



Examining Kindergarten School Readiness Skills for Children with Special Needs

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Background

School readiness relates to a child's capacity to master various skills and correlates with greater academic success and positive development (Janus et al., 2007). Acquisition of school readiness skills are especially important within the first years of life as they create a foundation for higher level learning and thinking (Lapointe, Ford, & Zumbo, 2007). School readiness is impacted by a number of factors both inside and outside the classroom. The lack of universal assessment leads to difficulty identifying and providing appropriate services to children.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a measure that comprehensively identifies a child's school readiness across five developmental domains:

- Emotional Maturity
 - Physical Health and Well-Being
 - Language and Cognitive Development
 - Communication Skills and General Knowledge
 - Social Competence
- A universal or consistent approach to measuring school readiness can better identify service needs and allow for appropriate preventative measures to ensure success upon entering school and throughout the lifespan.

Project Goals

1. Identify the predictors of school readiness.
2. Determine the differences in predictors of school readiness for children with or without special needs, as determined by the presence or absence of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
3. Assess whether preschool and parental involvement significantly predicts Kindergarten school readiness.

Methods

Study Design:

Analysis of archival data on school readiness of Kindergarten students in a suburban community obtained during the 2011- 2012 school year.

Descriptive statistics and statistical analyses including Chi Square analyses to identify predictors of school readiness.

Participants and Setting:

Participants included 18 teachers in 18 Kindergarten classrooms who completed an EDI on 357 students.

Table 1: Participant Demographics (N= 357)

Gender		
Male (n= 181)		50.7 %
Female (n= 176)		49.3 %
Age in Years		
mean		5.7
SD		
Ethnicity		357
White (n= 82)		23 %
Non-white (n= 275)		77 %
Socioeconomic Status		
Within poverty guidelines (n=194)		54.3 %
Exceeds poverty guidelines (n=163)		45.7 %
Primary Language		
English (n= 185)		51.8 %
Non-English (n =172)		49.2 %
IEP Status		
IEP (n= 30)		8.4 %
No IEP (n= 327)		91.6 %

Results

Table 2: Frequencies for Children with and without IEPs Identified as Very Ready or Vulnerable/Not Ready

	Children with IEP		Children without IEP	
	N	%	N	%
The Five Developmental Domains				
Physical Health and Well Being				
<10 % Vulnerable/Not Ready	8	26.7	16	4.9
>75 % Very Ready	8	26.7	160	48.9
Social Competence				
<10 % Vulnerable/Not Ready	1	3.3	23	7.0
>75 % Very Ready	6	20.0	103	31.5
Emotional Maturity				
<10 % Vulnerable/Not Ready	4	13.3	22	6.7
>75 % Very Ready	7	23.3	72	22.0
Language and Cognitive				
<10 % Vulnerable/Not Ready	8	26.7	19	5.8
>75 % Very Ready	3	10.0	73	22.3
General Knowledge and Communication				
<10 % Vulnerable/Not Ready	3	10.0	20	6.1
>75 % Very Ready	3	10.0	111	33.9

Table 3: Significant Predictors of Kindergarten School Readiness ($\geq 75^{\text{th}}$ %) Using Chi Square

Domain	Predictors
Physical Health and Well-Being	•Parent Volunteer •Gender •IEP status
Social Competence	•Parent Volunteer
Emotional Maturity	•Parent Volunteer
Language and Cognitive Development	•Parent Volunteer •English First Language •Hispanic
General Knowledge and Communication	•Parent Volunteer •Hispanic •English First Language •IEP Status •Gender
All 5 Domains	•Parent Volunteer

Conclusions

Several factors were found to be linked to school readiness including English as a first language, gender, ethnicity, and, in particular, having a parent volunteer in school (See Table 3). Of these factors, having a parent volunteer in school was significantly related to higher scores on all 5 domains measuring school readiness. Surprisingly, poverty and having attended an early childhood program (ECP) were not linked to any of the developmental domains. It was found that the majority of children living in poverty attended an ECP suggesting that the ECP potentially mitigated the potential effects of poverty. This possibility is an area for future research. For children with IEPs, a significant and positive relationship was found for General Knowledge and Communication as well as Physical Health and Well Being. One possible explanation for this finding is that students with IEPs typically receive specialized services in speech and OT.

It should be noted that the EDI was not developed in the US and was not meant to be used for individual assessment but rather as a population-based measure. Furthermore, there is no universal measure of school readiness. Our research highlights the need to develop a more systematic approach to measuring Kindergarten readiness.

References

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