AN INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES OF TRANSITION FIRST GRADE PLACEMENT

By

JANE ELLEN MEYER

Bachelor of Arts
Millikin University
Decatur, Illinois
1968

Master of Arts in Teaching
Oklahoma City University
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1987

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 1992

AN INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S

PERSPECTIVES OF TRANSITION

FIRST GRADE PLACEMENT

Thesis Approved:

Kathryn Castle
Thesis Advisor

David Yellin

Janice Williams

Thomas C. Collins
Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people who have provided me with support, encouragement, understanding, and patience during the completion of this study. I extend my thanks to my doctoral committee members, Dr. Kathryn Castle, Dr. Russell Dobson, Dr. David Yellin, and Dr. Janice Williams. I am grateful for the guidance provided and confidence shown in my abilities to complete the study by my major advisor, Dr. Kathryn Castle. A special thanks is extended to Dr. Russell Dobson for his encouragement to complete this naturalistic study. To Dr. David Yellin, I am very appreciative of his concern and interest at times when encouragement was needed. Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Janice Williams for her interest in this study.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the school system for permitting the study to be conducted. Thanks are extended to all the children, parents, teachers, and administrators who willing shared of their time and ideas throughout the course of the study.

Special thanks are due to my colleague and friend, Dr. Donna Castle Richardson, who encouraged me to enter the doctoral program and who recommended my employment as an adjunct lecturer at Oklahoma City University and assistant director of the Even Start evaluation project. These two positions allowed me to have the financial resources to complete the study.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to my friend and colleague, Linda Rhoten, who helped me reflect on the data gathered during the study, assisted me in the mechanics of formatting the final copy, and provided moral support throughout the study.

To my friend, Linda Bowlby, special thanks are given for the emotional support, caring, and concern demonstrated during my graduate work. Without her sustaining faith, patience, and encouragement, I would not have been able to withstand the daily pressures. She inspired me to keep faith in my abilities and to persevere.

To my sons, Michael and John, I know my graduate studies have taken my time and energy from our family. I appreciate their patience and understanding.

I dedicate this study to my grandchildren, Ashleigh and Michael, with hopes that when they enter school their teachers will provide developmentally appropriate programs for them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

TRANSITION CLASSES

Introduction

Starting school is a major milestone in children's lives. Eagerly, children come to kindergarten expecting to be successful in their school endeavors; however, many children may be classified as 'unready' for learning before or after their first school experiences. Such adult perceptions of 'unreadiness' are predicated on the basis of the belief that children's development is a process of biological maturation (Ames, 1978; Gesell Institute, 1980). Given extra time, children will be ready to handle academic tasks.

'Unreadiness' is often determined through the use of 'so-called readiness' tests or standarized achievement tests given before entrance to kindergarten or first grade such as the Maturational Assessment Test and Gesell School Readiness Test (Gesell Institute, 1980; Meisels, 1987). On the basis of these tests, predictions are often made by school district personnel as to children's ability to perform in the next year's curricular activities. In many cases, placement decisions are made prior to children's actual performance in the classroom. For example, educators make the decision on the basis of readiness tests that children are not going to be able to handle first grade curriculum even though children have not had the opportunity to perform first grade work. Hence, children are retained in kindergarten or placed in transition classes before first grade. In the literature, common names for transition classes are junior first grade, developmental first, transition first, and

readiness rooms (Kilby, 1982; Mann, 1961; Nicholas, 1984; Solem, 1981; Mossburg, 1987).

Another example of disqualifying children before they have had opportunities to perform school work is "academic redshirting". The term comes from the practice employed in athletics of holding out an athlete until he or she gains an age, size, or skill advantage over opponents. On the basis of readiness tests, some educators have suggested parents delay their children's entrance to kindergarten for an extra year in order to give children an age advantage (Frick, 1985; Jones & Sutherland, 1985). In other cases, parents may take it upon themselves to delay children's entrance to kindergarten. Some parents seek to give their children an extra year advantage while others may seek to protect their children from academic demands that are beyond the children's abilities.

Adding an extra year of school before kindergarten or after kindergarten is a controversial issue within the educational community. Advocates for transition grades believe they are protecting children from failure in regular school programs (Ames, 1980; Bohl, 1984; Friesen, 1984; Scott & Ames, 1969; Solem, 1981; Uphoff, 1990). Also, supporters suggest transition programs demonstrate developmentally appropriate curriculum and practice that will be adopted by other teachers at other grade levels (Uphoff, 1990).

Opponents of extra year programs maintain these programs are in effect a form of retention and contend there are negative effects to children's self-esteem and achievement (Billman, 1988; Bocks, 1977; Bredekamp, 1990; Egertson, 1987; Meisels, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1986). In addition to damage to children's self-esteem and achievement, critics suggest that the end result of these programs over an extended period of time is a further push-down of the curriculum as teachers adjust the curriculum to children who are a year older and have an additional year of school experience (Bredekamp, 1990; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1989, 1990).

Parents' opinions of transition classes are mixed. Some parents report benefits academically and socially (Ames, 1980; Arkley, 1987; Mayfield, 1983; Pheasant, 1985); other parents state their children have suffered from peer teasing and labeling after placement in transition classes (Kilby, 1982; Shepard & Smith, 1985).

Throughout the research literature on educational issues and programs, there are few studies that directly elicit children's views about school (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1985; Elliott, 1986; King, 1979; Yamamoto, 1979). Understanding children's perspectives can provide a new dimension to adult understanding of classroom life (Florio, 1978; Kaufman, 1984; King, 1979; Le Compte, 1980; McDermott, 1976; Sitton, 1980; Weinstein, 1983).

With respect to extra year programs, there is no available research literature to date that examines children's perspectives of what it is like to be in a transitional classroom. There has been no examination of the effects of transitional placement on children's peer relationships. Researchers suggest children have their own culture operating within school settings (McDermott, 1976; Le Compte, 1980; Sitton, 1980). Children's conceptualizations of events and situations may differ from adults perspectives (McDermott, 1976; Sitton, 1980). Children develop social classifications within classrooms as well as the school at large (MacDermott, 1976; Sitton, 1980). On the basis of these classifications, children choose playmates and workmates.

In light of the absence of children's perspectives of extra year programs, it is important that children's ideas about transition programs be solicited as another way of examining the impact of an extra year of schooling on those most directly affected.

The impetus for the study came from one observation in one transition first grade early in the children's school year. The researcher made note of the following children's conversation:

First boy: What do you think developmental first is?

Second boy: Well, it's not kindergarten and it's not first

grade. If it were first grade we would be doing more harder work.

First boy: Yeah, we don't go to recess with first grade.

After listening to these children's conversations, the researcher began to contemplate several questions: "What does it mean from the children's viewpoint to be a transition first grader?" "Do children in other transition placements try to figure out what they are doing in these kinds of classes?"

Statement of the Problem

Although transitional programs are used in a number of the districts in this state, no studies had intentionally focused on children's perceptions of their placement in extra year programs either during placement or after placement. Further, it was not known what children in other classrooms thought about children and activities in transitional classrooms. It was important to elicit the views of children in order to clarify and understand the meanings ascribed to transitional grade placement, particularly in light of the controversy as to the merits of such programs. The ideas children have about placement may affect their views of themselves as students which may in turn, affect their successes as students. When they perceive of themselves as less competent than others, children may not attempt academic tasks that they perceive they cannot do for fear that they may experience failure. In other words, children may protect themselves from perceived future failures by not attempting learning tasks (Bandura, 1990).

Children's friendships may be affected by extra year placements. For most children, losing friends is a stressful experience (Rubin, 1980). When they go into transition first grade, some children leave their friends who may go on to regular first grade. Although this happens to a certain extent with other children when their friends are assigned to other classrooms, there is a difference in that transition first graders can never have the opportunities of being with their agemates in subsequent grade level placements. Transition

first graders will always be one year behind their agemates in school progression.

Background

The first transitional programs appeared in the 1930s as alternative placements for children who were deemed "unready" for reading in first grade. Transitional programs were to provide extra time for children to mature and hence become ready for reading (McDaid, 1950; Gredler, 1984). The view of time as the most important factor in developmental sequence represented the maturationist explanations prevalent in that time period (Gredler, 1984; Mossburg, 1987). It is believed by maturationists that, given extra time to mature, children were able to master learning tasks presented to them (Gesell Institute, 1980).

Although they were not widespread, transitional programs existed and resembled current transitional programs in underlying assumptions about children's development and readiness for curricular activities. For the most part, the first transitional programs like those programs today, translated into an extra year of schooling for children. Within the school structure, children were separated from their age mates and placed in special classrooms with the explicit purpose of giving them extra time to get ready for first grade (Leinhardt, 1980; McDaid, 1950; Mann, 1961).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s early childhood programs received increased attention. Kindergarten enrollment increased from 60% of five year olds in 1966 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1986) to 95% of five year olds in 1989 (Hymes, 1990). By 1985 all fifty states were providing public support for kindergarten (U.S. Census Bureau, 1986). Elkind (1988) described the 1970s and 1980s as the time period in which interest in children's emotional and social development was replaced by an interest in children's intellectual development. Elkind attributed the shift away from emotional and social development

emphases to intellectual emphases to a changing view of children particularly among middle class parents. The changing view, Elkind believed, came from misinterpretations and subsequent misapplications of the works of Jerome Bruner, J. McVicker Hunt, and Benjamin Bloom. For example, the notion that "...any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest way to any child at any stage of development" (Bruner, 1962, p. 22) was translated as children could learn anything at any age (Elkind, 1988). Rather than adjust materials and content to young children's unique ways of learning, there was the expectation that kindergarten children could be instructed in the same content and manner as older school age children.

Bloom (1964) described the rapid mental growth of young children from birth to age four. Educators took this to mean that children needed adequate preparation in the preschool years. In practice, this translated to formal instruction in preschool and kindergarten (Elkind, 1988).

Kindergarten and preschool instruction was further impacted by the challenge Hunt (1961) posed to the notion of the concept of fixed intelligence. In his work with disadvantaged children, Hunt emphasized the impact of early stimulation on later intelligence. As this information became available to parents and educators, early stimulation of cognitive development was seen as important for not only disadvantaged children but also for children who were already receiving appropriate experiences in their early years. In other words, if early stimulation increased intelligence, the more stimulation earlier on the better. In practice, this translated into an escalation of expectations for kindergarten and preschool children.

With the success of Soviet space technology and accomplishments by Japan in the world market place, a barrage of attacks was launched against the American public school system for inadequately preparing educated citizenry to be competitive in science and mathematics (Elkind, 1988). Coupling the pressure on the schools with the impetus on the importance of stimulation in the early years of children's development, early intellectual

development became the focus of concern. Elkind believed that the idea of early stimulation was subsequently applied to middle class children resulting in undue pressure on children who were already receiving appropriate early learning experiences.

The education reform movement increased the demands for academically focused kindergarten programs. State mandated behavioral objectives, direct instruction teaching strategies, and prepackaged skill-based reading instruction contributed to increased academic demands on kindergarten children (Hatch & Freeman, 1988; Sigel, 1987). Acquisition of knowledge previously reserved for later years in school was pushed down into kindergarten. Sigel (1987) refers to the increased pressure on children to acquire more knowledge at earlier ages as "hothousing". He cautions that even though young children can engage in rote learning, rote learning does not guarantee conceptual understanding, and increased pressure may put children at risk for developing achievement anxiety (Sigel, 1987).

In the 1970s transitional programs increased in many school districts (Gredler, 1984; Mossburg, 1987; Seefeldt, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1990). Seefeldt (1989) suggests the increase in transitional programs resulted from school districts attempts to handle large numbers of children who were unable to succeed in academically focused kindergarten programs.

It is not known how many transition classes are in existence as the State Department of Education in the state in which the study was conducted does not keep an official record of such programs. It is known that several school districts have operated such programs for approximately fifteen years (Nicholas, 1984).

Although transition programs appear to be increasing and a number of such programs have been operating for a number of years, only three studies have been conducted in this state to date (Nicholas, 1984; Livingston, 1990; Rhoten, 1991). Nicholas (1984) examined the effects of transition placement on children's cognitive and affective growth in

a rural, Chapter 1 school. In this school district, kindergarten children were given the Gesell School Readiness Test and transition placement was made on the basis of the Gesell scores.

She administered the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and determined there were no differences in scores between children who had attended transition classes and a control group of similar children who had been recommended for transition placement but were enrolled in regular classrooms due to parental refusal of transition placement. Only nine children were available in the control group at the time the data were analyzed. Scores on state mandated achievement tests were used to compare academic progress. There were no significant differences in achievement between the groups. It is important to note that the achievement outcome comparisons were made on the basis of grade level rather than age. Children who had attended the transition class were taking grade level tests designed for younger children. At the time of testing transition first grade children had an additional year of school experience. Nicholas reported higher rates of psychological referrals for children in the regular first grade as compared to transition first grade children. Nicholas did not observe in transition classrooms nor did she interview children as to their perspectives on placement.

In a large suburban district, Livingston (1990) conducted a study of achievement differences between children placed in transitional programs, children recommended for transition placement but placed in regular classes, and children in regular classes. She found significant differences in achievement favoring the children placed in transition classes. Although the researcher found significant differences in achievement, it is important to note that she failed to adjust for age differences. Transition class children (experimental group) were one year older at the time of the test than children in the comparison group; therefore, transition children were taking grade level tests designed for children who were one year younger and had one year less school experience. Further, the

study was limited to a one-year follow-up. In previous transition program studies, Raygor(1972), Matthews (1977), and Kilby (1982) found that achievement differences evened out by third or fourth grade. The study did not focus on children's ideas about transitional placement.

Rhoten (1991) examined transition first grade curriculum in an urban school district. The researcher compared kindergarten, transition first grade, and first grade curricular goals and practices with NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987), an educational environment rating scale (Charlesworth, Mosley, Burns, Hart, Kirk & Hernandez, 1988), and state learner outcomes. In addition, the researcher examined teachers' and admininstrators' perceptions of the transition first program. The observations conducted and rating scale scores of the transition program showed a lack of appropriate curricular activities, materials, instructional strategies, motivation, and guidance of social-emotional development. Little difference was found between the transition program and regular first grade program in terms of materials and teaching strategies. Teachers and administrators viewed the program positively and believed that the transition program was appropriate to children's educational needs. As Rhoten (1991) concludes:

> Findings from the study indicated that the transition program provides a highly structured educational setting with a narrow curricular focus incongruent with the knowledge base of how young children learn, and the program appears to reflect inappropriate expectations for primary age children in first grade (p. 320).

Rhoten did not investigate children's ideas about placement in transition first grade.

Children's perceptions of their placement in transitional first grade programs seem an important area of investigation for several reasons. First, children's perceptions regarding transitional classrooms are unknown. Advocates assume children benefit from the extra year and assume there is no stigma attached to the extra year (Ames, 1980; Hood, 1982).

Critics assume children view the extra year as failure and that there is a stigma attached to the extra year.(Billman, 1988; Bocks, 1977; Egertson, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1986, 1990).

Secondly, transitional programs separate children from their age mates. It is important to know how children view the placement and separation from agemates. Children do label their peers based on special placement and select playmates and workmates based upon their criteria. In addition, losing friends is a stressful experience for children (Rubin, 1980).

Thirdly, children's ideas often differ from adults. Parents and teachers believe there are benefits derived from extra year programs. Children may not report to parents or teachers their daily encounters with other children or their own attitudes toward the classroom. Observations of children during interactions with peers outside the transition classroom offers information on children's social networks within the school. Social networks have not been examined in transitional programs to date. Interviews with children in other classrooms provide data as to how peers interpret transitional classrooms.

Lastly, it is not known how children's views of placement may affect their schooling experiences and their views of themselves as successful students. It is known that children identify themselves with teacher-formed ability groupings for reading. No matter what labels are given to the groupings, children figure out and often label which group is the "smart" group and which group is the "dumb" group. Consequently, children label themselves and others. This labeling negatively affects children's performance and views of themselves as capable learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify and describe children's ideas about transition first grade placement. Children were encouraged to share their perceptions of how children

come to be placed in transition classes, what transition first activities were like as compared to other first grades' activities, what their feelings were about transition placement, and what changes have occurred in friendships since transition placement. Through the course of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with selected children who were presently in the transition class, children who had been in the transition class in the past and were now in first through fourth grade classrooms, and children who were recommended for placement in the transition class but whose parents refused placement, and children who had never been recommended for placement in the transition class. Participant observation was ongoing in the kindergarten, transition, and two first grade classes as well as on the playground, in the hallways, and in the lunch room. School documents were reviewed.

The following research questions were proposed as the initial focus of the study:

1. Who were the children placed in a transition first grade?
2. What school criteria were used to determine children's placement in transition first grade?
3. What did placement in a transition first grade mean to children?
   (a) What explanations did children give for being in a transition first grade?
   (b) How did children view their daily activities? Were they doing what they thought they would be doing in first grade?
   (c) Who were children's kindergarten friends? Who are friends now?
4. What does placement in transition first grade mean to other children?
   (a) What reasons did regularly promoted children give for children being in a transition first grade?
   (b) How did regularly promoted children view their daily activities as compared to activities of transition first graders?
   (c) Who were their kindergarten friends? Who are their friends now?

5. What conclusions may be drawn about the impact of transition first grade placement on children's beliefs about themselves and attitudes about school?

Significance of the Study

As the debate ensues between advocates and opponents of transition programs, one dimension left unexplored was children's views of their placements in transition first grade classrooms. No studies have been identified in the research literature that focused on what it meant from children's standpoints to be placed in an transition first program. It was not known what children who have never been placed in transition classes believe about children who were placed in transition classes. It was not known how transition placement affected children's friendships. Interviews with children and observations of children in daily activities in transition first grade classrooms were absent in previous research efforts. Knowledge of children's understandings of transition placement has the potential of providing additional information that may assist parents and educators in decision making about transition placement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the research literature in three areas: 1) transition programs; 2) nonpromotion/retention; 3) children's perceptions of school and ability. The research on transition programs is divided into three sections. The first section presents the historical context for the development of transition programs. The second section describes research findings that claim positive effects of transitional programs. The third section describes research findings that show negative effects or no effects of transitional programs.

Opponents of transition programs suggest that findings of retention/nonpromotion studies are pertinent to transition programs, because in effect transition programs are another form of nonpromotion. Nonpromotion studies are used to illustrate the effects of extra year programs on children's academic and personal development.

The third section in the literature review presents research on children's perceptions of school and ability. In order to fulfill the mission of this study, it is important to know how children construct ideas about themselves and others through school experiences. Children have certain ideas about ability that seem to differ from adults' conceptions.

Transition Programs

Historical Context of Transition Programs

The historical setting for the development of the first transition classes was the 1930s. Swaby (1984) suggests that during the 1920s and 1930s reading readiness was a major concern of educators. Most educators had adoped the view that individuals pass through fixed stages of development based on physical and mental maturation. When this view of development was applied to reading, formal instruction was to occur at the time that children had matured to the appropriate stage. Instruction was to be delayed if children were not at the appropriate stage.

Educators conducted various studies in an attempt to find the exact stage that reading instruction should commence. Two researchers, Morphett and Washburne, claimed to have found the right stage (Swaby, 1984). According to this study conducted in one school system using one method of reading instruction, the researchers claimed that children were not ready to read until they had attained a mental age of six years and six months (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). The findings of this study were apparently accepted by most educators because of the predominance of maturationist theory and the emphasis on intelligence testing (Swaby, 1984). Although Gates presented evidence that readiness for reading was affected by factors other than biological maturation such as the teaching environment and method of reading instruction, his position was acknowledged by only a few educators and ignored by the majority of educators who maintained the maturationist perspective (Swaby, 1984).

The first transition classes seem to have been established to handle children whose reading instruction had to be delayed, because educators believed that they had not reached the appropriate mental age to benefit from instruction. Several early transition studies

provide examples of the beliefs in delayed instruction.

Peterson (1937) reported on a reading readiness program in Michigan. The selection criteria were mental age test scores of 5 years or less and low scores on the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test. Children identified as unready were placed in the transition (readiness) classroom. The Gates Silent Reading Test and the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Tests were given to the transition children and first grade children in the spring. The results reported that both first grade children and transition children had mean scores that exceeded the test norms. Educators viewed the program as successful.

Ring (1944) reported the results of a three year study of a one-semester reading readiness program which started in 1936 in Contra Costa County, California . The reading instruction for some children was delayed for one semester in all first grade classrooms. At the end of three years, comparisons were made between students who had received instruction and those who had delayed instruction. The delayed instruction group had a grade level reading score of 3.3 after 21 months of instruction as compared to a grade level reading score of 3.2 after 26 months for the instructional group. The researcher concluded that the transition group had made better reading progress. In addition, the researcher suggested that children who were in the delayed reading instruction group had better emotional adjustment.

Since the 1930s, researchers have conducted studies of transitional programs. The results of the studies indicate mixed findings. Some studies report positive effects; whereas others report negative effects or no significant effects. For purposes of the review of transition programs studies, the review will be divided into two sections: 1) studies lending support to transitional programs due to positive findings; 2) studies opposing transitional programs due to negative findings or findings indicating no significant differences.

Studies Supporting Transition Programs

The Chicago Public Schools began readiness programs in approximately 1939 (Johnson, 1942). First grade classes consisted of two instructional levels. Each semester comprised one level of instruction. Promotions occurred at the end of each semester. To accomodate children who were identified as unready for reading instruction, the schools added an additional semester. Larger schools set up separate classrooms for unready children. Smaller schools assigned children to a separate reading group for two semesters within regular first grade classrooms. Johnson (1942) reported that after three semesters 84% of the children designated as unready had been promoted to the next level of first grade in one semester. The remaining children had not completed first grade at the end of three semesters. The researcher considered the program to be successful.

Out of concern for slow learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, an experimental program was established in the Quincy, Illinois Public Schools to serve children who had been unsuccessful in first grade reading (Liddle & Long, 1958). Eighteen children were chosen for placement in the experimental program. Of the eighteen children, six children were in second grade and twelve children were scheduled to repeat first grade. Children were given individual intelligence tests and the California Test of Personality prior to placement in the experimental room. The California Test of Personality was readministered at the end of the first year. The results of the California Test of Personality showed as a group the children made gains in nine of the twelve areas on the test. In one area of the test, freedom from nervous symptoms, children's mean scores declined. The decline in mean scores seemed to suggest that children placed in the experimental program were displaying more nervous symptons than they had been prior to placement.

At the end of the second year, thirteen of the eighteen children remained. Of the thirteen children remaining, eight children had been in the experimental program for two years and five children had gone on to third grade. The Metropolitan Achievement Test was

given to the thirteen children at the end of the second year. Liddle & Long examined the reading grade placement scores and found that the children's scores reflected an average mean improvement of about 1.75 years in less than two school years.

Liddle & Long suggested children from lower class homes might benefit from nursery school or pre-kindergarten experiences. In addition, pre-first or ungraded classes were considered more desirable options than kindergarten retention. Little & Long advocated flexible grade progression based upon children's accomplishments.

Immature children were placed in a one semester reading readiness program in an Iowa school district (Mann, 1961). Children were kept in regular first grade classrooms, but they received a readiness curriculum consisting of 74 lessons designed by the researcher. Mann compared the regular first graders and readiness first graders using the Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness test, Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness Profiles, Reading Readiness Listening Test, Gates Primary Reading Test, and a learning rate test designed by the researcher.

The Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness test was given at mid-semester. The scores favored the control group composed of first graders who had received regular reading instruction. At the end of the semester, mean scores favored the readiness group on four subtests but did not reach statistical significance. The scores on one subtest of the Reading Readiness Listening Test were statistically significant in favor of the readiness group. At the end of the semester, the Gates Primary Reading Test scores significantly favored the regular instruction group.

Mann suggested that the program was effective, because the readiness group seemed to make more rapid progress and the program was well accepted by teachers. The researcher's conclusions seem to be incongruent with the actual study findings.

The effects of a reading readiness program on the achievement of children from lower socioeconomic families were studied by Ivancic (1967). In this study children were

matched on the basis of mental age, chronological age, intelligence quotient, parental education, family mobility, fathers' occupation, and family stability. There were a total of 63 children who were divided into two groups, the transition group and regularly promoted group. The researcher made comparisons of the two groups on classroom grades, standardized achievement test scores, and grade level attained after four years of school attendance. There were no significant differences on standardized achievement test scores or grade level attained between the groups. Classroom grades (reading and language) showed significant differences in favor of the transition group. Ivancic reported that the transition year had benefitted children in age-grade status and achievement due to the differences in classroom grades.

The reader should take note of several factors in interpreting the results of this study. First, the transition children were chronologically older than the control group children at the time that the comparisons were made on teacher assigned grades. Second, the transition year was not considered as a year of failure even though children had spent an extra year in school. Last, achievement test comparisons showed no significant differences.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota increased its junior first grade classes from one in 1970 to five in 1981 (Solem, 1981). Children were identified for placement in junior first grade classes on the basis of kindergarten teachers' observations, administration of the Yellow Brick Road Screening Test in the fall, and administration of the Metropolitan Readiness Test in May. The researcher listed characteristics of children who might benefit from junior first grade placement. The characteristics included hyperactivity, daydreaming, perceptual/motor deficiencies, impulsiveness, speech/language/hearing disorders, poor self-attitude, and learning deficits in reading, writing, and spelling.

Solem measured the effectiveness of junior first grades on the basis of junior first graders' class achievement levels in regular first grade in 1978 and 1980 as reported by teachers. In 1978, the teachers ranked 25% of junior first graders in the top quartile of their

first grade classes, 50% of junior first graders ranked in the second and third quartiles, and 25% of junior first graders ranked in the lowest quartile. In 1980, 28% of junior first graders ranked in top quartile, 70% ranked in the second and third quartiles, and 2% ranked in the lowest quartiles. Based upon the improvement in achievement ratings given by first grade teachers, the researcher concluded junior first grades were successful in helping at-risk children.

A second study was conducted of the Sioux Falls junior first grade programs. Using an ex-post facto design, Kilby (1982) compared existing school test data including scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test, Gates MacGinite Reading Test, and Iowa Test of Basic Skills, for 161 former junior first grade participants in comparison with 49 program-eligible participants who had not been in junior first grade. Also included in the study were twelve former junior first graders, who were at the time of the study, completing eighth grade. In addition, Kilby utilized surveys to poll parents and school personnel on benefits of junior first grades. Fifty parents of junior first graders were randomly selected. 100 school personnel, including kindergarten, junior first grade, and first grade teachers as well as psychologists and administrators, were surveyed.

Kilby (1982) claimed transitional program participation had a positive impact on reading achievement, special education placement, and grade repetition. At the end of fourth grade, junior first graders outperformed nonparticipants in reading achievement as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. However, the differences in reading achievement scores did not reach statistical significance. At the end of fourth grade, no significant differences were recorded in reading or math between junior first grade participants and nonparticipants. The eighth grade sample group (former junior first grade children) remained behind representative samples of regularly promoted classmates in grades four through eight as measured by achievement test and reading test performance. The eighth grade sample group did score above their own expected scores for three years,

but fell below expectations in seventh and eighth grade.

Placements in special education classes were less frequent for program participants than for nonprogram participants; however, 33% of junior first grade program participants received special education services and 49% received Title I services. Kilby noted that program participants were not as frequently placed in learning disabilities classes as nonprogram participants.

Nonprogram participants had significantly higher retention rates than junior first graders. In the calculation of retention rates, Kilby did not include the extra year that children spent in junior first grade. If Kilby had counted the extra year, junior first graders retention rates would have been higher than nonprogram participants (Shepard, 1990).

Results of the survey pointed to differences between parents and educators as to expected benefits of junior first grade programs. Parents listed academic achievement as the primary benefit. Educators (teachers and principals) ranked social-emotional maturity as the primary benefit. Rarely did parents or educators choose improvement in classroom behavior or school attitude as main benefits of the extra year program.

Junior first graders' parents were concerned about frequent negative comments made by other children including inferences to flunking. In spite of these concerns, ninety percent of the parents surveyed expected and reported positive benefits of junior first grade.

According to survey results, 98% of the educators indicated the junior first grade programs were worthwhile and 67% of the educators thought the program should be expanded.

Behavioral and academic progress of forty-three children in two transitional classrooms in two different Iowa schools was studied by Wilson (1981). The Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery was used to measure academic progress as well as to serve as an indicator of children's readiness for formal reading instruction.

In order to measure behavioral progress, a Pupil Rating Scale was developed to determine students' characteristics. Teachers completed the Pupil Rating Scale that

consisted of items meant to assess verbal and nonverbal categories. Among the verbal items were spoken language and auditory comprehension. The nonverbal items included motor coordination, personal-social behavior, and orientation. A total behavioral score was obtained by combining the five items from the verbal and nonverbal categories.

Wilson concluded the results of the study suggested the effectiveness of transitional programs. Utilizing a t -test analysis of fall and spring ratings by transitional teachers on the Pupil Rating Scale, he reported significant differences in verbal, nonverbal, and total behavioral scores. Children's scores on the Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery obtained in the spring of the kindergarten and transitional years were compared. The scores indicated children had made significant progress.

The effects of transitional room placement on academic achievement, affective development, and use of special services were studied by Dolan (1982). The subjects in this study were 199 children enrolled in second, fourth, and sixth grade in three elementary schools. Of the children selected for the study, 70 were former participants in transition room placements before promotion to first grade, 53 had attended a transition class either an entire school year or part of a school year before promotion to second grade; 16 children had been recommended for transitional classrooms but had been promoted to first grade because of parent refusal to agree to transitional placement, and 60 children had been regularly promoted and never considered for transitional placement.

To measure academic achievement in reading and mathematics, Dolan (1982) used Stanford Achievement Test scores obtained in second and fifth grade. An analysis of variance was completed on the data in order for statistical comparisons to be made. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the School Attitude Measure were administered to assess affective development. Parents and educators were asked to rate students' affective development using the subscales of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the School Attitude Measure. Student records were examined to

determine average yearly use of special services which included Title I reading, speech and language programs, and summer school.

Dolan (1982) suggested the findings of the study confirmed the success of the transitional program in improving academic achievement in reading. At the end of sixth grade, reading achievement of the two transitional groups significantly exceeded that of the parent refusal group. The transitional groups compared favorably in reading achievement with the regularly promoted children who had never been considered for transitional placement. In mathematics achievement, there were significant differences favoring the regularly promoted group. According to Dolan, significant differences in mathematics achievement between transitional groups and regularly promoted groups might be due to the primary focus on reading skills rather than mathematical abilities in transitional classes.

There were no significant differences found between groups on the affective measures. Children promoted to second grade following the transition year and regularly promoted children did not differ in average use of special services. The parent refusal groups used special services early in their school years and usage increased during the years following. Special services were required by the group promoted to first grade following the transitional year. This transitional group declined in special services utilization by sixth grade.

Pheasant (1985) described the development of a readiness first grade in Aumsville, Oregon in 1982. The Aumsville School District did not have a kindergarten program at the time the readiness program was established. The school district expected children entering first grade to have certain skills. In order to determine children's skill levels, the first week of school was spent in screening children using the Brigance K & 1 Screening Test, Metropolitan Readiness Tests, teacher constructed screening instrument that contained recognition of letter names and sounds, colors, shapes; rote counting, number recognition, number words, and number concepts; speech and language screening, and the Gesell

School Readiness Screening Test. Placements in the readiness class were decided on the basis of the children's performance on the screening instruments. Parent conferences were held to share screening information and placement recommendations. Parents made the final decision on placement. For those children qualifying for placement in the readiness program, parents were asked to sign a school generated form that indicated their agreement or disagreement with the placement. The probability of two years in first grade was included in the parent form. Approximately ten percent of the parents were reported as having difficulty accepting their children's placement in the readiness first grade.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, Pheasant reported readiness room participants' individual percentile scores and group mean percentile scores from the administration of the Metropolitan Readiness in the fall and spring. In addition, she stated that the retention rate diminished from fifteen percent to five percent after the first year of the readiness program. In the second year of the program, only one child was retained. Pheasant described parent and teacher satisfaction with the readiness program. Although the researcher claimed the retention rate dropped, it is important to consider that the researcher failed to include the children who were placed in the readiness program in the retention rates.

In an attempt to address the gap in research literature, the absence of children's direct evaluation of transitional placement, retention, and long term evaluation of retention, Sandoval & Fitzgerald (1985) conducted a study to assess high school students' attitudes about transitional first grade and retention in grade. The participants in the study consisted of three groups: 30 children who had been retained in one grade, 32 children who had been in transition first grade, and 75 children who had been regularly promoted were matched at random to the other children on the basis of sex and same high school English class. The researchers developed a 6 point Likert Scale questionnaire that asked retained and transition first grade participants if their retention experience "helped them do better in school, make

more friends, and feel better about themselves" (p.166). All participants were asked "whether retention helped other students they knew do better in school, make more friends, feel better about themselves, and if retention was a good idea" (p.166).

In addition to the questionnaire, school records were examined to determine year of retention, high school courses taken and credits earned, scores on district minimum competency tests, special education placement, and grades in English and mathematics.

Using T-tests of the means, questionnaire data were analyzed for between group differences in opinion. There were no significant differences among groups in their answers. Additional statistical analyses compared responses to questions within groups. The results showed children who had repeated a grade in school were less positive about retention making them feel better about themselves. Participants who had attended a transition first program were the most positive about the academic benefits of the program. The regularly promoted participants were less positive about the social benefits of retention.

After examining the school records, the researchers determined that grade repeaters did worse than the other two groups on district mandated minimum competency tests and had lower grades in freshman English and mathematics. Of the three groups, the transitional group outperformed the other two groups on the three measures of academic progress included in the study, however, the differences were not statistically significant.

In addition, Sandoval & Fitzgerald completed correlational analyses between the time of retention, attitudes toward retention and academic performance. The results of these analyses showed the time of retention was unrelated to attitude; however, those students who were retained later in school had poorer high school achievement.

Regularly promoted children were used as the control group in this study. As the researchers pointed out, the study did not include a comparison group of similar children who did not attend a transition program; therefore, the study could not conclude that junior first graders were doing better than they would have done without the extra year.

Children's responses to the questionnaire items presented some information on differences in attitudes about transitional first grade and retention; however, it is not known why children held these attitudes. Interviews with children might have added useful information to the study.

Arkley (1987) examined the characteristics of transitional first grade participants who demonstrated the most progress in reading and math during the school year, student attitudes about school, differences among transitional classrooms in reading and math achievement, and principals and teachers beliefs about the effect of transitional placement on students.

At the time of the study, the transition program was in its second year of existence. The transitional program had expanded from two classrooms in the first year of operation to nine classrooms the second year. 180 children were placed in the transitional classrooms on the basis of percentile scores from the prereading skills composite of the Metropolitan Readiness Test, IQ scores obtained from the Slosson IQ Test, kindergarten teachers' observations of behavior, and skills demonstrated at the end of the kindergarten year.

According to demographic information presented, the school district had a black minority population of approximately 26%. Of the total elementary school population, 36% qualified for free lunches. In the transitional classrooms, approximately 42% of the children were black and 55% of the children qualified for free lunches. There were more males in transitional classes than females. Although the researcher did not address the numbers of black, low-income, or males in the transitional classrooms, the data seemed to have indicated an overrepresentation of participants who were black, low-income, or males if one compares the enrollment figures with the demographic information given.

At the beginning and end of the school year, children in transitional classrooms were given the California Achievement Test and the Attitude to School Questionnaire. Differences between fall and spring scores were examined to determine progress in reading and math. The results suggested children who were black, youngest, or who had the

lowest scores on the Metropolitan Readiness at the end of kindergarten showed the greatest gains in reading during the transitional year.

There were no significant differences in the nine classrooms' means in reading or math. The classroom that showed the greatest gains in reading and math used a full-time aide whereas the other classrooms used aides several hours daily.

In regard to children's attitudes about school and themselves as learners, the Attitude to School Questionnaire was given at the beginning and the end of the school year. There were no significant changes in scores over the course of the year. One transitional classroom showed significant differences between the beginning and end scores. Children's attitudes towards school became more positive. The classroom showing significant positive changes in school attitude was also the same classroom that made the largest gains in reading and math.

According to parents' and teachers' beliefs, transitional programs positively affected children's school attitudes. The attitude survey given to the children did not indicate a significant difference in attitude change during the school year. Arkley explained the contradiction as a result of the interviews measuring different affective characteristics than the children's attitude survey.

The results of the questionnaire given to principals and teachers indicated that there was agreement among principals and teachers as to the effects of transitional programs. Both groups agreed that transitional placement was a better option than kindergarten retention or social promotion to first grade, transitional classes prepared children for academics in first grade, and transitional classes had a positive effect on children's school attitude.

Arkley spent one day observing one child in a transitional classroom. From this observation, she concluded that the transition experience seemed positive for the child. The reader should exercise caution in interpreting this finding. According to Williams (1986) in

order for researchers to inquire into settings in a meaningful way, enough time must be allowed in order for the observers to be regularly at the site and obtain the insiders' perspective of the situation.

A random sample of 45 parents of transitional first graders were interviewed on the phone. Parents reported that the program had a positive effect on children's academics and school attitudes. Also, parents liked the smaller class size.

A follow-up comparative study of transitional first graders' and first grade retainees' self-concepts and achievement after six years was completed by Rihl (1988). From the original participant population of 100 students, 60 students were still attending school in the district. Thirty-four children in the study had successfully passed the remaining grades after the transitional year and were in sixth grade; 16 had attended pre-first grade and 18 had been retained. Twenty-six children had been retained another year and were in fifth grade; 14 had attended pre-first, and 12 had been retained. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was given to all children in the two groups. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills mean scores were compared for the sixth and fifth grade groups.

The findings from the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale indicated that the fifth grade group had not sustained their self-concept level. The sixth grade groups' mean score was four points higher than the first grade retained group, but the differences in scores were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, Rihl (1988) suggested that the differences in points favoring the pre-first group indicated that transitional placement had a positive effect on the development of their self-concept.

In regard to the achievement test scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the results were not significantly different, however, the mean scores for the fifth grade and sixth grade pre-first group were higher than those of the fifth grade and sixth grade retained groups. Basing his comparison on the original study, Rihl (1988) concluded that the pre-first group had caught up to the retained group because at the time of the original study the

retained group had the higher mean achievement scores. In neither the original or follow-up studies did the achievement scores reach statistical significance.

In a study done in a suburban Oklahoma school district, Livingston (1990) examined achievement differences between children placed in transitional programs, children recommended for transitional placement but placed in regular classes, and children in regular classes. She reported significant differences in achievement favoring children in transition classes. In considering the findings of this study, the reader should take into account that the comparisons made on achievement test scores were not adjusted to reflect the fact that the transition first graders were a year older at the time of the testing and were taking tests designed for children one year younger.

Shepard (1989) reported on two studies investigating the effects of transition placement on achievement. Brevard County Schools in Florida (1987) undertook an investigation in which transition children were compared with kindergarten retainees and developmental kindergartners. According to Shepard (1989), transition students achieved the best scores of the three groups and were 30 percentile points above the national norms at the end of third grade. In this study, there was an absence of data describing the characteristics of the groups at the beginning of the research . In addition, Shepard pointed out that the comparisons made between transition children and retained children might not be appropriate because children placed in transition classes were often identified on the basis of immaturity; whereas, children retained in grade were often identified on the basis of academic failure.

Another study done by Ford (1985) was reviewed by Shepard (1989). Shepard stated that this study compared transition children's readiness scores at the end of the transition year with their own kindergarten readiness scores. As Shepard reported, the conclusion reached by the study showed the transition group gaining 55 percentile points in one year. While this was an impressive gain, Shepard suggested that a follow-up study in first grade

might be required to substantiate the results through controlled comparisons.

Studies Reporting Negative or No Effects of Transition Placement

Steinmetz (1946) completed a study of reading readiness groups in Chicago. Placement in the reading readiness group was determined by scores on the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test and Test of Primary Mental Abilities. Children were placed in the readiness groups for one semester. Her survey showed that nearly 20% of all first grade children were placed in transition classes and spent an extra semester in first grade. Besides the 20% placed in readiness classes, another 20% failed one semester of first grade. Steinmetz concluded that the program was not successful in reducing first grade failure. She suggested that first grade curriculum needed to be examined.

California established many transition programs in the 1930s and 1940s. According to Russell (1948), 271 of 418 counties surveyed had transition programs. He found that over 50% of the children in districts operating transition programs took three years to complete the first and second grade. He considered these programs ineffective since 50% of the children were nonpromoted.

In a study of reading readiness rooms in the Detroit Public Schools from 1946 through 1949, McDaid (1950) compared 147 children placed in readiness rooms after kindergarten with 147 children placed in regular first grade classrooms. He administered the Detroit Beginning First Grade Intelligence Test, Detroit Readiness Test, and California Test of Personality to both groups. He found no statistically significant differences between the two groups in personal or social adjustment as measured by the California Test of Personality. He found statistically significant differences in reading achievement which favored the regular first grade placement group.

McDaid had teachers and principals complete a questionnaire about their opinions of readiness rooms. The findings indicated that teachers and principals valued readiness programs because they thought school work matched children's ability, prevented frustration and failure, and gave children a period of time to mature.

Another study of the readiness room program in suburban Detroit was completed by Bell (1972). In addition to studying achievement, Bell also examined the effects of program placement on self-concept. In the school district where she conducted the study, there were readiness room programs in seven of the eight elementary schools. Two of the schools not only had a readiness program between kindergarten and first grade but also additional readiness programs between first and second grade and second and third grade. In these schools, it was possible for children to be separated from regular instructional placement for three school years.

The identification of children for placement in readiness room programs was based on the administration of the Anton Brenner Developmental Gestalt Test of School Readiness, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and kindergarten teachers' evaluations of children's progress. Two of the seven schools used the Gesell School Readiness Test.

The original number of subjects in the study was 95; 14 children were in the experimental group placed in readiness room programs and 81 children were in the control group not placed in readiness room programs. The control group children were identified by teachers' opinions and scores obtained on Anton Brenner Developmental Gestalt Test of Reading Readiness and either the Gesell School Readiness Test or the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. The control group children were considered to have abilities comparable to the experimental group children.

Bell administered the Stanford Early School Achievement Test and the Scamin Self-Concept Test at the end of one year. At the end of the second year, the Stanford Achievement Test Primary Battery and the Scamin Self-Concept Test were administered again. In addition, Bell interviewed principals and teachers and completed some classroom

observations.

The results of the study indicated that at the end of the first and second year the children placed in regular classrooms outperformed the readiness room children on achievement tests. During the two year period, the self-concept scores of regularly placed children increased slightly while the scores of children in the readiness room decreased significantly. Bell conjunctured that the readiness room provided an accepting and sheltered environment; however, when children left the readiness room and realized they were a year behind their agemates, children lost self-esteem and self-confidence.

Interviews with teachers and principals showed a commitment to the readiness program and strong beliefs in the need to continue the program. Beliefs of educators reflected the stance that children developed readiness for reading as a result of biological maturation; therefore, postponing instruction for a year by placement in a transition class made sense.

Hunter (1975/1976) studied the effects of transitional placement on peer relationships and later academic performance over a six year period. Hunter selected approximately 249 children as subjects in the study. 65 of the subjects had attended a transitional first grade classroom and 184 of the subjects had been regularly promoted.

The existing school records were used as data. The Stanford Achievement Test Scores from first and second grade and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in third through six grades were statistically analyzed and compared by an analysis of variance. The findings from the statistical analyses showed significant differences favoring the regularly promoted children at all six grade levels.

Hunter constructed an instrument to measure social ranking of the transitional group. Classroom teachers administered the instrument to all children in first through sixth grade. No significant differences in sociometric standing were found between the groups in first, second, fourth, fifth, or sixth grades. There were significant differences favoring the

regularly promoted children at the third grade level.

Raygor (1972) conducted a five year follow-up study of ninety-two children recommended for kindergarten retention in a suburban Minnesota school district. Of the ninety-two children recommended for kindergarten retention, thirty-seven children were randomly assigned to a half-day transitional class, twenty-five children were retained in kindergarten, and thirty children were assigned to first grade due to parents' disagreement with retention. The last group of children were considered to be potential candidates for first grade failure. In addition, the researcher selected a random sample of kindergartners to use in comparison with the three aforementioned groups.

Using the Stanford Achievement Test and teacher rating scale, comparisons were made on school achievement and school adjustment at the end of first, third, and fourth grade. At the end of the treatment year, the transition group had higher mean scores than the kindergarten retention group on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. By the end of third grade, there were no significant differences between the transition and kindergarten retention groups on academic performance as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test or school adjustment as indicated by the teacher rating scale. As a result of the findings, Raygor concluded that transitional treatment "did not seem any better than the regular kindergarten program" (p. 143).

Raygor suggested the two retained groups were performing better when compared with their peer group than those children who were promoted but predicted to fail. However, in reaching this conclusion Raygor was comparing children who were retained with their grade peers who were one year younger, whereas children in the potential first grade failure group were being compared with age as well as grade peers.

Although the findings of Raygor's study indicate positive effects of transitional programs after one year, achievement differences seemed to even out between groups by the end of third grade. As Raygor indicated in her conclusions, "the 'problem' of

differences in school achievement vanishes when it is assumed that children develop at different rates in different skills, and the program is designed to fit the child instead of frantically (and hopelessly) trying to 'get every child up to grade level'" (p. 147). Raygor suggested individualized ungraded elementary schools should be considered as an alternative to the rigid grade structure of most elementary schools.

Matthews (1978) studied the effects of transitional placement on reading and math achievement at the end of second and third grade. The site of the study was Alton, Illinois, a moderate sized school district. The design of the study included an experimental group of 138 transition room children and four control groups of 30 randomly selected children per group. The first control group was composed of 30 children who qualified for transitional placement but because of lack of space or parental objection were promoted to first grade after kindergarten. The second control group contained 30 children who had not qualified for transition classes and were enrolled in fourth grade during the 1975-1976 school year. The third control group consisted of 30 children who were retained in first grade during the 1973-1974 school year. The fourth control group consisted of 30 children who attended kindergarten in 1972-1973 and were enrolled in third grade during the 1975-1976 school year.

The selection of children for transition classrooms was based upon results achieved on a combination of tests including the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Bender Gestalt Test of Visual Perception, Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test, Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty, Metropolitan Readiness Test, and the Myklebust Pupil Rating Scale. A team of school personnel reviewed the testing results and made recommendations to parents. Parental consent was necessary for transition class placement.

In this study there were several important features of the program that deserve mention. Each child in the transition program had an individual readiness program of instruction that was revised weekly. The class size was limited to 15 children. Each

readiness room had a teacher aide for approximately four hours each day. The curriculum focused on language development, perceptual motor development, visual perceptual development, reading readiness development, social-emotional development, and number readiness.

Matthews utilized the second grade test scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests and third grade California Achievement Test. The transition group was statistically compared to each of the four control groups on each of the subsections of the tests using the Dunnett's Test.

Findings of the study indicated that transition year placement did not result in equal or greater achievement of the transition group at the second and third grade levels as compared to the regularly promoted control groups. In other words, transition children were not attaining comparable academic achievement as the average, regularly promoted students in second and third grade. On one comprehension sub-test of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, transition children scored significantly higher than the transition eligible control group.

The third grade test results showed that the transition group scored significantly higher on several subtests than the control group containing the transition-eligible children. The transition group did not catch up to or surpass the average students by third grade.

Wilson, Hewett, Sheets, & Thomas (1979) evaluated the transition program in two Iowa school districts in two different studies. The results of the first study indicated that transition room students performed less well than their peers on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The gaps seemed to close by sixth grade. In the second study, the researchers attempted to match transition room students with students on the basis of sex, intellectual ability, and readiness. Transition room students scored lower on achievement tests than their matched counterparts. The findings led the researchers to speculate that transitional placement was based on social, emotional, or behavioral concerns rather than on cognitive

or intellectual factors. As a result of this conclusion, Wilson suggested that evaluation of placement decisions might be important.

One of the few studies that examined both a primarily black population and differences in reading curriculum was conducted by Leinhardt (1980) in an urban school district. Two groups of transition eligible children were identified. The first group consisted of 32 children who attended first grade in 1975-1976 and were identified as transition-eligible by the school psychologist. The second group consisted of 44 children who were in the transition room during the 1976-1977 school year.

The reading programs that Leinhardt evaluated were a basal based approach and an individualized reading program, The New Reading System (NRS). The New Reading System consisted of a leveled system that utilized a code-emphasis approach. Children proceeded through the reading program as each subsequent level was mastered.

The first group of children were in seven basal classrooms and four individualized reading classrooms. The second group of children who were in transitional classrooms all received individualized reading instruction. Leinhardt made three comparisons: between the individualized reading program and basal reading program; between individualized reading program in a regular classroom and individualized reading program in a transitional classroom; between the two classrooms.

In order to assess reading achievement, Leinhardt used the total reading scores on the Stanford Achievement Tests at the end of the treatment year. The results of the comparisons suggested that there were significant differences favoring the transition-eligible, regularly placed children. Transition-eligible children who had received the individualized reading program performed better than students receiving basal instruction. Individualized reading instruction was more effective than the basal approach. Integrated classroom placement seemed to be the most effective setting.

The researcher found that children placed in transition rooms received less reading instruction than children in regular classrooms. In addition, transition room children were

not tested as often as children in regular settings. Less content was covered in transition rooms than in regular classrooms. Placement in transition rooms resulted in lower expectations of lower achieving students.

Family environments, cognitive characteristics, behavioral ratings, transition room placement and early reading achievement were examined by Talmadge (1981) in a study conducted in Harbor School District in Washington. The Harbor School District transition program had been in existence since 1969. At the time of the study, there were five transition first grade classrooms serving between seventy-five and ninety students. There had never been an evaluation of the transitional program.

Talmadge described the population as primarily middle class. The school district had a large representation of children from military families. Attrition rates in the district were quite high due to the mobility of military families.

The Metropolitan Readiness Test was used to determine if kindergarten children should be promoted to first grade or placed in a transition first grade classroom. Of the 424 kindergartners tested, 102 were recommended for transition classrooms. Some of the children recommended for transition placement obtained stanines as high as 6 on subtests of the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Of the 102 children recommended for transition placement, 80 children were left after attrition.

In the study, Talmadge included 77 transition class students, 46 students who had been promoted to first grade after one year in a transition class, and 314 regularly promoted first grade students. Reading achievement of the three groups was measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.

Findings indicated that at the end of first grade there were no significant differences in reading achievement between children who had been regularly promoted and children who had been in transition classrooms in reading achievement. However, when Talmadge controlled for differences in cognitive abilities between the children regularly promoted and

transition room children, he suggested transition placement seemed to delay reading instruction for the more capable group of transition room children.

Talmadge noted children who had been in transition classrooms were referred after the transition year for psychological assessment and considered for special education placement more often than regularly promoted first grade children. He suggested transition placement might have postponed the identification of more serious educational problems.

Additional findings indicated there were more males than females placed in transition classes. Also, 65% of the children in transition classrooms had fathers on active military duty, but seldom were the children's parents Navy officers.

Talmadge expressed concern that children were predicted to fail before they had a chance to succeed. He indicated that the number of students placed in transition classes seemed to be determined by the number of slots available in these classes. In other words, transition classes were firmly established within the school structure.

The effects of developmental first grade on self-concept, school achievement, and school attitude was considered by Nicholas (1984). The study took place in a rural, Chapter 1, Oklahoma School District. The district had both a developmental first and second grade. The Gesell Readiness Test was used to screen children for admission into the developmental first program.

Nicholas compared two groups of children. The first group consisted of 47 children who had been in developmental first or developmental second or in both developmental first and second during the school years 1979-1982. The second group consisted of 18 children at the start of the study who had been recommended for developmental first but who did not attend developmental first due to parent refusal during the school years 1979-1982. At the completion of the study, there were nine of the eighteen left in the program on which the actual data were calculated. Scores on state mandated achievement tests obtained from the school records were used to measure achievement outcomes of both groups. The

Piers Harris Self-Concept Scale was administered to both groups to serve as the comparative indicator for self-concept. Numbers of school absences obtained from school attendance records were examined as the measure of school attitude.

The results of the study showed no significant differences in self-concept, school attitude, or achievement between the two groups. For example, there was an average of 1 1/2 days difference in school attendance between the two groups. Scores on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale indicated there was a minor three point difference between the groups. The academic outcomes comparisons were made on the basis of grade level rather than age. One limitation of the study, however, was that older children were taking grade level tests designed for younger children. For example, children who had attended developmental first grade were one year older when taking first grade achievement tests than children regularly promoted.

Nicholas stated concern that 61% of the students who completed the first grade curriculum were referred for counseling as compared to 17% of the students who completed developmental first grade curriculum. She speculated this data corroborated previous research that suggested children who were placed chronologically rather than developmentally had higher rates of referrals for psychological services.

The researcher made several points that were relevant to the debate between advocates and opponents of transitional grades. First, she suggested that the controversy between factions confused the issue of how the school can best serve the child. Second, developmental placement between kindergarten and first grade might have been too late to have a major impact. Earlier preschool programs might have been beneficial. Third, an individualized approach to assessment and curriculum seemed an appropriate alternative to either chronological or developmental placement.

Even though numbers of school districts justified developmental first grade placement on the basis of the results of the Gesell Screening Test, few studies had been undertaken to

assess if the extra year placement based upon the Gesell screening affected children's later school achievement. May & Welch (1984) identified 223 children from grades 2 through 6 who had been administered the Gesell Screening Test in kindergarten. From the identified population, the researchers formed three groups: 62 "Buy A Year" children who had attended a transitional classroom prior to second grade; 59 "overplaced" children who had been recommended for a transitional class but whose parents had refused placement; 102 children who had tested as developmentally mature and had progressed normally through school.

There were significant differences in developmental age scores obtained from the Gesell screening among the three groups. The "developmentally mature" group had significantly higher scores than either of the other two groups. The "overplaced" group had significantly higher scores than the "buy a year" group. Also, there were significant differences in chronological age among groups.The" developmentally mature" group had the oldest average age of the three groups.

From existing school records, May & Welch collected scores on the Gesell Developmental Test (administered in the fall of kindergarten year and end of first grade), scaled scores on the third grade New York State Pupil Evaluation Program in reading and math, and scaled scores on the Stanford Achievement Test administered in second, fourth, and sixth grade.The researchers performed an analysis of variance on the data and Scheffe multiple comparison post hoc procedures.

Findings suggested that there were no significant differences between the "buy a year" and "overplaced" groups on the New York third grade reading test nor between the "developmentally mature" group and the "overplaced group". The "developmentally mature" group scored significantly higher than the "buy a year" group.

Analyses of the New York third grade math test showed significantly higher scores for the "developmentally mature" group over the other two groups. There were no significant

differences between the "buy a year" and "overplaced" groups.

On the Stanford Achievement Test there were significant differences between the "developmentally mature" and "buy a year" groups in favor of the "developmentally mature group". There were no significant differences between the "developmentally mature" and "overplaced" groups or between the "overplaced" and "buy a year groups".

At the time of testing the "buy a year" children were approximately one year older chronologically than the children in the other two groups. In spite of their age advantage, "buy a year" children showed no significant advantage over the "overplaced" children on test results.

The effects of a transition program on children's achievement in the first three grades in the Deer Valley School District in Phoenix, Arizona were studied by Jones (1985). Transitional programs had been in existence in this district since 1978. All nine schools had transitional classrooms. There was a district policy that prevented kindergarten retention.

In the study children who had attended transition classes were compared with children who were eligible for transition classes but were promoted because of parents' objections. Pre-test data indicated that the children in transition classes had an advantage over promoted children.

Academic achievement in reading and math was measured using the school district's basic skills test. T-test comparisons were made on raw scores and minimum competency scores. Pre-test and post-test scores of first grade students were compared by an analysis of variance.

The results of the study indicated that the promoted children had higher gain scores than transition children from the beginning to the end of first grade, but these gains were not statistically significant. At the end of second grade, transition children had higher math scores than promoted children; however, the differences were not statistically significant. The transition group advantages were diminishing. By the end of third grade there were no significant differences on any of the tests.

Jones found there were more boys than girls recommended and subsequently placed in transition classes.

The effects of transition room placement on academic achievement and developmental readiness for middle school of two groups of fifth grade students were examined by Mossburg (1987).The readiness group consisted of children who had spent a year in a transition room. The nonreadiness group was comprised of children who had never been retained either in a transition room or in the same grade. Each group contained 149 students. The students were paired on the basis of sex, socio-economic level of school attended (Chapter 1 or non-Chapter 1), mental rating obtained from the STAR Test of Mental Rating, and chronological age. The readiness students were eight to twelve months older than nonreadiness students.

Over one-third of the kindergartners in the school system were placed in transitional rooms between kindergarten and first grade. The cost to the school system was in excess of two million dollars the year prior to the study.

Mossburg collected data from reading, math, and composite scores on standardized achievement tests taken in first, second, third, and fourth grade by readiness and nonreadiness students. In addition to the statistical analyses of test data, Mossburg had fifth grade teachers complete the Readiness Checklist designed for the study. The Readiness Checklist contained items reflective of behavioral characteristics deemed important to readiness and maturity for middle school (grades 6,7,8).

The results of the study showed significant achievement differences over the four grades in favor of the non-readiness group. At the end of first grade the readiness group demonstrated an advantage (not statistically significant) over the nonreadiness group. However, at the end of second, third, and fourth grade, the nonreadiness group were significantly higher on math, reading, and composite achievement test scores. Regardless of their mental abilities, socio-economic status, or gender, non-readiness students held a

significant academic achievement advantage over readiness students in second through forth grade.

Fifth grade teachers rated non-readiness students significantly higher than readiness students on the Readiness Checklist. As Mossburg (1987) stated this finding challenges the assumption that "older students are more academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for middle school than younger students" (p.81).

Rhoten (1991) completed a study of transition first grade curriculum in a school district in the southwestern region of the United States. Comparisons were made between the curriculum in kindergarten, transition first grade, and first grade using the guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987) and Checklist for Rating Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Classrooms (Charlesworth, Mosley, Burts, Hart, Kirk & Hernandez, 1988). In addition, the researcher interviewed teachers and administrators to ascertain their opinions about the transition program in the district. A questionnaire was used to solicit educators' beliefs about transition classroom goals, materials, and assessment strategies. On site observations were conducted in the kindergarten, transition first, and first grade classrooms.

The researcher's conclusions were that the transition first grade classrooms lacked appropriate learning materials and activities. The transition classrooms had lower mean scores on the Checklist for Rating Developmentally Appropriate Practice than the kindergarten classrooms. The transition first grade curriculum showed little differences in teaching strategies or instructional materials from the regular first grade classrooms.

Summary of Research Findings

Thirty three research studies have been reviewed as background information for this study. Twenty-one studies have reported no difference or negative effects of transition

programs. Eleven studies reviewed claimed positive effects of transition programs.

The beginnings of transition programs in the 1930s seemed to coincide with educators' beliefs in the need to delay reading instruction until children reached the mental age of six years and six months. At that time educators were beginning to use standardized achievement tests and intelligence tests to identify children for placement in special classes.

Transition programs have increased since the 1970s in response to school reform mandates and establishment of competency based promotional standards. According to the literature on these programs, children are placed in transition programs because educators believe that some children are too immature to meet first grade expectations. It is believed that transition placement protects children from the risk of academic failure by giving children an extra year to mature. Transition programs are thought to protect children from emotional frustration of being overplaced in school programs. It is thought that transition placement can positively affect children's academic achievement.

The maturationist view of children's development seems to form the theoretical base upon which transition programs were formed in the 1930s and remains the theoretical base for transition programs in the 1990s.

Retention/Nonpromotion Literature

According to Holmes (1989) there were approximately 850 citings in the literature on retention/nonpromotion that include research studies and articles on the effects of retention/nonpromotion on academic achievement, personal adjustment, self-concept, school attitude, and attendance. For the purposes of this study, it would be impossible to examine all the literature available on the topic; therefore, the scope of the review will be limited to frequently cited studies or articles.

For purposes of organization, this section will be divided into three areas: 1) overview

of promotional policies; 2) research claiming positive effects of retention; 3) research claiming negative or no effects of retention.

Overview of Promotional Policies

Industrialization, immigration, and urbanization contributed to changes in schools in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In colonial America few children were educated. Child labor laws and education of immigrants contributed to the passage of state compulsory education acts in the late 1800s (Anderson, 1969; Angus, Mirel, & Vinovskis, 1988). With the enforcement of compulsory education, larger numbers of children were enrolled in schools. The schools adjusted to meet the increased enrollments by establishing a graded structure (Angus et al, 1988; Labaree, 1984). The graded system established at that time grouped children according to curricular accomplishments rather than age (Angus et al, 1988).

In 1872, Harris, St. Louis School Superintendent, issued his concerns that children who were nonpromoted were dropping out of school. The solution to the promotional problem offered by Harris was to divide each grade into levels and promote every ten weeks (Angus et al, 1988). His plan did not receive widespread acceptance.

Ayers (1909) reported high incidences of retardation (retention) among school children and high incidents of elimination (dropping out) in the late elementary grades. Ayers analyzed a number of factors associated with retention: late entrance, irregular attendance, illness, physical defects, nationality of the child, sex of the child. His conclusion was that no one factor could be isolated as the cause of retention. He recommended enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, better medical attention, courses of study tailored to the average child, more flexible grading, and collection of school statistics to account for students' progress.

As a result of the attention placed upon overage children in grade during the early 1900s, school reform efforts centered around the reduction of retention. In order to reduce the numbers of overage children in grades, several strategies were implemented by various districts. For example, in the 1930s Detroit developed programs based upon mental testing and ability groupings and Philadelphia adopted a policy of "continuous pupil progress" (Anderson, 1969; Angus et al, 1988).

The results of the reform efforts focusing on the reduction of overage children in grades contributed to the establishment of the present system of age/grade stratification, ability grouping, and tracking (Anderson, 1969; Angus et al, 1988).

Efforts to reduce overage children in grade were successful in so far as there was a decline in the numbers of overage children in grades from 1918-1952 (Lennon & Mitchell, 1955). Contrary to popular belief that children were socially promoted, reduction in overage children was accomplished by age/grade stratification and ability tracking.

Concerns pertaining to the efficiency of American public schools erupted dramatically after the launching of the Soviet Sputnik in 1957. With the assumption that America had fallen behind the Soviet Union, blame was placed upon public education for not adequately preparing students to compete particularly in the areas of mathematics and science. School promotional policies were criticized as being lax. Curriculum reform became a national priority.

The Process of Education published by Jerome Bruner in 1960 was influential in curriculum reform efforts. He believed that young children's abilities had been underestimated. Bruner encouraged curriculum developers to concentrate their efforts on reading, math, and science curriculum that could be implemented with young children. His reasoning suggested that if children started earlier, later profiency was assured.

Emphasis on children's early development and concerns that the United States was falling behind other nations in science and mathematics contributed to school reforms that emphasized starting academics earlier and promotion based upon competencies.

Positive Effects of Retention

Lobdell (1954) presented an argument for nonpromotion based upon policies implemented in the Union Free School District in New York. Lobdell outlined seven specific criteria to be taken into account when making retention decisions: students' grades; test scores; mental ability scores; physical size; chronological age; social, emotional and personality characteristics; and parents' attitudes. Lobdell rated ninety-four nonpromoted children on the basis of whether they had made good, fair, or poor progress. According to figures provided, 27 children made good progress, 38 fair progress, and 29 made poor progress. It is not known on what basis the ratings were made, but the numbers didn't seem to substantiate claims of the success of nonpromotion with only one-third of the children showing good progress whereas two-thirds of the children made fair or poor progress.

Two studies appearing in the late 1960s supported retention of children who were considered to be of normal intelligence but immature. Chase (1968) studied sixty-five children in 1966-67 who were repeating grades one through three who were retained due to immaturity. Of the sixty-five children, 44 were first graders, 15 were second graders, and 6 were third graders. Questionnaires were given to teachers who had recommended retention, teachers who had the retained children during the study, and retained children's parents. The Slosson Intelligence Test, Gesell Incomplete Man Test, Gesell Copy Forms, and Bender Visual-Gestalt Test were administered to each child during the first three months of the school year and again six months later.

The results on the two Gesell tests and the Bender Visual-Gestalt Test showed retained childrens'scores to be lower than expected of classmates and chronological peers. The Gesell tests showed average lags of 21 to 23 months behind chronological age expectations. The Bender Visual-Gestalt indicated an average lag of 9 months. In

accounting for the much lower scores on the Gesell tests, the researcher suggested the Gesell developmental tests might have been too stringent for this population, because the Gesell tests had been standardized on another student population in another region of the country.

Children made gains during the six months period between testing; however, they remained behind expected levels of their classmates who were a year younger. It is not known what gains children would have made had they not been retained, because this study did not provide a control group of similar children with whom comparisons could be made.

From questionnaire responses, Chase reported teachers felt retention had helped the children and for the most part had not created emotional upset. Upon closer examination of the teacher response data, approximately 22% (15.6% temporary; 6.2% serious, still noticeable) of the children were reported by their teachers as having some degree of emotional upset.

Chase reported that eighty-one per cent of the parents favored retention. Parents reported children were happy, easy to live with, and getting along with friends after repeating. However, in examining the percentages of parent responses, over one-half of the parents felt their children showed the same degree of happiness, ease to live with, and getting along with friends as they had the year before retention.

Advocating support for retention of immature children, Scott & Ames (1969) suggested that if children started school on the basis of developmental age rather than chronological age, there might be fewer retentions. The researchers selected twenty-seven elementary children who had been retained on the basis of immaturity. Of the twenty-seven children, five had been retained in kindergarten, fourteen in first grade, three in second grade, three in third grade, one in fifth grade and one in sixth grade. School grades and questionnaires (teachers and parents) comprised the data examined in the study.

Comparisons were made of children's final grades before retention with mid-year grades the year of retention. According to the grades reported, every child obtained higher marks during the retention year than the previous year. The researchers interpreted this information as substantiating improvement in academic achievement. It was not known; however, how children would have done had they been promoted as the study design did not allow for comparisons with similar children.

Teachers judged children's responses to repeating as excellent. Parents believed that retention improved children's school attitudes, school work, ability to get along with peers, and sense of responsibility. The researchers concluded that repeating had beneficial effects on grades, school behavior, and home behavior.

Retention was considered to cause children only "slight and temporary hurt" if parents explained the need for retention by placing responsibility on parents or schools for starting them before they were ready (Ames, p. 10). She believed large numbers of children were overplaced because they had started school before they were mature enough. She recommended placing and promoting children based upon behavioral age rather than chronological age. She claimed that the Gesell Institute had sufficient research evidence to suggest that retention was beneficial for immature children. In making this claim, she cited the results of two studies. One study completed by Lewis suggested parents' perceptions of retention were positive. The other study mentioned by Ames was done by Chase. Chase (1968) reported teachers' and parents' positive perceptions of the benefits of retention as well as improvement in children's grades before and after retention. As mentioned earlier, there were difficulties with interpretation of the study completed by Chase because there was lack of a control group of similar children with which to make comparisons.

Finlayson (1975) claimed the self-concept of retained children increased significantly during the five months following retention while promoted and nonpromoted children self-concept scores dropped slightly. 585 first graders were pretested in the fall and spring

using the FACES Scale. The second year three groups were selected for the study: 25 nonpromoted first graders, 25 first graders considered borderline for retention, 25 promoted first graders. The FACES Scale was administered again in the fall and spring. Although the nonpromoted groups' scores increased, it was important to note that they had the lowest scores in the beginning. Regression-to-the-mean was a probable expanation for the results.

Positive benefits of retention in the area of academic achievement as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was claimed by Vollrath (1982). In this study conducted in Kansas 34 kindergarten children who were retained in 1981-82 were compared with 35 regularly promoted kindergarteners. Metropolitan Readiness Test Scores, Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores, and California Achievement Test scores were obtained from the children's school records. Teachers completed a Behavior Problem Checklist. The Behavior Problem Checklist was constructed on the basis of deviant behaviors seen in a clinical setting.

According to the researcher, some of the children received additional services such as remedial reading, math, or resource room instruction.

The academic achievement of the two groups differed significantly before retention took place as measured by the Metropolitan Readiness Test. The differences favored the promoted kindergarteners. In the 3rd and 6th grades the retained group had higher scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Teachers' ratings on the Behavior Problem Checklist indicated nonretained kindergarten children had fewer behavior problems. The third and sixth grade retained children had fewer behavior problems.

In considering the findings of the study, it was not clear whether the differences in test scores reached statistical significance or if scores were adjusted to take in account the differences of the children's age at the time of the testing. The retained group would have been a year older at the time of testing. It is not known what effect the additional services the retained group received had on the achievement outcomes. The study compared retained

children who were experiencing academic difficulty with average children who were not experiencing academic difficulty. The results would have been more readily interpretable had there been a control group of similar children (retained) included in the design.

Promotional policies of the Mesa Public Schools were examined as to the long-term effects of retention-promotion decisions on academic achievement (Peterson, DeGracie, Ayabe, 1987). The researchers examined the California Achievement Test scores over a period of four years to compare academic achievement of retained children with a matched group of children who had been promoted. The children were individually matched on the basis of sex, ethnicity, chronological age, California Achievement Test scores in reading, math, language. A significant feature of this district's policy was all children retained in this district had an individual education plan developed and implemented during the retention year.

The results of the study indicated that in terms of class standing first and second grade retainees performed better than matched promoted cohorts in reading and mathematics but lost superiority by the third year. Retainees had better performances than matched promoted counterparts during the first year of retention; however, differences evened out by second grade in math and by third grade in reading and language.

Findings of the study led the researchers to suggest that "...retention plus remediation probably leads to greater academic achievement gains than retention alone, there is some evidence that social promotion with remediation may be more effective than retention with remediation" (Peterson, DeGracie, & Ayabe, 1987, p. 118).

Negative or No Effects of Retention

As previously mentioned, in the 1930s educators were embroiled in school reform issues revolving around promotional rates as a determinant of school efficiency (Angus et

al, 1988). High nonpromotion rates were translated to mean school inefficiency. As educators attempted to reduce nonpromotion rates through various strategies, concerns were expressed that continuous pupil progress had negative effects on academic standards.

Otto (1935) addressed the issue of the removal of the threat of nonpromotion as a motivator of student achievement. In the study, he established experimental groups and control groups consisting of second and fifth grade children in four Illinois school districts. The experimental groups were told by their teachers at the beginning of the semester and several times throughout the semester that they would be promoted. The control groups were told by their teachers at the beginning of the semester and several times throughout the semester that they would have to repeat if they did not work hard and do well. Otto made comparisons that included chronological age, mental age, intelligence quotient, final educational age, and mean gains. The results of the investigation showed no statistically significant mean gain differences for the second or fifth grade groups. He concluded that there were no achievement differences between groups threatened with failure and groups not threatened with failure.

In addition to the data analyses of achievement, Otto used a questionnaire at the end of the study to gather teacher responses to the experiment. Teachers reported that neither the quality of children's work nor attitudes diminished when the threat of failure was eliminated.

Three early studies of retention used an experimental design. Klene & Branson (1929) studied 141 children in grades two to six for one semester. The promoted group showed greater progress in academics the succeeding semester than did the repeating group. It is not known whether the differences were statistically significant.

The second experimental study was conducted by Farley (1936). He identified approximately four hundred children considered by their teachers as prime candidates for retention in grades two through five in three schools in 1933. All children were given the

Stanford Achievement Test and an intelligence test. The children were paired on the basis of IQ, mental age, and chronological age. From each pair, one child was retained and one was promoted. At the end of the semester, Stanford Achievement tests were administered to all children remaining in the study. Gains made in reading and math achievement as reflected by achievement test scores were compared for both groups. The second and third grade promoted groups showed greater gains in reading than the retained group. The fourth and fifth grade retained group showed a small gain advantage of one point in reading and two points in mathematics. There were poorer test results in four of the groups of retained children at the end of the semester than at the beginning and in twenty-five percent of the retained children made no gains in arithmetic. Farley concluded that "...the small gains hardly justify the expense and discouragement of retardation" (p. 38).

The final experimental study involved 700 children in grades one through seven who were not making good academic progress (Cook, 1941). Children were randomly assigned to one of two groups matched on the basis of achievement, personality traits, intelligence scores, and chronological age. One group was promoted and one group was retained. There were no statistically significant differences found at the end of one semester between the two groups in achievement.

In addition to achievement comparisons, Anfinson (1941) studied personal and social adjustment of junior high repeaters and nonrepeaters. 116 pairs of repeaters and 116 pairs of nonrepeaters were matched on the basis of school attendance, chronological age, sex, intelligence, and social-economic status. The Symonds-Block Student Questionnaire was administered to both groups to obtain a measure of personal and social adjustment toward school, home, and peers. The Bell School Inventory was used to measure school attitude. The Minneapolis tests of reading, arithmetic fundamentals, and arithmetic problems were used to measure and compare achievement progress.

The nonrepeaters showed a significant advantage over repeaters on the Symonds-

Block Student Questionnaire although both groups were classified as below average in adjustment. The Bell School Inventory showed no statistically significant differences between the groups on school attitude. On the achievement test measures, the nonrepeaters' scores in reading were higher than repeaters' scores. The differences were statistically significant. The two areas of mathematics achievement revealed no significant differences between the groups. When Anfinson examined the time of retention, he discovered that half of the repeaters had failed first grade.

Sandin (1944) reached similar conclusions regarding personal and social adjustment. Using rating scales, check lists, observations, sociometrics, and interviews, he found that children who had repeated a grade disliked school and wished to quit school. In addition, teachers rated repeaters as displaying more problem behaviors. Repeaters preferred friends from higher grades than their own. Older repeaters were not popular among their classmates. The absence of matched groups hampered inferences that could be made from this study as to whether the findings were due to retention or preexisting conditions.

Following Anfinson (1941) and Sandin (1944), Goodlad (1954) investigated social and personal adjustment of nonpromoted first graders and promoted second graders. The groups were matched on the basis of chronological age, mental age, and achievement. The groups' mental ages were determined by the administration of the Kuhlman-Anderson Tests; achievement quotients were obtained from the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. At the time of the study the nonpromoted group was in first grade; whereas the promoted group was in second grade. Adjustment was measured by the California Test of Personality, teachers' ratings of children on the Haggerty-Olson-Wickman Behavior Rating Scales, and sociometric questions asked of the children.

The results obtained from the total adjustment scores of the California Test of Personality indicated no significant differences between the nonpromoted first grade group and the promoted second grade group. However, further statistical analyses of test shifts

made by any one group on twenty individual items on the California Test of Personality showed that there were statistically significant differences present. Thirteen of the items favored the promoted group; however, seven items favored the nonpromoted group.

The overall sociometric findings suggested that promoted children tended to be more accepted as friends and less rejected as friends. The nonpromoted group experienced more acceptance and more rejection from peers. These overall findings did not reach statistical significance.

The total scores of the Haggerty-Olson-Wickman Behavior Rating Schedules revealed no statistically significant differences between the promoted and nonpromoted groups. Additional analyses of individual items showed some significant differences. Nonpromoted children were rated more unpopular and bully-like than promoted children by their teachers.

Toledo, Ohio was the site of a dissertation study conducted by Boesel (1960) that examined the effects of nonpromotion of reading achievement, behavior, school attitudes and social acceptance. According to Boesel, reading skill was the primary criteria of success in first grade and often became the objective criteria on which children's personal worth was equated.

Five schools that reported more than ten first grade failures were selected as sites for the study. There were differences in the population served by the five schools. One school served a population of primarily average middle class children; whereas, the other four schools served children designated as underpriviledged. Forty-three pairs of children (31 male pairs, 12 female pairs) were matched on sex, chronological age, scores from the California Test of Mental Maturity, IQ's above 85, and scores from a reading readiness test. Half of the children were promoted by a narrow margin and half were retained by a narrow margin. It was noted in this study that many more boys than girls were available for comparisons.

Reading achievement was measured by scores obtained on the Gates MacGinite Reading Test. School adjustment was obtained from Haggerty-Olson-Wickman Behavior

Rating Schedules completed by teachers. Interviews were conducted with children. Sociometric ratings were completed.

Findings indicated that promoted children made higher Gates scores each year than did nonpromoted children. At the end of the third year, no significant differences in reading were found between groups. On the Haggerty-Olson-Wickman Behavior Rating Schedules, teachers rated promoted children as more well adjusted than non-promoted children. Promoted children improved in behavior status the second year while nonpromoted lost status. There were no differences between promoted and nonpromoted on three areas of the sociometric rating: expansiveness, popularity, responsiveness. Social acceptance was extremely important to nonpromoted children.

Thirty-four nonpromoted children were interviewed. 25 children expressed unhappiness with retention and 9 thought retention had benefitted them. Half of the children interviewed stated that they enjoyed the year of retention more than kindergarten or the previous first grade year. Half of the children reported that they didn't like reading.

Sister Josephina (1962) examined retention data from two large school districts to ascertain differences in retention rates for boys and girls. Her findings suggested that in every grade the percentage of nonpromoted boys exceeded that for girls. She indicated that higher retention rates for boys might be due to behavioral and personal characteristics rather than achievement. She suggested that boys seemed to be less favored by their teachers than girls.

Caplan (1973) examined differences in teachers' ratings of behavioral characteristics of retained and promoted girls and boys as well as report card grades. There were fifty children (forty boys and ten girls) included in the study. Half of the children were repeating a grade and the other half had been promoted.

Findings suggested that retention of girls was partly based on behavior. Girls who displayed aggressive behavior in the classroom were more likely to be retained than girls

who conformed to school and female behavior norms. Implications were that aggressive girls might have had their learning abilities underestimated, because teachers centered on their aggressive behavior that did not fit with stereotypic female norms. On the other hand, girls who conformed might have had their learning problems neglected because of their good behavior. Teachers seemed to expect aggressive behavior from boys but not from girls.

In considering the results of the study, the small number (10) of girls included should be kept in mind. The study illustrated higher rates of retention for boys.

Another dissertation study finding no significant differences in achievement between nonpromoted and promoted first graders was completed by Koons (1968). Schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma served as sites for the study. Koons matched retained children with promoted children of the same sex, chronological age, reading scores from the Metropolitan Achievement Tests taken at the end of the 1962-1963 school year. In addition, he tried to match children within the same classes. In all there were 129 matched pairs of which 89 pairs were males and 40 pairs were females. There were more black children in the control group than in the experimental group.

Koons indicated that the schools had recently adopted a phonics based reading program. He commented that low achieving students did not benefit as much from phonics based reading program as did high achieving students. In addition, he suggested that there were differences in retention policies between schools. Some children who were not promoted would have been promoted if they had been in other school areas. Smaller classes and individualized instruction were his recommendations to reduce retention.

Abidin, Golloday, & Howerton (1971) found results contradicting those of Scott & Ames (1969). 85 children who had been retained in either first or second grade were compared with 43 children who had scored below the 25 percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Test and were never retained. The study utilized an ad hoc experimental design.

Data was reviewed from each child's school records during the first five grades. Also, the researchers collected demographic, achievement, ability, teacher ratings of behavior and academic promise during the study.

Immaturity and academic failure were reasons listed on school records as the cause of retention. In examining subject matter grades of retained and promoted groups for first grade they found no significant differences. They found the retained group's grades in reading and mathematics to be significantly lower the year they were retained in the first grade. Over six years of school, the retained group's academic achievement deteriorated as measured by standardized test scores. Yet IQ ratings obtained in first grade significantly favored the retainees over promotees. However, IQ ratings of retainees declined over the course of six years; whereas, IQ ratings of promotees increased over six years.

The authors claimed that retention was related more to nonacademic variables such as race, socio-economic level, and gender. As they stated, "If you are black, male, from a low socio-economic family with mother working and father absent your chances of being retained in the first or second grade are greatly increased"(Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, p. 414).

The relationship of nonpromotion to self-concept was explored by administering the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to 519 sixth graders who had been regularly promoted, 73 sixth graders who had failed to be promoted once, and 22 sixth graders who had failed to be promoted two or more times (White & Howard, 1973). The study was part of a larger study conducted by the North Carolina Advancement School, a research school established for studying underachievement.

Analyses of the subscales of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale were examined along three dimensions: gender, failure, and interaction between gender and failure. In all but one of the subscales, children who had never experienced retention had the highest mean scores. The mean scores were lowest for children who had been retained two or more

times. There were no significant interactions between gender and failure. Promotion appeared to affect boys and girls in the same way.

Additional paired comparisons between groups on subscale items were made using Scheffes Post Hoc techniques. In paired comparisons significant differences were found between the no failure pairs and the two or more failure pairs on each subscale category. Three of the subscale categories (family, social, self-satisfication) and total category showed differences between no failure pairs and one failure pairs but did not reach statistical significance ($p < .05$). The authors suggested that the results showed nonpromotion had negative effects on self-concept.

A major review of research on the effects of grade retention was undertaken by Jackson (1975) within the auspices of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. He identified and analyzed forty-four original research studies pertaining to retention. In the analyses, he examined the studies for the following characterisitics: 1) type of analytic design; 2) inherent flaws in the design of the study; 3) criterion (academic achievement or social-personal development) and contextual (grade level, IQ, etc.) variables investigated; 4) pattern of results for each criterion.

Findings indicated there were three frequently used designs. The first design compared the outcomes of retained students with the outcomes of promoted students. Jackson suggested this type of design was biased toward promoted students in that comparisons were made between retained students who were having school difficulties and promoted students who were not having as severe difficulties or they, too, would have been retained. Matching children on some basis such as achievement test scores, mental ability, gender, or etc. did not assure that comparisons were actually made with children who were initially similar on factors preceding nonpromotion.

The second type of design assessed progress made by retained children before and after promotion. The researcher indicated this type of study tended to favor grade retention.

Lacking control for improvement that came from other causes other than retention, the studies showed positive results of retention.

The third type of design utilized was experimental. Experimental design eliminated comparisons problems inherent in the other two designs. In these studies, children identified as having difficulties were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: retention or promotion. Only three experimental studies had been done at the time of the review. Due to the small populations represented and age of the studies, broad generalizations were not recommended.

After considering the results of the studies as a whole, Jackson offered the following conclusion:

> There is no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion for students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties. This is clearly indicated by the pattern of result from analyses using either of the two designs which investigated this comparison (Design I and III). This conclusion can be drawn from by referring to the few results from the most valid analytical design, by referring to the pattern of statistically significant results from both of the designs, or by referring to the pattern of both the statistically significant and nonstatistically significant results of both designs.
>
> *Thus, those educators who retain pupils in a grade do so without valid research evidence to indicate that such treatment will provide greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than will promotion to the next grade.* (p. 627)

Eighty four fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children were asked to rate stressfulness of life events. Children ranked academic retention third right after losing a parent and going blind even though they were infrequently experienced (Yamamoto, 1979). Since this study dealt with older children, it is not known if younger children would rate these items in

similar ways. However, this study is frequently referenced in relationship to younger children as well as older children because it is the one of the few studies to include children's conceptions of retention.

Wright (1979) compared the achievement of two groups of children after each group had completed third grade. The first group consisted of 45 (26 boys; 19 girls) children who had been retained in first grade and the second group consisted of 45 children who had been regularly promoted. The groups were matched on sex, IQ, educational level of parents, school attended, and achievement test scores. In this Philadelphia suburban school district, first grade children were retained on the basis of reading scores on standardized tests. The retained group did not score significantly below national averages in reading, but their scores were below the school district average. These children as a group were scoring better than national standards in spelling and language and at the national average in mathematics. The results of the statistical analyses showed no significant differences between the groups when age was controlled.

In a multi-cultural study completed on the effects of promotional practices, Haddid (1979, p. 4) described repetition as "educational wastage" both in terms of educational expense and also in terms of the effects repetition had on increasing drop-out rates and limiting educational opportunities. He suggested that promotional decisions based upon achievement as measured by teacher tests or standardized tests were questionable. In accepting achievement as the only important variable, affective and social goals of education were ignored. Also, achievement was influenced by the interaction of multiple variables both inside and outside the school. Student characteristics, school characteristics (teacher, methodology, curriculum), psychological, and socio-economic background formed a complex interactional network. The issue that needed to be addressed was how to prevent failure and improve low achievers' learning rather than whether to promote or not promote.

A study of the effects of retention on self-concept and achievement of children in grades three through five found no significant differences between children who had been retained and children who had been socially promoted (Hains, 1981). Twenty four children who had been socially promoted were compared to twenty-nine children who had been retained. Stanford Achievement Test scores and Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale scores were used to compare differences.

Cooper (1980) found promoted children performed better on measures of academic achievement than nonpromoted children as measured by scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests; however, she found no differences in self-concept of those retained and those promoted. Also, teachers were asked to rate children's adjustment. The results of teachers' ratings suggested no differences in teachers' perceptions of adjustment of promoted as compared to nonpromoted children. There were twenty percent more boys than girls in the nonpromoted group.

A study conducted in Washington found significant differences in achievement favoring promoted children (Askew, 1983). 25 children who had been retained in grades one through six were matched with 25 children who had been promoted on the basis of composite test scores. Comparisons were made between the two groups a year after retention to determine if there were significant differences in achievement based upon scores on the California Achievement Test. The results of t-test analyses of pair differences showed that retained and promoted children gained in achievement the second year; however, the average gain of the retained children was six months whereas the promoted children showed average gains of one year. Statistically significant differences favored the promoted children.

When early identification and prevention services were provided in a New York school district under the auspices of New York University Medical Center and the Community School District II in Manhatten, the rates of nonpromotion dropped (Hagin, 1984).

Kindergarten children in the district were screened with SEARCH, a test designed to identify delays in spatial orientation and temporal organization. A multi-disciplinary team composed of psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators administered further diagnostic testing to children identified by SEARCH as at-risk for school failure. The results from the diagnostic testing were utilized to devise an individual education plan for each child identified at-risk. Children remained in regular classrooms but received individual or small group instruction three to five times a week in thirty minute sessions.

Following groups of children in the prevention program from 1961-1974, Hagin reported that nonpromotion rates decreased from 12% in 1961 to 1-3% over the course of the program. At the school district's request in 1965, clinical consultation to school personnel was provided in lieu of direct intervention with the children. In that year the nonpromotion rate increased to 17% leading school staff to request the intervention services with children be reinstituted the following year.

Providing supportive services to at-risk learners reduced nonpromotions as well as having added effects such as improvement in teachers' attitudes toward children, positive parent support, and changes in administrative procedures regarding the use of nonpromotion.

According to Sandoval (1984), children who were retained differed in academic functioning as determined by test score results. Some children were very low functioning while others were high functioning. He raised several important issues. First, low functioning children might have benefitted from special education services. Second, high functioning children might have done as well had they been promoted.

Two school districts in Utah with very different promotional policies served as the sites for a study of promotional policies and the effects of retention on children's academic achievement (Niklason, 1984). The urban school district retained children who did not meet minimum academic competencies. The suburban district retained children only rarely

and after a team review.

Teachers in both districts were surveyed concerning numbers of children recommended for retention, reasons for recommending retention, demographic characteristics of children recommended for retention, and philosophical positions regarding retention practices. Findings of the teacher survey suggested that the majority of teachers favored retaining students, boys were recommended for retention more often than girls, poor academic achievement and immaturity were the reasons for retention given most frequently, and first graders were most often recommended for retention.

Children recommended for retention were matched with similar children on the basis of academic achievement, intellectual ability, and personal and social adjustment. There were 144 children in the recommended for retention group and 68 in the control group. The WISC-R or WPPSI, Wide Range Achievement Test, and California Test of Personality were given to all children. The results of the testing indicated that children differed significantly on all measures. The differences favored the control group on all measures.

Comparison was made of the growth of the retained and promoted children by using an analysis of covariance. Of the original group, 102 children recommended for retention were available for retesting. Since the first testing, 62 had been promoted and 40 had been retained. The promoted groups showed significantly greater growth in reading achievement than did the retained group. There were no statistically significant differences between the groups in arithmetic, personal adjustment, or social adjustment.

Holmes & Matthews (1984) conducted a meta-analysis of effect sizes taken from 44 retention studies selected from approximately six hundred available references. As a relatively new statistical procedure, meta-analysis offered the advantage of integrating the findings of multiple research studies. According to Shepard & Smith (1989) meta-analysis provided three advantages. First, meta-analysis generated comprehensive summaries that eliminated the difficulty of examining individual studies. Second, tallying of statistically

significant differences for each study was replaced by averaging of actual differences between treated and control groups across studies. Third, study results were examined for influencing factors that contributed to the results.

The researchers established three criteria for the selection of studies included in the meta-analysis: 1) original research studies that reported the effects on students of retention in elementary or junior high school, 2) data was presented that allowed for effect size calculation or estimation, 3) retained children were compared with promoted children. Geographically all regions except the Mountain States were included. In addition, the meta-analysis included studies ranging from publication dates 1929-1981.

The results were reported in four areas: academic achievement, personal adjustment, self-concept, and attitude toward school. Promoted children's achievement was higher than nonpromoted children. When sub-area effect sizes were analyzed, retention had statistically significant negative effects on children's achievement in language arts, reading, mathematics, and study skills. Retained children had statistically significant lower scores in personal adjustment, self-concept, and attitude toward school.

The researchers issued this caution to educators: "Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes" (Holmes & Matthews, 1984, p. 232).

A second meta-analysis of retention effects was undertaken by Holmes (1989). In updating his previous study (Holmes & Matthews, 1984), he selected sixty-three studies from approximately eight hundred possible research citings. From 861 effects sizes calculated, he found that retention produced negative results on achievement, self-concept, and school attitude. In examination of the studies claiming positive effects of retention, he indicated that the positive studies involved remediation plus retention and started with more capable groups of subjects. Additionally, the positive studies often made comparisons between grade peers rather than age peers, did not follow-up past one year, and used

primarily academic outcome measures. Although the second meta-analysis presented basically the same conclusions as the first meta-analysis, it provided additional information pertaining to the nature of the outcomes of the positive studies. Programs with positive effects provided additional services to retained children such as individualized education plans.

In the Boulder Valley, Colorado School District, Shepard & Smith (1985) conducted a study of the effects of kindergarten retention practices on children's cognitive and affective development, teachers' philosophies pertaining to retention, and parents' beliefs regarding retention. Within the school district, there were differences between schools in promotional practices. Retention rates ranged from 38% in some schools to 0% in others. Children were screened with the Gesell Developmental Test prior to kindergarten entry. On the basis of these test scores, children were assigned to pre-kindergarten or regular kindergarten classes. After a year in pre-kindergarten classes, children were promoted to regular kindergarten classes. In addition to the pre-kindergarten class, one school had a transitional first grade class for children deemed unready for first grade; therefore, it is conceivable that some children could spend an extra two years in school. By the time they reached first grade, children could be eight years old.

Two groups of forty children were selected for the study. One group consisted of children who had been retained in kindergarten in four schools that had been identified as having high rates of retention. A control group was identified from low retaining schools. The control group was matched on age, sex, readiness scores, and second language.

At the end of first grade, retained and control children were compared on CTBS scores, teacher ratings of achievement, and teacher ratings of adjustment and self-concept. The results indicated no differences between groups on CTBS math scores or teacher ratings. The scores on the reading test showed a one month difference in grade equivalent units favoring the retained group. In spite of an extra year of school, retained children were

performing very similarly to matched counterparts who had been regularly promoted.

Interviews were conducted with parents of retained and nonretained first graders, parents who had refused kindergarten retention, and parents of children who had repeated first grade. Parents of retained children reported positive benefits of retention that included an extra year to mature, more self-confidence, and academic advantages. Although a large majority of parents indicated positive effects of retention, parents in all categories expressed concern about negative comments from other children and adults. Further, some parents reported negative effects such as children's loss of confidence, larger physical size in comparison to other children, and continuance of behaviors that an extra year was supposed to have corrected. Also, some parents moved rather than allow their children to be retained.

First grade teachers rated 40% of the retained children as below average in social maturity. At the time of the ratings, retained children were one year older than regularly promoted first graders. Teachers' judgements of children's grade level in reading revealed that the same numbers of retained and control children were below grade level. Similar numbers of retained and control children were considered to be at the bottom of their classes.

Forty kindergarten teachers were interviewed as to their beliefs about children's development and the best ways of educating children. Two categories emerged from the data: nativists and non-nativists. In the latter category three sub-groups were identified: remediationists, diagnostic-prescriptive teachers, and interactionists. Further analyses found that nativists were most likely to retain children. Nativists relied on developmental readiness tests, age, physical size, and gender in making retention decisions. There were differences among schools in retention practices that seemed to correlate with teachers' beliefs about children's development. Those schools with nativist teachers had higher retention rates than schools with non-nativist teachers. Although there were differences in

retention rates among teachers, both nativists and non-nativists held the belief that retention was an effective educational practice. Very few teachers listed any negative effects of retention.

Other findings suggested retention practices seemed to be encouraged by school structures. Teachers felt pressured by first grade teachers to get children ready to read. Although teachers disagreed with academically focused kindergarten programs, they felt powerless to attempt changes in school structure. Teachers believed that they could obtain more homogeneous groupings if children were retained.

In response to limited information obtained directly from children regarding retention, Byrnes & Yamamoto (1985) undertook a study to determine children's reactions to retention. They interviewed 71 children who had been retained in grades one, three, and six and their teachers. At the time of the interviews, the children were repeating a grade in one of 25 classrooms within four schools. In addition, the researchers interviewed children who had never been considered for retention and some children who were being considered for retention the following year.

From the interviews, the researchers found that first grade boys acknowledged their retention; however, first grade girls were reluctant to name themselves as retainees. In several instances, girls denied they had been retained. Other findings indicated that 84% of the children shared negative feelings about being retained ("sad", "bad", or "upset") and 47% of the children stated they had been punished for being retained. When asked how they had found out about retention, forty-two percent of the children stated they had found out from their report cards. Other ways that children reported that they had found out about retention were discussions with parents and teachers. Children's ideas about the reasons for retention varied. The most common response was poor grades followed by bad behavior and work habits. To children the worst things about being retained were peer teasing, separation from friends, punishment, being sad, getting bad grades,

embarrassment, and repetition of the same work.

According to teachers, they were uncomfortable telling children about nonpromotion. Sixty percent of the teachers had not told the children they were being retained, rather the teachers had left it up to the parents to tell the children. Teachers perceived children's reactions to retention as being unemotional.

Additionally, Byrnes & Yamamoto (1986) surveyed 2000 parents, 200 teachers, and 45 principals to assess their views on grade repetition. The researchers examined parents', teachers', and principals' opinions regarding the use of retention, reasons for retention, and who should make the final decision. Additionally, teachers and principals were asked to rank alternatives to retention.

The findings indicated that parents, teachers, and principals thought children should usually be retained. The most common reason given for retention by all groups was lack of basic skills. A large percentage of teachers and principals listed emotional immaturity as a reason for retention. Eighty-one percent of the parents did not view emotional immaturity as an appropriate reason for retention. Parents and teachers agreed teachers should make the final decision on retention. On the other hand, principals thought they themselves should make the final decision. Teachers ranked smaller classes/individualized instruction first and remediation second as alternatives to retention. Principals favored remediation first and smaller classes/ individualized instruction second.

There were differences found between low and high income parents on survey responses. Low income parents were more supportive of teachers making the final placement decision. High income parents wanted to make the final decision. Low income parents were less likely to list parental request, emotional immaturity, academic failure, and lack of basic skills as valid reasons for retention.

In a five year follow-up study of first grade retainees in the Austin Independent School District, Baenen (1988) reported that retention had not helped children reach grade level

expectations. 243 first grade children who were repeating first grade were matched with low achievers who had been promoted. Matching criteria were age, sex, ethnicity, free lunch status, special education status, reading and math achievement scores obtained from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Reading and mathematics scores were higher for the group of promoted children as compared to the retained group. Both retained and promoted low achievers remained below national averages in reading and mathematics for their age. The differences between the groups increased across the years. 39% of the matched group were later retained one or more times. Approximately 12% of the retainees were retained a second time. 21% of the retained groups as compared to 10% of the matched group later received special education services.

The researcher concluded that retention had not helped students catch up to grade level and stay there. She suggested that the $9 million spent by the school district for an extra year of school for approximately four thousand retainees could be better spent in different approaches to instruction. Options recommended were compensatory reading and math programs, transition classes, special education, special curriculum groupings, tutoring, motivational instructional techniques, extended school day, and summer school.

Using data from three large school districts (Austin, Chicago, and a large suburban school district in the Northeast), Grissom & Shepard (1989) conducted a causal-model analyses of factors contributing to children dropping out of school. The researchers found that grade retention had a significant effect on dropping out when sex, achievement, and students' backgrounds were controlled. The chances of children dropping out of school were increased by the fact that they had been retained.

Summary of Retention Findings

The review of literature on promotional practices indicated that nonpromotion has been

a concern of educators since the establishment of the age/grade school structure which developed as a result of industralization, urbanization, and immigration. Early reviewers of retention practices thought high rates of retention were indicators of inefficiency (Ayers, 1909). To reduce retention rates various strategies were implemented which included in-class ability grouping and tracking based upon standardized achievement tests and intelligence tests (Anderson, 1969).

Thirty-six retention studies were reviewed. Six studies suggested there were positive effects of retention on academic achievement and/or personal and social adjustment of children. Thirty studies indicated there were no differences or negative effects of retention on academic achievement and/or personal and social adjustment of children.

The primary reasons given for retention were lack of basic skills necessary to complete the next grade level work and immaturity. In most studies, reading performance in first grade was a major factor in retaining children. Retention decisions were frequently made on the basis of achievement test scores and mental ability tests.

In-grade retention and transition placement showed similarities: a) reading skills were a primary criteria for nonpromotion; b) educators believed children required additional time to mature so that they would be successful in the next grade; (c) higher numbers of boys than girls were recommended for in-grade retention and transition classes; (d) placement decisions were made on the basis of test scores.

Research Studies on Children's Perspectives of School and Ability

Weinstein (1983) suggests that much of the research on classrooms and teaching has ignored children's perspectives of school experiences. Children spend many years of their lives in school settings. They actively attempt to make sense of their educational

experiences. Although their perspectives may differ from adults, children's notions about school are no less real than adults' ideas. Children's conceptions of school reality form the basis upon which they interpret the situations in which they find themselves, make judgements about themselves and peers, and form relationships with teachers and peers. Children form conceptions of ability and typical school activities through interactions with teachers, peers, and classroom arrangements (Bandura, 1990; Frey, Ruble, Higgins, & Parsons, 1983; King, 1979; Le Compte, 1980; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984; Weinstein, 1983).

School Structures and Formulation of Ideas About Ability

While they are still in kindergarten, children have certain notions about how first grade classrooms should look and what first grade work entails (Le Compte, 1980). Le Compte (1980) studied children's ideas about what first grade classrooms look like and what kinds of activities they expected to do. She interviewed 135 kindergarten age children who were enrolled in suburban schools in a southwestern school district. The children's kindergarten rooms were set up in open learning center formats. When they were shown pictures of classroom settings, open classrooms as compared with classrooms where desks were arranged in rows, children chose traditional classrooms as more representative of what first grade rooms should be like. In addition to having specific ideas about what first grade classrooms should look like, children also had specific expectations about what they would learn. Children most frequently mentioned that they expected to learn to read in first grade.

Children had certain ways that they characterized work as compared to play. Work was considered "done in chairs, doing papers, quiet, hard, listening, obeying rules" as contrasted to play which was "done on the floor, moving around, toys, not having to obey

rules, noisy, fun, easy" (Le Compte, p. 122).

King (1979) observed and interviewed kindergarten children in four classrooms in New England and Midwestern schools to determine children's ideas about work and play. She found that children identified teacher directed or selected activities as work. Children classified activities that were voluntary, individual, and without teacher involvement as play. Children were perceptive of the activities that teachers valued as educational. Play was not viewed as educational by children. The researcher speculated that children came to learn that play was not important in school, because play was often something children did after teacher assigned work was finished or children were told that they could play at recess.

Rosenholtz & Simpson (1984) suggested that the organization of classroom instruction affects children's formulation of ideas about intelligence and ability. They identified two types of classroom organization, unidimensional and multidimensional. In unidimensional classes, all students are involved in the same academic work using a limited number of materials and methods. Whole group instruction or ability grouping is common. Grades are the primary indicators of children's performance.

By contrast in multidimensional classes, there are choices of work assignments, materials, and methods available to children. Children have options to work individually and cooperatively. There are various ways that work is evaluated and children participate in evaluation of the work.

The structure of unidimensional classrooms facilitated children's comparative judgements about theirs' and peers' abilities because tasks, materials, and methods are similar. Additionally, this structure reinforced the idea that there is only one or limited options for determining academic ability.

On the other hand, the multidimensional classroom organization made it more difficult for children to compare performances. Variety and diversity encouraged children to adopt a

more flexible definition of ability because there was no unitary standard established.

In the early elementary years, peers contributed to ways that children conceptualize ability (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). As teachers praise children for work performance, children begin to understand that there are certain levels of performance. Children seem to compare peer performances with teacher evaluations before they begin to compare their own performances with teacher evaluations. As Rosenholtz & Simpson (1984) commented, "It is far less upsetting to admit that a classmate is stupid than to admit that one's own ability is low." (p. 40).

Conversations among children about performance lead to the establishment of ideas about ability. When children agreed with each other in the assessment of peers' abilities, children who were labeled as low ability were confronted with continuous negative reinforcement of their status (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). Peers' negative comments may have forced children to adopt the view that they were not capable learners.

While the Rosenholtz & Simpson (1984) findings referred to individual classroom structures, the implications of the research might be considered in a broader context. Children compare differences between classrooms as well. If children adopt a particular view of performance in their classroom as the standard upon which comparisons are made, other classrooms may be measured based upon those standards. First graders might evaluate activities in other first grades based upon their experiences in their own first grade classrooms. In children's judgements, some classrooms may be conceived as requiring more or less ability than others; therefore, children in peer-designated low ability classrooms may receive negative comments that might lead to children's acceptance of themselves as less able than peers. In light of the fact that children are assigned to a particular classroom for an entire school year, some classroom placements might subject children to negative peer comments over the course of an entire school year.

Higgins & Parsons (1983) indicated that children use age as a comparative factor when assessing their ability and competence. For example, children believe six years of age (first

grade) is the time that children learn to read. If they do not learn to read at this time, children may perceive that something is wrong with them. The age-stratification of classrooms contributes to children's awareness of individual differences by making comparisons easy.

Bandura (1990) suggested that children's perceptions of self-efficacy often diverge from actual ability. Children's self-efficacy perceptions affect the degree to which children may attempt academic tasks. For example, if children perceive of themselves as quite competent to succeed in school activities, they may put forth much effort. On the other hand, if children perceive themselves to be less competent learners, children may not use their capabilities.

School structure contributes to children's perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1990). In classrooms where children are all engaged in the same activities and teachers made comparative judgements of performances, children easily made comparisons of achievement and learning progress with agemates. The effect of social comparisons can be a loss in perceived efficacy among children who are less talented or ill-prepared (Bandura, 1990).

Blumfield, Pintrich, Meece & Wessels (1982) described ability grouping as a public evaluation of competence. They suggest groupings that segregate children by ability throughout the day should be avoided because it provides both consistent public recognition of skill levels. The effect of ability grouping is children are made to feel inferior. Children cannot give themselves positive evaluations if they perceive themselves as having inferior abilities.

Changes in Children's Thinking about Ability

Most children begin school with perceptions of themselves as highly competent

learners. As Veroff (1969) suggested young children make comparisons of self with self. In other words, children compare their present accomplishments with their own past accomplishments. Since they realize that they can do so much more than they could when they were younger, children can conceive of no reason why they should not continue to be competent learners. However, researchers have noted that children do not maintain high levels of perceived self-competency. High levels of perceived self-competency appear to decline with age as children's conceptions of ability, effort, and difficulty change (Nicholls, 1978, 1990; Stipek, 1981, 1984) and as they proceed through school (Stipek, 1984).

Experimental studies suggested that kindergarten and first grade children equated high ability with high effort rather than equating high ability with degrees of difficulty of tasks (Nicholls, 1978; Ruble, Feldman, & Boggiano, 1976). Children believed that as long as they expended maximum effort they were highly able to succeed in learning tasks regardless of the level of difficulty of the learning tasks.

Nicholls (1978) conducted interviews with children in which he gave children limited information about other unfamiliar children's performances to determine if children distinguished between the difficulty of the task, effort, and ability required to complete the task. He found that until about the age of seven children did not discriminate between difficulty of tasks and ability required to complete the tasks nor did children make comparisons on the basis of difficulty. Further, children did not differentiate between effort and ability until age eleven.

Contrary to Nicholls' findings, Stipek & Tannatt (1984) found that kindergarten and first grade children did make compartive evaluations of their own and peers' performance based upon the perceived difficulty level of the task. This study differed from Nicholls' (1978) study in that Stipek and Tannatt conducted interviews with ninety-six preschool through third grade children in an actual school setting. Children were given information

about peers known to them. According to the researchers, the school's emphasis on formal academic learning beginning in kindergarten made comparisons based upon task difficulty more readily observable to children.

In first grade and kindergarten children's judgements and work habits were the primary category for classifying children as "smart". Work habits frequently were equated with appropriate conduct. An example given by Stipek & Tannett (1984) illustrates the connections children made between work habits and behavior. When they were asked to explain smartness, children cited smart peers as those children who did what the teacher told them to do.

Children did not distinguish between effort and ability. Trying hard was equated with having high ability. Stipek & Tannett (1984) concluded that the implication of these findings is children may perceive negative feedback about their work as also negative feedback about their ability since they do not differentiate between effort and ability. Negative feedback about their efforts coupled with comparisons of peers' efforts and feedback might diminish children's self-perceptions of competency. Children's beliefs in themselves as competent learners contributes to the degree in which children may approach future learning situations. If they believe themselves to be less competent, children may not attempt learning activities that they perceive they are incompetent to perform.

Summary of Children's Perspectives of School and Ability

The literature indicated that children form ideas about school and school work through observations and interactions with peers, instructional organization of classrooms, and evaluative comments from teachers. School classrooms are observable. Children looked in and compared classrooms. Children talked among themselves and made comparisons about

teachers and activities. Based upon observations and comparisons, children constructed ideas about first grade in their school.

When classroom instruction was structured in such a way that all children were expected to do the same work at the same time and there was public evaluation of children's performance by teachers, children easily compared their own and peers' abilities.

In addition, research findings suggested that age stratification and ability groupings in schools contributed to children's awareness of differences in ability and can have a negative effect on children's beliefs in their competency.

As they proceed through school, children's high levels of competency diminished. Since they equated high ability with high effort, negative evaluations of their work may be perceived as negative evaluations of their ability as well. The result can be a loss of perceived competence and self-efficacy.

The relationship of this research to transition first grade has not been considered to date but appears to have relevance to the topic. Transition first grades separate children from their age mates and may be seen by children as a type of ability grouping. Transition first grade work may differ from children's perspectives of what they should be doing in first grade such as learning to read. The structure of the classroom in comparison to other first grade classrooms may be perceived by children as unlike typical first grade. These factors may negatively influence children's ideas of their own and peers' competency and self-efficacy resulting in lower school achievement.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The current chapter presents a description of the research methodology. The chapter is divided into the following sections: nature of the study; naturalistic method; the location, participants, and time of the study; data collection and procedures; data analysis; reporting the data; ethical principles of naturalistic research; criteria utilized to assure trustworthiness of the research; hypothesis statement; definitions of terms; assumptions of the study; limitations of the study.

Nature of the Study

The naturalistic research approach was chosen for this study because the researcher's intent was to understand what it meant from children's perspectives to be in a transition first grade class within a particular school setting. Naturalistic research offered advantages over more traditional approaches, because observations and informal conversations were less threatening to young children than formal measures requiring pencil and paper tasks. With the increased utilization of readiness tests and standardized achievement tests, young children might have perceived the situation as one in which right answers were required (Hatch, 1990). If they perceived they were being evaluated in some way, children might

have been hesistant to present their own ideas to the researcher.

It has been established through previous successful research efforts that interviews and observations were legitimate means of obtaining children's perceptions of school situations (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; King, 1979; LeCompte, 1980; Hatch, 1990).

In addition, naturalistic research offered a framework from which the questions of this study were best answered. In most of the research studies to date effects of transition classes and retention had been studied using outcome measures such as standardized achievement test scores and various types of rating scales designed to measure self-concept, school attitude, and self-esteem. With the exception of a few studies (Boesel, 1960; Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1985; Sandin, 1947; Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985; Yamamoto, 1979), children's responses to retention have not been directly solicited by researchers. Children who were placed in transition classes had not been interviewed or observed over a period of time to determine their reactions and conceptions of extra year placement. Further, peers' notions of transition classes had not been sought. Therefore, it was not known how transition classes were perceived within the school structure by children.

The researcher chose to use the term naturalistic research to describe the nature of the study based upon Lofland & Lofland (1984, p. 3) suggestions that naturalistic research was an appropriate term because it had a "tradition" of use and "possesses transdisciplinary neutrality." Further, it implied that the researcher sought to find the contextual meanings people gave to situations rather than approaching the situation with many presuppositions that were to be verified.

The important differences between naturalistic inquiry and more traditional approaches to research were found in the underlying assumptions about reality that guided the methodology. Guba & Lincoln (1985) offer five propositions about the nature of reality from the naturalistic perspective. They are a) Realities are multiple, constructed, and

holistic; b) knower and known are interactive, inseparable; c) only time-and context-bound working hypotheses (ideographic statements) are possible; d) all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects; e) inquiry is value-bound. (p. 37)

Based upon these assumptions, naturalistic studies examine the nature and context of school settings from multiple perspectives, study interactions and relationships in process, and report values of programs from participant perspectives (Erickson, 1986; Williams, 1986).

In light of conflicting adult views about transition programs, naturalistic inquiry offered an alternative strategy for conceptualizing the issues involved in children's placement in transition grades. It allowed the researcher to study the process in which children were actively engaged rather than making inferences from ...."known input and the observed output...."(Guba, 1978, p. 25). Descriptive and interpretive accounts of how and what were experienced in daily activities and interactions during nonpromotion were lacking in the existing research.

Children's lived experiences had not been considered even though it was known that children's perceptions of themselves and others influence the ways in which they interpret situations and act upon their interpretations. Further, adults' and children's ideas often differ. In the case of transition programs, many adults have assumed children were having good experiences. It was not known whether children's viewpoints were the same.

Naturalistic Methods

The methods selected for the study include child, parent, and teacher interviews, observations throughout the school environment including classrooms, hallways, lunch rooms, and examination of school documents that were utilized to recommend or place

children in transition first grade. Fieldnotes were kept for all observations, interviews, and document reviews. The content of the fieldnotes followed the recommendations made by Bodgen & Biklen (1982):

1. Descriptions of subjects
2. Dialogues with subjects and between subjects
3. Descriptions of physical settings
4. Accounts of particular events, activities
5. Observer's behaviors
6. Observer's personal speculations, feelings, ideas during the observations or interviews
7. Contents of school documents examined during the study. (p. 74-90):

Location, Participants, and Time of the Study

School Location

The study was conducted in one rural school district located in the southwestern region of the United States. The town in which the district is located has a population of 1392 citizens (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990). The school district is considered to serve a large population of low income families and is designated as a Chapter I school. The district has an elementary school, junior high, and high school. The elementary school serves a population of approximately three hundred students in grades kindergarten through sixth. The junior high and high school have a combined enrollment of approximately 300 students. The school has one transition classroom that has been in operation since the 1985-86 school year.

Participants in the Study

The participants selected for the study included twenty-seven children (14 boys and 13 girls), seventeen parents of children in the study, five teachers, and two administrators. Of the children in the study sixteen (9 boys and 7 girls) had attended transition first grade and eleven (5 boys and 6 girls) had not attended transition first grade. The sixteen transition first grade children interviewed represents approximately sixteen percent of the total transition first grade enrollment since the beginning of the program. The eleven children who had not been in transition first grade represents approximately five percent of the school population who had not been in transition first grade.

The child participants were selected from transition first grade through fifth grade. When the study was originally conceived, the researcher intended to interview children in primarily kindergarten through second grade. However, due to the information obtained from interviews with parents and teachers, the researcher also selected and interviewed children in third through fifth grade. For example, teachers and parents suggested that third and fourth grade children previously enrolled in transition first grade had recently commented about transition first grade placement in respect to present grade placement.

The majority of transition first grade children selected for the study were presently in first through fourth grade. The reason for selecting a larger number of former transition first graders was previous research had suggested children currently attending transition first grade may be somewhat protected from peer pressure and performance comparisons (Bell, 1972). Bell indicated that once transition first graders returned to regular school placements with peers who were chronologically a year younger, they experienced a loss of self-confidence. The researcher was interested in determining what the impact of transition first grade placement had if any on children's perspectives of themselves as learners as they progressed through school. Additionally, the transition first grade children who the

researcher began observing and interviewing at the start of the study in May of 1991 were attending first grade in the 1991-1992 school year. The researcher was able to follow these children from transition first grade to regular first grade placement. The numbers of children interviewed at each grade level can be found in Table 1.

The researcher obtained parent and child consent for participation in the study (See appendix A for the consent form). The teachers and administrators agreed to participate in the study.

Time of the Study

The researcher began the study on May 3, 1991 during the 1990-1991 school year. The last visit was made on March 6, 1992 of the 1991-1992 school year. A total of sixty-six visits were made to the school. During this time the researcher conducted approximately fifty-four interviews with children and twelve interviews with teachers and administrators and completed a total of twenty-three classroom observations in the kindergarten, transition first grade, or two first grade classrooms. The classroom observations included three in the kindergarten class, eight in the transition first class, six in one first grade, and six in the other first grade class. Ten observations were made on the school playground. Other observations were made throughout the course of the study when the researcher came in contact with the children in the hallways, lunchroom, or other places. Additional time was spent in interviewing parents on the phone and at the school's open house. School documents were examined on six of the on-site visits.

Data Collection and Procedures

The researcher conducted interviews with children and teachers at the school site.

TABLE I

CHILDREN INTERVIEWED BY GRADE LEVEL,
GENDER AND PROMOTIONAL STATUS

Number of Children Interviewed	Current Grade Placement	Boys	Girls	Transition Grade	Regularly Promoted
10*	T-1	6	4	10	-
14*	1	7	7	8	6
3	2	1	2	2	1
3	3	1	2	2	1
3	4	2	1	2	1
2	5	0	2	0	2

* Includes 8 children in First Grade 1991-1992 school year who were interviewed while in Transition First during 1990-1991 school year at the start of the study

Parents of the children in the study were interviewed on the phone with the exception of six parents who were interviewed at the school and three parents who were not interviewed but returned signed consent forms in order that their child could be interviewed. The researcher elicited permission to take written notes from the children, teachers, and parents who were interviewed in person. If during the course of the interview, it was obvious to the researcher that notetaking was making the interviewee uncomfortable, the researcher stopped and completed the field notes after the interview session. The children were interviewed from one to four times depending upon the information gained at each session and the time allotted for interviews by the classroom teachers. The length of time that interviews lasted was thirty minutes to seventy-five minutes.

Setting of the Child Interviews

At the beginning of the first interview, each child was told that the researcher was writing a book about children's ideas about school including what they liked and disliked about school, friends, and first grade experiences. The child was asked if he/she would like to tell his/her ideas about school. All children agreed to talk about their ideas about school. In addition, each child was told that sometimes grown-ups asked children questions to see if they knew the right answers. It was explained that the researcher was interested in that particular child's ideas about school and there were no right or wrong answers so whatever the child said was accepted.

In order to create an informal atmosphere, the researcher provided children with art materials, card games, and building toys so that the children had activities to do while the conversations took place. The art materials provided included watercolors, playdoh, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, and several kinds and colors of paper. Card games made

available were war, old maid, and animal rummy. Legoes and various accessories were the building toys provided. The researcher succeeded in creating a comfortable atmosphere for interviews. The art materials were a great success. After the first child was interviewed, the word spread among the children. Children approached the researcher in the hallways and wanted to know, "When is it goin' be my turn to go with you?" The last day that the researcher was at the school, children continued to ask to talk with the researcher. Children who had already been interviewed several times requested, "One more time, please".

The interviews took place on the stage in the gymanisum/cafeteria. This was the only space available in the school to conduct the interviews. The researcher set up several small desks and chairs and displayed the activity choices before bringing the children to the interview site. The stage curtains were always drawn prior to the interview to assure privacy.

When the interviews began, a limited number of items were regularly stored on the stage including the loud speaker equipment, speakers' lecturn, and several boxes of books. The children did not find these items distracting. By the last four interviews, the stage was completely filled with additional boxes of books, three large rectangular tables, bleachers, and boxes of "lost and found" items. The children found it difficult to maintain attention on the activities or conversation.

Initially, the researcher interviewed each child individually. Children made frequent requests to bring a friend. The researcher honored that request based upon two conditions. The first condition was that each of the children had been individually interviewed. The second condition was both children had been in transition first grade or both children had not been in transition first grade. Pair interviews were done in order to provide another measure of comfort. Also, the researcher had reason to believe that when children engaged in informal conversation with friends other information pertinent to the study might be gained.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview format. Guided interview questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix B) served as a general framework for gathering information. Specific questions asked during the interviews were adapted to fit with and extend from comments made by children in order to create a more informal conversational style.

Parent Interviews

Seventeen interviews were conducted with parents of children in the study. The researcher explained the study and written informed consent form to parents. In addition, the researcher asked parents to share their opinions about transition first grade including the placement process, benefits of the program, and any other information they wanted the researcher to know.

Teacher Interviews

The five teachers interviewed were asked to share their knowledge of the establishment and continuance of the transition first grade including reasons for its beginnings, identification and placement of children, and benefits of the program.

Administrator Interviews

The superintendent provided the researcher with enrollment data of the school district, per student cost, and her ideas about the transition first grade as well as her philosophy of leadership.

The principal provided information pertaining to her concerns about curricular and

instructional matters and changes instituted since her principalship began.

Observations

Kindergarten, transition first, and the two first grade classrooms were observed during the course of the study. General observations of the physical lay-out of the classroom, curricular activities, and teacher-child and child-child interactions were added to the field notes.

The researcher conversed with children at lunch, in the hallways, and on the playground. Informal conversations between children were noted. Attention was given to whom children sat with at lunch and whom they played with on the playground.

Observations were important for several reasons. First, the researcher needed to understand the daily routines and schedules of the school day if she were to understand and interpret situations. Second, frequent visits to children's classrooms and other activities allowed the researcher and children time to become acquainted. This was particularly important because the researcher must develop trusting relationships with the children in order to obtain information. Corsaro (1985) and Hatch (1990) suggest trust can be gained by giving children time and opportunities to accept the researcher in a way that is comfortable to them. In other words, the researcher eased into the children's settings and gained children's acceptance before attempting to gather information directly. The researcher waited for children's invitations to participate in their activities and conversations.

A crucial part of developing trusting relationships with children was to define the researcher's role with school officials. In order to diminish the traditional adult/child relationship in which adults were perceived as authority figures, the researcher was not a disciplinarian or enforcer of school rules with the exception of a situation in which

children's safety was involved (Corsaro, 1985; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). If a situation did arise in which the researcher was the only adult on hand and the possibility of physical harm existed, the researcher did intervene.

Lastly, observations were crucial because children actively engage with each other and adults. Observations provided clues to children's worldviews. Actions provided valuable information from which adults can pursue children's ideas. Taking these action clues, the researcher was able to ask for children's explanations (Corsaro, 1985; Fine, 1988; Hatch, 1990).

Document Examination

The researcher received parental permission to examine child participant's school records that included scores on the Maturational Assessment Test, Ray Reading Method Test, State First Grade Screening Test, and general information including the child's birthdate, phone number, and address.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analyses were ongoing processes throughout the naturalistic study. Naturalistic studies emphasize discovery and theory development (Bogden & Biklen, 1982; Charmaz,1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1984). Rather than begin with preconceived theoretical frameworks from which data was collected and analyzed, naturalistic studies strive to develop theories from the data emerging during the course of the study. During the course of data collection, the researcher developed categorizes from the data, examined relationships among categories, developed interpretations, changed categories and interpretations as further information was encountered, and sought out negative cases that disconfirmed existing interpretations.

Initial coding and focused coding allowed the researcher to sort, organize, conceptualize, and analyze the data in the study. Initial coding served the purpose of discovering and labeling "...simple, concrete and topical categories to more general, abstract conceptual categories for an emerging theory" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 111). From this initial process of ordering the data, questions emerged that guided the researcher in collection of additional information.

Initial coding categories were applied to larger amounts of data in the focused phase of coding as recommended by Charmaz (1983). Focused coding served the purpose of continually and purposefully re-examining the data in order to expand and refine the categories. At this stage, literature on the topic served as a source of questions and comparisons with the conceptual categories developed by the researcher from the emergent data.

The study began with three global categories: children's ideas about grade placement; children's ideas about friendships; children's ideas about learning activities. As the study progressed, categories were adjusted to reflect the data collected and other categories emerged.

Data Reporting

A narrative description of children's perspectives of transition first grade was completed from the data procured in the study. The researcher has described and interpreted information obtained from the data in order to present an "'invitation' to the reader to participate" (Crites, 1986) in what was seen, what was done, and what possibilities exist for educators' future considerations about children's placement in school.

The researcher has used interview quotations, paraphrasing, and descriptive information to present the data.

Ethical Principles in Naturalistic Research

Certain conventions have been established that guide naturalistic research. The researcher did maintain the following ethical principles for educational research proposed by Bogdan & Biklen (1982, p. 50-1):

1. Protect the subjects' identities so that the information collected does not embarrass or in other ways harm them. Anonymity should extend not only to writing, but also to the verbal reporting of information that you have learned through observation. The researcher should not relate specific information about individuals to others and should be particularly watchful of sharing information with people at the research site who could choose to use the information in political or personal ways.

2. Treat subjects with respect and seek their support. The subjects should be told of the researcher's interests and should give permission before the research proceeds. Researchers should never lie to subjects nor record conversations on hidden mechanical devices.

3. In negotiating permission to do a study, make it clear to those with whom you negotiate what the terms of the agreement are and you should abide by that contract.

4. Tell the truth when you write up and report your findings even though you may not like the conclusions reached or receive pressure to show certain results that are not present in the data. The researcher should be devoted to reporting what the data reveals.

Anonymity is difficult if not impossible to assure in a naturalistic study. However, the researcher did maintain confidentiality of the site and the participants. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and school, the researcher did use pseudonyms and/or numerical coding for all participants and classrooms in both data gathering and reporting of the results of the study. Ages, ethnicity, and gender of the child participants were included

in descriptive information because existing research indicates the importance of these factors in transition first grade placement.

The researcher adhered to the second principle by obtaining consent from child participants' parents as well as the child him/herself before conducting any interviews. Children who did not wish to be interviewed were not forced to participate. The researcher assured parents, children, and school faculty that confidentiality was maintained.

Permission was obtained to conduct the study in this school district. The superintendent, principal, and involved faculty were aware that the researcher was studying children's ideas about transition placement within the school setting.

As data was gathered throughout the course of the study, it was available for review as to its truthfulness. The dissertation reported the researcher's interpretations drawn from the data obtained in the project.

Criteria for Judging the Trustworthiness of the Study

Guba & Lincoln (1986, 1990) proposed certain criteria that can be used to evaluate the trustworthiness of naturalistic studies. They suggest credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability can be considered reasonable parallels to conventional criteria of validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability used in traditional experimental research.

Credibility is the criterion in naturalistic studies that parallels internal validity in conventional studies. Credibility is the "match between the constructed realities of respondents and those realities as represented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 217). In order to establish credibility the following techniques are recommended: "prolonged engagement at the site", "persistent

observation", and "peer debriefing", "negative case analyses", "progressive subjectivity", and "frequent member checks" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, 236-241).

The study met the credibility conditions established by Guba & Lincoln (1990) in the following manner. The study met the conditions of "prolonged engagement" because it took place over an extended period of time. Nine months overlapping school years 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 was the length of time the researcher was engaged on-site with participants. Sixty-six visits were made to the site.

To meet the criteria of "persistent observations", observations occurred in multiple settings including classrooms, playgrounds, lunch room, and school hallways throughout the course of the study.

Peer debriefings were ongoing throughout the course of the study. Two colleagues who hold advanced degrees in early childhood education and curriculum and instruction and are members of the faculty in the researcher's department served as debriefers. There were a total of twenty debriefings held with one or other of the selected debriefers. The researcher discussed research hypotheses, data, conclusions, and analyses with debriefers. Debriefers gave the researcher feedback including alternative views of ways to interpret and analyze information.

Through these debriefings, the researcher's subjectivity was analyzed to assure that the researcher was going beyond the initially stated hypotheses and including participants constructions of the situation. In these ways the criteria of progressive subjectivity (Guba & Lincoln) was met.

Negative case analyses, according to Guba & Lincoln (1990), parallels statistical analyses in quantitative study in that the qualitative researcher does not assume that there will be perfect agreement in study data. Rather the researcher looks at the data to ascertain that a reasonable number of incidences confirm or reject hypotheses. In other words, the researcher examines confirming and disaffirming data in an effort to assure that all data has

received careful consideration and follow-up. In the present study, the researcher used discrepant information from participants to guide future interviewing and observations. For example, some children reported peer teasing because of their placement in transition first grade. Other children reported no teasing because of their placement in transition first grade. The researcher acknowledged these differences by interviewing more children and reinterviewing some children. In addition, the researcher sought information from additional sources such as parents, teachers, and observations.

The most important category to establishment of credibility in a naturalistic study is an on-going process of "member checks" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 239). This means that the researcher verifies with participants that the information constructed by the researcher is representative of the participants' perspectives. Throughout the study, the researcher summarized interview information and restated it to participants in order that the participants could confirm or disconfirm it.

Transferability is the parallel to external validity or generalizability (Guba & Lincoln, p. 241). As applied in naturalistic studies, the burden of proof as to the generalizability lies with those who receive and wish to use the research findings. To facilitate this process, the researcher has provided "...all working hypotheses for the study, extensive and careful descriptions of the time, the place, the context, the culture in which these hypotheses were found to be salient" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 242).

The parallel to the conventional category of reliability is dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 242). It was expected that changes would occur as the study evolved. The researcher kept extensive field notes of interview data, speculations and questions that arose during the study, observations, and document reviews. The field notes provide a trackable record, commonly called an audit trail, of the research process and researcher's decisions and the data used to reach interpretations. The audit trail allows interested others to review the information to assure its dependability.

Confirmability is the parallel to objectivity in conventional research (Guba & Lincoln,

1990, p. 242). Upon examination of the data, reviewers of the study should be able to track the information to its source and determine if the researcher's categorical interpretations are explicitly and implicitly present in the narrative and the data itself.

Statement of Hypothesis

When entering into a qualitative research study, Guba & Lincoln (1990) suggested that the researcher be cognizant of biases or preconceived notions that are present. No researcher enters a research venture without a value perspective. The hypothesis statement is presented to illuminate the researcher's a priori position. The hypothesis for this study is: Children will have experienced some degree of stigmatization due to placement in transition first grade. The results of the study indicate that the researcher's hypothesis is feasible. The last chapter presents other hypotheses generated by data from the study.

Definition of Terms

academic redshirting: delaying children's school entry in order to provide an age advantage or to avoid academic failure

audit trail: trackable record of the research project that includes observations, interviews, records, and researcher's working hypotheses

confirmability: parallel to objectivity in conventional research; determining if the interpretations appropriately reflect the data and the data appropriately reflects the respondents' meanings

credibility: parallel criteria to internal validity in conventional research; the match between the constructed realities of respondents and the researcher's interpretations of respondents' realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 237).

daily activities: all activities that children are involved in during the course of the school day

dependability: the detailed description of the process of the study that reflects the stability of the data over time

developmental age: a test score obtained from the Maturational Assessment Test or Gesell School Readiness Test that supposedly indicates children's ability level for school work and upon which placement decisions have been made

developmentally appropriate practice: criteria for early childhood practices and policies for programs serving children ages birth through eight developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987).

extra year of school: adding an additional year to children's school careers by in grade retention (nonpromotion) or placement in a transition class before or after kindergarten

focused coding: applying intital coding to larger amounts of data to develop and expand categories and working hypotheses

grounded theory: theory which emerges from the data, not constructed a priori

immaturity: a label given to children on the basis of adults' perceptions of children's readiness for certain school activities; label given to children by adults as a result of readiness testing

initial coding: categorizing and sorting data in the intial phases of research

knower-known relationship: researcher and participants interact to influence each other

maturationists: adults who subscribe to the belief that children's development is based upon biological/maturation

member check: rechecking data, categories, interpretations with respondents

naturalistic research: inquiry process of research that employs participant

observation, interviewing, and data analysis generally based on non-quantitative measures; seeks to discover the participants' constructed meanings in given situations

negative case analysis: seeking respondent data that disconfirms working hypotheses in order to refine, change, and revise hypotheses

nonpromotion: the practice of holding children in the same grade a second year or placing children in a transition class

peer debriefing: a professional peer who helps the researcher clarify the on-going interpretations of research data, provides suggestions as to future direction, and supports and encourages the researcher

prolonged engagement: committment of sufficient time at the research site to develop trust and clear understandings of the participants' views

purposive sampling: the selection of respondents who will provide a variety of ideas about the situation

readiness: adults' conceptions of children's ability to perform certain school work often based upon readiness testing or maturationists' beliefs about children's development

readiness testing: the use of certain readiness tests such as the Gesell School Readiness Test, Maturational Assessment Test, Metropolitan Readiness Test, or others to determine children's placement in school

retention: the practice of holding children in the same grade a second year

transferability: parallel to generalizability in conventional research; the degree to which study findings may be transferred to another setting depending upon the similarity with other settings

transition class: a class before kindergarten or before first grade that adds an extra year to children's school career. Other names used are junior

kindergarten, developmental first, junior first grade, pre-kindergarten

trustworthiness: the worth of the study, its truth value, its applicability, its consistency and its neutrality (Guba & Lincoln, 1986, 1990)

Assumptions of the Study

1. It is believed that children, parents, and educators will respond truthfully once trusting relationships have been established with the researcher.
2. Children have valuable ideas to share that will assist adults' understandings of transition placement.
3. School is a complex and dynamic system that can be understood by exploring connections and relationships between participants and policies.
4. Naturalistic research affords possibilities of inquiry into realms of participant meanings within actual settings.

Limitations of the Study

The study examined children's perspectives of one transition class within one school district in the southwestern region of the United States. The results are not generalizable but may be transferable to other settings if interested parties can establish that these other settings similarly match the context, time, culture, and working hypotheses of this study. As Guba & Lincoln (1990) indicated transferability is the burden of the reader.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of this study was to describe and interpret children's perspectives of a transition first grade in a rural southwestern school district. The current chapter presents the findings of the study. The first section describes the setting of the study, the school, community, and classrooms, in order that the reader may gain understanding of the contextual situation in which children in the study live and attend school. In describing the contextual situation, the reader is provided information to determine if inferences may be made to other school settings. Transferability of information is contingent upon the reader's consideration of the "fittedness" of context between this school and children and other schools and children to which the reader may desire to make inferences (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The second section of the chapter describes the development of the transition program in this school and the criteria utilized to determine which children are recommended and placed in transition first grade and includes three sections: (a) history of transition first grade in the school; (b) identification of children for transition first grade according to educators, parents, and school documents; (c) incidences and rates of placement in transition first grade; (d) summary of transition placement process.

The third section of the current chapter provides children's dialogues with the researcher about school and transition first grade and the researcher's interpretation of children's conversations about school and transition first grade and includes eight sections:

(a) children's favorite aspects of school; (b) children's dislikes of school; (c) children's comparisons of first grade and transition grade; (d) children's explanations of why children went to transition first grade; (e) children's reports of the effects of placement in transition first grade; (f) children's discussion of positive aspects of transition first grade; (g) children's choices of classrooms after kindergarten; (h) summary of the dialogues with children and researcher's interpretations.

The fourth section of this chapter presents parents' reports of the effects of transition first grade on their families. The fifth section of the chapter summarizes the results of the study.

The Setting of the Study: Community, School, and Classrooms

Characteristics of the Community

The small community of 1,392 residents (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991) is on a major state highway approximately twenty miles east of a city that contains one of two major state universities and forty-five miles west of the second largest city in the state. It is surrounded on all sides by expanses of grazing land for cattle, sheep, and goats. When entering the outskirts of town from the west, an oil tank manufacturing company, motel, and public housing project consisting of single story, two family brick dwellings are visible. A locally owned video store and self-serve gas station sit opposite the housing addition. Nearby a liquor store is located adjacent to a tire repair shop.

The town's one street business section is located on the southside of the highway. Small businesses located in this section consist of a florist shop, drug store, newspaper publisher, clothing store, bank, grocery store, restaurant, barber shop, auto repair service,

two auto parts stores, law office, lawn implement dealership, and a lumber yard. In addition, the city hall, fire department, and public library are located on the main street. Some of the buildings have been remodeled but many of them are of original construction.

Interspersed along the highway are occupied and unoccupied one story and two story homes, the high school, and businesses including self-serve gas stations, video store, used car lot, nursing home, and a drive-in restaurant. At the east side of town is a city park named after a former Olympic athlete. A highway sign advertises the home of the athlete as a tourist attraction. Baseball diamonds and the high school football field are located east of the park.

According to the 1990 Census (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991) of the 1,392 residents of the community, 1,316 are white. The remaining population consists of 67 American Indians, 1 Black, 2 Asians, 21 Hispanics, and 6 others. The city is home for 564 families of which 307 are married couples (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991). As a lifelong resident described it, "Many people live here but most work elsewhere. The rent is much less expensive here than places where they work." In addition to the local businesses the residents' employers include oil related industries and hospitals in nearby towns, the city businesses and university twenty miles from town, and the large urban center forty-five miles from town.

There are two main residential areas lying on either side of the state highway. The residential areas on the south side of the highway consist primarily of small, single family wood dwellings. A few two story structures are present. Trailer homes are interspersed throughout the neighborhoods. In general the weatherworn condition of the dwellings leaves the impression that these are hard times for the residents as many are in need of paint and repair. A few well-kept homes can be seen but do not reflect the majority of dwellings in this residential section.

In sharp contrast to the residences on the southside of the highway, many recently

constructed brick one and two story homes with well-maintained yards can be found on the northside of the highway. A brick apartment building is also located in this section of town.

There are five protestant churches in this community. When driving into the city, the white dome of the First Baptist Church located just off the main business district is visible. Of newer brick construction, the First Christian Church is located on the east side of town next to the park. The remaining three churches are smaller in size and are located on the west side of the community.

The School in the Community

The local school district provides the only educational opportunities for children. There are no private schools. Before public school the only early childhood program available is the Head Start Program which is limited to those young children who meet the guidelines for enrollment. A private preschool program was in operation until 1985 at which time it closed and the teacher/director became an employee of the public school system. There are no licensed child care centers in the community. The lack of child care programs may be explained by the fact that the majority of the families served by the local school district consist of two parent families in which the mother is a full-time homemaker and the father is employed outside the home. In the case of single parent families where the mother is the head of the household, some mothers are employed outside the home and extended family members take responsibility for child care in the mothers' absence. Some single-parent mothers remain at home and receive state assistance.

The school district operates an elementary school, junior high, and high school. The elementary school enrollment is approximately three hundred children grades kindergarten through six. The junior high and high school enroll approximately three hundred children seventh through twelfth grade. The enrollment in the district is consistent from year to year according to school officials. Many of the parents of the children presently enrolled in

school attended the district's schools themselves.

The Superintendent of the district schools reports that the average per student expenditure has been approximately $2700 until the passage of HB 1017 which increased expenditures by approximately $500 per student to about $3200. These figures are well below the national average of approximately $4243 per child, reported for 1987-1988 cost per student in public elementary and secondary schools (Whalen, 1991).

Built in 1976 the elementary school is located approximately one-half mile from the highway. Except for the windows at the entry to the building, the remainder of the building including the classrooms are windowless. The principal's and secretary's offices and the teachers' lounge are closest to the main entrance of the school. There are sixteen classrooms, two classrooms per grade level first through sixth, one kindergarten room, one transition first classroom, one educatable mentally handicapped classroom, and one learning disabled classroom. Additionally, the school has a Chapter I reading program room, speech therapy room, band room, and gymanisum. The gymanisum also serves as the cafeteria for the elementary, junior high, and high school. A portable building is used for the gifted program. At the time of the study, the school's storm shelter adjacent to the building had been remodeled to serve as the kindergarten classroom.

On the southside of the school is the large playground area that contains permanent equipment including slides, swingsets, climbing apparatus, two merry-go-rounds, and asphalt paved basketball court. In addition, there are grassy areas for running and playing and a sand play area. Hopscotch, four-square, and tether ball can be played on the asphalt area next to the building. Balls, sand play toys, jump ropes, and other assorted outdoor play items are available for children's check-out during recesses.

Over the past four school years three changes have occurred in the principalship. At the end of this school term, another change is forthcoming as the present principal has resigned to take a college teaching position. During the course of this study, two principals

have provided leadership in the school. Both of the principals have provided leadership in curricular and instructional matters. The current principal provides the faculty with professional reading materials and purchases professional books for teachers use. Further, she supports and encourages faculty curricular initiatives. For example, she supported the elimination of worksheets in kindergarten and transition first grade. At the same time she encouraged teachers to engage children in more active, hands-on learning experiences. In fourth and fifth grade, she encouraged teachers to plan project units rather than rely solely on textbook materials.

Frequent changes in principals is a concern for teachers. As one of the teachers summed it up, "Just when we get to know them and trust them, they leave. It's really hard on us and the community."

Although changes have occurred in the principalship, the faculty remains constant. There are twenty-one teachers on the faculty. Of the twenty-one faculty, fifteen teachers live in the community. Most teachers have taught in the schools for a number of years. At the time of the study, there was only one new teacher in the school. The majority of the teaching faculty have elementary teaching certificates.

As is often true in smaller communities, teachers are knowledgable of children's and parents' backgrounds from contacts with them outside school activities. Teachers are respected leaders in the community. The director of the community education program is a teacher in the elementary school. Several faculty teach Sunday School classes in the community's churches and are Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop leaders.

In this city schools are a source of community pride. Given the limited number of social activities available within the community, school activities serve this function. High school athletics and school sponsored activities offer residents social activities. At the elementary school every Friday, the principal, teachers, and children wear school t-shirts or school colors. During the football season, the "spirit stick" award is presented to the

classroom who has the most children dressed in school colors. In October open house preceded by a bean supper brings parents to the school to visit children's classrooms and teachers. At the annual Halloween Carnival, each classroom sponsors a carnival booth. Children choose a King and Queen for each grade level by purchasing tickets to support their preferred candidate. The Christmas music program brings the parents and children together in celebration of the holiday season. Additionally, parents regularly volunteer in the school as library assistants, substitute teachers, field trip chaperones, and classroom party organizers.

Classroom Settings

Observations were made in the kindergarten, transition first, and the two first grade classrooms. Classroom descriptions provide the reader with insights into children's lives within the school.

Kindergarten. Beginning with the 1991-1992 school year, kindergarten became a full day program. Prior to the 1991-1992 school year, the kindergarten program consisted of two sessions, a morning and afternoon class. The kindergarten enrollment for 1991-1992 is thirty-one. According to school documents, this kindergarten class is the smallest class in the past seven years. The average enrollment from 1984 to 1991 was 48 children. The school system made the decision to institute a full day program this school year because of these lower enrollment figures. The cost of bus transportation for two half-day sessions was the deciding factor in establishing the full day program according to the superintendent of the district.

The kindergarten class moved to the remodeled storm shelter in late February. In the case of inclement weather, the kindergarten room is used by townspeople. Last spring tornadoes touched down about five miles from town; therefore, the possibility that it will be

used as a storm shelter by community residents is likely.

The storm shelter/kindergarten room has the appearance of being an underground cave. There are two entrances to the room. A woodworking table was set up in front of one of the entrances. Child size tools and wood scraps were on hand for children's use.

There are no windows in the kindergarten room. The room is not well lighted. Contractors made a miscalculation of numbers of fixtures required to provide adequate illumination. Parts of the room are carpeted and other parts are tiled to accomodate a variety of activities. There is a children's bathroom in the classroom.

The room is arranged in a learning center format. Centers observed were blocks and accessories, math, art, dramatic play area (presently, housekeeping), water table, writing, and reading area complete with commercially prepared and teacher made "big books", and a cooking area that contained a full size stove and sink placed at adult height. Book case shelves served as center dividers. Tables were placed in close proximity to centers to provide work spaces for children's activities. The teacher mentioned that she has tried to arrange the room so that noisy activities are at one end of the room (blocks, playhouse, water table) and quiet activities (reading, writing, art) are at the opposite end of the room.

On several walls were commercially made number, alphabet, and color posters. Also, children's art work decorated two walls. One display was of ditto sheet Humpty Dumptys that fifth grade children helped the kindergartners color, cut-out, and put together. The other art display consisted of string paintings all done in blue.

There was a carpeted area where children gather for large group activities. The area was also used for watching videos.

A typical day began with a whole group activity that involved the calendar and counting activities. After grouptime, children spent thirty minutes in center activites. A twenty minute recess followed center activities. Children gathered as a whole group again for ten minutes before lunch. Sometimes a story was read at this time. After lunch and

recess, children had a short rest time. Children went to music every other day after lunch. After rest or music, children were in "quiet" centers. Several teacher directed math activities were planned during this time. The children were assigned to groups that rotate through the centers and math activities at teacher specified times. According to the teacher, the children moved to the next center based upon when teacher structured activities were completed.

A twenty minute recess followed center time. When children came in from recess, they had a snack with the transition first grade class. After snack the children and teachers cleaned the room and prepared to go home.

The kindergarten teacher has been with the school system for thirteen years. She has a bachelor's and master's degree in early childhood education. She holds both early childhood and elementary teacher certification. She has a full-time aide who has a degree in sociology. The aide has been with the school system several years. This is the first year that she has worked with kindergarten children.

Transition First Grade. The transition first grade class is the smallest classroom in the building. At the last observation, there were three centers in the room including a writing center with two electric typewriters, book center, and a table that was designated as a cooking area. The class has gone to the kindergarten room to bake cookies and potatotes. Under the cooking table were Legos and accessories. Tables were placed around the room to provide workspace for children. The teacher reported that she doesn't have any permanent learning centers because she changes the areas to fit with the thematic units.

At the front of the room was a sizable open space that was the designated group area. A calendar, placards of children's names and birthdates, an easel with chart stories, and math activities were materials found in the group area.

On the left wall was a display of words that children have been learning in conjunction with a recent unit on potatoes. There were several graphs of weight, number, and length of

potatoes. An alphabet, number, and color chart were also displayed. Several walls had displays of children's art work that fit with the teaching theme.

The children's day began as a whole group with calendar, word bank, stories, and math activities. After group time, children wrote in their journals. Children chose the topic for journal writing. A twenty minute recess followed journal time. After recess, the children worked on unit activities as a whole group and individually. The teacher has planned units on such topics as spiders, insects, farm, quilts, human heart, Indians, and potatoes. Unit activities lasted until lunch time. Transition first grade children sat with kindergarten children in the lunch room.

When children returned from lunch, they either had music with the music teacher or math activities. The math activities lasted an hour or more until recess. After recess children had a snack with the kindergarten class. The last thirty minutes of the day were spent finishing up activities and straightening the room.

The teacher has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She has early childhood and elementary certification. She has been on the faculty for seven years.

First Grade Classroom A. Individual desks were arranged in straight rows facing the chalkboard. On the wall above the chalkboard were the upper case and lower case alphabet. Left of the chalkboard was the monthly calendar, weather chart, and helper chart. Right of the chalkboard was a vowel chart and a list of classroom rules. The rules posted were: do not run in the room, speak after receiving permission, no hitting or fighting, do not leave room unless there is an emergency, leave other peoples' property alone, no gum or candy without permission, stay in your chair, and don't tip your chair back. When they violated the rules, children had their names listed on the chalkboard. Further infractions of the rules resulted in loss of recess time, visits to the principal, or calls to parents.

Book shelves containing games, art supplies, and various odds and ends were on the

right wall. Children had access to the games on days when inclement weather prohibited outside recess. Art supplies were available to the children at teacher designated times.

More shelves were in the back of the room behind the children's desks. These shelves contained workbooks, basal readers, and stacks of zeroxed workbook sheets. Behind these shelves were the children's coat hooks. A long table was at the back of the room where the teacher worked with children on teacher designated art projects and reading. There were several teacher made wall displays that changed seasonally. No children's work was displayed on the walls. In the hallway, next to the door there was a display of children's coloring sheets.

Each morning children began their day with opening exercises that included calendar, weather, and math activities. Next, children had a whole group spelling lesson or reading workbook lessons that lasted for approximately forty-five minutes. Children then took a fifteen to twenty minute break in which they sang songs, played games like Simon Says, or drew. This classroom break replaced morning recess time. According to the teacher, the children voted to do away with their morning recess because it interfered with their morning reading work.

After the break, children spent forty-five minutes in either reading or phonics work until lunchtime. Reading or phonics workbooks were the commonly observed activities. Children were ability grouped for reading.

When the children came back from lunch, they had a twenty minute storytime followed by fifty minutes of math. Math activities consisted of workbook assignments. After math, children had a twenty minute recess. Music or physical education followed recess. The last part of the day was spent in phonics and handwriting exercises.

The teacher has been with the school system for twelve years. She has a bachelor's degree and master's degree in elementary education. She holds an elementary teaching certificate.

First Grade Classroom B. Individual desks were arranged in clusters of three and four taking up most of the classroom floor space. Along the west wall were shelves that contained various learning materials including table games, math manipulatives, and art supplies as well as the teacher's desk. Children used these materials at teacher specified times that included rainy days and after completion of seat work.

There was a chalkboard on the east wall. In front of the chalkboard was the designated large group meeting space where children gathered at several times during the day. Children began their day in this area participating in calendar activities, counting, and news of the day. News of the day was an activity in which children shared news of importance such as what they had done last night or what they planned to do on the week-end. The teacher recorded children's news on a large chart tablet. Also, in this area was a bean bag chair which was popular with the children. The teacher designated which children were allowed to sit in the bean bag chair.

Posted on the east wall was a list of sixteen classroom rules: no sitting on desks, don't play or talk when teacher is talking, keep our room clean, don't stand on the desks, keep all legs of the chairs on the floor, don't run, be kind, listen to the teacher, don't kick or shove, don't say naughty words, don't be mean, don't fight or hit, don't talk in halls, don't whistle, don't take peoples' things, be good. The teacher reported that children helped make the rules at the beginning of the school year. Violations of rules resulted in children's names being placed on the chalkboard. Subsequent violations resulted in loss of recess time, visits to the principal, and calls to parents.

Children's work was on display on the classroom wall and in the hallway. There were teacher made bulletin boards that followed a seasonal theme.

According to the posted class schedule, children spend approximately two one hour time periods in reading and writing activities in the morning with recess serving as a break between the time frames. At the beginning of the school year before the reading books had

arrived, the teacher used a thematic approach. For example, the teacher planned a frog unit. The teacher read books about frogs to the children and children did follow-up activities about frogs using zeroxed worksheet activities about frogs.

Since the arrival of the basal reading series, children have been divided into hetergeneous groupings for oral reading. The teacher listened to one group of children read while other children completed worksheets that accompanied the readers. If they finished, children were allowed to choose other activities. The format of the basal series was whole-group instruction so that all children were expected to be progressing at the same rate.

After lunch and recess, children were in math centers. The teacher selected certain manipulatives and placed them in different locations in the room. Children switched locations every fifteen minutes. After math, children had either music or physical education. The last activities of the day were library time or journal writing.

This is the first year the teacher has been at the school. She has a degree and certification in elementary education. She is completing coursework towards early childhood certification.

Historical Development of Transition

First Grade

According to teachers' reports, the catalyst for the beginnings of the transition first class came from first grade teachers' concerns that some children were "not on reading level" when they entered first grade. Changes in the kindergarten program appear to have contributed to educators' concerns that children were not ready for first grade reading. Prior to 1979 the primary focus of the kindergarten program was on learning how to read. Pre-primers and worksheets that drilled children on decoding skills made up the primary components of the kindergarten program. Several educators questioned the efficacy of

reading skill instruction in kindergarten even though there was pressure from first grade teachers that children needed to be taught to read in kindergarten.

The focus of the program changed gradually after 1979 in that other activities were incorporated into the kindergarten program. As one teacher stressed, "kindergarten children in this community need to be doing other things besides just reading...the children need to be playing, painting, working with clay, developing their fine motor skills." The teacher inferred that children in this community had limited experiences before school due to the economic status and educational level of many families.

As the kindergarten program changed, children spent less time completing reading skills and math worksheets until the last three months of the school year at which time children did spend daily time completing seatwork assignments in reading and math skills.

With less emphasis on formal reading instruction in kindergarten, children's entry into first grade without the customary skills expected by first grade teachers did create conflict between educators. The conflict centered around the issue of what kindergarten children ought to be doing. From the perspective of first grade teachers, children should be learning to read in kindergarten. Learning to read was defined as acquiring the necessary decoding skills. To others the emphasis in kindergarten should be on play and social-emotional development. Conflicting views about what kindergarten children ought to be doing was resolved somewhat when two educators attended workshops that dealt with the topic of developmental readiness and developmental assessment. At that period of time, proponents of the Gesell Institute held workshops throughout the state to train educators. Gesell Institute workshops present children's development as a process of biological maturation that occurs predictably over time (Gesell Institute, 1980). Coming from the Gesell Institute standpoint on children's development, the workshop leaders advocated for children's school placement on the basis of behavioral age rather than chronological age arrived at by testing children before kindergarten entry. To identify children's readiness for school based

upon behavioral age, educators were trained to administer the Maturational Assessment Test. The Maturational Assessment Test, like the Gesell School Readiness Test, claims to provide a behavioral age that can be used to determine whether or not children are ready for school. From this workshop, teachers reported learning that "as many as one-third of the children are too young for school"... "they may need an extra year to mature" as well as the kindergarten curriculum should be more action-oriented rather than worksheet based.

Beginning in 1983, the principal and kindergarten teacher began administering the Maturational Assessment Test to children in the spring prior to their kindergarten entry. In addition, the principal sought funding to establish the transition first grade. Funding was granted and the first transition first grade class was in place in the fall of the 1985-1986 school year.

According to teachers, the application of this developmental perspective has alleviated the conflict among educators in the school because it has provided a compromise of sorts. The first grade expectations have remained in place. Children who were unable to meet them were held out of kindergarten until they were a year older or children were placed in the transition first grade so that they were a year older when entering first grade. With a transition class in place, the kindergarten program was allowed to be less academically focused; however, teachers reported that the transition program has received pressure to prepare children for first grade.

Identification of Children for Transition First Grade

Educators' Reports of Placement Criteria

According to educators' reports, children's scores on the Ray Reading Methods test at

the end of the kindergarten year were the primary criterion used to make transition first grade placement decisions. Children who received scores below the mean on the reading methods test were recommended for transition first grade.

Since 1979 the school has administered the Ray Reading Methods Test to children in the spring of their kindergarten year in order to assign them to specific first grade classrooms. The reading teacher and two classroom teachers attended a workshop in another school district in 1979 to learn to match instructional strategies with children's reading method preference identified by the Ray Reading Methods Test. A grant was obtained by the school in order to purchase reading materials that fit with the learning preferences identified by the test.

The test was designed to provide the classroom teacher or reading teacher with a procedure to evaluate the preferred learning methods of beginning readers (Ray, 1970). In order to develop the test Ray examined the methods of teaching reading available at that time by reviewing reading textbook series. He suggested there were four primary methodologies: 1) Visual-Auditory; 2) Auditory-Visual; 3) Linguistic Word Structure; 4) Linguistic-Language Experience. According to Ray (1970) the Visual-Auditory reading method consisted of whole word instruction before the introduction of phonics principles. The Auditory-Visual approach utilized a phonics approach. Sound-symbol instruction was emphasized. The Linguistic Word Structure method emphasized spelling patterns of words rather than sound-symbol recognition. The Language Experience approach focused on the natural language of children in order to teach reading.

The test itself is a compiliation of subtests from different standardized instruments including the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, Wechsler Preschool Primary Scale of Intelligence, Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test, and the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis.

Until the 1991-1992 school year, children identified by the test as "auditory-visual" and "language experience" had been placed in one first grade classroom and children

identified as "visual-auditory" and "linguistic-word structure" had been placed in the other first grade classroom. These groupings by reading preference had continued through third grade.

Prior to the existence of the transition first grade, children who scored below the mean on the four categories of learner reading preference as identified by the reading test had been considered candidates for retention in first grade. A teacher estimates that five or six children had been retained in first grade annually.

After the establishment of the transition first grade, children who scored below the mean in all four methods had been recommended for placement in the transition first grade classroom.

Beginning with the 1991-1992 school year, first through third grade classrooms were no longer categorized by reading methodologies. Children were assigned to classrooms based upon parent and teacher preferences. Educators reported that the reason for the change was concern that the groupings might be a form of tracking. As it was stated, "The test seems to identify the kids who are smarter. They just get further ahead while the other kids fall further behind."

Parents' Reports of Placement Criteria

Although educators reported that children's scores on the Ray Reading Method Test were the primary basis upon which recommendations for transition first grade placement were made, parents reported that Maturational Assessment Test scores and children's birthdates were factors that contributed to transition first grade placement.

Maturational Assessment Test results have been used to make recommendations to parents that children's kindergarten entry be delayed one year. If they opted to enroll their "developmentally young" children in kindergarten anyway, parents have been told that their

children might experience failure in first grade. After the transition first class was in place, Maturational Assessment Test results were used to inform parents that their children might need to go to transition first grade if they started them to kindergarten when they were chronologically of age but "developmentally young". In addition, parents reported that they were told if they did not place their children in transition first grade, their children might fail first grade.

In interviews with parents of children included in this study, parents of fifteen of the seventeen children subsequently recommended or placed in transition first grade referred to testing before kindergarten and early progress in kindergarten as a determinant of their children's transition grade placement:

> The teacher recommended that he not start kindergarten
> but stay home an extra year. I decided to start him anyway,
> because he was of the age to go and I was afraid that my
> relatives would ask me why he wasn't in kindergarten.
> I knew he would probably have to go to T-1.

Additional parent comments suggest that the decision to place children in transition first grade came during the spring of the children's kindergarten year. A parent of a child who was placed in transition first grade reported, "...the school told me the first semester of kindergarten that he might have to go to T-1."

Another parent of a transition first grade girl referred to the developmental age obtained from the Maturational Assessment Test, "My daughter was developmentally young. She was developmentally 4.5 when she started kindergarten. The teacher talked to me about her going to T-1 after kindergarten."

Interviews with parents provided the information that children's birthdates were one of the factors considered in making the recommendation that children be placed in transition first grade. Of the seventeen children in this study who were either placed or recommended

for transition first grade, eight of the children had late spring or summer birthdays. A parent and teacher discussion on the first day of school clearly illustrates the influence of birthdate on transition placement. The parent states "My child was just six yesterday and that's why I'm glad he's in here." The teacher responded by showing the parent a nearby wall display of children's names and birthdays pointing out the numbers of children who have summer birthdays. Of the children in the transition class this school year, six of the eight children have summer birthdays.

In an interview with a parent of a transition first grader, the mother reported the following:

> I knew that he would be in T-1 before he started
> school. [Researcher asked parent to explain.]
> Because he was born in the summer. All the kids who are
> born in the summer end up in T-1. I don't think the
> teacher even works with kids who are born in the summer.
> She doesn't work with them on listening or staying
> on task. They sit out in the hallway and draw.

Other parents expressed similar perspectives that their children did not receive the attention that they needed in kindergarten. During initial visits to the school site, the researcher observed that these parents' children were in the hallway drawing. The rest of the kindergarten group was involved in some sort of worksheet activities in the classroom.

Another parent reported that she kept her child home an extra year rather than starting her to kindergarten based upon teachers' recommendations that her child's entry should be delayed because she was born in the summer. The parent was aware at that time that children with summer birthdays often went to transition first grade. She made the decision to delay her child's entrance to kindergarten to avoid the transition first placement.

In spite of the fact that they did not score "developmentally young" on the Maturational

Assessment Test or score below the mean on the Ray Reading Method Test, three of the eight children in the study who have summer birthdays have been recommended or placed in transition first grade.

As a result of the interviews with parents, the researcher asked additional questions of educators to ascertain if parents' perspectives were verifiable. The results of follow-up questions with educators indicated that Maturational Assessment Test scores and summer birthdates were factors in determining children's future placement in transition first grade. Educators quoted guidelines issued by the Gesell Institute (1980) that children born in the summer were at high risk for school failure. Additionally, educators believed that the Maturational Assessment Test did identify children who might be unready for first grade. The educators did recommend delayed kindergarten entry or potential placement in transition first grade in the spring before the kindergarten year or early in the kindergarten year.

Approximately two years ago a law suit was filed against the district because of recommendations that a child's kindergarten entry be delayed based upon scores on the Maturational Assessment Test. Although officially the practice of recommending delayed kindergarten entrance has halted, parents reported to the researcher that the practice continues as evidenced in the following parent comment, " The teacher told me that she was not supposed to tell me to hold my child out of kindergarten, but she suggested that if he were her child that was what she would do."

Document Examination and Placement Criteria

The researcher examined child participants' school records to verify the school placement criteria as reported by educators and parents. Children's scores on the Ray Reading Methods Test, Maturational Assessment Test, kindergarten report card, and State First Grade Screening Test were reviewed.

As previously mentioned the Ray Reading Methods Test has been used since 1979 to determine children's first grade placement. According to educators, children who scored below the mean on the four reading preferences were considered potential candidates for placement in transition first grade. Although the Ray Reading Methods Test could account for the transition first placement recommendations of eleven of the children in the study, the test scores failed to account for six of the seventeen children in the study who were subsequently placed or recommended for transition first grade. These children scored above the mean in at least one if not more than one reading method preference. The criterion apparently used for recommending transition first grade placement of these six children was children's birthdates. The six children whose placement could not be accounted for by Ray Reading Method scores had late spring or summer birthdays.

From 1983 through 1990, the Maturational Assessment Test has been given to children in the spring before entry into kindergarten by either the kindergarten teacher, transition first teacher, or principal. The Maturational Assessment Test claims to derive a behavioral age that is obtained from the following areas of development: motor/adaptive, language, social, and cognitive. The effect of this testing has been the identification of children who educators believed to be "developmentally young".

According to teacher reports, behavioral age scores of 4 or below indicated that children were "developmentally young" and children who scored within six months of their chronological age were considered to be functioning within normal developmental range. The researcher found that six children who received low scores according to the school's reported cut-off score of 4 developmental age on the Maturational Assessment Test were subsequently placed in transition first grade. Of these six children, five children also had below mean scores on the Ray Reading Methods test. One child scored above the mean on all the Ray Reading Method preferences; however, she was placed in transition first grade.

Examination of Maturational Assessment Test records provides the following example

of written notations found that confirm the use of the test scores before kindergarten to recommend future placement in transition first grade. "Told mom that he is very immature and she said that she knew it. I told her that he will need T-1 or she could keep him at home....."

In addition, the researcher found that first grade children entering the district were given the Maturational Assessment Test. If placement in transition first grade relied solely on Ray Reading Method Test scores, there would have been no need to administer the Maturational Assessment Test as well.

The information found in transition first graders' kindergarten report cards seems to verify the fact that some children were identified as potential transition first graders early in the kindergarten year prior to taking the Ray Reading Methods Test. On the first nine weeks report card, the following written statement typifies those that appeared:"_____ does not presently have the necessary skills (social/academic) to be ready for first grade work."

While Maturational Assessment Test scores, Ray Reading Methods Test scores, and summer birthdays seemed to account for the majority of recommendations or placements in transition first grade, other children have been placed in transition first grade without meeting any of the aforementioned criteria. During this school year, a child was moved "back" to transition first grade near the end of the first nine weeks of school. According to teacher information, the child was unable to keep up in first grade because he did not pay attention and did not complete his work.

The moving of children from a regular first grade classroom to the transition first classroom due to children's behaviors had occurred the previous school year as well. A child entering the district from another school system was placed in a regular first grade classroom. When she began crying and refusing to do her work, she was moved to the transition first grade class. This child did have a summer birthday. She was given the

Maturational Assessment Test as a first grader (typically given prior to kindergarten entrance) when she entered the school. Her scores on the Maturational Assessment Test and Ray Reading Test were within normal ranges.

Since children's behaviors were identified as another factor involved in transition first placement, the researcher examined the social and work behavior ratings section of the kindergarten report cards to ascertain if children placed in transition first grade had unsatisficatory ratings according to the teacher's evaluation. Nine of the transition first children in this study (seven boys and two girls) had unsatisficatory ratings on the behavioral categories of the kindergarten report card. Examples of the common behaviors listed as unsatisfactory for the nine children were attention span, adjusting easily to new situations, good use of time, working neatly, cleaning up, being quiet, and exhibiting self-control.

The review of participants' State First Grade Screening Test indicated that seven children identified and placed in transition first grade had low scores on the screening test. The other nine transition first graders received scores above twenty. The First Grade Screening Test was given to all first graders within the first months of the school year. Supposedly, the test identified children who may experience learning difficulties. Children receiving scores of twenty or below twenty were to be referred for further testing. Seven children placed in transition first grade received scores below twenty and were not referred for further testing during the transition first grade year. Had these children been placed in regular first grade classes, educators would have referred them for further diagnostic assessment. According to educators' reports, children placed in transition first grade were not commonly referred for testing. Educators believed that placement in the transition grade would remedy children's difficulties because these children needed extra time rather than special education services. There were two exceptions to referral for special services from transition first grade. Children were referred for speech services and Chapter 1 reading

during the transition year. Referrals for other special education services were delayed until the children entered regular first grade.

Since she was provided with a list of all children who had attended transition first grade and were still in the school system, the researcher was able to determine from observations of present classroom enrollments that some children who spent a year in transition first grade later were placed in special education classes for the educably mentally handicapped and learning disabled. The exact number of transition first grade children who were subsequently placed in special education classes was not known due to the fact that the researcher had obtained permission to examine only the school records of the study's participants. Of the participants in the study, three former transition first graders qualified for special education services.

According to advocates of transition first grades, children placed in transition first grade were average or above average in ability and had no learning difficulties (Gesell Institute, 1980). The review of school records suggested that some transition first grade children may have qualified for special education services. Services were delayed for one year or more because they were placed in transition first grade and no referrals were made for educational testing until the following year when they entered a regular first grade class because educators believed that the children's learning problems stemmed from needing an extra year to mature.

Nine transition children received scores above twenty on the First Grade Screening Test. The screening scores suggest that the nine children would not have been identified as at-risk for learning difficulties. Had the children been placed in a regular first grade class, teachers would have expected the children to be successful in the first grade curriculum.

Incidences of Placement in Transition First Grade

Since the transition first grade began in school year 1985-86, school records report 116 children had been recommended for placement in transition first and 97 children had attended transition first grade, 63 boys and 34 girls. The annual percentage of kindergarten children placed has ranged from 23% to as high as 38%. The annual percentage of children recommended for transition placement has ranged from 27% to 44%. See Table II for specific information pertaining to kindergarten enrollment, numbers of children recommended for transition first grade, and numbers of children placed in transition first grade from school year 1985-1986 through school year 1991-1992. Since the transition program began, the actual percentage of children placed is thirty-four percent.

As was evidenced in the placement figures, there were many more boys than girls placed in transition first grade. In fact nearly twice as many boys than girls have been recommended for transition first grade. Thirty-six percent of the kindergarten boys as compared to 21% of the kindergarten girls were recommended for transition first grade.

The approximate cost to the district of adding an extra year of school by operating the transition first program since its beginnings is approximately $260,900 based upon the per student expenditure of $2700 in the district.

Summary of Transition Placement Process

Three primary considerations were apparent in the school district's placement of children in transition first grade. The Maturational Assessment Test, children's summer birthdates, and the Ray Reading Methods Test formed the basis of information upon which educators drew conclusions as to which children were selected, recommended, and subsequently placed in transition first grade. Children's behavior in kindergarten and first

TABLE II

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLACEMENT OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN TRANSITION FIRST GRADE BY GENDER AND SCHOOL YEARS 1984-1985 THROUGH 1990-1991

	Enrollment						Total Kindergarten Enrollment			
School Year	Total K	Recommended for T-1	K Males	K Females	T-1 Males	T-1 Females	Recommended for T-1	Placed in T-1	Males Placed in T-1	Females Placed in T-1
1984-85	44	14	26	18	8	4	32%	27%	18%	9%
1985-86	57	18	33	24	12	3	32%	26%	21%	5%
1986-87	55	21	27	28	11	6	38%	31%	20%	11%
1987-88	47	18	23	22	10	7	40%	38%	21%	15%
1988-89	53	17	25	28	8	5	32%	25%	15%	9%
1989-90	36	16	16	20	8	5	44%	36%	22%	14%
1990-91	44	12	25	19	6	4	27%	23%	14%	9%
Totals	334	132	175	159	63	34	39%[a]	29%[b]	36%	21%

a Denotes the average percentage of kindergarten students recommended for placement in T-1 1984-1985 through 1990-1991 school years.

b Denotes the average percentage of kindergarten students enrolled in T-1 1985-1986 through 1990-1991 school years.

grade was an additional consideration.

The use of tests and children's youngness as criteria for placement decisions have been seriously questioned by educators. The Maturational Assessment Test is a school readiness test developed by a former Gesell Institute employee. It has similarities to the Gesell School Readiness Test that has been used nationwide by approximately 17.5 % school districts (Hymes, 1990) to identify children as 'unready' for first grade curriculum. Due to many of its components coming directly from the Gesell School Readiness Test, it may be questioned whether the Maturational Assessment Test like the Gesell School Readiness Test, has adequate reliability and validity. Kaufman (1985) and Walker (1973) found that the Gesell School Readiness Test did not possess adequate reliability or validity. Meisels (1987) raises questions about the concept of developmental age that the test purports to identify. He claims that developmental age has never been empirically verified. May & Welch (1984) found the Gesell test to be ineffective in identifying children who were at-risk for school failure by misidentifying as many as fifty percent.

There is no reliability or validity data provided for the Ray Reading Methods Test (Young, 1975). One doctoral study was found that was conducted by Manwarren (1972) to ascertain the predictive validity of the Ray Test. In this study, children who had scored below the thirteth percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Test were assigned to either a control group who received regular classroom instruction or an experimental group that received instruction based upon the preferred method identified by the Ray Reading Methods Test. The findings suggest that children benefitted from matching reading instruction with learning preference if the children were in either the visual-auditory or language experience preferred group. There was an inadequate sample of auditory-visual and linguistic learners identified by the test so that no conclusions could be drawn. Seventy percent of the children were identified by the test as preferring the visual-auditory method of reading instruction.

Of interest is the fact that the Ray Reading Methods Test was never intended or designed to make classroom placement decisions yet it has been used in this district since 1979 to do just that. The district established separate classrooms for different learning preferences. Further, the school has changed reading materials over the past twenty years and no on-going study has been made as to the fittedness of the materials to the purported preferences of learners. Lastly, during the past twenty years, research into children's early literacy acquistion presents another view of reading and writing that is excluded from the Ray Reading Methods Test, the whole-language approach. The attempt to isolate a particular method of teaching reading would be the antithesis of the whole language approach. As Smith (1992) writes:

> The original philosophy of whole language, even before it acquired the label, had nothing to do with methods, materials, or techniques. There was no attempt to tell teachers what they should *do* to teach children to read; rather, the aim was to tell teachers what their attitudes should be. The basis of the philosophy was *respect*- respect for language (which should be natural and "authentic," not contrived and fragmented) and respect for learners (who should be engaged in meaningful and productive activities, not in pointless drills and rote memorization (p. 440).

Raising the cut-off date for school entry has changed nationwide from December 1 or January 1 in 1968 (Educational Research Service, 1968) to October 1 or earlier (Whaley, 1985). Walsh (1989) suggests that this trend has contributed to more academically focused kindergarten programs and the creation of a "new group of youngest children, who will soon be perceived as having problems." Regardless of the date that children enter school,

there will always be an age range difference of 12 months between the youngest and oldest child in the class. Typically achievement differences will exist between the youngest and oldest children; however these differences disappear and become less as children progress through school (Langer, Kalk, & Searls, 1984; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1986; Walsh, 1989). Delayed entrance to kindergarten and transition grade placement have the effect of increasing age range differences within classrooms from 12 months to 24 months.

When the age range is increased in classrooms, there is an effect on curriculum. Teachers adjust the curriculum to children who are a year older and have had an additional year of school experience. The long term result is a further push-down of the curriculum (Bredekamp, 1990; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1989, 1990).

The long term effects of the two year age span become apparent in the upper grades when children's physical development is once again rapid and changing as they enter adolescence. The first children placed in transition class were now in sixth grade. Had they not been in transition first, the children would be attending classes at the junior high. These children did stand out from their classmates because of the differences in their physical size and changing physical characteristics. For example, some of the former transition first children were noticably taller than their classmates. Several of the former transition first grade children had facial acne. The teachers commented that the former transition first grade boys who were now in sixth grade were much more interested in girls than the other sixth grade boys.

The long term effect of delayed entrance to kindergarten or placement in transition first grade was the age range created at the high school level. Instead of the four year age span, there can be a span of six years, ages 14 to 20. Recent research conducted by Grissom & Shepard (1989) suggested that adding an extra year of school to children's school progression correlated significantly with drop-out rates in high school. The addition of an extra year to children's school careers increased the chances that they would drop out of

school. The school district in the present study has the highest drop-out rate in the county (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1992).

The incidences of referral to transition first grade illustrate the outcome of training in the Gesell Institute philosophy of child development in several ways including the percentages of recommendations for transition first grade and the underlying assumptions pertaining to children's development. First, teachers have recommended twenty to thirty-seven percent of kindergarten children be placed in transition first grade. These figures are representative of Gesell guidelines (Gesell Institute, 1980) and are believed by educators to be reasonable expectations for rates of children's unreadiness for school. It was interesting to note that prior to the establishment of the transition first grade, teachers reported that five or six children (approximately ten percent of the average kindergarten enrollment) were considered unready for first grade and were subsequently retained in first grade. After training in maturationist theory and readiness testing, twenty to thirty-seven percent of the children were considered unready. Second, the maturationist theory provides reasons that educators use to explain why children are not successful in formal academic curriculum (Gredler, 1984; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1986; Walsh, 1989). Basically translated if children's development is a matter of biological maturation unfolding predictably and invariantly over time, curriculum and teaching strategies can remain unchanged because children may eventually be ready. In essence, it removes educators' responsibilities to examine curricular and instructional matters by placing the responsibility for failure on children's development. In this school, it was easier to add a transition first grade than to address the conflict regarding the appropriateness of kindergarten and first grade curriculum. However, the conflict was still present. The transition first teacher stated that she had felt pressured to do phonics and math worksheets in order to prepare children for first grade. The pressure has now shifted to the transition program to get children ready for first grade.

Review of school documents indicated that some children may have qualified for special education services but because of their enrollment in transition first grade were not referred until a year later. Special education services for which they might have qualified were postponed for one year or more. Some children placed in transition first grade later were placed in learning disabled and educably mentally handicapped classes.

Dialogues with Children and An Interpretation

When the researcher initially conceived the idea of talking with children about their early schooling experiences, it was hoped that most of the interviews would be informal conversations held in the children's classrooms, on the playground, or over lunch. The day that a teacher put a child's name on the board for talking with the researcher was the point that the researcher realized that conversations could not occur in most classrooms in this school. Also, the researcher came to realize interviewing children on the playground was interfering with an important aspect of their school day. For most children interviewed, recesses provided the only opportunities for physical activity, play, and "just talking with friends" (as one fifth grader put it). As the researcher observed and children reported "...if you talk to your friends in the classroom, you get in trouble."

The information gained from interviews with children is organized to correlate with the questions asked of the participants. The researcher's interpretations of children's messages present possibilities for consideration and extend the invitation to others to engage in reflective decisionmaking regarding children's early school experiences. The researcher's theoretical background and observations are reflected in the interpretations.

Children's Favorite Aspects of School

The researcher began all interviews with children with a general question, "What do you like best about school?" The most common initial responses to the question were recess and playing, constructing with Legos, and art. Twenty children interviewed did not refer to academic subjects at all in response to the question. The following comments were selected as representative of the majority of the children's typical responses:

> I like to play with legoes. I don't get to play with legoes very much this year. We get to play with things like unifex cubes and tiles in the afternoons. I like to draw, too, but I don't get to draw much. I like to choose what I draw but you usually don't get to choose in first grade (first grade boy who was in T-1 last year).

> I like drawing best. You don't get to do much drawing in first grade except if you get your work all done (first grade girl who was in T-1 last year).

> I like being with my friends, you know, and talking. I get in trouble if I talk in the classroom. I like to draw, too,. but I only get to draw after I finish all my work. Sometimes I don't get all my work finished so I don't get to draw (fourth grade boy who was in transition first grade).

> I like playing with my friends outside. We play on the dome. Sometimes we play tetherball. [She names 6 friends]. You

know there are not enough recesses. There is only one in the morning and one after lunch. If I was "boss" I'd have more recesses (third grade girl).

Seven children mentioned school subjects as what they liked best. Although they initially responded with their favorite school subjects, the children also spoke of the importance of recess and socializing with friends. The children remarked:

I like reading best. I like books about turtles. I like to learn school stuff...school stuff helps you learn how to read. I like recess, too. Then I get to be with my buddies (first grade boy, formerly in transition first grade).

I like work. [What kind of work?] Oh, you know, reading, English, spelling, and math. I like playing with my friends alot. But I don't have many friends right now. [Why don't you have many friends?] They call me names like "trash" and "trash can". Then I have to fight and I get in alot of trouble (third grade boy who was in transition first).

I really like multiplication. It's easy. I do it when I have extra time. I like it because you get to play "around the world" with math. _____ always wins but I like to play. I don't like multiplication the way my mom does it. She makes it hard and she makes us do it right then. I know something else I like about school.

I like cursive. I like it because my teacher makes it
easy. She gives us clues and shows us how to do it.
Oh, something else. I like recess. I get to play with
my best friend who is in Mrs. _____ room. We have
a good time on the bus. We sing and play games (third grade
girl, former transition first grader).

I like math, spelling, science, social studies, band, music,
and English. I don't have to do many problems in math. I get
good grades. You need to get work done and learn stuff at
school. You need to be able to so you can get a job.
You have to get good grades to get in college.
I want to be a kindergarten teacher. Recess is fun. You
need it so you won't get real rowdy in the classroom.
Then I get to play with my friends (fourth grade boy).

Although five of the seven hours that they spend in school are devoted to academics such as reading and math, twenty of the twenty-seven children interviewed indicated that academics were not as important to them as play, friendship, and creative expression. The types of responses children in this study gave about school experiences are not new information. Early in the century, Dewey (1902, p. 47) examined children's school interests and he suggested that children had four interests, "...the interest in conversation, or communication; in inquiry, or finding out things; making things or constructions; and in artistic expression--we may say they are the natural resources, the uninvested capital, upon the exercise of which depends the active growth of the child....". He criticized traditional school methods for not providing the kinds of experiences that appealed to children's natural inclinations toward learning. Dewey (1915) stated that work in school unlike work

in the real world lacked the "human side of things" (p. 165). Traditional presentation of subject matter lacked the social aspect that was necessary for optimum intellectual growth (Dewey, 1915; Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1973). The fragmentation of curriculum into discrete subject areas made it difficult for children to make meaningful connections necessary for intellectual growth and development (Dewey, 1938).

A substantial body of research information has indicated that conditions in American schools have not changed much since Dewey's time. As Goodlad (1984) found in studying schooling in 13 communities in seven regions of the United States, teachers dominated 70% of the communication in classrooms. Further, children were lectured to and worked alone on written assignments the majority of their time in school. Examples from the researcher's field notes illustrate these points.

The teacher is conducting a whole group lesson in phonics. Children are seated at their desks with their phonics books open to the assigned page. The teacher snaps her fingers and says, "Let's go! "____, I want you still." "Put your scissors away."

Children are hurriedly putting things in their desks as the teacher requested. Teacher says,"We're getting too noisy." "Quiet down."

Teacher instructs children to say initial consonant sound "b". "Say it children." Children say in unison, "bah, bah, bah.". Then children are instructed to underline the b in their workbooks which they all do simultaneously.

As the lesson continues, the teacher asks children to tell her about the next picture in the workbook. Two children begin talking together about the picture. The teacher tells the two

children, "I want the discussion stopped!"

In another classroom, the teacher discouraged children's finding out information by themselves. From the researcher's field notes is the following example:

The teacher had asked the children to spell a particular word. On a large chart next to the area where the children were seated, the word was written in bold print. Several of the children spotted the word on the large chart and began to spell it out loud to the teacher. The teacher told the children that if they had looked at the chart "that was cheating". Rather than see this as children using resources to be able to spell or acknowledging that they had read the word, the children were admonished.

During the nine months she visited the school, the researcher observed few displays of children's self-initiated, creative art work. The art displayed in the classrooms and hallways was predominantly teacher made coloring sheets or cut-outs of teacher made patterns. Easels were present in the first grade classrooms but were used for holding teachers' reading charts. Painting was observed in the kindergarten and transition first grade classrooms but not in the first grade classrooms. No artwork that involved clay or playdoh was witnessed in the first grade classrooms.

Since they had limited access to art materials and little freedom to artistically express themselves, children appreciated the availability of art materials during the interviews. Access to art materials during the interviews may have prompted children's frequent selection of art as a favorite aspect of school even though they seldom had opportunities for creative art in their classrooms.

Children's Dislikes of School

When they talked about what they disliked about school, the children expressed common dislikes of reading, math, discipline, or tests. Children described reading and math as "boring". As two first grade boys commented:

> Reading is boring because we all read the same story out loud. We have to wait a long time for a turn. Then we have to read the story by ourselves, too. [Do you like the stories you read?] They are blah. [Tell me about some of the stories you remember. The children looked at each other for a time and then responded.] Oh, yeah, there was a story about running. [What would make reading better?] We could read by ourselves. Make our own books (Two first grade boys who had been in transition first).

The boys were describing the daily teacher-directed oral reading groups. During the reading groups, children took turns reading a page of basal text outloud. If the stories were too short for each child to have a turn, the teacher had the children reread the story. When they finished reading the story in groups, children went to their desks and read the story silently by themselves and completed workbook pages that accompanied the reading series.

Oral reading groups and workbook assignments were mentioned by older children as well. As a fourth grade boy stated, "I don't like reading because you have to do workbook pages and do the reading. I'm not a good reader. I'm slower than the other kids when we have to read out loud."

Sixteen children interviewed named reading as a school dislike. Children's reasons for disliking reading suggested that reading was presented in ways that children found

disagreeable. It wasn't the subject matter per se to which children objected, but rather the instructional methodology. A two hour observation in one of the first grade classrooms serves to illustrate the children's point of view. The example presented illustrates the focus of reading instruction on the acquistion of discrete skills as well as the exclusive use of worksheets and teacher directed whole group instruction.

The first graders in this classroom were completing a workbook page on letter/sound correspondence as a whole group. This was the third workbook page the children had completed. One of the children said the answer out loud. The teacher said to the child, "_____, how many times have I told you to raise your hand or wait until I call on you."

The child slumps down in her seat. The teacher goes on with the next items. She notices the child has slumped down in her seat. She goes to the child and physically straightens her up in her seat. She goes to a child who was new to the class and says, "Don't do this anymore." The girl had not marked the answer correctly. She then goes to a former transition first grade girl and points out where she was wrong while the rest of the class looked on. A few minutes later a child told the teacher, "_____ didn't get it right." (This was the third occasion that the little boy's answers had been publicly acknowledged by the teacher or other children as wrong.)

After completion of five workbook pages, the teacher instructed the children to get out their writing tablets. She told the new child that she had already missed so much

that she was going to have the class catch her up. The teacher and children then began a lengthy explanation of how and where to place letters on lined paper. After the explanation, the teacher assigned the children to make rows of seven on their papers. She reminded a girl to sit up straight and a boy to put his feet on the floor.

The new child told the teacher that she couldn't do it. Teacher said to her, *"Don't go over it. Erase it, slant it like this. Erase this. Hold your pencil like I told you to. Don't twist it like that."*

In addition to dislikes of reading, ten children talked about how much they disliked math. A first grade boy who had been in the transition class the previous school year told the researcher about his experiences in attempting to learn math.

I don't like math. [Tell me about the math you do].
We have to do two sheets a day. I get alot wrong then my mom makes me do them over. Sometimes my teacher makes me do them over. She puts grades in the grade book. [What grade did you get?]
Bad. Missed 25. There were only 26.

Later in the interview the first grader told the researcher the reason he believed he had been placed in transition first grade. According to the child, he went to transition first grade because he didn't know his math well enough to be in first grade. Although he believed he had spent a year in transition first grade to make up math deficiencies, the child continued to believe he had deficiencies in math. The child's perceived math deficiencies may have come from inappropriate curricular expectations. For example, according to the kindergarten report card and teachers' reports, at the end of the kindergarten year children

were expected to be able to recognize and write numerals to 20. This expectation exceeded the state learning objectives for kindergarten children that states children should be able to recognize numerals and write numerals to 10 (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1990). In addition, classroom observations indicated that children received instruction in mathematical concepts that were beyond their capabilities. The following example from the researcher's fieldnotes illustrates instruction in place value and telling time in transition first grade.

The children had just finished the opening exercises that consisted of calendar activities and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The children were instructed to get a clipboard and paper from a nearby shelf. The teacher told the children that she was going to dictate numbers to them and the children were to write the numbers on their papers. Besides writing the numbers, children were instructed to make tally marks in sets of five to represent the quantity that the numerical symbol indicated. The teacher dictated the numbers 7, 12, 20, 15, and 17. The children proceeded to write the numerals dictated by the teacher. Two children were successful whereas six were unable to complete the activity without assistance.

The next activity dealt with place value. Straws were bundled in sets of 10 and 100. The teacher showed the children bundles and expected the children to write the number represented by the bundles on their paper. For example, the teacher put out four bundles of ten, the children were to write forty. As the activity progressed, the children became restless and tired and started throwing their pencils out in the middle of the floor.

Some children were counting out loud. Other children complained that they were being disturbed by the children who were talking out loud. After this activity, the children had instruction on time. The teacher had individual children come up and turn the hands of the clock to correspond to school events such as recess and lunchtime. One child reacted to the activity by covering his face with his hands and saying, "I don't know." Next, the children completed a worksheet on time. The children were expected to draw hands on the clock to match the written time listed for each problem. Two children were able to complete this sheet. The other children were unable to complete the sheet.

Recent research into children's development of mathematical concepts indicates that children mentally construct ideas about number as they come to understand relationships between and among objects (Kamii, 1985). After extensive studies of preschool and first grade children's understandings of number, M. Kamii (1980) and C. Kamii (1985) concluded that place value was too difficult for first graders because it required cognitive understandings beyond first graders' abilities. Kamii (1985, p. 63) cautioned that "...premature instruction be it in place value or other aspects of the curriculum, is injurious to children's making sense of a discipline." Further, instruction in telling time made little or no sense to most first grade children. According to Kamii (1985), formally instructing first grade children in telling time is inappropriate. Children will learn to tell clock time when they have an interest (Kamii, 1985).

Fourteen children reported dislikes of school discipline. Children's comments suggested they perceived an unfairness in the rules and the consequences. Also, classroom rules had the effect of imposing restrictions on children's peer communication and peer relationships. The concerns about school discipline were voiced by children from first

through fifth grade. The children stated the following:

> I don't like not being able to talk to my friend when its really important. If I don't tell her now, I'll forget. If you talk, you get in trouble. [What kind of trouble?] In our class, you get ten smiley faces for the week. Each time you don't obey the rules, you cross out one smiley face. [How do you lose a smiley face?] Usually for hitting or talking. At the end of the week you get prizes. Or you can save them for big prizes (fifth grade girl).

> I don't like to stand on the wall at recess. [Stand on the wall?] I get in trouble for talking and then I have to stand against the wall. Sometimes I get in trouble again after I stand against the wall. Some kids get more checks than I do. [Tell me about the checks.] If you talk, you get your name on the board. If you break another rule, you get a check. When you get a check, you have to stand against the wall for some of recess. If you get another check, you have to sit out the whole recess. Three checks they call your mom or dad. Four checks, you might get kicked out of school and might get kicked off the bus (first grade girl, former transition first grader).

I don't like getting my name on the board. [How do you get your name on the board?] Talking out loud, hitting people, pinching people, getting mad and hitting, losing your place, mouthing off to the teachers or somebody else. [Did you ever have your name on the board?] Once. My crayon box fell out of my desk. _____ (a child in the room) said I pushed it off. The teacher believed her. I was real mad at her for lying.

[Do many kids get their names on the board] Yes, alot of kids, not many get checks except for _____ and _____[names two boys](first grade girl).

While order is necessary for learning to take place, the type of order imposed upon children can influence children's learning. Authoritarian types of classroom management which rely on the use of punishments and rewards create conditions that not only impede the ways that children can learn but also, the quality of children's learning (Kamii, 1985).The extensive use of punishments diminishes autonomy and reinforces heretonomy. As Kamii (1985, p. 46) suggests, "Children who are discouraged from thinking autonomously will construct less knowledge than those who are mentally active and confident."

The guidance of children in this school is based upon the district's adoption of the assertive discipline plan approximately seven years ago. The teachers attended a day long workshop to receive training in how to implement the plan. Teachers who have joined the faculty since the time of the training have not received formal training in the procedures.

Assertive discipline is a commercially marketed behavior management system based upon the principles of reward and punishment from behavioral psychology. The

assumption underlying the plan is that children can be taught to comply with classroom rules through the use of external rewards for desired behaviors and consequences for undesirable behavior. Supposedly, classroom teachers decide on appropriate classroom rules and consequences. Also, each teacher devises a class and individual reward system. As the children described, the punishments escalate with each additional infraction. In the two first grade classrooms the rules are posted; however, some of the infractions that children listed were not among the posted rules. Classroom observations indicated that children's names were put on the board for infractions that were not on the classroom rules list. Further, some children's names were frequently posted. During two visits to the site, the researcher noted that entire classrooms were being punished.

Criticisms have been lodged against this particular discipline program (Gartrell, 1989). Critics argue that assertive discipline works in opposition to the development of children's self-responsibility. To learn self-responsibility children have to participate in rule making. Further, the use of rewards diminishes intrinsic motivation. Children are embarrassed in front of their peers by having their names publicly displayed. The underlying reasons for misbehavior are never examined.

According to the standards for developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades, Bredekamp (1987) suggested the following practices:

> Teachers promote the development of children's consciences and self-control through positive guidance techniques including: setting clear limits in a positive manner; involving children in establishing rules for social living and in problem solving of misbehavior; redirecting children to an acceptable activity; and meeting with an individual child who is having problems

> or with children and their parents. Teachers maintain their perspective about misbehavior recognizing that every infraction does not warrant attention and identifying those that can be used as learning opportunities (p. 73).

In contrast Bredekamp (1987) defines the following practices as inappropriate. She states:

> Teachers place themselves in an adversarial role with children, emphasizing their power to reward acceptable behavior. Their primary goal is maintaining control of the classroom. Teachers spend considerable time enforcing rules, giving external rewards for good behavior, and punishing infractions (p. 73).

Approximately half of the children reported that they disliked tests. The types of tests that children mentioned were spelling and math tests, screening tests, and achievement tests. Children's dislikes of tests focused on several concerns. One concern that children reported was that they had not known the right answers. Another concern expressed was that peers and teachers made comparisons of ability on the basis of test scores.

A former transition first grader, who was interviewed shortly after taking the State First Grade Screening test, made the following comments.

> I don't like tests. Tests see who can do the goodest.
>
> I just had to take a test. I couldn't do it. I had to draw shapes, write alot of numbers, and my abc's.

Later in the interview, the child told the researcher that the reason he had been in transition first grade was because he had failed the kindergarten test (This reference was to

the Ray Reading Methods Test given at the end of the kindergarten year).

All children who listed tests as dislikes of school indicated that tests made them feel like failures. A fifth grader commented, "I don't like 'times' tests. I can't remember fast enough. I feel stupid when I don't do very good." A second grader remarked, "I know something I don't like about school. Spelling tests. It's hard to try and remember to spell all those words. We have 19 or 20 words. Sometimes I don't think I can spell very good. Other kids do better than I do."

Educators have expressed concern about the increased use of testing in the early years of school (Kamii, 1990; Meisels, 1987, 1989; Perrone, 1990, 1991; Shepard & Smith, 1986, 1988). As Perrone (1991) suggested, the use of tests might cause the loss of children's self-esteem and create unnecessary anxiety. Further, tests may not reflect children's developing constructions of spelling, math, and reading (Kamii, 1990). Meisels (1987, 1989) and Shepard & Smith (1988) caution against the use of tests in the early years of school to evaluate young children for several reasons. First, pencil-paper tests cannot adequately measure many areas of children's knowledge. Second, children may become confused in testing situations. Confusion may produce erroneous results that are not reflective of children's knowledge.

Children's messages about school dislikes indicated that academic subject matter was presented in ways that did not fit with children's natural inclinations toward learning. Children's expressed likes and dislikes about school in this study mirror concerns of adult educators as well. Many of children's dislikes are categorized as inappropriate practices in the guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987).

The researcher's observations in classrooms suggest that children's perspectives were verifiable. Children spent much of their class time in individual seat work or group recitation. Children's interactions with each other were limited by classroom rules. Subject

matter was divided into discrete units. Reading and mathematics were almost exclusively the curricular focus. Social studies and science were noticably absent. When social studies or science instruction occurred, the material was presented by teacher lecture or teacher experimentation. Children's participation was limited to completion of worksheets. The majority of art that was present in the classrooms consisted of assigned projects that involved coloring sheets or cutting and pasting teacher made patterns. A last example from the researcher's field notes illustrates the points made.

The observation took place in a first grade class. The teacher had finished reading a book to the children. She told the children that they were going to write a poem and make a book themselves. The children cheered in unison. The teacher passed out a ditto sheet that the children were required to color. The children were expected to copy a poem from a large chart tablet. The children had a difficult time copying the poem because they kept losing their places when looking back and forth from the chart tablet to their paper. When they voiced problems with copying, the teacher asked them if they couldn't see. One of the children asked the researcher to come and help him. The teacher put the child's name on the board for talking to the researcher. During the observation, the teacher told some children that they were not spending enough time coloring. Additional teacher comments were "get busy", "be quiet", and "get to work". The researcher heard no positive comments made to children during the forty-five minute observation. Near the end of the observation, several children commented that they thought they were going to get to

make a book by themselves but all they had done was copy a poem and color a page.

The preceding example illustrated language and writing instruction based upon the use of worksheets which all children were expected to complete according to teacher directions. In addition, the requirements that children remain silent while completing their assignments and the use of punishments to admonish children who did not remain silent were evidenced in the observation.

In comparison to the standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987), the observations in the two first grade classrooms and transition first grade classroom suggested that standards for appropriate practices were not met in one or more areas including curricular goals, instructional strategies, or guidance techniques. For example, Bredekamp (1987) suggested the following examples of inappropriate practices: "Instructional strategies revolve around teacher-directed reading groups that take up most of the morning, lecturing to the whole group, total class discussion, and paper-and-pencil practice exercises or worksheets to be completed silently by children individually at desks" (p. 68).

Throughout most of the school day curricular offerings focused on reading and mathematics. Bredekamp (1987) indicated that primary focus of curriculum on reading and math with the exclusion of social studies, science, and health in the early grades was inappropriate to children's overall development. Further, reading instruction that was limited to a workbook skilled approach was considered inappropriate practice in the primary grades. She gave the following examples of inappropriate practice: "...Reading is taught as the acquistion of skills and subskills. Teachers teach reading only as a discrete subject.....Language, writing, and spelling instruction are focused on workbooks. Writing

is taught as grammar and penmanship" (p. 70).

Children's dislikes of school are concerns of some educators as well (Bredekamp, 1987). Children's dislikes of school mirror many of the inappropriate curricular and instructional practices according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Children's Comparisons of First Grades

The researcher made an introductory statement that there were three first grades in the school before asking the question, "Do all first graders do the same work?" All of the children interviewed corrected the researcher and told her that there were two first grades in the school. When asked about the elimination of transition first grade from the category of first grade, the children gave various explanations of how transition first grade fit into the school structure according to their perceptions. The following are typical examples of children's descriptions.

> T-1 is between kindergarten and first grade. They try and help you through the year so you'll know what to do in first grade (third grade boy, former transition first grader).

> T-1 is not like my first grade.It's half of it. [Half of it?] They only learn half of the first grade stuff. They just cut things out and talk about first grade things (first grade girl who had never been in transition first grade).

> T-1 is part of kindergarten. (first grade boy)

T-1 and first grade are different. First grade is harder than T-1, you play more in T-1 (third grade girl, former transition first grader).

T-1 is training to go to first grade (fifth grade girl).

Children's reports that transition first grade was not first grade was in direct contrast to what teachers told children. Teachers told children that transition first grade was first grade. Children seemed to have rejected that idea and instead believed that there were distinct differences between transition first grade and the two first grade classes. The following conversations summarize the thoughts children have about the differences.

The other first graders did much harder work than T-1 kids. [What kinds of harder work did first graders do?] Reading and math. We didn't do reading in T-1 (third grade boy, former transition first grader).

She brings home tissue paper bags and we do homework like 2+2=4 (First grade girl).

T-1 doesn't do as much stuff as first grade. The other first grade class is hardest. My class does dogs, the other class doesn't (first grader, formerly transition first grader).

T-1 is easier than first grade. _____ room is the hardest. It's harder than mine. They do math worksheets and we don't (first grade boy, formerly transition first).

I thought T-1 was too easy. I went to first grade
and they were doing times. We were only doing
addition and subtraction in T-1 (first grade boy, former
transition first grader).

All children spoke of differences between the first grade classes. Many of the children described a hierarchy of work difficulty proceeding from T-1 as easiest to one first grade class that was hardest of all. The distinctions made by children in conceiving of classrooms from easiest to hardest seemed to have to do with two factors. One factor was the teacher. The hardest classroom had the strictest teacher. Strictest, in the sense, that children thought there were more rules and children had to sit in their seats and couldn't move around. The second factor was hard work. Hard work meant homework and having to redo work if mistakes were made.

The conclusion drawn from children's perspectives was that transition first was thought to be easier than first grade. This conclusion held for both children who had been in transition first grade and children who had not been in transition first grade. Children believed that children in transition first grade played more than children in first grade classes. Children seemed to make a distinction between first grade work, on the one hand, and play on the other.

The distinctions children made between work and play were addressed in the literature by other researchers who examined children's ideas about play and work in schools. King (1979) found that kindergarten children classify play activities as those activities that children engaged in voluntarily. Children regularly classified blocks and other constructive materials that teachers seldom used as play materials. Children categorized work activities as those activities that were required or preferred by the teacher. From children's views work activities were more important to teachers than play activities. As King (1979) concludes:

The children believe that play does not have

> an important educational function in the classroom.
> Play is not seen as directly related to the curriculum,
> and children place education in the category of work.
> This is not to say that children believe schoolwork
> is always drudgery. As adults we err when we assume that
> children equate work with tedium. The children's
> perspective does not indicate that they automatically
> assume work experiences to be tiresome. (p. 86)

The children in this study seemed to view activities in the transition first grade as more play oriented rather than work oriented. The researcher's observations confirmed that play oriented materials such as constructive toys (blocks and Legos) were used more frequently by children in transition first grade than in the other first grades. Children listed these activities as benefits of transition first grade. Children in transition first grade spent less time in teacher directed workbook activities than the other two first grade classes. Transition first graders did engage in voluntary activities regularly in their classroom. For children in the other two first grades, play occurred on the playground at recess or after their work was done in the classroom.

In children's judgements, the transition first grade was conceived as being easier than the first grade classrooms. Since they regard transition first grade as different and easier than regular first grade, transition first grade children may internalize that they are unable to do the kind of work that is typically required of first graders. In a very real sense from children's standpoints, transition first grade may represent failure to be able to do what others of the same age can do. A sense of failure in early schooling experiences can erode children's beliefs in themselves as capable learners which may effect later achievement.

Children's Explanations of Why Children Were in Transition First Grade

The reasons all children gave for transition first grade placement can be classified as perceived deficiencies in academic or skill acquistion, personal characteristics, or behavior. Regardless of age, gender, or whether they had been or had not been in transition first grade, children's ideas were similarly expressed.

Academic and skill deficiencies were most frequently cited as reasons children went to transition first grade. Twenty children interviewed listed academic or skill deficiences as the reason for transition first placement. Examples of academic deficits included by children were:

> I didn't pass the kindergarten reading test (first grade boy, formerly a transition first grader).

> I didn't know my letters. I didn't know the letter 'r'. I hope they don't put other kids in there for the same stupid reasons (fourth grade boy, formerly in T-1).

> I didn't do very good in coloring in kindergarten (third grade boy, former transition first grader).

> I had to learn how to do math better (first grader, formerly in transition first grade).

> They don't know their colors or letters (first grade girl).

> They don't know enough to go to first grade. They have

to learn how to do math and draw better (second grade boy).

They didn't pass kindergarten with flying colors
(fifth grade girl).

Three former transition first graders listed personal characteristics as reasons that they went to transition first grade. Several examples illustrate the characteristics they attributed to themselves.

I was younger than other kids (third grade girl).

I was not smart enough or old enough to go to
first grade (third grade boy).

I wasn't big enough or smart enough (fourth grade boy).

In these statements children attribute transition placement to age and size as well as smartness. When asked by the researcher to explain further, these children stated that their parents had told them they were too young or too small to go to first grade. Smartness related to not knowing certain items expected of them such as letters, colors, and numbers.

Four children added behavior as a reason for transition first grade placement. Children said:

They can't sit down a long time. You have to be able to sit down
in first grade. In T-1 kids don't have to sit down alot (fourth grade boy).

He had to go back to T-1 because he got in trouble alot
(first grade girl in reference to a boy who was moved
from her first grade classroom to T-1).

He got his name on the board alot. He had to go back to T-1 (first grade boy in reference to a boy who was moved to T-1 from his first grade class).

The comments made about children being "put back" in transition first grade indicated that if children can't make it in first grade, transition first grade was the place children had to go. Children interpreted the boy's assignment to transition first grade as a failure.

The reasons given for children's placement in transition first grade clearly showed that all children held beliefs that transition first graders had some sort of deficits. This perception was commonly held by children who had been in transition first grade as well as those who had not been in transition first grade. Therefore, it can be said that children perceived that at the time they were placed in transition first grade they had some sort of deficiency. Interview information provided evidence that children's peers perceived transition first graders to be deficient in some area and that transition first graders were aware of peers' negative perceptions as well.

Since transition first grade children perceive themselves as deficient and peers perceive them as deficient, there are implications that children's levels of self-competency may be eroded. As Stipek & Tannett (1984) suggested children may perceive negative feedback about their work as also negative feedback about their ability. Negative feedback about their efforts coupled with comparisons of peers' efforts and feedback may diminish children's self-perceptions of competency. Children's beliefs in themselves as competent learners contributes to the degree in which children may approach future learning situations. If they believe themselves to be less competent, children may not attempt learning activities that they perceive they are incompetent to perform. Subsequently, children's negative self-perceptions of competency may affect achievement.

Two children who had previously been in transition first grade and were now in third and fourth grade made comments that suggested they did not see themselves as capable

students.

> I'm not a very good student. I get bad grades (fourth grade boy).

> I make bad grades in math. When I was in second grade all the other kids made As and Bs, but I didn't. I don't think that I'm as smart as other kids. My friend went to the other first grade class and she ended up being smarter than I am (third grade girl). [When the researcher arranged the time for the interview, the child's teacher told her to take her anytime, she was always behind in her work.]

These children's comments stand in contrast to advocates of transition programs who claim that the extra year of schooling prevents future learning failures and improves children's academic achievements (Ames, 1978; Friesen, 1984; Scott & Ames, 1969). For the six former transition first graders who were in second, third, or fourth grade, the extra year of schooling had not given them an advantage over their peers or assured academic performance equal to peers who were a year younger than themselves. As a fourth grader stated it, "Kids think you're dumb [reference is to being in T-1]. You have to constantly prove yourself to them every year."

Children's Reports of the Effects of Placement in Transition First Grade

Thirteen of the sixteen children who have been in transition first grade reported that they have been teased by other children as a result of transition first grade placement. One second grade girl did not acknowledge directly that she had been teased, but she readily admitted that a girl friend who had been in the transition first grade class with her had been

teased. Two children reported no peer teasing due to placement in transition first grade. The following comments made by children typify the types of peer teasing that they experienced:

Some kids made fun of me. [What did they say?]

Changes his voice and chants, "You won't be in second grade."

[Gosh, what did you think about that?] I was mad.

I just ran away and I didn't say anything.

[Who were these kids? Where did it happen?]

On the playground. Kids from my kindergarten

and some older kids, too (first grade boy)

This conversation took place between the researcher and a first grade girl who was in transition first grade last year. The researcher had just asked the child what she thought other kids thought about T-1.

Other kids think it isn't good. I mean, they thought

we weren't smart. [How did you know they didn't think

you're smart?] Last year when I was in T-1,

some kids told me that I was mean, stupid, and retarded.

[Where were you when the kids said these things?]

Oh, on the playground at recess.

The child went on to tell the researcher that one of the girls who had made fun of her was her "very best friend in kindergarten".

There is some indication from the third and fourth grade children who were interviewed that there have been on-going occurrences of peer teasing throughout the grades. In other words, children continued to make remarks to them about the fact that they should be in the next grade or that they were a year older. Children reported:

Some kids tell me that I should be in fifth grade.

Some kids say I flunked because I'm in fourth grade.
They tell me I'm dumb (fourth grade boy).

Some kids in my classroom keep telling me I should be in fourth grade. They say I flunked. They say if I hadn't gone to T-1 I'd be in the right grade (third grade boy).

The eleven children in the study who had not been in transition first grade were keenly aware of which children in their classrooms had been in transition first grade. Throughout the interviews, the eleven children named all the children who they knew who had been in transition first grade. The fact that children did readily name all transition first graders in their classroom suggested that there was a label attached by the children to transition first graders that was sustained from grade level to grade level. In other words, once a transition first grader always a transition first grader.

Former transition first graders who were presently in third and fourth grade were perceived by their regularly promoted peers as smart. However, the regularly promoted children contributed the smartness to the fact that transition first graders were a year older and had been in school a year longer. For example, a fifth grade girl explained that "_____ is real smart. She has alot of good ideas, but she's a year older than I am." A fourth grade boy told the researcher, "_____ is good at math. He's been in school one more year than I have so he should be good at math. He's supposed to be in fifth grade."

The researcher did not observe any teasing of transition first grade children. In follow-up interviews, the researcher asked children if adults ever knew that other children were teasing them. Children's responses indicated that teasing happened when teachers were not around. One boy told the researcher that he wouldn't report it to the teachers because then

he'd be tattling.

A second effect of transition placement reported by thirteen of children was the loss of friendships. Children attributed the loss of friendships to the fact that their friends had gone on to first grade and they had been placed in transition first grade. Children expressed their loss of friendships in the following ways:

Being in T-1 wasn't fair. I didn't have any buddies.
My buddies were in Mrs._____ room [first grade room]
Not any one wanted to talk to me (first grade boy).

My best friend in kindergarten called me names and
didn't play with me anymore (first grade girl).

The kids from my kindergarten class acted like I was
stupid and wouldn't play with me when I went to T-1
(fourth grade boy).

I had to fight all the time when I was in T-1.
Kids were cussing at me, calling me names, making me
move to another seat on the bus. I didn't have
any friends except the ones in T-1 (fourth grade boy).

I kinda wanted to go to T-1 because it was fun. But I
didn't want to go because all my friends were going to
first grade and I wouldn't get to see them very much
(second grade girl).

The researcher observed that children in transition first grade tended to play together. This was not an unusual finding since most children play with children in their assigned

classrooms; however, transition children who were now in other classrooms sought each other out on the playground. When asked to name their favorite friends, transition first graders named other transition first graders regardless of whether they were now in the same classroom.

The third effect voiced by children was emotional upset. Thirteen children interviewed had not wanted to be in transition first grade. These comments were selected to represent children's expressions of their feelings about transition first grade placement:

I can still remember crying the first day (fourth grade boy).

I told my mom I didn't want to be in there. I was pretty upset (first grade boy).

I was really upset. My sister said I was dumb (first grade girl).

Other kids told me that T-l wouldn't be fun. Some kids told me I was ignorant. I was real sad. Right before school started my mom was joking me and told me they were keeping me in T-1. I got real upset when she told me that (first grade girl).

I didn't want to go to T-1. I was mad I was held back a year (fourth grade boy).

The children's remembrances of their feelings about transition first grade contradicted transition program advocates' assertions that children suffered only short term emotional upset. The children in this study keenly remembered their feelings even after the passage of several years as evidenced in the fourth grade boys' statements.

the parents of children who are now in second, third, and fourth grade reported that their children continue to talk about the fact that they should be in the next higher grade. Parents indicated that the children generally brought this up at about the time that school started. Further, two parents reported that their children felt stigmatized because of having been in transition first grade. They didn't want their children labeled as slow learners. In a small, stable community such as the one in which this study took place, there is a familiarity among people. They know their neighbors and have concerns about what they think about them and their children.

Children's Discussion of Positive Factors
about Transition First Grade

Transition first graders were united in their beliefs that there were positive features about transition first grade. The positive factors children cited included the teacher, materials and activities, and peer interactions. The following are representative of children's typical responses:

> I sorta liked T-1. I liked the teacher and I liked
> the way we switched around the tables and had partners
> to work with (fourth grade boy).

> I liked playing with others. There were more toys
> in T-1, that was good (fourth grade boy).

> T-1 has fun things to do. I get to play with Legos
> (transition first grade boy).

> I liked the teacher. She's a nice teacher and she

doesn't put kids names on the board like in my first grade (first grade girl).

We played games. I don't know if we did any work (third grade boy).

The positive aspects of transition first grade reported by children who had been in transition first grade were uniformly expressed in contrast to their later experiences in other classrooms. Children spoke fondly of the transition first grade teacher often stating that she was the nicest teacher that they had ever had in school. When asked what nicest meant to them, children spoke of being able to talk with each other without getting their name put on the board. They often mentioned that they didn't have assigned desks, didn't have to do homework or many worksheets, and that they had opportunities to play. Further, the learning activities cited by children as fun were those that involved such areas as cooking, construction, or active exploration.

All of the positive aspects of transition first grade appreciated by children fit within the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987) and should be aspects of primary classrooms.

The researcher's observations in the transition first grade classroom indicated that although many of the curricular activities and instructional strategies did not appear to meet appropriate practices guidelines, there were some activities and teacher approaches that did meet appropriate practice guidelines. The primary areas in which the transition first grade most often reflected developmentally appropriate practices were in positive teacher/child relationships and guidance of social-emotional development. The transition teacher reported that she did not use assertive discipline in her classroom. She stated that she preferred to

handle misbehavior by talking with children personally, by redirecting them, or by having children try to work out their own problems. Classroom observations verified the teacher' reports. In addition, the teacher expected that children would talk with one another. She allowed children to converse during activities. The following observation from the researcher's field notes provides a typical example.

The teacher explains to the children that they are going to make pictures of themselves. The activity involves tracing the outline of their body and then adding physical characteristics such as hair, facial expressions, clothing, and etc. The teacher asks the children to choose a partner to work with during the activity. The children are told that they will take turns tracing each other's body. The children are each given a large piece of butcher paper. Each pair of children begins talking about who will be traced first. Children continue to converse as they are tracing each other. One boy says to another, "_____, don't move. I'll mess up. Another child asks his partner, "Are you going to draw your belt on your picture?" When the first tracing was completed, a boy laughed and said to his partner, "Look how funny my hair looks."

Another pair of children began arguing over the fact that the child who was being traced moved causing the child who was tracing to "mess up". "See what you did! I messed up now." The child who was being traced said, "Start over." The other child responded, "I'm not going to. It takes too long. You won't have time to trace my picture." The teacher went over to the two children who were arguing and said, "I bet this can be fixed.

Let's talk about what you can do to fix it." One child said, "I don't know how to fix it." The teacher responded, "Have you thought about erasing it? The child said, "That's what we can do." The other child said, "I won't move again. I'll lay still. See it's okay."

Children's Choices of First Grade Classrooms after Kindergarten

The researcher asked children to pretend that they were back in kindergarten and were allowed to choose their first grade classroom for the next school year from either of the two first grade classrooms or transition first grade. The sixteen children who had been in transition first grade gave mixed responses to the question. Five children selected transition first grade. Eleven children chose regular first grade. The children who chose transition first grade made the following comments:

I told my mom that I wanted to go to T-1. The teacher is the reason I wanted to go in there. It's easier than first grade. (first grade boy, previously in transition first).

T-1 has fun things to do. We had more toys (transition first boy).

I'd pick T-1. T-1 has the nicest teacher (second grade girl, previously in transition first).

I would go to T-1. We did fun math. I wasn't smart enough to go to first grade (third grade girl,

enough to go to first grade (third grade girl,
formerly in transition first).

I'd want to go to T-1. The teacher never put kids names on
the board (first grade girl, formerly in transition first).

Eleven children chose a regular first grade classroom instead of transition first grade after kindergarten. The comments made were typified by the following examples:

I wanted to be in Mrs._____'s room. I didn't want to be in T-1.
I wanted to be with my friends. They learn to read and write in
Mrs._____'s room (first grade boy, formerly in transition first).

Mrs. _____'s room is where I would go instead of T-1.
T-1 was fun but kids make fun of you and your friends
are always ahead of you (fourth grade boy, formerly in
transition first).

I didn't want to go to T-1 so if they'd asked me
I'd have picked Mrs._____'s room. Most of my friends
went in there. I've had to show them ever since that
I can do the work. I'm still behind them a grade
(fourth grade boy, formerly in transition first).

Children who had never been in transition first grade were asked the same question. None of the children selected transition first grade. Some of the children reported that they would have liked to have been in the other first grade classroom rather than the one that they had attended. As a second grader remarked, I'd wanted to be in the other first grade because most of my friends were in there. They didn't do as much homework as we did

(second grade girl).

Two children specifically mentioned that they would not choose transition first grade and cited reasons such as peer teasing, loss of friendships, and deficiencies attributed to children who attended transition first grade. The children said:

> I wouldn't want to go to T-1. They can't do first grade stuff. You get held back and kids make fun of you. Your friends won't play with you anymore if you go to T-1 (Fourth grade boy).

> I didn't want to go to T-1. My mom thought I should go. It's fun but I don't want to go to first grade again. I wanted to be with my friends. Don't you think you would think that way? (First grade boy)

Five children who selected transition first mentioned the teacher and activities as the reasons that they would choose transition first grade again. Eleven former transition grade children selected regular first grades in order to maintain a regular grade progression with their friends. Children indicated that transition first placement meant a loss of friends, teasing, and having to prove yourself to same-aged peers. Children saw themselves as always behind their agemates. Even though they listed positive aspects of transition first grade, the positive aspects did not overcome the consequences of transition first placement in most children's minds. Apparently, children did not quickly forget transition first placement as evidenced by the former transition first graders who were now in third and fourth grade.

Summary of Dialogues with Children and An Interpretation

The preceding section described children's ideas about school and transition first grade. Children identified their favorite aspects of school as recess and playing, construction with Legos, and art. Twenty children in the study did not mention academic subjects as favorite parts of their schooling experiences. The seven children who did identify academic subjects also included recess and playing with friends as important features of school.

Children stated that reading, math, discipline, and tests were aspects of school that they disliked. Children's dislikes of reading and math stem from the presentation of the subject matter in traditional ways such as individual seat work or group recitation, focus on reading and math to the exclusion of other subject areas, and fragmentation of reading and math from children's purposeful activities and interests.

Teachers used disciplinary strategies that focused on punishments and rewards to control children's behavior. Rules were prominently posted in the first grade classrooms. Children reported loss of recess and visits to the principal as consequences for infractions.

All children considered transition first grade to be different than first grade. Even though teachers told them that transition first grade was first grade, children did not accept teachers' ideas. They compared activities of the transition class with first grade classes and reported differences. Children believed that transition first grade was easier than the first grade classes. Children perceived that transition first graders played more and did less work than first graders.

Academic or skill acquistion, personal characteristics, and behavior deficiencies were reasons children gave for children's placement in transition first grade. Children who had been in transition first grade and children who had not been in transition first grade believed

that placement in transition first grade meant that there was a deficiency. Children who had been in transition first grade recognized that other children viewed them as deficient.

According to children's reports, there were three major effects of placement in transition first grade. They were: peer teasing, loss of friendships, and emotional upset. All three effects were reported to continue as children progressed through school.

Children listed positive benefits of transition first grade that included the teacher, materials and activities, and peer interactions.

When asked what classroom they would have chosen for themselves after kindergarten, five of the sixteen former transition first children chose transition first grade; whereas, eleven children chose regular grade progression. Of the eleven children in the study who had not been in transition first grade, none chose transition first grade. Two children specifically stated they would not have chosen transition first grade because of peer teasing, loss of friendships, and deficiencies attributed to transition first graders.

Impact of Transition Placement on Children's Families

Although the focus of the research was on children's perspectives of transition first grade, the researcher found that parents had a story to tell about the effects of transition placement on themselves and their families that deserved a voice. As has been the tradition in Early Childhood Education, the child is considered in the context of his/her family; therefore, it seems important to include the parents' perspectives.

Seventeen parents were interviewed either in person or over the telephone. Sixteen parents had children who were placed in transition first grade.

Parents reported that family conflicts arose because of the child's placement in transition first grade. One mother told the researcher that she had not told the child's father

that the child was in transition first grade until six months into the school year, because she was afraid of how angry he might become. The hiding of the transition first grade placement from the father must have required that the child not discuss school experiences at home. It is conceivable that the situation created tension in the home during the six months that the placement decision was kept from the father.

Another mother reported that she was afraid that the child's grandparents would think he flunked kindergarten because he was in transition first grade. She indicated that she did not want to tell them but knew that she had to because he would be in first grade two years in a row. From the mother's point of view, either explanation she gave meant failure for the child in the grandparents' view.

All of the mothers of transition first graders indicated that placing their children in transition first grade was a difficult decision. The concensus voice of parents was that the decision was difficult because they perceived they had been given two negative options. The first option was to place their children in transition first grade which they described as a failure on their's or the children's part. The second option was to place their children in first grade against the school's recommendations. According to parents, they were told that it was likely their children would fail first grade if they started before they were developmentally ready. Parents felt that if they placed their children in first grade against school recommendations they would be setting their children up for failure. The parents were literally expressing a paradoxical situation. Transition first placement equated with failure. Placement in first grade equated with future failure. It was a no-win situation for parents. The majority of parents reasoned that transition first grade placement would be better for their children than first grade failure. The following examples typify parents' responses to children's transition first placement:

The school called me the first day he was in first grade and told me he needed to be in T-1. They said he didn't know his alphabet. I thought that was unfair. The school told me that

alot of kids go to transition first grade. I told them that if half of the kindergarten is that bad off, there must be something wrong with it. I can see three or five children having problems but not half of the class....The teacher and lady who tested him were upset with me because I wouldn't agree to his placement. I said the same thing to them that I said to you [the researcher] about that many kids going to T-1. I put him in T-1 because I couldn't handle him repeating first. I thought it would be less harmful in the long run. They wanted to put my youngest child in T-1, too. How would they know at the end of nine weeks of kindergarten that he needed to go to T-1? I didn't agree to him going in T-1. My oldest son still says "he's dumb" because he went to T-1. I talked to a first grade teacher and she told me how to work with him over the summer on his alphabet. Some of my friends wouldn't put their kids in T-1 either. I think it's a humiliation to kids.

As the above conversation indicated, families had more than one child recommended for transition first grade placement. During the course of the interviews, the researcher discovered that four families had more than one child recommended for transition first grade. As evidenced in the preceding parent comments, one parent refused to have her second child placed in transition first grade, because the first child was still upset. A second parent delayed her youngest child's kindergarten entrance in hopes that he would not have to go to transition first grade. She said, "I didn't want him to have to go to T-1, too. He was supposed to go to kindergarten this year but I kept him at home so that he wouldn't have to go to T-1 like his brother. I didn't want _____ in there either."

The other two parents agreed to transition first grade placement for their other children

because they liked the small class size and the transition teacher. As one parent remarked, " I put my second child in there. The teacher is really good. She works with kids individually. The kids get alot of attention because there aren't very many of them in T-1. I liked that."

Two other parents reported that older siblings of the transition first grader had been retained in grade. These parents opted for transition first grade in order to avoid in-grade retention at some future grade level. They believed that transition placement was less harmful than in-grade retention. An example of parent statements follows. "My older son had to repeat first grade. I didn't want _____to have be in first grade twice. When they [school officials] suggested T-1, I decided it would be better than repeating."

Summary of Results

The results of the study were presented in five major sections. The first section provided the contextual setting of the study including descriptions of the community, school, and classrooms in order that the reader might understand the situation in which children in the study live and attend school. The information was provided to allow the reader to decide if inferences may be made to other transition programs.

The second section of the chapter described the development of the transition program, criteria used to identify children for transition first placement, and rates of transition placement in the school district since the inception of the program. The findings of the study indicated that the transition first grade program developed as a result of educators' concerns that children were not ready for first grade reading. Children were identified for transition placement on the basis of testing (Maturational Assessment Test and Ray Reading Methods Test) and birthdates. Children who had summer birthdays were considered potential candidates for transition first grade regardless of the test results. Examination of

other school documents indicated that some children placed in transition first grade had subsequently qualified for special education placement in educably mentally handicapped or learning disabled classes. Referrals for special education services appeared to have been delayed for some children due to transition first grade placement. The rates of placement in transition first grade ranged from twenty-three to thirty-eight percent of the kindergarten class. When the teachers were trained in developmental assessment and the transition first grade class was established, the numbers of children identified by educators as "unready" rose from ten percent to twenty-three to forty-four percent.

The third section presented the information gained from interviews with children, observations in the classrooms and other school settings, and the researcher's interpretations of the interview and observational data. The information was presented in eight subsections that included: (a) children's favorite aspects of school; (b) children's school dislikes; (c) children's comparisons of first grades and transition first grade; (d) children's explanations of why children were placed in transition first grade; (e) children's reports of the effects of transition first grade; (f) children's discussions of the positive facets of transition first grade; (g) children's choices of first grade classrooms after kindergarten; (h) summary of the section.

Children listed recess and playing, constructing, and art as their most favorite aspects of school. Reading, math, discipline, and tests were children's common dislikes. Children's school dislikes appeared to have to do with traditional approaches to curriculum, instruction, and guidance. School experiences that children reported they liked were found to be appropriate practices as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Whereas, school experiences that children indicated they disliked were found to be inappropriate practices listed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Transition first grade was not classified as first grade by children in this study.

Children believed there were differences between transition first grade and regular first grades. Transition first grade was viewed as easier than regular first grades. Children perceived that transition first grade children did not do as much school work as children in regular first grades. Children believed that children in transition first grade played more than children in regular first grade.

Transition first grade children and children who had never been in transition first grade held the perception that transition first placement was based upon deficits in academics or skills acquistion, personal characteristics such as size or age, or behavioral problems. Transition first graders were aware that their peers considered them to be deficient in some area. The implication of these findings was children's perceptions of themselves as competent learners might conceivably be eroded by transition first grade placement. Since transition children compared their activities with peers in regular first grade classrooms, children might come to believe that they were less able than their peers. Peer teasing reported by transition first grade children might further reinforce negative self-perceptions. The results of negative self and peer perceptions may affect children's achievement.

Transition first grade children reported three major long term effects of their placement: peer teasing, emotional upset, and loss of friendships. There was evidence that peer teasing continued as children progressed through the grades. Children vividly remembered the feelings that they had about transition first grade placement four years after placement . Friendships that were lost with agemates due to transition first grade placement were not recovered according to children's reports.

Children listed positive aspects of transition first grade experiences which included the teacher, materials and activities, and friends. The positive attributes of transition first grade should be common school practices in all primary classrooms.

When asked which classroom they would have picked after kindergarten, five of the sixteen children who had been in transition first grade chose transition first grade because of the teacher and activities. The other eleven children chose regular first grade

progression. They wanted to stay in the same grade as their friends and avoid peer teasing. Some children felt that they had constantly had to prove their competency to their peers since transition first grade. They believed they could avoid that pressure if they had progressed regularly through school with agemates.

The fourth section of the chapter presented the effects of transition first grade on parents and families. Parents reported that transition placement created familial conflicts. Mothers who agreed to their children's transition first placement were afraid to tell children's fathers and grandparents. Parents perceived of transition first grade as their own or their children's failure.

Parents were faced with a paradoxical situation. Parents reported that educators told them that if they put their children in first grade before they were developmentally ready, the children would probably fail first grade. Parents perceived of transition first grade as failure. Most parents opted for transition first grade because they thought it would have less harmful effects than first grade retention.

The researcher found that some families had two children recommended for transition first grade. Other families had older children in the family who had been retained in grade.

Parents recognized some positive aspects of transition first grade which included the small class size, individualized attention children received because of the small class size, and the positive teacher-child relationships.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The focus of the study was upon children's perspectives of transition first grade placement in one rural school located in the southwestern region of the United States. The researcher initiated the study for several reasons. First, although several studies had addressed children's ideas about in-grade retention (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1985; Yamamoto, 1979), the existing research to date included no intentional examination of children's ideas about transition first grade and the results of placement on friendships or children's perceptions of themselves as competent learners. As the researcher observed prior to the study, some transition first grade children were concerned about their placements and were trying to make sense of their placements by making comparisons with kindergarten and first grade classrooms in the school.

Second, educators have been embroiled in controversy over the merits of transition programs. Advocates of transition programs have claimed that children should be placed in school on the basis of developmental age rather than chronological age in order to protect them from emotional stress or failure in regular school programs for which they were considered immature or unready (Ames, 1978, 1980; Gesell Institute, 1980). The assumption underlying the belief in developmental readiness is that children's development is a process of biological maturation occurring predictably over time (Ames, 1978; Gesell

Institute, 1980). Given time, children would become ready to handle academic tasks.

Advocates of developmental placement contend that children's readiness for school can be determined on the basis of testing frequently completed before kindergarten or during the kindergarten year. Tests commonly used for this purpose are the Gesell School Readiness Test or others similar to it such as the Maturational Assessment Test. As a result of the readiness testing, recommendations can be made that children's entrance into kindergarten be delayed one year (Frick, 1985; Jones & Sutherland, 1985), children be retained (Ames, 1980), or children be placed in transition programs (Friesen, 1984; Solem, 1981).

Advocates of developmental placement imply that children might suffer short term emotional upset; however, the long term benefits academically and emotionally surpass the temporary upset (Ames, 1978). In addition, supporters suggest that transition programs demonstrate developmentally appropriate curricular and instructional practices that could become models for other teachers at other grade levels (Uphoff, 1990).

Critics of kindergarten retention, delayed kindergarten entrance, and transition classes maintain there are negative effects to children's self-esteem and achievement (Billman, 1988; Bocks, 1977; Bredekamp, 1990; Egertson, 1987; Meisels, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1986). According to opponents, the long term results of these practices is a further push-down of curriculum as teachers accommodate children who are a year older or have an additional year of school experience. In other words, curricular activities designed for older children are presented at a lower grade level (Bredekamp, 1990; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1989, 1990).

A further concern of opponents is the use of developmental tests to make school placement decisions even though many of these tests do not maintain the necessary standards for reliability and validity prescribed by the testing profession (Meisels, 1987, 1989).

Since children's viewpoints of transition classes had not been explicitly solicited, the current study provides additional information, the perspectives of children, for educators' consideration in making transition class placements. Although the nature of the study prevents generalization to other sites, the information obtained in this study may be transferable to other settings based upon careful consideration of the contextual setting, participants, and conditions by the reader. The researcher has followed the guidelines suggested by Guba & Lincoln (1990) for naturalistic research. In naturalistic studies, transferability is the parallel to external validity or generalizability (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 241). The burden of proof as to generalizability rests with those who receive and wish to use the research findings. The researcher has provided the reader with "working hypotheses, extensive and careful descriptions of the time, the place, the context, the culture in which these hypotheses were found to be salient" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p. 242).

Summary

The current study followed the naturalistic research assumptions and methodology as suggested by Bogdan & Bilkin (1982), Charmaz (1983), Guba (1978), Guba & Lincoln (1985, 1989), Lofland & Lofland (1984), and Williams (1986). Data sources included observations in kindergarten, transition first, and first grade classrooms and other school locations, interviews with children, parents, teachers, and administrators, and examination of school documents.

The findings of the study were presented in five major sections. The first section provided descriptive information about the community, school, and classrooms settings. In naturalistic studies, contextual descriptions serve the purpose of situating the reader within the particular conditions of the school and community in order that the reader can judge

whether information from this study may be transferable to transition programs in other settings.

The second major section addressed the historical development of the transition program, selection criteria used to identify children for placement in the transition program according to educators, parents, and school documents, and the numbers of children recommended and actually placed in the transition first grade since its establishment in school year 1985-1986 through school year 1991-1992.

The third section reported the interview data obtained from dialogues with children, classroom and other school site observations, and the researchers's interpretations of the interviews and observations. Seven topics discussed with children were considered: (a) children's favorite aspects of school; (b) children's dislikes of school; (c) comparisons of first grades and transition first grade activities; (d) children's explanations of why children were placed in transition first grade; (e) children's reports of the effects of transition first grade placement; (f) children's discussion of the positive aspects of transition first grade; (g) children's choices of classroom placement after kindergarten.

Parents' reports of the results of transition first grade placement on their families constituted the fourth section of the study.

Conclusions

Development of Transition First Grade, Placement Criteria, and Rates of Placement

The transition first grade program in the rural school in this study began in the school year 1985-1986 as a result of first grade teachers' concerns that children were not ready for first grade reading. A series of events were connected with the development of the

transition first grade. In 1979 educators' received training in identification of reading methods preferences by the administration of the Ray Reading Methods Test. Children who scored below the mean on reading preferences were considered to be unready for first grade reading. At about the same time that educators began using the Ray Reading Methods Test to determine classroom placement, changes occurred in the kindergarten curriculum. Prior to 1979, the primary focus of kindergarten curriculum had been on formal reading instruction implemented through the use of basal workbook materials. After 1979, there was a gradual shift of the kindergarten curriculum toward more expressive and social oriented activities such as painting, free choice play, and building with constructive materials (blocks and Legos). Changes in kindergarten curriculum reinforced first grade teachers' beliefs that children were not being prepared for first grade reading. The Ray Reading Methods Test given at the end of the kindergarten year confirmed first grade teachers' perceptions that children were not ready for first grade reading instruction. As a result of educators' perceptions of children's unreadiness for first grade based upon reading test scores and changes in the kindergarten curriculum, recommendations were made to parents to delay children's kindergarten entry until they were a year older. Parents who enrolled their "unready" children in kindergarten were told their children might fail first grade. Educators reported that an average of five or six children failed first grade annually.

In 1983 some educators received training in Gesell developmental theory and developmental assessment. This training reinforced educators' ideas that some children were unready for school. Educators accepted the notions that one-fourth to one-third of children entering school were immature and unready and children who were born in the summer were unlikely to be ready for school. The school began administering the Maturational Assessment Test to children in the spring of the year prior to kindergarten entry. The principal sought funding for a transition first grade. The first transition grade was in place in school year 1985-1986.

Once the transition first grade was established, scores on the Maturational Assessment Test given in the spring before children's entrance into kindergarten and children summer birthdates were used to identify children as potential candidates for transition first grade according to parental reports and school documents. School officials made recommendations to parents that children's entrance into kindergarten be delayed on the basis of Maturational Assessment Test scores or children's summer birthdates. If they enrolled their children in kindergarten in spite of educators' recommendations for delayed entrance, parents were told that their children would probably need to be placed in transition first grade. If they refused transition first grade placement, parents were subsequently told that their child might face first grade failure.

After the establishment of the transition first grade, twenty-seven to forty-four percent of the kindergarten children were recommended for transition first grade placement. Thirty-four percent of the kindergarten children between school years 1985-1986 and 1991-1992 were placed in transition first grade. There were nearly twice as many boys than girls placed in transition first grade. Sixty-three boys were placed and thirty-four girls were placed.

Prior to the transition first grade approximately ten percent of the children were considered unready for first grade and subsequently were retained. After the establishment of the transition first grade, twice to three times as many children were considered unready for first grade.

The tests used to make placement decisions, Ray Reading Methods Test and the Maturational Assessment Test, do not meet the testing standards for predictive validity or reliability (Manwarren, 1972; Meisels, 1987; Young, 1979). The Ray Reading Methods Test was not designed to make classroom placement or promotional decisions but rather to make instructional placements for reading. The uses of tests with young children for placement and promotional purposes have been seriously criticized by experts in the field of testing (Meisels, 1985, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1989).

A review of school documents and observations indicated that some children who

received low scores on the Maturational Assessment Test and Ray Reading Methods Test and placed in transition first grade were later identified for special education services including classes for the educably mentally handicapped and learning disabled. Placement in transition first grade had the effect of delaying diagnostic assessment for one full year for these children, because teachers did not refer children from transition first grade. Teachers believed that children required additional time to mature. These children received low scores on the State First Grade Screening Test but because of their placement in transition first grade were not referred for further assessment until they were entering first grade a full year later and were seven years old. The postponement of referral for special education services as a result of transition first grade placement was previously indicated in studies conducted by Talmadge (1981) and Rhoten (1991). The implication of these findings suggests that transition placement postponed the identification of children's more serious educational problems.

Children's rights to individualized special education services are guaranteed by Public Law 94-142, The Education For All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Selakovich, 1984). According to Public Law 94-142, schools are required to identify and evaluate children who may require special educational services. Expeditious comprehensive diagnostic assessment of children's educational needs, individualized educational plans, and appropriate educational placements are required. Recommendations for placement in special education classes requires consensus among educators and parents as to the most appropriate and yet, the "least restrictive environment".

The delay of referral for special education services due to transition class placement has postponed the identification of learning difficulties and subsequently, the provision of services for children who were eligible.

As Meisels (1987) suggests, the appropriate use of screening instruments in the early childhood years is the identification of children who may require specialized services.

Referral for diagnostic assessment should occur after screening and include a comprehensive evaluation of children's physical, emotional/social, and intellectual development. Readiness tests should be used to plan appropriate curricular activities. The school in this study used the Maturational Assessment Test, a test classified as a readiness instrument, to make placement decisions which violates the purposes of the instrument (Meisels, 1987, 1989). The Maturational Test Scores should have been utilized to plan appropriate curricular activities for the children, rather than make promotional decisions. Educators may have been misinformed since the author of the Maturational Assessment Test (Gillespie, 1986) claims the test can be utilized for developmental assessment and the establishment of transition programs; however, the current professional literature has provided substantial information about the assessment and placement of young children on the basis of readiness tests that contradicts Gillespie's position (Bredekamp, 1987; Kamii, 1990; Meisels, 1987, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1989, 1990; Wortham, 1990).

The delay of children's school entrance or the addition of an extra year of school on the basis of age has been substantially researched. No matter what age children start school there will be one year's difference in age between the youngest and oldest children in the class. Achievement differences disappear or become less as children progress through school (Langer, Kalk, & Searles, 1984; Shepard & Smith, 1985, 1986; Walsh, 1989). The long term effects of delayed entrance or the addition of an extra year of school have resulted in a push-down of curriculum (Shepard & Smith, 1989). The findings of the current study suggested that first grade expectations had been pushed down into the kindergarten. For example, teachers reported that kindergarten children received formal instruction in reading. Even though changes occurred in the kindergarten program after 1979, first grade expectations did not change. Children were expected to read upon entry to first grade. Educators' perceptions of reading consisted of a primary emphasis on children's acquisition of decoding skills. First grade reading instruction relied primarily on basal workbook materials and oral drill in phonics.

Children's failure to learn to read or to be ready to learn to read was attributed to maturation. Children were described as too young or too immature. Educators' beliefs in children's maturation as the determinant of reading readiness resulted in a lack of examination of kindergarten or first grade curriculum. This finding lends further support to previous research conducted by Shepard & Smith (1985) and Walsh (1989).

Further, the initial development of transition programs in the 1930s seemed to coincide with maturationist beliefs in a fixed age or stage that children should start reading. Children were tested and reading instruction was delayed for children who had not reached a mental age of 6.5 (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). Educators' training in maturationist theory and first grade reading expectations contributed to the establishment of the transition first grade in the current study.

Dialogues with Children and an Interpretation

Twenty-seven children were interviewed during the course of the study. Of the twenty-seven participants (fourteen boys and thirteen girls) interviewed, sixteen children had been or were currently placed in transition first grade. The eleven children who had not attended transition first grade were presently in first through fifth grade classrooms.

The results of the interview data obtained from child participants were reported in seven sections that corresponded to the actual questions asked of children by the researcher. A brief summary of each of the sections follows:

Children's Favorite Aspects of School. Recess and playing, constructing with Legos, and art were children's favorite aspects of school. Twenty of the children did not refer to academic subjects at all as favorite school experiences. The seven children who named academic subjects also included recess and playing as the best parts of school. Classroom

observations indicated that children had limited opportunities for peer interaction and spent much of their time in individual seatwork after teacher directed lessons. Children commented on the lack of opportunities for creative art expression. Children expressed interest in creating their own art. The art observed in classrooms was typically worksheet coloring or production of a finished art project that followed a teacher model.

Children's School Dislikes. Reading, math, discipline, and tests were the most frequently mentioned areas that children disliked. Children's criticisms of reading and math focused on how these subjects were presented. Children complained about the worksheets in reading and math. Children expressed dislike of group oral reading that involved sitting for long periods of time and waiting for their turns. Classroom observations verified children's perceptions of subject matter presentation through the use of worksheets and reading groups. Children spent most of their school day in whole group, teacher-directed instruction followed by the assignment of individual seatwork. The primary focus of the curriculum was on reading and math to the exclusion of other subject areas. When science or social studies was presented in the classroom, the instruction followed a lecture or worksheet format.

Many children disliked the methods of discipline utilized by teachers. Children reported that they disliked having their names put on the board and losing recess time. Children indicated that they were punished for talking to each other or talking without teacher permission. The researcher's observations confirmed the children's reports. For example, while the researcher was present in a first grade classroom, one of the children spoke to the researcher. The child's name was immediately placed on the board. On two separate occasions, the researcher witnessed entire classrooms receiving punishments for being too loud.

With the exceptions of the kindergarten and transition first grade classrooms, the

disciplinary strategies used by educators restricted children's interactions with each other in the classrooms and teachers' and children's interactions. In the two first grade classrooms, communication between teachers and children focused on enforcement of the classroom rules and direct instruction in subject areas. Children's communication with each other was restricted by the rules and subsequent punishments applied by teachers.

Tests were commonly mentioned as an aspect of school that children disliked. The kinds of tests that children mentioned were spelling tests, screening tests, and achievement tests. In each case, children commented that they had done poorly. Children were also concerned that comparisons were made between themselves and others on the basis of tests.

The aspects of school that children disliked mirrored early childhood educators' concerns reflected in sections on inappropriate practices as stated in Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987). For example, children's comments that they found reading boring due to teacher-directed reading groups and workbook assignments exemplifies inappropriate practices as Bredekamp (1987) states: "...Reading is taught as the acquisition of skills and subskills. Teachers teach reading only as a discrete subject....Language, writing, and spelling instruction are focused on workbooks. Writing is taught as grammar and penmanship" (p. 70).

Children's frequent remarks about punitive disciplinary strategies that limited their interactions with each other and teachers' interactions with children are defined as inappropriate practices. According to Bredekamp (1987), inappropriate classroom guidance includes teachers' emphasis on rule enforcement, assertion of power, punishment of rules infractions, and external rewards for good behavior.

Children's dislikes of school may well be a function of inappropriate instructional and curricular practices. Such inappropriate practices can contribute to children's negative

views of school experiences. The long term result may be a loss of interest in school and dislike of learning.

Children's Comparisons of First Grade. All of the children in this study compared transition first grade and the two regular first grades. None of the children considered transition first grade as a type of first grade even though educators told children the transition class was first grade. All children interviewed reported differences among the first grade classes and transition first class. All children viewed the transition first as easier than the two first grade classes. Children believed that children in transition first grade played more than children in regular first grade. Children perceived that children in regular first grade did harder work than children in transition first grade. According to all children in this study, transition first graders were unable to do first grade work.

Since transition first graders and regularly promoted children believed that transition first graders were less able to complete first grade work, there exists the possibility that transition first grade children may come to accept themselves as less capable than agemates. Interviews with two former transition first graders who were presently in third and fourth grade indicated these children continued to hold a negative view of their capabilities as learners. Due to the small number of former transition grade children in higher grade levels interviewed, the reader is encouraged to draw conclusions cautiously. However, from the two children's reports, it is conceivable that these children's perceptions of themselves as competent learners may have been affected by placement in transition first grade which in turn can affect later achievement. Further, if children perceive that they are incapable of learning, children may not make an effort to learn in future learning situations.

Previous studies of children's self-competency indicate that children form judgements about their own competency and ability on the basis of classroom structures, teacher evaluations, and peer feedback (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). The removal of children

from the regular school progression with agemates and subsequent placement in a different kind of classroom established conditions which led to comparisons among classrooms as evidenced in this study. Self and peer perceptions of deficiencies associated with comparisons of transition first grade placement with regular first grade classes may have created factors that contributed to diminished levels of perceived self-competency and ability which may result in lower achievement. Since they were placed in a classroom that was labeled by themselves and other children as easier (requiring less effort) and play-oriented (rather than work-oriented), transition first children were faced with immediate and perpetual feedback that they were unable to do the same kinds of work as their agemates. Children may consider themselves failures in their first schooling experiences.

Children's Explanations of Why Children were in Transition First Grade. All children cited deficiencies in academic or skill acquisition, personal characteristics, or behavior as reasons that children were placed in transition first grade. Regardless of age, gender, or whether they had been or had not been in transition first grade, children's ideas were similarly expressed. The implications of these findings suggest that children's perceived self-competency may be eroded by placement in transition first grade. Young children tend to perceive negative feedback about their work as also negative feedback about their ability (Stipek & Tannett, 1984). If children perceived themselves to be less able than agemates as is suggested by children's explanations of transition first grade placement, children's beliefs in themselves as capable learners may be eroded. When faced with new learning situations, children who perceive themselves to be less capable may consider themselves incompetent to perform new learning tasks. Although advocates of transition programs claim that the extra year of schooling prevents future learning failures and improves children's academic achievements, children's placement in transition first grade has the effect, according to children's perceptions in this study, of presenting children with a sense of failure during the transition first year. Since there is interaction and continuity between

past, present, and future learning experiences (Dewey, 1938; Katz, 1989), transition grade placement has the potential for damaging children's long-term educational development and dispositions toward learning. The failure and deficiency label attached to transition grade placement by children who have been in transition classes and children who have not been in transition classes can do nothing less than harm children's orientation toward learning, self-confidence, and achievement. As Katz (1989) states, "Occasional feelings of incompetence may be benign. But when children have such feelings frequently, regularly--in other words cumulatively--they are likely to learn to feel stupid and ultimately to give up. We refer to this self-attribution as *learned stupidity*."

Since they are separated from agemates for the remainder of their school experiences, some former transition first grade children believed that they were always behind their age mates. Even if they were completing school work successfully, former transition first grade children and regularly promoted peers realized that they were a year older and had an additional year's school experience. Regularly promoted peers dismissed transition first graders later successes on the basis of the extra year of age and schooling. In essence, transition first graders might be outstanding students in later grade levels, but according to peers, they weren't outstanding by virtue of the fact that they were a year older.

Children's Reports of the Effects of Placement in Transition First Grade. Thirteen children reported peer teasing, loss of friendships, and emotional upset as major effects of transition first grade placement. Only three former transition first graders reported no peer teasing, loss of friendships, or emotional upset.

Five children interviewed who are in second, third, or fourth grade children and had previously been in transition first grade reported on-going occurrences of peer teasing throughout their grade progression. Children continued to make remarks to them about the fact that they should be in the next grade or that they were a year older than classmates.

In this study, children at all grade levels named children in their classrooms who had been in transition first grade. The fact that children never forgot who had been in transition first grade even four and five years later indicated that transition first grade placement was a permanently attached label that went with children through their school progression.

Transition first grade children reported losses of friendship due to placement in transition first grade. Former transition first graders tended to play together regardless of their present classroom placement. Children reported that regularly promoted peers refused to play with them after transition first grade placement. Among the third and fourth graders interviewed, transition first graders named other transition first graders as best friends. The implication of this study is that transition first grade placement has a long lasting impact on children's friendships. Even as children progressed upward in grades, some children refused friendship to former transition first graders. In effect, the future possibilities for friendships were limited by transition first grade placement for some children.

Of the sixteen transition first grade children interviewed, thirteen were upset by transition first grade placement. The children recounted the feelings that they had at the time of their placement. The passage of time did not diminish children's recollections of their feelings as evidenced by interviews with two former transition first grade children who were presently in fourth grade. As one of the fourth graders remarked, "I can still remember crying". Children remembered crying, anger, and sadness at the time of placement. The findings suggest that even after the passage of several years, children were still upset. Parents of former transition first graders reported that their children continued to bring up transition first grade placement at the start of each school year. According to parents, children talked about the fact that they should be in the next grade level at the start of each new school year.

Children's Discussion of Positive Factors about Transition First Grade. All children who had been in transition first grade reported that there were benefits of being in transition first grade. The three most commonly mentioned benefits were the teacher, materials, and learning activities. According to children's reports, the teacher allowed them to talk with another, work in groups, and play with Legos and other constructive materials. Children mentioned learning activities they enjoyed that included cooking, studying spiders, and making books. Children stated that they had opportunities to draw and play with Legos, blocks, and games. In citing positive factors about transition first grade, former transition first graders compared transition first grade with later classroom experiences.

All of the positive features of transition first grade reported by children were appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987) that should be aspects of all primary classrooms. The researcher's observations indicated that the transition first grade classroom reflected some developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987) in teacher-child relationships and guidance of social-emotional development.

Children's Choices of First Grade Classrooms after Kindergarten. Children were asked by the researcher to pretend that they were back in kindergarten and were allowed to select their first grade classroom for the next school year. Of the sixteen children who had been in transition first grade, five children chose transition first grade and eleven children chose one or other of the regular first grade classes. Children who chose transition first grade after kindergarten gave similar reasons that included the teacher, availability of toys, and fun activities. Children who selected one or other of the regular first grade classes gave reasons such as friendships, reading and writing activities, and avoidance of peer teasing.

All ten children who had never been in transition first grade chose regular first grade classes. Five children specifically reported that they would not want to select transition first grade because of peer teasing, loss of friends, and lack of reading instruction.

The sixteen children who had been in transition first grade reported positive features of transition first grade; however, the positive features did not outweigh the loss of friendships, teasing, and lower grade placement than agemates according to eleven children interviewed. For these eleven children, neither the transition teacher or curricular activities outweighed the negative impact of transition grade placement on their feelings of competency. Transition first grade placement labeled them as deficient in their own minds as well as in peers' minds. For these young children, their beginning efforts as learners in a formal schooling setting were unsuccessful. Early school experiences form the foundation for children's constructions of themselves as competent learners. Transition first grade placement may have created negative early school experiences that children may internalize as negative reflections on their capabilities as learners. Negative self-beliefs can lead to diminished interests and achievements in school. As Katz & Chard (1989) suggest, negative early school experiences can have a long-term cumulative effect on children's self-confidence. Since transition first grade placement separates children from their agemates for an entire school year, subjects children to deficit labels from peers and adults, and causes children and parents emotional upset, there is the strong possibility that children's confidence can be negatively affected for years to come.

The positive aspects of transition first grade listed by children were appropriate practices that should be implemented in primary classrooms for all children (Bredekamp, 1987). Children should not be removed from regular school progression in order to have appropriate educational experiences and positive relationships with peers and teachers.

Impact of Transition Placement on Children's Families

Seventeen parent interviews were conducted during the course of the study. Sixteen parents had children who were placed in transition first grade.

Parents reported that familial conflicts had arisen because of children's transition first grade placement such as disagreements between mothers and fathers and grandparents' negative perceptions of the child.

All parents of transition first grade children reported that the decision to place their children in transition first grade was difficult. The consensus of parents' opinions was that they had been faced with two negative options. First, parents perceived if they accepted transition first grade placement they would be acknowledging a failure on their part or on their children's part. Parents reported they felt they had failed to provide schooling experiences at home that would have prepared their children for either kindergarten or first grade. Parents suggested that transition placement meant their children were not capable of learning.

Second, parents believed if they did not place their children in transition first grade, their children were likely to fail first grade. According to parents' reports, school officials advised them of the likelihood of first grade failure if transition first grade placement was refused. Either decision parents made equated with failure. The majority of parents chose transition first grade because they perceived transition first grade placement as less of a failure for their children than first grade failure.

Two parents reported that older siblings of the transition first grade children had been retained in-grade. The decision to place their children in transition first grade was made to avoid in-grade retention. For these two parents, transition first grade was less harmful than in-grade retention.

One parent refused transition first grade placement because her oldest child had been placed in transition first grade and she believed the child was still upset. Another parent delayed her youngest child's kindergarten entrance in hopes that he would not have to go to transition first grade. Her oldest child had been placed in transition first grade.

Parents (similarly to their children) reported some positive aspects of transition first grade which included smaller class size, individualized attention, and the transition first

grade teacher. The parents described the transition first grade teacher as patient and supportive of children's individual development. According to parents, the transition teacher understood their children's individual needs.

Although they reported positive aspects of transition first grade, the majority of the parents interviewed were not satisfied with transition first grade placement because they believed it meant their children had failed. Three parents reported that they were glad that their children had attended transition first grade, because they perceived their children to be better students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered specifically to the school district which participated in the study and may be applicable to other school districts that have transition grade programs. Recommendations for future research efforts in the area of transition programs are provided in a separate section.

Recommendations to the School District

1. The cost to the district of operating the transition first grade program from 1985-1986 to 1991-1992 was $260,900. The monies allocated for transition first grade reflects the districts' concern for interventive services. It is recommended that the district terminate the transition first grade program on the basis of increasing research evidence that suggests such programs produce no effects or negative effects on children's achievement and personal development (For example, see Bell, 1972; May & Welch, 1985; Shepard &

Smith, 1986). Research findings indicate that regular grade progression coupled with remediation are effective strategies to deal with children who are not keeping up with agemates (Holmes, 1989; Peterson, DeGracie, & Ayabe, 1987). Since there is a known absence in the community of early childhood programs for children before kindergarten and educators' reported children's lack of early learning experiences, the district's funds could better be expended in establishing a four-year old program for school district children. Research supports the effectiveness of early educational experiences prior to formal school entry (Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, 1979, 1983; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980; Weikart, Epstein, Schweinhart, & Bond, 1978).

2. The identification of twenty-three to thirty-eight percent of district kindergarten children annually as unready for regular first grade experiences suggests that an examination of kindergarten and first grade curriculum is in order. Research findings report that high rates of nonpromotion are frequently tied to inappropriate primary grade expectations and practices (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988; National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1991; Shepard & Smith, 1988). It is suggested that the school district examine the standards established by the National Association for the

Education of Young Children, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987), conduct staff development workshops to up-date educators' knowledge on appropriate primary practices, and furnish educators' with professional journal publications that address the ways that young children learn and develop. In addition, educators should be encouraged to review their beliefs about children's development based upon maturationist theory in comparison with current theories on how children learn.

3. The district should evaluate the tests and procedures used to screen and identify children for specialized services and transition placement. The Maturational Assessment Test and Ray Reading Methods Test do not meet the validity and reliability standards established by the testing profession upon which placement or promotional decisions can be made (Meisels, 1987, 1989; Manwarren, 1972; Young, 1979). The district should consider the adoption of an early screening program that meets the guidelines for appropriate assessment of young children according to guidelines suggested by Meisels (1989).
It is suggested that the district adopt one of the four screening instruments considered to meet testing standards for reliability and validity (Meisels, 1989). They are:

Denver Developmental Screening Test (Frankenburg, W.F., Dodds, J., Fandal, A., Kuzak, E., & Cohrs, M.), Early Screening Inventory (Meisels, S.J., & Wiske, M.E.), McCarthy Screening Test (McCarthy, D.), and Minneapolis Preschool Screening Instrument (Lichenstein, R.). Children who receive low scores on screening tests should be referred for diagnostic testing conducted by trained psychometrists or psychologists. The district should discontinue the use of readiness tests for promotional purposes. The intended purpose of readiness tests is to adjust curricular activities to children's needs (Meisels, 1989). If the district continues to use the recently adopted Early Screening for the Prevention of School Failure Test, it should be used only as a reference for curricular planning not for screening children or placement purposes.

4. It is recommended that the district review its policy regarding the referral of transition first children for special education assessment. Children receiving scores below the cut-off on the State First Grade Screening Test should be referred for diagnostic assessment. Children's rights to appropriate assessment and educational services are guaranteed under Public Law 94-142.

5. It is suggested that the district follow the children placed in transition first grades through high school to

determine the drop-out rate of these children in comparison to regularly promoted peers. As recent research suggests, the addition of an extra year of school contributes to higher drop-out rates (Grissom & Shepard, 1989). This may be of particular importance to the school district in light of the fact that the district has the highest drop-out rates in the county. In addition, the district should determine if the children who are dropping out of school before the completion of high school are children who the district recommended delayed kindergarten entrance or nonpromoted at some time during their school progression. Since the district began placing children in 1979 on the basis of the Ray Reading Methods Test scores, these children would be approaching the completion of their high school years. The district should examine the drop-out rates in terms of the effects of the classroom tracking by learning preferences on subsequent completion of school.

6. Since the disciplinary strategies used by some educators, prohibited positive interactions among children and with teachers, it is suggested that the district consider other alternatives to assertive discipline proposed by Gordon (1974), Dreikurs & Cassel (1972), and Glasser (1985) that provide positive approaches which encourage the development of children's problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

7. The district should examine its policies regarding the disproportionate number

of male children identified and placed in transition first grade. Previous research suggests that gender differences in achievement and learning are due to socialization and teacher practices rather than predetermined biological differences (Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971; Sister Josephina, 1962). Court action could possibly be instituted against the district for gender discrimination since it appears that transition first grade placement affects a disproportionate number of male children (Shepard & Smith, 1989). In addition, the district should be cognizant of previous research that suggests minority children are often overrepresented in transition classes (Arkley, 1989) and in-grade retention (Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971).

Recommendations for Research

1. The current study suggested that children's views of themselves as competent learners may be affected by transition first grade placement. Future research might focus on comparisons of transition first grade children's perceived self-competency and regularly promoted children's perceived self-competency at various grade levels.

2. Additional studies of children's views of transition first grades should be undertaken in other school settings. Longitudinal studies of children's views of transition first grade would be beneficial in understanding long term effects of transition grade placement from children's perspectives. Comparisons of children's ideas about

transition first grade at different grade levels is recommended.

3. Further studies might focus on parents' perspectives of transition first grade. Although a few studies have included parent views, no studies have intentionally focused on the impact of children's transition grade placement on families. Fathers' views of transition placement should be included in future studies as there has been an absence of fathers' reports.

4. Since teachers' beliefs about how children learn appear to contribute to recommendations for transition first grade as well as in-grade retention, research in the area of the development of teachers' belief systems and changes in belief systems might provide additional information for teacher educators.

5. Advocates of transition grades suggest that transition grades have appropriate curriculum and instruction and can become models for other grade levels (Uphoff, 1991). As the findings of this study suggest curricular and instructional strategies in transition grades may not be appropriate to young children's unique ways of learning. Few studies have intentionally focused on curriculum and instruction in transition grades. Evidence suggests that curriculum and instruction may not be any more appropriate in transition first grade than in first grades (Rhoten, 1991). Further research is warranted in this area.

Final Summary

The results of the study of children's perspectives of a transition first grade class located in a rural school district in the southwestern region of the United States indicated that children who had been placed in transition first grade and children who had been regularly promoted held common views of what it meant to be placed in transition first grade. Children viewed transition first grade as a class for children who had deficiencies in academic or skills acquisition, personal characteristics, or behavior. In order to be in transition first grade, children had failed to learn what was expected of them in order to be first graders. Unanimously, children voiced their beliefs that transition first graders required additional preparation for first grade and easier learning experiences than children who were regularly promoted to first grade.

Thirteen of the sixteen transition first graders reported negative effects of transition first grade which were peer-teasing, loss of friendships, and emotional upset. Children previously placed in transition first grade who were in first through fourth grade stated that peer teasing and loss of friendships still occurred as a result of transition first grade placement. Regularly promoted peers continued to make remarks to former transition first graders that included references to flunking and to being a year older than current classmates. Continued peer teasing and loss of friendships as a result of transition first grade placement indicated that a stigma had been attached to children who had been in transition first grade. Further substantiation of the stigma attached to transition first graders was evidenced by the fact that the ten regularly promoted children in first through fifth grades readily named former transition first graders who were currently in their classrooms.

Thirteen of sixteen transition first graders clearly recalled the feelings that they had at the time of placement which included anger and sadness. As evidenced by a fourth grader's

comments, "I still remember crying the first day", children had not forgotten the emotional upset that transition first grade placement caused them.

Transition first grade placement impacted families as well. The sixteen parents of present or former first graders reported the difficulty that they had accepting the placement of their children in transition first grade. From parents' perspectives, transition first grade placement represented failure. Parents expressed a sense of failure in themselves for not preparing their children to meet first grade expectations or they expressed concern that their children might not have the abilities to learn. Parents were confronted with a paradoxical situation regarding their children's transition first grade placement. Parents were told if they did not place their children in transition first grade, the children were likely to fail first grade. Parents were placed in a "no-win" situation. If they agreed to transition first grade placement for their children, parents accepted children's failure. If they did not agree to transition grade placement and their children subsequently failed first grade, parents accepted the responsibility for placing their children in a failure situation.

Transition first graders and their parents reported positive aspects of transition first grade. Children indicated that they liked the teacher, the materials, and activities in the transition first grade. Parents mentioned the teacher, smaller class size, and the individualized attention their children received. The positive aspects of transition first grade mentioned by children and parents represent appropriate practices that should be present in all lower primary grades according to the Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987).

According to children and parents, the positive aspects of transition first did not outweigh the stigma attached to transition first grade placement. Given the choice, eleven of the sixteen children who had been in transition first grade reported that they would have chosen regular first grade classes after kindergarten. They reiterated the negative effects of transition placement (peer-teasing, emotional upset, loss of friendships) as reasons for

selecting regular grade progression. Parents reported that their children continued to bring up the fact that they were a year behind in school.

The findings of the current study indicated the importance of talking with children about their school experiences. Although some researchers may criticize the small numbers of children interviewed in the study, the quantity of children interviewed is not the most pertinent issue when individual children's lives are considered. As this study demonstrates, children's lives have been affected by school placement decisions. Children voiced their concerns that transition first grade meant failure. Children expressed self-perceptions of deficiencies as the explanation for transition grade placement. Children related the negative effects of transition grade placement on their feelings, friendships, and sense of competency. Educators should make a concerted effort to discuss with children their feelings about school placements.

Children's reports indicated that transition first grade placement may have created negative early school experiences that were internalized as negative reflections on their capabilities as learners. Negative self-beliefs can lead to diminished interests and achievements in school. Early school experiences can have a negative long-term cumulative effect on children's self-confidence and achievement. Educators should take into account children's reports of the effects of transition first grade when considering the advantages and disadvantages of transition programs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abidin, R., Golladay, W., & Howerton, A. (1971). Elementary School Retention: An Unjustifiable, Discriminatory and Noxious Educational Policy. Journal of School Psychology, 9(4), 410-417.

Ames, L.B. (1978). Is your child in the wrong grade? Lumberville,PA: Modern Learning Press.

Ames, L.B. (1980). Retention: A Step Forward. Early Years, 11(4), 10-11.

Anderson, R.H. (1969). Pupil Progress. In R.L. Ebel (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (4th ed.). Toronto: Macmillan.

Anfinson, R.A. (1941). School Progress and Pupil Adjustment. Elementary School Journal, 41(7), 507-514.

Angus, D., Mirel, J., & Vinovskis, M. (1988). Historical Development of Age Stratification in Schooling. Teachers College Record, 90(2), 211-236.

Anfinson, R.D. (1941). School Progress and pupil adjustment. Elementary School Journal, 41, 501-514.

Arkley, H. (1987). An Evaluation of Selected Transition First Grades (Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University, 1986). Dissertation Abstracts International, 47, 3958A.

Askew, F.E. (1983). A Causal-Comparative Study of Achievement Test Scores of Promoted and Non-Promoted Elementary Students with Similar Intellectual Abilities (Masters thesis, Central Washington University), Master's Thesis in Education, 33, 21.

Ayers, L.P. (1909). Laggards in our Schools. New York: Russell Sage.

Baenen, N.R. (1988). Perspectives after Five Years--Has Grade Retention Passed or Failed? (Report No. AISD-87.35). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Texas Office of Research and Evaluation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 300 424)

Bandura, A. (1990). Conclusion: Reflections on Nonability Determinants of Competence.

In Sternberg, R., & Kolligan, J. (Eds.), Competence Considered (pp.315-362). New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Bell, M.J. (1972). A Study of the Readiness Room Program in a Small School District in Suburban Detroit, Michigan (Doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University), Dissertation Abstracts International, 34, 525A.

Billman, J. (1988). Two Years of Kindergarten, Ethical and Curricular Considerations. Winona, Minnesota: Winona State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 297 884).

Bloom, B. (1964). Stability and Change in Human Behavior. New York: Wiley.

Blumfeld, P., Pintrich, P., Meece, J., & Wessels, K. (1982). The formation and role of self-perceptions of ability in elementary classrooms. Elementary School Journal, 82, 401-420.

Bocks, W.M. (1977). Non-Promotion: "A Year to Grow?". Educational Leadership, 34(5), 379-383.

Boesel, F.G. (1960). Effects of Nonpromotion on Reading Achievement and Behavior Problem Tendencies in the Primary Grades (Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan), Dissertation Abstracts International, 21, 2191.

Bogden, R., & Biklen, S. (1982). Qualitative Research for Education. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Bohl, N. (1984). A gift of time: The Transition year. Early Years, 14.

Bredekamp, S. (1987). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8 (Expanded Edition). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bredekamp, S. (1990). Extra Year Programs: A Response to Brewer and Uphoff. Young Children 45(6), 20-21.

Bruner, J.S. (1962). The Process of Education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Byrnes, D.A., & Yamamoto, K. (1985). Academic Retention of Elementary Pupils: An Inside Look. Education 106(2), 208-214.

Byrnes, D.A., & Yamamoto, K. (1986). Views on Grade Repetition. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 20(1), 14-20.

Caggiano, J.A. (1985). A study of the effectiveness of transitional first grade in a suburban school district. (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1984). Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 2752A.

Caplan, P.J. (1973). The Role of Classroom Conduct in the Promotion and Retention of

Elementary School Children. Journal of Experimental Education, 41(3), 8-11.

Charmaz, K. (1988). The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation. In R. Emerson (Ed.). Contemporary Field Research. Prospect Hills, Il: Waveland Press.

Charlesworth, R., Mosley, J., Burts, D., Hart, C., Kirk, L., & Hernandez, S. (1988). Checklist for rating developmentally appropriate practice in kindergarten classrooms. Unpublished manuscript. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University.

Chase, J.A. (1968). A Study of the Impact of Grade Retention on Primary School Children. Journal of Psychology, 70(2), 169-177.

Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1979). Summary report: Lasting effects after preschool. (DHEW Publication No. OHDS 80-30179). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983). As the twig is bent...Lasting effects of preschool programs. Hillsdale, N.J.: Eribaum.

Cook, W.W. (1941). Some Effects of the maintenance of high standards of promotion. Elementary School Journal, 41, 430-437.

Cooper, A.D. (1980). The Relationship Between Nonpromotion and Achievement, Self-Concept, and Overt Behavior of Children Experiencing Difficulty in Kindergarten or First Grade (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas), Dissertation Abstracts International, 41, 1940A.

Corsaro, W.A. (1985). Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Crites, S. (1986). Storytime: Recollecting the past and projecting the future. In Theodore R. Sarbin (Ed.), The Storied Nature of Human Conduct (pp. 152-173). New York: Praeger.

Dewey, J. (!915). The School and Society. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. & Dewey, E. (1915). Schools Of To-Morrow. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. New York: MacMillan.

Dolan, L. (1982). A follow-up evaluation of a transition class program for children with school and learning readiness problems. The Exceptional Child, 29, 101-110.

Dreikurs, R. & Cassel, P. (1972). Discipline without tears: What to do with children who misbehave. New York: Hawthorn.

Educational Research Service (1968). Entrance age policies. Arlington, VA: Author.

Egertson, H.A. (1987). The Shifting Kindergarten Curriculum. (Report No. OERI-400-86-0023). Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 293 630)

Elkind, D. (1988). Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk (3rd printing.). NY: Alfred Knopf. (original printing 1987).

Elliott, S.N. (1986). Children's Ratings of the Acceptability of Classroom Interventions for Misbehavior: Findings and Methodological Considerations. Journal of School Psychology, 24, 23-35.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook in Research on Teaching (3rd ed.). NY: Macmillan.

Farley, E.S. (1936). Regarding repeaters: Sad effects of failure upon the child. Nation's Schools, 18 (4), 37-39.

Fine, G.A., & Sandstrom, K.L. (1988). Knowing Children. Participant Observation with Minors. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Finlayson, H.J. (1975). The Effect of Nonpromotion Upon the Self-Concept of Pupils in Primary Grades (Doctoral Dissertation, Temple University, 1975), Dissertation Abstracts International,

Florio, S. (1978). Learning How to Go to School: An Ethnography of Interaction in a Kindergarten/First Grade Classroom (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1978).

Frick, R. (1985, January 16). In support of academic redshirting. Education Week, 24.

Friesen, D. (1984). Too Much, Too Soon? Principal, 63(4), 14-18.

Gesell Institute (1980). A gift of time...A developmental point of view. New Haven, CT: Gesell Institute of Human Development.

Gillespie, C. (1986). School Readiness Workshop Announcements. Norman, OK: Educational Enrichment, Inc.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory. NY: Aldine.

Glasser, W. (1985). Control Theory in the Classroom. New York: Harper and Row.

Goodlad, J.I. (1954). Some effects of promotion and nonpromotion upon the social and personal adjustment of children. Journal of Experimental Education, 22, 301-328.

Goodlad, J.I. (1984). A Place Called School (pp. 229-230). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gordon, T. (1974). Teacher Effectiveness Training. New York: Wyden.

Gredler, G. (1984). Transition Classes: A Viable Alternative for the At-Risk Child? Psychology in the School, 21, 463-470.

Grissom, J.B., & Shepard, L.A. (1989). Repeating and Dropping Out of School. In Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. Flunking Grades (pp 34-63). London: Falmer Press.

Guba, E.C. (1978). Toward A Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation. In E.L. Baker. CSE Monograph Series In Evaluation. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Graduate School of Education.

Guba, E.C., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Guba, E.C., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1990). Fourth Generation Evaluation. Newbury, Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Haddid, W.D. (1979). Educational and Economic Effects of Promotion and Repetition Practices. Paper prepared for The World Bank Education Department, Washington, D.C. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 195 003)

Hagaman, N. (1947). Transition First Grade Classes and Their Values. California Journal of Elementary Education, 15, 171-192.

Hagin, R.A. (1984). Effects of First-Grade Promotion Practices of a Program for the Prevention of Learning Disabilities. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 471-476.

Hains, A.A. (1981). The Effect of Retention on the Self-Concept of Elementary Students in Grades Three Through Five As Compared to the Self-Concept of Elementary Students Who Have Been Socially Promoted.(Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1981). Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 2398A.

Harter, S. (1990). Causes, Correlates, and the Functional Role of Global Self-Worth: A Life-Span Perspective. In R.J. Sternberg & J. Kolligan, Jr. (Eds.), Competence Considered (pp. 67-97). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hatch, J.A. (1990). Young Children as Informants in Classroom Studies. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 5(2), 251-264.

Hatch, J.A., & Freeman, E.B. (1988). Kindergarten philosophies and practices: Perspectives of teachers, principals, and supervisors. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 3, 151-166.

Higgins, E.T., & Parsons, J.E. (1983). Social Cognition and the social life of the child: Stages as subcultures. In E.T. Higgins, D.N. Ruble, & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), Social Cognition and social development: A sociocultural perspective. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Holmes, C.T. (1989). Grade Level Retention Effects: A Meta-Analysis of Research Studies. In L.A. Shepard & M.L. Smith (Eds.), Flunking Grades: Research and

Policies on Retention (16-33). London: Falmer Press.

Holmes, C.T., & Matthews, K.M. (1984). The effects on nonpromotion on elementary and junior high school pupils: A meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 54(2), 225-236.

Hood, K. (1982). By Parents for Parents. A Pre-First Parent's Guide to the Early Education Program in Eastern Lancaster County School District. New Holland, PA: Eastern Lancaster County School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 239 736)

Hunt, J. McV. (1961). Intelligence and Experience. NY: Ronald.

Hunter, B.B. (1976). An evaluation of the effectiveness of a transition grade between kindergarten and first grade upon later academic achievement (Doctoral dissertation, Ball State University, 1975). Dissertation Abstracts International, 37, 708A.

Hymes, J.L. (1990). Early Childhood Education: The Year in Review. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Ivancic, R. (1967). Effect of a year of prereading curriculum on later achievement and school progress for selected children. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg, 1966). Dissertation Abstracts International, 27, 4166A.

Jackson, G.B. (1975). The Research Evidence on the Effect of Grade Retention. Review of Educational Research, 45(4), 613-635.

Johnson, W.H. (1942). Development of the Chicago Program to aid pupils lacking reading readiness. Elementary School Journal, 42, 337-346.

Jones, R.R. (1985). The Effect of a Transition Program on Low Achieving Kindergarten Students When Entering First Grade (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University, 1985).

Jones, L.D., & Sutherland, H. (1981). Academic redshirting: A positive approach to grade retention. Education, 102(2), 173-175.

Kaufman, S.S. (1984). Stresses and Coping Styles of Elementary School Children (Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University, 1984). Dissertation Abstracts International,

Kamii, M. (1980). In C. Kamii (1985). Young Children Reinvent Arithmetic, (pp. 57-58). New York: Teachers College Press.

Kamii, C. (1985). Young Children Reinvent Arithmetic. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kamii, C. & Kamii, M. (1990). Why Achievement Testing Should Stop. In Kamii, C. (Ed.). Achievement Testing in the Early Grades. The Games Grown-Ups Play (pp. 15-38). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young

Children.

Kaufman, N.L. (1985). Review of the Gesell Preschool Test. In J.V. Mitchell (Ed.), The ninth mental measurement yearbook, Vol. 1. Lincoln, NB: Buros Institute of Mental Measurements.

Kilby, G. (1982). An Ex-Post Facto Evaluation of the Junior First Grade Program in Sioux Falls, South Dakota (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota, 1982). Dissertation Abstracts International, 41, 3271A.

King, N.R. (1979). Play: The Kindergartners' Perspective. Elementary School Journal, 80(2), 81-87.

Klene, V., & Branson, E. (1929). Unknown title. Elementary School Journal, 29, 564-566.

Koons, C.L. (1968). Nonpromotion of First and Second Grade Students and Subsequent Reading Performance (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tulsa, 1968).

Labaree, D.F. (1984). Setting the standard: Alternative policies for student promotion. Harvard Educational Review, 54, 67-87.

Langer, P., Kalk, J., & Searls, D. (1984). Age of admission and trends in achievement: A comparison of blacks and Caucasians. American Educational Research Journal, 21, 61-78.

LeCompte, M.D. (1980). The Civilizing of Children: How Young Children Learn to Become Students. Journal of Thought, 15(3), 105-127.

Leinhardt, G. (1980). Transition Rooms: Promoting Maturation or Reducing Education? Journal of Educational Psychology, 72(1), 55-61.

Lennon, R.T., & Mitchell, B.C. (1955). Trends in age-grade relationships. School and Society, 82, 123-125.

Liddle, G., & Long, D. (1958). Experimental Room for Slow Learners. Elementary School Journal, 143-149.

Livingston, M. (1990). A Comparative Study of the Short-Term Academic Achievement of Developmentally-Placed Versus Traditionally-Placed Kindergarten Students (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tulsa, 1990).

Lobdell, L.O. (1954). Results Of A Nonpromotion Policy In One School District. Elementary School Journal, 54(6), 333-337.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L.H. (1984). Analyzing Social Settings. A Guide to Qualitative Evaluation and Analysis. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company

Mann, L.M. (1961). An Extended Reading Readiness Program For A Selected Group In

The First Grade (Doctoral dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1961).

Manwarren, M. (1972). A Validity Study of the Ray Reading Methods Test (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1972).

Matthews, H.W. (1977). The Effect of Transition Education, A Year Of Readiness And Beginning Reading Instruction Between Kindergarten And First Grade (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1977).

Mayfield, M.L. (1983). Orientation to School and Transition of Children Between Primary Grades. The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 29(4), 272-284.

May, D.C., & Welch, E.L. (1984). The effects of developmental placement and early retention on children's later scores on standardized tests. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 381-385.

McDaid, E.W. (1950). A Study of An Experimental Reading Readiness Program in a Large City School System (Doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University, 1950).

McDermott, R.P. (1976). Kids Make Sense: An Ethnographic Account of the Interactional Management of Success and Failure in One First Grade Classroom (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1976).

Meisels, S.J. (1987). Uses and abuses of developmental screening and school readiness tests. Young Children, 42(2), 68-73.

Meisels, S.J. (1989). High-stakes testing in kindergarten. Educational Leadership, 46(7), 16-22.

Meisels, S.J. (1989). Developmental Screening in early childhood (Third edition). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Miller, W. & Norris, R.C. (1967). Entrance age and school success. Journal of School Psychology, 6, 47-60.

Morphett, M.V., & Washburne, C. (1931). When Should Reading Begin? Elementary School Journal, 31(7), 469-503.

Mossburg, J. (1987). The Effects of Transition Room Placement on Selected Achievement Variables and Readiness for Middle School (Doctoral dissertation, Ball State University, 1987).

Nicholas, R.L. (1984). Developmental Versus Chronological Placement: Comparative Effects on Self-Concept, School Achievement, and School Attitude (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tulsa, 1984).

Nicholls, J.G. (1978). The development of the concepts of effort and ability, perception of academic attainment, and the understanding that difficult tasks require more ability. Child Development, 49, 800-814.

Nicholls, J.G. (1979). The development of perception of own attainment and causal attributions for success and failure in reading. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 94-99.

Nicholls, J.G. (1990). What is Ability and Why Are We Mindful of It? A Developmental Perspective. In Sternberg, R., & Kolligan, J. (Eds.), Competence Considered (pp.11-40). New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Oklahoma State Department of Education (1990). Suggested learner outcomes: Developmental four year olds, kindergarten, first grade. Oklahoma City: author.

Oklahoma State Department of Education (1992). Drop Out Rates. Oklahoma City: Author.

Otto, H.J., & Melby, E.O. (1935). An Attempt to Evaluate The Threat of Failure As A Factor in Achievement. Elementary School Journal, 35(8), 588-596.

Pepitone, E.A. (1972). Comparison behavior in elementary school children. American Educational Research Journal, 9, 45-63.

Perrone, V. (1990). How Did We Get Here? In Kamii, C. (Ed.) Achievement Testing in the Early Grades (p. 1-14). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Perrone, V. (1991). On Standardized Testing. Childhood Education, 67(3), 132-142.

Peterson, I.B. (1937). The reading readiness program of the Ironwood Public Schools. Elementary School Journal, 37, 438-446.

Peterson, S.E., DeGracie, J.S., & Ayable, C.R. (1987). A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Retention/Promotion on Academic Achievement. American Educational Research Journal, 24(1), 107-118.

Pheasant, M. (1985). Aumsville School District's Readiness Program: Helping First Graders Succeed. Eugene, OR: Oregon School Study Council. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 252 967)

Piaget, J. (1973). To Understand Is To Invent. New York: Grossman Publishers.

Ray, D. (1970). Manual for the Ray Reading Methods Test. Stillwater, OK: Diagnostic Publishing Company.

Raygor, B.R. (1972). A Five Year Follow-Up Study Comparing the School Achievement and School Adjustment of Children Retained in Kindergarten and Children Placed in a Transition Class (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1972). Dissertation Abstracts International, 33, 1526A.

Rhoten, L. (1991). An Examination of Transition First Grade Curriculum In An Oklahoma

School District (Doctoral, dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1991).

Rihl, J.V. (1988). Pre-First Grade: A Year To Grow. A Follow-Up Study. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 302 332)

Ring, O.E. (1944). Effectiveness of a reading readiness program as shown by results of standardized tests. California Journal of Elementary Education, 4, 91-96.

Rosenholtz, S.J., & Simpson, C. (1984). The Formation of Ability Conceptions: Developmental Trend or Social Construction? Review of Educational Research, 54(1), 31-63.

Ruble, Feldman, & Boggiano (1976). Social Comparison between young children in achievement situations. Developmental Psychology, 12, 192-197.

Rubin, Z. (1980). Children's Friendships. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Russell, O.H. (1948). Provisions for Immature Five-and-Six-Year Olds in California Schools. California Journal of Elementary Education, 15. 220-223.

Sandin, A.A. (1944). Social and Emotional Adjustment of Regularly Promoted and Non-promoted Pupils (Child Development Monograph No. 23). NY: Columbia University Teachers College.

Sandoval, J. (1984). Repeating The First Grade: How The Decision Is Made. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 457-462.

Sandoval, J., & Fitzgerald, P. (1985). A high school follow-up of children who were promoted or attended a junior first grade. Psychology in the Schools, 22, 164-170.

Schweinhart, L. & Weikart, D. (1980). Young Children grow up: The effects of the Perry Preschool Program on youths through age 15 (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.

Scott, B.A., & Ames, L.B. (1969). Improved Academic, Personal, and Social Adjustment in selected Primary School Repeaters. Elementary School Journal, 69(8), 431-439.

Seefeldt, C. (1989). How Good is your Kindergarten Curriculum. Principal, 68(5), 11-15.

Selakovich, D. (1984). Schooling in America. New York: Longman.

Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. (1985). Boulder Valley Kindergarten Study: Retention Practices and retention effects. Boulder, CO: Boulder Valley Public Schools.

Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. (1986). Synthesis of research on school readiness and kindergarten retention. Educational Leadership, 44(3). 78-86.

Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. (1987). Effects of kindergarten retention at the end of first grade. Psychology in the Schools, 24, 346-356.

Shepard, L.A. & Smith, M.L. (1988). Escalating academic demands in kindergarten: Counterproductive policies. Elementary School Journal, 89, 135-145.

Shepard, L.A. (1989). A Review of Research on Kindergarten Retention. In Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. (Eds.), Flunking Grades. Research and Policies on Retention (pp. 64-78). London: Falmer Press.

Shepard, L.A., & Smith, M.L. (1989). Flunking Grades. Research and Policies on Retention. London: Falmer Press.

Smith, F. (1992). Learning to Read: The Never-Ending Debate. Phi Delta Kappan, 73(6), 432-441.

Smith, M.L., & Shepard, L.A. (1987). What doesn't work: Explaining policies of retention in the early grades. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(2), 129-134.

Sigel, I.E. (1987). Does Hothousing Rob Children of Their Childhood? Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 2(3), 211-225.

Sister Josephina (1962). Promotion, a Perennial Problem. Education, 82(6), 373-376.

Sitton, T. (1980). The Child as Informant: The Teacher as Ethnographer. Language Arts, 57(5), 540-545.

Solem, M.R. (1981). Junior First Grade: A Year to Get Ready. Phi Delta Kappan, 63(4), 283-284.

Steinmetz, K. (1946). Reading readiness and grouping of pupils in the primary grades. Basic Instruction in reading in elementary and high school. Supplementary Educational Monograph published in conjunction with the School Review and The Elementary School Journal, 10, 45-49.

Stipek, D.J. & Tannett, L.M. (1984). Children's Judgements of Their Own and Peers' Academic Competence. Journal of Educational Psychology, 76 (1), 75-84.

Swaby, B.E. (1984). Teaching and Learning Reading. A Pragmatic Approach. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Talmadge, S. (1981). Descriptive and Predictive Relationships Among Family Environment, Cognitive Characteristics, Behavioral Ratings, Transition Room Placement, and Early Reading Achievement (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon).

Uphoff, J.K. (1990). Extra Year Programs: An Argument for Transitional Programs During Transitional Times. Young Children, 45(6), 19-20.

U.S. Census Bureau (1986). Statistical Abstract of the United States, 106th edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Commerce (1991/August). 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Oklahoma. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office.

Veroff, J. (1969). Social comparison and the development of achievement movitation. In C. Smith (Ed.), Achievement related motives in children (pp. 46-101) New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Vollrath, F.K. (1982). A Comparative Study of Achievement and Classroom Behaviors of Retained and Nonretained Kindergarten, Third, and Sixth Grade Students (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1981). Dissertation Abstracts International, 44/04A, 1039.

Walsh, D.J. (1989). Changes in Kindergarten: Why Here? Why Now. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 4(3), 377-391.

Weinstein, R.S. (1983). Student Perceptions of Schooling. Elementary School Journal, 83(4), 287-312.

Weikart, D., Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L. & Bond, J. (1978). The Ypsilanti Preschool Curriculum Demonstration Project: Preschool years and longitudinal results (Monographs of the High Scope Educational Foundation, 4). Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.

Williams, D. (1986). When is naturalistic evaluation appropriate? In D.D. Williams (Ed.). New Directions for Program Evaluation. No. 30. Naturalistic Evaluation (pp. 85-92). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Whalen, R. (1991). In L. Rhoten, An Examination of Transition First Grade Curriculum in An Oklahoma School District (p. 331). (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1991).

Whaley, M. (1985). The status of kindergarten. A survey of the states. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Board of Education.

White, K., & Howard, J.L. (1973). Failure to be promoted and self-concept among elementary school children. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 7(3), 182-187.

Wilson, B.J., Hewett, G., Sheets, C., & Thomas, J. (1979). Early intervention programs: Proceed with caution and evaluate. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 183 280)

Wilson, B.J. (1981). The evaluation of transition programs: A quantitative and quasi-qualitative look. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 209 890)

Wortham, S. (1990). Tests and Measurement in Early Childhood Education. Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Company.

Wright, J.B. (1979). The Measured Academic Achievement of Two Groups of First Grade

Students Matched Along Five Variables When One Group Has Been Retained (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 41/08A, 3418.

Yamamoto, K. (1979). Children's Ratings of the Stressfulness of Experiences. Developmental Psychology, 15(5), 581-582.

Young, D. (1975). The Relationship Between Pre-Reading Behavior Patterns And Success of Specific Reading Methods With Kindergarten Children (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1975).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Project Title: Children's Perspectives of Transitional First Grade Placement
Experimenters: Kathryn Castle, Ed.D., and Jane Meyer

I, (print name) _____, hereby agree and I agree to allow my child, _____ to participate in the above study with the procedures outlined below.

A. **Purpose** - The purpose of this study is to obtain some of the ideas and feelings children may have regarding transition first grade experiences including activities and friendship patterns.

B. **Procedures** - In participating in this experiment, you and your child will be asked to do the following things:
   1. As the parent or guardian you will complete a questionnaire that will provide basic demographic information about your family and your child.
   2. If selected, your child will be asked to participate in 2-4 informal interviews to explore more thoroughly his/her feelings about transition first grades. Interviews will occur during the course of the child's day in the school setting.
   3. On-going classroom observations of your child will be conducted to acquaint the researcher with daily school routines and to provide time for the researcher to become known to the children.
   4. School documents may be examined to provide information about the transition first grade program.

C. **Time required for participation** - Completion of the questionnaire by the parent will require from 15-30 minutes. Interviews, if the child is selected, will require from 5-15 minutes and will be conducted at times that will not interfere with school work or daily activities.

D. **Confidentiality** - All information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be released. Files of research data will be numerically coded and/or pseudonyms applied, and all data will be kept in a secure (locked) portable file case at the researcher's home address. Raw data will destroyed at the end of the study (approximately May 1992) or following professional publication. Results from this study shall become a part of the researcher's doctoral dissertation and may be shared at professional meetings or in publications, but no identification of school district or individual child, teacher or parent will be made. You and your child's personal confidentiality and the confidentiality of the school/school district will be preserved.

E. **Benefits** - You will have the opportunity to review the study findings since the school district will be provided a copy of the completed dissertation. At your request, I will agree to meet with you individually and discuss the study findings.

Consent form for *Children's Perspectives of Transitional First Grade Placement.*

I and my child have been fully informed about the procedures given on the preceding page for the educational study, *Children's Perspectives of Transitional First Grade Placement.* I and my child are aware of what each will be asked to do and of the risks and benefits in this study. I also make the following statements:

My and my child's participation is limited to the investigation entitled *Children's Perspectives of Transitional First Grade Placement.*

The purpose of this study is to examine the personal perspectives of children regarding a transition first grade program, including activities and friendship patterns.

I understand that my and my child's participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this study at any time and my child is free to withdraw his/her consent and participation in the study at any time.

I understand that I may contact the major investigator at the following address or telephone number should I desire to discuss my or my child's participation in the study and/or to request information pertaining to the findings of the study:

Jane Meyer	Kathryn Castle
Route 1 Box 513	306 Gunderson, OSU
Stillwater, OK 74074	Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 743-4025	(405) 744-7125

Additionally, I understand that I may contact Terry Maciula, University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater OK 74078 (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily, and a copy of this form has been given to me. I hereby give my permission for my participation and that of my child, _____.

_____ _____

(Signature of Participant) Date

_____ AM PM

Time

I certify that I have personally completed all the blanks in this form and have explained the information herein to the subject before requesting the subject to sign this consent form.

_____

(Signature of Project Director or Authorized Representative)

APPENDIX B

GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INITIAL GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you like best about school?

2. What do you not like about school?

3. Let's pretend you could learn anything you wanted in your class, what would you choose?

4. There are three first grades. How do kids know in which room they're going to be? How did you find out what room you'd be in this year?

5. Do all first grade kids do the same learning activities?

6. What kinds of learning activities do first graders do?

7. If you could pick anybody in school to play with, who would you pick? Are there any kids at school you don't like to play with? Why?

QUESTIONS ADDED BASED UPON CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

8. What did you think about being in transition first grade?

9. What did your friends think about your being in T-1?

10. How did you like transition first grade?

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Proposal Title: Children's Perspectives of Transitional First Grade

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Castle/Jane Meyer

Date: April 26, 1991 IRB # ED-91-034

This application has been reviewed by the IRB and

Processed as: Exempt [X] Expedite [ ] Full Board Review [ ]

Renewal or Continuation [ ]

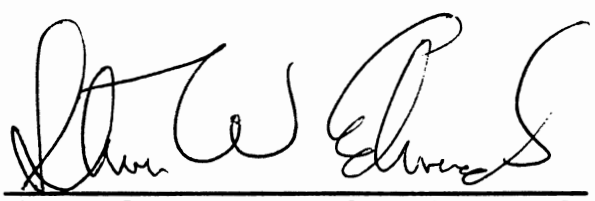
Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):

Approved [X] Deferred for Revision [ ]

Approved with Provision [ ] Disapproved [ ]

Approval status subject to review by full Institutional Review Board at next meeting, 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reason for Deferral or Disapproval:

Signature:  Date: April 26, 1991

Chair of Institutional Review Board

VITA

Jane Ellen Meyer

Candidate for the degree of

Doctor in Education

Thesis: AN INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES OF TRANSITION FIRST GRADE PLACEMENT

Major field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of Henry Clair Kinter and Ellen Rackley Kinter.

Education: Graduated from Princeton High School, Princeton, Illinois in May, 1964; received Bachelor of Arts degree in 1968 from Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois,with a major in History and Political Science and Secondary Education; completed the requirements for the Master of Arts of Teaching degree in Early Childhood Education in May, 1987 at Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, OK; completed the requirements for the Doctor in Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction in July, 1992.

Professional Experience: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Oklahoma State University, Curriculum and Instruction, 1988-1992; Adjunct Lecturer, Oklahoma City University, 1992; Adjunct Lecturer, Northeastern Oklahoma State University, University Center, Tulsa, OK, 1991-1992; Director of Milieu Therapy, Sunbeam Family Services, Oklahoma City, OK, 1985-1988; Director of South Children's Center, Sunbeam Family Services, Oklahoma City, OK, 1974-1988; Early Childhood teacher, Sunbeam Family Services, Oklahoma City, OK, 1971-1974; Teacher of fifth grade and sixth grade, Decatur Public Schools, Decatur, Illinois, 1969-1971.