

Going to Kindergarten:

Transition Models and Practices and Quality of Classroom Settings

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Today's presentation

- **What models and practices can be used to more effectively link families, children, and schools?**
- **What happens in early education classrooms that affects readiness?**



Transition experiences

“His teacher called several days before school started; it was great and really made Nate feel great.”

“The teacher called me the first week of school and said she should be evaluated for Ritalin because she can’t teach her.”

“We weren’t sure about sending him, he may be young, his teacher called to say he’s way behind and should go back to preschool.”



Transition experiences (continued)

“At the beginning I got her excited by talking about starting school six months before it started . . . it made the transition easy. . . . Before school started, I took her to the classroom to get her adjusted to it.”

“On a more personal level, my son spends eight hours a day with his teacher and his best friend. I want to know those people. I don’t want to be a once-every-three-months-for-report-card thing. I want to have more interaction.”

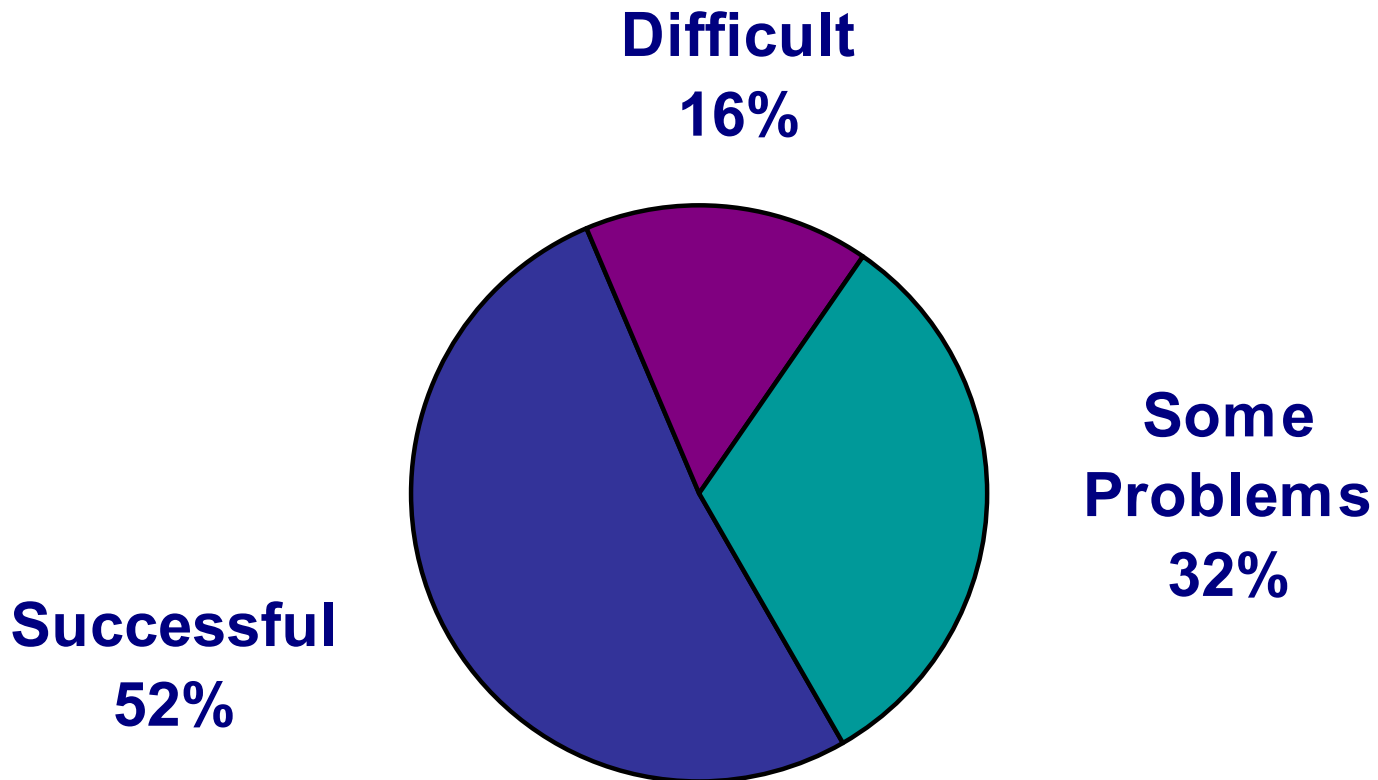


Common themes in parents' views

- **Anticipation and excitement about something new**
- **Contact can help or it can hurt**
- **Prepare by starting early**
- **Please get to know my child**
- **Please teach my child**



How successfully are children entering kindergarten?



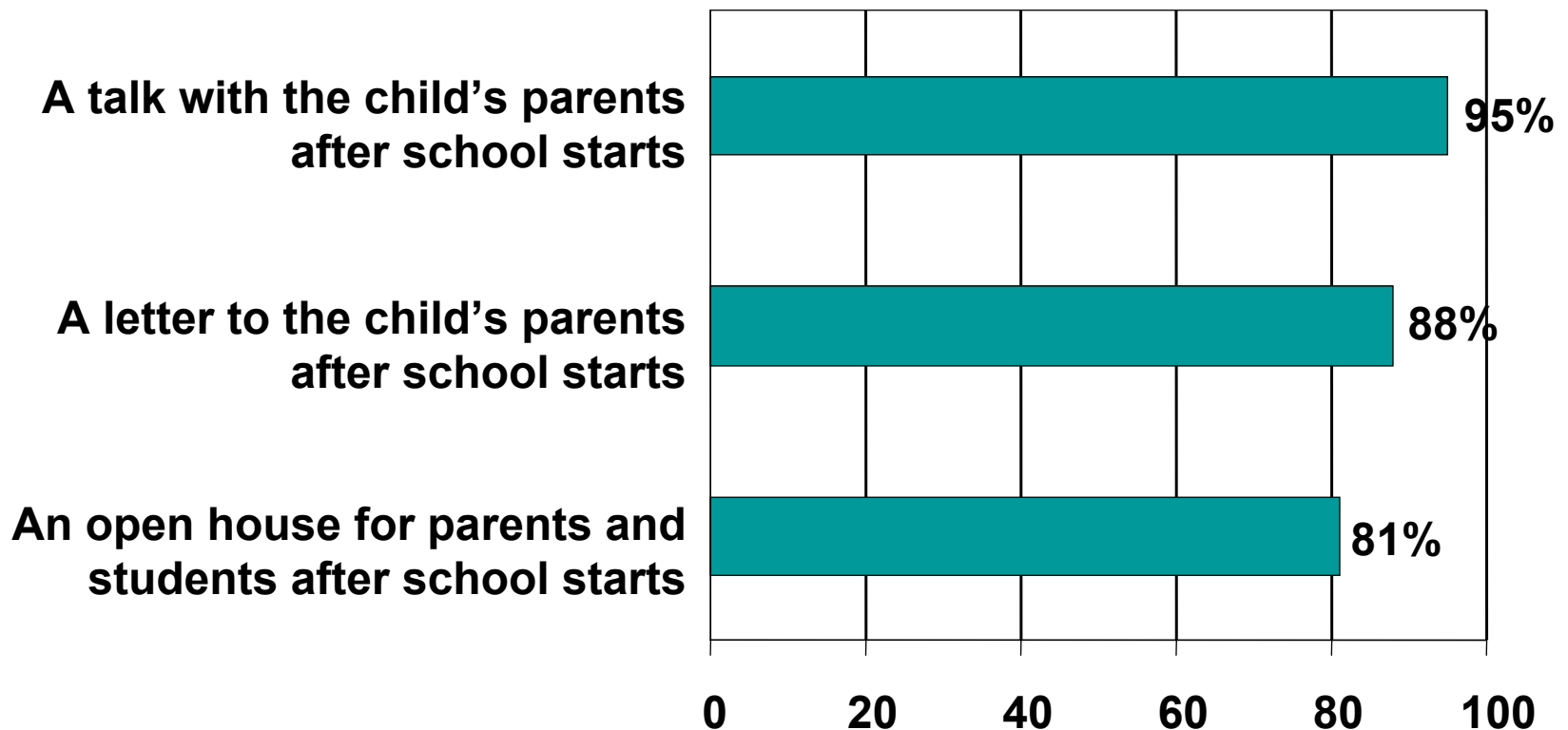


Discontinuities in the transition period

- **Formal academic demands**
- **Complex social environment (peers)**
- **Less parent support**
- **Less family connection**
- **Less time with teacher**

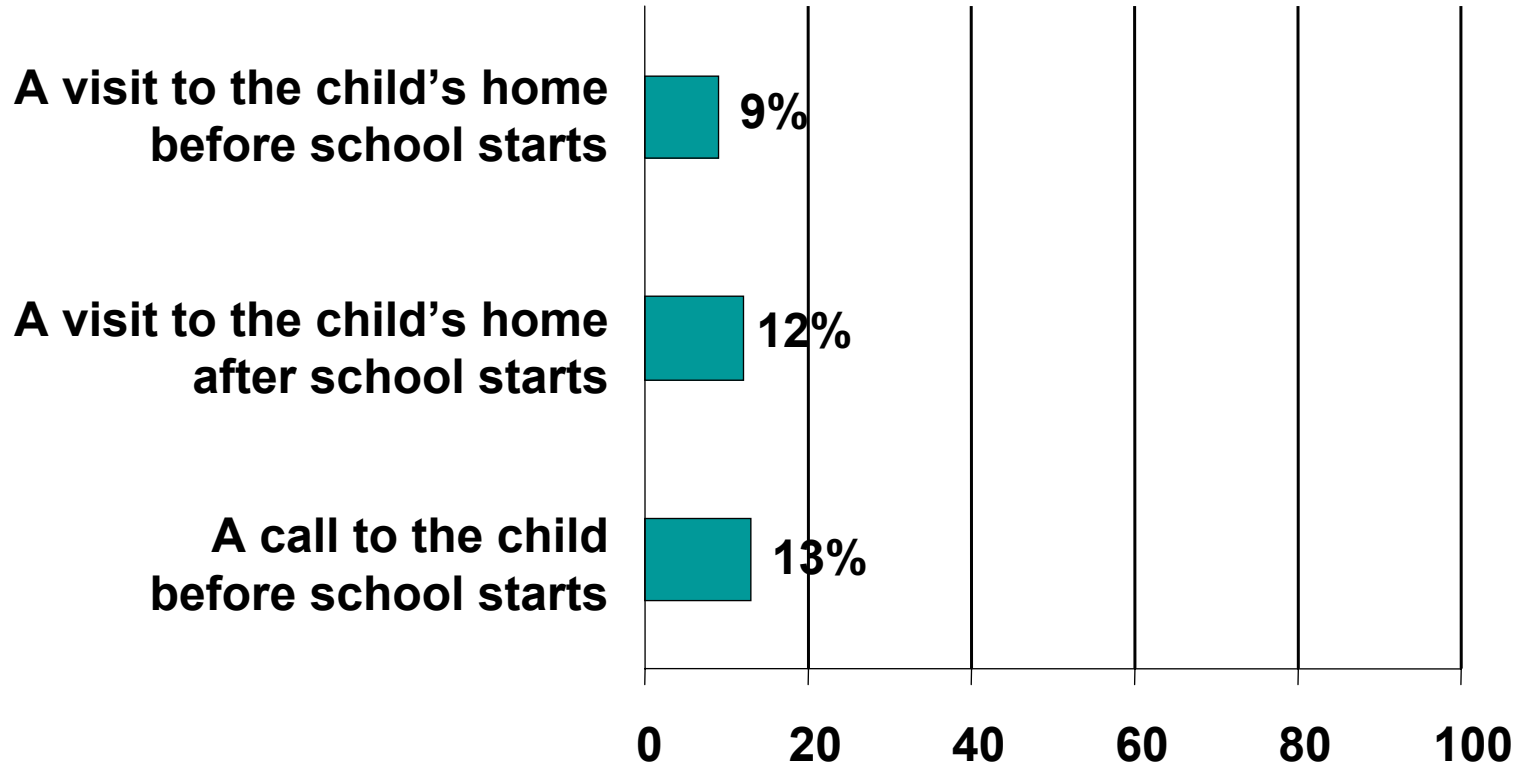
How are teachers helping children make the transition to kindergarten?

Three most common

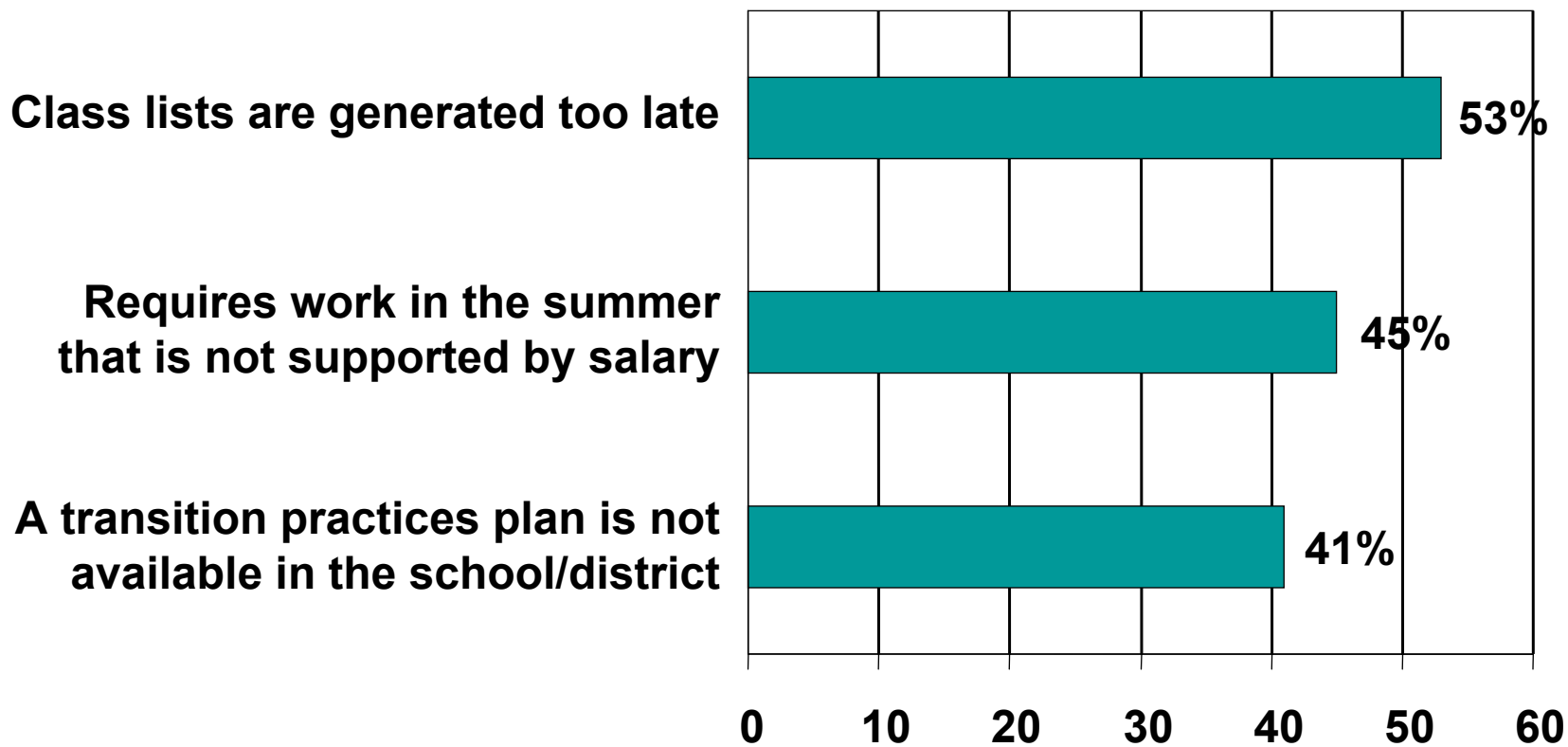


How are teachers helping children make the transition to kindergarten?

Three *least* common



What do teachers see as barriers to transition practices?





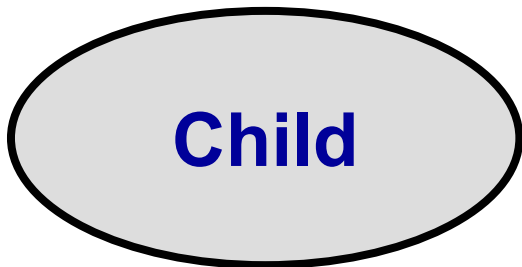
Typical transition

- **Generic contact**
- **After school starts**
- **Always at school**
- **Too little, too late, too impersonal**

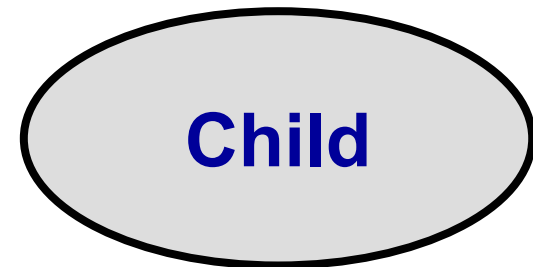


A child-focused view

Preschool



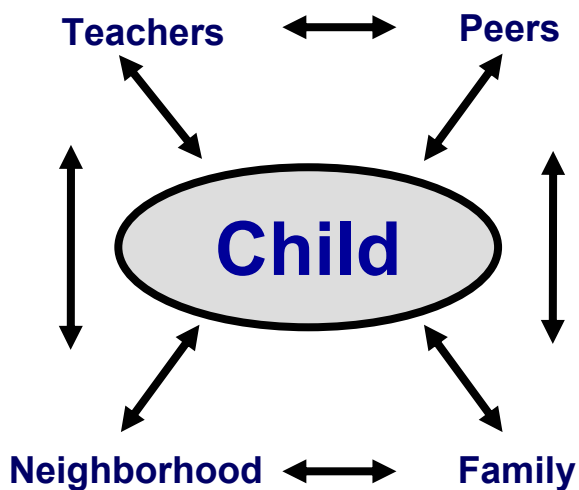
Kindergarten



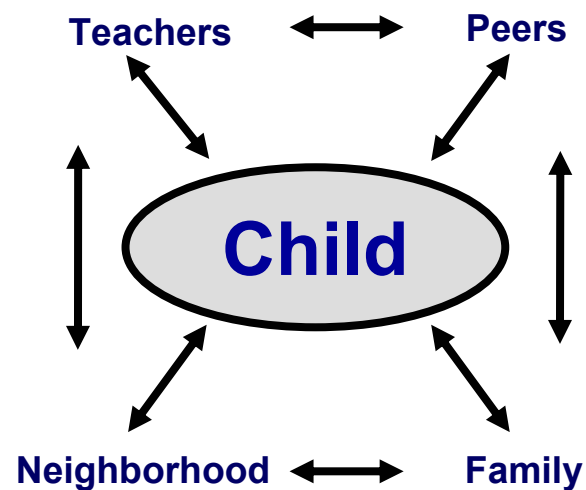


A developmental view

Preschool



Kindergarten





Transition is a process involving:

■ Linkages

- “Ready” schools**
- Community participation and support**
- Family involvement and knowledge**
- Preschools and child care**

■ Quality classrooms



A transition agenda: Linkages

- **Build links across time and context**
- **Transition needs are different for different families, schools, neighborhoods, and children**
- **Focus on guiding principles**



Transition experiences

“The teacher called the first week of school to say he is the biggest clown in the class.”

“I am pleased . . . the teacher called after the first two days of school to say how well she was doing.”

“I’m not happy with it. . . . I sent in notes but got no response from the teacher. . . . The first day of school I sent him with a dollar for lunch but he didn’t eat all day . . . something got mixed up. I tried again with a dollar the next day . . . but he didn’t eat that day either. He wet his pants. The teacher is young and she’s not very organized. I’m anxious about this year.”



Steps to kindergarten transition

- 1. Establish collaborative teams**
- 2. Identify a transition coordinator**
- 3. Facilitate regular meetings and conduct a needs assessment**
- 4. Generate ideas for transition activities**
- 5. Create a transition timeline**
- 6. Anticipate barriers**
- 7. Revise ideas and timeline**
- 8. Implement transition practices**



Collaborative transition teams

- **Schools, parents, feeder programs, agencies**
- **Facilitator (internal or external)**
- **Identify common goals for kids and families across contexts and time**
- **Focus on continuity in relationships for child and family**
- **Neighborhood-based**
- **Create a transition timeline**



Practices: Four guiding principles

- **Relationships serve as a bridge for child, family, and school. Peers, teachers, parents, and staff play a role.**
- **Supportive relationships are resources for children.**
- **Schools can build strength-based relationships with families.**
- **Different sets of relationships fit different needs.**



Timeline Example

PRESCHOOL

SUMMER

KINDERGARTEN

September

April

June

August

September



Family group meetings
Foster peer relationships

PS & K teachers transition efforts
Class lists for K
Preschoolers visit K
Peer relationships outside school

Home literacy activities
School playground nights

Open houses
K teacher and parents meet
K screenings

Back-to-school nights
Foster family connections w/ teachers



Checklist for transition coordinators

■ Family connections

- Make contact in first 2 weeks
- Assess family needs and link up with services
- Encourage parents to foster peer connections
- Send home newsletters
- Schedule regular meetings
- Help organize back-to-school nights and transition orientations
- Encourage home-learning activities

■ Peer connections

- Help teachers establish peer connections at school
- Introduce each child to the kindergarten teacher
- Help kindergarten generate class lists that pair friendly peers



Checklist for transition coordinators

(continued)

■ School connections

- Foster inter-school discussions about programs and classroom practices
- Encourage events co-sponsored by the preschool and the kindergarten
- Initiate meetings between preschool and kindergarten teachers about children

■ Community connections

- Help clarify community needs and expectations regarding schools and transition
- Meet regularly with the transition team



Checklist for kindergarten teachers

■ Family connections

- Make contact in first two weeks
- Encourage participation
- Participate in regular meetings with parents
- Attend back-to-school nights and transition orientations

■ Peer connections

- Promote peer connections at school
- Encourage parents to promote peer connections outside of school

Checklist for kindergarten teachers

(continued)

■ School connections

- Invite preschoolers to visit
- Discuss expectations for transition with preschool teachers
- Discuss particular children with preschool staff
- Incorporate preschool rituals
- Visit the preschool classroom
- Encourage contact with the preschool teacher

■ Community connections

- Stay apprised of the transition team's goals and plans
- Participate in meetings about transition



Policy targets

- **Definitions of readiness**
- **Assessment mechanisms**
- **Personnel; roles; responsibilities**
- **Registration mechanisms**
- **Practices and procedures**



Policy considerations

- **Define/describe school readiness, 2-7 years**
 - Child
 - Family
 - Schools
- **Promote readiness definitions in multiple venues**
- **State/local mandates for transition planning**
 - Responsibility of public schools/community
 - Identify key constituencies
 - Identify leadership
 - Timelines of key events



Policy considerations (continued)

■ **State/local transition practices**

- Transition meetings for staff
- Transition meetings for families
- Joint activities
- Record and information sharing
- Joint curriculum/assessment planning



The “other side” of readiness: Classrooms

Children → Classrooms and Instruction
Preschool → Early Elementary Grades

Untested assumptions:

- Uniformity of classroom experience as a “treatment”
- Agreement about what constitutes Pre-K–1 curriculum

Current context is rapidly changing--

State Pre-K, Head Start initiatives



Observational data sources

■ National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL)

- ❑ Multi-state Pre-K classroom observations (n=238)

■ NICHD Study of Early Child Care

- ❑ 36/54 months (n ~ 1,000)
- ❑ Kindergarten (n=220)
- ❑ First grade (n=969)

Credentialed, educated teachers/caregivers



Experiences in early childhood settings

- **Does quality matter?**
- **To what kinds of activities and practices are children exposed?**
- **How do children spend their time?**
- **What is the quality of the social and instructional environment?**
- **What are the implications for designing a system for professional development?**



Quality matters

- **Early child care, measured during the first 4½ years, was associated with both developmental benefits and developmental risks.**
 - **Children who were in higher quality child care displayed:**
 - **Better pre-academic skills (effect size = .24)**
 - **Better language skills (effect size = .15)**
 - **Children who had more experience in child care centers displayed:**
 - **Better language skills (effect size = .28)**
 - **Better memory (effect size = .33)**



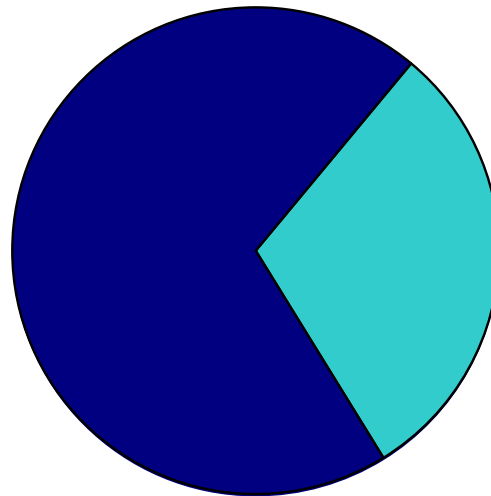
Exposure to activities and practices

- **Vast majority of interaction/activity is whole group**
- **Few, if any, social or instructional interactions between teacher and individual child**
- **Instruction = Literacy activities**
- **Exceptional variation**
 - No “typical class”
 - Every code has full range present



How do children spend time?

- High levels (30%) of “business/routine” activity
 - Pre-K/K: snack, lining up, attendance
 - 1:3 managing materials, routines

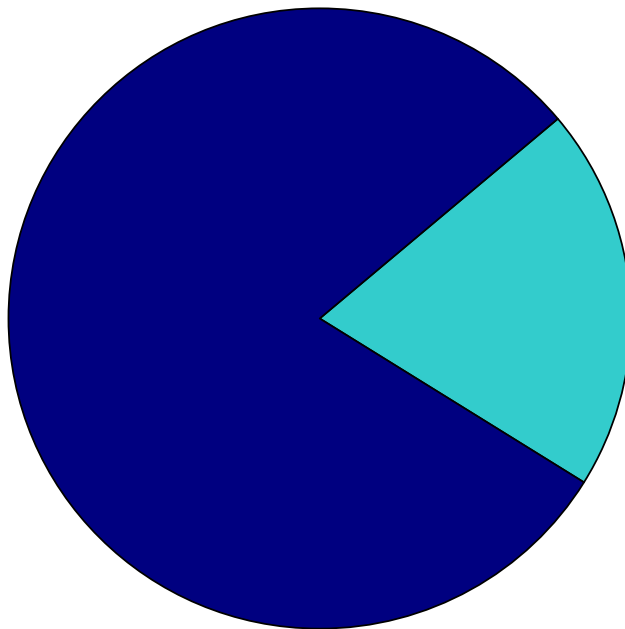




How do children spend time?

■ Ratio of listening, sitting, watching: Doing

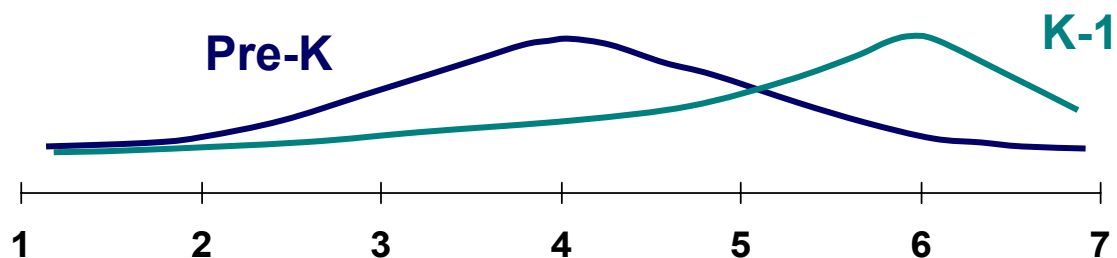
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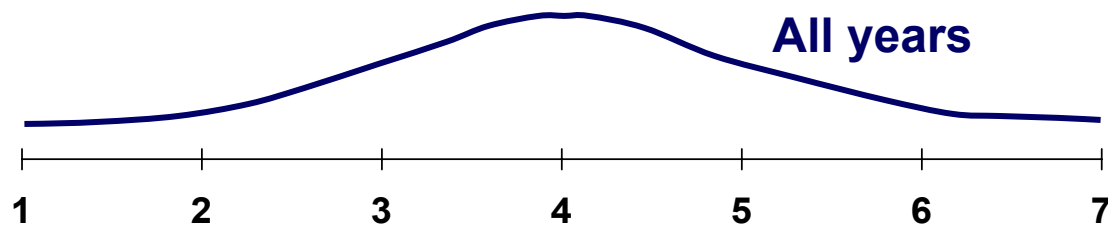


What is the global quality of the setting?

■ Positive emotional/social climate

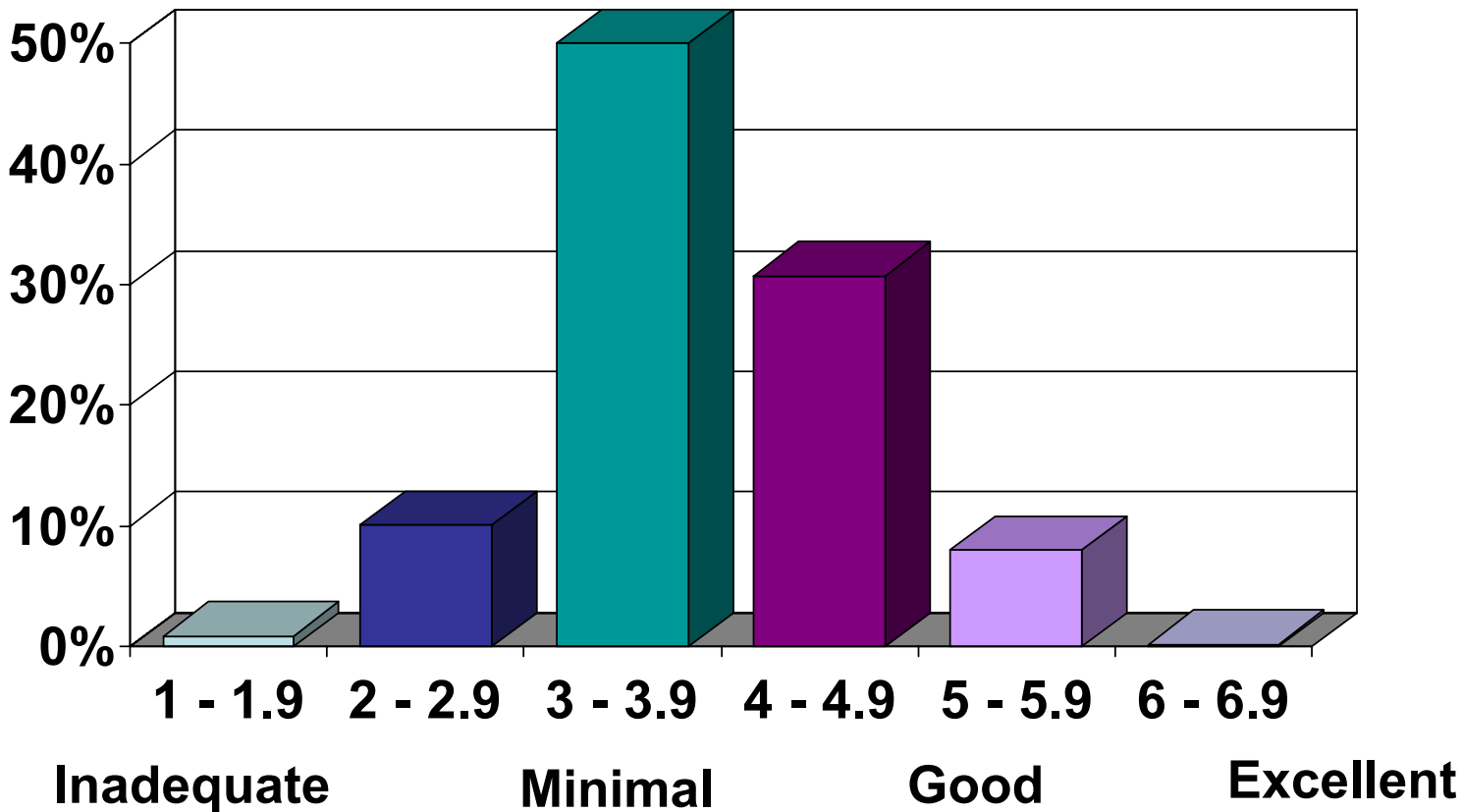


■ Instructional climate/productivity





Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale





Conclusions from observational research

- **Quality for kids \neq Courses, credentials, curriculum or materials**
- **Current P.D. metrics only loosely connected to teacher-child interactions**
- **Interactions of teachers and children are highly variable, instructionally passive**
 - Equality, access issues

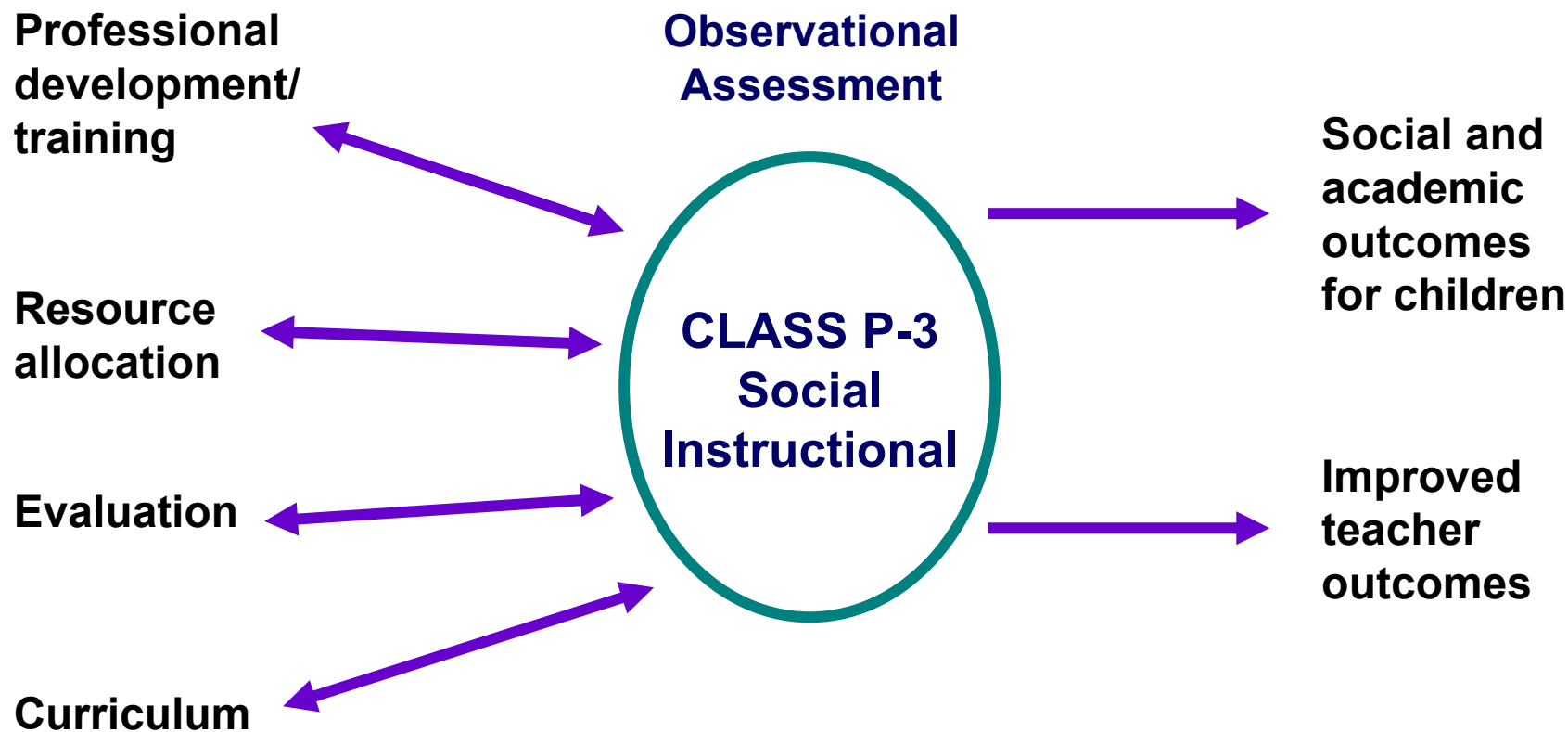


Policy considerations

- Shift policy statements on “quality” from current metrics to process metrics
- Systematic assessments of classroom settings
- Linked to professional development experiences



Standards assessment for classrooms, not just children





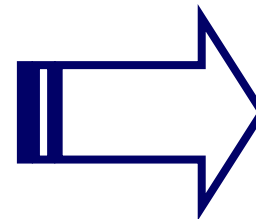
Observation of process and professional development

Self-Consultant

Knowledge
Expertise
Support

Observations of
individual practitioners,
process

Professional
Practice
Interactions



Regular, individualized, feedback cycle



Outcomes of addressing transition links and classroom quality

- **A coherent P-3 curriculum and classroom assessment metric**
- **Public can define readiness for children and quality for classrooms**
- **Regular assessments of classrooms**
- **Transition plans/links in communities**



Outcomes (continued)

- **Special education referrals drop; are more accurate**
- **Teacher stabilization**
- **Alignment of inputs to child; increased achievement/competence**
- **Increased family support**



Resources

www.ncedl.org -- *Enhancing the transition to kindergarten: Linking children, families, and schools*

Pianta, R., & Kraft-Sayre, M. (2003). *The Kindergarten Transition Guide*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

La Paro, K., Pianta, R., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pre-K Version*. National Center for Early Development and Learning, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

Pianta, R., & Cox, M. (1999). *The Transition to Kindergarten*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

Pianta, R. (1999). *Enhancing relationships between children and teachers*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.