

A Study of Opinions Concerning Public Preschool Programs
For Three- and Four-Year-Olds
In Bladen County

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by
Susan LaLynn Packer
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Rationale for the Study

As hard as it may be to believe, 43 percent of our nation's children from birth to age three have mothers who work full- or part-time. Nearly 50 percent of children ages three to six have mothers who work outside the home. Moreover, 58 percent of school children, grades one to twelve, have working mothers, and more than seven million young Americans need some form of child care (Kamerman, 1984, p. 2).

According to an article in Newsweek, both spouses in today's family feel they must work to maintain the standard of living with which they were raised. Furthermore, the "baby boom population" is now producing a "baby boomlet" so that by 1990, the population under ten years of age will increase by five million to total thirty-eight million children (Watson, Cuppola, Wang, Moreau, Copeland, & Cardwell, 1984, p. 15). Wiessler and Thornton (1983) reported that 50 percent of American mothers work outside the home, and they predict that by the end of the 1980's, two-thirds of all families will have both parents working. Changing Times (1984) reports that according to the 1982 Census Bureau data, only about one-fourth of the full-time working mothers had arrangements for their children under the age of five. The growing need for child care is becoming more and more apparent to the public. Siegel, a state child care advisor from California, stated, "Ten years ago

when you talked about day care, you were talking about welfare mothers. Today you're talking about everybody" (Watson et al., 1984, p. 14). Similarly, Ruopp, president of the Bank Street College of Education in New York, said, "The demographics suggest that day care will be a significant part of the early experience of growing numbers of children for the foreseeable future" (Wiessler and Thornton, 1983, p. 67).

In North Carolina, according to the Department of Human Resources, there are approximately 487,000 children under six years of age. More than 348,000 of these children have working mothers (Crisp, 1984). Approximately 94,000 of these children live in poverty (Niblock, 1983). Comparatively, only about 9,316 low-income preschoolers are enrolled in Head Start; 75,334 children are served in public school kindergarten (Crisp, 1984), and there are approximately 17,190 places available for children in quality preschools, or preschools holding Level II standards (Niblock, 1983; Crisp, 1984). In summary, in North Carolina these quality programs serve only approximately 101,000 of the 348,000 children of working mothers who need to be served.

The North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children reported in NC-aeyc News (1984) that the percentage of mothers of preschool children who work outside the home is greater in North Carolina (59 percent) than for the rest of the nation (47 percent). Therefore, the proportion of children needing day care is greatest in our state. Moreover, according to a regional report on Laurinburg radio station WSTS, the percentage of working mothers in our state is expected to reach an all-time high of 85 percent by the end of the decade. These statistics seem to suggest that high

quality early childhood programs are needed for the young children of working mothers in our state.

While a total of approximately 203,230 places are needed, options available to North Carolina mothers are limited. Some of the present child care situations a mother may choose from include: Privately owned half-day preschools and full-day child care centers, church sponsored half-day preschools and full-day child care centers, federally funded half-day preschools and full-day child care centers, industry sponsored (usually full-day) centers, or family day care homes (Maxim, 1980).

Privately owned centers may be divided into two categories: 1) Private proprietary to produce a profit for the owner and 2) Voluntary nonprofit programs that focus on child care and protection. However, private, non-government funded services are the norm for centers (Hendrick, 1980). Privately owned centers generally serve a large number of children and sometimes have elaborate facilities (Watson et al., 1984). According to Wiessler and Thornton (1983), there are more than 22,000 privately sponsored child care centers in our nation, and they are usually open at least ten hours a day, five days a week. There are franchises of day care centers in our nation, the three largest and most renowned being La Petite Academy, Children's World Inc., and Kinder Care. Kinder Care, started in 1969, now has 800 centers, 8,700 employees, and serves 60,000 children in 38 states and Canada (Wiessler and Thornton, 1984). Results of a 1982 survey reported in Changing Times (1984) suggest that day care centers make up 15 percent of the arrangements working mothers made for their children under five years of age, and two percent

of preschoolers with working mothers were enrolled in the commercial centers run by national franchises like Kinder Care.

Non-profit centers are sponsored by churches, civic groups, employers, or labor unions. The National Council of Churches announced that 25,000 churches are involved in some type of child-care program, and these churches are serving more than one million children. (Wiessler and Thornton, 1984).

Relative to industrial care, some employers are beginning to lend a hand with child care. More than 500 organizations, 60 percent of which are hospitals, have started some form of day care program (Wiessler and Thornton, 1984). However, in spite of new tax incentives, other employers have refused to develop child care programs. Newsweek (Watson et al., 1984) reports that in 1979, Coors Beer Company, near Denver, Colorado, gave quite some thought to building a day care center. Deciding that the center would have to operate around the clock, as the brewery does, the company felt that the \$750,000 project was too expensive, and they rejected it.

At present, another full-day alternative is the care being given to children in the unlicensed homes of relatives and friends (Hendrick, 1980). There are 1.5 million "family day care homes," or private homes where six or fewer children can be cared for (Changing Times, 1984). These family day care centers are often, but not always, unregulated in any way, and it is estimated that they provide as much as 70 percent of the total child care available in the United States (Hendrick, 1980). In North Carolina, it is estimated that more than 10,000 children are cared for in unregulated day-care homes (NC-aeyc News, 1984).

Nationally, the average cost for a young child in day care is \$57 a week, and in some centers the fees go much higher (Watson et al., 1984). According to the local child care centers that have been investigated, parents can expect to pay \$25-\$35 per week for child care, or \$1300-\$1820 per year. The cost of child care tends to depend on the number of staff and personnel employed by the centers, whether or not the center receives federal or state funds, and the certification level of the center. Furthermore, while most day care centers are licensed by the state, state requirements deal mostly with safety features, fire codes, etc., and state licensed centers may not necessarily meet the requirements fulfilled by those centers holding Level II standards.

A new alternative that is being proposed to meet the increasing need for quality child care and to battle the cost of existing child care is a public, state funded, high quality preschool in the public schools of North Carolina for three- and four-year-olds. The details of this new proposal are still being refined; however, Dr. Phillips, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, declared his approval of this new alternative at a breakfast meeting with community leaders in Wilmington on September 22, 1983. Dr Phillips said:

The final priority I want to discuss with you today is the need to begin the development of day care centers in the public schools of North Carolina for three and four year olds. Day care programs should be phased in just the way kindergartens--one of the greatest educational success stories in our state's history--were. Our expanding knowledge of how children learn and grow, as well as the changing nature of our society, make the 1980's the time to begin public school programs for our very young children. . . . We must begin in the mid 80's as we did kindergartens in the mid 70's, serious provisions of day care programs for very young children in the public schools (p. 4).

The North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children, a concerned child advocacy group, is conducting a "Voices for Children Campaign" to increase the general public's awareness of the positive benefits brought about by high quality preschool education. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation with the Voices for Children Campaign released a report that defines the characteristics of a high quality program as follows:

- 1) It is well managed and monitored.
- 2) Parents become partners with teachers in educating the child.
- 3) Competent, committed teachers or caregivers plan and work together in teams to provide mutual support and individual attention to children.
- 4) The program is organized around a specific curriculum or set of principles for learning.
- 5) Teachers or caregivers are trained in the curriculum through ongoing, inservice training.
- 6) The program is regularly assessed to assure that goals for high quality are being met.

(North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children, 1983, p. 3).

Moreover, an editorial in The Charlotte Observer on December 8, 1983 entitled, "A Bold Proposal - Day Care Instead of Welfare" discusses the findings of a report conducted by a task force of civic and business leaders in Mecklenburg County. The article states:

Mecklenburg County commissioners accepted with unusually strong words of praise this week a study about county day-care problems compiled by a task force of civic and business leaders. The report's key finding was that the lack of affordable day care affects so many areas of community life that county government should accept responsibility for paying for such services for all low-income residents who need it.

In addition, the Mecklenburg task force proposed raising the tax rate if necessary to fund a program that would meet "known day-care needs." The report also suggests that the greater barrier to employment for many poverty-stricken, single parents is the lack of affordable day care and that day care assistance would allow many parents to get off welfare and find jobs. The editorial states that the proposal deserves consideration since its success could save the taxpayers money and give families a better chance to break the circle of poverty. The editorial also contends that, successful or not, it would be a justified experiment to pay people to work instead of paying them not to work.

Statement of the Problem

The idea of preschool and/or what Dr. Phillips termed "day care" in the public school is among the latest issues in early childhood education today. However, even though the preschool programs appear to be needed, they may not be implemented or prove successful unless public opinion favors them. There are those people who question the wisdom of educating three- and four-year-olds in the public schools. Can the total needs of young children, three or four years of age, be met in a public school environment? Concerns range from those dealing with the cost of the necessary staff-child ratios, training of teachers and caregivers, provision for rest and nutrition, and hours of operation to concerns about transporting these very young children to the school.

The purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes of Bladen County parents, educators, and politicians toward a public

preschool program for three- and four-year-old children. Bladen County was chosen because the researcher is seeking employment there, opinions were readily accessible, and it is the home of the researcher.

Definitions

As used throughout this paper, the terms parents, certified teachers, child care workers, and politicians are defined as follows:

- I. Parents - Mothers and/or fathers (natural or adoptive) having at least one child in the age range of Birth to 12 years.
- II. Educators
 - A. Certified Teachers - People who have been certified to teach grades kindergarten through four.
 - B. Child Care Workers - Non-certified people who work as care givers to children in day care situations.
- III. Politicians - Any elected official working in Bladen County Government and/or representing Bladen County.

A review of the related literature and research on the topic will be presented in Chapter II. Chapter III describes the methods and materials used in this study. The results of the study have been analyzed and reported in Chapter IV. Chapter V presents a discussion and conclusions drawn from the results of the survey.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter I, there is a growing need for quality care for young children in the nation and in North Carolina. This chapter will explore the effects of preschool on young children.

Professional and Expert Opinions

Based on their experiences, some professionals and experts in the field of early childhood education have definite beliefs about the effects of preschool, and these professionals are advocating quality child care. An editorial in The Fayetteville Observer (1984) entitled, "Day-Care Neglect" cites the expert opinion of Blank, director of child care for the Children's Defense Fund, which is the best known child advocacy group on the national level. Blank says it is plain that our nation refuses to acknowledge "day-care" as the first stage in the education of millions of American children, particularly since the census figures make it quite evident that in most homes, neither parent is at home all day; both are at work.

As reported in Newsweek (Watson et al. 1984) Jones, who runs a Kinder Care that serves 220 children in southeast Atlanta, states:

You can see all the difference in the world between a child who has been in a quality day-care program and one who hasn't. Most four-year-olds who haven't been in child-care programs can't do all the things our older two-year-olds can do. (p. 16).

Likewise, Blusiewicz, an Atlanta psychologist, contends that everything depends on "the quality of day care. The research is starting to show that kids in good day care centers do have some advantages. They are more socialized; they tend to deal better and feel more comfortable in groups later on" (Watson et al., 1984, p. 16). Hence, opinions lean toward high quality preschool education for young children.

Studies

While the opinions of educators and experts are important, one must ask what the figures show. In recent years, educators have looked at the effects of preschool programs on cognitive, social, and emotional development. The Voices for Children Campaign (1983) reports a success story concerning preschool education that took place in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Weikart, Ypsilanti's director of special education in 1960, and Beatty, principal of the Perry Elementary School, believed that scholastic problems could be prevented before they began, and that early childhood education could be the key to overcoming these problems. As a result, the Perry Preschool Project was formed. This project was unique in that it served children living in poverty and followed children for over 20 years. Of the 123 impoverished children in this study, half of their parents received welfare assistance and only one in five of their parents had finished high school. These children were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received a high quality program of preschool education, and the control group received no preschool. Afterwards, both groups attended the same schools with no special treatment, thus assuring

that the preschool program be the only difference. The children were followed and assessed regularly through childhood and their teen-age years. The results indicated that the early childhood program worked and also had long lasting effects. The following data is a portion of that obtained from the Perry Preschool Project:

Among Children Like Those in the Study, For Every 100 Children:

	<u>With Preschool</u>	<u>Without Preschool</u>
-Number arrested by their early 20s	31	51
-Number employed at age 19	50	32
-Number supporting themselves completely by their own (or spouse's) earnings	45	24
-Number of years in special education	2.1	3.6
-Number that drop out of high school	33	51
-Number that attend college or job training courses	38	21

(High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1983, p. 2).

These same children who went to preschool did noticeably better on achievement tests throughout their school careers than those without preschool. They also averaged more than one full grade equivalent better on tests than the control group at age 14. These former preschoolers showed greater motivation to do well in school, did more homework, and had higher educational aspirations. Finally, economic analysis of the Perry Preschool Project showed that the program returned to society over four thousand dollars over the

lifetimes of the participants for every thousand dollars invested. Economic returns included a decreased need for special education, reduced legal costs because of reduction in delinquency, and higher earnings projected because the children who went to preschool stayed in school longer. (North Carolina Voices for Children Campaign, 1983).

There is a growing number of studies besides the Perry Preschool Project that support the position that high quality early childhood education has long-term effects. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (1983) reports that a solid collection of this evidence came from a "Consortium of Longitudinal Studies" which originated from the ideas of Lazar and Grotberg in 1975. Lazar and Grotberg wanted a central gathering of data from several early preschool studies. With the support of the United States Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies was formed. This consortium provided limited aid to individual investigators for continued data collection. The eight researchers that made up the consortium studied predominately Black youngsters and followed up on their studies many years later. Based on their research, the consortium observed that preschool education significantly reduced the number of children placed in special education or retained in a grade. This finding is significant since special education and grade retention costs the school nearly twice as much as regular education placement. (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1983).

Another document entitled Evaluation of Prekindergarten Head Start (Toll, 1976) is a research report telling the positive effects

of the Philadelphia Prekindergarten Head Start program, a child development program for three- and four-year-old children from low-income families designed to improve the child's physical and emotional health. In this program, the Denver Developmental Screening Test (DDST) was administered during October, 1975 and April, 1976 to 82 percent and 84 percent of the population respectively. In April, only 1.8 percent of the population was identified as having a developmental delay as defined by the DDST, a decrease of about 40 percent from the Fall administration. According to the report, "the population screened had improved after a year of program participation so that there were far fewer children 'at risk' than were found in the norming population."

A fourth research report (Ireland, 1968) gives the evaluation of a Title I Preschool Program in the Atlanta Public Schools. The effects of prekindergarten experience upon subsequent school experience were evaluated. Prekindergarteners improved on three subscales of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) and on color and shape naming. The children having prekindergarten experience surpassed those who did not have the preschool experience on the vocal encoding scale of the ITPA.

These studies, research reports, and others like them suggest that preschool can be quite successful.

Even though professional opinions, research reports, and longitudinal studies illustrate that preschool programs are beneficial to children and society, there are still existing opinions and biases that stir up a debate over whether or not children under age five can be effectively cared for in a public school environment.

Caldwell (1981), former president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, believes the public school is the best, most logical place for providing preschool care since every neighborhood has a school. However, Caldwell cited four major deterrents (other than the need for money) to public preschool programs:

1. Lack of conceptual clarity.
There is still a great deal of misunderstanding concerning what preschool education is and what it should provide children.
2. Negative attitudes toward education.
Day care people often do not want to deal with the field of education because it often seems to already be "in a mess."
3. Resistance of school personnel.
A general "we've already got more to do than we can do" attitude often develops causing personnel to shun the added responsibilities of day care.
4. Subtle and disguised sexism.
Because day care is thought to be a woman's service and it aids her in employment outside the home, it tends to "break up" the family unit.

The debate continues over preschool education and its implementation in the public school. This chapter has reported both sides of this debate.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Introduction

Chapter I summarized the growing need for child care. Chapter II presented (from the available literature) the pros of preschool education and noted deterrants to the implementation of preschool programs in the public schools. This chapter will explain the methods and procedures used by the researcher to conduct the study.

The Sample

Initially, 125 people were surveyed (as described later). Of these, 66 responded. Of these 66, 15 were parents, 21 were certified teachers, 15 were child care workers, and 15 were politicians. Each group is described below based on the demographic data they provided.

Parents

Of the 15 working parents who returned the survey, the mean age was 26-35 years. Fourteen of the parents were females while one was male. One parent was divorced, two were separated, and 12 were married. The mean number of children each parent had was zero to two. One parent completed elementary school, and one parent completed junior high school. There were eight high school graduates, two technical school graduates, and three college graduates. Parents were employed as factory workers, sales clerks, store owners,

secretaries, and security guards. All married parents reported that their spouses were employed. Spouses were employed as factory workers, sales clerks, military personnel, pediatricians, heavy equipment operators, and butchers. Eleven of the parents owned land in Bladen County while four parents did not. The mean income level of parents was \$20,000-\$24,999.

Teachers

Of the 21 teachers who responded, the mean age was 36-45 years. All the teachers were females. One teacher was single; two were divorced, and 18 were married. The average number of children each teacher had was zero to two. All teachers were college graduates. Of the 18 married teachers, all had employed spouses except for one. Spouses' occupations included farmers, factory workers, sales clerks, store owners, educators, engineers, insurance salesmen, and truck drivers. Seventeen of the twenty-one teachers owned land in Bladen County while four did not. The average income level was \$20,000-\$24,999.

Child Care Workers

Of the 15 child care workers who returned the survey, the mean age was 36-45 years. All of the child care workers were females. One was single while 14 of the workers were married. The mean number of children each worker had was zero to two. Ten of the workers were high school graduates; two were technical school graduates, and three workers were college graduates. Of the 14 married workers, 13 reported that their spouses were employed while one spouse was not employed. Spouses' occupations included factory workers,

military personnel, lawyers, telephone repairmen, carpet installers, lab technicians, construction workers, reporters, and telecommunicators. Ten of the workers owned land in Bladen County. The mean income level of the child care workers was \$20,000-\$24,999.

Politicians

Of the 15 politicians who returned the survey, the mean age was 46-55 years. Thirteen of the politicians surveyed were males, and two were females. One politician was widowed while the remaining fourteen were married. The mean number of children that the politicians had were three to five. Three politicians completed junior high school; six politicians were high school graduates, and five politicians were college graduates. Ten politicians listed themselves as employed while four listed themselves as not employed. The politicians' occupations included farmers, store owners, pipe fitters, and craftsmen. Eight politicians reported that they had employed spouses; five politicians listed their spouses as unemployed. The spouses' occupations included factory workers, store owners, educators, lawyers, and bookkeepers. Fourteen of the politicians owned land in Bladen County. Their mean income level was \$25,000-\$29,999.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire, which is found in Appendix A, was used to obtain all information from the people surveyed. Part I of the questionnaire was an attitude scale that asked the respondents to read the seventeen statements about public preschool education and decide whether he/she strongly agrees (SA), agrees (A), disagrees (D),

strongly disagrees (SD), or is undecided (UD). To show his/her response, the person circles the appropriate abbreviation, SA, A, D, SD, or UD. Part II was optional and requested demographic information about the respondent, such as age, marital status, income level, etc.

Methods

Initially 125 individuals were identified as possible participants in the study. A sample of 50 parents, 25 certified teachers, 25 child care workers, and 25 politicians (terms defined on p. 8) were distributed a copy of the survey.

Politicians were randomly selected by a member of the faculty from a list obtained at the Bladen County courthouse.

Teachers represented a selected available sample. The researcher asked the principals at three of the county's elementary schools to distribute a copy of the survey to each of the teachers of kindergarten through fourth grade in the school by placing the survey in their school mailboxes.

Day care, or child care workers, were selected by using the phone book. Five child care centers in the county received five questionnaires for their workers.

Parents' opinions were obtained by sending home a copy of the survey with first and second graders at another elementary school in the county.

Persons surveyed were asked to complete the survey and return it to the researcher via a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

After approximately 16 weeks, 53 percent of the surveys had been returned and were used by the researcher to report and analyze

the results. Demographic information was recorded and has been reported in this chapter. Next, the responses of the parents, teachers, child care workers, and politicians were tallied and the responses of each group were evaluated by means of Chi square. Chapter IV contains specific results. In each case the $p < .05$ level of significance was used and the null hypotheses were that there would be no difference in expected -vs- observed frequencies.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction

Chapters I, II, and III dealt with the rationale, available literature, and methods and materials, respectively, used in this study. This chapter presents the results of this investigation of the opinions of Bladen County parents, educators, and politicians. The researcher obtained these opinions by having the respondents complete an attitude scale about preschool education and its implementation in the public school system.

Parents' Responses

The parents who returned the survey agreed with five of the seventeen statements. They agreed that children who attend preschool do better in school in later years than children who do not go to preschool. They agreed that everyone should get a good, high quality education. They agreed that the workers in a preschool program should be required to hold some type of degree or state certification in the area of child care. However, the parents agreed that the advantages of a public preschool program would not justify its expense or the money it would drain from other educational programs, and they felt that federal subsidies or tax advantages would be better alternatives to a state sponsored day care situation.

Parents disagreed with three of the seventeen statements including the idea that society has the responsibility to care for

the children of working mothers. Parents also disagreed with the ideas that the public school is a bad influence on young children and that preschool education is detrimental or encourages the break-up of the American family.

Parents' opinions of the remaining nine statements did not indicate any determinable preference. Table 1 contains the specific Chi-square values for the parents' responses.

Table 1

Chi-square Values Computed Determining
Parents' Attitudes Toward Public Preschool
Programs for Three- and Four-Year-Olds

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
1	11.6	<.01	Parents disagreed
2	10.0	<.01	Parents disagreed
3	2.8	NS	Not determined
4	4.8	NS	Not determined
5	2.8	NS	Not determined
6	2.8	NS	Not determined
7	6.4	<.05	Parents agreed
8	2.8	NS	Not determined
9	3.6	NS	Not determined
10	1.2	NS	Not determined
11	1.6	NS	Not determined
12	7.6	<.05	Parents disagreed
13	8.4	<.05	Parents agreed
14	8.4	<.05	Parents agreed

Table 1
(Cont.)

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
15	30.0	<.01	Parents agreed
16	7.6	<.05	Parents agreed
17	5.2	NS	Not determined

Teachers' Responses

The teachers who returned the survey agreed with five of the seventeen statements. They favored schools for four-year-olds and were in agreement that they would like for their own three- or four-year-old child to be enrolled in a public school preschool program. The teachers were familiar with the movement to organize public programs for preschoolers. Teachers agreed that everyone should have a good, high quality education and that public preschool workers should be required to hold some type of degree or state certification in the area of child care.

The teachers disagreed with seven of the seventeen statements. They did not feel that preschool education is detrimental nor that it encourages the break-up of the American family. They disagreed that four-year-olds should be kept from a school setting and that a public preschool program would rush the child and treat him/her as a "little adult." Teachers did not feel the public school is a bad influence on a young child. Moreover, they disagreed with the idea that society has the responsibility to care for the children of working mothers.

No identifiable preferences were evidenced on the other five statements. Table 2 contains the specific Chi-square values for the teachers' responses.

Table 2

Chi-square Values Computed Determining
Teachers' Attitudes Toward Public Preschool
Programs for Three- and Four-Year-Olds

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
1	31.14	<.01	Teachers disagreed
2	11.14	<.01	Teachers disagreed
3	14.00	<.01	Teachers disagreed
4	12.28	<.01	Teachers disagreed
5	31.14	<.01	Teachers disagreed
6	4.57	NS	Not determined
7	4.89	NS	Not determined
8	12.28	<.01	Teachers agreed
9	17.49	<.01	Teachers disagreed
10	3.86	NS	Not determined
11	6.09	<.05	Teachers agreed
12	12.39	<.01	Teachers disagreed
13	36.29	<.01	Teachers agreed
14	5.43	NS	Not determined
15	42.00	<.01	Teachers agreed
16	2.00	NS	Not determined
17	22.85	<.01	Teachers agreed

Child Care Workers' Responses

The child care workers who responded to the survey agreed with four of the seventeen statements. They agreed that children who go to preschool do better in school in later years than children who do not go to preschool. Results show that they would like for their own three- or four-year-old child to be enrolled in a public school preschool program. They felt that everyone should get a good high quality education and that child care workers should hold some type of degree or state certification in the area of child care.

The workers disagreed with six of the statements. They disagreed that preschool education pushes children too quickly, too soon; makes "little adults" of them, is detrimental, or that it encourages the break-up of the American family. They also disagreed that young children need time to play and should not be in a school situation or environment. The child care workers disagreed that it is the responsibility of society to care for the children of working mothers.

No identifiable preferences were evidenced on the other seven statements. Table 3 contains the specific Chi-square values for the child care workers' responses.

Table 3

Chi-square Values Computed Determining
Child Care Workers' Attitudes Toward Public Preschool
Programs for Three- and Four-Year-Olds

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
1	30.00	<.01	Workers disagreed
2	19.2	<.01	Workers disagreed

Table 3
(cont.)

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
3	12.4	<.01	Workers disagreed
4	7.64	<.05	Workers disagreed
5	12.4	<.01	Workers disagreed
6	5.2	NS	Not determined
7	7.6	<.05	Workers agreed
8	14.4	<.01	Workers agreed
9	19.2	<.01	Workers disagreed
10	1.2	NS	Not determined
11	1.6	NS	Not determined
12	1.6	NS	Not determined
13	7.6	<.05	Workers agreed
14	.4	NS	Not determined
15	24.4	<.01	Workers agreed
16	5.2	NS	Not determined
17	.14	NS	Not determined

Politicians' Responses

Politicians who returned the survey agreed with six of the seventeen statements. They agreed with the idea that everyone should get a good, high quality education. They also agreed that prekindergarten programs would push three- and four-year-olds too quickly, too soon and that the public school is a bad influence on three- and four-year-olds. They also agreed that the advantages of public preschool programs would not justify the expense they

require or the money they would take from other educational programs. The politicians agreed that funding of preschool programs should come from private sources. Again, politicians agreed that workers in the preschool programs should be required to hold some type of degree or state certification in the area of child care.

In contrast, politicians disagreed with four of the seventeen statements. They did not agree with the idea that preschool education outside the home was detrimental or encouraged the break-up of the American family. Moreover, they disagreed with the view that society has the responsibility to care for the children of working mothers. They also disagreed with the belief that day care in the public schools would be a wise investment for society.

No identifiable preferences were evidenced for the other seven statements. Table 4 contains the specific Chi-square values for the politicians' responses.

Table 4

Chi-square Values Computed Determining
Politicians' Attitudes Toward Public Preschool
Programs for Three- and Four-Year-Olds

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
1	16.2	<.01	Politicians disagreed
2	27.86	<.01	Politicians disagreed
3	4.42	NS	Not determined
4	4.42	NS	Not determined
5	17.70	<.01	Politicians disagreed
6	31.89	<.01	Politicians disagreed

Table 4
(cont.)

Statement No.	χ^2	p	Direction
7	3.6	NS	Not determined
8	5.2	NS	Not determined
9	7.42	<.05	Politicians agreed
10	9.14	<.05	Politicians agreed
11	5.28	NS	Not determined
12	7.42	<.05	Politicians agreed
13	17.8	<.01	Politicians agreed
14	6.14	<.05	Politicians agreed
15	24.4	.01	Politicians agreed
16	5.2	NS	Not determined
17	.4	NS	Not determined

This chapter reported the results of the attitude scale completed by Bladen County parents, teachers, child care workers, and politicians. These results are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY

Introduction

Chapter I presented the rationale for this study. Chapter II reviewed the available research and literature concerning public preschool programs. Chapter III explained the methods and procedures of the researcher in conducting this study. Chapter IV presented the specific Chi-square values computed for the responses of the four groups surveyed. These responses and results will be analyzed in this chapter.

Commonalities

In reviewing the results, certain commonalities appeared. All four groups that were surveyed held the same view on four of the seventeen statements. In contrast, two statements showed areas of disagreement among the groups.

There seemed to be general agreement in all four groups on statement one. They all disagreed that preschool education was detrimental and that it encouraged the break-up of the American family. Also, statement two, regarding society's responsibility to care for the children of working mothers was met with disagreement from all four groups. The four groups surveyed agreed on statement thirteen concerning the idea that people who work with young children should hold some degree or state certification in the area of child care. All groups agreed with statement fifteen

which contends that everyone should have a good, high quality education.

This agreement may be explained by the fact that most people in today's world see the need for an education provided to all ages by qualified people. Furthermore, society leaves the decision of whether or not to have children to the parents; therefore, it also leaves the responsibility of caring for the children to the parents. Perhaps the public has not fully accepted the fact that in today's world a woman's place may not only be in the home, but also in the work force. As more and more women need child care, the public's view toward society's responsibility for caring for children could possibly change. However, at this time, Bladen County opinion contends that child care is not the responsibility of society.

There were also two noteworthy areas of disagreement. Statement nine contends that prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year-olds push children too quickly, too soon. Politicians agreed with statement nine while teachers and child care workers disagreed with the statement. This disagreement might arise because teachers and child care workers are involved in the education of children, and perhaps they have seen positive results of an education that begins in the early years. Politicians, however, may not feel the same need to start education at an early age, and they probably have not had the opportunity to observe preschools in action.

Statement twelve contends that the public school is a bad influence on a young child and that he/she should not be taken from his/her home at the early age of three or four. Again, politicians agreed while teachers and parents disagreed. This disagreement is

perhaps because teachers feel that the public school, of which they are a part, is not a bad influence, and parents who need child care probably trust the public school as much as any institution. Politicians may be considering the cost of moving preschoolers into a school, since they agreed that the change of a preschool program would not justify the money it would drain from other education programs.

The remaining eleven statements had one to three groups in agreement, with the other group(s) in the non-determinable column. For example, with statement number three, teachers and child care workers disagreed that four year olds need time to play and should not be in schools while the opinions of parents and politicians were not determinable, and no group agreed with the statement. Group responses are compared and summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Comparison of Group Responses

Statement No.	Agreed	Disagreed	Not Determined
1		Parents Teachers Child Care Workers Politicians	
2		Parents Teachers Child Care Workers Politicians	
3		Teachers Child Care Workers	Parents Politicians

Table 5
(cont.)

Statement No.	Agreed	Disagreed	Not Determined
4		Teachers Child Care Workers	Parents Politicians
5		Teachers Child Care Workers Politicians	Parents
6		Politicians	Parents Teachers Child Care Workers
7	Parents Child Care Workers		Teachers Politicians
8	Teachers Child Care Workers		Parents Politicians
9	Politicians	Teachers Child Care Workers	Parents
10	Politicians		Parents Teachers Child Care Workers
11	Teachers		Parents Child Care Workers Politicians
12	Politicians	Parents Teachers	Child Care Workers

Table 5
(cont.)

Statement No.	Agreed	Disagreed	Not Determined
13	Parent Teacher Child Care Workers Politicians		
14	Parents Politicians		Teachers Child Care Workers
15	Parents Teachers Child Care Workers Politicians		
16	Parents		Teachers Child Care Workers Politicians
17	Teachers		Parents Child Care Workers Politicians

Summary

More than ever before, women are seeking employment outside of their homes. Of these working women, those who have children need adequate (preferably high quality) care for their children. However, if fees at day care centers continue to skyrocket, fewer parents will be able to afford child care. What will the parents do? Should they quit their jobs and look for governmental assistance like welfare? A recently suggested alternative for these children and their parents is a preschool program for three- and four-year-olds in the public school. Such an endeavor was piloted

in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and this experiment has been monitored over twenty years by following the children in the Perry Preschool Project throughout their lives. Positive results have been evidenced. For a preschool program of this type to be implemented in our state, it is the opinion of the researcher that the majority of the public must favor such a program and desire to have it. Because it is the home of the researcher, opinions were readily accessible, and the researcher hopes to work there, Bladen County was chosen to have its parents, teachers, child care workers, and politicians surveyed to determine their opinions of the public preschool program. Results show that although preschool education is generally accepted and not seen as detrimental, the public school program was viewed as favorable only by the teachers and child care workers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At this point, I must stop and express my gratitude to the many individuals who helped my project become the reality that you now hold in your hands.

I want to thank each person who took the time to complete and return a survey. Without their cooperation, my data and knowledge would have been incomplete.

My deepest appreciation goes to Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Dr. Judith Wish, Dr. Robert Brown, and Dr. James Chavis for their professional advice and personal encouragement that kept me "on the track" during the researching and writing of this paper. I also wish to thank Dr. Charles Jenkins and the Chancellor's Scholars Council for allowing me to be a part of the Chancellor's Scholars Program and carry out this project.

I would like to say a special "Thank you" to my parents who have prayerfully, lovingly, and financially supported me throughout my life and especially during the past four years.

Finally, I thank God for the health, strength, and wisdom to complete this paper which culminates my undergraduate studies.

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May 2, 1984

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Susan Packer, and I am a senior majoring in Early Childhood Education at Pembroke State University. I am also a member of the Chancellor's Scholars Program at Pembroke State. To meet a requirement of the Chancellor's Scholars Program, I must do a research project in the area of my major. I have chosen to survey politicians, educators and parents in Bladen County to discover their attitudes and opinions of a public preschool program for three- and four-year-old children.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please do not include your name on the survey! I am interested in your honest opinion and attitudes more than your identity. Your cooperation in my research will be greatly appreciated! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Susan Packer

Susan Packer

Survey
*P1-5-84

Please read each of the following statements. Decide if you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), or are Undecided (UD), and circle your answer.

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|----|----|
| 1. Preschool education of young children outside the home is detrimental and encourages the break-up of the American family. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 2. Society has the responsibility to care for the children of working mothers. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 3. Four-year-olds need time to play and should not be in schools. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 4. Sending children to a preschool setting in the public school at the age of four years tends to make adults rush children and treat them as "little adults" instead of children. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 5. Loving, nurturing, and good moral character should be the only qualifications of workers needed to work with three- and four-year-olds. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 6. I believe that day care in the public schools would be a wise investment for society. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 7. Children who go to preschool do better in school in later years than children who do not go to preschool. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 8. If I had a three- or four-year-old, I would like for him/her to be enrolled in a public school prekindergarten or preschool program. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 9. Prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year-olds push children too quickly, too soon. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 10. Funding of three- and four-year-old preschool programs should come from private sources. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 11. I would favor schools for four-year-olds. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 12. The public school is a bad influence on a young child and he/she should not be taken from his/her home at the early age of three or four. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 13. To be qualified to care for young children, the workers should hold some type of degree or state certification in the area of child care. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 14. The advantages of a prekindergarten program would not justify the expense it requires or the money it would drain from other educational programs. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 15. Everyone should get a good, high quality education. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 16. Federal subsidies or perhaps tax advantages for private day care would be better alternatives to a state sponsored day care situation. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |
| 17. I am familiar with the movement to organize public day care or prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year-old children. | SA | A | D | SD | UD |

*Surveys were coded as follows: Parents - Pt-5-84 Teachers - CT-5-84
Child Care Workers - CC-5-84 Politicians - Pl-5-84

Please complete the remainder of the survey about yourself by checking or filling in the appropriate blanks. This information will be used in grouping and reporting the results of the survey. It will not be used to try to identify you. Although I need and would appreciate this information, if you feel uncomfortable answering this section of the survey, simply omit it. However, please return your completed section I.

1. Age
 18 - 25 years
 26 - 35 years
 36 - 45 years
 46 - 55 years
 56 - 65 years
 above 65 years
2. Sex
 Male
 Female
3. Marital Status
 Single
 Married
 Separated
 Divorced
 Widowed
4. Number of Children
 0 - 2
 3 - 5
 6 - 8
 more than 8
5. Level of Education
 completed elementary school (grades 1-6)
 completed junior high school (grades 7-9)
 high school graduate
 technical school graduate
 college graduate
 two-year school
 four-year school
 other (Please specify - i.e. graduate work etc.)
6. Are you employed?
 yes
 no
7. If you are employed, what is your occupation?
 farmer
 factory worker
 sales clerk
 store owner
 educator
 politician
 doctor/nurse
 military
 lawyer
 other (please specify)
8. If you are married, is your spouse employed?
 yes
 no
9. If your spouse is employed, what is his/her occupation?
 farmer
 factory worker
 sales clerk
 store owner
 educator
 politician
 doctor/nurse
 military
 lawyer
 other (please specify)
10. Do you own land in Bladen County?
 yes
 no
11. Income Level (yearly)
 under \$5,000
 \$5,000 - \$9,999
 \$10,000 - \$14,999
 \$15,000 - \$19,999
 \$20,000 - \$24,999
 \$25,000 - \$29,999
 \$30,000 - \$34,999
 \$35,000 and over