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CONTENTS

Editorial

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Shane R. Jimerson | The California School Psychologist Provides Valuable Information Regarding Response-to-Intervention Approaches | 3 |
|-------------------|--|---|

Special Topic Articles

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| Matthew K. Burns
James E. Ysseldyke | Comparison of Existing Response-to-Intervention Models to Identify and Answer Implementation Questions | 9 |
| Amanda VanDerHeyden
Shane R. Jimerson | Using Response-to-Intervention to Enhance Outcomes for Children | 21 |
| Catherine Christo | Critical Characteristics of a Three Tiered Model Applied to Reading Interventions | 33 |
| Kristi Hagans-Murillo | Using a Response-to-Intervention Approach in Preschool to Promote Literacy | 45 |
| Krista Healy
Mike Vanderwood
Danielle Edelston | Early Literacy Interventions for English Language Learners: Support for an RTI Model | 55 |
| Sara E. Bolt | Reflections on Practice Within the Heartland Problem-Solving Model: The Perceived Value of Direct Assessment of Student Needs | 65 |
| T. Chris Riley-Tillman
Stephen M. Kalberer
Sandra M. Chafouleas | Selecting the Right Tool for the Job: A Review of Behavior Monitoring Tools Used to Assess Student Response-to-Intervention | 81 |
| Steven E. Knotek | Sustaining RTI through Consultee-Centered Consultation | 93 |

General Articles

- | | | |
|--|---|-----|
| Renee P. Pyle
Michael P. Bates
Jennifer L. Greif
Michael J. Furlong | School Readiness Needs of Latino Preschoolers: A Focus on Parents' Comfort with Home-School Collaboration | 105 |
| Lauren Bolnik
Stephen E. Brock | The Self-Reported Effects of Crisis Intervention Work on School Psychologists | 117 |
| Diana Joyce
Thomas Oakland | Temperament Differences Among Children with Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder | 125 |



School Readiness Needs of Latino Preschoolers: A Focus on Parents' Comfort with Home-School Collaboration

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This study investigated the contextual, social, language, and learning factors that influence the success of Latino preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten. Data were collected on 112 Latino children who completed a four-week preschool program focusing on English language and school readiness skills. Predictive analyses indicate that their parents' self-reported comfort with home-school collaboration was a stronger predictor of kindergarten success than the academic and social skills measured by this study. These findings suggest that school readiness is a product of the interactions between the child, family and school personnel. Relationships that parents and children experience with school personnel are essential, not only because of their continuing influence on children after they begin school, but also because they provide the opportunity for families to be the best resources possible for their children.

Key Words: School Readiness, Latino, Preschool, English Language Skills, School Personnel

The issue of when children are ready to be taught, the classic readiness query in education (Tyler, 1964), has remained elusive for many decades. Questions about school readiness have received even greater attention and visibility with the development of national educational goals relating to the topic. In the fall of 1989, then-President George Bush and the governors of the 50 states met for the first Education Summit held in nearly 100 years (Meisels, 1998). This meeting established eight "National Education Goals." First among these goals was the following: "All children in America will start school ready to learn" (National Education Goals Panel, 1991). A 1991 Carnegie Foundation survey of 7,141 kindergarten teachers found teachers to estimate that 35% of the nation's students were not adequately prepared to start school (Boyer, 1991). Compared to children enrolled in school in 1985, 42% of the teachers in 1991 said that the readiness situation is getting worse; only 25% said that things are getting better.

In Ramey and Ramey's (2004) study of low-income children who were randomly assigned to participate in a preschool program or a control group, data indicated that children who completed the year-long program scored significantly higher on measures of cognitive abilities. In a follow-up with 99% of study participants into early adulthood, results showed that those who received the preschool services continued to have higher performance on measures of intelligence, math, and reading. Children who completed the preschool program were also three times more likely to attend a four-year college than non-participants (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Absent generally accepted and empirically documented criteria of what young children should know and be able to do when they are 4- or 5-years old (Bredenkamp, 1992), parents and preschool teachers must rely on their explicit and implicit beliefs regarding readiness as they prepare children for school. In addition, few studies have systematically compared the beliefs of parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers about what children should know and be able to do at school entry (Gredler, 1992). The small number of studies that have examined parents' and teachers' readiness

beliefs found that the groups had different concerns. For example, kindergarten teachers were more likely to emphasize a child's ability to not disrupt the class; families and childcare providers emphasized school-like skills such as knowing English, knowing the letters of the alphabet, and counting; in addition, childcare providers were most likely to emphasize problem-solving skills (Harradine & Clifford, 1996). Current research is further limited in helping us understand readiness in high-need communities (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000); there is limited information regarding school readiness within low-income communities (Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, & Eggers-Pierola, 1995). The increase in early literacy research and suggestions set forth by the National Reading Panel has helped some to clarify the debate on school readiness skills (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

This is a particularly pressing issue in California, where almost 3 million Latino children attend California schools, outnumbering non-Latino White students by over 100,000 (California Department of Education, 2004). The growth in the population of Latino students has been accompanied by increased awareness of the challenges many Latinos experience in school. Latino children, in general, are not experiencing a high degree of success in the American educational system (Lopez & Cole, 1999). Despite rising levels of school performance across ethnic groups over the last 20 years, Latino children consistently score lower in mathematics, reading, writing, and science proficiency than non-Latino White children (Sable & Stennet, 1998). Additionally, compared to non-Latino White students, Latino students are less likely to finish high school (Sable & Stennet, 1998). From 1999-2000 the dropout rate among Latino 9th – 12th graders was 1 to 2 times the dropout rate of non-Latino White students (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2002). In California, the percentage of Latino children dropping out of school exceeds the statewide average for all groups: in the 2003-2004 school year, 4.3% of Latino students dropped out of school as compared to the average across all ethnic groups of 3.3% (California Department of Education, 2004).

Kindergarten screening tests have disproportionately identified ethnic minority children and those from the lower socioeconomic (SES) groups as unprepared for school (Ellwein, Walsh, Eads, & Miller, 1991). Minority students and children from lower SES backgrounds are much more likely to be retained than White middle-class students throughout elementary school, including nonpromotion to first grade (Cosden, Zimmer, & Tuss, 1993). In addition, only 24% of eligible Latino children are enrolled in kindergarten or preschool as compared to 57% of eligible White non-Latino children and 43% of eligible African American children (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2002). Clearly, the need is great to understand more about the factors responsible for early academic success in this population.

Parental Involvement

Researchers have suggested that there is a strong positive relationship between student achievement and parent involvement among Latino families (Lopez & Cole, 1999). The benefits of parental involvement in the educational process have been well documented (e.g., Taylor & Machida, 1994). Parent involvement, broadly defined, includes a variety of activities that allow parents to participate in the educational process at home or at school (e.g., attending school-based activities, and reviewing homework with their child). Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, and Fendrich (1999), in their longitudinal assessment of 1,205 urban, kindergarten students, found that improved home-school collaboration was associated with increases in children's academic functioning. Historically, parents of low socioeconomic status who are also ethno-linguistically diverse have been isolated from educational institutions (Lopez & Cole, 1999). In addition to promoting children's academic achievement, parent involvement has been shown to have positive effects on related behaviors such as student self-competence.

tence, self-esteem, school adjustment, and classroom behaviors (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). Despite strong empirical support for parent involvement, research has found that Latino parents are significantly less involved in their children's education than Anglo and African-American parents (Lopez & Cole, 1999).

Traditional definitions of readiness have not encompassed critical environmental variables, such as home-school collaboration, so that the burden of proof rests on the child to prove they are "ready" for school (Meisels, 1995). Exploring contextual variables in a sample of Latino children and families is important for developing a better understanding of school readiness.

Research Questions

This paper is designed to address issues of school readiness for Latino children and the influence of parental involvement (Pyle, 2003). Three general questions are addressed in this paper:

1. How are Latino preschool children rated by their preschool teachers on school readiness indicators (social emotional development, language development, and approaches toward learning)?
2. How knowledgeable are parents about educational services, how accessible do they find these services, and how comfortable are they employing these services for their families?
3. How well can kindergarten success be predicted by each of the following variables: the child's social/emotional development, language development, and approaches toward learning; and the parent's knowledge of who can help them access educational services and their comfort with accessing these services?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 112 Latino preschool children who attended a summer immersion, school readiness program before entering kindergarten in Santa Barbara County. Data were also collected from the children's parents and teachers. No significant differences were found on demographic data of responses to the family questionnaire between parents who gave consent for the follow-up and those who did not. Eighty-eight percent of parents chose to complete the questionnaire in Spanish. Mothers completed 73.3% of the questionnaires, fathers completed 22.5% and 4.2% were completed by both parents. The final sample included 58 males (51.8%) and 54 (48.2%) females. The average age was 5.4 years at the start of their kindergarten year. Seventeen teachers (15 female teachers, two male teachers) participated in this study, 13 were Caucasian and four were Latino. See Table 1 for additional demographic information.

Measures

Santa Barbara County Healthy Start Teacher Questionnaire. This teacher questionnaire, developed for the study, asked teachers to rate each student's school readiness domains: social-emotional development, language development, and approaches to learning. The teacher questionnaire was developed after the first author reviewed 13 national- and state-level readiness assessments and recent research relating to common indicators of school readiness. A list of 35 questions was developed from this research and brought to meetings at which the measure was critiqued and edited by representatives from each of the four Healthy Start agencies in Santa Barbara County. Principle components factor analysis was used to derive the three subscales. The three subscales used in final analyses were labeled: Social Emotional Development (e.g., initiating with and responding appropriately to others; $\alpha = 0.86$), Language Development (e.g., communicates verbally, listens to stories, draws pictures

Table 1.
Participant Demographics

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender (<i>n</i> = 112)		
Male	58	51.8%
Female	54	48.2%
Ethnicity (<i>n</i> = 112)		
Latino	112	100.0%
Parent's Education Level (<i>n</i> = 112)		
No High School	62	55.4%
Some High School	3	2.7%
Graduated High School	20	17.9%
Some College	17	15.2%
Graduated College	10	8.9%
Preschool Experience (<i>n</i> = 102)		
None	32	31.4%
One Year	69	67.6%
More than One Year	1	1.0%
English as a Second Language Status (<i>n</i> = 92)		
Limited English Proficient	85	92.4%
Fluent English Proficient	4	4.3%
English Only	3	3.3%

to tell a story; $\alpha = 0.89$), and Approaches Toward Learning (e.g., learning behaviors such as being curious and enthusiastic about school activities; $\alpha = 0.84$). At the end of the first week of the summer program, teachers were given the assessment and an instruction sheet on how to complete the questions. They were given a full weekend and two school days to complete it. Preschool teachers rated their students' skills on a 3-point scale (1 = not yet, 2 = emerging, 3 = developed).

Santa Barbara County Healthy Start Family Questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed for the study to measure parents' perceptions of their child's readiness for school and their own comfort with interacting with their child's school personnel. Based on a review of the few measures that relate to family factors of school readiness, and input from personnel from four Healthy Start agencies, the questionnaire was developed and piloted with parents of preschoolers. The final questionnaire contains a list of 10 dichotomous questions (1 = yes, 2 = no) to measure the parents' knowledge of the educational system, and the parents' comfort accessing educational services. Parents completed this assessment in Spanish or English during the second week of the preschool program.

Social Skills Rating System. The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) is a norm-referenced, nationally standardized, cross-informant rating scale system designed to screen children and youth suspected of having social and academic problems. It measures three domains: Social Skills, Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence ($M = 100$; $SD = 15$). The reliability of the SSRS is relatively high for internal consistency; median coefficient alphas for the Social Skills Scale, Problem Behavior Scale, and Academic Competence Scale were .90, .84, and .95, respectively.

Good test-retest reliability also was noted, with correlations of .85 for Social Skills, .84 for Problem Behaviors, and .93 for Academic Competence. The examiner added two questions to this instrument: Is this child ready for first grade? If not, will he/she be ready by the end of June? This second question was used as the final variable in determining the kindergarten success of the sample. Kindergarten teachers completed this scale during the spring of the children's kindergarten year.

Oral Reading Assessment Level – by Jimerson (ORAL-J). The ORAL-J (Jimerson, 2000, 2002) was designed to assess oral reading fluency. The ORAL-J consists of three subtests: Letter Identification, Letter Sound Pronunciation, and Oral Reading Passages. It is administered individually and takes from 5-10 minutes to complete. Reliability correlation coefficients range from .90-.98. Test-retest reliability data demonstrate correlation coefficients between .91-.98 across the subtests. Analyses of content validity, construct validity, criterion validity, and predictive validity consistently support the use of the ORAL-J as a measure of pre-reading and general reading skills (Jimerson, 2002; Klein & Jimerson, 2005). This assessment is administered by the classroom teacher each fall, winter, and spring; data from the spring of the kindergarten year were used for this study.

Procedure

All children in this study completed a pre-kindergarten intervention program that provided English oral language and listening activities (e.g., music, stories, tapes, big books, and poetry) and pre-literacy activities for five hours per day, five days per week for the duration of the four weeks. Teachers introduced experiences to prepare children for learning behaviors appropriate to a kindergarten setting (i.e., sitting together in a circle while listening to a story, how to hold a pencil, turn-taking, etc.).

Data collection and analyses for this study included data collection at two points in time: during the pre-kindergarten program parents and teachers completed school readiness questionnaires, and during the spring of the kindergarten year reading fluency, and teachers' response to the SSRS were collected. The cumulative files (school record) were reviewed in the spring to gather demographic data (e.g., ethnicity, parents education level, preschool experience, and English as a Second Language Status).

Data were analyzed using *t*-tests and chi-square statistics to address the first two research questions: (a) ratings of Latino students on school readiness indicators and (b) parental knowledge/accessibility/comfort with educational services. A series of multiple regressions were conducted to examine which variables predicted school readiness (research question 3).

RESULTS

Predictor and Criterion Measures

There were five predictor variables and six criterion variables in this study. The five predictor variables included: the three child factors from the Teacher Questionnaire: (a) Social Emotional Development (SED), (b) Approaches Toward Learning (ATL), and (c) Language Development (LD); and the two family variables from the Family Questionnaire: (d) Parent's Knowledge of Where to Find Services (PKS), and (e) Parent's Comfort Level in Going to their Child's School (PCL). See Table 2 for descriptive statistics for predictor measures at the start of kindergarten.

The six dependent measures, which are indicators of kindergarten success, included: (a) SSRS Academic Competence standard score (AC), (b) SSRS Social Skills standard score (SS), (c) SSRS Problem Behavior standard score (PB), (d) ORAL-J Spring Letter Naming score (LN), (e) ORAL-J Spring Sound Identification score (SI), and (f) the additional question added by the examiner on the SSRS: "In June, will this child be ready for 1st grade?" (RFG). These six criterion measures were

selected because of their frequent use in the literature. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics for criterion measures at the end of kindergarten.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics for Predictor Variables (at the start and end of kindergarten)

<i>Entrance into Kindergarten</i>				
Variable	Mean/Freq.	SD	min.	max.
<i>Teacher Questionnaire Variables</i>				
Approaches toward learning	2.73	.33	1.8	3.0
Language development	2.24	.55	1.0	3.0
Social emotional development	2.65	.37	1.5	3.0
<i>Family Questionnaire Variables</i>				
Find services	Yes = 46.2% ($n = 51$)		No = 53.8% ($n = 61$)	
Feel comfortable	Yes = 90.9% ($n = 100$)		No = 9.1% ($n = 11$)	
<i>Spring of Kindergarten Year</i>				
Variable	Mean/Freq.	SD	min.	max.
<i>SSRS Variables</i>				
Social skills standard score	101.70	14.8	40	130
Academic competence standard score	95.76	10.9	62	115
Problem behavior standard score	99.68	11.7	84	135
Will the child be ready for 1 st grade?	Yes = 90.1% ($n = 100$)		No = 9.9% ($n = 11$)	
<i>ORAL-J Variables</i>				
Letters correct–spring	36.7	14.2	1	71
District scores for letters correct–spring	39.9	16.5	0	100
Sounds correct–spring	21.3	6.1	0	30
District scores for sounds correct–spring	22.3	6.5	0	55

* These variables were not used in the analyses, but are presented here for comparison.

Research Question 1: Teacher Ratings of Child-Focused School Readiness Indicators

Several one-sample t -tests were conducted to look at teacher ratings of the sample (alpha was adjusted to .02 to control for type I error). Teachers rated their preschool students as significantly higher on Social Emotional Development skills than Language Development skills, $t(112) = -9.51, p < 0.001$, and Approaches Toward Learning, $t(112) = -2.54, p < 0.01$. Additionally, teachers rated their students' Approaches Toward Learning skills as significantly higher than their Language Development skills, $t(112) = -7.86, p < .001$. These results are consistent with the newly developing English language skills of these children (i.e., 92.4% classified as Limited English Proficient in the fall of their kindergarten year). The Approaches Toward Learning and Social Emotional scales measure non-verbal behaviors that facilitate participation and learning in the classroom, children can perform well along this domain without using any verbal language skills.

Research Question 2: Parent Ratings of Knowledge, Comfort and Need for Help

Most parents (83.2%) reported that they would like help to assist their child at home across all areas of educationally related tasks. Yet, 53.8% of parents noted that they do not know who could help

them find educational services for their family, and 9.1% reported feeling uncomfortable going to school and talking to their child’s teacher. Although 90.9% of parents reported feeling comfortable, only 54.9% had actually met and talked to their child’s teacher and 46.8% had gone to parent meetings or workshops at their child’s school.

Research Question 3: Predictive Power of Child- and Family-Focused School Readiness Variables on Kindergarten Success

Several variables were observed to determine the best predictors of school readiness. Analyses of the factors that influence school readiness included both an examination of child-focused variables (from the Teacher Questionnaire) and family-focused variables (from the Family Questionnaire). Multiple regressions were conducted to observe the impact of these variables on measures of school readiness. As a primary question in this study is “how do we measure school readiness?” multiple criterion variables measuring school readiness were included in analyses.

Child-focused results. Social Emotional Development (SED), Language Development (LD), and Approaches Toward Learning (ATL) were entered as the first step in a series of six regression analyses. The alpha level was adjusted downward to .01 to limit type I error. SED, LD, and ATL explained 10% of the variance in teachers’ ratings of the children’s readiness for first grade; this finding was statistically significant, $F(3, 95) = 5.89, p < .001$. With academic competence standard score as the criterion measure, the child-focused variables accounted for 13% of the variance, which was also statistically significant, $F(3, 95) = 5.89, p < .003$. The child-focused variables accounted for 8% of the variance in social skills standard score, $F(3, 95) = 3.73, p < .01$. In contrast, the child-focused variables were not significantly related to problem behaviors standard score, $F(3, 95) = 1.32, p = .27$. These variables accounted for 8% of the variance in the ORAL-J letters correct spring scores, $F(3, 98) = 3.72, p < .01$, and 10% of the variance in the ORAL-J sounds correct spring scores, $F(3, 98) = 4.66, p < .004$.

Data indicate that Language Development was the most significant child-focused school readiness variable for this sample. Specifically, Language Development significantly predicted Academic Competence Standard Scores, $B = 7.74; p < .01$, and Social Skills Standard Scores, $B = 9.47; p < .01$. Approaches Toward Learning significantly predicted teacher ratings of a child’s readiness for first grade, $B = 3.82; p < .001$. Language Development predicted more kindergarten success variables than Social Emotional Development and Approaches Toward Learning (See Tables 3 to 7 for all child-focused regression analyses).

Table 3.
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Competence Standard Score (n = 98)

Variable	B	SE B	F
Step 1 Child-Focused Variables			
Social Emotional Development	-3.59	4.42	-.10
Language Development	7.74	2.70	.38*
Approaches Toward Learning	2.81	4.33	.09
Step 2 Family-Focused Variables			
Comfort	-4.91	3.59	-.13
Knowledge	-1.53	2.07	-.07

Note. $R^2 = .13$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 2 ($p = .24$).

Table 4.
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Social Skills Standard Score (n = 98)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>F</i>
Step 1 Child-Focused Variables			
Social Emotional Development	3.17	6.32	.06
Language Development	9.47	3.86	.34*
Approaches Toward Learning	-3.54	6.19	-.08
Step 2 Family-Focused Variables			
Comfort	-11.47	5.06	-.22
Knowledge	0.14	2.91	.01

Note. $R^2 = .08$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .05$ for Step 2 ($p = .08$).

* $p < .01$.

Table 5.
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Problem Behaviors Standard Score (n = 98)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>F</i>
Step 1 Child-Focused Variables			
Social Emotional Development	-2.51	4.89	-.07
Language Development	0.34	2.99	.02
Approaches Toward Learning	-5.21	4.79	-.16
Step 2 Family-Focused Variables			
Comfort	5.91	4.02	.15
Knowledge	1.24	2.20	.06

Note. $R^2 = .01$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .02$ for Step 2 ($p = .31$).

Table 6.
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Predicting ORAL-J Letter Names - Spring (n = 101)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>F</i>
Step 1 Child-Focused Variables			
Social Emotional Development	-7.60	5.98	-.16
Language Development	4.83	3.66	.18
Approaches Toward Learning	10.42	5.84	.26
Step 2 Family-Focused Variables			
Comfort	-4.57	4.96	-.09
Knowledge	.84	2.86	.03

Note. $R^2 = .08$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .01$ for Step 2 ($p = .65$).

Table 7.
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis Predicting ORAL-J Letter Sounds - Spring (n = 101)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>F</i>
Step 1 Child-Focused Variables			
Social Emotional Development	.78	2.49	.04
Language Development	1.19	1.53	.11
Approaches Toward Learning	4.16	2.44	.24
Step 2 Family-Focused Variables			
Comfort	-4.50	2.02	-.22*
Knowledge	-.21	1.17	-.02

Note. $R^2 = .10$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .05$ for Step 2 ($p < .07$).

* $p < .01$.

Family-focused results. Family-focused variables were tested in a series of multiple regression analyses. The scores on the dependent measures were regressed on the family-focused predictor variables (parents' comfort and parents' knowledge) in the second step of the hierarchical analysis, after entering the child-focused variables. When teacher reports of the child's readiness for first grade are used as the criterion variable, results are significant, F change (5, 93) = 4.15, $p < .002$, indicating that family-focused variables predicted an additional 13% of the variance in a child's readiness above and beyond the child-focused variables (See Table 8). Of the predictor variables, only parents' comfort level had a significant positive relation to the readiness variable. However, when school readiness was measured by academic competence standard scores, social skills standard scores, problem behavior standard scores, or ORAL-J letters correct in the spring of grade K, the predictive value of family-focused variables was not significant. The family-focused variables did account for 5% of the variance in ORAL-J sounds correct in the spring, F change (2, 96) = 2.71, $p < .01$. Again, the only predictor that had a significant positive relation to the criterion measure was parents' comfort level.

Table 8.
Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Reports of Readiness for 1st Grade (n = 98)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>F</i>
Step 1 Child-focused variables			
Social emotional development	-.66	1.56	.18
Language development	-.69	1.06	.44
Approaches toward learning	3.82	1.51	6.49**
Step 2 Family-focused variables			
Comfort	-2.02	1.03	3.83*
Knowledge	-.23	.93	.06

Note. $R^2 = .10$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .13$ for Step 2 ($p < .001$).

* $p = .01$, ** $p < .001$.

Parents' comfort going to their child's school and talking to their teacher emerged as a significant predictor of both teacher ratings of a child's readiness for first grade and ORAL-J sounds correct score. Results were significant, and predicted an additional 13% of the variance over the child-focused variables.

DISCUSSION

The major finding of this investigation is that even after participating in a pre-K summer academic preparation program, the success of the kindergarten year as measured by teacher ratings of readiness for first grade centered on the relationship of the parents to the school. The family-focused variables predicted an additional 13% of the variance in a child's readiness for first grade above and beyond the child-focused variables. Of the predictor variables, only parents' self-reported comfort with accessing school personnel had a significant positive relation to the readiness variable.

Although research has not empirically studied parents' comfort with collaborating with school personnel, authors have hypothesized its importance (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Lopez & Cole, 1990). Most of the parents in this sample (88%) completed the Family Questionnaire in Spanish and 55.4% did not have any high school education. Parents with limited English proficiency and lower level of formal schooling relative to United States standards may be less confident in their ability to collaborate with school personnel and to help their children with academic tasks. Other studies indicate that parents' work schedule and lack of bilingual communication at school are significant barriers to parent involvement for Latino families (Edwards, 1990; Lopez & Cole, 1999). Data from this sample suggest that parents' comfort in going to their child's school and talking to the teacher may impact their child's performance at the end of kindergarten. This finding suggests that there are ways in which schools and communities can intervene to promote kindergarten success by acting in ways to solicit and value the involvement of Latino parents in the schooling process.

Results from this study also indicate that there is a disconnect between parents report of comfort in going to their child's school and talking to their teacher and the frequency with which they have actually met with and talked to the teacher. In light of the findings presented here that parent's comfort has a significant and positive impact on their children's school success, facilitating parental involvement is critical.

It should be noted that several of the measures developed for use in this study were developed for the purposes of this investigation and, therefore, there is limited information on the psychometric properties or normative values of the measures. However, trends that emerged through these analyses provide interesting and important information about school readiness. In addition, a more recent study has independently verified the factors of the Santa Barbara County Healthy Start Teacher Questionnaire (Redding, 2004).

An additional limitation relates to the absence of pre-academic skill levels and English language proficiency as variables included in the description of Latino preschoolers' school readiness. Although not a focus of this study, these variables have been shown in the research to significantly impact the domain of readiness (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000).

First, Language Development and Approaches Toward Learning emerged as significant predictors of school readiness. Although Language Development was a stronger predictor of school readiness, in this sample the teachers rated students more highly on Approaches Toward Learning than Language Development. As many of these students were in the process of developing English proficiency, the Approaches Toward Learning finding indicates that basic classroom tasks such as drawing a story, using pencils and paint brushes, and expressing curiosity and excitement about school through

non-verbal communication are also significantly related to teachers' ratings of readiness for first grade. This finding suggests that academic standards should not be the primary focus for kindergarten students to be deemed successful. Rather, these students need support in developing basic learning skills and fostering positive feelings about their school experiences. It also highlights that discussions about being ready to learn when entering kindergarten are not the ultimate objective, rather it is responsiveness to kindergarten instruction that sets the foundation for early and sustained school success.

It was surprising that Social Emotional Development did not significantly predict kindergarten success, given the research illustrating its significance. However, this sample is unique to the literature that has focused primarily on Caucasian and African American samples (Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, & Eggers-Pierola, 1995; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000).

Perhaps, for this sample, the effects of Language Development are preeminent such that language skills are a necessary precondition for appropriate social emotional development. These results suggest that language development should be a continued focus of future research to better understand school readiness within the Latino population.

Most of the parents in this sample (88%) completed the Family Questionnaire in Spanish and 55.4% did not have any high school education. Data from this sample suggest that parents' comfort in going to their child's school and talking to the teacher may impact their child's performance at the end of kindergarten. There are implications of recognizing that school readiness is an outcome of an interactive process. First, it may be difficult to assess a particular child's "school readiness" except when that child is immersed in the challenges of the primary grade classroom. Prior assessments of school readiness outside of the context of school may be poorly predictive of how children will fare when they reach the classroom because the school has a large impact on how they and their parents function within this environment.

Second, data from Research Question 3 (regarding how well kindergarten success can be predicted by each of the child-focused variables) suggest the significance of understanding school readiness as an interaction of the child with the family and school and therefore the benefits of relationships to learning. These data provide support for future research of parents' rating of their comfort and suggest that traditional school readiness assessments may be missing an important predictor of success. This result indicates the important role parents have in enhancing their children's success in kindergarten and suggests that schools and communities can participate in this process.

Particular attention should be paid to the school psychologist's role in working with parents and teachers. School psychologists have an opportunity to positively encourage home-school relationships by supporting teachers to include parents in at-school experiences such as classroom volunteering and to link school curriculum with activities that parents may engage in with their children.

Relationships that parents and children experience with the school are essential because of their continuing influence on children after they begin school, and because of the social and emotional resources they provide to families to allow them to be the best resources for their children. In each case, this positive connection, facilitated by school psychologists, provides young children and their families with some of their best resources for school success.

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