



# HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

## **Junior Kindergarten Pilot Program Evaluation 2005-2006**

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## **Introduction**

On July 13, 2004, the governor signed Act 219 (04) SB 17 SD1 HD1 CD2 into law. This act established a two-tiered kindergarten system in the state of Hawai'i. The impetus for Act 219 concerned the state's early age of entry into kindergarten and the resulting challenge of meeting the developmental and educational needs of the younger kindergarten students. Prior to the passage of Act 219, a child was eligible to enter kindergarten in a given school year as long as he or she turned five before January of that school year. The December 31 cut-off birth date was one of the latest in the nation, resulting in a situation in which kindergarten students in Hawai'i were younger on the average than kindergarten students in most other states.

The language of the bill expressed concern regarding the early school performance of chronologically younger students:

The legislature finds that studies nationally and locally have found substantial differences between 'older' students and 'younger' students within a grade, [in] terms of their performance and ability. Students at greatest risk are boys born between July and December. They account for a disproportionate number of students who are retained at their present grade level, have school adjustment problems, or are certified as learning disabled. Comparisons between Hawaii students and students in other states on national achievement tests in later grades are likely to be more equitable if the entry age of [the] Hawaii student is more closely aligned to that of most other states. In light of these and other findings, the legislature is committed to school readiness. The legislature finds that it is necessary to create conditions that will enable children in Hawaii to succeed in kindergarten and subsequent school experiences.

Starting in the 2006-2007 school year, the age of entry into kindergarten was raised so that eligible students must turn five by August 1. Children who reach the age of five between August 2 and December 31 are now enrolled in the public school system as junior kindergarten students. At the end of the school year, junior kindergarten students may be promoted to first grade or spend a second year as a kindergarten student, depending on their needs. Although Act 219 does not state a preferred path, other Department of Education (DOE) documents indicate that the expected route is to move directly from junior kindergarten into first grade.

The intent of the new system was to better meet the needs of younger students. As stated in the bill:

The legislature finds that students born in the latter half of the calendar year will benefit from a more targeted developmentally appropriate curriculum geared to their young age. By addressing the range of learners in the kindergarten classroom, the public educational system can better ensure success for students in their early years, provide a more level playing field for students, and improve overall educational outcomes for students. Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a two-tier junior kindergarten and kindergarten to implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum. The program will be sufficiently flexible to allow those junior kindergarten students deemed ready to participate in kindergarten to do so, and provide those students who may need additional support to move from kindergarten to junior kindergarten. This will facilitate the progress of junior kindergarten and kindergarten students to the first grade. Children in the program who could benefit from another year may continue in kindergarten for a second year.

Although the bill used the term *two-tiered* system, schools were not required to have separate classrooms or different curricula for younger and older children. Schools were allowed to follow one of three models:

- Separate classrooms for younger, junior kindergarten students and the older, kindergarten students. In this report, we called this the ‘age-based’ option.
- Classrooms that include both junior kindergarten and kindergarten students. We referred to this as the ‘heterogeneous’ option.
- Public-private partnerships in which the junior kindergarten students are served in a community setting. This model was referred to as the ‘public-private collaboration’ option.

It is also possible that schools would combine models, e.g., some classrooms consisting of only junior kindergarten children, some classrooms with only kindergarten students, and some classes with a mix of older and younger students. We will refer to this arrangement as the ‘mixed’ option.

In the 2004-2005 school year, Kamaile and Leihoku Elementary Schools became the first schools to implement junior kindergartens. These schools provided feedback to the Department of Education on classroom models and implementation issues. The DOE prepared an implementation framework to be used by schools as the program expanded and

conducted a baseline survey using the Hawai‘i State School Readiness Assessment Survey (HSSRA).

During the 2005-2006 school year, thirty-seven volunteer elementary schools served as sites for the junior kindergarten pilot program. All pilot schools implemented the junior kindergarten model of their choice. In the 2006-2007 school year, all public schools other than charter schools and conversion charter schools implemented the two-tiered program.

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the experiences of the 2005-2006 pilot junior kindergarten schools. The evaluation was designed to address the following issues:

- Provide a description of the demographic characteristics of students and faculty in the pilot schools, including a description of teachers’ and administrators’ qualifications specific to early childhood education
- Provide a description of school practices during the pilot year including junior kindergarten models selected, grouping practices, curriculum and/or school reform models used, the degree to which classroom environments and instructional practices were developmentally appropriate, and practices pertaining to student retention and promotion
- Provide a description of current professional development services and training relating to early childhood education and an assessment of future professional development needs
- Provide a description of how effectively information about junior kindergarten policies and practices was communicated to stakeholders including teachers, parents, and school administrators
- Provide recommendations for enhancing the junior kindergarten program during the full implementation years

## Literature Review

Junior kindergartens, also known as two-tiered or developmental kindergartens, assign children to either a junior kindergarten class or a senior, i.e., traditional, kindergarten class based on one of two factors: children's performance on developmental screening tests or children's age of entry. Some states utilize a screening-based junior kindergarten program to provide developmentally appropriate curricula to children whose screening scores suggest that they are developmentally immature or not *ready* for traditional kindergarten<sup>1</sup>. Such programs exist in New Jersey, Virginia, California, Michigan, Tennessee, Illinois, and Washington. Age-based programs, similar to those implemented in Hawai'i, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada, assign four-year-olds to junior kindergarten classrooms with the goal of readying younger children for the demands of regular kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

Although few state programs have been evaluated empirically, outcomes have been measured for screening-based programs in New Jersey and Virginia. According to a report by the New Jersey Department of Education (2006), their *The Gift of Time* developmental kindergarten program is a best practice program. This version of developmental kindergarten was developed for young five-year-olds with developmental, social or emotional delays. The program employs a distinct junior kindergarten curriculum and smaller class sizes, and unites with regular kindergarten classes for lunch, field trips, and special events. Outcome data indicated that children made gains and scored above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized measures of reading, verbal, and math at the end of second grade. However, these data were drawn from a sample of only twelve students and no data from a comparison group were reported, so it is impossible to determine the generalizability of the data or how these participants' scores compared to those of children who attended regular kindergartens. A longitudinal evaluation of Virginia's Developmental Kindergarten (DK), a program for

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<sup>1</sup> In Hawai'i, enrollment in either junior kindergarten or kindergarten is not mandatory. In 2003, in an effort to underscore the shared responsibility that schools, families and communities have in supporting young children, the Hawai'i School Readiness Task Force, which consisted of a diverse group of influential stakeholders, developed Preschool Content Standards describing the content of well-rounded preschool programs. They cover the five developmental domains that are meaningful to preschool four-year-olds. These content standards were developed to align with the Hawai'i Department of Education's K-2 Content and Performance Standards. Both the Hawai'i State Legislature and the Board of Education have adopted the standards and dissemination has begun in public and private preschools statewide (source: [www.goodbeginnings.org](http://www.goodbeginnings.org)).

children scoring in the bottom third of their peer group on developmental screening tests, has resulted in mixed findings (Phillips, 1992). In Virginia's program, children transition to regular kindergarten after their year in DK. In the fourth year of Phillips' longitudinal study, second grade data reveal that DK children outperformed comparison groups of children retained in kindergarten and non-retained children on an array of academic outcomes. These findings, however, were only significant for certain groups: girls, white children, and children attending higher socioeconomic status schools, suggesting that the program is not beneficial for all children. The program has also been criticized for its use of readiness tests, as boys, minorities, children of low socioeconomic status and young children consistently scored lower than other groups and because none of the four tests in use were strong predictors of future test performance (Ellwein, Walsh, Eads, & Miller, 1991).

Other studies have failed to document consistent academic advantages resulting from additional transitional school years for children who were determined to be *unready* for kindergarten or first grade. May and Welch (1984) compared the achievement of students placed in a developmental kindergarten with two groups of children who enrolled in regular kindergarten: one group that had been recommended for regular kindergarten, and another that had been recommended for developmental kindergarten but enrolled in regular kindergarten instead. Achievement scores were compared at third grade, and the developmental kindergartners were the lowest performers, despite having a one year age advantage over their same-grade peers. Longitudinal studies of children placed in developmental kindergartens have also been used to investigate how well these children perform, as compared (1) to children in their same age group, but in the next grade level and (2) to their same-grade peers who are one year younger. Banerji (1990) employed this design longitudinally to investigate the effects of a two-year developmental kindergarten. She found that although the developmental kindergartners demonstrated an academic advantage over their same-age and same-grade peers until the end of first grade, their academic advantages dissipated by the end of second grade. Mantzicopoulos and Morrison (1992) followed a similar empirical design and evaluated the effects of kindergarten retention on children's academic performance through the end of grade two. Their findings indicate that although retained children demonstrated an initial academic advantage in their second year of kindergarten, this advantage was not maintained beyond the kindergarten year. Retained

children continued to perform below district norms on academic achievement in first and second grades. These studies suggest that additional transitional years of schooling are not significantly related to children's long-term academic achievement.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children<sup>2</sup> (2001), does not support the use of developmental screening tests to determine kindergarten placement, nor does it advocate the developmental segregation of children into separate classrooms. The organization's position on trends in kindergarten entry and placement also finds unacceptable the delay of children's entry to school and the use of extra-year classes, deeming such practices "subtle forms of retention" that label "children as failures at the outset of their educational experiences" (p. 4).

Such practices, however, are commonly employed. Costenbader, Rohrer and Difonzo (2000) surveyed 775 public and private school districts in New York state to determine the procedures and instruments used in kindergarten screenings. Thirty percent of the 385 respondent districts report using locally constructed screening measures, and 55 percent use published readiness measures, such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), the DIAL-R, the Brigance K & 1 Screen for Kindergarten and First-Grade Children (Brigance, 1991), and the Gesell School Readiness Test (Ilg & Ames, 1972). Based on the screening results, 19 percent of the respondent districts advised parents to delay their children's school entry when children were identified as unready for kindergarten. Other districts reported placing such children in reduced-sized kindergartens, extended-day kindergartens, developmental kindergartens, and in early intervention programs. More than half of the respondents also reported referring unready children to professionals for further evaluation. The authors caution that placement decisions based primarily on screening procedures may be unreliable, given the poor psychometric properties of many of these instruments and the high rate of false positives that occur as a result of their use. The latter concern, that large numbers of children who are identified as 'unready' or 'at-risk' actually do not experience learning or behavioral deficits, is of particular concern.

Age-based junior kindergarten placement is an alternative to that determined by developmental screening. Typically, the cutoff birth date for entrance to kindergarten is

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<sup>2</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), formed in 1926, serves as the national accreditation association to set standards for preschool and early childhood education programs.

determined by the state. Approximately twenty-two states have designated August 31 or September 1, typically the beginning of the school year, as their birth date cutoff (Education Commission of the States, 2005). Since 1975, however, states have increasingly moved the cutoff date earlier into the year, thereby requiring children to be older when entering kindergarten classrooms (Stipek, 2002). Between 1975 and 2000, twenty-two states have moved their birth date cutoffs in this direction. Nationally, as many as 9 to 10 percent of parents have opted to delay their children's entry into kindergarten, with boys twice as likely to be held back as girls (Stipek, 2002). This voluntary delay of entry is commonly known as academic *redshirting*. The rationale behind these decisions has been that older children will likely be more prepared for the academic environment of the kindergarten classroom. Older children are perceived to benefit more from instruction, thereby enabling them to more readily master curricula which may further decrease the need for retention or social promotion (Stipek, 2002).

Stipek (2002) argued that the debate over the age of entry into kindergarten considers the relative value of instructional experience and biological maturation and experience in out-of-school contexts. She found that the effects of entry age have been evaluated by comparing delayed versus on-time entry, naturally occurring age differences within grades, and the effects of a year of maturation and out-of-school experience with that of a year of schooling. Findings suggest that children whose school entry was delayed demonstrated greater behavioral problems than their modal aged peers (Byrd, Weitzman & Auinger, 1997; Mantzicopoulos & Morrison, 1992; Mayer & Knutson, 1999). Academic outcomes for delayed versus on-time kindergarten entrants are mixed (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; Kundert, May & Brent, 1995; May, Kundert, & Brent, 1995). Findings resulting from this method of comparison should be interpreted with caution however, as qualities that led parents to delay entry in the first place may continue to influence developmental outcomes as children progress through school. Because birth dates tend to be randomly distributed throughout a grade-level, studies comparing naturally occurring variations due to age within a grade are less problematic. While this research suggests that there exists a small age advantage in early elementary grades for older children, this advantage diminishes with age (Jones & Mandeville, 1990; Sweetland & De Simone, 1987). Furthermore, findings do not support the notion that older children benefit more from schooling than younger children, as younger

children's gains from the school experience enable them to catch up academically to their older peers (May & Welch, 1986; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Stipek & Byler, 2001). Lastly, the most methodologically rigorous comparative studies evaluating the relative effects of schooling and age on children's developmental outcomes suggest that schooling contributes more to children's cognitive competencies than does maturation (Cahan & Cohen, 1989; Crone & Whitehurst, 1999). One study suggests that the effect of a year in school was twice the effect of a year of age (Cahan & Davis, 1987). Studies also suggest that young children benefit as much from the schooling experience as do older children, as younger children in one grade often outperformed older children in the grade below (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999; Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995). Taken together, these findings suggest that school has a greater effect on achievement outcomes than age, and children who enter kindergarten at young ages overcome any initial academic disadvantages due to age as they progress through the first few grades of school.

Locally, Brandt (2006) investigated the relationship between age and third grade reading and math achievement, as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Using data on 27,383 students, Brandt found that all correlations between age and achievement were close to zero and non-significant by grade 3, concluding that the non-significant relationship between age and achievement consistently found in the research literature also applies to the children in Hawai'i.

## **Methodology**

Act 219 required the Hawai'i Department of Education to evaluate the junior kindergarten pilot program implemented in the 2006-2007 school year, and to submit findings and recommendations to the legislature. The DOE contracted with the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center to administer this project conducted by principle investigators, Drs. Donna Grace (Institute for Teacher Education) and Barbara DeBaryshe (Center on the Family), at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Data sources used in this report included administrative data provided by the DOE as well as surveys and focus group interviews conducted with pilot school teachers and principals. Participation in data collection activities was voluntary. The DOE stipulated that

all data for this program evaluation, other than administrative records, needed to be gathered on January 30 and January 31, 2006, following the DOE early literacy professional development workshops for pilot school teachers and administrators, held at the Pacific Beach Hotel, on those two days.

### *Teacher and Principal Surveys*

Surveys were administered in a large group format to all workshop attendees. The survey forms were completed and submitted before participants left the morning workshop sessions. Surveys were identified by a code number and did not include the respondent's name.

Parallel versions of the surveys were developed for principals and teachers. The survey instruments are included in Appendices A and B. The content of these surveys was developed by the authors of this report in consultation with the DOE. Two sections of the surveys, *Your Personal Perspective* and *Classroom Activities* were adapted from the *Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey: Kindergarten Version* developed by early childhood education experts Drs. Rosalind Charlesworth and Diane Burts. The Charlesworth and Burts instrument is designed to measure the degree to which teachers' beliefs and classroom practices are aligned with professional guidelines for developmentally appropriate early childhood education practices; the validity of this instrument has been demonstrated in several published research studies (Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White & Charlesworth, 1998; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Mosley & Fleege, 1993; McMullen & Alat, 2002).

Surveys were returned from 113 teachers representing thirty-one different schools, or 84 percent of the pilot school cohort. Surveys were also returned from twenty-four school administrators (mostly school principals), representing 65 percent of the pilot school cohort.

### *Focus Groups*

Focus group interviews were included in the study design to gain greater insight and in-depth understanding of the participant's perspectives on Act 219 and its implementation in the pilot schools. An advantage of focus group interviews is that they gather a wide variety of data in a shorter amount of time than would be needed for individual interviews. In addition, the group setting provides a comfortable and relaxed context that tends to produce richer data

from the participants, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the topic that an individual might not have considered (Rubin and Rubin, cited in Berg, 2001). Some of the focus group questions overlapped with those on the survey, while others were developed to gather information that was not as conducive to a survey format.

A standardized interview protocol was developed, pilot tested, and revised for clarity, comprehensibility, and timing. Twelve questions addressing the implementation of junior kindergarten programs were included in the final form of the protocol. Questions addressed grouping practices, curricular changes, developmentally appropriate practices, policies for promotion and retention, support and professional development needs, and recommendations for other schools to use in implementing a junior kindergarten program (see Appendix C for interview protocol). Seven staff members of the Curriculum Research & Development Group and two additional University of Hawai'i College of Education professors were trained as focus group facilitators and recorders to assist the principal investigators in conducting the interviews.

A total of thirty-six teachers and thirty-three administrators, representing thirty-three of the thirty-seven pilot schools, participated in the focus group interviews. Interviews were conducted on two separate days. Teachers and administrators were interviewed in separate groups with two teacher and two administrator focus group interviews conducted each day, for a total of eight interviews. Each group consisted of eight to ten participants.

To minimize group influence, the interview questions were distributed to the pilot school teachers and administrators prior to the focus group sessions so that participants could individually jot down their own thoughts and ideas to each question prior to group sharing of their responses. The trained facilitator ensured that each member had the opportunity to add his/her contribution to the compilation of the group responses.

During each focus group interview, the recorder captured the interviewees' comments in a word-processing format. In addition, all of the focus group interviews were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. The transcriptions were compared to the recorder's notes for accuracy and completeness. Utilizing procedures of inductive analysis, the transcripts were then coded and categorized according to the patterns and themes that emerged from the data. The results are summarized and presented according to the interview questions they address and the topics that emerged, with representative interviewee comments included.

### *Administrative Data*

Shortly after the January meetings, teachers were asked via e-mail to submit information about their classes including the number of children in their class, and each child's age and length of preschool experience, if any. Information on class enrollment was returned from 103 teachers, including data from some who did not attend the January meetings.

The DOE also supplied data on retention rates for the 2003-2004 through 2005-2006 school years.

## **Results**

### *Description of Participants*

#### *Pilot Schools*

Thirty-seven volunteer schools participated in the junior kindergarten pilot. The names of these schools are listed in Table 1. Participating schools represented all school districts and twenty-three out of forty-two school complexes. The pilot campuses served a total of 3,051 junior kindergarten and kindergarten students, 39 percent of whom were junior kindergarten age. Characteristics of the pilot year schools and children are shown in Table 2.

Table 1  
List of Participating Pilot Schools

SCHOOL NAME		
Ali'iolani	Kalaniana'ole	Linapuni
'Ewa Beach	Kalihi Waena	Mānoa
Ha'ikū	Kamaile	Nahienaena
Helemano	Kamali'i	Nānāikapono
Honoka'a	Kapālama	Pāhoa
Honowai	Kauluwela	Pearl City
Iroquois Point	Kea'au	Pearl Ridge
Jefferson	Kīhei	Wahiawā
Ka'ala	Kōloa	Waikele
Kahakai	Leihōkū	Waikīkī
Kailua	Liholiho	Waikoloa
Ka'imiloa	Likelike	Wailupe Valley
Kalāheo		

Table 2  
 Characteristics of Pilot Schools and Pilot School Children

CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER OR PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN
Total Number of Children	3,051
Age Grouping	38.9% junior kindergarten 56.1% kindergarten 4.8% Repeating kindergarten 0.2% Information missing
Sex	51.5% boys 48.5% girls
Served Under IDEA	6%
Received Free or Reduced Price Lunch	48.7%
Family Speaks English at Home	87.4%
Ethnicity	27.6% Native Hawaiian/part Hawaiian 23.8% Other 22.3% Filipino 12.9% Caucasian 6.2% Japanese 4.3% Samoan 3.9% Chinese 3.2% Latino 2.2% African American 1.3% Indo-Chinese 0.9% Korean 0.8% American Indian 0.8% Portuguese
Average grade level enrollment	85
Met Annual Yearly Progress goals for 2006	85.0%

### *Principals*

Twenty-four administrators provided survey data. This group included twenty-two principals and two vice-principals; for simplicity, we will use the term ‘principal’ to refer to our administrator respondents. Principals varied widely in terms of their professional preparation relating to early childhood education. Half of the principals had *no* degree or credential in early childhood education or elementary education. Half of the principals had one or more such credentials, including the following:

- 46 percent held an elementary teaching license.
- 37 percent held a bachelor’s degree in elementary or early childhood education.
- 17 percent had a graduate degree in early childhood education or child development.

This pattern suggests that only a minority of principals were well-trained in early childhood education; such training increases the likelihood that a principal can provide effective leadership in implementing a developmentally appropriate two-tiered kindergarten system.

### *Teachers*

Survey data were provided from 113 teachers. All teachers met the minimum qualifications set by the Department of Education. All teachers held a bachelor’s degree or professional diploma and an additional 23 percent held a master’s degree. All teachers reported holding a current State teaching license (96 percent were fully licensed and 4 percent held a provisional license) and all were certified to teach elementary education. An additional 18 percent of teachers reported dual certification, e.g., secondary education, special education. However, a small number of these teachers described certificates that are not recognized by the Department of Education, e.g., Montessori certification.

Very few teachers reported credentials specific to early childhood education (note that the items listed below are not mutually exclusive):

- 3 percent had a Child Development Associate credential.
- 3 percent had a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and 4 percent had a bachelor’s degree in human development or family resources.
- 4 percent had a state early childhood endorsement.
- One teacher (0.8 percent) had a master’s degree in early childhood education.
- 12 percent reported some other form of training relevant to early childhood, e.g., elective courses.

As a group, the teachers were experienced educators. On the average, they had taught for fourteen years, with an average of 8.3 years experience teaching kindergarten. Many teachers also reported teaching preschool (26 percent), Grades 1-3 (68 percent), or Grades 4-8 (40 percent); only a handful of teachers had taught at the high school level (4 percent).

### *Understanding of Act 219*

#### *Teachers' and Principals' Understanding of Act 219*

The first question posed to participants in the focus group interviews pertained to their understanding of Act 219 and the establishment of a junior kindergarten program. The majority of the teachers and principals agreed that the purpose of the act was to identify late born children who would turn five after August 1, and to place them in a developmentally appropriate junior kindergarten class. There was support for the intent of this act, as seen in the following comments:

- *The purpose was to establish a two-prong system to meet the needs of students not yet ready for kindergarten. The intent to raise entry age was good.*
- *The bill was needed because schools were facing large numbers of students enrolling without preschool, and not coming in with the basic skills to be prepared for grade 1 at the end of the year. The JK would help get these students ready for kindergarten.*
- *The act has brought a lot to the teachers' consciousness that there are these very young children.*
- *I have always felt the age of entry in Hawai'i was too young, so this was one very smart, powerful thing the state did to allow the students to be more developmentally ready for the grade levels they go through.*
- *Act 219 recognized developmental differences in students. The changes are in how teachers look at students in their preparation and recognition of the importance of working with students to prepare them for moving on to first grade.*
- *It could be powerful because of addressing the needs early, meeting the needs of children--less retention in the upper grades, fewer drop outs, fewer sped referrals.*
- *One good thing is to allow the early born to attend school, because not as many go to preschool as we might think.*

### *Confusion and Concerns with Regard to Act 219*

There were also concerns expressed by some of the teachers and principals about the implementation of Act 219 due to lack of clarity, schools doing different things, and lack of accompanying resources and teaching positions.

- *The purpose is not clear, we've received conflicting information.*
- *Participation has raised more questions than it has provided any way to proceed.*
- *There is no consistency.*
- *It's just going by the seat of our pants at every school.*
- *What is the real intent behind Act 219? When can that be communicated to the educators and given to us in a way that we can comprehend and move with? Then we'll see some changes.*
- *We thought that the class size would be fifteen to one; instead it is twenty and twenty-two to one.*
- *We thought the legislature provided money for seventy-five additional teaching positions to help.*
- *Reduce class size. Where did those positions go?*
- *Act 219 is supposed to allow us the flexibility, but it did not come with personnel resources.*
- *It's going to be the same old, same old because we don't have the resources to make changes.*

### *Parents' Reactions*

The focus group interviewees were also asked describe how parents reacted to Act 219 and how the school responded. They reported a full range of parent reactions from supportive and appreciative, to no reaction, to mixed feelings and uncertainty, to disgruntlement. The majority of teachers and principals felt that the parents had either a supportive or a 'wait and see' attitude. Some of the parents who were supportive appreciated the opportunity for their late born child to have a year of preschool (as opposed to waiting a year to enroll in kindergarten), or were reassured that the intent was for all children to move to first grade.

- *Most parents are glad because they cannot afford preschool. They are glad they are getting additional support before kindergarten.*
- *It's more like, "Oooh, free child care, can I bring mine in a little earlier?"*
- *Parents have been fairly positive, but our JK is doing the same thing as the regular K and they were told that our aim is to get them all to first grade at the end of the year.*
- *I explained that the idea was that most children would move on to grade one.*

Most schools had a parent orientation where the program was explained, questions were answered, and supporting materials were handed out. All felt this was very helpful.

- *We prepared parents through an orientation meeting, school bulletins, and screening. We had a fairly positive response.*
- *We had a lot of parent education at the beginning of the year.*
- *In addition to regular orientation, all parents have opportunities for question and answer time with the principal.*

For those parents who had concerns, the primary issue pertained to promotion to first grade or having their child spending a second year in kindergarten.

- *Some parents were confused or shocked. They see it as retention.*
- *Some new parents were uncomfortable because it was so ambiguous, so they wanted to know what the child has to do to go to first grade.*
- *Parents were concerned about, "Is my kid advanced?" or "Is my kid in the slower class?"*
- *We had quite a big core of parents that are concerned, "Will my kid go on or will my kid stay?"*
- *I think offering extra time is going to be a challenge.*
- *Some parents are adamant that their child will go on to grade one. Others are accepting that their child may need another year.*

## *Junior Kindergarten Models and Grouping Practices Used in the Pilot Schools*

### *Junior Kindergarten Models Used*

Identifying the junior kindergarten models used was not a straightforward task. The descriptions provided by principals did not always match the descriptions provided by teachers within the same school, and there were some cases in which these descriptions appeared to be inconsistent with the information included on classroom rosters. We considered all three sources of information together before coding the school's particular junior kindergarten model. The number of pilot schools using each of the possible junior kindergarten models is shown in Table 3.

Most schools continued to follow the status quo established before Act 219. The majority of pilot schools (59 percent) served junior kindergarten and kindergarten children together in heterogeneous, mixed-age classrooms. Only seven schools (19 percent) used the same-age option, organizing classrooms by age so that each classroom served only younger or only older children. Five schools (13 percent) used a mixed model, with one or more classrooms containing only younger students, and other classrooms serving a heterogeneous age group. No schools self-identified as following the public-private collaboration model. However, one teacher's roster included five preschool children and four junior kindergarten children. It is not clear whether this was a PrePlus classroom, a DOE special needs preschool classroom, or some other arrangement; it is possible that this one classroom represented a public-private partnership. It is important to note that schools did not always implement their preferred junior kindergarten model. Some schools, most often the smaller schools, wished to follow the age-based model, but did not have a large enough enrollment to offer anything other than heterogeneous classrooms.

Consistent with the school-level junior kindergarten model selected, most teachers worked in mixed-age classrooms (see Table 4). A few classrooms were intended to be age-based; however one or two late-enrolling students were placed in the class despite being a different age. We included these classrooms in the age-based counts.

Table 3  
Junior Kindergarten Models Used in the Pilot Schools

MODEL	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS
Heterogeneous	All classrooms are mixed age, serving both junior kindergarten and kindergarten children	22	59.5
Age-Based	All classrooms are age-segregated, serving only junior kindergarten children or only kindergarten children	7	18.9
Mixed Model	Some classrooms serve only junior kindergarten children while other classrooms are mixed age	5	13.5
Unclear	It was unclear whether this school used the age-based or mixed model	1	2.7
Not Available	Data were not available	2	5.4

Table 4  
Age Composition and Characteristics of Individual Classrooms

CLASSROOM AGE COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF CLASSROOMS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CLASSROOMS	AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER CLASSROOM	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF JR. K. STUDENTS PER CLASSROOM	PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH 6 OR MORE MONTHS OF PRESCHOOL
Jr.K. & Kindergarten	85	69.7%	21.0	44.3%	56.2%
Jr.K.	18	14.8%	19.8	97.9%	49.8%
Kindergarten	14	11.5%	21.1	4.5%	74.2%
PreK & Jr.K.	1	0.8%	9	44.4%	n/a
Missing Data	4	3.3%	n/a	n/a	n/a

### *Issues Considered by Schools in Selecting a Junior Kindergarten Model*

*Enrollment and staffing.* Corroborating the survey data, the majority of teachers and administrators in the focus groups stated that their classes were mixed-age rather than age-segregated. Thus, the age range of the children in the classes remained primarily the same as prior to the legislation. For many of the interviewees, enrollment and staffing issues took precedence over the intent of Act 219.

- *We cannot group just by age. It depends on enrollment, teacher allocation, and space.*
- *By our numbers, we have to be heterogeneous.*
- *We started out trying to keep it true to birth date, but the numbers just didn't work out, so we had to go back to how we would normally have the kids in classes.*
- *Our resources dictated what we could do. The numbers didn't warrant a separate JK.*
- *For us, it is enrollment and position allocation.*

*Beliefs about early learning.* On the surveys, principals were asked to briefly state the reasons why their school had chosen a particular implementation model. Most comments indicated that schools used the model that was most consistent with their beliefs about early learning:

- 50 percent of principals felt mixed-age classrooms better serve children's needs.
- 25 percent felt developmental grouping better serve children's needs.
- 25 percent felt age-based classrooms better serve children's needs.
- 17 percent of principals noted that their schools were too small to allow for age-based classrooms.
- 4 percent planned for age-based classrooms but late enrollees were placed in classrooms regardless of age.

In addition, the focus group interview participants, particularly the principals, shared their belief that a child's developmental stage and readiness for kindergarten were as important or more important than chronological age in determining placements.

- *It's not so much about age as it is about readiness.*

- *We still have those who are late born, but who have gone to preschool and developmentally do not belong in the JK. Likewise, we have children who are early born in January, who are not ready for K.*
- *Although the Act ties us to ages, we still need to have leeway to say that date of birth does not control placement.*
- *The law has good intentions, but we need to attend to the issue of kids that are young and can do well in school. Need to look at age and readiness.*
- *Children are so different at four and five. They may reach higher levels in a month or two.*
- *Some of our JK s have surpassed our Ks academically. It's more about developmental needs than age.*
- *This year we tried to track the kids to see if the late born had lower readiness skills. But we are not really finding that. It just depends on the child.*
- *We looked at age and readiness. Just because a child is younger than others does not mean that they are not ready to do the stuff the older kids do.*
- *The teachers are finding that the great determinant of success in the K is not age, as we all know, but participation in preschool.*
- *Our philosophy is to meet every student where they are, so grouping by age went against our philosophy.*

*Perceived need to assess entering children's abilities.* In response to the belief that children's 'readiness' was an important consideration in placing children into junior kindergarten or kindergarten classrooms, a variety of assessments were used to evaluate the abilities of the entering children at the beginning of the year. Assessments mentioned included those that accompanied commercial curricula, the Phelps, EPSS, the Developmental Reading Assessment, school-developed assessments, and others that were not named.

- *We do a lot of pre-testing before placing children.*
- *We used the Phelps to group into classes. It was more by Phelps than by age.*
- *Because of our numbers, we made one true JK, and then based on test scores, the overflow went to the other classes.*

- *We now assess everyone at the beginning of the year.*
- *The teachers are asking me for substitutes so they can test all of their K students.*
- *We give a pre-assessment, then divided them up into homogeneous groups.*
- *We have blended classes based on pre-test scores.*
- *Prior to JK coming, we already had a system of pre and post assessment so we know where the children are.*
- *What we did differently was that for the first time we did pre-testing of the children.*
- *We have a mixed class, but made a check-list of what the kids knew, behaviors, and academics and then decided how to separate kids based on that.*

#### *Satisfaction with the Junior Kindergarten Model Adopted*

*Satisfaction levels.* On the survey, principals were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the school-wide junior kindergarten model adopted on their campus. Teachers were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the age range in their own classroom. Results are shown in Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis tests of rank order were used to compare satisfaction levels across groups. For both principals and teachers, there were *no statistically significant differences in satisfaction* with the school-wide or classroom-specific age groupings used. Thus, at the mid-point of the school year, there was no clear preference for mixed age versus age-based groupings.

Teachers' satisfaction was not associated with either class size,  $r = -.10$ ,  $p = .32$ , or with the percentage of junior kindergarten age children in their classroom,  $r = -.06$ ,  $p = .62$ . Teachers were more satisfied, however, when more children in their classroom had six months or more of preschool experience,  $r = .34$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Teacher satisfaction may have been similar across classroom types because most teachers were assigned to a classroom on the basis of preference and/or expertise. Again, on the survey, principals were asked to indicate the factors used in assigning teachers to classrooms. Teachers were assigned on the basis of their qualifications and/or skills with the junior kindergarten and kindergarten age group (79 percent), interest in working with this age group (58%), and/or by volunteering for their particular assignment (54 percent). Seniority was used as the basis for teaching assignments by only 21 percent of principals.

Table 5  
Satisfaction with Age Groupings Used in the Pilot Schools

PRINCIPAL SATISFACTION WITH JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN MODEL					
Model Used	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Heterogeneous	0%	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%
Age-Based	0%	0%	20%	60%	20%
Mixed Model	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
All Models	0%	8.3%	12.5%	50%	29.2%
TEACHER SATISFACTION WITH OWN CLASSROOM TYPE					
Classroom Type	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Jr.K. & K	0%	11.3%	23.8%	51.3%	13.8%
Jr.K.	5.6%	5.6%	33.3%	38.9%	16.7%
Kindergarten	0%	0%	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%
All Types	0.9%	9.1%	26.4%	49.1%	14.5%

*Advantages and disadvantages of heterogeneous, mixed-age classrooms.* On the survey, teachers were also asked to briefly comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the age grouping of their own classroom. Teachers in heterogeneous classrooms (the most common classroom type), saw the following advantages of having a mixed-age class:

- 60 percent said that modeling and support from older/more proficient peers was beneficial for the junior kindergarten children in their class.
- 16 percent said that mixed-age classrooms provided equal challenges and opportunities for all students.
- 8 percent mentioned equity issues for teachers, e.g., that all classrooms have equal enrollments.
- 6 percent felt that they still meet children’s individual needs by using ability-based small learning groups within their class.

At the same time, the teacher survey respondents in heterogeneous classrooms saw the following disadvantages of mixed-aged classrooms:

- 25 percent found it challenging to address their students' diverse skills and needs.
- 31 percent specifically discussed the challenges of teaching or meeting the needs of the younger or less proficient children.
- 4 percent felt they neglected the needs of the older or more proficient children.
- 17 percent said their class size was too large or resources too limited to allow them to be effective for all children.
- 11 percent mentioned stigma or confusion about junior kindergarten, especially for children who do not progress directly to first grade.
- 12 percent had other reasons.

In keeping with the survey results, the focus group participants also reported advantages of mixed-age classes in terms of having role models for students. In addition, another advantage mentioned was to provide the opportunity for more children to reach their potential after some exposure to school. They were not asked about disadvantages of mixed-age classrooms.

- *Sometimes we have a child, who on the school-made skills inventory knows nothing, and within a month, they are at the top of the class because it's a matter of exposure. In a heterogeneous class, my kids can move on.*
- *We're heterogeneous and feel that it gives the younger ones a chance to have role models and the older ones a chance to help.*
- *The teachers wanted the classes structured so that the struggling students, whether late or early born, would have good models to follow.*

*Advantages and disadvantages of homogeneous, age-based classrooms.* Teachers in age-based junior kindergarten classrooms listed the following advantages to keeping all the younger children together:

- 39 percent mentioned children's similarity in terms of their skills and needs.
- 30 percent felt better able to meet the needs of younger children, i.e., they could move through the curriculum more slowly.
- 9 percent mentioned being able to have a smaller class size.

- 9 percent mentioned *looping*<sup>3</sup>.
- 13 percent listed other reasons.

These same teachers saw the following disadvantages of age-based junior kindergarten classrooms:

- 37 percent said children showed lower levels of school readiness.
- 22 percent mentioned missed opportunities for modeling and assistance from older peers.
- 18 percent said their class size was too large to meet the younger children's greater needs.
- 7 percent said some junior kindergarten children are not being challenged.
- 7 percent had curriculum concerns.
- 7 percent cited other reasons.

Finally, teachers in age-based kindergarten classrooms saw the following benefits of having a classroom consisting of only older children:

33 percent felt it was beneficial that their students were similar in terms of skills and needs.

- 50 percent said that older children have higher levels of school readiness.
- 17 percent mentioned other reasons.

These same teachers mentioned the following disadvantages of older-children-only classrooms:

- 57 percent identified pragmatic issues such as the junior kindergarten classrooms having fewer students.
- 43 percent felt some older children would be better served in the junior kindergarten setting.

The focus group participants also reported that an advantage of age-segregated classes was the children's similarity in terms of their skills and needs. In addition, some noted that in the homogeneous classrooms, role models will still emerge. They were not asked about the disadvantages of age-segregated classes.

- *The non JK teachers feel that they are able to focus more on students because less time is used giving individual attention to younger students who lack readiness skills.*

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<sup>3</sup> Looping: when the teacher moves up with his/her class, e.g. from first to second grade.

- *The K teachers like it because they don't have to deal children who can't focus or have behavior problems.*
- *I kind of disagree with the need for role models. Among the late borns, the role models rise to the top. On the other hand, these are children with basically the same needs so you can really focus on your teaching and be very direct, [unlike] in a mixed range when you have to deal with all the different levels.*
- *We have the little guys. We were worried we wouldn't have role models. It was the opposite. Now they have to risk because nobody is there giving them the answer. It's wonderful to see them become leaders.*

### *Curriculum Models and Assessment Practices*

#### *Curriculum Models Used*

On the surveys, teachers were asked to list up to four different curricula or reform models used at their school for the junior kindergarten or kindergarten grade levels. A list of these curricula is shown in Table 6. Compared to the classrooms as a whole, teachers who worked in age-based junior kindergarten classrooms seemed less likely to report using the Harcourt Brace family of products. Junior kindergarten teachers were more likely to report using *Everyday Math* and other curricula that were not widely-used across the schools as a group, e.g., *Pacific Literacy*, *Skerritt*, and *Read Well*. This pattern suggests that some junior kindergarten classrooms select curricula that are thought to be more accessible to younger children.

#### *Modifications to Curricula*

On the survey, teachers were also asked to briefly describe any modifications that were made at their school in order to meet the needs of all students (see Table 7). Across all classroom types, the most common modifications reported were to teach at a slower pace and to use more active learning strategies, e.g., hands-on materials, centers, movement. There were no striking differences in the pattern of modifications reported by teachers in age-based junior kindergarten classrooms compared to mixed-age classrooms. No junior kindergarten teachers mentioned active learning or small group instruction. Since the number of respondents was small, these apparent gaps should be interpreted with caution.

Table 6  
Curricula and School Reform Models Used:  
All Classrooms and Age-Based Junior Kindergarten Classrooms

PRODUCT	ALL		JR.K.	
	#	%	#	%
Harcourt Brace	53	25.5	2	7.6
Houghton-Mifflin	22	10.6	4	15.4
America's Choice	13	6.2	0	0
Foss	13	6.2	2	7.6
Investigations (math)	11	5.3	2	7.6
Open Court	10	4.8	0	0
Everyday Math	9	4.3	5	19.2
Teacher or School Developed Curriculum	8	3.8	1	3.8
Growing With Math	7	3.4	0	0
DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment)	7	3.4	0	0
Success for All	7	3.4	0	0
Distar/Direct Instruction	6	2.9	1	3.8
SRA (McGraw-Hill Reading Technology)	6	2.9	1	3.8
Balanced Literacy	5	2.4	0	0
Reading Well	4	1.9	0	0
Rigby	4	1.9	0	0
Handwriting Without Tears	4	1.9	2	7.4
DASH (science)	4	1.0	0	0
Miscellaneous	15	7.2	6	23.1
TOTAL	208	100	26	100

Table 7  
 Modifications Made to Curriculum:  
 All Classrooms and Age-Based Junior Kindergarten Classrooms

CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS	ALL		JR.K.	
	#	%	#	%
Slower pace	23	27.7%	3	33.3%
More active learning (hands-on centers, etc)	11	13.2%	0	0%
Modify but do not describe how	7	8.4%	1	11.1%
Address standards	6	7.2%	2	22.2%
More direct instruction, practice	6	7.2%	0	0%
More phonemic awareness	5	6.0%	0	0%
Use different curricula depending on class, student	5	6.0%	2	22.2%
Tutoring, small groups	5	6.0%	0	0%
More emphasis on vocabulary, language	5	6.0%	0	0%
No modifications needed	4	2.5%	0	0%
Miscellaneous	7	8.4%	1	11.1%
TOTAL	83	100%	9	100

In keeping with the survey data, the curricular change or modification most frequently reported by the focus group participants was to slow down the pacing and scale down the content for the junior kindergarten children, while using the same curriculum as for the kindergarten children.

- *I find myself teaching at a slower pace, with a lot of reviewing and repetition.*
- *The teachers are going at a much slower pace than normal. They might take two days instead of one to complete an entire lesson.*
- *I do follow the curriculum. But I do scale it down for the JK kids.*
- *It's about giving the children more time to grasp curriculum.*
- *We have been following the same curriculum, but the teacher has had to somewhat modify it and scale it down - not going as in-depth as normal .*

Further corroborating the survey results, several teachers and principals reported doing things in more age-appropriate ways with the junior kindergarten children in the

classroom. Increasing the use of centers was, by far, the most frequently reported change.

Other changes included more differentiation, integrated teaching, small group work, student choice, and more music, art, and play.

- *In our JK classes, we use a more center-based approach as opposed to children having their own desk - more songs and that sort of thing, so it is more developmentally appropriate.*
- *Because of the workshops we had at the beginning of the year, we are doing more manipulatives, hands-on, songs and finger plays, and centers. Since that time we have purchased blocks, kitchenettes, and sand and water tables.*
- *The JK class has more time for learning centers and social development. JK will not have all the rigorous testing - freed from Dibbles.*
- *There's a big difference between this year and last year. When I walk through the classrooms, you can see that it is more center driven, and more small group instruction.*
- *We all have center time in the afternoon, blocks, and a dramatic play area. We all use story time. Because we are not tied to a specific program or curriculum, we have more flexibility.*
- *We're now validating each other and saying, "Yes, it's okay to play."*
- *More integrated teaching and thematic curriculum.*
- *This first semester, I focused on building eye hand coordination, small muscles, and social and emotional growth. This semester, now that they have more skills under their belts, I'm focusing more on the academics.*
- *I am more able to modify lessons having attended some useful workshops, and to be a little more appropriate for younger learners.*
- *We are differentiating with the children.*
- *We moved out the teacher's desk, file cabinets, those big awful paper drawers, half of her chairs and desks and we made more centers. She is reporting that it just worked out beautifully.*
- *I use the pre-school standards instead of the K standards at the beginning of the school year for the JK students.*

- *We got off math workbooks and are doing Everyday Math. Also focusing on small groups, with an aide.*
- *We're looking into building a sand box and a water table for more hands-on activities.*

#### *Other Classroom Changes*

In addition to the changes reported above, interviewees occasionally mentioned being able to place a part-time teacher (PTT) in the junior kindergarten class for additional support. This was always greatly appreciated by the teachers. A few principals also talked about moving teachers with early childhood training into the junior kindergarten classrooms. Another teacher mentioned adding a second parent teacher conference during the year to keep parents better informed about their child's progress. One of the principals said they had conducted parent education workshops at the school on strategies for helping children at home.

*I told the parents that I needed them to be true working partners with the teachers, and that the children need to be read to every day, by dads as well as moms. I gave them a whole slew of activities they could engage in, like doing nursery rhymes when driving around, and pointing out letters on things in the grocery store.*

#### *Lack of Changes Resulting from Act 219*

Many of the focus group participants reported making little or no basic changes in response to Act 219. Several explained that because the age mix of the children had not really changed in the classrooms, the curriculum has tended to remain the same. In a few cases this was because they felt they were already differentiating instruction and implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

- *Our philosophy has always been that children develop at different rates and learn differently, so we didn't change anything.*
- *We differentiate, like we always do.*
- *We do not make specific modifications for the JK children. We do it for every child. It is not necessarily the younger ones that need help.*
- *We're fortunate that my K team has worked together for years and they were always developmentally appropriate, and they always used a lot of hands-on.*

In the majority of situations, however, the lack of change was attributed to the fact that they saw no need for doing so since they had the same age range of children as they had before Act 219.

- *It is the same age children walking through the doors. Nothing has changed. The act was supposed to change the entry age for kindergarten but in practice it has not done that.*
- *Status quo, just the same thing.*
- *We're not doing anything different in terms of curriculum, grouping, or support. Students are exposed to the same curriculum and provided the same support as any learner.*
- *Some of the teachers are having a hard time understanding why we are having this special JK program when we are still doing it the same way.*
- *You know that the Act is there, but we just went on with business as usual.*
- *Nothing has changed at our school. We thought there would be cut-off dates, similar to the mainland. But they all still come to school. Some are just labeled JK.*
- *We have a mixed group. Our grade level sees no evident changes in what we have done or how we think about the JK program.*
- *The classes are mixed. We're still doing the same thing. It seems like regular K.*
- *We have the same curriculum and the teachers are teaching in the same way.*
- *We don't do anything separate for the late born.*

Several interviewees who reported making no changes in curriculum and instruction in response to Act 219 explained that this was primarily due to their perceived need to hold the junior kindergarten children to the same kindergarten standards in order to move them to first grade.

- *From what I understood at both these sessions, the intent [was] to get every K student to move on to first grade, no matter the date of birth.*
- *We thought that the JK classrooms would have a separate curriculum, but we soon found out it was not the case; we had to keep at the same pace with all the others.*
- *In order to move to grade one, they all need to meet the same benchmarks as the regular K students. Therefore they need the same curriculum.*

- *We asked if all kids have the same expectations for going to grade one and the answer was yes. Therefore, there was not differentiation in terms of JK and K because the expectations were the same.*
- *We aren't doing anything differently because we have to work towards K standards, so we are expecting each child to be at the same level.*
- *We had to expose them to the same curriculum so they could move on to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. But I really would like to see the lower, less experienced children have a different curriculum. They should have more play. And then they would not be expected to move to grade 1 next year.*

### *Assessment Practices*

The Department of Education has developed three instruments that provide information on school readiness. The Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment: Schools Ready for Children (HSSRA-SRC) is intended to be used by principals to assess the degree to which their school's policies and practices support school transitions, parent involvement, and developmentally appropriate classroom practices for the early elementary grades. A second version of the HSSRA, Children Ready for Schools (HSSRA-CRS) may be used by teachers to report on the level of school readiness for children in their classroom as a whole. The Kindergarten Developmental Domains Assessment Checklist (DDC) is intended to be used by teachers to rate children's progress on language development, social-emotional development, classroom behaviors, and approaches to learning,

Neither instrument appears to have been widely adopted in the pilot schools. Only ten principals (41.7 percent) reported using the HSSRA-SRC. The most common use of the instrument was to fulfill mandated reporting practices. Only a few principals used the HSSRA-SRC for self-assessment or for progress monitoring. Among the group of principals who described how they used the HSSRA-SRC, 43 percent said it was "useful" or "very useful."

Twenty-seven teachers (23.9 percent) reported using the HSSRA-CRS. This instrument was used for mandated reporting and was also discussed at grade level meetings. Only a handful of teachers (6 percent) said they used the HSSRA-CRS for initial curriculum planning. Of those teachers who reporting using the HSSRA-CRS, 27.2 percent said the instrument was "useful" or "very useful."

Twenty-nine teachers (25.7 percent) reported using the DDC. The most common uses of the DDC included lesson planning and individualization, progress monitoring, and reporting to CAS or their principal. Among those who used the DDC, 47.8 percent said it was “useful” or “very useful.”

In contrast, all teachers but one (99.1 percent) endorsed an item indicating that they used “my own informal observations” to assess children. However, teachers’ open-ended comments suggested that they interpreted this survey item to include assessment techniques other than anecdotal observation, e.g., developmental checklists, school-designed, or curriculum-based assessments. Results were used for grouping, lesson planning and individualization, and completing grade level objectives and report cards. Teachers were much more enthusiastic about these informal and self-selected assessment techniques; 98 percent said they were “useful” or “very useful.”

In the focus groups, a number of the interviewees reported using assessments, rather than age, to place children at the beginning of the year, as discussed above in the *Junior Kindergarten Models and Grouping Practices* section. As seen in the comments below, other interviewees expressed a perceived need to begin doing using assessments to evaluate the readiness of the children for placement and promotion.

- *We need to expand JK, not just by age, but by some type of criteria to determine placement based on readiness.*
- *It would be better to actually assess their readiness level for K.*
- *We’re looking for a holistic assessment tool to administer at the end of the year and prior to grade one.*
- *What criteria are we going to use to judge ability? It’s not just an age issue.*
- *We are looking at everyone taking a standard assessment and then grouping.*

Focus group respondents who either were using or felt they should be using assessments to place the children and to make decisions about promotion, also expressed a desire for the state to provide guidelines for uniform, developmentally appropriate state assessments to use for these purposes.

- *We would like statewide assessment guidelines for JK so that we are all on the same page... for who goes to K and who goes to grade one.*

- *We need developmentally appropriate assessments for K*
- *We need a standard type of assessment - statewide to place the kids.*
- *We want to have some good, effective assessment and screening instruments and tools.*

### *Developmentally Appropriate Practices*

#### *Developmentally Appropriate Beliefs, Environments, and Teaching Practices*

In response to the question about the impact of Act 219, a number of the teachers and administrators in the focus groups reported being more informed about and having a heightened awareness of developmentally appropriate practices.

- *The thinking and even some of the teaching techniques have changed with the teachers being in-serviced. That has been the greatest value for us in participating in this. They have a better understanding of early childhood practices and are starting to use a common language.*
- *There is a heightened awareness of the K teachers of the importance of center activities and talking about what are the essential best practices for young children. Most teachers still don't get early childhood classes at the university level.*
- *The wonderful thing about having our teachers come to these things is that it has made their eyes more open to what kindergarten should be. They are learning more about what is developmentally appropriate.*
- *Changes were in becoming more aware of the different ability levels and getting back to the developmentally appropriate practices we had been moving away from because of the push for test scores.*
- *We still need to move the children along, but we realize we need to have different methods that are more developmentally appropriate to do that.*
- *There is a heightened awareness of differentiation by the teachers.*
- *I am more aware of the immature, younger learners and am better able to understand their behaviors.*
- *We try to find more developmentally appropriate programs or strategies to use.*

- *The whole grade level is doing 'open court,' but I didn't find that appropriate for the JK children at the beginning of the year. My principal told me to decide what to do, so I was fortunate.*

Table 8  
Mean Scores on Environment, Beliefs, and Practices Scales

MEASURE	MEAN	SAMPLE RANGE	MAXIMUM
Classroom Environment	10.62	3.00 -15.00	16
DAP Beliefs – Teachers	3.89	3.00 – 4.85	5
DAP Practices – Teachers	3.16	2.35 – 4.04	5
DAP Beliefs – Principals	3.92	2.92 – 4.77	5
DAP Practices - Principals	3.25	2.58 – 4.08	5

- Classroom Environment items used a yes/no format.
- For Belief items: 1 = “not at all important” 2 = “not important” 3 = “fairly important” 4 = “very important” 5 = “extremely important.”
- For Practice items: 1 = “almost never (less than monthly)” 2 = “rarely (monthly)” 3 = “sometimes (weekly)” 4 = “regularly (2-4 times per week)” 5 = “very often (daily)”.
- Items were reflected as needed so that high scores indicate developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices. For Classroom Environment the scale score was the item sum, for Beliefs and Practices, the scale score was the item average.

Table 9  
Classroom Environment Items

ITEM	PERCENT
Reading area or center	95
Block area or center	90
Mathematics area or center	87
Access to an outdoor area for gross motor play	84
Writing area or center	84
Dramatic play area or center	84
A variety of age-appropriate manipulatives	83
An adequate variety of child-size furniture	80
Art area or center	72
A well stocked classroom library	71
Access to safe, age-appropriate playground equipment	66
Listening center or area	64
Musical instruments	60
A quiet, secluded area where 1-2 children can be alone	52
Science area or center	50
Social studies area or center	24

*Note:* Tabled values are the percentage of teachers who have each resource

On the survey, three separate scales were used to measure (a) beliefs about developmentally appropriate practices (13 items), (b) the frequency of developmentally appropriate instructional and guidance practices (30 items), and (c) the classroom environment, including centers, learning materials, and facilities (16 items). Scale scores showed considerable variation across respondents and followed a bell-shaped distribution. This suggests that a spectrum of beliefs and practices were represented in the pilot school participants. Only teachers provided data on the classroom environment. Both teachers and principals reported on their own beliefs. Teachers reported on their own classroom practices, while principals were asked to report on practices averaged across their school's kindergarten and junior kindergarten classrooms. Results for both scale means and individual items are shown in Tables 8 through 11.

As seen in Table 9, classrooms had an average of almost eleven of the sixteen environment items. Results indicate room for improvement, as many classrooms did not have the desirable variety of learning centers and materials. Many classrooms did not provide centers for listening, music, art, and most strikingly, for science or social studies. Almost half of the classrooms lack quiet, private space. While not in the majority, too many classrooms needed more manipulatives, books, furniture, and access to appropriate playground equipment.

In response to one of the focus group questions, the participants shared their perceived needs for more developmentally appropriate resources. Hands-on materials, smaller class sizes, aides in the classroom, and children's books were, by far, the resources deemed most critical.

- *hands-on curricular materials, manipulatives, and materials for centers*
- *big books, leveled books, and quality children's literature*
- *classroom space for centers and storage*
- *sand and water tables*
- *developmentally appropriate playground equipment - trikes, large balls*
- *puppets*
- *computer software/computers*

- *dramatic play supplies, kitchen centers, art supplies*
- *supplies for cooking*
- *child-appropriate furniture*
- *easel boards*
- *classrooms with attached bathrooms*

Table 10  
Developmentally Appropriate Belief Items

ITEM	TEACHER REPORT	PRINCIPAL REPORT
It is _____ to read stories everyday to children in various contexts	100	96
It is _____ to provide many daily opportunities for developing social skills with peers.	95	92
It is important for teachers to allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in play.	88	71
It is _____ for teachers to provide opportunities for children to select many of their own activities.	72	62
It is important for teachers to allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in projects.	59	79
Workbooks and/or worksheets are _____ in my classroom.**	44	0
It is _____ for children to have freedom to decide how to go about doing learning tasks.	39	54
As an evaluation of children’s progress, readiness and achievement tests are _____.**	31	42
It is _____ to focus on teaching children discrete skills by using repetition and recitation. **	29	29
It is _____ to use the same approach for literacy instruction for all children in the classroom. **	15	29
It is _____ to provide the same curriculum and environment for all children every year. **	3	21
It is _____ that each curriculum area be taught as a separate subject at a separate time. **	2	8
It is _____ to follow a prescribed curriculum plan without making modifications to the plan. **	1	0
<p><i>Note:</i> Tabled values represent the percentage of respondents who indicated this item was either “important” or “very important.” Items marked with a double asterisk are considered by many early childhood professionals to be less desirable for young children.</p>		

Table 11  
Developmentally Appropriate Classroom Practice Items

ITEM	TEACHERS	PRINCIPAL
Participate in whole-class, teacher-directed instruction **	95	92
Experiment with writing by drawing, copying, and/or using invented spelling	91	87
Sing, listen to and/or move to music	86	96
Use manipulatives (e.g., pegboards, Legos, Unifix cubes)	84	83
Participate in rote counting **	81	75
Play with puzzles and construction materials (e.g., Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks)	80	83
Select from a variety of learning areas and projects	74	76
Have their work displayed in the classroom	72	92
Build with blocks	70	54
Do activities that integrate multiple subjects (reading ,math, science, etc.)	68	87
Engage in child-chosen, teacher-supported play activities	67	75
Practice handwriting on lines **	62	54
Use commercially prepared phonics activities **	58	58
Use flashcards with ABCs, sight words, and/or math facts **	57	75
Solve real math problems using objects in the classroom	53	71
Draw, paint, work with clay, and use other art media	50	67
Find it difficult to sit and listen for the duration of a learning activity **	45	37
Work with materials or modified to meet their individual needs	44	71
Work in assigned ability-level groups **	43	54
Circle, underline, or mark items on worksheets **	42	46
Do planned movement activities using large muscles.	40	71
Receive rewards to participate in activities they are reluctant to join **	37	62
See their own race, culture, and language reflected in the classroom	35	42
Explore science materials (animals, plants, gears, measurement tools, etc)	26	46
Have the opportunity to learn about people with special needs	25	37
Get separated from their friends to maintain classroom order **	23	12
Get placed in time-out **	19	12
Engage in experiences that demonstrate the explicit valuing of each other	18	42
Experience family members reading stories or sharing a skill with the class	10	25
<i>Note:</i> Tabled values are the % of respondents who said the practice occurs “regularly” or “very often.” Items marked ** are seen by many early childhood professionals to be less desirable.		

In terms of developmentally appropriate beliefs, most survey respondents felt it was important to support children's social development and to provide frequent opportunities for reading aloud, exploratory play, and activity choice (see Tables 8 and 10). Also consistent with recommended early childhood practices, very few respondents felt that curriculum delivery must be uniform and unvarying. However, a sizable minority of respondents gave high ratings to drills, worksheets, and standardized testing. This likely reflects pressures felt by staff to meet annual progress goals. There were a few items on which teachers and principals had diverging views, e.g., role of worksheets, project-based learning, and the value of keeping curriculum consistent over time. When teachers and principals differed, principals tended to report more developmentally appropriate beliefs.

Reports of classroom practices are shown in Tables 8 and 11. Relative strengths appear to occur in the following areas: emergent writing, song and music, use of manipulatives, and circulation among different learning centers. Reported frequencies of whole-class instruction, repetitive drills, and worksheets were very high. Unfortunately, our instrument did not capture the duration of time spent in these activities. Daily use of short periods of whole class instruction, such as a morning circle time, can be very supportive for young learners, and some degree of rote learning is to be expected. However, frequent, prolonged periods of whole-group, repetitive instruction does not fit with models of best practices in early childhood education. These data also suggest there is room for improvement in the areas of modifying materials, gross motor activities, teaching math concepts in a meaningful context, teaching socio-emotional content, and direct parent involvement in the classroom.

The teachers and administrators in the focus groups were asked in what ways they thought their classrooms were developmentally appropriate. As noted above, many of the respondents mentioned incorporating more learning centers, hands-on activities, small group instruction, music, stories, play, and differentiated instruction in the junior kindergartens when addressing curricular changes they had made in response to Act 219.

### *Predicting Variation in Developmentally Appropriate Practices*

Which teachers or schools provide the most developmentally appropriate learning experiences? As was expected, teachers who scored high on developmentally appropriate

beliefs reported using more developmentally appropriate classroom practices,  $r = .43, p < .001$ . Teachers who had worked in preschool settings had more developmentally appropriate beliefs,  $r = .22, p < .02$ . Developmentally appropriate practices were more commonly reported by (a) teachers who had an early childhood endorsement on their teaching license,  $t_{111} = 2.19, p < .03, ms = 3.4$  vs. 3.1, (b) veteran teachers (those with more total years in the field),  $r = .29, p < .04$ , (c) teachers with more experience at the kindergarten grade level,  $r = .25, p < .01$ , and (d) teachers who were happier with the age composition of their classroom,  $r = .21, p < .03$ . More experienced teachers had richer classroom environments. This relationship held for total years in the field,  $r = .24, p < .01$ , years teaching kindergarten,  $r = .19, p < .05$ , and years teaching preschool,  $r = .20, p < .04$ . Perhaps due to the small sample size, there were no associations between principals' experience or qualifications and their beliefs or their reports of teachers' practices.

School-level characteristics showed a puzzling pattern of association with early childhood practices. Schools that included at least some separate junior kindergarten classrooms (e.g., schools using the age-based or mixed models) scored higher on teacher developmentally appropriate beliefs,  $t_{(111)} = 2.64, p < .01, ms = 4.02$  vs. 3.8. This raises the possibility that staff philosophy played a role in the process of deciding on a junior kindergarten model. Although teachers' beliefs were less developmentally facilitative in schools that used heterogeneous age grouping, the heterogeneous schools had richer classroom environments,  $t_{(111)} = 2.17, p < .03, ms = 11.1$  vs. 9.8. Note however, that all the differences described above were small in magnitude.

### *Concerns Expressed Regarding Developmentally Appropriate Practice*

*Lack of developmentally appropriate practices.* Although the interviewees were not asked this question, several of the interviewees brought up ways in which they felt their classrooms were not yet developmentally appropriate, including references to book work, assessments, playground equipment, lack of classroom space, the pressures of meeting standards and accountability, and not enough time to incorporate developmentally appropriate practices.

- *Although I said centers were developmentally appropriate, it is [sic] not really - because you are supposed to be there conversing with and interacting with the*

*children. Instead, with all these standards and assessments, our center time is when the teacher pulls the children back and assesses them for every single content area.*

- *At my school, when the kids are in centers, we are busy doing reading groups.*
- *I think inappropriate things are the workbooks and the assessments for ending K and beginning first grade that all kids must do for the data base.*
- *We are not developmentally appropriate in the standards, bookwork and asking the children to write and formulate sentences.*
- *The playground equipment is not designed for the youngest children.*
- *We try to use a lot of play, music, arts, constructing things, but it gets harder and harder. We have to give up some of those things.*
- *The kids just under proficiency are getting the tutoring, not the kids who are low. And we're seeing the low kids are getting none. They need it.*
- *We are not doing as much play as we should because we are trying to get them ready for first grade. There is not enough play, and not enough center time.*
- *Our classrooms are not very developmentally appropriate because we need more space, more resources.*

*Standards and new report card.* In addition, teachers and administrators raised questions about the extent to which the kindergarten standards were developmentally appropriate.

- *How are we expected to incorporate developmentally appropriate practices while still addressing the standards?*
- *We are providing entrance for the junior kindergarten children who were born after August first, yet teaching at the K standards. So that is a conflict.*
- *Are we building a strong base for the students, or are we trying to push certain things down their throat that are so inappropriate? We have the pressure.*
- *It's become a pushed down curriculum. We need to let the kids do a lot more playing. It's the standards.*
- *The thing that bothers me is that we are moving towards those standards because of NCLB, and we have to meet all those benchmarks, so it's getting harder and harder to do all these developmentally appropriate activities.*

- *If we are to have separate JK classrooms, then we need JK standards. Or else just stick to the cut-off date for K.*
- *I didn't even know that there were pre-school standards. It might be helpful for JK teachers to know these exist. It's not developmentally appropriate for some children to be expected to meet the K standards.*
- *An obstacle is trying to keep a developmentally appropriate program and trying to figure out how to match it to the standards.*
- *The K standards don't apply to the junior kindergarten children.*

Some concerns were also raised about the appropriateness of using the kindergarten report card for the junior kindergarten children.

- *Teachers are frustrated between knowing what is developmentally appropriate and what is asked of them. They were especially frustrated with report cards that they did not feel were developmentally appropriate.*
- *Our teachers are torn in K. They know the importance of developmentally appropriate practice, however with the push for standards and report cards, they feel really stressed about that. The reality is making AYP (adequate yearly progress) takes the forefront. We struggle. We know what is important but yet we are still required to have children at a certain place when they leave.*
- *My teachers really think that the report card is not applicable to the skills and things they need to know in junior kindergarten. Need to rethink the report card.*
- *We are being told that children need more time in the day to play, but that is not reflected in the report card.*
- *There is frustration with teachers over the report card because too much is not applicable, especially for the JK. Yet, if we do have JK kids we want to move into grade one, they won't have met all the standards because of so much play and literacy.*
- *The new report card is not informative to parents or teachers. K standards are very broad.*

#### *Professional Development Provided and Perceived Areas of Need*

On the survey, many teachers reported engaging in informal and short-term professional development experiences (see Table 12). It appears that most professional development activity is 'home grown,' e.g., based on self-directed searching of resource

materials or informal discourse with grade-level colleagues. Ongoing and in-depth experiences such as mentoring, study groups, and formal coursework were less common. Teachers typically described each training experience as “useful” with the highest ratings given to discussions with grade-level peers and attending conferences. The value of within-school and across-school articulation for teachers was frequently reiterated in the focus group interviews. As one administrator stated:

*When we had lunch [at the DOE Early Literacy workshop], it was so powerful to have the teachers sharing with each other. I think we miss the boat when we don't give them time to talk to each other. It's an underutilized resource right there under our noses. It's the more powerful thing. We have to trust their professionalism. Trust the teachers because they DO know.*

Table 12  
Participation in Professional Development

FORM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	%	MEAN
Discussions at grade level meetings	96	4.4
Independently read journals, books, or websites	86	4.0
In-service provided by the DOE on 8/29/2005 or 9/16/2005	78	3.9
Workshop	50	4.2
Mentor, coach, or master teacher	35	4.1
Study/discussion group	33	4.0
Early childhood conference	25	4.3
Formal for-credit course	12	4.0
Other	7	4.2
<p><i>Note:</i> Tabled values in the second column are the percentage of teachers reporting having engaged in a particular professional development activity within the past two years. Usefulness was rated on a 5-point scale where 4 = “useful” and 5 = “very useful”.</p>		

Participation in some forms of professional development varied widely across school type, e.g., schools implementing age-based vs. mixed vs. heterogeneous junior kindergarten models. Teachers in schools using age-based classroom groupings were significantly less likely to take college courses. Teachers in schools using heterogeneous age-groupings were

significantly more likely to attend early childhood conferences, to work with a mentor, to read professional material on their own, and to participate in a study group. The reason for these differences is not clear. Perhaps these schools were also involved in Reading First or a school reform initiative; if so, these initiatives may have allowed for increased professional development experiences, but also led schools to be reluctant to engage in the additional initiative of adding age-based junior kindergarten classrooms.

On the survey, the highest priority areas for professional development for teachers were

- emergent and early writing instruction,
- emergent and early reading instruction,
- English as second language learners,
- linking assessment to instruction, and
- portfolios.

Principals' highest priority areas for professional development were

- developmentally appropriate practice,
- differentiated instruction,
- linking assessment to instruction,
- emergent and early reading instruction, and
- social-emotional development.

In the focus groups, the following professional development needs were shared. They are listed from the most to the least frequently mentioned. The focus group and survey responses overlap in the areas of developmentally appropriate practice, early literacy, and differentiated instruction. Other areas needed for professional development mentioned were for guidance in using the standards and new report cards with the junior kindergarten children, thematic teaching, assessment, physical education, using manipulative, differentiation, and parent involvement.

- *early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practice*
- *early literacy*
- *standards and new report cards*
- *attending national early childhood conferences*

- *thematic teaching*
- *developmentally appropriate assessments*
- *physical education*
- *using manipulatives*
- *differentiation*
- *parent involvement*

### *Promotion and Retention Issues*

#### *Questions and Concerns Raised in the Focus Groups*

*Recommending children for another year in kindergarten.* This was an issue that was brought up repeatedly throughout the focus group interviews. Principals, more than teachers, expressed concerns about the possibility of keeping more children in kindergarten for another year as a result of Act 219. Representative comments follow:

- *The downside of the act is that it has brought about conversations about retention. To my dismay, teachers are now saying, “maybe we should keep the kids in kindergarten,” and this has raised a lot of issues that are not aligned with the philosophy of the program.*
- *I’ve been here fifteen years and in only one year can I remember talks about having seven kids retained. Now that we have this JK, it has given us a license to say they can be retained.*
- *We are going through this process, yet I am concerned that we might be using the JK program as a vehicle to start holding back these students. K is a growing age and you hate to retain them and then find out that maybe they were slow in K but in first grade would do okay.*
- *Retention shouldn’t be a part of the conversation, but because of the law it is.*
- *One of the early conclusions regarding Act 219 is that we’re finding that we are talking about some students being retained - whether you call it retention or not.*
- *That’s the one thing Act 219 has put into focus for us. In the past, we’ve retained only a handful of kids. Now, it is a new mind-set.*

- *If we end up sending 90 percent of our JK kids to kindergarten instead of grade one, that will be a complete mind change from what we are doing. Yet all of the schools in our complex aren't doing that, so there is no teeth in the pilot program to support us in that decision.*
- *Of our JK classes, there are nine out of nineteen possible retentions, so almost half will repeat.*

*Lack of clarity about promotion expectations.* While several of the teachers and administrators were under the impression that all kindergartners were to be prepared for first grade, the understanding of others was that children placed in a straight junior kindergarten class would move into kindergarten, then move on to grade one, thereby adding an extra year of schooling for these students.

- *The principal decided that students will move from JK to K, then on to first grade.*
- *All parents know that their child is in my JK class, and will go on to K.*
- *We have the JK and then as appropriate, they will transition next year into K.*
- *The act acknowledges that if the children were put in a JK classroom, then they are getting ready for K, not first grade.*
- *The really good thing about the JK program is that the stigma of retention is not as great because the idea is that they will go from JK to K.*

*Giving children the 'gift of time.'* While some focus group participants saw the progression as being from junior kindergarten to kindergarten to first grade, others saw the two-tiered system as providing flexibility in retaining or promoting children. Several interviewees spoke of the greater opportunity to give more children the 'gift' of another year in kindergarten in response to Act 219.

- *For our school, Act 219 is saying we can give the children more time. A majority of my students didn't go to preschool. So it gives them extra time.*
- *We were very clear at the beginning of the year what our expectations were with regard to the K standards. If their children weren't keeping up, we started talking about that option [another year of K].*

- *What an opportunity. If need be, children can have a second year in kindergarten. It's about the state seeing how we can support children in the early years to achieve success.*
- *If we notice a child is possibly needing another year and they are in JK, it's a lot easier to approach the parents sooner, because parents don't feel like it's retention.*
- *When Act 219 came out, we felt that it would give those kids extra time if they needed it.*
- *It is the gift of another year because of needs or age.*
- *The term to use is 'giving the child the gift of another year.' That sounds much better than 'your child is retained.'*

*Retention without an 'R'.* Teachers and administrators also reported that with the establishment of the junior kindergarten program, children could remain in the program another year without the stigma of retention, or having an 'R' placed on their records.

- *We assured parents that it is okay for kids who aren't ready to stay back a year. This is not retention.*
- *One thing that is positive is that a JK child could have another year in and will not have an 'R' after their name like they repeated.*
- *My understanding is that there would be no 'R' on their thing, so saying retention is just an in-house thing you don't want to share with the parents.*
- *We tell parents that moving from JK to K is not retention. It's promotion.*
- *The child can be offered more time now, without the 'R' on their record.*
- *With Act 219, there is less of a stigma for JKs who have to go to K again.*
- *Under NCLB (No Child Left Behind), what is making our school look good is that for the JK kids that don't go on to first grade, it will not count as retention. We don't have to count them so that makes our state look good.*

In some cases, decisions about children's potential to move on to first grade were predetermined in only the first few weeks in school.

- *From the beginning already, we were thinking that this is the group most likely to repeat K.*

- *We had a two week assessment period that helped us determine who was not yet ready for K and who we thought may not be ready for first grade at the end of K and put them in the JK class.*
- *I have to lower my expectations for the kids that I pretty much know will be continuing on in K again.*
- *Most parents knew that if their child was placed in the JK class, then most likely their child was going to be retained as a kindergartner.*

### *School Promotion Policies and Practices*

*General lack of policies.* The focus group interviewees were asked whether or not their school had a uniform practice for promoting children to first grade or recommending another year in kindergarten. The majority of the interview respondents reported that they did not have an established policy.

- *No uniform policy.*
- *Basically, it just comes down to the teacher.*
- *It's a case-by-case situation. No uniform practice.*
- *No regulations on retention. The final say comes from parents.*
- *We retain as needed, and always inform and involve the parents.*
- *Nothing in writing. If a child is not meeting K standards, we explain the possibility of retention to the parents.*
- *No set practice. It's about knowing standards in K and what is expected in first grade.*
- *We don't have a uniform retention policy, but we should. We need one.*

*Use of assessments for promotion and retention.* Several interview participants did report they based decisions on various forms of assessments. However, there is no consistency among these assessments across schools, or consensus on their reliability, validity, or developmental appropriateness for use with young children. Use of the LIGT

Retention Scale was the most frequently reported assessment tool used in decisions about retention.

- *We use a checklist and observations, and involve the counselor, teachers, parents, and administrator(s).*
- *We have K assessments that look at letters, sounds, sight words. It's in quadrants, so if a child hasn't gone from one quadrant to another, we will consider retention.*
- *We assess quarterly with K assessment, with standards assessment, but are running into problems with our ESL population.*
- *We use the LIGT Retention Scale and that kind of gives us a more objective checklist to look at.*
- *Our decision is based on whether or not they meet the standards.*

*Standards, the new report card, and promotion/ retention issues.* Other teachers and principals reported some confusion as to what criteria should be used for promotion, particularly with regard to meeting the kindergarten standards, and felt that state guidelines would be helpful.

- *Every school is doing things in their own way, so it's confusing to figure out what kind of criteria should be used for promotion.*
- *We need a way to determine which students should be moved on to first grade and which might repeat. How do we determine which ones are ready?*
- *We all have an idea in our minds of what we think, but are not sure what is the criteria to follow?*
- *We have questions about that new report card and the standards. If they don't meet all the K standards, but they meet most, do they go on to grade one?*
- *We've had difficulty deciding whether to keep back students using standards as a gauge. We're not sure how much of the standards they should know to go on.*
- *The kindergarten teachers are asking "What are the mandatory benchmarks for the kids to be able to do at the end of K?"*
- *We're hoping to get more guidance from these workshops so it could be more uniform between all the schools.*

- *Some of us have very different philosophies about this topic. We've been hoping for more guidance from the state about what it would look like to clear that up.*

*Junior kindergarten models and promotion/retention issues.* With both mixed-age and age-segregated classes, issues were raised regarding promotion and retention. As reported by a large number of the survey and focus group respondents, many teachers had adapted to the junior kindergarten children by slowing down the pace of instruction and scaling down the curriculum. Teachers and principals in the focus groups felt that these junior kindergarten children would not be able to move on to first grade because they had not met the same standards as the children in the kindergarten classes.

- *Our dilemma is because the JK kids go much slower and less in-depth, they won't have covered as much content as the K has. So, should they go on to first grade without covering the same standards as the K class?*
- *How will you send them to first grade if they haven't done K work?*
- *It is going to be more costly for schools to think about two curriculums in going from the JK to the K realm.*

On the other hand, concerns were raised about children in the mixed-age classrooms who, if spending a second year in kindergarten, might find themselves simply repeating the same curriculum over again.

- *We have a blended class and use the same curriculum for the early and late born children. So, for those that are retained, are they going to see all the same curriculum next year?*
- *If they have to go on to K the next year and have the same curriculum, they will have to repeat the same thing and that won't work all that well.*
- *I cannot see sending kids back into another room to repeat exactly the same things they did the year before.*
- *We have a scripted program. For the students who are retained, are we just going to put them back in the same program and repeat it? It won't work. And then it is going to open up questions about fidelity. If we are doing fidelity, why aren't these kids moving?*

*Non-mandatory kindergarten attendance and promotion to first grade.* Several focus group participants noted that because kindergarten is not mandatory, school decisions about retaining children in kindergarten were undermined.

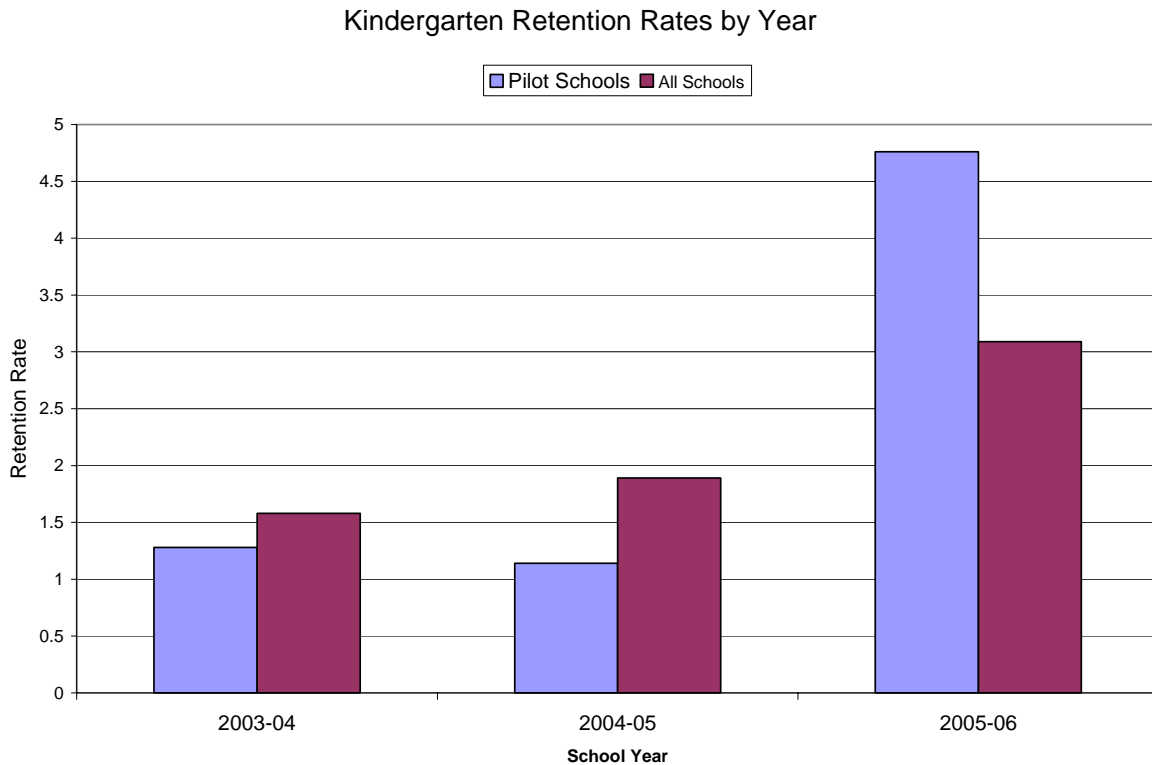
- *If a parent does not want their child retained, then we can't do it because kindergarten is not mandatory. We are in a bad situation until it is made mandatory.*
- *Because kindergarten is not mandatory, how can you exercise the retention issue?*
- *Theoretically, somebody from the outside can come in and walk right into grade one. So we're talking about JK and we haven't even made K mandatory.*
- *Will it ever be in writing that K is mandatory? Why isn't it mandatory?*

*Enrollment and staffing issues and promotion to first grade.* Several focus group participants, particularly principals, expressed concern that the heightened focus on retention in response to Act 219 might create staffing problems.

- *The intent of the JK program is admirable, but if the children should not go on, it throws the school system and screws up enrollment down the line. So you are hesitant to keep them back.*
- *We cannot keep so many behind because it means we may lose a teacher in first grade, and then there is not enough room for the new K students coming in.*
- *If a lot of those kindergartners are retained, it will start affecting the first grade enrollment. The first grade teachers will not be happy with the K teachers if all they needed was one more student to have the numbers to get another teacher.*
- *If we don't have enough children going on to first grade, it will affect staffing in a small school. We can lose positions.*
- *Retaining is a serious issue for schools with a lot of JK children. It has implications for next year's class - not just the kindergarten, but other grade levels as well, especially with the weighted student formula. You might have a bubble, because junior kindergarten might lead to a huge kindergarten level, but a small grade one level.*

### *Changes in Kindergarten Retention Rates*

The concerns expressed by the teachers and principals proved to be well-founded. Administrative data provided by the DOE shows that kindergarten retention rates increased dramatically at the end of the pilot year. These data are shown in the figure below.



Retention rates at the thirty-seven pilot schools held steady for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years (1.28 percent and 1.14 percent, respectively), followed by an over 400 percent increase at the end of 2005-2006 (when 4.76 percent of children were retained. These figures are compared to all DOE schools (except charter schools and special schools). For the DOE as a whole, retention rates for the three school years were 1.59 percent, 1.89 percent and 3.09 percent. State-wide, there was a much more modest increase in retention during 2005-2006, i.e., 63 percent higher retention than in the prior year. Note that much of the overall increase could be due to the pilot junior kindergarten schools.

### *Perceived Need for Guidelines, Policies, and Support for Implementing Act 219*

Focus group respondents frequently brought up a felt need for the state to provide more direction, guidelines, and policies regarding implementation of the junior kindergarten program.

- *We need clear cut criteria about the intent of the program.*
- *We need a uniform state policy on the junior kindergarten program.*
- *There are no set guidelines or criteria - not enough state directives.*
- *We need the state to come out with a clear set of criteria across the board for JK and K.*
- *We need the program to be uniform across schools.*

The need for more classroom support and state guidance was expressed to a much greater extent than the need for professional development. Overall, as reported by the focus group participants, classroom aides and smaller classroom sizes took a strong lead in perceived needed areas of support, followed by uniform guidelines for promotion/retention, making the standards and the state report card more developmentally appropriate for junior kindergarten and kindergarten children, providing time for cross-school teacher articulation, and uniform assessment guidelines. The areas are listed below from the most to the least frequently mentioned.

- *aides in the JK and K classrooms*
- *smaller class sizes*
- *uniform guidelines for promotion and retention*
- *incorporate developmentally appropriate practice into standards and report card*
- *time for across-school teacher collaboration and dialogue*
- *uniform assessment guidelines and assessment tools*
- *junior kindergarten standards*
- *substitutes to free teachers for testing*

- *mandatory kindergarten attendance*
- *hold to definite age cut off for kindergarteners*
- *provide JK to all four year olds*
- *provide a clear model for the junior kindergarten program*

Issues were also raised related to the weighted student formula, along with suggestions that it be applied to the junior kindergarten children, given their greater needs for support.

- *With the weighted student formula, many of the supports for those needy children will be in question in terms of personnel. If you are losing \$250,000 to \$400,000, then you are not going to have the support or help.*
- *They should weight those students who are JK at level two because they are going to need some kind of additional support. If we are going to do centers, they can have somebody guiding the questioning.*
- *They should give a weighted count to the JKs. If you are going to do mixed classes, then you have added weight to a JK child, so you don't end up with classes of twenty-something.*
- *With the weighted student formula, two of my teachers who are wonderful in K are going to be losing their job[s].*

Finally, the focus group participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to add. Again, the perceived needs for uniform state guidelines and policies for establishing the program, assessment, and promoting children to kindergarten or first grade were expressed by the teachers. The principals emphasized their concerns about the applicability of the kindergarten standards and report card, and retention issues. In addition, it was suggested that schools receive some extra funding for starting a junior kindergarten program, and the need for more aides in the junior kindergarten classrooms and smaller class sizes was reiterated.

### *Advice for Other Schools Starting the Junior Kindergarten Program*

In concluding the focus group interviews, the teachers and principals were asked what advice they would give to schools starting a junior kindergarten program. Responses are listed below from those mentioned *most* frequently to those listed *least* frequently. Providing time for teacher articulation and sharing within and across schools topped the list. In particular, several respondents mentioned the value of visiting other schools and learning what others were doing. The need for teacher articulation was followed by the importance of holding parent orientation sessions and on-going communication with them about curriculum, helping their children at home, and promotion criteria and policies. Respondents frequently suggested lobbying for more positions, funding, classroom aides, and smaller class sizes for the junior kindergarten program. Several respondents also stressed the need to start planning and preparations early. Other suggestions included providing more training in developmentally appropriate practice, placing teachers with early childhood backgrounds in the junior kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, staying flexible, communicating better to the public about the program, and adding information to the DOE website on the challenges and successes reported by schools in developing a junior kindergarten program, and guidelines for assessment.

- *Provide time for a lot of teacher articulation and sharing within and across schools.*
- *Hold parent orientations and information sessions, and establish on-going parent communication.*
- *Push for more positions, funding, classroom aides, and smaller class sizes.*
- *Start planning and preparation early.*
- *Provide more training in developmentally appropriate practice and early childhood education.*
- *Place teachers with early childhood backgrounds in the junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes.*
- *Stay flexible.*
- *Publicize the program more and educate the public.*

- *List the challenges and successes of junior kindergarten programs in schools on the DOE website so others can tap into this.*
- *Add a matrix for assessment to the DOE website - uses, strengths and limitations.*
- *Don't have more than 50 percent of the JK children in one blended classroom.*

### *Summary and Discussion*

The data reported here were collected in January, 2005, midway through the first year of the implementation of the junior kindergarten program in the pilot schools. Thus, these results must be interpreted with caution, since the schools had only been piloting the junior kindergarten program for approximately six months. Things may have become clearer for teachers and administrators as the year progressed, and additional changes may have occurred following this collection of data. Given this caveat, the patterns and themes that emerged from the data are shared below.

Although the primary purpose of Act 219 was to raise the age of kindergarten entry in Hawai'i, because of the high percentage of children in the state who do not attend preschool (approximately 50 percent), a two-tiered program was established that included a junior kindergarten option for late born children. Despite some confusion surrounding the initial implementation of Act 219, several focus group participants voiced support for the intent of the legislation. Focus group participants reported that parents had been well-informed by the pilot schools about the junior kindergarten program. Most parents were said to be generally supportive of the changes and had a 'wait and see' attitude. The area of greatest concern for parents was whether or not their children would move on to first grade.

Only a minority of schools adopted the new option of determining classroom membership based on age. Due primarily to enrollment and staffing issues, the majority of the schools reported placing most children in mixed-age classes rather than age-based junior kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The result was that in almost 70 percent of the pilot school classrooms, the age-range of the children was the same as it was before Act 219. There were no clear preferences reported for any of the different proposed models of junior kindergarten implementation and no statistically significant differences found for teacher and principal satisfaction regarding the various models implemented (age-segregated, mixed-age, or a combination of both).

Although heterogeneous and mixed model classrooms were two of the options proposed for implementing a junior kindergarten program, according to DOE documents, the intent was for teachers to differentiate instruction according to the needs and abilities of the children in developmentally appropriate ways. An encouraging response to the act was a heightened awareness of developmentally appropriate practices, as reported by the focus group participants. In addition, several of the survey and focus interview group participants reported an increase in the use of centers and hands-on activities in the classrooms. Most survey respondents also indicated their belief in the importance of supporting children's social development and providing frequent opportunities for reading aloud, exploratory play, and activity choice. Very few of these respondents valued uniform or unvarying curriculum. Of some concern were the high ratings on the survey given to drills, worksheets, and standardized testing. As noted above, this may reflect pressures to raise test scores and meet Annual Yearly Progress goals. The survey results indicated that the teachers scoring highest on developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices were those with early childhood training and teaching experience.

Although some teachers and principals indicated a greater use of differentiated instruction to accommodate the varying abilities and needs of children in the classrooms, the majority of both survey and focus group respondents reported that the major modification for the junior kindergarten children had been to slow down the pace of instruction and scale down the content of the curriculum. This practice led to issues pertaining to the promotion of children to first grade who had not been exposed to a curriculum equivalent to the regular kindergarten classrooms, and therefore may not have met the same kindergarten standards.

Other respondents reported making no classroom or curricular changes in response to Act 219. Some said they were already implementing developmentally appropriate practices. Others saw no need to do anything differently since the age-mix of children in their classrooms had not changed.

In terms of additional resources and supports, the focus group participants repeatedly brought up the perceived need for classroom aides, smaller class sizes, and more hands-on materials. These resources and supports were considered to be greatly needed, even more so than professional development.

Within the area of professional development needs, both survey and focus group respondents reported highly valuing opportunities for within-school and across-school teacher dialogue regarding implementation of the junior kindergarten program. In addition, both groups indicated a need for more training in the areas of developmentally appropriate practice, early literacy, and differentiated instruction.

Three primary issues were raised by the focus group participants regarding the implementation of the junior kindergarten program in the pilot schools. The first pertained to the perceived conflict between expectations for developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction, and meeting state standards and Annual Yearly Progress goals. Several teachers and administrators questioned the age-appropriateness of the kindergarten standards and the new report card for use with both the junior kindergarten and kindergarten children. Thus, consideration should be given to the use of the 2003 State Preschool Content Standards for four year olds. These standards have been approved by the Board of Education and the Legislature. These standards have already been approved by the DOE for use in DOE special education. They are available through the Good Beginnings Alliance.

The second issue concerned assessment practices. Many of the focus group teachers and principals expressed a belief that ‘readiness’ was a more important factor than age in placing children in classrooms; thus, they either used, or wanted to use, assessments to make placement decisions. A wide variety of assessments were reported to be utilized for these purposes, raising issues about the accurate and appropriate use of assessment instruments. The problematic nature of testing with early childhood populations has been widely acknowledged in the professional literature due to the rapidity and unpredictability of growth and development in young children, the unnatural and decontextualized conditions of administering many tests and assessments, and the nature of the instruments themselves. The younger the child, the greater the difficulty in obtaining valid assessment data.

Assessments that are well-suited for one purpose may be totally unsuited for another; thus the potential for abuse exists when tests and assessments are used for purposes for which they were not intended. As reported in the literature review, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) does not support the use of developmental screening tests to determine kindergarten placement, nor the use of extra-year classes. According to the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education

(NAECS/SDE, 2000), readiness tests do not predict outcomes and should be used for assisting teachers in making instructional decisions about children rather than for sorting children into homogeneous classrooms.

The dangers of basing classroom practices on readiness assessments lies in practices documented to be harmful to children, including grouping, labelling, tracking, lowered expectations, and using a watered down curriculum. In addition, those children most often deemed not ready for kindergarten are disproportionately represented by racial and linguistic minorities, low-income children, and males (NAECS/SDE, 2000). The most ethical means of placing children in junior kindergarten or kindergarten is by age.

The third and most frequently raised issue in the focus groups pertained to a heightened focus on recommending children to spend another year in kindergarten. Although DOE documents state that the intention of the junior kindergarten program is to prepare all children for first grade, some teachers and principals envisioned it as a two-year program, with all children going from junior kindergarten to kindergarten, then to first grade. These respondents commented that the junior kindergarten children would not be ready to move to first grade because they had not covered the same amount of curriculum or met all the kindergarten standards.

A large number of focus group participants described junior kindergarten as providing the opportunity to give children the ‘gift of time’ by recommending two years in kindergarten. However, those with mixed-age classrooms questioned the value of having retained children using the same curriculum for two years in a row. Teachers and principals reported that the retention issue was a strong concern of many parents. As demonstrated in the chart comparing retention before and after the implementation of Act 219, there was more than a 400 percent increase in retention for the pilot schools in 2005-2006. Thus, there is strong reason for concern about increased retention rates when Act 219 is fully implemented.

Keeping children in kindergarten for two years is a subtle form of retention, even if the ‘R’ is not placed on their records. As reported in the literature review, research has shown that although retained children may demonstrate an initial academic advantage, they tend to fall behind again in later grades. According to the NAECS/SDE (2000) position statement, children who are retained demonstrate more social regression, more behaviour problems, and

higher stress levels, and more frequently drop out of school. According to Shepard and Smith (1990), the benefits claimed for extra-year programs are not supported by research.

### **Recommendations**

Our recommendations fall into eleven areas as detailed below.

1. *Ensure that teachers with the highest level of qualifications in early childhood education are placed in the junior kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms.*

The evaluation data indicate the most developmentally appropriate experiences were provided by teachers with qualifications specific to the early childhood period. By qualified teachers we mean those with more years of experience at the preschool and kindergarten levels, teachers who elect to work with the youngest age groups, and most important, teachers who have the early childhood endorsement on their teaching license. The early childhood endorsement was a strong correlate of appropriate teaching practices. Given this finding, we urge the DOE to work closely with teacher education programs at the local colleges and universities to increase the number of graduates in early childhood education. Since the early childhood endorsement requires roughly one semester of coursework beyond the requirements of the regular elementary teaching certificate, the DOE may wish to consider providing incentives in the form of scholarships, grants, or salary increments for teachers who are working towards, or who hold, the early childhood endorsement.

2. *Provide material resources and related professional development to improve the developmental appropriateness of learning materials and the physical aspects of classroom environments.*

Too many teachers report deficiencies in the areas of classroom furniture, learning materials (e.g., manipulatives; children's books; and science, art, and music materials), and appropriate playground equipment. It also appears that many teachers would benefit from professional development on how to arrange the classroom environment in a way that supports movement, hands-on and integrated learning, small-group work, and transitions between focused instruction and play-based instruction.

3. *Provide resources to allow for smaller classes and/or smaller adult-child ratios.*

Either smaller classes or the addition of part-time teachers or assistants would allow for more small-group instruction, individualized teaching, and adult mediation of children's learning in classroom centers.

4. *Provide clear policy guidelines for administrators, teachers, and parents about the meaning of the two-tiered kindergarten system. Clarification is needed in the areas of (a) expected progression through grade levels, (b) preferred grouping practices, and (c) promotion and retention issues.*

There was considerable confusion among pilot school participants about the basic intent of Act 219. Although DOE guidelines state the expectation that all children be prepared to enter grade one (State of Hawai'i Department of Education, 2005), many teachers, principals, and parents believed that junior kindergarten provided an extra year of schooling with children being routed from junior kindergarten into kindergarten and then into first grade.

There was also confusion as to whether the intent of Act 219 was to provide for a shift away from mixed-age classrooms to age-based grouping. DOE guidelines state that "heterogeneous grouping is best practice" (State of Hawai'i Department of Education, 2005, p. 17). Yet the law allows for age-based classrooms and it might be reasonable to infer that age-segregated classrooms are a desired intent of the act, given that the act creates a new student classification based solely on date of birth.

There are no clear standards for determining whether a child should progress to grade one or remain in kindergarten. Granting schools leeway on this important decision has the advantage of allowing for flexibility and the possibility of addressing each child's needs on a case-by-case basis. However, few stipulations leave room for variation across schools and possible inequities for children. Most research shows no clear long-term benefits of possible grade retention. Thus, it is important for administrators, teachers, and parents to be clear about the factors that need to be considered when deciding that a child is better served by spending more time at the kindergarten grade level.

5. *Provide resources and professional development to ensure that all children receive a high quality, developmentally appropriate education regardless of age. This professional development should be coherent, comprehensive, and ongoing, and should make use of hands-on training and self-reflective practice.*

A positive outcome of the pilot year was a heightened awareness of and commitment to developmentally appropriate practice and differentiated instruction. However, the evaluation data suggest there is room for improvement in classroom practice, and many teachers and principals expressed dissatisfaction with their current ability to flexibly and effectively meet every child's needs. Although the pilot schools were provided with professional development workshops, the amount of such support was relatively modest, given the kinds of changes that pilot schools were asked to implement.

There is a rapidly growing body of research and practice recommendations concerning effective in-service professional development (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001; Calhoun, 2002; Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Lovett & Gilmore, 2003; Malone, Stratka & Logan, 2000). The primary message of this literature is that one-time or sporadic, lecture-based workshops do not improve teachers' skills, change classroom practices, or improve student outcomes. Effective professional development (a) is specifically designed for the standards or curriculum that teachers are asked to implement or address, (b) provides ample hands-on practice during the training session, (c) allows for on-site observation and feedback by a supportive mentor over an extended period of time, (d) encourages teachers to reflect on and evaluate their new practices; (e) is based on needs and goals identified by the participants, and (f) creates a learning community among school members who collectively define desired outcomes, select and implement action strategies, and examine evaluation data.

We suggest that the DOE commit significant resources to designing and implementing an ongoing program of skills-based and classroom-focused professional development and support for all junior kindergarten and kindergarten teachers and relevant administrators and support staff. Because the DOE is only starting to work through the issues that arise from the implementation of Act 219, it is important that teachers and administrators share their varied strategies and experiences. Schools or individuals who have been successful on one or more criteria, e.g., low retention, rapid progress of children with lower

entry skills, or high levels of parent involvement, should be encouraged to show others what they have tried and the cadre of grade-level personnel state-wide will benefit from seeing that there may be different routes and models that lead to promising outcomes.

6. *Provide guidance and professional development on the appropriate uses of child assessment data.*

Pilot schools used a wide variety of assessment tools and strategies. It was not clear whether assessment was used for its most useful and valid purpose--namely for individualized instructional planning. Participants reported using (or wanting) assessment tools to help them group children by entry skills or to make retention decisions. This indicates a possible misunderstanding of the precision and appropriate use of structured assessment in early childhood populations. There was also a relatively high level of interest in implementing a universal assessment tool. Although the DDC was offered for this purpose, the level of uptake has been low. The topic of assessment should be well-received as a focus of professional development activities, as both teachers and principals identified ‘assessment for instructional improvement’ as a high priority need.

7. *Provide guidance and professional development on meeting the Hawai‘i Content and Performance Standards for kindergarten and using the new kindergarten report card.*

Many participants felt that the kindergarten standards were not developmentally appropriate for either junior kindergarten or kindergarten children. Furthermore, they felt the format of the new report card system was inconsistent with the early childhood education practices they were being asked to implement. It would be helpful to provide professional development on the topic of integrating the current standards and reporting system with developmentally appropriate practice. It may also be useful to review the standards and report cards for possible revision, taking into consideration the use of the 2003 state Preschool Content Standards for four year olds for the junior kindergarten children. These standards have been approved by the Board of Education and the Legislature. The DOE has approved them for use in special education classrooms<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The State Preschool Content Standards for four-year olds are available through the Good Beginnings Alliance website ([www.goodbeginnings.org](http://www.goodbeginnings.org)).

8. *Pay close attention to grouping and retention practices to ensure against inequitable outcomes such as informal tracking or unnecessary retention. Provide related professional development on appropriate grouping and promotion/retention practices.*

The evaluation results raise three areas of concern that warrant immediate monitoring. First, retention rates rose dramatically in the pilot schools. Second, many schools appeared to group children into classrooms on the basis of readiness testing conducted early in the school year. In the most extreme cases, personnel reported predicting at the start of the year which children were going to be retained. Third, if age-based junior kindergarten classrooms consistently deliver a slower curriculum, these students may be more likely to be judged to need a second year of kindergarten. All of these practices run the risk of creating an informal tracking system in which less is expected of children who are younger, who lack preschool experience, are acquiring English language skills, or who otherwise start the year with fewer school-related skills. This is a suitable time for the DOE to provide a clear message concerning its position on tracking and redshirting. There is a clear need for professional development that focuses on current, comprehensive research findings concerning the (mostly negative) outcomes of homogeneous age and skill-based classroom groupings and grade retention.

9. *Provide a fully-funded summer transition program for children who have not attended preschool.*

The transition to kindergarten is more challenging for children who have not attended preschool. Extended transition programs of several weeks or even months duration help children adjust to classroom routines and expectations, separate from their family members, and establish relationships with their teachers and peers in a more relaxed and intimate setting before the rest of the school population arrives on campus. The DOE should review the guidelines developed by the School Readiness Task Force Committee on Transition to Kindergarten, make suggestions concerning implementation models, and provide the resources needed to offer such programs on all campuses.

10. *Design and implement a rigorous evaluation of the junior kindergarten program, starting as early as possible.*

Act 219 marked a significant change in school policy and, therefore, a commensurate effort to evaluate the results of this new policy is warranted. This evaluation should include input from all constituents, including teachers, school administrators, complex and district staff, and parents. To be of the greatest use to the school system, results should be shared as quickly as possible with participants at the school level, on at least a yearly basis.

Ideally, this evaluation would be designed to inform the DOE on what junior kindergarten models and particular instructional techniques work best for which children. For example, school-level characteristics should include data on school size, NCLB status, school-level demographics, the school-wide junior kindergarten model selected, principal characteristics, and grade-level decision-making models. Classroom-level data should include classroom type (i.e., mixed age or age-based), teacher characteristics and classroom processes such as grouping practices, teacher qualifications specific to early childhood, curriculum type, the developmental appropriateness of the classroom environment, instructional quality and differentiation, and the use of curriculum-based assessment. Preferably the data on classroom processes could be verified by a third party and not based only on teacher self-reporting as was the case in this report. Child level data should include age, gender, a proxy measure of family socioeconomic status, ELL and special needs status, and promotion/retention, report card, and other test data across the first few years of elementary school. To most sensitively capture differences in children's progress, a universal baseline measure of *readiness skills* should be collected. Hierarchical statistical modeling could then be used to tease apart child, classroom, and school-level contributions to individual differences in school outcomes over time. Qualitative methods such as focus group interviews, analysis of work samples and documents, and open-ended observation of grade-level planning processes and classroom strategies would provide richer insights on participants' experiences and the variety of strategies used across schools and classrooms, generate new areas in need of exploration, and allow for in-depth case studies of especially successful or innovative schools and classrooms.

11. *Discuss whether other junior kindergarten models or policies are worthy of consideration.*

There is no clear research-based evidence that raising the age of kindergarten entry or offering a second year of kindergarten to younger or less ‘ready’ children has significant long-term advantages for children’s academic outcomes (Brandt, 2006; Stipek, 2002). Given this situation, further consideration of the intentions of Act 219 may be warranted. If the goal is to improve the quality and developmental appropriateness of the kindergarten experience for all children, it may be possible to address this need without making a distinction between junior kindergarten and kindergarten age groups. In fact, Act 219 appears to have had the unintended consequence of ‘problematizing’ the junior kindergarten age children. If the state has a compelling interest in raising the age of kindergarten entry, this could be done with the least impact on families by gradually raising the cut-off age by one month per school year. A possible negative outcome of raising the age of school entry is that families will incur increased costs for child care or preschool, and those children who do not attend preschool will have fewer months of early education. High quality preschool does have a positive effect on later school performance, especially for lower SES children. An equitable approach, and one that might better serve to improve early school performance would be to offer universal preschool for all four-year-old children, or for particular populations who might show the greatest benefits from preschool, e.g., low-income children, English language learners, children with developmental concerns. If these options are considered, a careful examination of the existing research on the effectiveness of public and/or universal preschool would be needed. Given the significance of the issues that Act 219 was intended to address, it is important to periodically examine whether our educational policies are having the intended effects and/or whether modifications in current policies would better serve the public good.

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**Junior Kindergarten Pilot Program  
Principal Survey**

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Background**

Position:  Principal     Vice Principal     Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any of the following credentials relating to early childhood or elementary education?  
Check all that apply:

- Bachelor's degree in elementary education or child development
- Elementary education teaching license
- Graduate degree in early childhood education or child development
- Other (describe):
- No credential specific to early childhood or elementary education

**About Your School**

In your school, how are teachers selected/assigned to Jr. K/ Kindergarten classrooms?  
Check all that apply.

- Teacher seniority
- Teacher volunteered
- Teacher interest in the Jr. K/ kindergarten age group
- Teacher qualifications/skills with the Jr. K/ Kindergarten age group
- Other (describe):

Which Jr. K. option does your school use? Check one:

- Younger/Older Children Separated:** Younger children (born 8/2 – 12/31) are in a separate classroom from older children (born 1/1 - 8/1).
- Blended or Heterogeneous Age:** All classrooms consist of a mix of younger and older children.
- Mixed:** Some classrooms have only younger children (born 8/2 – 12/31), some classrooms have only older children (born 1/1 - 8/1), and some classrooms are heterogeneous, including both younger and older children.
- Other:** Please explain

What were the reasons your school selected the Jr. K. option that you are currently using?  
 Check all that apply:

School size

- Not large enough for an age-separated classroom
- Needed to add/drop a Jr. K/ kindergarten classroom due to enrollment

Developmental Considerations

- Felt age-separated classrooms better serve children's needs
- Felt heterogeneous age classrooms better serve children's needs
- Felt classrooms grouped by developmental level rather than chronological age better serve children's needs

Other

- Describe:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this school decision?

Advantages (if any)	Disadvantages (if any)

How satisfied are you with the Jr. K. option your school is using (Check one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

### Use of HSSRA: Schools Ready for Children

- Please provide feedback about the HSSRA: School Ready for Children assessment tool.
- If your school does not use this instrument, circle “No” under *Used in 05-06* and skip to the next page.
- If your school uses this instrument, circle “Yes” or “No” to indicate the different possible ways you use the HSSRA.
- Then, rate your satisfaction with HSSRA: Schools Ready for Children based on how useful it is to you as a principal. Circle the number 1-5 that best represents your opinion.

HSSRA Used in 2005-06?		If HSSRA: Schools Ready for Children is used, RESULTS are used for....				Overall usefulness of HSSRA				
						Not at all useful	Minimally useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
Yes	No	Meeting state reporting requirements	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
		Evaluating school communication with Jr. K/ kindergarten parents	Yes	No						
		Evaluating school transition programs for Jr. K/ kindergarten children & parents	Yes	No						
		Evaluating school professional development support for Jr. K/ kindergarten teachers	Yes	No						
		Evaluating the developmental appropriateness of Jr. K/ kindergarten classroom practices	Yes	No						
		Changing or improving school communication with Jr. K/ kindergarten parents	Yes	No						
		Changing or improving school transition programs for Jr. K/ kindergarten children & parents	Yes	No						
		Changing or improving school professional development support for Jr. K/ kindergarten teachers	Yes	No						
		Changing or improving the developmental appropriateness of Jr. K/ kindergarten classroom practices	Yes	No						
Other:	Yes	No								

### Early Childhood Professional Development Experiences

What professional development activities has your school provided for Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers within the past two years that were specific to early childhood education (age birth – 8 years)?

- We have listed some specific types of professional development activities and left space for you to add other forms of professional development that we missed.
- Check “Yes” or “No” to indicate whether your school has offered each type of activity,

Professional Development Activities for Jr. K/ kindergarten Teachers Specific to <u>Early Childhood Education</u>	Done in past 2 years?	
	Yes	No
Had Jr. K/ Kindergarten attend the early childhood in-service provided by the DOE on 8/29/2005 or 9/16/2005		
Encouraged teachers to complete formal for-credit courses in early childhood education		
Provided on-site workshops on early childhood topics		
Encouraged Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers to attend early childhood conferences		
Provided staff time to discuss early childhood topics at Jr. K/ Kindergarten grade level meetings		
Provided Jr. K/ kindergarten teachers with a mentor, coach, or master teacher		
Offered on on-site study/discussion group for Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers on early childhood topics		
Other		
Other		

**Staff Early Childhood Professional Development Needs**

- In the table below, we list a number of topics relating to early childhood education.
- Please place a check by the three topics that you feel are the highest priority for your Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers.

<b>Content Area in <u>Early Childhood</u></b>	<b>Top 3</b>
Developmentally appropriate practice	
Promoting oral language skills	
Emergent and early reading instruction	
Emergent and early writing instruction	
Emergent and early math instruction	
Social studies instruction	
Fine arts instruction, e.g., art, music, drama	
Physical education instruction	
Addressing social-emotional development	
English as a second language learners	
Young children with special needs	
Observing children	
Linking assessment to instruction	
Portfolios	
Differentiated instruction	
Integration of instruction across content areas	
Using learning centers	
Working with parents	
Classroom management and child guidance	
Other	
Other	
Other	

## Your Personal Perspective

Recognizing that some things in education programs are required by external sources, what are your personal beliefs about early childhood programs? Please circle the number that most nearly represents your beliefs about each item's importance for Jr. K/ Kindergarten programs.

<b>In you opinion, how important is it for Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers to.....</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Fairly important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Extremely important</b>
1. Use standardized readiness and achievement tests to evaluate children's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provide opportunities for children to select many of their own activities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in play.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Teach each curriculum area as a separate subject at a separate time.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Read stories everyday to children in various contexts (e.g., lap reading, small & large groups)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Use the same approach (i.e. reading program) for literacy instruction for all children in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Provide many daily opportunities for developing social skills with peers.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Use workbooks and/or worksheets in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in projects.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Provide the same curriculum and environment for all children every year.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Let children decide how to go about doing learning tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Focus on teaching children discrete skills by using repetition and recitation.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Follow a prescribed curriculum plan without modifications.	1	2	3	4	5

## Classroom Activities

For the following questions, think about how often children in your school's Jr. K/ Kindergarten classroom do the following activities. Circle the number that best represents the average frequency of each activity across all Jr. K/ Kindergarten grade level classrooms.

<b>How often do children in our Jr. K/ Kindergarten classrooms....</b>	<b>Almost Never (less than monthly)</b>	<b>Rarely (monthly)</b>	<b>Sometimes (weekly)</b>	<b>Regularly (2-4 times a week)</b>	<b>Very Often (daily)</b>
1. Build with blocks	1	2	3	4	5
2. Select from a variety of learning areas and projects	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have their work displayed in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
4. Experiment with writing by drawing, copying, and/or using invented spelling	1	2	3	4	5
5. Play with puzzles and construction materials (e.g., Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Explore science materials (animals, plants, gears, magnifiers, measurement tools, etc)	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sing, listen to and/or move to music	1	2	3	4	5
8. Do planned movement activities using large muscles (e.g., balancing, running, jumping)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Use manipulatives (e.g. pegboards, Legos, Unifix cubes)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Use commercially prepared phonics activities	1	2	3	4	5
11. Work in assigned ability-level groups	1	2	3	4	5
12. Circle, underline, or mark items on worksheets	1	2	3	4	5
13. Use flashcards with ABCs, sight words, and/or math facts	1	2	3	4	5
14. Participate in rote counting	1	2	3	4	5
15. Practice handwriting on lines	1	2	3	4	5

### Classroom Activities, Continued

<b>How often do children in our Jr. K/ Kindergarten classrooms....</b>	<b>Almost Never (less than monthly)</b>	<b>Rarely (monthly)</b>	<b>Sometimes (weekly)</b>	<b>Regularly (2-4 times a week)</b>	<b>Very Often (daily)</b>
16. Participate in whole-class, teacher-directed instruction	1	2	3	4	5
17. Find it difficult to sit and listen for the duration of a learning activity	1	2	3	4	5
19. Have the opportunity to learn about people with special needs	1	2	3	4	5
20. Receive rewards as incentives to participate in classroom activities in which they are reluctant to join	1	2	3	4	5
21. See their own race, culture, and language reflected in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
22. Get placed in time-out	1	2	3	4	5
23. Experience family members reading stories or sharing a skill or hobby with the class	1	2	3	4	5
24. Engage in child-chosen, teacher-supported play activities	1	2	3	4	5
25. Draw, paint, work with clay, and use other art media	1	2	3	4	5
26. Solve real math problems using objects in the classroom environment that are incorporated into other subject areas	1	2	3	4	5
27. Get separated from their friends to maintain classroom order	1	2	3	4	5
28. Engage in experiences that demonstrate the explicit valuing of each other (e.g., sending a card to a sick peer, creating a group classroom mural)	1	2	3	4	5
29. Work with materials that have been adapted or modified to meet their individual needs	1	2	3	4	5
30. Do activities that integrate multiple subjects (reading ,math, science, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

You are pau!

Thank you so much for your patience and candor in answering this survey

**Junior Kindergarten Pilot Program  
Teacher Survey**

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Background**

For each degree type that you have earned, please check the degree and indicate your major field of study.

Degree	Field of Study
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate degree (AA/AS)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree(BA/BS/BEd)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree (MA/MS/MEd)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe)	_____

What type of teaching license do you currently hold?

- Fully licensed       Provisional       Emergency

What certifications do you have? Check all that apply:

- Elementary     Secondary     Special Education     Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any educational credentials ***specific to early childhood education*** (ages birth – 8 years)?  
Check all that apply:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential  
 Hawai'i early childhood teaching endorsement  
 Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

How many years of teaching experience do you have, in total? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How many years of teaching experience have you had at the following grade levels:

Preschool	_____ years	Grades 4 - 8	_____ years
Kindergarten/Jr. K	_____ years	Grades 9 -12	_____ years
Grades 1 - 3	_____ years		

## Your Classroom Enrollment

What is the age composition of the children in your classroom:

- All younger children (born 8/2 – 12/31)
- All older children (born 1/1 – 8/1)
- Younger and older children together
- Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

How satisfied are you with this arrangement? (Check one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this arrangement?

Advantages (if any)	Disadvantages (if any)

### Curriculum Models

- In the grid below, list the name(s) of the school reform model (e.g., Success for All) and/or curricula (e.g., Harcourt Brace Reading) used in your school for the Jr. K/K grade level. Include both comprehensive curricula and subject-specific curricula. If you use a school-developed or teacher-developed curriculum rather than a commercially available curriculum, please indicate this. If your school uses more than one curriculum, list each one.

<b>Name(s) of Curriculum/Reform Model Used at Our School for <u>Jr. K/ Kindergarten</u></b>

Have you (or your school) made any modifications in any of these curricula or reform models to better suit the needs of Jr. K/ Kindergarten children?

No

Yes

If yes, please explain below.

### Assessment Practices

- Please provide feedback about the following assessment tools. Two of these are instruments designed by the DOE.
- If your school does not use these, circle “No” under *Used in 05-06* and skip to the next page).
- If your school uses these instruments, circle “Yes” or “No” to indicate the different possible uses.
- Then, rate your satisfaction with each assessment tool based on *how useful it is to you as a teacher*. Circle the number 1-5 that best represents your opinion.

Assessment Name	Used in 2005-06?		If used, RESULTS are used for....			Not at all useful	Minimally useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
	Yes	No		Yes	No					
HSSRA: Children Ready for School	Yes	No	Initial curriculum planning for class	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
			Reporting to school as a whole	Yes	No					
			Discussing in GLC meeting	Yes	No					
			Reporting to CAS	Yes	No					
			Meet State reporting requirement	Yes	No					
			Other:	Yes	No					
Developmental Domains Checklist	Yes	No	Planning instruction for individual children	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
			Grouping children for classroom activities	Yes	No					
			Reporting to parents	Yes	No					
			Tracking progress of individual children	Yes	No					
			Reporting to CAS or others outside school	Yes	No					
			Reporting requirement to principal	Yes	No					
			Discussion with school counselor	Yes	No					
			Other:	Yes	No					
My own informal observations as the classroom teachers	Yes	No	Describe how used:			1	2	3	4	5

### Your Classroom's Environment

We are interested in knowing what physical and material resources are available in Jr. K./ Kindergarten classrooms. Does your classroom have the following physical or material resources? Please check "yes" or "no" for each.

Resource	No	Yes
An adequate variety of child-size tables and other furniture		
A variety of age-appropriate manipulatives		
A well stocked classroom library		
Access to an outdoor area for gross motor play		
Access to safe, age-appropriate playground equipment		
Block area or center		
Reading area or center		
Writing area or center		
Science area or center		
Mathematics area or center		
Dramatic play area or center		
Art area or center		
Social studies area or center		
Listening center or area		
Musical instruments		
A quiet, secluded area where 1-2 children can be alone		

## Your Early Childhood Professional Development Experiences

What professional development activities have you engaged in within the past two years that were specific to early childhood education (age birth – 8 years)?

- We have listed some specific types of professional development activities and left space for you to add other forms of professional development that we missed.
- Check “yes” or “no” to indicate whether you have participated in each type of activity. Answer only about activities that you have engaged in as a recipient of training, not those in which you served as a trainer or leader.
- For each activity that you have engaged in, rate how useful this professional development experience was for you. Circle the number from 1-5 that best represents your opinion.

Professional Development Activities Specific to <u>Early Childhood</u>	Done in past 2 years?		Usefulness				
	Yes	No	Not at all useful	Minimally useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
I attended the early childhood in-service provided by the DOE on 8/29/2005 or 9/16/2005			1	2	3	4	5
I completed a formal for-credit course			1	2	3	4	5
I attended a workshop			1	2	3	4	5
I attended an early childhood conference			1	2	3	4	5
I participated in discussions at grade level meetings			1	2	3	4	5
I worked with a mentor, coach, or master teacher			1	2	3	4	5
I independently read journals, books, or websites			1	2	3	4	5
I participated in a study/discussion group			1	2	3	4	5
Other			1	2	3	4	5
Other			1	2	3	4	5

### Your Early Childhood Professional Development Needs

In the table below, please indicate ***your*** desire for future professional development in each of the following content areas relevant to ***early childhood education (ages birth – 8 years)***.

- Rate your personal level of need for additional training in each content area. Circle the number from 1-4 that best represents your need.
- Check your ***three*** highest priority areas.

<b>Content Area in <u>Early Childhood</u></b>	<b>Little or no need</b>	<b>Moderate need</b>	<b>Need</b>	<b>Strong Need</b>	<b>Your top 3</b>
Developmentally appropriate practice	1	2	3	4	
Promoting oral language skills	1	2	3	4	
Emergent and early reading instruction	1	2	3	4	
Emergent and early writing instruction	1	2	3	4	
Emergent and early math instruction	1	2	3	4	
Social studies instruction	1	2	3	4	
Fine arts instruction, e.g., art, music, drama	1	2	3	4	
Physical education instruction	1	2	3	4	
Addressing social-emotional development	1	2	3	4	
English as a second language learners	1	2	3	4	
Young children with special needs	1	2	3	4	
Observing children	1	2	3	4	
Linking assessment to instruction	1	2	3	4	
Portfolios	1	2	3	4	
Differentiated instruction	1	2	3	4	
Integration of instruction across content areas	1	2	3	4	
Using learning centers	1	2	3	4	
Working with parents	1	2	3	4	
Classroom management and child guidance	1	2	3	4	
Other	1	2	3	4	
Other	1	2	3	4	
Other	1	2	3	4	

## Your Personal Perspective

Recognizing that some things in education programs are required by external sources, what are *your personal beliefs* about early childhood programs? Please circle the number that most nearly represents *your* beliefs about each item's importance for Jr. K/ Kindergarten programs.

<b>In you opinion, how important is it for Jr. K/ Kindergarten teachers to.....</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Fairly important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Extremely important</b>
1. Use standardized readiness and achievement tests to evaluate children's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provide opportunities for children to select many of their own activities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in play.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Teach each curriculum area as a separate subject at a separate time.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Read stories everyday to children in various contexts (e.g., lap reading, small & large groups)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Use the same approach (i.e. reading program) for literacy instruction for all children in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Provide many daily opportunities for developing social skills with peers.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Use workbooks and/or worksheets in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Allocate extended periods of time for children to engage in projects.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Provide the same curriculum and environment for all children every year.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Let children decide how to go about doing learning tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Focus on teaching children discrete skills by using repetition and recitation.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Follow a prescribed curriculum plan without modifications.	1	2	3	4	5

## Classroom Activities

For the following questions, think about how often children in your classroom do the following activities. Circle the number that best represents the average frequency of each activity.

<b>How often do children in my classroom....</b>	<b>Almost Never (less than monthly)</b>	<b>Rarely (monthly)</b>	<b>Sometimes (weekly)</b>	<b>Regularly (2-4 times a week)</b>	<b>Very Often (daily)</b>
1. Build with blocks	1	2	3	4	5
2. Select from a variety of learning areas and projects	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have their work displayed in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
4. Experiment with writing by drawing, copying, and/or using invented spelling	1	2	3	4	5
5. Play with puzzles and construction materials (e.g., Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Explore science materials (animals, plants, gears, magnifiers, measurement tools, etc)	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sing, listen to and/or move to music	1	2	3	4	5
8. Do planned movement activities using large muscles (e.g., balancing, running, jumping)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Use manipulatives (e.g. pegboards, Legos, Unifix cubes)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Use commercially prepared phonics activities	1	2	3	4	5
11. Work in assigned ability-level groups	1	2	3	4	5
12. Circle, underline, or mark items on worksheets	1	2	3	4	5
13. Use flashcards with ABCs, sight words, and/or math facts	1	2	3	4	5
14. Participate in rote counting	1	2	3	4	5
15. Practice handwriting on lines	1	2	3	4	5

### Classroom Activities, Continued

How often do children in my classroom....	Almost Never (less than monthly)	Rarely (monthly)	Sometimes (weekly)	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Very Often (daily)
16. Participate in whole-class, teacher-directed instruction	1	2	3	4	5
17. Find it difficult to sit and listen for the duration of a learning activity	1	2	3	4	5
19. Have the opportunity to learn about people with special needs	1	2	3	4	5
20. Receive rewards as incentives to participate in classroom activities in which they are reluctant to join	1	2	3	4	5
21. See their own race, culture, and language reflected in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
22. Get placed in time-out	1	2	3	4	5
23. Experience family members reading stories or sharing a skill or hobby with the class	1	2	3	4	5
24. Engage in child-chosen, teacher-supported play activities	1	2	3	4	5
25. Draw, paint, work with clay, and use other art media	1	2	3	4	5
26. Solve real math problems using objects in the classroom environment that are incorporated into other subject areas	1	2	3	4	5
27. Get separated from their friends to maintain classroom order	1	2	3	4	5
28. Engage in experiences that demonstrate the explicit valuing of each other (e.g., sending a card to a sick peer, creating a group classroom mural)	1	2	3	4	5
29. Work with materials that have been adapted or modified to meet their individual needs	1	2	3	4	5
30. Do activities that integrate multiple subjects (reading ,math, science, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

You are pau!

Thank you so much for your patience and candor in answering this survey

## JK Focus Group Interviews - Jan. 30 & 31

*\*Please jot down your thoughts on this form and bring to the group interviews in Jan.\**

1. Now that you have been involved in the Jr. K pilot project, what is your understanding of Act 219 and establishing a junior kindergarten program? Has there been any changes in the way you think about this?  
  
What, if anything, are you doing differently now compared to having a regular kindergarten?
3. What has been the reaction of the parents at your school to the new law? How has your school responded to them? Would you do anything differently?
4. The pilot schools have tried different methods of grouping. How have you grouped the Jr. K children and how has it worked out for you? Would you do anything differently?
5. Are there any modifications you have needed or need to make in the curriculum in order to meet the educational needs of the Jr. K children?
6. Does your school have a uniform practice for promoting children to first grade or recommending another year in kindergarten? If so, please share.
7. How have you or would you move a child from one class to another within the school year? If you have done this, how did it work out?
8. We talk a lot about the need to have developmentally appropriate programs for young children. What does this term mean to you? In what ways do you think your Jr.K/K classrooms are developmentally appropriate?
9. In thinking about the ideal developmentally appropriate classroom for four and five year olds, what would you need in terms of curricular materials and the classroom environment?
10. What additional professional development or support do you need?
11. What advice would you give teachers or schools for starting a Jr.K program next year?
12. Anything else anyone would like to add?

