

Ready for Success In Kindergarten

*A Comparative Analysis of Community Beliefs:
Preschool and Kindergarten Parents, Teachers, and Administrators*

Stephanie Feeney, Ph.D.

Department of Teacher Education & Curriculum Studies
College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Donna Grace, Ed.D.

Department of Teacher Education & Curriculum Studies
College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Mary E. Brandt, Ph.D.

Hawai'i State Department of Education
Office of Planning, Budget and Resource Development
and Department of Educational Psychology
College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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THE HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
1776 University Avenue, UES 103 • Honolulu, HI 96822-2463
Phone: (808) 956-9563 • Fax: (808) 956-5665
Email: hepc@hawaii.edu • Website: www.hawaii.edu/hepc

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~ Mahalo ~

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Feeney, S., Grace, D. and Brandt, M. (December 2001)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Readiness Issue

What is readiness? More specifically, how should *readiness to succeed in school* be defined? Defining readiness is not a simple issue. Is it “children who should be ready for school or the schools that should be ready for the children, or the society that should provide appropriate support for the children and the schools (Lewit & Baker, 1995, p. 128)?” Nor is defining readiness an academic issue. How readiness is defined, in large measure, determines where the responsibility for improving readiness lies: the child, the school, or the support provided to both. A readiness definition, then, has practical consequences. It affects decisions about assessment, about the direction and targets of community and state investments, and about how to gauge progress.

Only recently, and then only at the national level, a general consensus on the broad components of readiness has been identified. The National Educational Goals Panel (2000) has recommended three readiness components: (1) readiness in the child; (2) schools’ readiness for children; and (3) family and community supports that contribute to children’s readiness.

States have now turned their attention to more systematically and fully defining each of these parts of readiness; how these parts will be assessed; and how progress in each of these parts will be determined.

The Readiness Issue in Hawai`i

In Hawai`i, state agencies, community foundations, and public and private partnerships are poised to support readiness efforts to improve educational outcomes for young children. A necessary foundation for all of these efforts is an agreed upon definition of readiness in Hawai`i. Yet, Hawai`i is among the many states without a formal definition (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

Purposes of the Research

The purposes of this research project are:

- (1) To Discover and document the beliefs held by the Hawai`i early childhood community (i.e., parents, teachers and administrators affiliated with preschools and public and private kindergartens) about two of the readiness components - children ready for school and schools ready for children.

Results of national and other states’ studies are instructive and may to some extent generalize to Hawai`i. Since characteristics of our communities and public school system differ from those in other states, we explored what the Hawai`i early childhood community thinks about readiness. Hawai`i results may have greater relevance to and more impact on Hawai`i policy decisions.

- (2) To synthesize the readiness beliefs about children and schools held by the Hawai`i early childhood community and those of national experts to arrive at a proposed statewide definition of readiness that gives more substance to the broad components of children ready for school and schools ready for children.
- (3) Based on the synthesis, to provide draft benchmark instruments for gathering system level information on children ready for school and schools ready for children for consideration by the Hawai`i early childhood community.
- (4) To make policy recommendations based on Hawai`i readiness findings, and augmented by national early childhood education literature.

Hawai`i Readiness Research Project

What Was Done

This research project has two studies that explored

Hawai'i early childhood community's beliefs about child and school readiness. The first study, using a focus group interview method, gathered group responses to four open-ended topics:

(1) What characteristics or abilities make a child ready for success in kindergarten? Which child characteristics or abilities go together? Of all the characteristics or abilities, which are the five most important ones for school success?

(2) What are the most important influences on a child's readiness for school success: the child, the family, the school, the community, or some combination of these?

(3) What can parents, teachers, schools and the community do to help children be successful in kindergarten?

(4) How can teachers and schools build on the cultural background of children?

Twenty-four parent and teacher focus groups, totaling 178 participants affiliated with either preschools or kindergartens from three of the four major islands in the state of Hawai'i, representing a range of ethnicity and income levels were interviewed.

The second study, modeled after two influential national readiness surveys, gathered ratings to survey items on a five point scale, with 1 meaning *not at all important* and 5 meaning *essential* to success in school. The survey had three parts: (1) 25 child readiness items, 15 of which were from the national surveys; (2) 18 school practice items; and (3) five items on influences on kindergarten success.

Preschool, private school and public school administrators, teachers, and parents from around the state, totaling 2,604 respondents, completed the survey. The return rate was outstanding, and represented the full range of income levels and ethnicities in Hawai'i.

What Was Found

National comparisons and a synthesis of our findings from the group interviews and surveys are summarized according to two of the three major components of readiness developed for the National Educational Goals Panel: (1) Readiness in children; and (2) Readiness of schools for children. While not part of the research, implications regarding the third readiness

component, family and community supports, are noted.

Readiness in Children

Comparison with National Findings

National studies found fairly strong discrepancies between preschool parents' and kindergarten teachers' beliefs, with parents placing greater emphasis on school-related behaviors (such as takes turns and shares; able to sit still and listen) and school-knowledge and skills (such as knows letters of the alphabet, counts to 20, and uses pencils and paint brushes). This was not the case in Hawai'i. Preschool parents and kindergarten teachers in Hawai'i are similar to one another in their high ratings (i.e., *very important* or *essential* for kindergarten success) of all child readiness items from the national survey. Such strong agreement can give some direction to readiness efforts and initiatives in the state.

However, these high endorsements raise the issue of expectations for young children. From these findings, young children entering kindergarten are expected to have a wide array of well developed skills and knowledge in order to do well or to be successful in school. Are such high expectations reasonable and developmentally appropriate for young children? The community of early childhood educators and parents should consider this question, particularly in light of the press for high and rigorous educational standards.

Hawai'i Interview and Survey Findings

In Hawai'i, the most salient and shared views about children's characteristics and abilities are summarized by seven child readiness domains adopted for this research project: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social-Emotional Development; School-Related Behavior and Skills, Cognitive Development and General Knowledge, Approaches to Learning, Language Development and Communication Skills, and Motor Development and Self-Help Skills.

Physical Health and Well-Being. Like the national findings (NCES, 1993b), physical health and well-being of young children is seen as *the* most important and essential readiness characteristics by all survey respondents. Children who are physically fit, well nourished,

rested, and in general good health are more likely to benefit from learning experiences provided by families, schools and communities. All survey groups, regardless of their affiliation and role, endorsed this belief, regarding it as essential for children's successful learning. *"Healthy, rested, and well nourished"* was selected by all survey groups as one of the five most important and influential characteristics for school success. Although health and well-being was barely mentioned by our interview groups because of the way our question was worded, health screening for children was high on the list of important things communities can do to help children be successful.

The high agreement and the extremely high ratings for physical health and well-being have strong implications for private and public agencies and their policies, such as access to vision, hearing and dental screening; child immunization efforts; and nutrition and health education programs, to name a few.

Social-Emotional Development. Children's social and emotional skills emerged as central in almost every interview group's beliefs about readiness, and was strongly endorsed as *"very important"* for school success by all survey groups, particularly by parents. The social-emotional domain points in two directions: the external that encompasses children's ability to cooperate, form friendships and understand the perspectives and feelings of others; and the internal that includes recognition and expression of one's own feelings, positive self-regard and a developing sense of independence and efficacy. For the interview groups, *"Gets along well with others"* was one of the five critical readiness qualities. Again, the central importance of this domain is reinforced by the fact that every survey group and interview group selected *"Is confident and feels good about self"* as one of the five most critical characteristics needed for school success.

School-Related Behaviors and Skills. School-related behaviors and skills of young children surfaced in the interviews and on the surveys as a very important readiness domain, particularly among parents, public school kindergarten teachers and preschool administrators. Children who come to kindergarten with (or who quickly acquire) certain work habits and attitudes (such as

completing appropriate tasks, following simple routines and directions, demonstrating common courtesies, and exhibiting self-control in groups) reduce the need for teachers to attend to classroom management issues. Teachers, therefore, can focus more on learning and curriculum. All interview groups had in their top five, items similar to *"Can follow directions, rules and routines,"* as did all survey groups. Administrators, teachers, and parents in our survey also selected another item from this school-related behavior domain as one of the top five readiness characteristics: *"Is respectful of others."*

Cognitive Development and General Knowledge. General knowledge (such as knows colors, shapes, letters, numbers) was not a highly valued aspect of child readiness. It was mentioned more frequently by parents than by teachers in our group interviews; and on our survey, public school parents rated it more highly than private or preschool parents. Administrators did not see general knowledge as that important to school success. Relative to the other domains, all survey groups considered it the least important domain. No group (survey or interview) selected a basic knowledge characteristic as one of the most critical skills for children's success.

Cognitive development (meaning the development of concepts and understandings, such as emergent literacy concepts, concepts of number, space and time; and cognitive processes, such as comparing, synthesizing, reflecting and evaluating new knowledge) did not emerge in the interviews. Our survey items, modeled as they were on national surveys, did not represent this aspect of the domain. The lack of cognitive survey items is a limitation of our study, since cognitive development has a prominent role in children's readiness for school success in the research literature.

Greater knowledge of cognition and its development needs to be promoted in the early childhood community of parents, caregivers and professional educators. Awareness and knowledge of this domain are particularly needed for systematically planning and maintaining a balanced, comprehensive curriculum for young children. Attention to cognition and its development in the curriculum, particularly by kindergarten teachers, will provide the scaffolding

of higher level thinking processes and skills expected and needed for learning in later grades.

Approaches to Learning. Characteristics related to how children approach learning experiences and opportunities (such as curiosity, willingness to try new tasks and challenges, persistence, taking a problem-solving approach, etc.) were rarely mentioned in the group interviews. When these characteristics did come to mind, teacher focus groups, primarily preschool teacher groups, brought them up as important. However, the items regarding approaches to learning occurred on the survey were highly endorsed as essential for school success by parents, teachers and administrators. “*Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities*” ranked in the top five qualities selected by all survey groups.

Language Development and Communication. Communication skills were mentioned in the group interviews, but not often; and they did not form a separate category for any of the interview groups. Most communication skills, particularly by preschool teacher interview groups, were grouped with other items depending on the function served. For example, “saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’” would be placed with social skill items. Both parent and teacher interview groups did single out the importance of a child being “*able to communicate his or her needs, wants and feelings*” as one of the top five child characteristics for success. On the survey, parents and teachers endorsed communication skills as very important, and thought they were more important than did administrators. For the survey respondents, however, no communication item was placed in the top five.

Language development never came up in the group interviews, and unfortunately was not

represented on the survey. Because language acquisition is seen as a universal phenomenon, it may be overlooked in education or its promotion may be seen as unnecessary. As the saying goes, “Language is caught rather than taught.” The challenge in education, then, is how to thoughtfully and systematically create a language rich oral environment for young children.

Motor Development and Self-Help Skills

Motor development skills were mentioned infrequently and less often than self-help skills in the group interviews. When they did emerge, teacher groups more often than parent groups noted their importance. However, both teachers and parents groups placed “*Able to care for personal needs*” as one of the top five characteristics necessary for kindergarten success. With the exception of public school administrators, all survey groups placed a high value on self-help skills (“*very important*” or higher) and a lesser value on motor development.

Child Readiness Summary

The findings from both studies indicate that the child readiness characteristics judged as most important to kindergarten success for Hawai'i come from the following domains:

- Physical health and well-being; i.e., “*Is healthy, rested and well nourished.*”
- Social-emotional domain; i.e., “*Is confident and feels good about self*” and “*Gets along well with others.*”
- School-related behaviors and skills; i.e., “*Can follow directions, rules and routines*” and “*Is respectful of others.*”
- Communication skills; i.e., “*Is able to verbally express needs, wants and feelings.*”
- Self-help skills; i.e., “*Is able to care for personal needs.*”
- Approaches to learning; i.e., “*Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new situations.*”

Relative to the above domains, child readiness characteristics in language development, motor development, and cognitive development and general knowledge domains were viewed as less critical to success in kindergarten.

Readiness of Schools for Children

In the focus group interviews, we asked what schools can do to help children be successful in kindergarten. Overall, the largest cluster of actions across parent and teacher interview groups focused on staffing/structure (such as having enough adults to give individual attention to children both through smaller class size and more adults in the classroom). Actions that ensure schools are caring, nurturing, and safe places for

young children was the second largest cluster and tied with actions that promote communication between parents and school, and parent education. Curriculum, teaching strategies and assessments appropriate and responsive to young children's development formed the remaining cluster.

School practices also encompass what teachers could do to help young children be successful in school. The two largest clusters across parent and teacher interview groups were actions that support children's development (such as give individual attention, show interest and empathy, nurture, care and praise, etc.) and actions focused on parent-school communication and relationships (such as, welcome parents, explain child's progress, share classroom activities, etc.). Kindergarten teacher interview groups, while supporting parent-school communication and relationships, considered teachers' actions that support children learning as more relevant to children's success.

On the survey, we asked respondents to rate the importance of school actions and practices on children's kindergarten success. These items formed four clusters, along with a set of independent items. Two clusters (one addressed curriculum practices that provide active and individualized learning experiences, and one focused on home-school communication and transition to kindergarten) were the most highly rated by all survey groups. These clusters, on the average, were considered more than "very important" to children's success in school.

Within these two highly rated clusters, we identified school practice items that were strongly endorsed as *essential* to children's success in kindergarten. These are:

- "School communicates well with families about child's school experiences;
- Entering kindergarten children visit the school they will be attending;
- Children can choose from a variety of hands-on activities; and
- Teachers individualize the curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of children."

From the set of individual school practice items strongly endorsed as "essential" to kindergarten success were:

- "Children listen to stories read aloud;
- Parents are provided with education about child development and learning; and
- Children's health is screened before they enter kindergarten."

In general, important and valued school actions and practices are consistent between interview and survey findings. Schools and teachers can best assist children's success in school by (1) demonstrating care and support for young children's emotional well-being; (2) establishing positive home-school relationships through communication and transition activities; and (3) providing active and individualized learning experiences for young children.

At the present time, there is little information on the extent of these practices in Hawai'i schools, nor is there a formal, systemic infrastructure to gather, evaluate, and make such information accessible for use. Initial attention by the early childhood community to home-school communication and transition activities may be a good first step since it would encompass both preschool and kindergarten communities.

Family, Community and Cultural Factors Influencing Readiness

When asked about the relative importance of factors influencing children's readiness, the interview participants more often saw child characteristics and experiences provided by the family as most influential, and community characteristics as least influential on children's success in kindergarten. All survey groups also considered family experiences as "very important" to "essential" factors for school success. Like the interview participants, administrators, teachers, and parents as-a-whole judged community characteristics to be the least important factor of all.

On our survey, preschool experience (a factor omitted in the focus group interview protocol) was viewed as a highly influential factor by preschool teachers and preschool parents.

Thus, survey respondents held views much like

our focus group participants, who ranked family experience as a very strong influence on school success, and considered school and community of lesser importance.

Consideration of children’s home languages and cultures in the curriculum was important to the survey participants, but seen as less essential to school success than many of the other given school practices. Neither did the interview groups generate these areas as things that teachers, parents, schools, or communities should address.

When specifically asked during the interview, however, how teachers and schools could build on children’s cultural backgrounds, the preschool parent and teacher interview groups proposed incorporating cultural awareness into the curriculum and accepting and building on children’s home languages. Kindergarten parent and teacher interview groups focused more on having cultural awareness in the curriculum and less on home language.

If cultural and language backgrounds of children and families are to be valued, then greater awareness about these influences along with strategies about how to build on them should be part of community education efforts and professional development programs for educators.

Recommendations

Awareness of views about readiness held by parents, teachers and school administrators in our state and those held by nationally recognized early childhood experts helped us focus our recommendations on both shared perspectives and unique beliefs.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Adopt a statewide definition of readiness that recognizes its complex and dynamic nature and corresponds to the central values expressed by Hawai`i early childhood education community.

A definition of readiness should:

- *be sufficiently complex* to incorporate the three critical attributes (i.e., child characteristics, school characteristics, and family/community characteristics) that

interact to increase the likelihood of children learning;

- have *common, core aspects* valued by Hawai`i early childhood community of parents, teachers, and administrators; and
- recognize its *dynamic nature* (i.e., readiness is not a single point in time, nor are children “ready” or “not ready”).

The value of a common and shared definition has been noted by many. It has the potential of serving as a central focus around which the early childhood community can organize its efforts; guide its expenditure of energy and resources; and give sustaining purpose for public and private partnerships. Hawai`i, with its small size and centralized school system, is in a good position to be one of the leaders among the states to arrive at a common definition of readiness.

The overriding purpose, however, for developing a statewide definition of readiness is to create a context that will enable children to succeed in kindergarten and subsequent school experiences. To realize this purpose, we recommend that Hawai`i’s definition of readiness follow the lead of the National Education Goals Panel and national early childhood experts. It should address the three critical attributes of child, school, and family/community supports valued by Hawai`i early childhood stakeholders and address the dynamic nature of the concepts of readiness. We offer the following definition for consideration:

Readiness is the interactive outcome of a child’s early development, school practices, and family and community supports that enable a child to engage in and benefit from school learning experiences.

Further, we recommend that the three attributes embedded in this draft definition be more fully described so as to communicate to parents and teachers of young children and policy makers.

Readiness of Children

This refers to the characteristics that children bring to the school setting that enhance the

likelihood of learning. These characteristics, in terms of the seven developmental domains addressed in our research project, are: social-emotional development, school-related behaviors and skills, approaches to learning, language development and communication skills, cognitive development and general knowledge, motor development and self-help skills, and physical health and well-being. Our findings on child characteristics valued in these domains by parents, teachers and administrators in Hawai'i form the essence of the child benchmarking instrument that we have drafted for consideration by the early childhood community.

Readiness of Schools

This refers to characteristics and practices of schools and teachers that are most likely to produce positive outcomes for young children. Overall, actions that schools and teachers can take are those that demonstrate caring and support for young children's well-being; actions that establish positive home-school relationships through communication and transition activities; and curriculum practices that emphasizes active, individualized, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children.

Community and Family Supports

This attribute of readiness addresses programs and policies in communities that support the well-being of children and families. Although this component was not an objective of our research, we recommend an excellent review on community programs and practices that work by Halle, Zaff, Calkins, and Margie (December 2000) to the Hawai'i Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA), which

is in the process of collecting baseline data for community benchmarking.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Establish an inclusive, stable mechanism and infrastructure with authority and support to coordinate and oversee readiness initiatives in Hawai'i.

To assure conditions that enable a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, there needs to be a mechanism and infrastructure in place for coordinating and overseeing statewide readiness efforts. Currently, readiness initiatives and efforts are undertaken in an independent, non-

systematic, and often isolated fashion, sometimes resulting in efforts that are duplicated, and sometimes leaving gaps that may go unnoticed. The mechanism and infrastructure set up should be:

- *inclusive*, that is, geographically representative of the state and of the public, private and preschool sectors;
- *stable*, that is, insulated from changing political and educational leadership by having stable positions and personnel sufficient to carry out its responsibilities; and
- imbued with *sufficient authority and support* from the public and private sectors.

The Good Beginning's Alliance, if given expanded public-private support, has the potential of fulfilling all of these attributes, and thus would be capable of carrying out these new and necessary readiness functions and responsibilities.

The Interdepartmental Council (IDC) of the Hawai'i Good Beginnings Alliance has been involved in a School Readiness Partnership. At their meeting on September 2001, the CEO of Kamehameha Schools and the State Superintendent of Education agreed to co-chair a Readiness Task Force. We recommend that this Task Force be responsible for establishing inclusive, stable, and supported mechanisms and infrastructure for coordinating and monitoring state readiness efforts and tasks.

Some of these are:

- Finalizing the state definition of readiness, having it endorsed by appropriate agencies and organizations, promoting it through public awareness campaigns focusing on the importance of all three readiness components, and working to assure that it is implemented and utilized in all Hawai'i state readiness efforts;
- Facilitating the development of standards and indicators for early childhood education in Hawai'i. [A number of groups are currently working on this task. It would be helpful to convene members of these groups to work

together.];

- Guiding the development of assessment efforts that gather systemic information on young children ready for school, schools ready for children, and the quality and extent of community and family support;
- Establishing appropriate transition activities and communication channels between homes/preschools and kindergartens, both public and private, in the state;
- Overseeing the development and delivery of early childhood training of caregivers, teachers and administrators to help them better support children's development;

Arranging for the provision of technical assistance for readiness efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop a systematic, comprehensive approach to readiness assessment that has clarity of purpose and is in accordance with the best practices in early childhood assessment.

Our third recommendation is for the development of a systematic approach for the assessment of readiness. This approach should:

- have *clarity of purpose* and use of these results;
- be *comprehensive* by encompassing all three aspects of readiness - child, school, and family/community support; and
- be in *accordance with best practices and guidelines* put forth by early childhood associations and early childhood assessment experts.

A great deal has been written in recent years about the assessment of children's readiness. In fact, the current interest in this topic is at least partly motivated by concerns about the use of tests to determine children's readiness for school. Questions have been raised about the nature of the tests, the uses to which they were put, and the kinds of educational decisions that were being

made based on results from these tests. (See Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Halle, Zaff, Calkins & Margie, 2000; Meisels, 1987; and Shepherd, 1994; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000). "*Thus assessments must be used carefully and appropriately to resolve educational problems, rather than to create such problems* (Meisels, 1999, 59-61)."

National Educational Goals Panel (NEGP) planning group (1995), while agreeing that assessment of child outcomes is an important and necessary step, note that it is insufficient. Assessment of children must be coupled with a commitment to examining social and institutional readiness to support children's early development and learning. To that end, the planning group strongly urged "*that energy be devoted to examining the readiness and capacity of the nation's schools to receive young children* (p. 4)."

Readiness assessment should be well thought out so that the approach has all three readiness components, the results of which are set in a system of use. Gathering and reporting data do not necessarily change or improve conditions: "Weighing a hog does not make it fatter." Use of readiness assessment results need to be articulated and agreed upon.

Before a viable assessment system can be designed, it is necessary to be clear about the different purposes and uses of assessment results and appropriate methodology to achieve each purpose. The very essence of validity is proper use of results.

NEGP, the National Association of the Education of Young Children, and other national organizations have set forth important principles for readiness assessment. We recommend that the state of Hawai'i adopt such principles and use them in developing its systematic approach to readiness assessment.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Promote school practices that facilitate home-school communication, particularly transition activities between home/early childhood programs and kindergarten.

This recommendation requires public and private preschools and public and private elementary schools to work together, a complex enterprise. The transition from preschool or home to kindergarten can be a stressful time for children just entering kindergarten. Our findings suggest that children face high expectations and that kindergarten teachers place a lesser emphasis on supporting children's overall development than preschool teachers do. Larger classes and more formal settings contribute further to the adjustment in kindergarten. This transition can be even more difficult for poor and minority children who have not attended preschool and whose families are not aware of school expectations. In order to facilitate a successful transition to kindergarten, connections between children, families, schools and communities need to be made (Halle, et al., December 2000).

The long term goal is that every family in Hawai'i with a child who is about to enter kindergarten have access to activities that smooth the transition between home/early childhood programs and kindergartens. The short term goal is to establish the means and mechanisms by which this long term goal can be accomplished; identify the steps to be taken; and establish how progress toward this goal can be gauged. This calls for a statewide plan that facilitates collaborative transitions to

kindergarten for children and their families that focuses on two areas:

- Coordination and communication between the kindergarten and preschool/child care programs that children attend. Activities might include transfer of records to kindergarten teachers; communication between kindergarten teachers and previous caregivers about students and their previous learning experiences; and school visits by entering kindergarten students.

- Coordination and communication between the kindergarten and parents of entering kindergartners. Activities might include formal arrangements for visits by parents of entering kindergarten students; distribution of letters and/or packets of material about the kindergarten program; information about parental rights and responsibilities; ways parents may smooth children's entry into kindergarten.

Transition activities may be in place in a number of schools and communities. The state level GBA Quality Assurance Committee has expressed interest in doing work on transitions and could seek funding for initial work in this area.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Coordinate and promote education and training for preschool and kindergarten teachers, parents, and administrators appropriate to their respective roles and based on the project's findings.

Focus group and survey findings suggest that parents, teachers and administrators could better support children's development and have schools be more ready for young children if they had additional training in identified areas including: language development, cognitive development related to early literacy, numeracy and science concepts; curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children's home language and culture; effective communication and family involvement in education, and finally, creation of supportive, nurturing settings for young children.

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Introduction

National Background

When first introduced in 1991, the National Education goals stated that, “all children in America will start school ready to learn (National Education Goals Panel, 1997).” Educators and policymakers are still committed to achieving this goal, but it has been revised over time in recognition of the fact that all children begin learning at birth. In many communities today, *ready to learn* has been replaced with *ready to succeed in school*, a phrase that better reflects the intention of the original goal. There has also been a growing recognition that it is not enough for children to be ready. Schools and communities must also be ready for children if they are to become successful learners.

At present, many states are turning their attention to the assessment of readiness for school as a part of their efforts to improve educational outcomes for children. Readiness is a complex concept and one that has been much debated. While a tremendous amount of attention has been paid to it in recent years, there is still little consensus about what readiness is, how it should be assessed, or what uses should be made of assessment data. The authors of *Summary of State Survey on School Readiness* write, “Although there has been some effort to study school readiness at the national level, little is known about what is happening in individual states with regard to students’ readiness for kindergarten.” At the time of its publication, 49 states did not have a formal definition of readiness. Hawai`i is among these states (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

Readiness in Hawai`i

There is a growing interest in children’s readiness for school in Hawai`i. The Good Beginnings Alliance, a public-private partnership charged with coordinating programs for young children, is focusing on readiness as part of a collaboration with the Department of Education. The Hawai`i Community Foundation is also lending its support to efforts to improve educational outcomes for young children in the state of Hawai`i.

A necessary foundation for all of these efforts is an agreed upon definition of readiness in Hawai`i. This research project explores how various stakeholders in the state perceive the concept of *readiness*. It is intended as part of a coordinated effort to improve educational experiences for young children in Hawai`i. The ultimate goal of this effort must be to help children succeed in school. As Meisels writes, “Readiness is not an end in itself; it is the beginning of an active teaching and learning engagement (1999, p. 43).”

Research about readiness has been conducted in a number of states as well as nationally. Findings from these studies are instructive and may to some extent be generalized to Hawai`i. The principal investigators of this project believe, however, that research is more meaningful and can have more impact on policy if it is based on the characteristics and viewpoints of those who are going to utilize it. This is particularly true in Hawai`i, where the characteristics of our communities and public school system are different than those in other states.

Project Purposes

This research project specifically contributes to the efforts in the state of Hawai`i to establish shared understandings, common goals, and appropriate practices for helping young children achieve school success through its focus on the following objectives:

- Discover the perceptions about the construct of readiness held by parents of preschool and kindergarten children; among preschool teachers as well as public and private kindergarten teachers; and among school administrators of preschools and public and private elementary schools.
- Identify similarities and differences in the views of all parent, teacher and administrator groups (both

within and between groups).

- Compare and contrast the views of parent, teacher and administrator groups in Hawai`i to those of experts in child development and early education, as well as to the views reported in state and national readiness studies.
- Derive a definition of readiness from these multiple perspectives that will lead to a unified view and that will inform readiness activities in Hawai`i.
- Make policy recommendations based on the findings to inform decisions about assessment of young children, professional development, parent education and other readiness related early childhood activities in Hawai`i.

Readiness: Three Distinct Components

For the purposes of both research design and policy recommendations, the project adopted three distinct components of readiness developed for the National Educational Goals Panel (NEGP): (1) Readiness in children; (2) readiness of schools for children; and (3) family and community supports that contribute to readiness of children and of the schools (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, & Margie, December 2000). A brief synopsis of these three components follows, particularly as each component influenced the design of the project.

Readiness in Children

Traditionally, the locus of readiness has been seen as lying primarily within the child. This view has often led to “a narrowly constructed, academically-driven definition of readiness (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995, p.1).” Based on child development and early education research, NEGP explicitly recognized the multi-faceted nature of child readiness and expanded child readiness beyond the narrow academic view to encompass a number of dimensions (NEGP, 1997).

The project, therefore, examined child readiness dimensions of NEGP, those from early childhood literature, along with those of states that have articulated this component. From this examination we found many similarities, but also some differences in the ways NEGP, researchers and these states parsed child readiness characteristics and categorized them into domains. Our review revealed that there are a variety of ways to validly organize and group child readiness characteristics depending on purpose and use. Upon consideration of all the domains reviewed, seven child readiness domains became our research-based analytic framework¹. These seven domains for Hawai`i are described in Table 1.

Domain Comparisons

Hawai`i domains are similar, but not identical to those developed by North Carolina, Vermont, and the National Education Goals Panel (1995). First, where NEGP and North Carolina see emergent literacy concepts as part of language development, we consider this area to be primarily cognitive as it deals with conceptual development related to the print environment. Therefore, we, like Vermont, placed emergent literacy concepts in the cognitive domain, and not as part of the language development.

¹The principle that governed this decision is simple: The domains should be explicit enough to avoid overlooking critical aspects of child readiness and, at the same time, general enough to encompass a variety of specific and related child characteristics. We believe this simple principle resulted in a comprehensive and useful set of child readiness domains.

Table 1. Description of seven Hawai'i child readiness domains used in readiness research project.

Social-Emotional Development

Social development has to do with interpersonal relationships and behaviors, and the ability to form and sustain them. These include cooperation, understanding the needs of others, creation of opportunities for companionship and the ability to listen to others' points of view. Emotional development has to do with empathy and understanding of feelings of others, as well as the recognition and expression of one's own feelings and their relationship to antecedent events, positive self-regard, and a developing sense of independence and efficacy.

School-Related Behaviors and Skills

Behaviors and skills considered desirable in school settings. These include work habits, completing tasks, following simple routines and directions, demonstrating common courtesies, paying attention, and exhibiting self-control in groups.

Approaches to Learning

A range of attitudes and habits toward learning. These include openness and curiosity about the world, willingness to attempt new tasks and challenges, persistence and reflection, capacity for imagination and invention, and adopting a problem-solving approach to cognitive tasks.

Language Development and Communication

The acquisition of linguistic forms and procedures, as well as social rules and customs for acts of expression and interpretation. These include receptive and expressive oral language (oral comprehension and speaking with age-appropriate syntactic and grammatical constructions and vocabulary) as well as receptive and expressive understanding of non-verbal, meaning-based aspects of communication such as intonations, body language, and facial expressions.

Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

Knowledge and strategies related to external objects, often learned by observations and direct experience; conceptual knowledge (such as emergent literacy and numeracy concepts), concept formation and reflective processes that synthesize, relate and make connections between new knowledge and prior knowledge; and general knowledge having to do with socio-cultural knowledge and conventions such as names for numbers, letters, shapes and colors, cultural representations for numbers (numerals) and letters (alphabetic forms), etc.

Motor Development and Self-Help Skills

Physical and functional performance that involves use of fine and gross muscles (e.g., cutting, jumping, buttoning, zipping, and other self-help skills), as well as sensorimotor coordination (e.g., eye tracking of objects and lines of print).

Physical Health and Well-Being

Bodily well-being which includes growth rate, physical fitness, physical energy levels, nourishment, and general physical health.

Also within the cognitive domain, we placed NEGP's cognitive dimensions – knowledge about properties of particular things (such as, a particular apple is “red,” an attribute); knowledge based on drawing similarities, differences, and associations across particular things (such as a collie and a cocker spaniel are both “dogs,” a concept); and knowledge about societal conventions (such as the English names given to letters of the alphabet, a skill). Our domain became “Cognitive Development and General Knowledge.”

Second, neither Vermont nor NEGP seem to make a distinction between language development and communication skills. We view these two areas as related but also different from one another. Language development is the development and use of linguistic concepts, structures and vocabulary. Communication skills are social and involve another person or persons. In addition to the ability to express meaning in speech, these skills involve understanding the perspective of the audience as well as the use of non-verbal cues to fully communicate the sense of the words. Because communication skills are more socio-linguistic than purely linguistic, we, like North Carolina, included them as related to, but distinct from, language development. Our domain became “Language Development and Communication.”

Third, where the others combined motor development and self-help skills with physical well-being, we viewed physical health and well-being as sufficiently critical for children today to stand alone. Thus, Hawai'i has two separate domains – “Motor Development and Self-Help Skills” and “Physical Health and Well-Being.”

Fourth, in the domain, “Approaches to Learning,” the other groups combined school-related behaviors such as sitting still, focusing, listening to the teacher, and exhibiting self-control with dispositions toward learning such as curiosity, motivation, and creativity. We see these as distinctly different areas and therefore separated them into two domains. The former we labeled “School-Related Behaviors and Skills,” and the latter we called “Approaches to Learning.” [See Appendix A for a comparative matrix.]

Readiness of Schools for Children

NEGP has argued that schools must be ready for children. Children and schools mutually contribute to children's success in school. Thus, states need to be clear about and examine schools' readiness for and capacity to receive young children (Kagan, et al., 1995). NEGP argued that school readiness encompasses ten characteristics, such as smooth transitions between home and school; continuity between early education programs and child care and elementary schools; curriculum and instruction that helps young children learn about and make sense of their complex world (Halle, et al., December, 2000).

The research project thus designed questions to reveal participants' beliefs about children's readiness for school and the importance of a set of school practices that characterize schools' readiness for young children. We also asked all participants explicitly about how teachers and schools can build on the cultural backgrounds of Hawai'i children.

Family and Community Supports

The third component of readiness, family and community supports that contribute to readiness of children and of the schools, is being critically examined in Hawai'i by the Good Beginnings Alliance in partnership with the Governor's Advisor on Children and Families, University of Hawai'i Center on the Family, and three Hawai'i State Departments: Health, Education, and Human Services. Briefly, this component encompasses three key features: all children having access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs; parents, as their children's first teachers, having access to training and support needed to help their preschoolers learn; and children residing in safe, nurturing environments and receiving the nutrition, health care, and physical activity needed to begin school with healthy minds and bodies.

Although this project, by design, did not address this third component of readiness, the findings have strong

implications regarding its support.

Overview of the Report

This report has two major studies. The first study, using community focus groups, is primarily qualitative. Its purposes, methodology, findings and discussions are presented in Section I. The second study, using survey questions with Likert scales, is quantitative. In Section II, its purposes, procedures, results and discussion are presented. Section III synthesizes the two sets of findings into conclusions and, finally, Section IV suggests recommendations for policy based on the findings and conclusions of the project.

Section I

Qualitative Study: Focus Group Interviews

This study is unique in that it is the only readiness research of its kind that, to the best of our knowledge, uses focus group interviews as a primary method of data collection.² The readiness studies in the literature have relied almost solely on survey data. We feel that by using the combination of interview and survey methods, our project goals were greatly enhanced, and the validity of our findings strengthened.

Purpose

Why focus group interviews? To date, studies of communities' and educators' perceptions of readiness have used survey formats with responses being primarily to items on a Likert scale. This *etic* design³, where the preselection of items as well as the narrow form that responses may take, already impose an external, research-based view of readiness on the survey participants.⁴ The results, while reliable, contribute in a limited way to understanding the communities' own views of what constitutes readiness.

Capturing *emic*³ views of readiness is increasingly important as communities become more culturally and ethnically diverse. Group interviews and the protocol we designed allow the participants' own views and interpretations to emerge. Since one major goal of this research project was to reveal the perceptions and beliefs about readiness that groups already hold, focus group interviews became a major source of data for this project and formed a separate study.

This methodology also addressed our concern about getting responses to a written survey from parents in low-income communities, particularly where standard English is not the first language. We wanted to be sure that their input was included.

Focus group interviews offer additional advantages. First, the focus group process allows one to gather a wide variety of data in a shorter amount of time than could be accomplished with individual interviews. In this sense, it is also more cost-effective. Second, the group setting provides a more comfortable and relaxed context than a formal one-on-one interview. This was particularly important due to the diverse, multi-cultural population of Hawai'i. Third, focus group interviews offer researchers the opportunity to observe the participants' interactions as they share their comments. Fourth, these interactions tend to produce richer data from the participants, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the topic that one individual might not have thought of (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 115). Finally, the information gathered from the focus groups served

²Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews (2001) had focus groups as part of their design. However, they did not use input from focus groups as data, but rather used them to refine survey items for comprehensibility. Their results are solely from Likert type response to survey items.

³An *etic* approach takes a perspective from outside the system. Constructs come "from scientific theories external to the phenomena..." and analyses are based on "distinctions and subclassifications already accepted by the scientific community." Methods that employ "standardized category classification[s] fall squarely within an *etic* approach." *Emic*, in contrast, refers to a research approach "... from the perspective of the participants - from *inside* a single, culturally significant unit." Criteria used come from "...within the system [unit] itself and are relevant in terms of the internal functions, interpretations, and meanings for the participants themselves. Qualitative research methods assume ... it is the participant who has better access to his own inner state (Sevigny, 1981, 75-77)."

⁴Typically, survey respondents' contributions are confined to agreeing or disagreeing with the items given on the survey.

to inform the construction of our survey.

Description and Background of Focus Groups and Participants

A total of 178 parents and teachers participated in twenty-four focus group interviews conducted on three of the four major islands of Hawai`i.⁵ The number of participants in each group ranged from 5-17. Thirteen of these groups were preschool parents or teachers, and eleven were kindergarten parents or teachers. Thus, the participants represented four distinct role groups: (a) parents of four-year-olds, (b) parents of kindergartners, (c) preschool teachers, and (d) kindergarten teachers.

Table 2 contains more details. Every focus group was ethnically diverse, with ethnicity indicated by self-identification. The participants' ethnic backgrounds were Asian, Caucasian, Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian, Filipino, Hispanic, Puerto Rican, Samoan, Portuguese, and mixed.

The general socio-economic status of the geographic areas where the focus group interviews were conducted was considered along with the given educational level of the participants in parent groups to determine whether the group was low, mixed or middle income. For the teacher groups, the socio-economic status of the student population at the schools in which they taught was considered.

Table 2. Number and Composition of Focus Groups.

	Overall	Parent Groups		Teacher Groups	
		Preschool	Kindergarten	Preschool	Kindergarten
No. of Groups	24	7	5	6	6
No. of Participants	178	56	30	55	37
No. of Low Income Groups	10	3	2	3	2
No. of Middle Income Groups	6	2	1	1	2
No. of Mixed Income Groups	8	2	2	2	2

Note. The number of parents and teachers were similar in both the preschool and the kindergarten groups, while the overall number of preschool participants was greater than that for the kindergarten groups. For this reason, percentages were used when appropriate in the qualitative data analyses.

Focus Group Protocol

In order to generate comparable data from group to group, a standardized interview protocol was developed and pilot tested for clarity, comprehensibility, and timing. After revisions, facilitators were trained to conduct and record the group interviews. Each group interview session had both a facilitator and a recorder⁶ and took approximately one hour. Whenever possible, the researchers observed, took notes on the process, and responded to questions from the group.

⁵Sites were on the islands of Kauai, Maui and Oahu. We attempted to conduct focus groups on the island of Hawai`i; however, we were not able to schedule them within the time frame of the study.

⁶In addition to the two trained facilitators who were graduate students in early childhood education at the University of Hawai`i-Manoa, the researchers also trained a community coordinator from an early childhood agency to conduct and record the group interviews on the island of Maui.

Following an introduction of participants to one another, a welcome that included the general purpose of the session, a presentation of ground rules and an overview of the process, the group interview questions were asked and the procedures for responding to the questions were explained. Responses were recorded on large chart paper for all to see. Table 3 contains the interview topics, specific questions asked, and synopsis of the procedures used. Appendix IA has the complete protocol.

Free elicitation of items and open categorization are procedures drawn from cross-cultural and cognitive classification studies. With neither the items nor, in the case of child characteristics, the categories being given, the participants own endemic items and categories were allowed to emerge. According to the cognitive classification research, the most salient and typical items come to mind first in a free elicitation setting. These tend to be items at the “top of the cognitive deck” or can be viewed as core, prototypical items that most often are shared and consensual.⁷ Thus, the participants were not forced to adopt the researchers’ academic, conceptual-based framework described earlier. Given the diverse, multi-cultural community in Hawai`i, and our objective of gathering parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of readiness, we felt that it was important that the participants freely express their own ways of seeing and organizing the construct of readiness.

Analyses and Findings

The procedures for analyzing the qualitative data differed depending on the interview topic and the specific question asked. Where meaningfully possible, the data were summarized in a numerically simple fashion, (i.e., frequencies and percentages), in part, to assist the emergence of patterns within and across the focus groups. *The findings are the patterns and generalizations*, however, and are not the numerical figures. The analyses and findings for each topic are presented in the next section.

⁷ Findings from a number of cognitive and cross-cultural studies conducted in the 1970's support this generalization See: Rosch, E., 1977 in Warren, N. Ed.; Rosch, E., 1978, in Rosch, E. & Lloyd, Lloyd, Eds; and Cole, M., Gay, J. & Sharp, D. 1971.

Table 3. Focus Group Interview Topics, Questions and Synopsis of Procedures.

Topic I. Child Characteristics/Abilities that Contribute to Kindergarten Success
<p>Elicitation of Child Readiness Items</p> <p><i>What makes a child ready for kindergarten? What should a child know or be able to do to be ready to succeed in kindergarten? Please take a few minutes to think about this question, and to help you remember, write down your thoughts in the space provided.</i> [Each participant had a chance to share one idea in a round-robin fashion that continued until no new items were added and the participants were satisfied that the list was complete.]</p> <p>Categorization of Generated Child Readiness Items</p> <p><i>As they say in Sesame Street, some of these things belong together, some of these things are not quite the same. So we'd like to find out which ones you think go together.</i> [The list of items was read aloud.] <i>Look at this list, think of which of these things can be grouped together.</i> [Pause, and then pointing to the first item.] <i>Which other items on the list can be grouped with this one?</i> [This continued until all items were categorized with the understanding that a category could have a single item. The participants then decide on a "name" for the items grouped together.]</p> <p>Selection of the Five Most Important Child Readiness Items</p> <p><i>We would like to know which of these items you feel are most important. Each one of you has been given five sticky dots. Look at the list and decide which you feel are most important for children's success in kindergarten. Please place your dots on the items you feel are most important. You can place as many dots as you wish on any item. You can divide your dots any way you want; you can put one dot on five items or all five on one item.</i> [Read aloud the top five items receiving the most "sticky dot" votes.] <i>As a group, these are the top items you feel are most important for children's success in kindergarten.</i></p>
Topic II. Relative Importance of Four Factors on Children's Kindergarten Success
<p><i>What are the most important influences on a child's readiness for school success? Is it the child, the family, the school, the community, or some combination of these factors?</i> [Individually, each participant completed this portion using a stick-on picture label to represent "Child," "Family," "School," and "Community." Participants were free to give equal importance to all four factors listed.]</p>
Topic III. Forms of Support for Success in Kindergarten
<p><i>What can teachers, parents, schools and the community do to help children be successful in kindergarten?</i> In a round-robin fashion, participants shared their items until the list had no new items.</p>
Topic IV. Connection Between Culture and School Practices
<p><i>How can teachers and schools build on the cultural backgrounds of children? What can teachers and schools do to be sensitive to and incorporate cultural differences?</i> In a round-robin fashion, participants shared their items until the list had no new items.</p>

Note. The complete group interview protocol is in Appendix IB.

Topic I: Child Characteristics/Abilities that Contribute to Kindergarten Success

Purposes

Topic I has three interrelated purposes: (1) to reveal what characteristics or abilities in the child are perceived as critical for readiness for school success (i.e., readiness in the child); (2) to reveal how the participants organized these readiness items (i.e., what are the participants’ child readiness domains); and (3) to reveal which child attributes/characteristics the group-as-a-whole believe to be *the* most important.

What should a child know or be able to do to be ready for success in kindergarten?

Procedure for Eliciting Child Readiness Items

A free elicitation procedure was used in all 24 group interviews. Each group participant had the opportunity to contribute their child readiness items in response to the prompt about what makes a child ready for kindergarten. All items were recorded on chart paper for all to see.

Analysis and Findings

Similarities and differences in quantitative findings across parent and teacher preschool groups and parent and teacher kindergarten groups are presented in Table 4. The number of items generated, the range, and mean number of items per group are remarkably alike across all role groups, with the exception of preschool teachers. Preschool teachers generated the most items per focus group (21.5). Findings of the qualitative analyses of the items and content of the categories offer suggestions as to why preschool teachers as a group are somewhat different.

Table 4. Mean, Range and Number of Child Readiness Items for Parent and Teacher Focus Groups

	Parents		Teachers	
	Preschool	Kindergarten	Preschool	Kindergarten
Interview Groups				
No. of Groups	7 groups	5 groups	6 groups	6 groups
No. of Participants	56 people	30 people	55 people	37 people
Free Elicitation				
Total No. Items	123 items	83 items	129 items	83 items
Range	14-20 per group	13-22 per group	18-24 per group	14-20 per group
Mean/group	17.5 items	16.6 items	21.5 items	13.8 items

What child characteristics belong together?

Procedure for Categorizing Child Readiness Items

After the child readiness items were generated and recorded, the group participants categorized the charted items into their own child readiness domains and provided a label for each category. Finally, the group decided which items were most important using a group-based voting procedure.

Analyses

The number of categories and range and mean number of items per category by focus group were calculated. However, the content of the categories (i.e., the set of items placed together) were the basis for discerning the qualitative meaning of the categories. In this sense, the items taken together as a whole “define” a given category. The labels given the categories were also considered, but some groups did not “name” their categories. Similarities and differences in qualitative meaning of the categories within and across preschool and kindergarten parent and teacher groups were identified. An example of our qualitative analyses is presented in Table 5 and more analytic details are provided in Appendix IB. The groups’ categories were further compared to Hawai`i child readiness domains derived from the literature, as previously described. The most central concepts of child readiness were determined by a combination of category size and presence across the role groups.

Table 5. An Example of Qualitative Analysis for Comparing Category and Domain Meanings.

Participant Group’s Category	Hawai`i Domain
Category #2 (No label) 3 items	Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>has fundamentals - abc’s, counting</i> • <i>writes name</i> • <i>colors and shapes</i> 	<p>Good match with General Knowledge section of domain.</p> <p>No cognitive/conceptual items in any category were generated.</p>
Category: Self-Motivation 2 items	Approaches to Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>desire to explore and experiment</i> • <i>likes books - has been exposed to them</i> 	<p>Fairly good match. Items seem to be ways to learn and acquire information and knowledge; i.e., through direct (<i>explore and experiment</i>) and indirect (via <i>books</i>) experiences.</p>

Quantitative Category Findings

The number of categories and the mean number of items per category are remarkably alike across all role groups, with the exception of preschool teachers. See Table 6. Preschool teacher focus groups had the greatest variation in number of categories formed (a low of three to a high of seven). They formed more categories (5 per group) than the other role groups. Given that preschool teachers also had the largest mean number of items per focus group (mean: 21.5), organizing the items into more categories is not surprising.

Table 6. Range and Mean Number of Categories and Items Generated by Parent and Teacher Focus Groups.

	Parents		Teachers	
	Preschool	Kindergarten	Preschool	Kindergarten
Range	3 to 5 categories	4 to 6 categories	3 to 7 categories	3 to 4 categories
Mean No. categories	4 per group	4 per group	5 per group	4 per group
Mean No. items	4-5 per category	4 per category	4-5 per category	4-5 per category

Qualitative Category Findings

The patterns of similarities in the types of categories and items among the four role groups compared to the academic, conceptual domains are presented first, followed by areas with the most notable differences. Over all role groups, there were five common findings:

1. None of the groups organized items into categories that mapped onto the seven Hawai`i domains in a one- to-one manner. In almost all instances, the categories formed were either more inclusive or more specific. For example, many of the kindergarten teacher groups placed social skill items with school-related behavior items, seeing these as functionally intertwined. For preschool teachers, emotional development items were separate from social skills items, forming a different and distinct category.
2. Cognitive development and language development items and categories were by and large absent regardless of role group. Cognitive, conceptual items were rare. For example, of the 206 total items generated by 12 parent groups, only two items were cognitive-conceptual (i.e., *classifying and making observations* and *predictions and cause and effect*). Preschool teachers generated only one cognitive-conceptual item (*able to make logical predictions and evaluate them*), while only one group of kindergarten teachers did so (i.e., the group generated two items: *critical thinking skills* and *problem solving skills*).

In contrast, general knowledge items were well represented in parent groups (almost 5 items per general knowledge category) and were more sparsely present in the teacher groups (i.e., one or two items in just four of six preschool teacher groups and one or two items in only two of the five kindergarten teacher groups). Almost all these general knowledge items were extremely good examples of NEGP’s general knowledge subcategory of conventional knowledge, such as letters, numbers, colors, and shapes.

No group formed a category similar to Hawai`i domain of Language Development and Communication. Although all groups generated communication skill items, these items were most often organized together with social skill items, with school-related behavior and skills items, or with emotional development. For example, one parent group aptly placed *able to express feelings* with *feels good about self; able to separate from family; show respect for teacher*, as well as a contextual item, *need for preschool experience*, to form a category of Emotional Skills. Another parent group formed a category labeled “Personal-Social Skills/Self-Confidence” which contained all four kinds of items – communication, social, emotional, and school-related skills. Kindergarten teacher groups, with one exception, placed communication items with these others to form the same kind of categories as the parent groups.

No group generated language development items akin to those that would be examples for our Hawai`i framework, such as “syntactic and grammatical growth” or increasing use of both generic and specific names for things, such as *flower* and *plumeria*. Again, it appears that items are placed together to form functional categories, rather than the more academic framework used to investigate children’s growth and development.

3. Items in the domain of Physical Health and Well-Being were rarely generated by almost all focus groups. Only four of the 24 groups had this category, while twenty generated no Physical Health and Well-Being items at all.

Of the preschool parent groups, two had this category, while five other groups generated no items at

all. This same pattern occurred in the other role groups: one of the preschool teacher groups had formed this category, while five had no items; for kindergarten parent groups, none had items; and of the kindergarten teacher groups, just one had a category and five had no items.

Given the results of the survey discussed in the next section, it appears that this domain of physical health and well-being was, for our focus groups, most often an implicit or fundamental readiness premise. It simply did not occur to most groups to even mention this area (i.e., 20 out of 24 groups did not generate a single item). Moreover, given our question “What should a child know or be able to do?” almost precluded this area of physical health and well-being from being mentioned.

4. There were common categories that occurred in almost all focus groups regardless of role. The categories that were formed by almost every focus group are listed in Table 7. Since they were common across focus groups and were also quite “rich” categories (that is, contained more than a few items), we considered these categories to be salient and central to the concept of child readiness.

For both preschool and kindergarten parents, the same three categories emerged as central to their “definition” or concept of child readiness. These are School-Related Behaviors, General Knowledge and Social-Emotional Skills.

The teacher groups differed somewhat from one another and from the parent groups. Preschool teacher groups, like the parent groups, emphasized General Knowledge and Social Skills, within which they placed communication skills and items related to children’s independence (i.e., able to do things on their own).

School-Related Behaviors and Skills (such as *pays attention, sits still, etc.*) did not emerge as a major area for preschool teachers. In contrast, this domain was the most salient for kindergarten teachers. Children who are able to conform to the typical demands of schooling are easier to teach than those who are not. However, kindergarten teacher groups did not ignore the social and/or emotional characteristics of children. Those were also salient. Surprisingly, General Knowledge skills were not common across the kindergarten teacher groups, but were for parents and preschool teachers.

5. The greatest contrast in categorization among the role groups is the Approaches to Learning domain, which deals with such characteristics as eagerness to learn, curiosity, and enthusiasm. The parents were more like one another, while the teachers were more like one another.

More of the parent groups had separate categories and items for Approaches to Learning than did the teacher groups. Three preschool parent groups had separate categories for these items (e.g., *desire to explore and experiment, eagerness to find out about the world, motivated*). The other four preschool parent groups had no items, and consequently no categories.

Table 7. Salient and Central Categories of Child Readiness for Parent and Teacher Focus Groups.

Role Group	Most Salient, Central Child Readiness Categories	Second Most Central Child Readiness Categories
Preschool Parents	School-Related Behaviors and Skills (7/7)	Social-Emotional Development (6/7) General Knowledge (6/7)
Kindergarten Parents	School-Related Behaviors and Skills (5/5) General Knowledge (5/5)	Social-Emotional Development (4/5)
Preschool Teachers	General Knowledge (6/6) Social Skills (6/6)	Communications - all preschool teacher groups generated such items, but often placed them with social skills or with independent skills.
Kindergarten Teachers	School-Related Behaviors and Skills (6/6)	Social and/or Emotional (5/6)

Note. The figures within the parentheses are the number of focus groups which formed the category by the overall number of focus groups within that role group. For example, seven out of seven preschool parent focus groups formed a category labeled “School-Related Behavior and Skills.”

Kindergarten parent groups were more like the preschool parent groups: two kindergarten parent groups had a separate Approaches to Learning category with items such as *participate in the group*, *interested*, *eagerness for new experiences*, *challenges*; two had no items or categories; and one had a single item, *enthusiasm*, placed with other items.

Only one preschool teacher group had a separate category, three generated no items at all, and two groups had one or two items placed with other types of items. The kindergarten teacher groups were most like their preschool counterparts: only one had a separate category; three had no items; and two others had one or two items placed in other categories.

Of all the child readiness items, which are the five most important ones?

Procedures for Selecting the Five Most Important Items

The participants in each focus group were asked to select the top five most critical child readiness items from the list they had just generated and categorized. Each participant within a focus group was given five “votes.” This voting procedure, explained in detail in Appendix IB, resulted in a set of “most important” items for each focus group.

Analyses and Findings

Of all the items generated, which ones did parents and teachers believe were the most important characteristics for success in kindergarten? The five most important child readiness items selected by the each focus group were excerpted and then assigned to one of the seven Hawai`i domains. In instances where an item could not validly be placed in one of the seven Hawai`i domains⁸, it was set aside. These items were then examined. They formed an additional and quite different category that we called “contextual factors.”

⁸Two researchers had to agree (100% agreement) that an item belonged in a given domain.

The number of votes indicate the degree of importance attached to the top five items by each focus group. The number of votes received by all the items assigned to each of the seven domains was tallied and the percent of votes received within each of the domains was calculated. These are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Number and Percentage of Votes Received by the Top five Most Important Items Classified by Domain for All Role Groups.

Hawai'i Domains	Total Votes		Parent Groups				Teacher Groups			
	No.	%	Preschool No.	Preschool %	Kindergarten No.	Kindergarten %	Preschool No.	Preschool %	Kindergarten No.	Kindergarten %
Social-Emotional Development	158	26.9	32	19.5	29	27.4	71	42.8	26	17.1
School-Related Behaviors and Skills	103	17.5	30	18.3	21	19.8	10	6.0	42	27.6
Language Development and Communication	60	10.2	20	12.2	9	8.5	20	12.0	11	7.2
Motor Development and Self-Help Skills	57	9.7	4	2.4	9	8.5	29	17.5	15	10.0
Cognitive Development and General Knowledge	50	8.5	23	14.0	13	12.2	12	7.2	2	1.3
Approaches to Learning	46	7.8	4	2.4	6	5.7	22	13.3	14	9.2
Physical Health and Well-Being	4	0.7	2	1.2	0	0	2	1.2	0	0
Contextual Factors	110	18.7	49	30.0	19	17.9	0	0	42	27.6
Overall Totals	588	100	164	100	106	100	166	100	152	100

Note. For the seven domains, the largest three percentages overall and for each role group are in bold print.

1. Social-Emotional items were the highest valued ones for kindergarten parents (27.6%), preschool parents (19.5%) and preschool teachers (42.8%). Indeed, preschool teachers placed considerably more importance on Social-Emotional items as necessary for school success than any other role group.
2. In contrast, School-Related Behaviors and Skills items (27.4%) were the highest valued items by kindergarten teachers. Preschool and kindergarten parents (18.3% and 19.8% respectively) also valued items in this domain, which was second in importance for both these groups. In contrast, preschool teachers' second most valued item type was the self-help skills part of Motor Development and Self-Help Skills (17.5%).
3. General Knowledge type items were third in importance for preschool (14%) and kindergarten parents (12.2%). For preschool teachers, it was Approaches to Learning (13.3%), while kindergarten teachers viewed Self-Help Skills as third. Thus, the third most highly valued item types were the same for the parent groups and different from the teachers groups.

4. General Knowledge type items were valued much less by teachers than by parents. For teachers, those item types (i.e., *has basic skills; knows shapes, colors, numbers, letters; recognizes name; knows telephone number; etc.*) were fifth and sixth in overall importance, while both parent role groups gave General Knowledge type items third place in importance for success in kindergarten.
5. Contextual item types were highly valued by all the groups with the exception of preschool teachers. If this category were considered with the seven Hawai`i domains, contextual type items would be first in value for preschool parents (30%); third for kindergarten parents (17.9%); and tied for first place for kindergarten teachers (27.6%). Preschool teachers had no items in the top five most important related to context. Since this contextual finding was unexpected and indicates a different perspective on child readiness characteristics, the items classified as “contextual” that occurred in the top five items of these groups are listed in Table 9.

Table 9. Contextual Items in the Top Five Most Important Items for Kindergarten Success.

Parents		Teachers	
Preschool	Kindergarten	Preschool	Kindergarten
First in Importance 49 “votes” 30.0%	Third in Importance 19 “votes” 17.9%	0 points	First (tied) in Importance 42 “votes” 27.6%
Socialization; social interaction prior to K	Home teaching	None	Immediate environmental influences on home and school
Positive attitude toward child, family, and teachers	Have parents be part of child’s transition (to kindergarten)		Stable home; responsible parenting
Parent involvement [at elementary school]	Have support of parents		Supportive parents and family
Teachers’ involvement in transitions	Attend to some extent preschool programs		Early experiences with primary caretakers
Positive talk about fears of “BIG” school			Has been read to daily
Need preschool experience			Familiarity with books
Family educational values			Exposure to stories, singing, rhymes
Past experiences with books, being read to			Lots of “hands-on” experiences
Consistency			Experiences with coloring, scissors, folding, etc.

Preschool teachers in all six focus groups did not generate a single contextual item when asked about children’s abilities or characteristics needed for success in kindergarten. So, of course, they had no contextual items from which to select as the most critical ones. In fact, these teachers stuck to the task as presented. All preschool teacher groups were clearly centered on the child, focusing only on “internal” child characteristics; not interactive ones, and clearly not on “how these characteristics came to be.” This view is quite consonant with a “Piagetian” maturational perspective of child development.

The kindergarten teachers’ contextual items considered most important for children’s success all relate to

home and prior schooling experiences of the child. None concern the role that the elementary school or the kindergarten teacher can play vis-a-vis the child's success. Such a perspective is clearly "other-centered," and is consonant with the view that faculty at public schools attribute success or failure to learn to external sources and tend to overlook the role their knowledge and skills play in learning.

In contrast to preschool teachers, parents valued contextual items that delineated their role, the preschool's role, and the teacher's role in developing characteristics and abilities of children which lead to later school success. This perspective is more interactive, as well as being far more situated than the teachers' by including a variety of contexts, their interactions and connections, a framework first articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979). He conceptualized the social and ecological systems that impact families, family interactions and individual development of children. The relationships between these systems in which family members function, such as those between home and school or home and community, can have positive effects on family functioning and individual development. The next topic examines how our participants viewed these systems and their relationships.

Summary of Findings on Topic I: Child Readiness Categories and Items

Child Readiness Categories

The four role groups shared remarkably similar views on their core child readiness categories. All thought that social and emotional skills and abilities are necessary for success in kindergarten. Most believed that children who are familiar with and have the capacity for certain school-related behaviors and skills would more likely be successful in kindergarten. Preschool teachers were the exception. Finally, most groups saw general knowledge (that is, knowledge about conventions regarding numbers, letters, and objects) as central to children's success. In this case, kindergarten teachers were the exception.

All role groups were remarkably similar regarding child readiness categories and items *that were absent*. These missing categories were language development and cognitive development. In addition, physical health and well-being were also absent from the role groups' thinking about child readiness for success, which, in this case, may be due to the wording of the prompt.

Contextual items, although not forming a separate readiness child readiness category for any role group, were prominent and intertwined throughout all but preschool teachers' domains. These contextual items were primarily interactive and experiential, focusing on factors that promote the development of child readiness characteristics or abilities.

Finally, more parent groups generated characteristics and domains akin to Approaches to Learning than did teacher groups. Although more parents saw this domain as necessary to kindergarten success, a domain that covers attitudes and habits of learning such as openness, curiosity, and willingness to attempt new tasks and challenges, it still was not prominent.

Most Important Child Readiness Items

With the exception of preschool teachers, the top two categories for most of the child readiness items selected as the most important ones for school success were social-emotional and school-related behaviors and skills. Preschool teachers, more so than any other group, heavily invested in social-emotional characteristics as critical to readiness. However, preschool teachers second largest readiness category from which the most critical child readiness items came was the domain of motor development and self-help skills.

Topic II. What are the most important influences on a child's readiness for success in

school?

Purpose

Conventional wisdom has held that the concept of readiness pertained primarily to the skills, abilities, and characteristics possessed by the individual child. In recent years, this concept has been broadened to include the components of the school, family, and community, in addition to the child. Our intent was to determine how each of the four role groups viewed the relative importance of these factors, and their relation to one another.

Procedure

The role groups were asked about the relative importance of the child, family, school, and community on readiness for school success. Individually, each participant completed this portion using a stick-on picture label to represent “Child,” “Family,” “School,” and “Community.” Participants were to arrange the labels in a way that indicated the relative importance of each factor to school success. Possible configurations were illustrated and explanations for each configuration were given. For example, if all four labels were placed in a horizontal row, it indicates that each factor is equally important. If they were placed in a vertical row, the order from top to bottom indicated each one’s relative importance, top being the most important and bottom, the least important. Table 10 shows some of the possible configurations. After arranging their labels, the participants were encouraged to write about why they organized the labels in the way that they did.

Table 10. Four Examples of Configurations Indicating Relative Importance of Factors Influencing Children’s Readiness for Success.

T Configuration		Vertical Configuration	
1 st both equally important	XX	1 st most important	X
2 nd in importance	X	2 nd in importance	X
3 rd least important	X	3 rd in importance	X
		4 th least important	X
Rectangular Configuration		Horizontal Configuration	
1 st both equally important	XX	All equally important	XXXX
2 nd both equally important	XX		

Analyses and Findings

For this analysis, the unit is not a focus group; rather it is the individual participant. The participants were grouped by role (i.e, parent or teacher; preschool or kindergarten). Not all participants submitted their label placements. Consequently, the numbers do not match those used for focus group as the unit of analysis.

The participants’ arrangements were sorted into one of these four role groups. Within each role group, the number and frequency of different configurations were calculated. Within each type of configuration, patterns were identified (i.e., which factor [child, family, school, community]) occupied which level of importance. Finally, the factor most frequently placed in the first ranking of the configurations was identified and calculated by role group.

Kinds of Configurations

All four role groups were similar in the number of different configurations (between 7 and 8), but not in the

kinds of configurations (see Table 11):

Teacher Configurations

- None of the 36 kindergarten teachers considered all four factors of equal importance. However, five (or 12%) of the 43 preschool teachers did.
- Seven (or 16%) of the kindergarten teachers viewed the factors hierarchically, with all seven placing the factors in the exact same position (family has the most important influence on readiness, followed by child characteristics, school and last, the community).
- Similarly, eight (or 19%) of preschool teachers had a hierarchical configuration. However, unlike the kindergarten teachers, these preschool teachers had five different patterns within this hierarchical configuration. Such variability indicates little agreement as to the relative importance of child, family, school or community in contributing to readiness for success in school.
- For kindergarten teachers, the most frequent configuration (9 of 36, or 25%) was rectangular – two factors are first and equal, and two are second and equal. Seven of these 9 teachers, or close to 20%, of all kindergarten teachers viewed the Child and Family as co-equal and most important, and the School and Community as co-equal and less important.
- For preschool teachers, the most frequent configuration (14 of 43, or 33%) was a T – with two factors first and co-equal, and the other two arranged hierarchically. Similar to the preschool teachers, the Child and Family were placed first and co-equal. Approximately 26% (11 of 43) considered these two factors as equally important and more important than School or Community which, in turn, were seen as one having more influence than the other.

Parent Configurations

- The most frequent configuration for both preschool parents (16, or 31.3%) and kindergarten parents (8, or 26.7%) was a T.
- Just four of 51 preschool parents formed a horizontal configuration where all four factors are of equal importance in ensuring a child's success in kindergarten. No kindergarten parent did.
- Just three preschool parents and seven kindergarten parents saw the relationship among child, family, school, and community as hierarchical, forming a vertical stack.

Table 11. Locus of readiness: the most frequent configuration and patterns within it by role groups.

Parent		Teacher	
Preschool =51	Kindergarten N=30	Preschool N=43	Kindergarten N=36
T Configuration 16 or 31.3%	T Configuration 8 or 26.7%	T Configuration 14 or 33%	Rectangle Configuration 9 or 25%
XX X X	XX X X	XX X X	XX XX
3 Patterns • 14 or 27.8% had child=family at top of T	2 Patterns • 7 or 23.3% had child = family at top of T	4 Patterns • 11 or 25.6% had child=family at top of T	3 Patterns: • 7 or 19.4% had child=family in top rectangle
Pattern Types: • Child Family School Community (14) • Family School Child Community (1) • Family School Community Child (1)	Pattern Types • Child Family School Community (7) • Family School Child Community (1)	Pattern Types: • Child Family School Community (10) • Child Family Community School (1) • Family School Child Community (2) • Family School Community Child (1)	Pattern Types: • Child Family School Community (7) • Child School Family Community (1) • School Community Child Family (1)

Most Influential Factor

For all the groups, which factors were considered most influential on child readiness for success in school? That is, which were placed first and how many participants placed the same factor(s) in that position? In Table 12, the factors are listed by most frequent to least frequent in having been placed first.

Table 12. Frequency and Percentage of Factors Placed in the First Position By Role Groups.

Factors Placed as “Most Important”	All Participants N= 161		Parents				Teachers			
			Preschool N= 52		Kindergarten N=30		Preschool N=43		Kindergarten N=36	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Child = Family	59	36.7	20	38.5	13	43.4	14	32.5	12	33.3
Family	50	31.1	11	21.2	12	40.0	7	16.3	20	55.5
Child	23	14.3	13	25.0	2	6.7	8	18.6	–	–
Child=Family=School	10	6.2	2	3.8	1	3.3	6	14.0	1	2.8
All Equal	9	5.6	4	7.6	–	–	5	11.6	–	–
Family=School	6	3.7	2	3.9	1	3.3	3	7.0	–	–
School = Community	2	1.2	–	–	1	3.3	–	–	1	2.8
Community	1	0.6	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2.8
School = Child	1	0.6	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2.8

Note. The figures in bold in Table 12 are those factors most often placed first in importance by each role group.

Findings

1. Child and the family were the most frequent factors for three of the four groups. Preschool parents (38.5%), kindergarten parents (43.4%), and preschool teachers (32.5%) viewed the child and family as co-equals and as the most important influences on child readiness. In contrast, kindergarten teachers' most influential factor was the family alone. Over half (55.5%) considered this single factor as the major contributor to a child's readiness for success.
2. The child alone was the second most frequent factor for preschool parents (25%) and preschool teachers (18.6%). In contrast, kindergarten parents' second most frequent factor (40%) was the family alone, almost the same number who thought that the child and family together were most influential (43.4%). For kindergarten teachers, the child and the family together (33.3%) ranked second.
3. Both kindergarten groups (parents: 40% and teachers: 55.5%) ranked the family as the single most important influence on readiness, more frequently than did either of the preschool groups (parents: 21.2% and teachers: 16.3%).
4. The preschool groups ranked the child alone (parents: 25% and teachers: 18.6%) the most important factor considerably more often than did the kindergarten parents (6.7%) and the kindergarten teachers (0%).
5. Preschool teachers most often recognized the interrelations between the child, family, school, and community as being central to the construct of readiness, with 11.6% of them ranking the four factors as equally important compared to 7.6% of preschool parents, and none of the kindergarten parents or teachers. They also ranked the child, family, and school as equal 14% of the time, compared to 2.8%-3.8% for the other three groups.

Perhaps because the preschool teachers tend to have more contact with the families of their students and with community agencies, they more readily see their influence on a child's readiness for school success. As they are more distanced from the elementary schools, they may see the nature of the kindergarten practices and curricula as having a greater impact on readiness than do the kindergarten teachers, who tend to look more to external factors such as the family alone, or the family and the child. The community was the factor most often placed below the others in terms of relative importance.

6. Only one participant placed the community first and most influential.

Summary of Findings on Topic II: Relationship of Factors that Influence Readiness of the Child

Factors seen as having *the* most influence on readiness (i.e., those factors that were placed first in the two most frequent configurations) across all participants were (a) Child and Family as co-equal; (b) Child alone; and (c) Family alone. These three accounted for over 82% of the responses. School and community were rarely seen as the most influential factors on children's readiness for success.

Differences did exist by type of participant. For kindergarten parents and teachers, the top two were the same, Child and Family as co-equals, and the Family Alone, but the ranks were reversed. For preschool parents and teachers, the top two were the same and the ranks were identical – Child and Family and the Child Alone.

Although infrequent, more preschool teachers than any other type of participant appeared to recognize the interrelations between the child, family, school, and community as equally important and influential to readiness for success in school.

Topic III. What can parents, teachers, schools and the community do to help children to be successful in kindergarten?

Purpose

The focus groups were asked to think about what the individuals and institutions that impact children's lives (parents, teachers, schools, and community) could do to facilitate their success in kindergarten. Our purpose was to learn what each focus group considered to be important actions. This topic represents a critical shift in the type of information provided by the groups. It takes the beliefs about importance of the four factors and asks for specific actions. Thus the shift was from somewhat abstract rankings of factors to concrete "what can be done." This information provides depth to the former findings.

Procedure

All participants in each focus group had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts. The participants stated the action and who (the agent) should be responsible (i.e., parent, teacher, school, community). All actions and agents offered by the participants were recorded on chart paper.

Analysis and Findings

All actions by agent were grouped into categories and assigned labels. The total number of items within each category by agent and focus group was calculated. Lastly, the similarities and differences in terms of frequency and percentage of the total items contributed by a group that relate to a category were examined.

A. What Parents Can Do

Over all focus groups, 90 actions were given about how parents can help children be successful in school. We organized these into seven categories. In Table 13, the categories and actions within each category are rank ordered by overall frequency and percent.

Overall, parents contributed 31, or 34.5%, of the actions, while teachers contributed 59, or 65.5%. It seems that teachers had more to say about how parents can contribute to children's success in school than did the parents themselves.

Table 14 contains the frequency and percent of each category by role group. The largest category overall dealt with actions that parents could take that would support children's social-emotional development (32.2%). This was the largest category for both preschool teachers (46.4%) and preschool parents (41.2%). Kindergarten teachers, however, most often mentioned how parents could help with children's school-related learning (41.9%), with supporting social-emotional development a distant second (19.3%). Kindergarten parents spoke most about how important it was for parents and schools to have good cooperative relationships and communication (28.6%).

Table 13. What parents can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Categories of actions ranked by overall frequency and percent.

What Parents Can Do		
Categories and Actions	No.	%
Support Children's Social-Emotional Development Care for social-emotional development; listen to and communicate with children; treat them with respect; spend time with them; support self-confidence and self-esteem; encourage, motivate and praise; support development while being sensitive to individual differences; let children be children; instill values; provide appropriate expectations and limits; meet children's physical and emotional needs.	29	32.2
Support Children's Learning [School-Related] School-related knowledge and skills; expose children to books, talk and listen to children; expose them to academic knowledge like the alphabet and numbers; provide enriching experiences and environments in which children can learn; parents be the child's teacher; monitor television viewing; get the child into preschool; find a school that is a good match for the child.	23	25.5
Parent-School Communication and Relationships Families' relationship with the school, communication between home and school; collaboration and cooperation.	13	14.4
Parent Support and Involvement Family support for education; family members willing to be involved in the school community and the child's education.	10	11.1
Help Child Meet School Expectations Motivate the child to want to go to school; let children know what to expect in school and what the school would expect of them; share information about the child with the teacher; help children to develop study skills.	8	8.8
Personal Knowledge and Qualities Take responsibility for parenting behavior; know about child development and early childhood education.	5	5.5
Parent Education Attend workshops and participate in parent education programs.	2	2.2

Table 14. What parents can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Frequency and percent by role group for each category.

Category	Parent Responses				Teacher Responses			
	Preschool		Kindergarten		Preschool		Kindergarten	
What Parents Can Do Rank Order	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Support Children's Social-Emotional Development	7	41.2	3	21.4	13	46.4	6	19.3
Support Children's Learning [School-Related]	5	29.4	3	21.4	2	7.1	13	41.9
Parent-School Communication and Relationships	2	11.8	4	28.6	6	21.4	1	3.2
Parent Support and Involvement	2	11.8	1	7.1	4	14.3	3	9.7
Help Child Meet School Expectations	1	5.9	3	21.4	1	3.6	3	9.7
Personal Knowledge and Qualities	–	–	–	–	2	7.1	3	9.7
Parent Education	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	6.5
Overall Total = 90	17	18.9	14	15.6	28	31.1	31	34.4

B. What Teachers Can Do

A total of 95 actions, organized into seven categories, were given about how teachers could support children's success in kindergarten. In Table 15, the categories and the actions within each category are rank ordered by overall frequency and percent.

Table 15. Contains the frequency and percent of each category by role group.

What Teachers Can Do		
Categories and Actions	No.	%
Support Children's Development Show interest in child's learning; focus on positives and give more praise, more in individual attention; show empathy; meet basic needs; support self-esteem; be supportive, nurturing and caring; accept cultural and economic differences; be child advocates; give reassurance by accepting mistake; be good listeners.	37	38.9
Parent-School Communication and Relationships Open communication, welcome parents; share what is happening in the classroom; explain how child is progressing; cooperate and work together with family members.	20	21.0
Support Children's Learning [School-Related] Read to students; expose students to rich language experiences; provide hands-on experiences; use learning centers in the classroom; more play centers to make learning enjoyable; have a more enriched and creative curriculum; vary instruction to match children; have/know background and history of each child; learn through play; creative curriculum; know children as individuals; vary instruction to meet each child's needs and interests.	16	16.8
Personal Knowledge and Qualities Teacher personality (caring, happy, motivated, friendly) and competence (knowledge of child development, willing to change to meet children's needs, and to reflect on new ideas and methods).	6	6.3
Help Child Meet School Expectations Make sure children know kindergarten rules and expectations; be consistent with rules and routines; get children use to group time; help them develop good study skills.	6	6.3
Parent Support and Involvement Encourage and support families' participation in the classroom.	6	6.3
Transition to Kindergarten Help children and families make a smooth transition to kindergarten; make parents aware of kindergarten expectations; have transition activities like welcome letter, open house and visits to the kindergarten class.	4	4.2

Frequency and percent of actions that teachers can do to help children be successful in kindergarten by role group are in Table 16. Overall, parents proposed 48, or 50.5%, of the actions, while teachers contributed 47, or 49.5%. Thus, parents and teachers had about the same amount to say about how teachers could contribute to children's success. However, preschool teachers (35) had far more to say than kindergarten teachers (12), offering about three times as many ways to help children succeed. In fact, kindergarten teachers overall contributed relatively little to this category, just under 13%.

Like parent actions, the largest category overall for teacher actions dealt with support for children's social-emotional development (38.9%). This was the largest category for each of the four role groups.

Table 16. What teachers can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Frequency and percent by role group for each category.

Category	Parent Responses				Teacher Responses			
	Preschool		Kindergarten		Preschool		Kindergarten	
What Teachers Can Do Rank Order	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Support Children's Development	10	43.5	9	36.0	14	40.0	4	33.3
Parent-School Communication and Relationships	5	21.7	5	20.0	8	22.8	2	16.7
Support Children's Learning [School-Related]	2	8.7	4	16.0	6	17.0	4	33.3
Personal Knowledge and Qualities	2	8.7	2	8.0	2	6.0	–	–
Help Child Meet School Expectations	–	–	2	8.0	3	8.6	1	8.3
Parent Support and Involvement	4	17.4	1	4.0	1	2.8	–	–
Transition to Kindergarten	–	–	2	8.0	1	2.8	1	8.3
Overall Total = 95	23	24.2	25	26.3	35	36.8	12	12.6

C. What Schools Can Do

A total of 88 actions were proposed across all focus groups. Half were contributed by parents and half by teachers. These actions were organized into eight categories, the largest of which was Staffing and Structure with 15 actions. See Table 17. Actions focused on having enough adults to give individual attention to children both through smaller class size and more adults in the classroom. School climate and safety was a close second with 14 actions. School Climate and Safety tied with Parent-School Communication and Parent Education for the second place, with 14 actions mentioned for each of these categories (16% of the total items each).

Table 17. What schools can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Categories of actions ranked by overall frequency and percent.

What Schools Can Do		
Categories and Actions	No.	%
Staffing, Structure Small class size; low ratio of adults to children so that children's needs are met; stable teacher population; more support for children with special needs; half-day kindergarten program.	15	17.0
School Climate and Safety Schools should be caring and nurturing places for children that encourage pride in work and doing their best; provide for physical and psychological safety.	14	15.9
Parent-School Communication and Parent Education Workshops for parents in parenting and education; school family nights; good communication between home and school.	14	15.9
Program, Curriculum Curriculum and teaching strategies (hands-on and early childhood focus); well-designed learning environments; learning centers; appropriate assessments.	13	14.8
Resources and Facilities	12	13.6
Professional Development Training in early childhood education; provide workshops and courses in working with young children with special needs; provide time and substitute teachers.	8	9.1
Transition to Kindergarten Communication between preschool and kindergarten, half-day transitions to kindergarten, collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers.	8	9.1
School Policies Have and communicate policies regarding attendance, health and discipline; consistency in policies.	4	4.5

In Table 18, the percent and frequency within each category by role group are presented. None of the categories was very large for any role group. More than the other role groups, preschool parents believed that schools could help young children succeed by taking actions to ensure school safety and a positive school climate (8, or 29.6%).

Kindergarten parents most often mentioned communication between home and school (6, or 35.2%). In fact, this category represented the largest number of items brought up by parents (5 actions by preschool parents or 18.5% of their total and 6 by kindergarten parents for 35.2% of their contributions). Actions in this category were raised less frequently by preschool teachers (3 mentions for 11.5 %) and were not mentioned at all by kindergarten teachers.

Program and curriculum (mentioned 13 times for 15% of the total), perhaps in anticipation of children entering kindergarten, was more often raised by preschool teachers (5 mentions, or 17.6 %, of the items they raised) and preschool parents (5 mentions, 19% of their items). They thought that children would be more successful if the kindergarten curriculum was more child-centered. One preschool teacher said, “Get real with where the child is.” Kindergarten teachers and parents expressed less concern with program issues (parents mentioned it once and teachers two times).

Table 18. What schools can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Frequency and percent by role group for each category.

Category What Schools Can Do Rank Order	Parent Responses				Teacher Responses			
	Preschool No.	%	Kindergarten No.	%	Preschool No.	%	Kindergarten No.	%
Staffing and Structure	6	22.2	3	17.6	3	11.5	3	16.7
School Climate and Safety	8	29.6	1	5.9	3	11.5	2	11.1
Parent-School Communication and Parent Education	5	18.5	6	35.2	3	11.5	–	–
Program and Curriculum	5	18.5	1	5.9	5	19.2	2	11.1
Resources and Facilities	–	–	4	23.5	4	15.3	4	22.2
Professional Development	–	–	1	5.9	5	19.2	2	11.1
Transition to Kindergarten	2	7.4	1	5.9	3	11.5	2	11.1
School Policies	1	3.7	–	–	–	–	3	16.7
Overall Total = 88	27	30.7	17	19.3	26	29.5	18	20.5

Note. Figures in bold are the largest percentages for each role group.

D. What Can Communities Do

Fewer actions were mentioned concerning what communities can do than what the parents, teachers, and schools can do. The contributions made by teachers (53%) compared to parents (47%) was fairly well balanced. Availability of resources was the largest single category. It was mentioned 22 times, 31% of the total number of actions. See Table 19.

Table 19. What communities can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Categories of action ranked by overall frequency and percent.

What Communities Can Do		
Categories and Actions	No.	%
Resources Funding for preschools (both tuition subsidies and better preschool salaries); investment in facilities, libraries, health insurance; more resources for classrooms and schools.	22	30.5
Family Support Health screening for all children; playgroups; more recreational areas, library activities. Support for parents through parenting workshops and classes. Provision of high quality, affordable preschools for all families who want their children to attend; more workplace preschools.	27	37.5
School Modifications More reasonable entrance age for kindergarten, simplified bureaucracy; smaller classes for emotionally disturbed children; better planning; smaller classes with lower ratios; use of volunteers.	8	11.1
Understanding and Support More support for education including early child hood education; appreciation for the work of teachers.	4	5.5
Professional Development Courses, workshops and training in early childhood education.	4	5.5
Family Support: School Involvement Time off to participate in school activities; work schedule that's flexible.	3	4.2
Collaboration Everyone working together on behalf of children.	2	2.8
Safety Safe communities; safe and clean schools.	2	2.8

Note. "Communities" explicitly included state and county elected officials.

All groups brought up the importance of community efforts to support families in preparing children for school success. Overall there were 27 mentions, or 37.5%. However, we subdivided these actions into three categories: community programs and resources, parenting education, and preschool programs and resources. See Table 20. One participant expressed the essence of these three categories by saying, “The goal is to ensure that every child comes from a nurturing environment.”

Table 20. What communities can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Frequency and percent by role group for each category.

Category What Communities Can Do Rank Order	Parent Responses				Teacher Responses			
	Preschool No.	%	Kindergarten No.	%	Preschool No.	%	Kindergarten No.	%
Resources	10	43.5	5	33.3	4	22.2	3	18.7
Family Support - Community Programs and Resources	2	8.7	3	20.0	3	16.7	2	12.5
Family Support - Parenting Education	2	8.7	1	6.7	3	16.7	3	18.7
Family Support - Preschool Programs and Resources	1	4.3	2	13.3	3	16.7	2	18.7
School Modifications	3	13.0	1	6.7	1	5.5	1	6.2
Understanding and Support	–	–	–	–	2	11.1	2	12.5
Professional Development	1	4.3	–	–	2	11.2	2	12.5
Family Support - School Involvement	2	8.7	1	6.7	–	–	–	–
Collaboration	2	8.7	–	–	–	–	–	–
Safety	–	–	2	13.3	–	–	–	–
Overall Total = 72	23	31.9	15	20.8	18	25.0	16	22.2

Note. “Communities” explicitly included state and county elected officials

What Can All Do

The responsibility for the great majority of focus group items tended to be assigned to parents, teachers, schools or community. The idea that all groups needed to be responsible was not prominent. The number of actions mentioned was the smallest of all, a total of 33, and were brought up when someone wanted to emphasize its importance. See Table 21. Given the small overall size, frequency and percent of each category by role group are not presented in a table.

Fifty-eight percent of the actions were mentioned by parents, and 42% by teachers. Support for children’s development was brought up most (10 times, 30% of the items in this category). Preschool teachers mentioned such actions six times (75% of their items) and preschool parents four times (22% of their items). Kindergarten parents and teachers did not mention any actions in this category. Only parents mentioned the second ranked category, resources and advocacy (6 items in all, 18% of the total). Preschool parents mentioned it five times, and kindergarten parents once.

Table 21. What all (parents, teachers, schools, and communities) can do to help children be successful in kindergarten: Categories of action ranked by overall frequency and percent.

What All Can Do		
Categories and Actions	No.	%
Support Children Support children’s emotional and social development; everyone involved with young children should listen to them, treat them with respect, validate their feelings, encourage them, make school a positive experience, be good role models.	10	30.3
Resources and Advocacy Support and advocate for early childhood education; support for schools and teachers; provide more resources.	6	18.2
Awareness/Education Children and education should be a priority; educate all on importance of early childhood education.	5	15.1
Program Focus on the whole child; academics should be appropriate to age group; age appropriate teaching strategies; make kindergarten fun and interesting; model skills.	4	12.1
Environment Learning environment should be safe and nurturing; a loving environment.	4	12.1
Communications and Relationships All involved in early childhood education need to work together; participate and engage in open dialogue about readiness.	3	9.0
Support Parent Development Support the growth of parents.	1	3.0

Summary of Findings on Topic III: What Various Role Groups Can Do to Help Children Be Successful in School

What Parents Can Do. Overall, the top two things parents can do are to support children’s social-emotional development and their school-related learning. Looking across all four role groups, the most frequently mentioned parental actions were captured by just three categories. Stated another way, just three categories occurred in the top two ranks: (a) parents supporting children’s social-emotional development (number one for preschool teachers and parents, and number two for kindergarten teachers and parents); (b) parents supporting children’s school-related learning (number one for kindergarten teachers, and number two for preschool parents and teachers and tied for second for kindergarten parents); and (c) parents supporting communication and positive relationships between home and school (number one for kindergarten parents, and number two for preschool teachers).

What Teachers Can Do. Overall, teacher support for children’s development and for parent-school relationships and communication were the top two ways teachers can contribute to children’s success in school. Again, when considering all four role groups, three categories captured the top two places: (a) teachers’ support for children’s development (number one for all groups); (b) teachers’ support for parent-school relationships and communication (number two for both parent groups and preschool teachers); and (c) teachers’ support for children’s school-related behavior (number two for kindergarten teachers).

What Schools Can Do. Across all four role groups there were seven different categories that occurred in the top two ranks indicating differences in perspective depending on whether the group was affiliated with a preschool or kindergarten, and a parent or teacher.

What Communities Can Do. Overall, and for all four role groups, communities can best contribute to young children's school success by providing support services to families and resources for preschools and elementary schools. All other categories had very few mentions.

Finally, we offer two observations on the relative contribution of parents and teachers. They contributed similar percentages of items in response to how teachers, schools and the community could help children be prepared for school success. However, in commenting on what parents can do, the percentage of actions raised by teachers was almost twice that contributed by parents. In addition, kindergarten teachers brought up more actions that parents can do than preschool teachers relative to the size of the group.

Topic IV. How can teachers and schools build on the cultural backgrounds of the children?

Children in Hawai'i come from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The gap that children often experience between the culture of the home and the culture of the school can negatively impact their learning and opportunities for school success. According to Crnic & Lamberty (1994), reconceptualizing readiness depends upon considering the interrelations among a number of influences, including the role of culture and diversity. These factors have not been well studied and are particularly important in places like Hawai'i.

Our goal was to gain a sense of the participants' thoughts about building on children's cultural backgrounds in school, and their ideas about how best to do this. We asked, "How can teachers and schools be more sensitive to cultural differences and build upon the cultural backgrounds of the children?" As with the other topics, the round-robin style of free elicitation was used, with the participants' comments recorded.

Analyses

Five categories emerged from grouping similar responses together. These categories are presented in Table 22. We then compared the percentage of responses falling into the categories by each role group. Table 23 depicts the percent of responses by each role group in each of the categories.

Table 22. Categories and description of items for how teachers and schools can build on cultural backgrounds of young children.

Category	Description of Items
Build cultural awareness into the curriculum	Celebrate cultural holidays; learn about different cultures through songs, dance, costumes, cooking, and artifacts; hold an international festival at the school.
Involve parents and community members in the classroom	Invite family and community members to come into the classroom and share information about their cultures, traditions, experiences, and occupations.
Accept and build upon the home language	Respect and build upon the child's home language while teaching and modeling standard English.
Know or learn about the families and cultures in school-community	Listen to and learn from parents and family members; read about different cultures; take workshops or courses; live in or spend time in the school-community; have more multi-cultural content in teacher education. [Comments were aimed at both teachers and administrators.]
Teach and demonstrate respect for other cultures and beliefs	Help children to appreciate and understand diversity, encourage them to treat others with respect, and model acceptance and caring attitudes in the classroom.

In addition, there was a miscellaneous category containing items that were only raised once or twice across all the groups. Items in this category included acculturating children into a single value system, lowering student-teacher ratios, providing resources to learn about different cultures, and defining common goals and policies for language usage and curriculum.

Table 23. Percentage of Items Generated in Each Cultural Category.

Cultural Category	Preschool		Kindergarten	
	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents
Build cultural awareness into curriculum	16.3%	26%	43.8%	26.9%
Accept and build upon home language	30.2%	28%	3.1%	7.7%
Involve parents/community members	16.3%	20%	3.1%	3.8%
Know and learn about families and cultures in community	13.9%	12%	6.3%	11.5%
Teach and demonstrate respect for other cultures and beliefs	16.3%	6%	9.4%	7.7%

Note. The largest percentages are in bold.

Findings and Discussion

Cummins (in Kawakami & DuDoit, 2000) asserted that students from dominated societal groups are empowered or disabled as a direct result of their interactions with teachers and schools. She pointed out that these interactions are mediated by the extent to which, among other things, (1) minority students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program, and (2) minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education. These practices are directly related to three of the five categories of responses generated by the focus group participants. However, as seen in Table 23, there are striking differences across the role groups in the emphasis each placed in these areas, primarily between the preschool group (teachers and parents) and the kindergarten group (teachers and parents).

The preschool teachers and parents placed much more importance on accepting and building upon the home language of children (30.2% and 28%) than did the kindergarten teachers (3.1%) and parents (7.7%). Given the large number of children in Hawai'i whose home language is Hawaiian Creole, this may be something that more kindergarten teachers need to consider.

The preschool teachers and parents also felt more strongly (36.3%) than kindergarten teachers and parents (6.9%) about the need to involve families and community members in the classroom to help enhance cultural awareness and understanding. This may be an important resource that many kindergarten teachers are not fully utilizing. In addition, the preschool teachers placed more emphasis (16.3%) on teaching and demonstrating respect for other cultures and beliefs than did the other three groups (6%-9.4%).

In order to build upon the cultural backgrounds of students, it seems essential for teachers to learn about and be familiar with the families and cultures in the school community. However, the kindergarten teachers placed relatively little emphasis on this issue (6.3%) compared to the other three role groups (11.5%-13.9%).

Lastly, all four role groups placed considerable emphasis upon building cultural awareness into the curriculum. However, the items generated were focused primarily on adding activities to the curriculum in connection to holidays (Martin Luther King Day, Cinco De Mayo, Boys and Girls Day). These activities centered around lessons related to multicultural cooking, crafts, songs, and dances rather than integrating cultural awareness in more meaningful ways that develop, for example, understandings about the history, cultural values, and struggles of various racial and ethnic groups, and ways that issues of racism, classism, prejudice and social justice have played out in their lives. This finding suggests a need for more professional development in this area, particularly in how these sensitive issues can be made meaningful to young children.

Summary of Findings on Topic III: Building on Children's Cultural Backgrounds

The greatest differences across the role groups are between the preschool groups (parents and teachers) and the kindergarten groups (parents and teachers). The preschool teachers and parents placed much more emphasis on accepting and building upon the child's home language than did the kindergarten teachers and parents. The preschool parents and teachers also placed much more emphasis on involving families and community members in the classroom to enhance cultural awareness and understanding in comparison to the kindergarten parents and teachers.

The preschool teachers more often brought up items related to teaching and demonstrating respect for other cultures and beliefs than did the other three groups. The kindergarten teachers responded most strongly to items related to building cultural awareness and understanding into the curriculum. However, their comments about how to do this focused on holiday activities rather than teaching that would lead to appreciation of human similarities and growing understanding of the history and struggles of different racial and ethnic groups.

Section II

Quantitative Study: Surveys

Purposes

A written survey was used to address a major objective of the project, namely that of comparing and contrasting views held by parents, teachers and administrators in Hawai'i with those reported in national studies conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the U.S. Department of Education. In particular, we wanted to compare our data with the results from two 1993 surveys that are frequently referred to in states' documents and in the readiness literature: (1) *The 1993 National Household Education Survey* (NCES, 1993a) that collected information regarding parents' attitudes about readiness; and (2) *The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Student Readiness* (NCES, 1993b) that gathered similar information from public school kindergarten teachers.

The second purpose of the survey was to have greater representation of views about school readiness than is possible with our group interview qualitative methodology. It is important for state policy and practices regarding readiness to have in hand perspectives from as large a number of people as possible. The survey was constructed to ask questions about the same topics as those asked in the focus group interviews. If the findings from both survey and interviews substantiate one another, greater faith can be placed in the conclusions.

Survey Construction and Description

The survey had three sections which mirrored the topics asked in the focus group interviews. Drafts of the survey were reviewed by the Quality Assurance Committee of the Hawai'i Good Beginnings Alliance, and suggested changes were made in wording and in adding additional information to be collected. The three sections are described below. For details, please see Appendix II A1 for a copy of the survey.

Child Readiness Items. This section had two parts. One part had 25 child readiness items, fifteen of which came from the FRSS survey, with only slight modifications made in wording of a few items. Ten items were added to reflect characteristics mentioned by the focus groups, particularly in the areas of social-emotional development, self-help skills, and general knowledge. The same five point Likert scale used in the FRSS survey was used here, with "1" being *not at all important* to "5" being *essential*. The second part had the respondents select five of the 25 items as *the* most important child characteristics.

School Practices Items. This section had 18 items dealing with school practices and policies. The items selected came from our review of the literature and other relevant surveys. Again, the Likert scale of one to five was used.

Influences on Kindergarten Success Items. This section had five items that influence children's success in kindergarten (i.e., family experiences, preschool attendance, child characteristics, community characteristics, and the relationship between the home and the school) rated on the same five point Likert scale as the child readiness items.

Sampling Procedure and Respondents

Approximately 50% of preschools, private schools and public elementary schools in the state were randomly selected.⁹ Within the selected schools, surveys were sent to the administrator or director, to all kindergarten or preschool teachers, and to parents in one of the kindergarten or preschool classes designated by the grade level chair. The overall sample represented a broad geographical and socio-economic range across the state; and was proportionate to the overall ratio of administrators to teachers to parents in the state, with the administrators being the smallest group and the parents being the largest.

Number of Respondents and Estimated Return Rate

A total of 2,604 surveys were returned. The number of respondents by school type and role group are presented in Table 24. The estimated return rate was between 64-91% for the role groups in the public school system, and an estimated return rate was between 38-50% for the private schools and preschools.¹⁰

Table 24. Number of Survey Respondents and Estimated Return Rate by School Type and Role Group.

		Preschool		Private		Public	
		No.	Return Rate	No.	Return Rate	No.	Return Rate
Administrators	124	44	48%	22	40%	58	65%
Teachers	413	149	50%	36	40%	228	91%
Parents	2067	646	43%	316	38%	1105	64%
Total Number	2604	839		374		1391	

Description of Survey Respondents

For a complete demographic breakdown of all survey respondents by role groups, please see Appendix II A2. The ethnic backgrounds of parents, teachers, and administrators were diverse, and appeared representative of the state as a whole. Overall, 28.2% were Asian-American, 21.4% were Caucasian, 16.4% were Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian, 15.4% were mixed, 11.4% were Filipino, and 7.2% were African-American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Native American or other. Parent educational background was also diverse and ranged from no high school diploma (about 3%) to more than a Bachelor's degree (about 36%). Teacher educational background ranged from those with Associate degrees (about 4%, all of whom were preschool teachers) to those with Master's degrees or Doctorates (about 18%). The years of experience for both administrators and teachers ranged from 1-31 years, with a mean of 7.5 years for administrators and 10.0 years for teachers. The teachers were asked to report the socio-economic level of the majority of children in their classroom. Thirty-nine percent of the teachers reported that the majority of children they taught were

⁹Approximately 50% of the public schools with kindergartens from each of the seven districts were randomly selected, resulting in the number of schools in the selected sample being proportionate to each district's percentage of schools in the state.

¹⁰The number of surveys distributed to schools was intentionally over-estimated. For example, six teacher surveys were sent to each school, when, in fact, many schools only have one or two kindergarten or preschool classes; and thirty parent surveys were sent to a designated teacher in each school, even though preschool and kindergarten classes usually have 20 or fewer students. We preferred to err on the side of over, rather than under, distribution. A school form was to be returned that had the number of kindergarten or preschool teachers in each school and the number of parents surveys distributed in order to calculate return rate. However, many of these forms were not returned, especially from the private schools and preschools. Not having access to private and preschool records, we could only estimate the return rate for these sectors based on our knowledge of average number of teachers and classroom size in Hawai'i. For public school surveys, however, we could more accurately determine the actual return rate.

middle income students; 34.4% reported that their classroom majority were low income students; 1.7% were upper income students, and 18.1% reported either no majority or that they were not sure.

Analyses and Results

Analyses and results are presented for each of the three main parts of the survey: Child Readiness Characteristics, School Practices, and Influences on Kindergarten Success. SAS Multi-Level Statistical Model (MLSM) was used with alpha set at .01¹¹ on items clustered into categories to examine differences among the role groups (i.e, administrator, teacher, parent) and school types (i.e, preschool, private, and public). Appendix II B to N contains the percentages and means of all survey items for each role group by school type and overall.

Child Readiness Results

Item Results

The 25 child readiness items, clustered into the seven readiness domains, with the percentage of respondents who rated the items as a “essential,” are shown in Table 25. *Is healthy, rested, and well nourished* had the highest percentage with 79% of public school teachers seeing it as essential for school success. *Is able to use pencils and paint brushes* was the lowest with 2% of public school administrators seeing it as essential.

Items with High Ratings

Looking at items endorsed by 50% or more of the respondents, called “essential” items, the preschool subgroups were most alike with five or six essential items for administrators, teachers and parents. The public school subgroups had the most variation: public school administrators had just one essential item; public school teachers had 10; and public school parents had six. The private school subgroups ranged from a high of seven items for private school teachers; five for parents and just two for administrators.

Items with Low Ratings

Items were examined that had 25% or fewer respondents rating them as essential. Referred to as “non-essential,” do these items show patterns of similarities and differences across categories and respondent groups?

Private school administrators considered 13 of the items as not essential, six of which were in the Cognitive and General Knowledge category. Five items, scattered across three categories, were non-essential for private school teachers, and just one item for private school parents.

Public school administrators viewed 17 items as non-essential: all six Cognitive and General Knowledge items; both of the Language and Communication items; and four of five School-Related Behaviors and Skills items. In contrast, public school teachers had only two items (both in the Cognitive and General Knowledge Skills), and public school parents had none.

¹¹The Multi-Level Statistical Model, a nested hierarchical statistical model in SAS, does not assume that individual responses within a given group are independent of one another. No apriori hypotheses were made. Significant alpha (p value) was set at .01 with “post test” alpha level adjusted to reduce possibility of finding significance by chance given the large number of possible mean comparisons.

Table 25. Child Readiness Items: Percentage of Respondents Endorsing Items as Essential

Child Readiness Categories and Items	Preschool			Private			Public		
	Admin N=44	Teacher N=149	Parent N=646	Admin N=22	Teacher N=36	Parent N=316	Admin N=58	Teacher N=228	Parent N=1105
1. Physical Health and Well-Being Is healthy, rested, and well nourished.	77	71	71	64	75	74	69	79	68
2. Social Emotional Skills Takes turns and shares. Makes friends. Is sensitive to other children's feelings. Is respectful of others. Adjusts to new situations. Is confident and feels good about self.	32 25 27 59 36 66	41 30 30 46 34 60	50 34 40 59 35 58	19 27 27 41 27 41	42 25 36 56 22 47	44 29 33 54 29 57	24 12 19 29 28 45	50 27 30 55 33 55	47 34 39 56 32 56
3. Motor and Self-Help Skills Is able to use pencils and paint brushes. Is able to care for personal needs.	21 66	24 60	35 59	18 50	25 72	28 52	2 35	25 72	39 55
4. Approaches to Learning Has good problem solving skills. Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities. Enjoys listening to stories, books.	46 43 48	46 40 44	35 43 44	9 46 32	47 50 53	29 41 42	24 47 29	47 50 53	35 42 45
5. Language and Communication Skills Use words to make needs and thoughts known. Knows and uses standard English.	48 16	52 24	49 42	32 9	25 14	42 39	22 4	42 14	43 45
6. School Related Behaviors and Skills Finishes tasks. Can follow directions, rules and routines. Is not disruptive. Sits still and pays attention. Is responsible for belongings and classroom materials.	30 71 25 23 41	44 67 32 27 38	42 59 42 35 40	9 41 18 36 14	36 64 39 22 31	38 58 39 31 30	21 41 10 5 21	57 80 50 42 41	45 5 3 38 43
7. Cognition and General Knowledge Knows colors and shapes. Knows address and phone number. Knows letters of the alphabet and some beginning sounds. Recognizes name in print. Able to write first name. Can count to 20 or more.	16 5 2 30 16 7	20 9 21 38 31 17	40 26 37 42 37 31	9 0 18 18 23 14	25 19 47 58 44 22	30 22 37 37 37 29	9 7 14 22 17 12	25 4 42 52 45 29	42 31 48 49 51 41

Preschool administrators, compared to their colleagues with 13 and 17 items, had only eight non-essential

items. Similar to their public and private colleagues, most of these low rated items were in the Cognitive and General Knowledge category. Just six items for preschool school teachers and none of the items for preschool parents had such low essential ratings.

Summary

Overall, administrators tended to endorse more child readiness items as non-essential to success in kindergarten (i.e., 25% or less essential ratings) than did parents or teachers. Public school teachers saw more items (10) as essential for success (50% or more essential ratings) than any other group. The items they rated consistently as essential were clustered in Social-Emotional and School Related Behaviors and Skills. Parents overall had the fewest items that they considered non-essential.

Category Results

Category means by role group and school type are contained in Tables 26 to 28 and in Figures 1 to 3. Physical Health and Well-Being had the highest mean overall (4.69, SD 0.52) and the highest mean for each of nine subgroups. Cognition and General Knowledge had the lowest overall mean (4.04, SD 0.80). This category was also rated the lowest by each of the nine subgroups.

There were no significant differences in mean ratings for two of the seven categories: Physical Health and Well-Being and Approaches to Learning. It seems that in Hawai'i, early childhood stakeholders viewed the role of these two categories in school success similarly: Physical Health and Well-Being (O 4.69) was considered "essential," while Approaches to Learning (overall mean: 4.27) was viewed as more than "very important."

Significant difference in role groups ($F=4.78, df2, p .0092$) was found in the Social-Emotional domain. Parents (O 4.33) considered children's social-emotional skills to be significantly more important to kindergarten success than did administrators (O 4.17), while there was no difference between administrators and teachers (O 4.30) or between parents and teachers.

A significant difference in role group by school type occurred in School-Related Behaviors and Skills ($F=5.09, df4, p .0006$). Preschool administrators (O 4.24) viewed this domain as significantly more important than did private school (O 3.79) or public school administrators (O 3.88). All parent groups and teacher groups placed higher value on these behaviors and skills than did private school administrators and public school administrators. Finally, public school teachers (O 4.45) felt that school behaviors and skills are more crucial to school success than did any of the other parent groups.

Language and Communication skills were viewed as significantly more important ($F=36.98, df2, <.0001$) by parents (O 4.32) and teachers (O 4.10) than by administrators (O 3.85).

A significant difference by role group and school type in Cognition and General Knowledge was found ($F=3.68, df4, .0063$). All parent groups placed more importance on these cognitive and general knowledge skills for school success than did preschool and public school administrators. Interestingly, private school administrators (O 3.52) and private school parents (O 3.86) viewed the importance of this domain about the same. Public school teachers (O 3.84) placed more importance on the cognitive-knowledge domain than did public school administrators (O 3.48), while there was no difference among the three teacher groups. However, the parent groups did differ: public school parents (O 4.25) saw this domain as more important than either preschool parents (O 4.02) or private school parents (O 3.86).

Table 26. Administrator Mean Ratings for Child Readiness Categories

Child Readiness Categories	Total Admin N=124	Preschool Admin N=44	Private Admin N=22	Public Admin N=58
Physical Health and Well-Being	4.68	4.76	4.59	4.66
Social-Emotional Skills	4.17	4.29	4.10	4.11
Motor and Self-Help Skills	4.01	4.23	4.09	3.80
Approaches to Learning	4.27	4.38	4.08	4.27
Language and Communication Skills	3.85	4.07	3.81	3.70
School-Related Behaviors and Skills	3.99	4.24	3.79	3.88
Cognitive and General Knowledge	3.49	3.49	3.52	3.48

Table 27. Teacher Mean Ratings for Child Readiness Categories

Child Readiness Categories	Total Teachers N=413	Preschool Teachers N=149	Private Teachers N=36	Public Teachers N=228
Physical Health and Well-Being	4.76	4.71	4.75	4.80
Social-Emotional Skills	4.30	4.29	4.19	4.33
Motor and Self-Help Skills	4.29	4.25	4.31	4.31
Approaches to Learning	4.33	4.27	4.24	4.39
Language and Communication Skills	4.10	4.20	4.03	4.05
School-Related Behaviors and Skills	4.37	4.30	4.20	4.45
Cognitive and General Knowledge	3.81	3.77	3.78	3.84

Table 28. Parent Mean Ratings for Child Readiness Categories

Child Readiness Categories	Total Parents N=2067	Preschool Parents N=646	Private Parents N=316	Public Parents N=1105
Physical Health and Well-Being	4.68	4.68	4.72	4.67
Social-Emotional Skills	4.33	4.37	4.26	4.33
Motor and Self-Help Skills	4.31	4.32	4.18	4.34
Approaches to Learning	4.26	4.26	4.20	4.27
Language and Communication Skills	4.32	4.33	4.27	4.33
School Related-Behaviors and Skills	4.31	4.29	4.23	4.34
Cognitive and General Knowledge	4.11	4.02	3.86	4.25

Figure 1. Administrator Mean Ratings for Hawai'i Child Readiness Domains

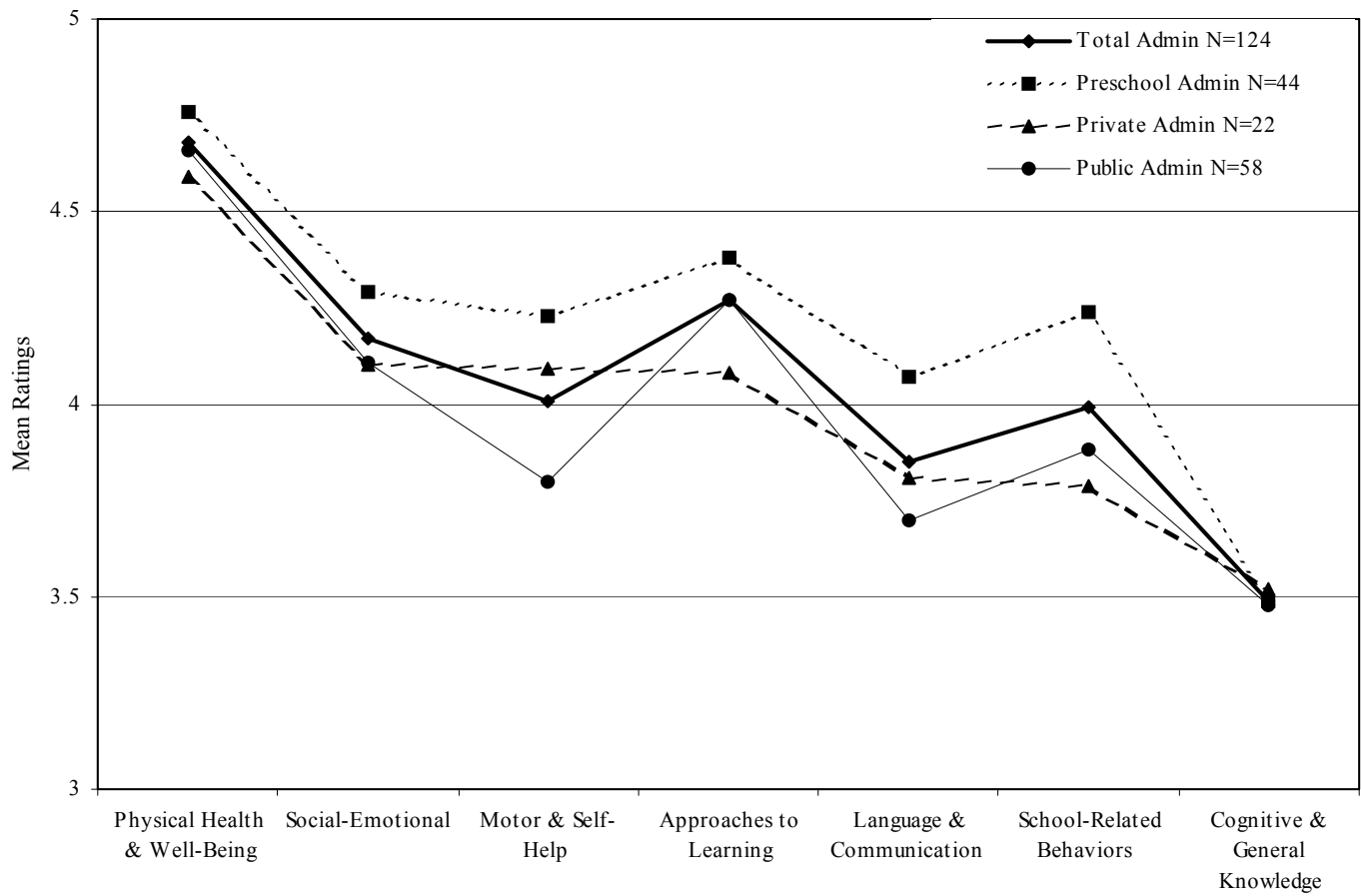


Figure 2. Teacher Mean Ratings for Hawai'i Child Readiness Domains

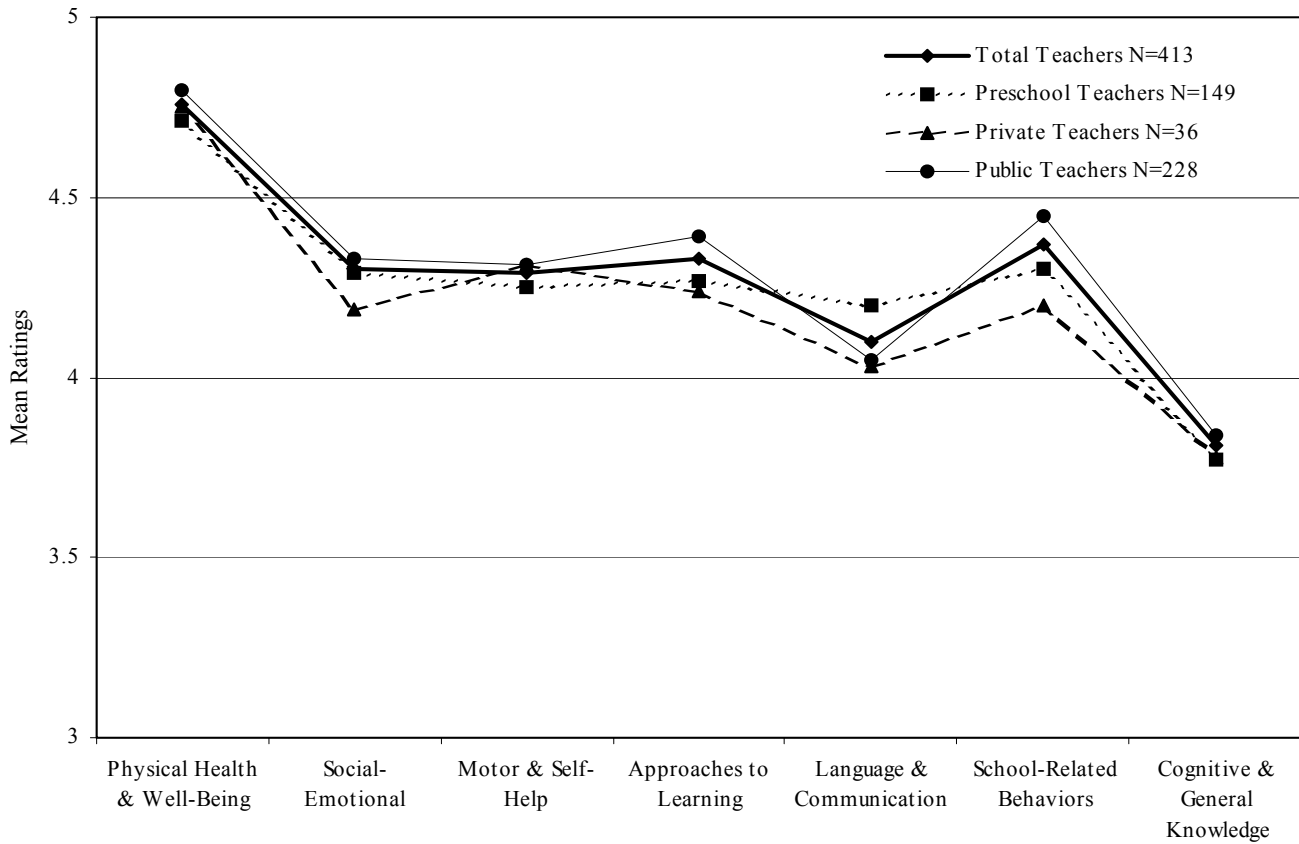
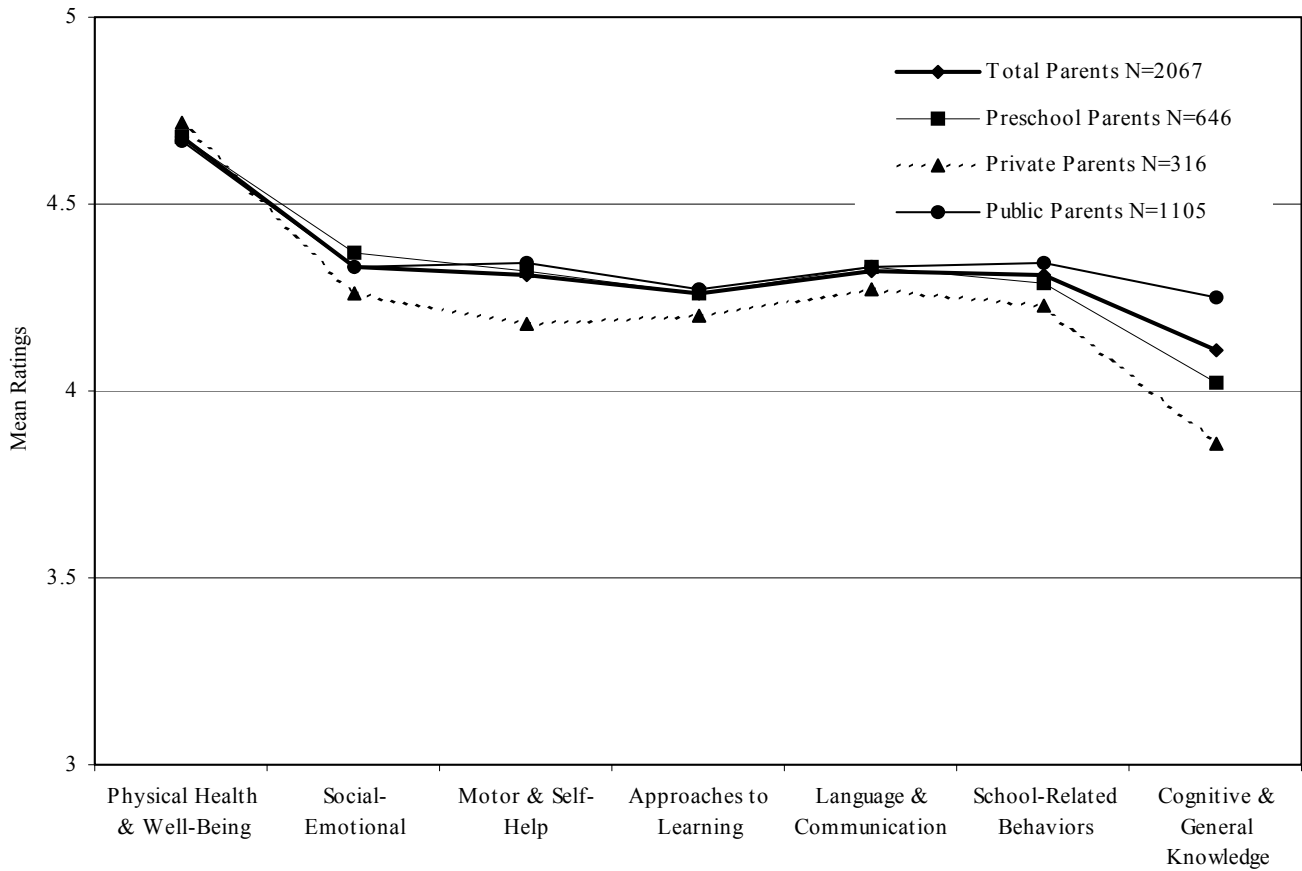


Figure 3. Parent Mean Ratings for Hawai'i Child Readiness Domains



For the Motor and Self-Help domain, significant differences were found ($F=5.33, df4, p .0004$) in role group by school type. Public school administrators (O 3.80) placed less importance on motor and self-help skills than did the three parent groups (O 4.32, O 4.18, and O 4.34 preschool, private, and public school parents respectively), the three teacher groups (O 4.25, O 4.31, O 4.31 preschool, private, and public school teachers respectively), and preschool administrators (O 4.23). In addition, public school parents (O 4.34) placed a stronger emphasis on motor and self help skills than did private school parents (O 4.18).

Child Readiness: Top Five Items

Survey Participants Top Five Items

Each respondent selected five of the 25 child readiness items as the most critical items necessary for success in kindergarten. The five child readiness items selected by the highest percentage of respondents in each role group are presented in Table 29 and Figure 4. The same five items occurred in the top five for administrators, teachers, and parents. The percentages ranged from a high of 74.2% for administrators to a low of about 35% for parents.

The items, however, had different rank orders across the role groups. Administrators ranked “*Can follow directions, rules and routines*” lower (4th rank) than parents and teachers (1st rank); administrators ranked “*Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities*” higher (3rd rank) than these other two groups (5th rank). In addition, administrators selected “*Is healthy, rested and well nourished*” (1st rank) much more frequently (74.2%) than did teachers (57.9%) and parents (47.6%), while teachers selected “*Can follow directions, rules and routines*” more than any other group (71.6%).

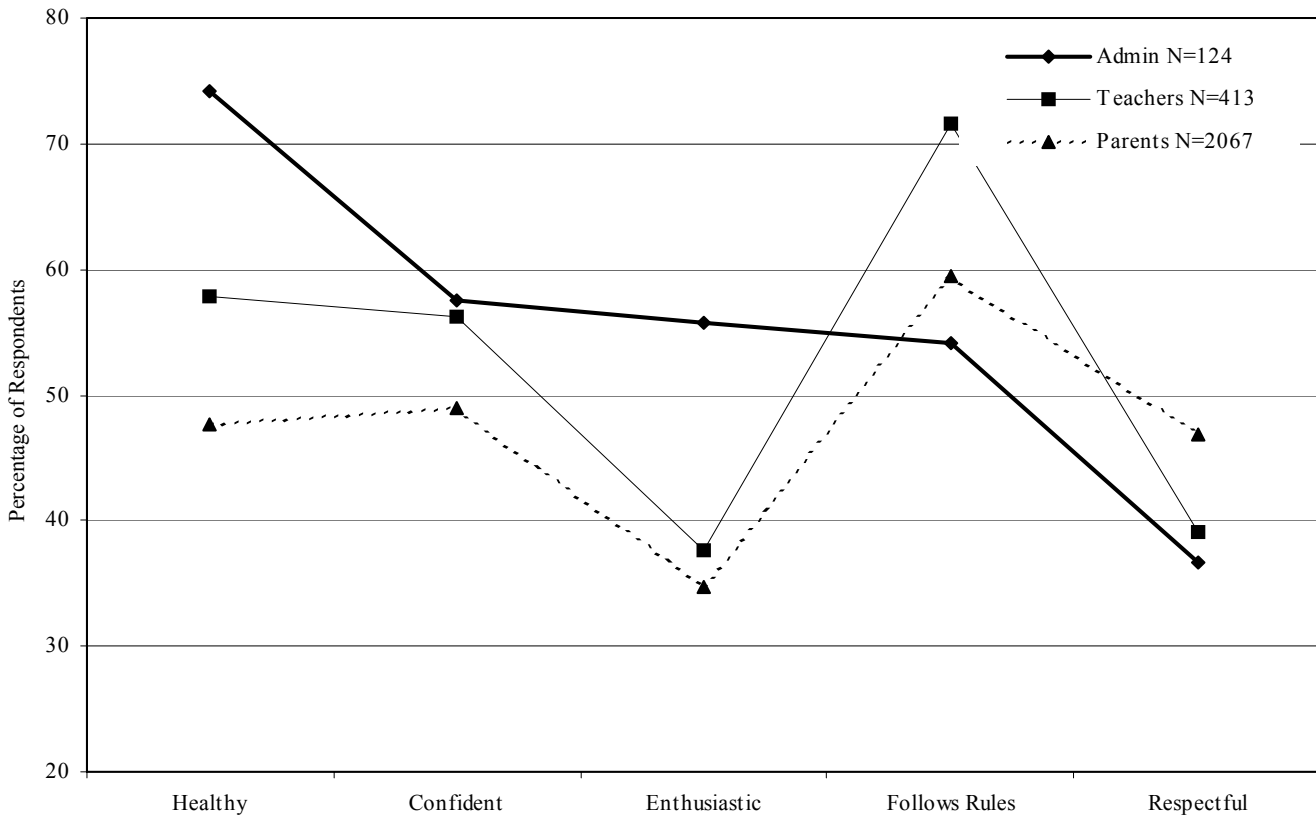
Table 29. Five Top Child Readiness Items Selected by Survey Respondents as Most Critical to Kindergarten Success.

Child Readiness Items	Admin N=124		Teachers N=413		Parents N=2067	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Is healthy, rested and well nourished	1	74.2	2	57.9	3	47.6
Is confident and feels good about self	2	57.5	3	56.2	2	48.9
Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities	3	55.8	5	37.7	5	34.7
Can follow directions, rules and routines	4	54.2	1	71.6	1	59.5
Is respectful of others (children and adults)	5	36.7	4	39.1	4	46.9
Additional Top Child Readiness Items Selected as Most Critical						
Enjoys listening to stories, books	Public School Administrators					(36.4%)
Uses words to make needs and thoughts known.	Preschool Administrators					(39.5%)
	Preschool Teachers					(37.7%)
Is able to care for personal needs	Private School Teachers					(41.7%)

All parents, whether their children were in preschool or in public or private kindergarten, had the same “ top

five” items. However, some differences were apparent within the teacher and administrator groups depending on whether they were preschool, private, or public schools. Each had one item in the 5th rank that was unique to their school type. These three items are also listed in Table 29.

Figure 4. Child Readiness Items Selected by Survey Respondent as the Five Most Important Child Readiness Characteristics



Comparison with Focus Groups' Top Five Items

Comparison between the parent and teacher focus groups' top five child readiness characteristics and the

parent and teacher survey respondents’ top five child readiness items¹² are presented in Table 30. The rankings for survey items are based on the percentage of survey participants who selected the items; and rankings for focus group items are based on results of the group voting procedure.

Table 30. Ranking of Focus Groups and Survey Respondents Top Five Child Readiness Characteristics Considered Most Critical for a Child’s Success in Kindergarten.

Top 5 Child Readiness Items	Focus Groups		Survey Participants	
	Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Parent
Is confident and feels good about self	3	4	3	2
Can follow directions, rules, and routines	5	3	1	1
Is respectful of others (adults and children)			4	4
Is healthy, rested and well nourished			2	3
Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities			5	5
Is able to verbally express needs, wants and feelings	4	2		
Is able to care for personal needs	1	5		
Gets along well with others	2	1		

Two items, one in the social-emotional domain and one in the school-related behavior domain, cut across differences in survey and interview methodologies to surface as highly valued child characteristics for both teachers and parents. Such congruence lends strength to the importance placed on these characteristics as critical to children’s success in kindergarten.

A possible explanation for difference in the items selected by the survey respondents and the focus groups can be offered. First, the child readiness items were presented for selection to the survey respondents, yet were self-generated by the focus group participants. Thus, some of the items selected in the top five by survey respondents were simply not generated by many focus groups, and therefore could never be considered for “Top Five” selection. Second, the wording of the focus group interview prompt, *What makes a child ready for kindergarten success? What should a child know or be able to do?* may have precluded thinking of items in certain categories. A case in point are items related to Physical Health and Well-Being, one of the survey participants’ most frequently selected item. Such items simply do not come to mind when considering what a child should *know* or *be able to do*.

Comparison of Hawai`i and National Results on Child Readiness Items

¹²Please see Appendix II O for a description of the item matching procedure used to make interview group and survey comparisons. Note that administrators are not included in Table 29 since they were not a part of the focus group interviews.

The *National Household Education Survey* (NCES,1993a) collected information on preschool parents' attitudes about readiness, and *The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Student Readiness* (NCES,1993b) gathered public school kindergarten teachers' readiness attitudes. Because these studies are frequently referred to in the readiness literature, our Hawai'i survey included seven items that were common to both federal surveys. Eight other items from the federal teacher survey, for a total of 15, were also included in the Hawai'i survey. In Table 31 and Figure 5, we compare the national and Hawai'i preschool parent and kindergarten teacher survey results on the seven items they have in common.

Table. 31. Percentage of Hawai'i and National Preschool Parents and Public School Kindergarten Teachers Who Rated Child Readiness Characteristics as “*very important*” or “*essential*” for Kindergarten Success

Seven Common Child Readiness Survey Items	Public Kindergarten Teachers		Preschool Parents	
	Hawai'i	National	Hawai'i	National
Uses words to make needs and thoughts known	92	84	91	92
Takes turns and shares	93	56	93	92
Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities	88	76	87	84
Sits still and pays attention	84	42	80	80
Is able to use pencils and paint brushes	67	21	76	65
Can count to 20 or more	63	8	69	59
Knows the letters of the alphabet	72	10	76	58

Hawai'i parents and the national sample of parents rated these seven child readiness items similarly. Of note are the few items that Hawai'i parents rated substantially higher than the national sample. These were two General Knowledge items: “*Can count to 20 or more*” (10 percentage points higher) and *Knows the letters of the alphabet* (18 percentage points higher); and one Motor Skill item: *Is able to use pencils and paint brushes* (11 percentage points higher).

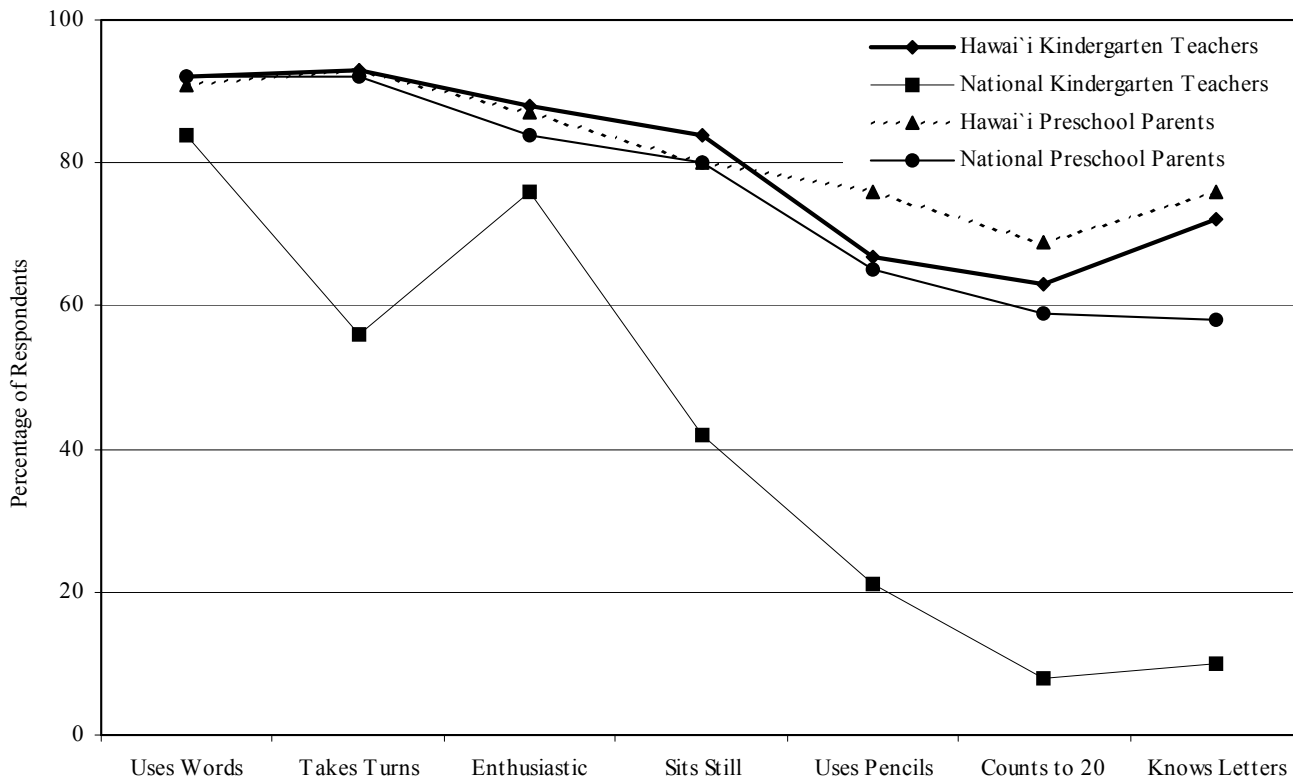
The ratings of Hawai'i parents, Hawai'i public school kindergarten teachers, and the national sample of parents were quite similar to one another and different from the national sample of teachers' ratings. The national teacher ratings were consistently, and often substantially lower, than the other three groups on all five items. The differences overall ranged from 7 percentage points lower to 61 percentage points lower. The most substantial differences were in the two basic skills items (*Can count to 20 or more* and *Knows the letters of the alphabet*). Only 8 to 10% of the national sample of kindergarten teachers rated these characteristics as ‘*very important*’ or ‘*essential*,’ in comparison to 58 to 76 % of the national parents, Hawai'i parents, and Hawai'i teachers. Although these three groups rated knowing the alphabet and counting to 20 higher than the national kindergarten teachers, these items still ranked below the other five for all groups.

Although the percentages differed, the three items with the highest ratings were the same for all four groups (Hawai'i and national parents and teachers): *Takes turns and shares* in the social domain; *Uses words to make needs and thoughts known* in the communication domain; and *Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new*

activities in the domain of Approaches to Learning.

In Table 32, we compare Hawai'i and the national percentages of kindergarten teachers who endorsed 15 common items as 'very important' or 'essential.' Hawai'i public school kindergarten teachers percentages

Figure 5. Percentage of Hawai'i and National Preschool Parents and Kindergarten Teachers Who Endorsed Child Characteristics as Essential or Very Important



ranged from 61% to 99 % compared to 7% to 96% for the national teachers. Again, Hawai'i public school kindergarten teachers consistently rated all items as 'very important' or 'essential' more frequently than did the national sample of public kindergarten teachers.

When considering the comparisons between the national and Hawai`i samples of parents and teachers, it must be remembered that there is an eight year difference between the undertaking of these studies. During this time, there has been a growing emphasis on academics and basic skills in the elementary schools, and an increasing awareness of the importance of social and emotional development, particularly at the preschool level.

Table 32. Percentage of National and Hawai`i Public School Kindergarten Teachers' Ratings as "very important" or "essential" on Common Child Readiness Items.

15 Common Child Readiness Items	Public Kindergarten Teachers	
	Hawai`i	National
Is physically healthy, rested, well-nourished	98	96
Is sensitive to other children's feelings	87	58
Takes turns and shares	93	56
Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities	92	76
Has good problem solving skills	88	24
Sits still and pays attention	84	42
Can follow directions	99	60
Finishes tasks	93	40
Is not disruptive	89	60
Uses words to make needs and thoughts known	92	84
Know and uses standard English	61	42
Knows the letters of the alphabet	71	10
Can count to 20 or more	63	7
Knows colors and shapes	65	24
Is able to use pencils or paintbrushes	67	21

Where the national studies found fairly strong discrepancies between parent and teacher beliefs, with parents placing more emphasis on behavioral items (such as taking turns and sharing; able to sit still and listen) and school-related skill items (such as knowing letters of the alphabet, counting to 20, and using pencils and paint brushes), this does not appear to be the case in Hawai`i. Our results indicate that parents and teachers in Hawai`i are more similar to one another in their perceptions of readiness than parents and teachers in the national sample. This similarity in views holds potential to enhance readiness efforts and initiatives in the state of Hawai`i.

However, the very high value given to all 15 child readiness characteristics (i.e., *very important* or *essential*)

by both Hawai'i teachers and parents raises the issue of expectations for young children. From these findings, young children entering kindergarten are expected to have a wide array of well developed skills and knowledge in order to do well or to be successful in school. Such high expectations may or may not be reasonable. The community of early childhood educators and parents should consider discussion of the following questions, particularly in our current educational era of "high standards:" Are these expectations too high? Are there too many? And most importantly, are both our preschool and kindergarten teachers sufficiently well prepared and skilled so that our young children will succeed in school?

School Practices Results

Respondents rated the importance of 18 school practices relative to readiness for kindergarten success. These items clustered into four categories: Transition and Communication, Language and Culture, Active and Individualized, and Passive and Uniform. A fifth set of items formed another category labeled "Other." The clustered items and the percentage of respondents who rated the item as "essential" (the top rating of "5" on the Likert scale) to success in kindergarten are displayed in Table 33.

Administrators had the highest and lowest percent of "essential" ratings compared to any other subgroup. The percent rating an item as a "5" ranged from zero by private school administrators for "*Children use worksheets/work books for math, science, and/or reading*" to a high of 86.4% for two items: "*Children can choose from a variety of hands-on activities*" by preschool administrators and "*School communicates well with families about child's school experiences*" by private school administrators.

The administrators also had more items with high essential ratings (i.e., 50% or more "essential" ratings) than any other subgroup. The number of items with 50% or more ranged from five for public school administrators to eight for preschool administrator. As a group administrators (5 to 8) viewed slightly more schools practices as essential for children's success than teachers (5 to 7 items), and substantially more than parents (3 to 6 items).

The items in the Passive and Uniform cluster had the lowest percentage who rated them as essential. Seven of the nine subgroups considered most, if not all, items in this category not to be essential school practices (i.e., had fewer than 25% rating an item as a "5").

Surprisingly for Hawai'i, all parent groups did not see the school practices that deal with home language and culture as essential. Less than 25% thought these items are essential for success in school. Public school teachers and administrators held similar views as the parents—these language and culture practices were seen as less essential than other given school practices. Private school administrators and teachers more frequently rated them as essential than their public school counterparts.

Public school respondents (i.e., public school administrators, teachers, or parents) compared to their respective preschool and private school counterparts, had the fewest number of school practice items (3 to 5) considered essential (i.e., over 50% gave item a "5").

Table 33. School Practice Clusters and Items with Percentage of Respondents Endorsing the Items as “Essential”

School Practice Categories and Items	Preschool			Private School			Public School		
	Admin	Teacher	Parent	Admin	Teacher	Parent	Admin	Teacher	Parent
Transition and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school communicates well with families about child’s school experiences. • There is communication between kindergarten teachers and previous teachers/caregivers. • Entering kindergarten children visit the school they will be attending. • Schools have an orientation for entering kindergarten children and their families. 	75.0	75.2	74.2	86.4	72.2	73.1	58.6	55.3	60.5
	38.6	30.9	30.8	45.5	19.4	22.8	19.0	13.6	27.2
	36.4	47.7	48.5	27.3	25.0	35.4	22.4	14.5	39.7
	68.2	67.1	56.7	54.6	50.0	47.5	55.2	57.0	48.2
Language and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers accept and build on children’s home language. • Teachers incorporate the children’s culture in the curriculum. • Parents are involved in classroom activities. 	29.6	22.8	14.6	31.8	16.7	8.2	13.8	22.4	17.4
	43.2	47.7	23.7	54.6	36.1	20.3	20.7	21.1	22.5
	38.6	41.6	40.1	36.4	36.1	32.0	41.4	27.2	27.5
Active and Individualized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children engage in running, jumping, climbing, and active play. • Children can choose from a variety of hands-on activities. • Teachers individualize the curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of children. 	56.8	40.3	33.4	40.9	44.4	38.6	31.0	33.8	29.6
	86.4	58.4	49.1	45.5	50.0	51.9	39.7	51.8	41.7
	68.2	65.8	50.6	50.0	66.7	41.8	53.5	55.3	46.0

Table 33. School Practice Clusters and Items with Percentage of Respondents Endorsing the Items as “Essential”

School Practice Categories and Items	Preschool			Private School			Public School		
	Admin	Teacher	Parent	Admin	Teacher	Parent	Admin	Teacher	Parent
Passive and Uniform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use worksheets/ workbooks for math, science, and/or reading. • Children have homework almost every day. • Teachers expect all children to meet the same academic standards. • The school has the same curriculum in all kindergarten classrooms. 	2.3	.4	26.0	0	11.1	29.1	1.7	5.7	38.4
	2.3	4.7	14.4	4.6	2.8	14.9	5.2	15.8	30.8
	2.3	6.0	11.3	4.6	8.3	10.1	24.1	19.3	19.1
	11.4	13.4	22.3	18.2	30.6	20.6	29.3	2.5	30.8
Other School Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children listen to stories read aloud. • Parents are provided with education about child development and learning. • Children’s health is screened before they enter kindergarten. • Teaching is exclusively in standard English. 	70.5	61.7	53.7	81.8	63.9	55.4	63.8	76.3	49.8
	50.0	65.8	59.4	54.6	41.7	32.0	41.4	43.9	27.5
	63.6	63.8	60.4	59.1	58.3	53.2	53.5	67.5	56.8
	22.7	23.5	31.3	36.4	36.1	31.7	19.0	21.9	37.4

The three school practice items with the highest percentage of essential ratings for each subgroup are listed in Table 34. Of the 18 school practices, a total of 7 occur in the top three, indicating a great deal of correspondence across the nine subgroups. In fact, all nine subgroups have in common *communicating well with families about children’s school experiences*. Seven of the nine subgroups have *children listen to stories read aloud* in their top three.

Administrators share two school practices in common – communicating with families, and children listening to stories. Each also had a different item in their top three – health screening for private administrators and choice of hands-on activities for preschool administrators; and orientation to kindergarten for public school administrators.

Table 34. The Top Three Most Valued School Practices Essential for School Success.

School Practices	Administrators N=124			Teachers N=413			Parents N=2067		
	Presch	Private	Public	Presch	Private	Public	Presch	Private	Public
The school communicates well with families about the child’s school experience.	75.0	86.4	58.6	75.2	72.2	55.3	58.6	73.1	60.5
Children listen to stories read aloud.	70.5	81.8	63.8		63.9	76.3		63.9	49.8
Children’s health is screened before they enter kindergarten.		59.1					60.4	53.4	56.8
Teachers individualize the curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of children.				65.8	66.7	55.3			
Parents are provided with education about child development and learning.				65.8			59.4		
Children can choose from a variety of hands-on activities (blocks, centers, arts & crafts).	86.4								
Schools have an orientation for entering kindergarten children and their families.			55.2						

Note. The figures are the percent of respondents who rated the item a “5” (essential) to school success.

Teachers, too, share two items in common– communicating with families and individualizing instruction. Private and public school teachers both have children listening to stories in their respective top three, while preschool teachers placed more value on parent education.

Like the other two role groups, parents are remarkably alike. They, too, share two school practices in their top three – communicating with families and health screening for children. In addition, children listening to stories was in both the private and public school parents’ top three. Preschool parents, like their teacher counterparts, valued parent education.

School Practice Clusters

Tables 35 to 37 contain the means for school practice clusters by role group and school type, which are displayed in Figures 6-8. Passive and Uniform Practices was the lowest valued category overall (3.53, SD 0.89) and for each of the nine subgroups (low: 2.32 mean for preschool administrators; high: 3.88 for public school parents). There was no one cluster that all groups considered to be the most important to school success. It varied across the groups.

Language and Culture Practices. There were significant differences among the role groups for the Language and Culture cluster ($F=36.73, df2, <.001$). Administrators (O4.07) considered practices that promote language and culture more important to school success than did parents (O 3.70); teachers (O 3.99) placed more value on such practices than did parents, while there was no significant difference between administrators and teachers.

Active and Individualized Practices. Role group ($F=11.43, df2, p<.0001$) and school type ($F=7.01, df2, p .0012$) were significant. Administrators (O 4.44) and teachers (O 4.39) placed more importance on practices that engage children in active ways and are individualized than did parents (O 4.23). The preschool group, as a whole (O 4.32), considered such school practices as more important than the public school group (O 4.22).

Transition and Communication Practices. Role group by school type was significant ($F=6.13, df4, p .0001$) resulting in quite an array of complex differences between and among the nine subgroups. First, while there were no differences within the preschool subgroups nor the private school subgroups, there were difference within the public school subgroups. Public school parents (O 4.24) placed greater value on these school practices than did public school teachers (O 4.03), a potential source of tension.

The differences between preschool teachers and the kindergarten teachers was also significant: Preschool teachers saw transition and communication practices as close to essential (O 4.45) while public school kindergarten teachers saw less value in these practices (O 4.03). The private and public school kindergarten teachers (O 4.15 and O 4.03 respectively) see less value in transitioning families and children from preschool environments to the more institutional school environments and also place less value on home-school communication than do preschool teachers (O 4.45). Since strengthening ties between preschools and “regular” schools has been a goal of early childhood educational organizations, such a difference may well be important to address.

Passive and Uniform Practices. Role group by school type was significant ($F=3.62, df4, p .0070$). Preschool administrators (O 2.32) did not place great value on this cluster of items and rated it significantly lower than all parent groups, all teacher groups, and public school administrators. Public school parents (O 3.88) had the highest mean and rated these practices as more important than public school administrators (O 3.24) and more important than private school parents (O 3.37) and preschool parents (O 3.37). Teacher groups were not significantly different from one another.

Table 35. Administrator Mean Ratings for School Practice Clusters

School Practice Category	Total Admin	Preschool Admin	Private Admin	Public Admin
Transition and Communication	4.32	4.47	4.35	4.19
Language and Culture	4.07	4.10	4.15	4.02
Active and Individualized	4.44	4.65	4.28	4.33
Passive and Uniform	2.80	2.32	2.68	3.24

Note. Means of the highest valued practice are in bold.

Table 36. Teacher Mean Ratings of School Practice Clusters

School Practice Category	Total Teacher	Preschool Teacher	Private Teacher	Public Teacher
Transition and Communication	4.19	4.45	4.15	4.03
Language and Culture	3.99	4.08	4.02	3.93
Active and Individualized	4.39	4.45	4.42	4.34
Passive and Uniform	3.15	2.66	3.00	3.49

Note. Means of the highest valued practice are in bold.

Table 37. Parent Mean Ratings of School Practice Clusters

School Practice Category	Total Parent	Preschool Parent	Private Parent	Public Parent
Transition and Communication	4.19	4.36	4.20	4.24
Language and Culture	3.70	3.73	3.60	3.72
Active and Individualized	4.23	4.26	4.28	4.19
Passive and Uniform	3.64	3.37	3.37	3.88

Note. Means of the highest valued practice are in bold.

Figure 6. Administrator Mean Ratings for School Practice Categories

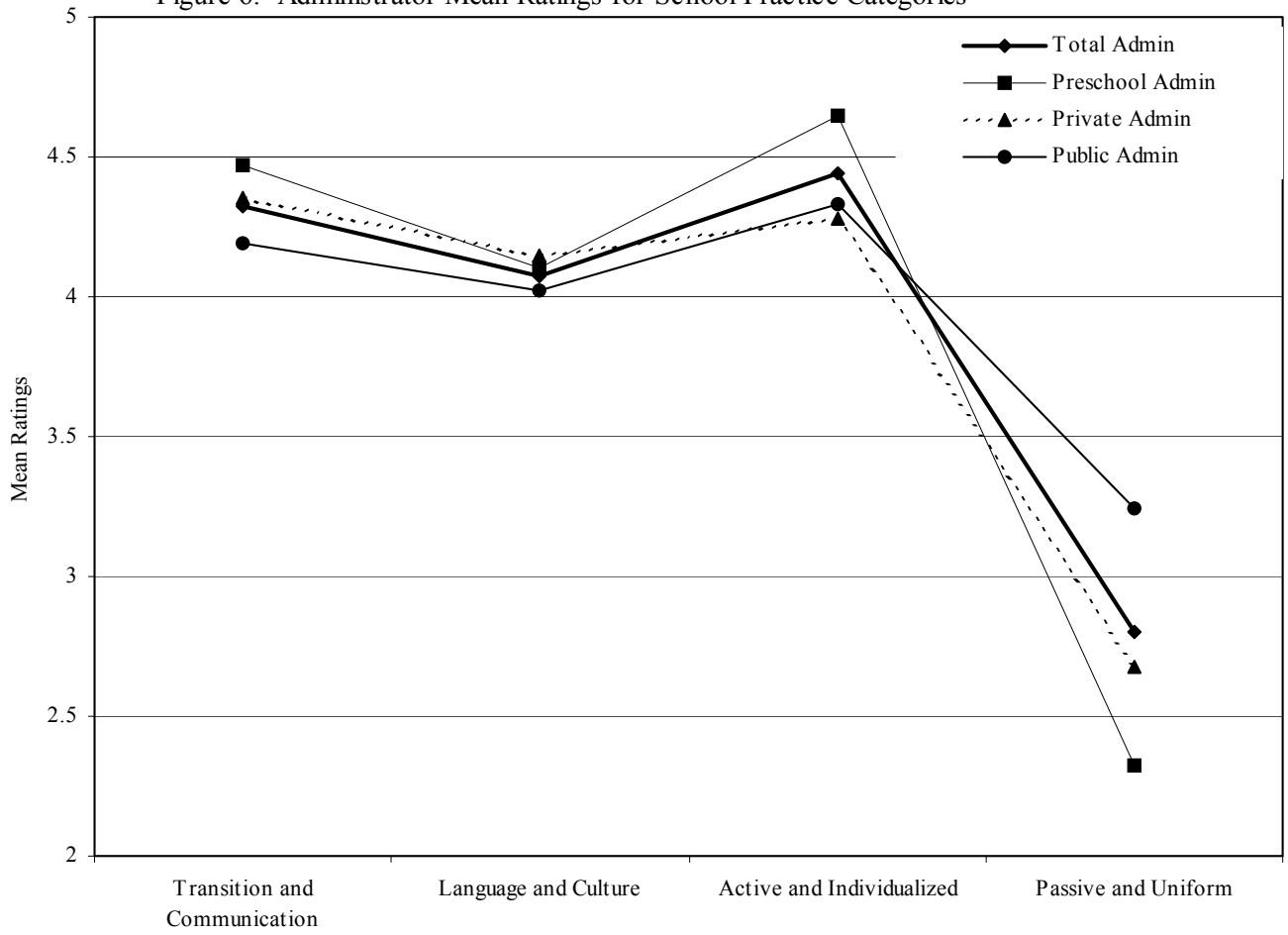


Figure 7. Teacher Mean Ratings of School Practice Categories

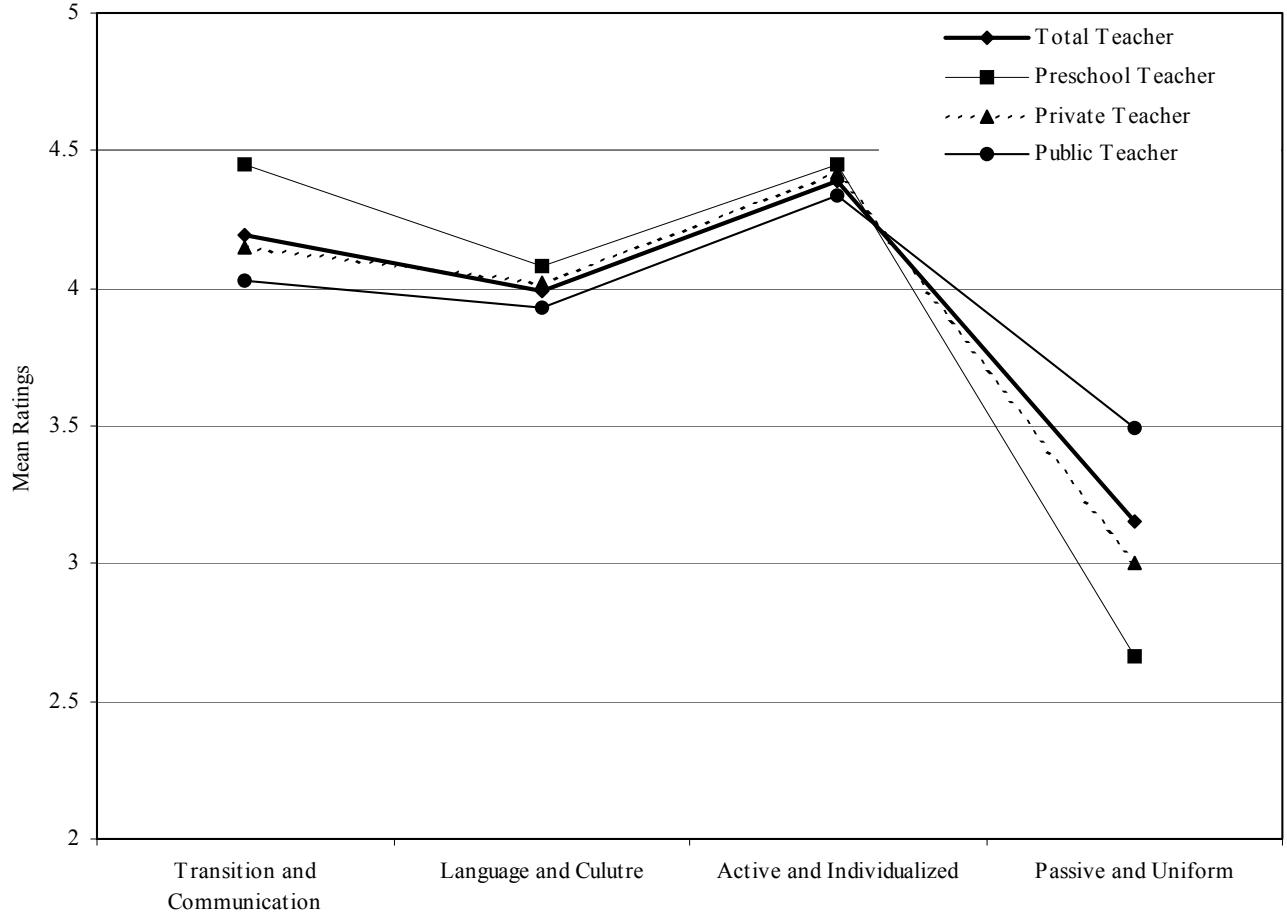
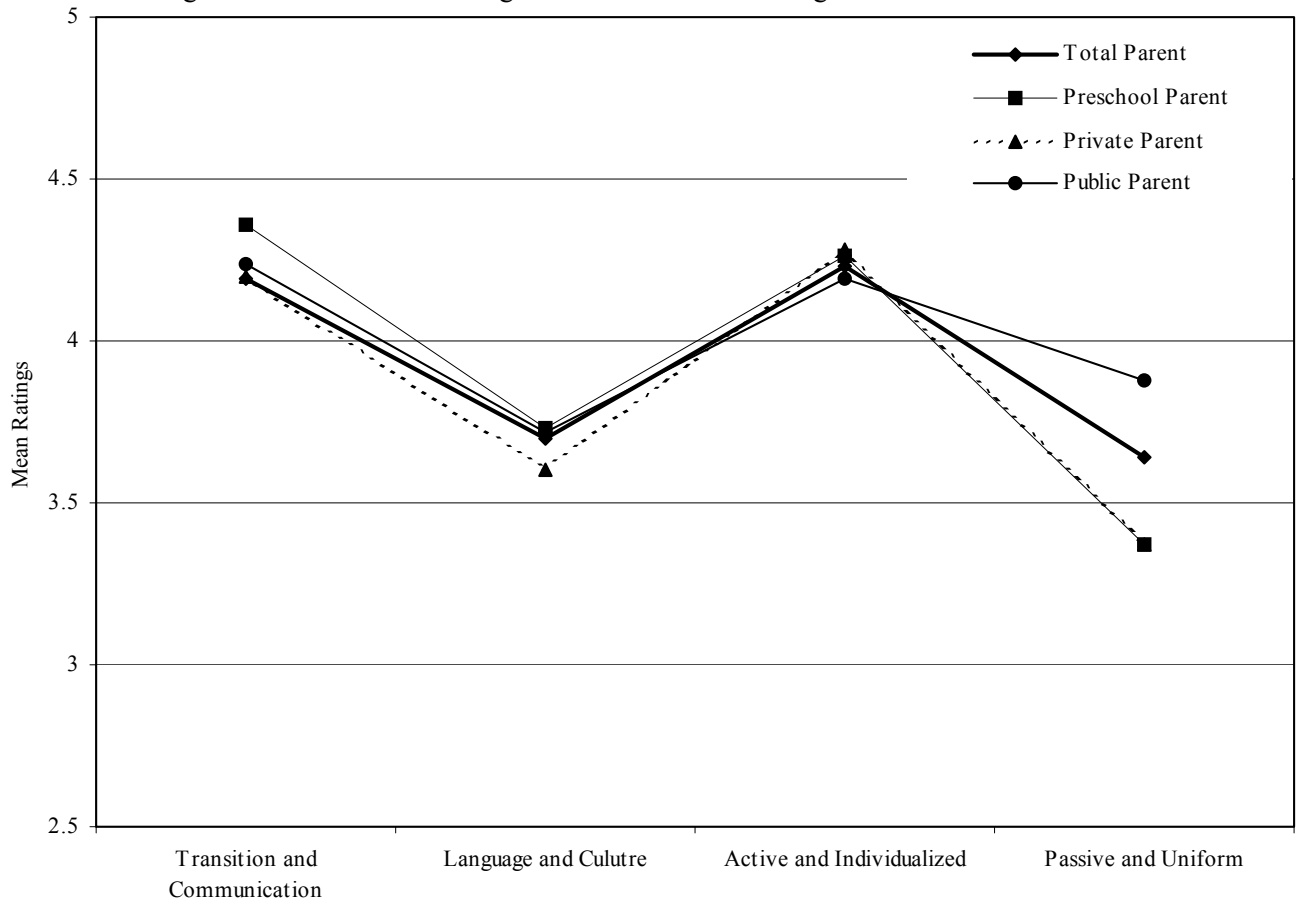


Figure 8. Parent Mean Ratings of School Practice Categories



Influences on Kindergarten Success

The percentage of respondents who rated the five influences (family experiences, preschool attendance, characteristics of the child, characteristics of the community, and relationship between home and school) as “essential” and the mean ratings for each of the groups are presented in Tables 38 to 40.

Of the five factors, Family Experiences and Home and School Relationships were seen by all nine subgroups as the two most important factors influencing children’s success in kindergarten. These top two factors were also highly valued, with means ranging from a low of 4.40 to a high of 4.95.

Community Characteristics was by far the least important factor of the five for almost all (7 of the 9) subgroups. For public school parents, however, Preschool Attendance was least important of the five (O 3.69; about 27% ratings of essential), but close in value to Community Characteristics (O 3.86; about 26% ratings of essential). For private school administrators, Preschool Attendance was clearly last with just about 9% of them rating it essential to success and most considering it as only somewhat important (O 3.10). Only preschool teachers (O 4.21) and preschool parents (O 4.17) saw preschool experience as a very important factor.

Thus, our survey respondents held views much like our focus group participants, who ranked family experience as a very strong influence on school success, and considered school and community of lesser importance.

Table 38. Administrators' Percentages of Essential and Mean Ratings of Factors Influencing School Success.

Factors Influencing School Success	Total Admin		Preschool Admin		Private Admin		Public Admin	
	%	O	%	O	%	O	%	O
Family Experiences	83.1	4.84	77.3	4.77	72.7	4.73	91.4	4.95
Preschool Attendance	15.3	3.68	15.9	3.70	9.1	3.10	17.2	3.89
Child Characteristics	32.3	4.15	38.6	4.31	27.3	4.05	29.3	4.07
Community Characteristics	6.5	3.36	6.8	3.41	13.6	3.23	3.5	3.36
Home and School Relationships	53.2	4.44	59.1	4.48	50.0	4.45	50.0	4.40

Note. Highest valued figures are in bold.

Table 39. Teachers' Percentages of Essential and Mean Ratings of Factors Influencing School Success

Factors Influencing School Success	Total Teachers		Preschool Teacher		Private Teacher		Public Teacher	
	%	O	%	O	%	O	%	O
Family Experiences	81.1	4.80	83.9	4.84	52.8	4.50	83.8	4.82
Preschool Attendance	24.7	3.83	41.6	4.21	13.9	3.50	15.4	3.63
Child Characteristics	44.8	4.33	46.3	4.35	36.1	4.20	45.2	4.33
Community Characteristics	12.6	3.51	19.5	3.66	2.8	3.23	9.7	3.46
Home and School Relationships	62.0	4.57	63.1	4.58	58.3	4.70	61.8	4.57

Note. Highest valued figures are in bold.

Table 40. Parents' Percentages of Essential and Mean Ratings of Factors Influencing School Success

Factors Influencing School Success	Total Parent		Preschool Parent		Private Parent		Public Parent	
	%	O	%	O	%	O	%	O
Family Experiences	72.5	4.70	76.9	4.75	80.4	4.79	67.6	4.65
Preschool Attendance	30.6	3.85	38.7	4.17	25.6	3.78	27.2	3.69
Child Characteristics	47.8	4.39	52.6	4.48	40.2	4.27	47.1	4.38
Community Characteristics	24.5	3.80	25.7	3.81	18.4	3.58	25.5	3.86
Home and School Relationship	59.3	4.53	64.6	4.58	63.0	4.55	55.1	4.50

Note. Highest valued figures are in bold.

Section III

Overall Summary and Conclusions

In this section, national comparisons and our findings from both focus group interviews and surveys are summarized according to the major components of readiness developed for the National Educational Goals Panel: (1) Readiness in children; (2) Readiness of schools for children; and (3) Family and community factors (Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, December 2000).

Readiness in Children

Comparison with National Sample

When considering the comparisons between the national and Hawai`i samples of parents and teachers on common child readiness items, it must be remembered that there is a difference of eight years between the two studies. During this time, there has been a growing emphasis on academics and basic skills in the elementary schools, and an increasing awareness of the importance of social and emotional development, particularly at the preschool level.

Where the national studies found fairly strong discrepancies between parent and teacher beliefs, with parents placing more emphasis on behavioral items (such as taking turns and sharing, being able to sit still and listen) and school-related skill items (such as knowing letters of the alphabet, counting to 20, and using pencils and paint brushes), this does not appear to be the case in Hawai`i. Our results indicate that parents and teachers in Hawai`i are more similar to one another in their perceptions of child readiness than parents and teachers in the national sample. This finding holds potential to enhance readiness efforts and initiatives in the state of Hawai`i.

However, the very high value given to all 15 child readiness characteristics (i.e., *very important* or *essential*) by both Hawai`i teachers and public school kindergarten parents raises the issue of expectations for young children. From these findings, young children entering kindergarten are expected to have a wide array of well developed skills and knowledge in order to do well or to be successful in school. The community of early childhood educators and parents should consider whether these child readiness expectations are reasonable and developmentally appropriate, particularly in light of the press for high and rigorous standards.

Comparisons within Hawai`i Sample

In Hawai`i, the most salient and shared views about what children's characteristics and abilities promote learning and success in kindergarten come initially from findings of our focus group interviews with preschool and kindergarten teachers and parents, and are supported and extended by results of surveys completed by public, private and preschool administrators, teachers and parents.

Physical Health and Well-Being

Like the national teacher sample (NCES, 1993a), physical health and well-being of young children are seen as *the* most important and essential readiness characteristics by all survey respondents. Children who are physically fit, well-nourished, rested, and in general good health are more likely to benefit from learning experiences provided by families, schools and communities. All survey groups, regardless of their affiliation and role, endorsed this belief, regarding it as essential for children's successful learning. *Healthy, rested, and well nourished* was selected by all survey groups as one of the five most important and influential characteristics for school success. Although health and well-being was barely mentioned by our interview groups as a child readiness characteristic because of the way our prompt was worded, health screening for children was high on the list of important things communities can do to help children be successful.

The high agreement and the extremely high ratings for physical health and well-being have strong implications for private and public agencies and their policies, such as access to vision, hearing and dental

screening; child immunization efforts; and nutrition and health education programs, to name a few.

Social-Emotional Development

Children's social and emotional skills emerged as central in almost every interview group's beliefs about readiness, and was strongly endorsed as "very important" for school success by all survey groups, particularly by parents. The social-emotional domain points in two directions: the external that encompasses children's ability to cooperate, form friendships and understand the perspectives and feelings of others; and the internal that includes recognition and expression of one's own feelings, positive self-regard and a developing sense of independence and efficacy. Again, the central importance of this domain is reinforced by the fact that every survey group and interview group selected *Is confident and feels good about self* as one of the five most critical characteristics needed for school success.

School-Related Behaviors and Skills

School-related behaviors and skills of young children surfaced in the interviews and on the surveys as a very important readiness domain, particularly among parents, public school kindergarten teachers and preschool administrators. Children who come to kindergarten with (or who quickly acquire) certain work habits and attitudes (such as completing appropriate tasks, following simple routines and directions, demonstrating common courtesies, and exhibiting self-control in groups) reduce the need for teachers to attend to classroom management issues. Teachers, therefore, can focus more on learning and curriculum issues. All interview groups had in their top five child readiness characteristics, items similar to *Can follow directions, rules and routines*, as did all survey groups. Administrators, teachers, and parents in our survey also selected another item from this school-related behavior domain as one of the top five readiness characteristics: *Is respectful of others (children and adults)*.

Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

General knowledge (such as knowing numbers, colors, shapes and letters) was the least valued component of children's readiness for school. It was valued higher by parents than by teachers in our group interviews; and on our survey, public school parents valued it more than private or preschool parents. Administrators did not see general knowledge as that important to school success. Relative to the other domains, all survey groups considered it the least important domain. No group (survey or interview) selected a basic knowledge characteristic as one of the most critical skills for children's success.

Differential value placed on basic conventional knowledge by parents and teachers has been found in other studies (Lewit & Baker, 1995; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2001). However, our study found no substantial differences in this regard, although there was a general trend in that direction.

Cognitive development (meaning the development of concepts and understandings, such as emergent literacy concepts, concepts of number, space and time; and cognitive processes, such as comparing, synthesizing, reflecting and evaluating new knowledge) did not surface in the interviews. Our survey items, modeled as they were on national surveys, did not represent this aspect of the domain. The lack of cognitive items on our survey is a strong shortcoming of our study, since cognitive development has a prominent role in child development and education literature.

Greater knowledge of cognition and its development needs to be promoted in the early childhood community of parents, caregivers and professional educators. Awareness and knowledge of this domain are particularly needed for systematically planning and maintaining a balanced, comprehensive curriculum for young children. Attention to cognition and its development in the curriculum, particularly by kindergarten teachers, will provide the scaffolding of higher level thinking processes and skills expected and needed for learning in later grades.

Approaches to Learning

Characteristics related to how children approach learning experiences and opportunities (such as, curiosity, willingness to try new tasks and challenges, persistence, taking a problem-solving approach, etc.) were rarely mentioned in the group interviews, indicating that they did not readily come to mind when thinking about characteristics for success in school. When these characteristics did come to mind, teacher focus groups, primarily preschool teacher groups, brought them up as important. However, when items tapping into approaches to learning occurred on the survey, they were highly endorsed by parents, teachers and administrators, considering such child characteristics as close to essential for success. *Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities* ranked in the top five qualities selected by all survey groups.

Language Development and Communication

Communication skills were mentioned in the group interviews, but not often; and they did not form a separate category for any of the interview groups. Many communication skills were embedded in the contextual comments, particularly for preschool teacher interview groups, so that communication skills served a social skills function or an independent skills function. Both parent and teacher interview groups did single out the importance of a child being able to communicate his or her needs, wants and feelings as one of the top five child characteristics for success. On the survey, parents and teachers endorsed communication skills as very important, and thought they were more important than did administrators. For the survey respondents, however, no communication item was placed in the top five.

Perhaps the lesson from these findings on communication is that teaching and learning of such skills should be situationally embedded in purpose and use - that is what makes sense to teachers and parents; it also corresponds to how young children learn to communicate in home and community settings.

Language development never came up in the group interviews, and unfortunately was not represented on the survey. Because language acquisition is a universal phenomenon, it may have been overlooked in educational settings or its promotion seen as unnecessary. As the saying goes, "Language is caught rather than taught." The challenge, like in the cognitive domain, rests in the educational arena: how to thoughtfully and systematically create a language rich environment for young children.

Motor and Self-Help Skills

These skills occurred infrequently in the group interviews. When they did emerge in the interview setting, teacher groups more often than parent groups noted their importance. In the survey, all groups placed a high value on these skills (more than "very important"), with exception of public school administrators.

Readiness of Schools for Children

In the focus group interviews, we asked what schools can do to help children be successful in kindergarten. Overall, the largest cluster of actions across parent and teachers interview groups focused on the staffing/structure issue, such as having enough adults to give individual attention to children, both through smaller class size and more adults in the classroom. Actions that ensure schools are caring, nurturing, and safe places for young children was the second largest cluster, and tied with actions that promote communication between parents and school, and parent education. Curriculum, teaching strategies and assessments appropriate and responsive to young children's development captured most of the remaining actions.

The strongest differences about what schools should do that emerged in the interview groups were not surprising, but are informative for policymakers. Preschool teacher interview groups brought up professional

development, sufficient resources and adequate school facilities as something schools can do; preschool parent groups did not. Kindergarten parent interview groups strongly noted how parent-school communication and parent education would assist children's success in kindergarten; kindergarten teacher groups did not. Kindergarten teacher groups noted the importance of school policies; kindergarten parent groups did not. Thus, role group (parent or teacher) and school affiliation (preschool or public kindergarten) shift perspectives on what would be needed and helpful to children's successful school experience.

School practices also encompass what teachers could do to help young children be successful in school. The two largest clusters across parent and teacher interview groups were actions that support children's development (such as provide individual attention, show interest and empathy, nurture, care and praise, etc.) and actions focused on parent-school communication and relationships (such as welcome parents, explain child's progress, share classroom activities, etc.). Kindergarten teacher interview groups, while supporting parent-school communication and relationships, considered teachers' actions that support children's learning as more relevant to children's success.

On the survey, we had an array of items that asked respondents to explicitly rate the importance of school actions and practices on children's kindergarten success. These items formed four clusters, along with a set of independent items. Two clusters, one that dealt with curriculum practices that provide active and individualized learning experiences, and one that enhances home-school communication and facilitates transition to kindergarten, were the most highly rated by all survey groups. These clusters, on the average, were considered more than "very important." Individual items with the highest percentage of "essential" ratings also came from these same two clusters. The independent items, *reading stories aloud to children*, *parent education* and *health screening*, were also seen as essential to children's success.

In general, important and valued school actions and practices are consistent between interview and survey findings. Overall, actions that schools and teachers can take to best assist children's success in school are those that demonstrate caring and support for young children's emotional well-being; establish positive home-school relationships through communication and transition activities; and curriculum practices that provide active and individualized learning experiences for young children. These findings correspond well with characteristics of "ready schools" put forth by NEGP (2000). One notable absence in the Hawai'i findings is the "ready school" characteristic of altering practices and programs if they do not benefit children.

At the present time, there is little information on the extent of these practices in schools, nor is there a formal, systemic infrastructure to gather, evaluate, and make such information accessible for use. Initial attention by the early childhood community on home-school communication and transition activities may be a good first step since it would encompass both preschool and kindergarten communities.

Family and Community Factors Influencing Readiness

The interview participants more often saw child characteristics and experiences provided by the family as most influential, and community characteristics as least influential on children's success in kindergarten. All survey groups also considered family experiences as "very important" to "essential" factors in school success. Like the interview participants, administrators, teachers, and parents as-a-whole judged community characteristics to be the least important factor of all.

Preschool experience (a factor omitted in the focus group interview protocol) was not valued as a highly influential factor by most of our survey subgroups. Only two groups, preschool teachers and preschool parents, saw preschool experience as very important.

Thus, our survey respondents held views much like our focus group participants, who ranked family experience as a very strong influence on school success, and considered school and community of lesser importance.

Consideration of children's home languages and cultures in the curriculum was important to the survey participants, but seen as less essential to school success than many of the other given school practices. Neither did the interview groups generate these areas as things that teachers, parents, schools, or communities should address.

When specifically asked, however, how teachers and schools could build on children's cultural backgrounds, the preschool parent and teacher interview groups proposed incorporating cultural awareness into the curriculum and accepting and building on children's home languages. Kindergarten parent and teacher interview groups focused far more on having cultural awareness in the curriculum and far less on home language.

If cultural and language backgrounds of children and families are to be valued as influential factors in children's success, then greater awareness along with specific strategies would need to be part of community education efforts and professional development programs for educators.

Section IV Recommendations

Our recommendations grow from our research project on perceptions and beliefs about readiness described in this report and from a review of the national literature. Awareness of views about readiness held by parents, teachers and school administrators in our state and those held by nationally recognized early childhood experts helped us focus our recommendations on both the shared perspectives and unique beliefs.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Adopt a statewide definition of readiness that recognizes its complex and dynamic nature and corresponds to the central values expressed by the early childhood education community in Hawai`i.

Our first recommendation is that the state of Hawai`i adopt a definition of readiness that is *sufficiently complex* to incorporate the three critical attributes (i.e., child characteristics, school characteristics, and family/community characteristics) that interact to increase the likelihood of children learning; that has *common, core aspects* valued by parents, teachers, administrators and the early childhood education community; and that recognizes its *dynamic nature* (i.e., readiness is not a single point in time, nor a simple switch: “on- ready” and “off-not ready”).

The value of a common and shared definition has been noted by many. It has the potential of serving as a central focus around which the early childhood community can organize its efforts, guide its expenditure of energy and resources, and give sustaining purpose for public and private partnerships. Hawai`i, with its small size and centralized school system, is in a good position to be one of the leaders among the states to arrive at a common definition of readiness.

The overriding purpose, however, for developing a statewide definition of readiness is to create a context that will enable children to succeed in kindergarten and subsequent school experiences. To realize this purpose, we recommend that Hawai`i’s definition of readiness follow the lead of the National Education Goals Panel and national early childhood experts. It should address the three critical attributes of child, school, and family/community supports valued by Hawai`i early childhood stakeholders and address the dynamic nature of the concepts of readiness. We offer the following definition for consideration:

Readiness is the interactive outcome of a child’s early development, school practices, and family and community supports that enable a child to engage in and benefit from school learning experiences.¹³

The three attributes embedded in this draft definition are more fully described below, and national experts’ views on them are highlighted in the Background section which follows.

Readiness of Children

This refers to the characteristics that children bring to the school setting that enhance the likelihood of learning. We organized these characteristics in terms of the seven developmental domains addressed in our research project: social-emotional development, school-related behaviors and skills, approaches to learning, language development and communication skills, cognitive development and general knowledge, motor development and self-help skills, and physical health and well-being. Our findings on child characteristics

¹³ Adapted from the definition of readiness developed by the state of Maryland.

valued in these domains by parents, teachers and administrators in Hawai'i give substance to this attribute of readiness. Such common, valued child characteristics form the essence of the child benchmarking instrument that we drafted for consideration by the early childhood community.

Readiness of Schools

This refers to characteristics and practices of schools and teachers that are most likely to produce positive outcomes for young children. Overall, actions that schools and teachers can take are those that demonstrate caring and support for young children's well-being; actions that establish positive home-school relationships through communication and transition activities; and curriculum practices that emphasize active, individualized, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children.

Community and Family Supports

This attribute of readiness addresses programs and policies in communities that support the well-being of children and families. Indicators include such things as health services; availability of high quality preschool programs; family access to basic resources; collaborative, integrated services; access to parent education, etc. Outcome data collected by the Good Beginnings Alliance can be used to provide baseline levels for this characteristic.

Background

In a policy report, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1990), states that, "Defining readiness as 'the expectation of what skills and abilities children should possess prior to school entry' is defining readiness as gatekeeping. This definition ignores the reality of children's unequal access to growth-enhancing environments. They call for a definition that includes "efforts to combat the roots of school failure (p. 22)."

Crnic and Lambrey (1994) stated, "We lack a coherent theory of readiness that not only addresses individual child characteristics, but attends to the multiplicity of factors that facilitate children's success in academic environments. If we are to move ahead in understanding readiness, we must attempt to re-conceptualize the readiness construct to consider the multiple factors likely to promote the ultimate goal of readiness, and how these factors might interact to facilitate a successful transition to school and a readiness to learn (p. 101)."

The National Summit on School Readiness Assessment brought together early childhood experts to examine and discuss the research and concept of school readiness. In her keynote talk at this conference, Lynn Kagan (March 2000) stated that we need to create a system that is appropriate and meets the expectations of all involved, including parents, educators, and policymakers. She also pointed out that in order to develop such a system we need to have consensus in the field about what children should know and be able to do.

Meisels (1999) expressed the opinion that "Readiness must be conceptualized as a broad construct that incorporates all aspects of a child's life that contribute directly to that child's ability to learn. Definitions of readiness must take into account the environment, context and conditions under which the child acquires skills and is encouraged to learn (p. 62)." Graue (March 2000) echoed this view at the National Summit. She believes that child readiness is a complex concept and that all elements must be considered in defining readiness. These elements include: (1) the physical, biological, and maturational elements of a child; (2) the cultural-social resources that catalyze the physical (e.g. relationships, prior experiences); and (3) the social expectations and standards to which children are held.

Scott-Little (March 2000), in summing up the construct of readiness discussed at the National Summit conference noted that, "Today, most experts think of "readiness" as a dynamic process that occurs over time

rather than a status that is achieved (or not achieved) by the first day of kindergarten. Moreover, many see readiness as a broad construct that incorporates all aspects of a child's life that contribute to his or her ability to learn—aspects that cannot be measured by the standardized tests used in schools (p. 38).”

As the above statements show, assumptions about readiness that were held in the past have been challenged. There is a growing consensus that readiness is a flawed concept when it addresses only attributes of individual children and implies that some of them are not ready and should not be allowed to attend school. The view that is more widely held today is that readiness is a useful construct only if it leads to support for children's development and includes societal factors that impact that development along with child attributes.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Establish an inclusive, stable mechanism and infrastructure with authority and support that coordinates and oversees readiness initiatives in Hawai'i.

To assure conditions that enable a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, there needs to be a mechanism and infrastructure in place for coordinating and overseeing statewide readiness efforts. Currently, readiness initiatives and efforts are undertaken in an independent, non-systematic, and often isolated fashion, sometimes resulting in efforts that are duplicated, and sometimes leaving gaps that may go unnoticed. The mechanism and infrastructure set up should be *inclusive*; that is, geographically representative of the state and of the public, private and preschool sectors, and should be *stable*; that is, insulated from changing political and educational personnel by having stable positions and personnel sufficient to carry out its responsibilities, and imbued with *sufficient authority and support* from the public and private sectors.

The Good Beginning's Alliance exhibits some of these characteristics. With expanded support, it has the potential of fulfilling all of these characteristics and thus capable of carrying out the necessary functions and responsibilities.

Background

At the National Summit conference, a number of states reported statewide initiatives for coordination of school readiness efforts. James B. Hunt (March 2000), Governor of North Carolina, described a 50-member Ready for School Goal Team working in North Carolina to create a profile for child readiness, to identify assessment tools, to see how well the state is doing, and to develop a profile of schools that are ready for children. Maryland has a model for school readiness designed to support local school systems in their efforts to transition children into public school and to enhance their readiness for school. Maryland is working on a definition and related activities including outcomes, staff development and assessment plan, and method (Grafwallner, Treacle, & Rhode, March 2000). South Carolina created First Steps to School Readiness, a statewide early childhood education initiative. It involves parenting support for families, more services to at-risk children, promotion of high-quality preschool programs, health services, and mobilization of communities in their support of young children and their families (Casteel, & Mims, March 2000).

The Interdepartmental Council (IDC) of the Hawai'i Good Beginnings Alliance has been involved in a School Readiness Partnership. At the IDC meeting on September 14, 2001, the CEO of Kamehameha Schools and the Hawai'i State Superintendent of Education agreed to co-chair a Readiness Task Force. We recommend that this Task Force be responsible for establishing inclusive, stable, and supported mechanisms and infrastructure for coordinating and monitoring state readiness efforts and tasks. Some of these are:

- Finalizing the state definition of readiness, having it endorsed by appropriate agencies and organizations, promoting it through public awareness campaigns focusing on the importance of all three readiness components, and working to assure that it is implemented and utilized in all Hawai'i state readiness

efforts;

- Facilitating the development of standards and indicators for early childhood education in Hawai'i. [A number of groups are currently working on this task. It would be helpful to convene members of these groups to work together.];
- Guiding the development of assessment efforts that gather systemic information on young children ready for school, schools ready for children, and the quality and extent of community and family support;
- Establishing appropriate transition activities and communication channels between preschools and kindergartens (both public and private) in the state;
- Overseeing the development and delivery of early childhood training of caregivers, teachers and administrators to help them better support children's development;
- Arranging for the provision of technical assistance for readiness efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop a systematic, comprehensive approach to readiness assessment that has clarity of purpose and is in accordance with the best practices in early childhood assessment.

Our third recommendation is for the development of a systematic approach for the assessment of readiness. This approach should have *clarity of purpose* and use of these results; be *comprehensive* by encompassing all three aspects of readiness - child, school, and family/community support; and be in *accordance with best practices and guidelines* put forth by early childhood associations and early childhood assessment experts.

Background

A great deal has been written in recent years about the assessment of children's readiness. In fact, the current interest in this topic is at least partly motivated by concerns about the use of tests to determine children's readiness for school. Questions have been raised about the nature of the tests, the uses to which they were put, and the kinds of educational decisions that were being made based on results from these tests. (See Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Zaslow, Calkins & Halle, December 2000; Meisels, 1987; and Shepherd, 1994; Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000.) Like the topic of readiness, previous practices have been called into doubt and a growing consensus has emerged regarding practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. Meisels (1999) cautions those who are working on readiness assessment to remember that, "The readiness issue is thick with dilemmas... Thus assessments must be used carefully and appropriately to resolve educational problems, rather than to create such problems (pp. 59-61)."

When the National Summit conference turned to assessment, there was a growing conviction that schools and communities be assessed, as well as children and schools. As Ramey (March 2000) stated: "Ways of thinking about assessment are rapidly changing. In the traditional thinking of the past, the child was assessed. Now the child, home, classroom, school, district and state must all be assessed to provide a complete picture (p. 12)."

The technical planning group of the National Educational Goals Panel (1995) expressed an earlier, but similar, belief about assessment as did experts at the National Summit conference. This planning group held that child outcomes should not and cannot be the sole measure of America's progress toward the first Education Goal (i.e., children ready to learn). While specifying child outcomes is a necessary step, it is an insufficient approach. It must be coupled with a commitment to examining social and institutional readiness to support children's early development and learning. To that end, the planning group strongly urged "*that energy be devoted to examining the readiness and capacity of the nation's schools to receive young children*

(p. 4).” Delivery standards—kinds of services provided for children including access to high-quality early childhood programs, and service delivery systems—how services and programs fit together, are two critical aspects of readiness and, therefore, of any readiness definition and readiness assessment.

Readiness assessment should be well thought out so that the approach includes all readiness components, the results of which are set in a system of action and use. Gathering and reporting data do not necessarily change or improve conditions: “Weighing a hog does not make it fatter.” Purposes and use of readiness assessment results need to be articulated and agreed upon.

Before a viable assessment system can be designed, it is necessary to be clear about the different purposes and uses of assessment results and appropriate methodology to achieve each purpose. The very essence of validity is the appropriate use of assessment results.

“Validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales *support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions* based on test scores or other modes of assessment....Broadly speaking, then, validity is an inductive summary of both the existing evidence for and the potential consequences of score interpretation and use. Hence, what is validated is not the test or observation device as such but the *inferences about score meaning or interpretation* and *about the implications for action* that the interpretation entails (Messick, 1989, p. 13).

Britt and his colleagues from North Carolina at the National Summit conference (March 2000) described two major uses for assessing readiness of children as they enter kindergarten. Results that are used to examine the impact of early childcare and education programs, community supports for families, and other early experiences, Britt refers to as “accountability assessment.” The other use, referred to as “instructional assessment,” helps teachers more effectively instruct each child in the class (p. 29). In addition to evaluating programs and improving instruction for children, Kagan noted at the conference two additional uses put forward by the NEGP: (1) those of identifying children with special needs, and (2) of holding teachers, schools and districts accountable.

NEGP (1997) stressed the importance of using assessments for their intended purposes. They identify the following general principles for readiness assessment:

- Assessments should bring about benefits for children;
- Assessments should be tailored to a specific purpose, and should be reliable, valid, and fair for that purpose;
- Assessment policies should be designed recognizing that reliability and validity of assessments increase with children’s age. Therefore, some assessments should be postponed until children are older;
- Assessments should be age-appropriate in both content and method of data collection;
- Assessments should be linguistically appropriate, recognizing that to some extent all assessments are measures of language;
- Parents should be a valued source of assessment information.

NAEYC (1988; 1990) believes that the most important consideration in evaluating and using standardized tests is the *utility criterion*. The purpose of testing must be to improve services for children and to ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences. Decisions about testing and assessment instruments must be based on the usefulness of the assessment procedure for improving services to children and improving outcomes for children. This association has formulated guidelines for assessing young children in their position statement on standardized testing:

- All standardized tests used in early childhood programs must be reliable and valid according to technical standards of test development.
- Decisions that have a major impact on children such as enrollment, retention, or assignment to remedial or special classes should be based on multiple sources of information and should never be based on a single test score.
- It is the professional responsibility of administrators and teachers to critically evaluate, carefully select, and to use standardized tests only for the purposes for which they are intended and for which data exists demonstrating the test's validity.
- It is the professional responsibility of administrators and teachers to be knowledgeable about testing and to interpret results accurately and cautiously to parents, school personnel and the media.

Vermont could serve as a fairly complete system approach to readiness. At the National Summit conference, Mitchell and Murphey (March 2000) described how the issue of readiness assessment was addressed in Vermont. The state used an outcomes based approach it had employed to gauge the well-being of children and families across the life span. Beginning in 1990, Vermont conducted a survey of kindergarten teachers to determine the percentage of children ready to start school. The state then conducted a series of workgroups and pilot studies to identify indicators and examine the success of a number of early childhood initiatives. In 1999, the state received funding to develop these indicators into a complete assessment system. Three assessment instruments were developed (i.e., a teacher questionnaire, principal questionnaire, and child health questionnaire) and pilot tested for statewide use.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Promote school practices that facilitate home-school communication, particularly transition activities between home/early childhood programs and kindergarten.

This recommendation requires public and private preschools and public and private elementary schools to work together, a complex enterprise. The transition from preschool or home to kindergarten can be a stressful time for children just entering kindergarten. Our findings suggest that children face high expectations and that kindergarten teachers place a greater emphasis on children's academic progress and somewhat lesser emphasis on supporting children's overall development than preschool teachers do. Larger classes and more formal settings contribute further to the adjustment into kindergarten. This transition can be even more difficult for poor and minority children who have not attended preschool and whose families are not aware of school expectations. In order to facilitate a successful transition to kindergarten, connections between children, families, schools and communities need to be made (Halle, et al., 2000).

The long term goal is that every family in Hawai'i with a child who is about to enter kindergarten have access to activities that smooth the transition between home/early childhood programs and kindergartens. The short term goal is to establish the means and mechanisms by which this long term goal can be accomplished; identify the steps to be taken; and establish how progress toward this goal can be gauged. This calls for a statewide plan that facilitates collaborative transitions to kindergarten for children and their families that focuses on two areas:

Coordination and communication between the kindergarten and any preschool/child care program that children attend. Activities might include transfer of records to kindergarten teachers; communication between kindergarten teachers and previous caregivers about students; curriculum development coordinated with pre-kindergarten programs; and school visits by entering kindergarten students.

Coordination and communication between the kindergarten and parents of entering kindergartners. Activities might include formal arrangements for visits by parents of entering kindergarten students; distribution of letters and/or packets of material about the kindergarten program; information about parental rights and responsibilities; and ways parents may smooth children's entry into kindergarten.

Transition activities may already be in place in a number of schools and communities. The state level GBA Quality Assurance Committee has expressed interest in doing work on transitions and could seek funding for initial work in this area.

Background

Halle, et al., (2000) also assert that it is essential for schools to take an active role in facilitating the transition. They cite a number of promising practices that range from personal contact between kindergarten and preschool teachers (which may involve kindergarten teachers visiting preschools in order to learn about the curriculum children have experienced) to getting reports on individual children from preschool teachers. Preschool children also benefit from visiting the school and kindergarten classroom they are about to attend. Since every child does not attend a formal early childhood program, the connection between home and school is also very important. Schools can reach out to parents before children enter through personal communications, home visits and meetings.

Graue (1992) recommended that "comprehensive community plans for the transition between home and school could tie together the concerns of the home, the preschool, and the elementary school. School outreach to parents of soon-to-be kindergartners would help all voices to be heard as the child meets the school (p. 241)."

RECOMMENDATION 5: Coordinate and promote education and training for preschool and kindergarten teachers, parents, and administrators appropriate to their respective roles and based on the project's findings.

Focus group and survey findings suggest that greater awareness along with specific strategies would need to be part of community education efforts for parents and professional development programs for educators. Parents, teachers and administrators could better support children's development and have schools be more ready for young children if they had additional training in certain identified areas: language development, cognitive development related to early literacy, numeracy and science concepts; curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children's home language and culture; and finally, creation of supportive, nurturing settings for young children.

Section V
READINESS BENCHMARK INSTRUMENTS
~Children Ready for School and Schools Ready for Children~

I. PURPOSE AND USE OF DATA FROM READINESS INSTRUMENTS

Both types of readiness data are for:

- Community Benchmarking
- Policy Level Decision-Making

Data are explicitly NOT for the purpose of diagnosing readiness of an individual child, nor for the purpose of judging individual teacher's practices.

II. GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS AND PROCEDURES

Hawai'i Readiness Research Project team developed two benchmark instruments for Readiness for Kindergarten Success:

(1) Children Ready for Kindergarten (i.e., child characteristics/abilities) Instrument

This instrument may be completed (a) by **teachers of preschoolers** entering kindergarten during the **last segment of preschool year** (e.g., June) on the class-as-a-whole **or** (b) by teachers of kindergartners towards **end of 1st quarter** (e.g., October) on class-as-a-whole.

(2) Kindergarten Ready for Children (i.e., school practices & school policies) Instrument

This instrument may be completed by **school administrators** or **kindergarten Grade Level Chair** regarding school practices that apply to kindergarten grade level and not on individual teachers and not about school policies and practices in general. When to complete the instrument is to-be-determined.

Issue to discuss is whether **preschool directors** should be involved and, if so, in what way.

Assessment methods for the third component of readiness, Family and Community Supports, rests with the Interagency Council Task Force on Readiness.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENTS

Content of Instruments are based on findings of Hawai'i Readiness Research Project (2001), supplemented by review of the readiness research literature.

(1) Children Ready for Kindergarten

Child readiness characteristics/abilities are drawn from:

- Characteristics rated highly in the survey by all groups surveyed (2604 respondents).
- Characteristics selected in *the* top five most important child readiness characteristics.
- Salient readiness categories and characteristics that emerged from group interviews (24 groups, 178 participants).
- Supplemented from readiness literature.

(2) Kindergarten Ready for Children Instrument:

School practices drawn from:

- Salient responses to interview question on “What can schools do to help children be successful in kindergarten.”
- Salient responses to interview that relate to contextual factors influencing a child’s success.
- Practices rated highly by the groups surveyed.
- Supplemented by readiness literature.

IV. Guidelines for Instrument Development

- **Balance between brevity and comprehensiveness**

To increase the likelihood of the instruments being completed by teachers and administrators, the instruments should be short and simple. At the same time, the instrument should yield sufficient information to be useful and valid for community benchmarking purposes, but not for diagnostic or instructional interventions, nor for judging individual teachers. Careful selection of key and essential items for the instruments is therefore critical. Avoid asking for data that can be obtained from other sources.

- **Ensure confidentiality and individual privacy**

The target is the classroom-as-a-whole, and not individual children. Data from classrooms are then aggregated for a school, not individual teachers.

- **Maximize validity and accuracy**

These concerns guided who should complete the instruments and when they should be completed. For example, a teacher needs to be knowledgeable about the children and have sufficient time to get to know and to observe them. Completing the instrument should also take place at a convenient time in the school semester for the teacher and administrator. At the opening of school and those first few weeks of school is not a time to ask for data.

Frequency of data collection should be based on sufficient intervals to allow time for improvement as well as to ensure and maintain a cooperative spirit of participants who complete the instruments.

V. REPORTING AND GOAL SETTING

Decisions are needed regarding the following issues:

- (1) Development of Standards and Goals: How and who shall set the “readiness” standard or goals? For example, what level of readiness constitutes “Outstanding, Good, Fair, or Low?”
- (2) Development of Working Agreements: What state or local agency or organization will gather, summarize and report the findings on Children Ready for School and on Schools Ready for Children?
- (3) Development of Guidelines for Data Use: What state or local agency or organization and individuals shall have access to the data, within what ethical and legal parameters, and for what use?

READINESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS
~Children Ready for School~

HAWAII BENCHMARK INSTRUMENT

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Base your judgments on observations of your class-as-a-whole.
- Select one week towards the end of the first school quarter to pay close attention to behaviors/characteristics listed in the survey.
- Mark your response on the survey immediately after your observations. Your responses will be more accurate then because your observations will be fresh in your mind.
- Make solid estimates about the proportion of your class that show the behaviors/characteristics listed.

Please mark one of the following options on your survey:

- 1= somewhat less than half the class or fewer
- 2= about half the class (give or take a few)
- 3= somewhat more than half the class or greater

9= don't know or not sure

When you are observing your class, consider the **proportion of your class displaying the behaviors/characteristics** listed in the survey.

An alternative to the above option that could be field tested:

- 1 = About 1/4 of the class*
- 2 = About 1/2 of the class*
- 3 = About 3/4 of the class*
- 4 = Almost the whole class*

DK = Don't Know or Not Sure

READINESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

DRAFT

~Children Ready for School~

School _____

No. of Students _____

1= somewhat less than half the class or fewer

2= about half the class (give or take a few)

3= somewhat more than half the class or greater

DK = don't know or not sure

	Check one only.			
What proportion of your class display the following characteristics or behaviors a good deal of the time?	1	2	3	DK
1. Are well rested and alert.				
2. Appear to be physically healthy and well-nourished.				
3. Work and play well with others.				
4. Appear to feel good about themselves.				
5. Able to follow classroom routines.				
6. Able to listen for about 15 minutes to group discussions and stories read aloud.				
7. Appear interested in the world around them.				
8. Seem eager to learn.				
9. Are independent in caring for their own personal belongings.				
10. Use words to make thoughts and needs known.				
11. Show familiarity with how books work (e.g., hold book right side up; turn pages from front to back; etc.).				
12. Show interest in books and print.				
13. Know names and sounds of some letters				
14. Can count <i>a set</i> of objects.				
15. Able to sort and classify objects.				
16. Know names of some numerals (e.g., "5" is called "five")				

Items on this survey should NOT be used to assess readiness of an individual child.

READINESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS
~Schools Ready for Children~

HAWAII BENCHMARK INSTRUMENT

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Instructions:

Please review your school's practices concerning its...

- communication with preschools and kindergarten parents
- transition activities for incoming kindergarten children and their families
- early childhood parent education activities and programs
- curriculum approaches in the kindergarten classrooms

Please respond specifically about policies and practices for kindergarten grade level and not general school policies and practices.

READINESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS
~Schools Ready for Children~

HAWAII BENCHMARK INSTRUMENT

School _____ Date _____

No. of Kindergarten Classrooms _____ Total No. of Kindergarten Children _____

Please check one.	Yes	No
1. School has special orientation for kindergarten children and their parents/guardians <i>before the schooyear begins.</i>		
2. School invites kindergarten families to visit the school grounds and classrooms <i>prior to beginning of school year.</i>		
3. During kindergarten registration, school has parents complete information about their child’s preschool attendance (e.g., whether attended, for how long, preschool name).		
4. School has in place a systematic way for preschool teachers/caregivers to share information about entering kindergarten children with kindergarten teachers (strengths and needs).		
5. School has a variety of ways, specifically for kindergarten parents, to be involved with the school.		
6. School has formal and systematic procedures for reaching kindergarten parents with information about parent involvement activities.		
7. Kindergarten classrooms are set up so that kindergarten children spend most of their day (more than 75%) in active, “hands-on” activities and projects (in contrast to seat work, listening, and worksheet activities).		
8. School offers on-going parent workshops on child development and learning (in contrast to a single event).*		
9. School has in place a well-developed family literacy program.*		

Comments:

* For questions 8 and 9:

These workshops and family literacy programs may be offered by the school in conjunction with community organizations or agencies.

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Five Child Readiness Items

Comparison of Three Child Readiness Domains

	National Educational Goals Panel	North Carolina	Vermont	Hawai'i
1.	Social and emotional development	Social and emotional development	Social and emotional development	Social and emotional development
2.	Approaches to learning	Approaches to learning	Approaches to learning	Approaches to learning
3.	Language development and literacy	Language development and communication	Communication	Language development and communication skills
4.	Cognition and general knowledge	Cognition and general knowledge	General knowledge and cognitive development	Cognitive development and general knowledge
5.	Physical well-being and motor development	Health and physical development	Physical development and health	Physical health and well-being
6.	--	--	--	Motor development and self-help skills
7.	--	--	--	School-related behaviors and skills

Focus Group Interview Protocol

School/Location _____ Date _____

Facilitator _____ Recorder _____

Participant Group: Parent ____ Teacher ____ Preschool ____ Kindergarten ____

INTRODUCTION/WELCOME

Good evening, my name is _____. I am _____ (please state position) _____. I'm helping with a study on school readiness. This is _____ our recorder for today/tonight. Please sign in, here's a copy of tonight's agenda, focus questions to review and a baggie of labels and dots that we will be using for tonight's focus group. Please help yourself to some refreshments while we get ready to begin.

We're here to find out your ideas about children's readiness for kindergarten. I want to thank you for coming here tonight. To get better acquainted, we will go around the room and introduce ourselves.

GROUND RULES

Before we begin our activity we would like to keep in mind some ground rules.

Read the ground rules aloud and refer to them on the chart.

GROUND RULES

- Be respectful of other's ideas.*
- Be courteous when speaking and listening.*
- Be brief.*
- Allow everyone a chance to speak.*
- Please answer the question first and then add other comments.*

I am responsible for ensuring sure that everyone is heard and understood.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please take a look at your focus group questions underneath the agenda. We will go over each question one at a time, and you can share your thoughts and feelings about them.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Read Question 1:

What makes a child ready for kindergarten?

What should a child know or be able to do to be ready to succeed in kindergarten. Please take a few minutes to think about this question, and to help you remember, write down your thoughts in the space provided.

After participants have completed the question:

As we go around the room, please share one of your ideas and _____ will write them on the chart. If anyone before you mentions what you wanted to say, you may state your thoughts about that item and add a new item. After everyone has had a chance to share one idea, we will go around the room again and you will have an opportunity to share the rest of your ideas.

Recorder:

- If an idea has been repeated, add a check next to the item.
- Please clarify with participants to verify statements.
- Keep focusing back to the question if people wander off the topic.
- Keep checking to ensure the recorder writes what the participant meant.

CATEGORIZATION

As they say in Sesame Street, some of these things belong together, some of these things are not quite the same. So we'd like to find out which ones you think go together.

Read list of responses.

Look at this list, think of which of these things can be grouped together.

Point to first item.

Which other items on the list can be grouped with this one.

Mark all items within the group with one color.

Look at these items marked in (say color). What can we call this group.

Recorder writes name given that group of items on chart paper.

SELECTION OF MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS

Have participants count off 1 to # of participants in the group.

Please write your number on each of your five dots.

We would like to know which of these items you feel are most important. Each one of you has been given five sticky dots. Look at the list and decide which you feel are most important for children's success in kindergarten. Please place your dots on the items you feel are most important. You can place as many dots as you wish on any item. You can divide your dots any way you want, you can put one dot on five items or all five on one item.

After participants are seated.

As a group, these are the top items you feel are most important for children's success in kindergarten.

Read top items aloud.

MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON A CHILD'S READINESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

Read Question 2:

What do you think are the most important influences on a child's readiness for school success? Is it the child? The family? The school? Or the community? Or some combination of these factors.

We've given you four labels. One is for the child, one for the school, one for the family and one for the community. These things influence a child's readiness for kindergarten success.

On the chart are ways to arrange your stickers to show which ones you feel are most important. On the back of your paper, please arrange your labels to show the level of influence you feel each item has on a child's readiness for kindergarten. If you feel an item has no influence, you may choose not to use that label. Please explain your arrangement below under comments.

WHAT VARIOUS GROUPS CAN DO TO HELP CHILDREN BE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL

Read Question 3:

What can teachers, parents, schools and the community do to help your child to be successful in kindergarten?

Please take a few minutes to think about this question, and if you would like, write down your thoughts.

After participants have completed the question:

Each person will have a turn to share what their thoughts are. As we go around the room, please share the three items you feel are most important. If anyone before you mentions what you wanted to say, you may state your thoughts about that item and add the other items.

If negative comments/stories arise, please be prepared to paraphrase them into categories and ask participants if paraphrase is what s/he meant to say (e.g., “Teachers need to be more sensitive to cultural differences. “Teachers need to communicate more with the parents.”).

BUILD ON CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN

Read Question 4:

How can teachers and schools build on the cultural backgrounds of children?

What can teachers and schools do to be sensitive to and incorporate cultural differences. Please take a few minutes to think about this question, and if you would like, write down your thoughts.

After participants have completed the question:

Each person will have a turn to share what their thoughts are. As we go around the room, please share the three items you feel are most important. If anyone before you mentions what you wanted to say, you may state your thoughts about that item and add the other items.

DEMOGRAPHICS

We are interested in how different groups view readiness so that the results of this effort can help schools be more responsive children and their families. We are requesting for the personal information so that we can compare the findings of this study with national surveys. The information that you will provide is strictly confidential and would provide us with important information that would assist us in using the findings of this study.

CONCLUSION

When you have completed the information, please put your questionnaire into the folder. We would like to thank all of you for participating in today's/tonight's focus group. Please feel free to help yourself to some more food and please select a book for your child before you leave. If you have any questions, we will be available. Thank you.

Sample of Qualitative Analysis of Child Readiness Items and Categories Generated by a Preschool Parent Group.

Preschool Parent Group’s Child Readiness Items and Categories N=11 Participants	Seven Conceptual Child Readiness Domains and Assignment by Researchers with Comments
#1 No Label	Social-Emotional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C teacher involvement in transitions C positive separation from parents C positive talk about fears C fascination with big school 	Deals with transitions and how they may happen in positive ways (e.g., parents’ positive talk and teachers’ help with transition). Somewhat peripheral to, but supportive of, child’s Social-Emotional Development. Contextual flavor.
#2 No Label	School-Related Behaviors and Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C good behavior C independent C willingness to learn C has school routine C speech C positive attitude toward one another - family, child, teacher C there’s lots of encouragement to children C safety (environment is safe) C interaction with children 	Has similar items; but also includes attitudes of adults and kids plus idea of safe environment placed together with School-Related Behaviors and Skills
None	Approaches to Learning
None	Language Development and Communication Skills
	Note 1 item called “speech” in #2
#3 No Label	Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C has fundamentals - abc’s, counting C write name C colors and shapes 	Has only general knowledge
None	Motor Development and Self-Help Skills
None	Physical Health and Well-Being
# 4 No Label	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C parent involvement C parent/teacher communication 	No Correspondence to Child Readiness Domains. Consider these “contextual” (i.e., readiness of school for child and family/community supports and services). See also #1.

Note. This preschool group did not label their categories.

Hawai`i Readiness Survey

PART I. Demographic information items varied depending on the role group: parents, teachers or administrator.

PART II: About readiness for success in kindergarten

A. How important to a child's success in kindergarten are the following influences?

1=Not at all important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; 5=Essential
Please circle the appropriate number below.

	Not at all					Essential
1. Family experiences (e.g. child having been read to)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Preschool attendance	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Characteristics of the child (ways of behaving, knowledge, skills)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Characteristics of the community in which the child lives	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Relationship between the home and school	1	2	3	4	5	

B. How important to a child's success in kindergarten are the following characteristics/abilities?

1=Not at all important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; 5=Essential
Please circle the appropriate number below.

	Not at all					Essential
1. Finishes tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Takes turns and shares.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Can follow directions, rules and routines.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Has good problem solving skills.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Is not disruptive.	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Sits still and pays attention.	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities.	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Makes friends.	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Is sensitive to other children's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Is respectful of others (adults and children).	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Adjusts to new situations.	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Is confident and feels good about self.	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Uses words to make needs and thoughts known.	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Knows and uses standard English.	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Knows colors and shapes.	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Is able to use pencils and paint brushes.	1	2	3	4	5	
17. Knows address and phone number.	1	2	3	4	5	
18. Knows letters of the alphabet and some beginning sounds.	1	2	3	4	5	
19. Recognizes name in print.	1	2	3	4	5	
20. Able to write first name.	1	2	3	4	5	
21. Enjoys listening to stories, books.	1	2	3	4	5	
22. Can count to 20 or more.	1	2	3	4	5	
23. Is healthy, rested and well nourished.	1	2	3	4	5	
24. Is able to care for personal needs (dressing, toileting, etc).	1	2	3	4	5	
25. Is responsible for belongings and classroom materials.	1	2	3	4	5	

C. Using the items in list B, please select the five characteristics that you feel are most important for a child's readiness to be successful in Kindergarten. Enter the item numbers from B in spaces below:

D. How important to a child's success in kindergarten is each of the following school practices?

1=Not at all important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; 5=Essential
Please circle the appropriate number below.

	Not at all				Essential
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Children engage in running, jumping, climbing and active play.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Children can choose from a variety of hands-on activities (blocks, home center, science center, dramatic play, arts and crafts).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Children use worksheets/workbooks for math, science, and/or reading.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Children listen to stories read aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Children have homework almost every day.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Teachers expect all children to meet the same academic standards.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Teachers individualize the curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of children.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Teachers accept and build on children's home language.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Teaching is exclusively in standard English.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Teachers incorporate the children's cultures in the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The school has the same curriculum in all kindergarten classes.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Parents are involved in classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Parents are provided with education about child development and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The school communicates well with families about the child's school experience.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There is communication between kindergarten teachers and previous teachers/caregivers.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Entering kindergarten children visit the school they will be attending.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Schools have an orientation for entering kindergarten children and their families.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Children's health is screened before they enter kindergarten.	1	2	3	4	5

E. Is there anything else you'd like us to know or to share with us about readiness for kindergarten?
 (use back of page if needed)

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Demographic Background and Characteristics of Survey Respondents

- Table 1. Number, percent, and ethnicity of survey participants by role group and school type.
- Table 2. Number and percent of parents by education level and school type.
- Table 3. Number and percent of teaches by education level and school type.
- Table 4. Means, ranges and standard deviations (SD) of years of experience for administrators and teachers by school type.
- Table 5. Distribution of classrooms by socio-economic status of students/families as reported by teachers.

Table 1. Number, percent, and ethnicity of survey participants by role group and school type.

Ethnicity	Administrators N=124						Teachers N=413						Parents N=2067					
	Preschool N = 44		Private N = 22		Public N = 58		Preschool N = 149		Private N = 36		Public N = 228		Preschool N = 646		Private N = 316		Public N = 1105	
Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asian N = 731	18	40.91	3	13.64	27	46.55	41	27.52	3	8.33	147	64.47	205	34.73	77	24.37	210	19.00
Filipino N = 296	3	6.82	1	4.55	3	5.17	13	8.72	2	5.56	6	2.63	48	7.43	30	9.49	190	17.19
Haw/ Part N = 426	4	9.09	4	18.18	8	13.79	29	19.46	2	5.56	18	7.89	131	20.28	35	11.08	195	17.65
Caucas. N = 554	17	38.64	12	54.55	13	22.41	32	21.48	21	58.33	43	18.86	106	16.72	103	32.59	207	18.73
Mixed N = 399	2	4.44	2	9.09	7	12.07	18	12.08	3	8.33	9	3.95	117	18.11	50	15.82	191	17.29
African Amer. N = 25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.44	7	1.08	4	1.27	13	1.18
Hispanic N = 44	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2.68	3	8.33	1	0.44	9	1.39	8	2.53	19	1.72
Pacific Islander N = 55	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.34	-	-	1	0.44	7	1.08	2	0.63	43	3.89
Other N = 55	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	6.71	2	5.56	2	0.88	9	1.39	5	1.58	27	2.44
Native Amer. N = 7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.31	-	-	5	0.45

Note. Ten parents did not give their ethnicity.

Appendix II A 2

Table 2. Number and percent of parents by education level and school type.

Highest Level of Education	Preschool N=646		Private School N=316		Public School N=1105		Total Parent N=2067	
No High School Diploma	8	1.24%	3	0.95%	46	6.15%	57	2.75%
High School Diploma	93	14.40%	19	6.01%	287	25.97%	399	19.30%
Some College	232	35.91%	91	28.80%	429	38.82%	752	36.38%
Bachelor Degree or Higher	285	44.12%	192	60.76%	275	24.89%	752	36.38%
Missing	28	4.33%	11	3.48%	68	6.15%	197	5.18%

Table 3. Number and percent of teaches by education level and school type.

Highest Level of Education	Preschool N=139		Private K N=36		Public K N=228		Total Teacher N= 413	
Associate degree or CDA credential	54	36.24%	M.	–	14.	–	54	3.87%
Bachelor or Bachelor in Education	48	32.20%	17	47.20%	119	52.19%	18	44.55%
Bachelor Plus Early Childhood Education	17	11.40%	10	27.80%	57	25.00%	84	20.34%
Master's or Doctorate	19	12.80%	8	22.20%	48	21.10%	75	18.16%
Missing	11	7.38%	1	2.79%	4	1.75%	16	3.87%

Table 4. Means, ranges and standard deviations (SD) of years of experience for administrators and teachers by school type.

Role Group	Preschool			Private			Public			Total		
	Mean	Range	SD	Mean	Range	SD	Mean	Range	SD	Mean	Range	SD
Administrators N=124	8.7	1-30	7.36	8.6	1-21	6.87	6.0	1-15	4.18	7.5	1-30	6.13
Teachers N=413	10.3	1-30	7.36	9.0	1-30	7.07	9.9	1-31	7.30	10.0	1-31	7.29

Note 1. For private and public K teachers, years of experience refers to kindergarten teaching experience.

Note 2. Eight administrators (1 preschool, 1 private, and 6 public) did not complete survey section on years of experience; 14 teachers (8 preschool, 1 private and 5 public) did not complete survey section on years of experience.

Table 5. Distribution of classroom by socio-economic status of students/families (SES) as reported by teachers.

More than half the children in my class or group are from . . .									
SES	Preschool		Private		Public		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
High income families	4	2.7	2	5.6	1	0.4	7	1.7	
Middle income families	68	45.6	25	69.4	69	30.3	162	39.23	
Low income families	34	22.8	1	2.8	107	46.9	142	34.4	
No majority	7	4.7	—	—	8	3.5	15	3.6	
Not sure	22	14.8	4	11.1	34	14.9	60	14.5	
Missing	14	9.4	4	11.1	9	4.0	27	6.5	

Percentages, Means & Standard Deviations of Survey Items & Categories by Role Group & School Type

• **All Role Groups and School Types**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten B1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten B2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten B4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten B5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten B7

• **Total Administrator Sample - Overall**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten C1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten C2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten C4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten C5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten C7

• **Preschool Administrator**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten D1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten D2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten D4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten D5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten D7

• **Private School Administrator**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten E1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten E2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten E4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten E5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten E7

• **Public School Administrator**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten F1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten F2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten F4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten F5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten F7

• **Total Teacher Sample - Overall**

- Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten G1
- Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten G2
- Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten G4
- Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten G5
- Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten G7

• **Preschool Teachers**

Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	H1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	H2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	H4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	H5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	H7
• Private School Teachers	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	I1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	I2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	I4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	I5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	I7
• Public School Teachers	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	J1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	J2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	J4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	J5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	J7
• Total Parent Sample	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	K1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	K2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	K4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	K5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	K7
• Preschool Parents	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	L1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	L2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	L4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	L5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	L7
• Private School Parents	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	M1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	M2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	M4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	M5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	M7
• Public School Parents	
Degree of importance of five influences on a child’s success in kindergarten	N1
– Degree of importance of 25 child characteristics/abilities for success in kindergarten	N2
– Degree of importance of seven child characteristic/ability domains on success in kindergarten	N4
– Degree of importance of 18 school-related practices on success in kindergarten	N5
– Degree of importance of four school-related practice domains on success in kindergarten	N7

Description and Results of Matching Procedure for Interview and Survey Top Five Child Readiness Items

For comparison purposes, the items generated by the focus group participants were carefully matched with the items from the survey. Examples of the matching procedure are given below.

<u>Focus Group items generated</u>	<u>Matched to Survey item</u>
Confidence to make new friendships	# 12: Is confident and feels good about self
self-esteem	
“I can do” attitude	
self confidence	
feels good about self	
confidence in self	
 <u>Makes friends (social skills)</u>	
getting along w/others	
socially age-appropriate	
able to interact w/peers in positive and healthy way	
social skills	
able to interact w/children in civilized manner	
social skills	
social skills	
socialization with others	
socialize with others-social skills	
interest in relations w/children & adults	
social skills	
social ability	
social skills/interacting w/others	
 <u>Enjoys listening to stories (familiarity with books)</u>	
Literacy experiences (holds book, reads)	
familiarity w/books	
has been read to daily	
exposure to stories, singing, rhymes	
past experience with books, being read to	

In all but two cases, there was a clear, one-to-one correspondence in this matching process. First, the focus group participants included ‘social skills,’ ‘social interactions,’ and ‘getting along with others’ in their top five items. The survey item closest to this was ‘Making friends,’ which is part, but not all of what social skills encompasses. However, as they all get at the concept of getting along with others, it was considered an appropriate match. Second, the focus group participants included ‘familiarity with books’ and ‘being read to’ in their top five items. The survey item this most closely matched was ‘enjoys listening to stories.’ Again, this is a close, but not an exact match. Table 1 shows the ‘top five’ child characteristics selected by teachers and parents in the focus groups and on the survey, and their respective rankings. Administrators are not included since they were not a part of the focus group interviews.

The survey participants had the same top 5 items in common; however, the rankings were slightly different. Teachers and parents in the focus groups also generated the same top 5 items; however, their list differed somewhat from that of the survey participants. The following two items were included by both the focus groups and the survey groups:

- Is confident and feels good about self
- Can follow directions, rules, and routines

Unique to the focus groups' top 5 list of child readiness items were the following:

- Is able to care for personal needs
- Gets along well with others
- Is able to verbally express needs, wants and feelings

For the survey participants, the following three items were included:

- Is healthy, rested and well nourished
- Is respectful of others
- Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities.

There are a few possible explanations for the differences in 'Top child readiness characteristics' selected by the focus group and survey participants. First, the child readiness items were presented to the survey respondents, yet were self-generated by the focus group participants. Thus, some of the items on the survey might not have occurred to the members of the focus groups. An example would be the item, 'Is enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities.' This may have been an item that did not pop into people's minds during the interview sessions, yet it might have been considered important had it been suggested. Second, the wording of the focus group questions may have influenced some of the responses given. For instance, in generating child readiness items, the focus group participants were asked, "What makes a child ready for kindergarten success? What should a child know or be able to do?" This wording might explain why the focus group participants did not generate items related to 'Physical health and well-being', which was one of survey participants' most frequently selected 'Top five' child items.

Table 1. Matching of top five child readiness characteristics from focus groups to survey items

<u>Preschool Teachers</u>		<u>Kindergarten Teachers</u>	
1. Is confident/feels good about self*	36	1. Contextual factors	26
2. Able to care for personal needs**	31	2. Makes friends	17
3. Makes friends (social skills)	29	3. Sits still/pays attention	16
4. Uses words to make needs/ thoughts known**	20	4. Enjoys stories**	16
5. Knows colors and shapes	12	5. Able to care for personal needs**	15
		6. Can follow rules/directions*	14
<u>Preschool Parents</u>		<u>Kindergarten Parents</u>	
1. Contextual factors	38	1. Contextual factors	19
2. Able to care for personal needs**	34	2. Makes friends	15
3. Uses words to make needs/ thoughts known**	20	3. Can follow directions/rules*	10
4. Is respectful of others*	16	4. Is confident/feels good about self*	9
5. Makes friends	14	5. Uses words to make needs/ thoughts known**	9
		6. Able to care for personal needs**	7

*Is one of top five survey characteristics for all role groups combined.

**Is one of top five survey child characteristics for one or more subgroups.