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Running head: TRANSITION INTO A NEW SCHOOL CLASSROOM

New Student Transition Program into Elementary School

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State University of New York College at Brockport

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the wonderful journey I have experienced in the Counselor Education Program at SUNY Brockport. The amount of self-awareness I have achieved, in the past three years, has been enormous. It has been a whirlwind of experiences that made me grow as a person and has allowed me to form wonderful connections with my professors, supervisors and clients. The memories of my experiences will be cherished and applied toward my future endeavors to inspire individuals the way this program has inspired me.

A sincere thank you goes out to all my SUNY Brockport professors, Dr. Pat Goodspeed, Dr. Leslie McCulloch, Dr. Jeff Cochran, Dr. Susan Seem, Dr. Tom Hernandez and Dr. Muhyi Shakoor. Without the patience and support from all of you, I would never have been able to form such wonderful connections with others and most importantly would not have been able to successfully complete this path of learning in my life.

Many thanks and appreciation goes out to Donna Ray Evans, Ginther Elementary School Counselor and Amy Gaesser, Oliver Middle School Counselor, for being such wonderful supervisors and role models to me. Their ability to work together to help foster my learning has been remarkable. Not only were they wonderful supervisors, but great inspiring friends who were always there to listen and support me when necessary. My internship experiences will always be cherished and held close to my heart.

My classmates have been not only wonderful friends whom I have grown so close to, but also wonderful coaches throughout our journey together. It would have been

impossible to learn so much without all the support from one another. I know my classmates will not only be my colleagues, but my lifelong friends.

My overwhelming love and appreciation goes out to my family; my mother, my father and my brother for always believing in me and supporting me in every decision along my journey of self-growth. They have inspired me to reach for my goals and never fall short of the finish line. I know I could not become who I am today, without their everlasting love and support.

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Abstract

Transition into a new elementary school is difficult and frightening for children in Kindergarten. This article focuses on the impact peers, parents, teachers and counselors have when helping support the transition into a new school setting. Environmental, social, physical and emotional issues all play a key role in the transition process. Interventions are implemented to a new Kindergarten Student at a Brockport Elementary School to determine if they affect the school adjustment and forming of friendships for that five year old child. Recommendations for counselor practice are included.

New Student Transition Program into Elementary School

In the United States, it is very common for families and children to have to migrate to different geographical locations. The migration of families in the United States has been caused by many social conditions such as availability of jobs for parents, breaking of families, and unexpected natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornados and or earthquakes. When American families are forced to change locations, the children are also affected and have to change schools.

The loss of jobs for families has become a common situation that places lots of stress and burden on one's family. It is common for families to have to move their families to a new geographical region in order to receive jobs to support their families (Metropolitan Housing Council, 2004). Leaving behind old memories and friends, the families are forced to move in order to survive in society and support their families. That is one example of a social condition that causes children to have to move to a new school district during the school year.

In the United States, the root cause of poverty and income disparity is linked to the types of families Americans form (Boushey, Brocht, Gundersen, & Bernstein, 2001). It has been argued that broken families earn less and experience lower levels of educational attainment (Fagan, 1999). For example, broken families live in low income families which have common risk factors such as minority status, single motherhood, low parent education and young parental age. Growing up in broken families, the children are involved in the life of poverty and family and instability and that lifestyle becomes natural to them. For that reason, it is common that broken families

foster broken families (Fagan, 1999). The broken families experiencing poverty often force children to adjust to changes in family life and move to new unfamiliar environments, such as housing structures and schools. As a result of single parent households, low parent education level, young parental age and low income families, children are often forced to move from one school to another during the academic school year.

Natural disasters, for example, Hurricane Katrina, also have a huge impact on the migration of American families. The unexpected natural disaster separated family members from each other and forced the family members to leave family behind and move to new areas. Some family members were transported to shelters while other members were sent to other parts of the world to escape the disaster. Hurricane Katrina is one of many examples of natural disasters that hit a geographic location and caused families to be separated and forced them to move to a foreign location.

The combination of poverty, single parent households, and the changing of schools can be very stressful not only on the children involved, but also on the families. Stability within the family is lost and the child is forced to go through school transitions which are often even more stressful on a child. Examples of stressful school transitions placed on children are becoming familiar with a new teacher, new school building, new rules and new friends in the classroom. The new student in an unfamiliar school experiences many feelings such as feelings of loneliness, sadness, and feelings of being scared and lost. All those feelings are often intensified when the transition happens after the start of the new school year. The feelings are stronger after the school year has begun because rules have already been set, friendships within the classroom have already been

formed and the new student is placed into an unfamiliar classroom. The child holds many stronger scared feelings because they are the only new student that has to immerse him/herself into an established classroom. As a result of the already established classroom and having to become familiar with a new building, a new teacher, new rules and having to make new friends the transition is very challenging for a Kindergartener. The changes do not stop there. After the child's school day, they then head home to where they are still dealing with many changes within their own family. They are expected to become familiar with their new housing, new neighborhood and new friends in their community. All the different changes for a Kindergartener can be very overwhelming and having support in their lives is imperative for a successful transition.

New Student Transition Program for Elementary School Students

The goal of this program is to provide elementary school counselors with an overview of available and applicable literature, and a foundation upon which to build an effective new student transition program. It is to inform the school counselors about the amount of stress that children often have about the changes within their lives, the importance of family ties to the school, and it shows the importance of outside support during the transition. A review of the available literature supports an integrated, long-term, school wide approach to working with new Kindergarten students in creating a supportive environment and a successful school transition.

Review of the Literature

History of Kindergarten

The word kindergarten is defined as “children’s garden.” Children are considered to be young plants growing in a garden (Wills & Lindberg, 1967). Froebel developed the first Kindergarten in Germany in 1837. His philosophy was to educate the body, mind and soul through play, outdoor experiences, music, movement, creativity and independence. Children’s development was enhanced through play and individual activity. Schurz organized the first U.S. kindergarten in 1856 in Wisconsin. Peabody opened the first English speaking Kindergarten in Boston, in 1859. Peabody is recognized for publicizing the Kindergarten movement and organizing the first teacher-training center for Kindergarten teachers in the U.S. The first 30 years of Kindergarten provided children’s first group experience outside the home (Wills & Lindberg, 1967). It was most common for children to remain at home with their parents, rather than being in other child care settings, up until time for their transition into Kindergarten.

Between 1920 and 1950, children’s Elementary education was child-centered. Child-centered was when the child was allowed to direct his or her own play and did not have a strict curriculum to follow. After the 1950’s curriculum reflected reading, writing, and math abilities, with an emphasis on reading, writing upper and lower case letters, beginning phonics, forming and reading numerals and number tasks. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, publicly funded Kindergarten programs were implemented for the first time, which created significant changes in the Elementary School systems (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). Examples of the changes were added rest and sleep time, play time and written

work, such as math and spelling, into the Elementary curriculum (Hill, 1987). It was more social behaviors based learning for the Kindergarten children which taught the children how to follow rules in society such as listening to adults, working with peers and following social order. After teaching social behaviors, there was a shift in the Kindergarten curriculum that made it more academic and also, at that time, the entering children were older than in the past. Elementary School teachers were then experiencing pressure to have children learn more of the basic skills, such as following directions, playing with others, and parents demand more of reading and math abilities (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992).

Elementary School programs are designed to clarify, expand and extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They are designed to give children the opportunity to develop and practice their thinking, language, problem-solving, emotional, social and other skills (Seefeldt & Wasik, 2002). In order to accomplish that, Kindergarten children participate in reading time, play time and math time. The many different novel activities that Kindergarteners participate are often different from their free play at home. Activities such as carpet time, station time and reading time, made the Kindergarten classrooms more structured than free play at home. As a result, the period of adjustment to the new environment is affected by factors such as the transition process, the family, the teachers and the new rules and behaviors the children must demonstrate.

Transition Process

A child's transition to a new school is a substantial change for young children and their families because it is when there is a high demand for adjustment to a new environment. School transitions are so significant because they involve many changes

for the child such as a move from home, another school or a preschool into a formal school, and those changes are often inevitable and stressful (Pianta & Cox, 1999). Leaving an old school or preschool for Kindergarten is one of the many separations that children go through with both positive and negative feelings (Ziegler, 1985). Transition is much more complicated than simply changing buildings. This change requires adjusting to a new peer group, a new role, a new teacher, and new expectations (Maxwell & Eller, 1994). Transitions are characterized by elevated demands and expectations and the need to negotiate these challenges in novel setting among unfamiliar people (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Transition is the activities initiated by schools to bridge the gap between the old school and new school experience (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). The transition to a new school can set the tone for children's future school experiences (Vermont State Department of Education, 2000). During transitions, children must cope with many new demands such as adjusting to new academic challenges, learn the new school and teacher expectations, and gain acceptance into a new peer group. It is also the time when parents' beliefs about their children are shaped (Pianta & Cox, 1999). If the child follows rules and is cooperative to the teacher, parents think positively about their child and child's future. If the child struggles at following rules and acts out in the classroom, the parents hold more negative beliefs about their child and child's behavior.

Transition adjustment.

The transition from early childhood settings to the more formal elementary schools is often a struggle for young children because it involves leaving a familiar environment and moving into a more unfamiliar environment (Cryer & Clifford, 2003).

Conquering the challenge of successfully adjusting to the new school and the higher demands placed on the child, gives the child and the family confidence to meet future life transitions. The family will associate the successful transition in Kindergarten to future transitions such as moving homes or changing families and they will hold positive thoughts about their child's future transitions.

Elementary school provides children with the opportunities to draw their own conclusions about school and it allows them to form their own ideas about learning. Kindergarten gives children the opportunity to work with other children their own age and experience social situations, such as sharing, working together and following rules, to further their own development. These social situations will allow children to learn about communication, cooperation, responsibility, self-control, taking turns, respect for self, the teachers, and others in the group, courtesy, following group rules, and establishing interest in a group setting (Wills & Lindberg, 1967). Children who experience early school success continue to demonstrate success in social competence and academic achievement (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2003). On the other hand, children who have a difficult transition and adjustment to school usually have trouble catching up with their peers (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2003). There is a concern that the transition for young children may be abrupt and children may go from a situation that is appropriate for their age and development levels to one that is not. Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer (1992) found that the children select their own learning activities, such as playing house, playing with fake food in a kitchen setting and looking at books, that build on their own abilities and interests in developmentally appropriate preschool environments. In the Elementary setting, teachers directly instruct the children and encourage them to

successfully complete assignments such as math equations, writing journals and drawing pictures. The difference between the expectations of the two different settings can often create a more difficult adjustment process for a child into the new Kindergarten classroom.

Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Each year, children enter Elementary School with all different ranges of prior knowledge and experiences. The amount of prior knowledge and experiences a child has can influence the child's development in the Elementary school. Some of the prior knowledge can include things such as the child's skills and prior school-related experiences, the child's home life and early childhood programs they participated in. Some examples of prior knowledge children might have can include social skills, such as how to be a good friend and play behavior, which can be how to share and work with other children and communication skills which can include the ability to use their words to let others know their feelings and thoughts.

The child's home life has a huge impact on the child's knowledge and experiences. The kinds of influences parents have and how they interact with their child, allow the child to become socially competent and emotionally adjusted. Social competence and emotional adjustment are seen equally important as academic competence in the Elementary School setting (Spitzer, Cupp, & Parker, 1995).

Early childhood programs influence a child's knowledge because it's a social situation that teaches useful skills that cannot be forced, such as participating in a large group, playing or working independently and with peers and asking for help (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). The wider the range of knowledge and experiences the

child has when entering Kindergarten, the higher the development of the child in Elementary school (Maxwell & Eller, 1994).

Transition Studies

The National Transition Study says that the academic demands of Elementary School create the greatest difficulty for the highest percentage of children. Other factors that have an influence on the child's adjustment include meeting the behavioral expectations of Elementary School, adjusting to the length of the school day, interactions with other children, accepting the school's rules and discipline techniques and adjusting to the size of the class (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992).

Transition practices survey.

The National Center of Early Development and Learning (1996) developed the Transition Practices Survey to describe specific practices teacher's use in facilitating transition to Elementary School and the barriers that developed. The Transition Practices Survey reported that 52% of children have a successful entry into the formal school setting but 48% have moderate or serious problems. Teachers are most concerned about children's skills in following directions and academics. When asked how important children's skills are to be ready for Elementary School, most teachers believe physical well-being, self-expression, social development, and curiosity are most important (Pianta & Cox, 1999). The majority of transition practices are implemented after school begins and with low contact with individual children and families. The most common activities are group-oriented practices which are when children work together in groups for reading time, play time or show and tell time. The most common barriers to having groups organized are that class lists are generated too late; the practices involve summer work

not supported by salary, and a lack of a transition plan in the school district (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001). Other factors that affect the implementation of transition activities and the parents' involvement in these activities are structural influence, curriculum, the schools' attitude toward children and parents, and the level of poverty in the community (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992).

Transition activities.

An extension of the National Center for Early Learning and Development's Transition Practices Survey was a project offering surveys and questionnaires to parents and teachers. The questions focused on transition activities and participation of both parents and teachers, and the barriers experienced by teachers and parents regarding transition activities. The results of the study indicate most families visit the new Elementary classroom. The least frequent activity is attending an orientation into the new Elementary School. When parents participate in the transition activities offered, 99% found these activities to be helpful. Other transition activities offered by the school that the families found helpful are meeting with the elementary school principal and a tour of the school. The greatest barrier parents reported is that their work schedule interferes with participation in transition activities.

The study also included transition activities that families do at home to help prepare children for their new Elementary School. The majority of families practice the daily routine of getting ready for school and teaching their child to tie their shoes. Parents also talk with family members or friends with school-aged children to develop expectations about the new Elementary School. Parents discuss behavior expectations

with children, meeting new classmates, what will happen on the first day of school, the nature of the school work, and meeting the child's new teacher.

The transition activities most used by teachers involve having children and families visit the classrooms. By visiting the classroom, the families and children are allowed to see the setup of the classroom and become familiar with the environment. The findings from this study indicate a need to investigate the structure of elementary schools in relation to transition activities and a need for great collaboration between old Elementary Schools and new Elementary schools (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003).

Transition Elements and Models

In 1995, the Regional Educational Laboratories' Early Childhood Collaboration Network developed eight elements to consider when improving transitions into Elementary School and La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta (2003), found that there are four models to consider when addressing children's transition to Elementary School. The eight approaches and four models can be combined to focus on the children's "readiness" skills, their relationships within and across contexts and the stability of the relationships in the child's life. The eight elements are to consider families as partners, to establish a sense of shared leadership; to provide comprehensive and responsive services; to be familiar with the home culture and language; to establish communication among those involved in the child's transition; to be familiar with the child's knowledge and skill development; to offer appropriate care and education; and to conduct an evaluation of effective partnerships (Cryer & Clifford, 2003). The four models are the skills only model, the environmental input model, linked environments model and the developmental model.

Skills only model.

The skills only model focuses only on the skills and abilities the child brings with them on the first day at a new school. That includes skills such as tying shoes, writing letters, listening to adults and sharing with friends. While a child's skills and abilities have an influence on their school ability, they do not account for school adjustment (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). One of the eight elements for transition focuses on understanding the child's home culture and being familiar with the child's knowledge and skills is a way the school meets the child's individual needs. It happens through collaboration to understand the child's world and how their own beliefs and ideas were formed. It means getting to know the child's family situation and become familiar with any situations the child experienced up until Kindergarten. Over all, getting to know who the child is, is one of the most important goals for the school faculty. By getting to know the child, and help supporting them through their transition process, they help the child feel comfortable in their new environment and help the child form partnerships with teachers and school faculty.

Environmental input model.

Environmental input model describes the influences of the teacher, family, peers, and community on the child. The negative aspects of this model are it is not clear how or if the different settings are connected to one another and the interactions of these experiences over time (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). Families as partners require a high degree of communication between the child's parents and the school faculty. It involves meetings and phone conversations to help the family feel welcomed and help the family stay informed about their child's transition into the new school.

Linked environments model.

The linked environments model recognized the influences of the key people in a child's life; the teacher, family, peers and the community. This model also recognizes the influences that these factors have on each other and on the child (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). Shared leadership brings together the teachers and the parents as sharing the responsibility for the child's learning. It is working together to help the child understand their new responsibility in the new school environment. Providing services for the child is necessary in order for the successful transition of the child. Communication is imperative among the school faculty and the parents to work together to help the child understand the services offered.

Developmental model.

The developmental model considers all the previous contexts and relationships that interact with each other and the child. It also includes how the relationships the child has with family, teachers, peers, and community develop over time and how they influence the child's adjustment in school. There is also a support system developed between teachers, peers and family and school to serve as connectors for the child during the transition period. These connections support the child's competencies such as understanding school work and reading assignments that assist school success (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000).

New Transition Expectations

Entering the school setting for the first time can be challenging for young children. Kindergarten, the first step on the academic ladder, represents an almost universal challenge for American children. It is a time of shifting demands for social,

cognitive, and emotional behavior (Painta & Cox, 1999). The Kindergartener must leave mom and dad behind, for the first time, and must make friends and follow rules all on their own. Through observations and interviews with Elementary School children at a local Elementary School, the children worry about riding the bus, not knowing the children in their classrooms, getting lost in the school and missing their parents and siblings. Those concerns stem from the transition to the new Elementary school setting when children face a set of new demands associated with differences in school environment, teacher expectations, academic standards and rule setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Direct influences.

In the American Society, the people children associate with everyday model behaviors to children and those daily interactions teach social customs and can greatly affect the child's achievement in school (Johnson, 2000). A child's peers have a strong influence on academic achievement. Because of the amount of time a child spends each day with his or her friends, the peer influence on a child can be substantial. Having friends in school allows children to learn many skills such as group interaction, conflict resolution and trust building. Without positive peer group interactions, serious social problems may develop such as poor friendship and social skills. Peer rejection in early childhood is a good predictor of social and academic problems later (Buhrmester, 1990). Children often carry their early Elementary School memories with them and they impact their sense of self worth and self confidence. Influences and motivations for all kinds of children's behavior, including study habits and personal academic development, come mostly from their peers, but also from their parents, teachers and others they come in

close contact with (Wentzel, 1998). All individuals within close proximity of children on a daily basis have a huge influence on who the child becomes, both socially and academically.

Role of Parents During Transition

When families are involved in their children's early childhood education, children may experience greater success once they enter elementary school (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Parent's role in successful transition is made aware in the social, emotional, and academic support they offer to their children at home and in school (National PTA & National Head Start Association, 1999). Language begins with communication within the home and for that reason, parents are the most influential person in determining their child's readiness for the new Kindergarten classroom (Gramelspacher, 2005).

Parents teach their children basic words, numbers, concepts and skills. To prepare their children for school, parents are involved in activities including parent-child conversations about everyday events. They encourage leisure reading and have a high interest in the children's academic and personal growth (Pianta & Cox, 1999).

Educational involvement of families consists of activities parents do at home to help support their child's learning. Reading stories, playing games, teaching rules and talking to their children are activities which help form social and emotional connections between parents and children.

Parents also have their own idea about what it means for their children to transition into a new school. They have their own expectations and concerns for their children in the new environment. Parents are experiencing a change in their roles and expectations when their children transition into a new class (Love, Logue, Trudeau, &

Thayer, 1992). The parents are no longer the only teachers in their child's life, now so are their elementary school teachers. Family involvement in young children's education may contribute not only to a smooth transition to elementary school for children, but also for parents, by helping to prepare them for later involvement in their children's learning (Kreider, 2002).

Environmental factors.

Early school adjustment is positively associated with parental education, socioeconomic status, and children's ethnicity (Birch, 1999). Educational attainment of a child's parents is a good predictor of the academic achievement of the child (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). College educated parents are more able to help their child understand their homework compared to those with less than a high school education, when all other variables are the same (Johnson, 2000). Parental education and income creates advantages that lead to cognitive maturity within the child before entering their new Elementary School.

Parents from lower status have increased stress in their families as well as diminished resources which cause a decreased amount of parenting practices and warmth and acceptance toward their child. The child's psychological adjustment in these families becomes very poor due to the many environmental struggles such as single parent families, decreased amount of income, and violence and or social practices that can lead to increased behavioral problems. The age of the mother is important because many young mothers had difficulty in school and were raised in poor neighborhoods (Birch, 1999). Due to the lack of resources, parents in lower socioeconomic groups find skills of

self-sufficiency and independence more important than abstract development in the emotional and receptive language domains (West, 1995).

While socioeconomic differences play a part in the expectations from children, the majority of parents at all education levels rate children's ability to share and take turns, communicate his/her needs, wants, and thoughts verbally, and approach new activities with enthusiasm and curiosity as very important (National Data Resource Center, 1995). Earlier research has found that parents place a greater emphasis on the social and emotional maturity than on school-related academic skills. However, recent research reports that parents place greater importance on academic skills (National Data Resource Center, 1995). That means that parents value learning that involves learning to read, write and learning how to solve math problems.

Parent involvement.

Research suggests that parents' involvement in school depends in part on how welcome they feel by the school (U. S. Department of Education, 1997). At a local elementary school, parents are an important part of the day-to-day operation of the school. Parents work with the staff to set policy, raise funds, administer programs, and organize events. The local elementary school is a parent-friendly, family-focused atmosphere as a result of activities such as the Caring Kids Club, parent volunteer activities, and formal programs such as the Parent Teacher Organization. Research has shown that it's the million little things a school can do to make parents and teachers partners in the children's education (Cane Run Elementary School, 1997).

At the local elementary school, since parents work busy schedules, the need for child care and transportation are often barriers that prevent parents from attending school

events and participating in their child's school environment. It is very common for teachers to struggle to find ways to reach out to parents. At the local elementary school, the school counselor helps ease the difficulties by communicating with parents and referring them to other resources in the community, if needed. These parents are often thankful for the willingness of staff to help and give suggestions. Research has suggested that meeting families' basic needs, being flexible when drawing parents into school activities, and finding new ways to communicate with parents can result in higher success rates for children at school (Cane Run Elementary School, 1997).

There are many parent volunteer activities in which the parents are invited to be part of the local elementary school on a daily basis. Having activities such as the Caring Kids Club allows parents to understand the elementary school from the inside and helps them to realize the view teachers have for their children. Research has shown that it is important for elementary schools to create an atmosphere where parents are truly comfortable to come into the school building and which makes them want to come back and makes them feel like they are part of the school (West, 1993).

There often exists a large disparity among parent and teacher beliefs in regards to childhood education. Disparity between parent and teacher beliefs shows the need for greater parent and teacher dialogue as well as parent education programs to assist parents and teachers in defining similar goals (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989). Clarity of goals is important to children's successful transition to elementary school. At the local elementary school parents value providers who give emotional support, and listen to parents in personal crises. Those parents appreciate trusting and lasting connections with teacher, counselors and school administration. The higher the degree of similarity and

trust that parents and teachers achieve in their goals and expectations, the stronger the effect these expectations will have on children's performance (West, 1993).

Role of the New Child During Transition

The child is the central feature in the transition to Elementary School, but the adjustment to school is influenced by the teachers' and parents' perceptions of what skills children need for early school success (Maxwell & Eller, 1994). Children who enter Elementary School eager to learn and expecting to be successful are more likely to be successful in school and to accomplish their goals in life (Vermont State Department of Education, 2000). There are five areas of development that are important to a child's preparations for school. They are physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language usage, and cognition and general knowledge. Children are ready for school when they have been exposed to consistent, stable adults who are emotionally invested in them, a physical environment that is safe and predictable, regular routines, competent peers, and materials that stimulate their explorations (National Center for Early Development and Learning, 1998). The new elementary school adjustment is defined by each child's ability to cope with the specific cognitive and social demands of the school environment. If there is a mismatch between previously learned skills and what is expected of the children in their new environment, there will be a higher risk of failure to adapt to the new environment (Gelfer & McCarthy, 1994). Responsibility has fallen onto the school environment to help children overcome these differences, such as types of rules and adjust to the classroom. Often the school counselor plays a huge role in helping the child over the differences and helps them adjust by pairing the child up with another child that has a

similar situation. Through careful interaction and expression of feelings, the children work together as a pair to understand their roles and jobs at their new elementary school.

Children who have developed positive feelings about school are more likely to be engaged and enthusiastic about classroom activities. These feelings are in their academic performance, relationship with teachers, and the classroom structure (Valeski & Stipek, 2001). It is those children that often share well with their friends, follow directions and work successfully in group settings.

Role of Teachers During Transition

Teachers are most familiar with the transition into the new elementary school. Teachers are responsible for children's learning through several domains of development such as physical, emotional, social, and intellectual (Damon, 1995). Teachers relate children's success in Elementary School to the ability to cooperate with other children, curiosity, eagerness to learn, the ability to cooperate and get along with other children, pay attention, ability to complete tasks, have basic reading and math skills, social skills, and are physically and emotionally healthy. They mention that children must have basic use of language to understand teachers' instructions, express their ideas, ask questions, and engage in conversations with peers (Pianta & Cox, 1999).

Teachers have identified social skills as more important than academic skills. Children with poor transitional and social skills tend to require more time as teachers provide extra assistance, attention and instruction related to transition skill deficits (Chandler, 1993). Most Kindergarten teachers feel that knowing letters and numbers is not critical for school readiness because they can and do teach children these skills in Kindergarten. Teachers do encourage parents to focus more on the ability to pay

attention in class, and the ability to communicate needs and wants to others as crucial for school success (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

American Elementary teachers report that nearly one half of all students entering school are not ready to learn. These children reportedly have trouble listening and following directions, taking turns, paying attention, demonstrating confidence, working independently, cooperating with others in the group, communicating with teachers and peers, lack an eagerness to learn, curiosity and well-developed social and emotional skills, or don't have a home life that promotes learning (Zigler, Finn-Stevenson, & Hall, 2002). However, the literature does highlight the importance of viewing children as individuals with distinctive sets of experiences, cultural views, and skills rather than on a one-dimensional scale of "readiness" (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). It has been proven that Kindergarten and Elementary School teachers play a vital role in the development of children. What is learned or not learned in the early years can shape children's views of themselves and the world, and affect later success or failure in school (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2005).

Shifting Social Networks

During the transition into a new Elementary School, the children's social networks begin to change from children primarily interacting with adults to children primarily interacting with other children. The new demands of Elementary School are more focused on academics and social and emotional competencies. This competence may not be the only measurable outcome of a successful transition. The quality of the parents' relationships with teacher and school staff and the ideas of child's schooling may be an equally valid indicator of transition outcomes (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

The family-school relationship influences how well the child adjusts to school and how much the child benefits from school (Pianta & Cox, 1999).

Sometimes, parents and teachers experience conflicting viewpoints. One of the strongest arguments is the debate whether Kindergarten is viewed as a place to learn academic skills or a place to acquire social skills (Maxwell & Eller, 1994). The majority of teachers and parents rate their children's ability to sit still and pay attention in class as essential for school readiness. Most parents think that children should enter Elementary School being able to count to twenty or more, know the alphabet, and be able to use pencils and paint brushes. In reality, all 4 and 5 year olds enter school ready to learn and schools should respond to each individual child's level of readiness rather than making children responsible for meeting school requirements (Seefeldt & Wasik, 2002).

The Family-School Relationship

The most important aspects of the transition process are the relationships between the child and teacher, the parents and teacher, child and peers, and child and parent (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Building family-school partnerships is imperative to support positive transition outcomes. The family-school partnership enhances children's educational experience (Gelfer, 1991). The families and schools are sharing responsibility for the child's development and are equal partners in the child's education. National Education Goal Eight states every school will promote partnerships that increase parent participation in facilitating the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. That indicates the recognition that families and schools are needed to promote development and educational outcomes for children (Pianta & Cox, 1999). When parents, caregivers, and schools work together to share a common understanding about

transition, together they can plan for an effective and positive experience for the children entering school (Vermont State Department of Education, 2000).

Communication.

Communication is the key component in parent-school relationships. It is the foundation for building confidence and trust between families and schools. The family and schools learn the goals and expectations of each other and the children. They serve as a source of support for each other. Parents will have the knowledge of what their children are learning in school and how they can continue their children's learning at home. Teachers will have access to the children's needs, interest, and capabilities and they want to know how the children are learning (Gelfer, 1991). Communication is enhanced when parents and teachers are aware of their values, their views of one another, their perceptions of the children and the values they have for education (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Schools, families and communities all share responsibility for children's development. They contribute to the policies of the children's education by identifying goals, problems, and solutions to create more successful partnerships to benefit more children. Parents and teachers need to communicate the differences in goals and expectations they have for the children to help them successfully enter into the new elementary school (Booth & Dunn, 1996).

However, conflict is a natural dimension of communication. Without resolving conflict, there will be a breakdown in communication, which will lead to a lack of empathy, disrespect for the other's roles and perspective, and an imbalance of knowledge, authority, and power (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). That breakdown in

communication is devastating because it will have direct negative influence on the child's adjustment to their new elementary classroom.

Theories of the Family-School Relationship

The relationship between family and school consists of overlapping spheres that have an influence on children. Epstein (1995) categorized six types of family involvement. Parenting which is when the schools assist families with child-rearing skills; Communicating is when families and schools communicate about school programs; Volunteering which is when families volunteer in their child's school; Learning at home is when schools involve families in academic activities at home; Decision making which is when families are members of the school in regards to school decisions and advocacy; and Collaborating with community includes coordinating the work and resources of the community to advance school programs (Pianta & Cox, 1999).

School relationships.

The developmental model used for successful Elementary transitions focuses on the relationships among the child, teacher, family, peers, and community, all of which have an influence on a child's development. This perspective shows children developing in a variety of ways that contain multiple relationships including a system of family and school. This system focuses on the interaction between families and schools and its influence on the child. The results of the interaction are the importance of relationships among key persons, importance of continuity over time, and the idea that interactions have to provide support for the child. Parents and teachers creating academic and social goals together enhance continuity between home and school and ease the child's transition from home to school and or school to school (Booth & Dunn, 1996).

Parent involvement.

Parent involvement in ways that help the school is most often emphasized. Examples are volunteering and fundraising. In the local elementary school, volunteering can be doing such activities as being a lunch monitor and or classroom helper. Ninety percent of family involvement in America's schools is characterized by the partnership approach (Pianta & Cox 1999). That approach emphasizes shared responsibility for educating children and families. That approach focuses on developing a relationship based on collaboration in which learning is produced by students with the help of parents, educators, peers and community members (Pianta & Cox 1999).

School connections.

Connections among the child, the family, and the school are also very important. A constructive, sustained relationship between families and schools depends on creating a common language to discuss the roles of families and schools and shaping the relationship through dialogue about rights, responsibilities, and available resources (Pianta & Cox, 1999). While the school-family relationship is critical at any stage of a child's education, it is usually established during the transition into elementary school. For example the Kindergarten Transition Project at National Center for Early Development and Learning was developed. It was a school-based approach to enhance connections among children, families, teachers, and peers during the transition process (National center for Early Development and Learning, 1999). It consisted of weekly meetings to allow parents and schools to work together for the development of the children. It helped the parents stay informed on what their child was learning and it

provided time for the parents to talk with teachers about their child's development in the classroom.

Forming Friendships

Making connections is very important to create a positive transition for Elementary School children. Success in forming positive and productive relationships within the classroom for young children, becomes the foundation or building blocks for the development of social skills for adulthood. Children who fail to develop minimal social skills and are rejected or neglected by peers are at significant risk to drop out of school, to become delinquent and to develop mental health problems in adulthood (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993). Forming friendships is a form of connection that is important for the adults involved within the process, but also for the peer's involved during the transition. In seeking friends, all children must come to terms with the possibility that they may not be liked, learn to compete for social status, and deal with the conflicts that inevitably arise (Cole, 1993). It is through the help of parents and schools working together that the child can successfully understand that forming and maintaining friendships is not always an easy task.

Importance of Peer Socialization

As children grow they develop in many ways. They not only develop physically but also mentally. As children start to grow they move into a widening world of persons, activities, and feelings. The children are aware of more things such as the differences among their friends, their own feelings in regards to social situations and becoming aware of the activities they do and do not like to do. Socialization can be defined as the process by which we learn the ways of a given society or social group so that we can function

within it (Elkin & Handel, 1978). Socialization is a huge goal of any elementary school classroom. It is the process of making the children aware that even though everyone is different, they can all still play together and be friends.

When children enter elementary school they are going to be under the influence of two sets of socialization agents within the school: the classroom teacher and peers.

Classes in elementary school are usually organized with a single teacher who is in charge of twenty to thirty children. The role of the teacher is to give less personal attention and nurturing to the child and more peer socialization than the child would receive at home (Hartup, Higgins, & Ruble, 1983). That is usually done through having a time for show and tell, having the children work in pairs for an assignment and by having reading time as a group. The socialization process for Kindergarten children involves learning how to be with themselves, with their peers, with teachers and with life's challenges (Wagenaar, 1999). The outcomes of socialization among Kindergarten children are affected by many situational conditions, that is, the characteristics of the children involved and the settings in which their interaction occurs (Hartup, 1999).

Child's role during socialization.

The formal social structure of a local elementary school is associated with the school system and the informal social structure is associated with the peer culture. The formal social structure creates the rules of the school that the child must follow. The informal structure creates the friendship rules and skills the child must demonstrate within the Kindergarten classroom. Status in both of these social structures is determined by the social skills and the child's achievement. Through entering a new Kindergarten classroom, the child is introduced to those formal and informal structures and as a result,

it forces the child to choose their own individual role. (Hartup, Higgins, & Ruble, 1983). It is the child's decision to decide whether to follow the rules and play appropriately with their peers or to not follow the rules and not play appropriately with their peers.

From the beginning of Kindergarten, the major developmental task that children struggle to master is social interaction. When children go through personal and biological change, it is often difficult for them to understand themselves and their role within the classroom. Peer reflection plays a huge part in how the Kindergarten child learns to adjust to their selves and the expectations around them. (Akos, 2000).

The school is a major institution for continuing children's accreditation because the influence the school holds helps develop the child's attitude. Those attitudes are formed based on the need that children give meaning to their relationships with school faculty. Knowledge seeking is an example of one type of child's attitude. Children's attitudes toward learning are primarily characterized by knowledge seeking, and this attitude is often changed in the formal school situation. In many schools children are still expected to be inactive, to accept what they are offered by the school, and to give up their own knowledge-seeking plan (Ganter & Yeakel, 1980). Children often form positive attitudes when they feel they have a choice in their learning and that they can make their own choices in regards to their personal relationships.

Culture is a real and significant dimension of child socialization. Understanding various cultural styles of parenting and skills acquisition is critical to understanding how, why and under what circumstances socialization occurs (Coates & Wagenaar, 1999). It is imperative to realize that children come from different cultures and for that reason they enter Kindergarten with different beliefs and values. It is an important goal of the

elementary school to accept each child's culture and at the same time bring every child from all different cultures together to form friendships.

School's role during socialization.

The importance of the school as an agency of socialization can be divided into three subtopics: the school and society, the classroom and the teacher. When children begin school it is usually the first time they come under supervision of people who are not their relatives. The school is most likely the first agency that encourages children to develop loyalties and sentiments that go beyond the family and link them to the wider social order. The school as an agency of socialization should be recognized as the first organizer of social relationships (Elkin & Handel, 1978). The classroom is often seen as a place where the child is easily faced with socializing amongst peers. Since most of the things that children do in the classroom are done in the presence of their peers, they have to learn how to deal with a more formalized group situation. Parental expectations and perceptions of their children's development of both cognitive and motor skills serve to affect the transition to the school environment (Coates & Wagenaar, 1999).

Children spend a large amount of time with other children and as a result have extensive opportunities to influence one another. Recent national standards presented by the American School Counseling Association emphasized that academic development and personal/social development should be equal and necessary components of recommended developmental school counseling programs. It is possible for children to unlearn inappropriate behaviors and learn new ways of relating more easily through interaction and feedback in a safe practice with their peers (Akos, 2000). The developmental needs of elementary aged children have expanded and are becoming more

diverse. Personal and social needs form a large part of self-concept and provide the initial developmental path for adolescents.

Children's social interactions with their peers contributed to their cognitive development. Children's play is considered a form of social behavior, and they engage in several social situations such as cooperation, assistance, sharing and solving problems in appropriate ways. In these situations, children acquire social skills to learn about their social world, such as the adults' and their peers' points of view, morals, social skills, and conceptions of friendships (Saracho, 1999).

Summary

The transition into an unfamiliar, formal school structure involves many dynamics that greatly affect a child's competency about life and social order. When those dynamics come together with the importance of peer relationships, the message is a clear one, the research suggests. Peer relationships are important contributors to the quality of both children's current lives and their future development. Children who have difficulty in relating to peers can be helped. Such interventions are most effective when they are tailored to fit the specific nature of the children's peer problems and when all the adults come together to provide positive support for the child.

Method

Setting

The local Elementary School consists of approximately thirty seven teachers and five hundred thirty Kindergarten and First Grade students. There are also many teachers' aids, reading and speech teachers that work very closely with many students within the kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Sixty three percent of the teachers within this school building hold Masters Degrees while thirty seven percent hold Bachelors Degrees. There exist many children with different ethnicities, but white, non Hispanic children are the majority and make up ninety one percent. Black, non Hispanic children make up five percent of the student population, Hispanic children make up three percent of the population and Asian children make up less than one percent of the total population.

Approximately thirty percent of children in the local Elementary School are eligible for free or reduced lunch on a daily basis. Six percent of the students have an individualized education plan through the state that the school and teachers must follow. One percent of the students are migrant students, who migrated from Mexico and three percent of the students have limited English skills.

Sample

A case study was done on one new female Kindergartener for eight weeks. A total of six other Kindergarten friends were used as big helper friends from week two through week seven. This project was conducted to provide one form of intervention that can be demonstrated to help support new Elementary students transition late into a new school classroom. The child's individual feelings must be taken into consideration on a weekly basis and marked as precedent to any weekly structure of the program. Any

unexpected situations that may arise may greatly shift the direction of the session. The counselor's ability to listen, be flexible and available are imperative for the success of the program.

Procedure

The first step in beginning the program was to communicate with the office secretary about any new incoming Kindergarteners. Approximately two weeks later, a female student's name was given to me. The child was moving to the school from Florida where she was living with an aunt. Now at her location, she will be living with her mom and her mom's boyfriend.

After receiving the student's name, the next step was to speak with the principal to find what classroom the child would be placed in. An appointment was set up with that teacher in order to explain the program to her and get her written approval to work with her new student and friends for eight weeks. After explaining the program and the motivation for it, the teacher was very supportive (See Appendix A). A day and time to administer the program was set up that was convenient for both the counseling intern and the classroom teacher.

On the student's first day of school, a note was sent home with her asking for her parent's permission to allow her to participate in the program (See Appendix B). On that same day, a similar note was sent home with every student in the classroom informing the children's parents that their child might be picked, by the new student, to be a big buddy friend. The letter asked for written permission, from the parents, to allow their child to participate in the program, as a helper (See Appendix C). Approximately four days later,

all the letters were returned to the classroom teacher, who then passed them along to me through my mailbox.

Pre Test- Week One

On Tuesday, November 14th at 12:30 the pre test questions were given to the classroom teacher, about the new student's behavior (See Appendix D). Then the new student was picked up at her classroom, by the counseling intern. The counseling intern introduced herself to the new student and asked the new student if she would be willing to come with the counseling intern and have some special time together. When the new student agreed, the counseling intern and the new student walked to the counseling intern's office. When they arrived there, the counseling intern sat on the floor with the new student and they talked to get to know one another. After building rapport, the counseling intern informed the child of the program. The counseling intern read the letter of consent to the new student and informed the new student that it was her decision to participate (See Appendix E). The new student agreed and next the intern asked the new student a list of fifteen questions about her classroom and friends in her classroom (See Appendix F). The student's responses were documented and then the new student was returned back to her classroom.

Week Two

The second week working with the new student was when she had the freedom to decide which friend she would like to bring for our special time together. The new student chose friend A, who was eager to come. Upon arrival at the counseling intern's office, the counseling intern introduced herself and explained the program future. The intern talked about the I care rules (Appendix I) with the children and reminded them that

anything they talked about would not leave the room. The intern informed them of their chance to openly talk about anything they would like and then friend A was going to take the new student on a tour of the school. After some getting to know each other time, the counseling intern, friend A, and the new student toured the school. Friend A showed the new student where the gym, the nurse's office, cafeteria, library, art room, music room, playground and the Friendship room was. After thanking friend A for her assistance with familiarizing the new student with the elementary school, the children were returned to class.

Week Three

The new student picked another, different little girl from her classroom to come for special time with the counseling intern. When arriving to the counseling intern's office, the counseling intern, introduced herself to friend B and explained her purpose as being a big buddy friend to the new student. The children were allowed to talk about anything where they used the time very correctly. After talking to and getting to know one another, the counseling intern reminded the children the rules of the school. The I care rules were told to the counseling intern by the children. As a group, the rules were talked about and explained. Lastly, the counseling intern read a book to the children called, "How to Be a Good Friend." After the story, the counseling intern talked with friend B about how she could be a good friend to the new student, since she did not know many other friends in the classroom. The students were then returned to class.

Week Four

The new student picked a male friend this time to come as a big helper friend. At the counseling intern's office, the counseling intern informed the male student how he

was chosen to be a big buddy to the new student. After going over the rules and allowing the children free association, the counseling intern used wooden people to help each other understand one another's families. Friend C informed us that he lived with his mom and dad and was the only child. The new student used the wooden people to show that she lived with mom and her boyfriend. She said she had two brothers and one baby on the way. The counseling intern used the blocks to show that she has a mom, dad and one brother. The differences in all the families, allowed the counseling intern to show the children that all families are different but no matter what everyone can still be friends. The children were then returned to their classroom.

Week Five

The new student chose a little girl to come with her to the session today. The rules were reviewed by the counseling intern and talk time was allowed. After talk time, the counseling intern, friend D, and the new student talked about the types of pets they have. The new student talked about her rabbit, two dogs and one cat. Friend D talked about her snake and dog she has. The counseling intern talked about her one cat she has. After the children were given crayons and paper and were allowed to draw pictures of their pets. The counseling intern used the pets to help the children understand that everyone is different but they all could still be friends. After about thirty minutes the children were returned to class.

Week Six

This week, the new student picked, yet a different little girl, to be her big helper friend. Going over the rules of the group and time for free association took up the first ten minutes of the group. After that, the M & M game was administered in which friend

E and the new student were told to pull out an M & M and then match the M & M on the chart and read the feeling word. The child was then expected to talk about a time they felt that way. Some examples of the feeling words were sad, happy, embarrassed, angry, mad, excited. After each time, the child was able to eat the M & M's. When the game was over, the children walked back to class.

Week Seven

This was the last week the new student was bringing a big buddy friend with her. The new student chose a little girl to bring with her. The counseling intern used the first few minutes to allow the children to share anything that they wanted with each other. The intern also went over the rules and explained confidentiality to the children. The bean bag game was administered in which the children had to take turns and throw the bean bag on the shapes. When the bean bag landed, the child had to lift up the face to see a feeling word underneath. The counseling intern would help them read the word, then the child would talk about a time they felt that way. The counseling intern would tie together the stories from both the new student and friend F. After taking turns and finishing the game, the counseling intern allowed the children to find similarities and differences between themselves. The counseling intern then told the children that even though they may not look the same, they can still be friends. The children were then sent back to class.

Week Eight

This was the last week of the New Student Transition Program. The counseling intern gave the teacher the post test (Appendix G), which consisted of the exact same questions from the pre-test. The counseling intern picked up the new student and took

her to the intern's office. She talked with the new student and informed that the project is complete and that she was going to ask her lots of questions again. The questions asked were the same questions asked on week one to the new student (Appendix H). The new student's answers were documented and the new student was returned to class.

Results

The results of the New Student Transition Program into a new Elementary classroom project have been measured and evaluated. Individual factors, such as the new student's family life, the new student's cognitive ability and the new student's behavior within the classroom, were identified during the project, and influenced the results of the project.

Teacher Evaluation

At the time of the pre-test, the classroom teacher was not aware of the new student's skill level. Because the records from the child's previous school (1/2 day Kindergarten) were not yet received by the new school, the teacher evaluated the child solely on her behavior within the classroom setting.

Pre-test.

The pre-test showed that during the first week, the new student was able to play with several different girls in the classroom. Even though the new student seemed comfortable playing with the girls, the new student always gravitated to one child in particular. The new student was interested in playing with several girls when they all wanted to play the same thing. However, the new student always wanted to play with one particular new friend, even if they wanted to play with different things. The new student always chose to sit next to the one particular child during meeting time or whole group lessons within the classroom.

After one week in the new classroom, the new student did not appear interested in her class work. The new student sat at her table to work, like all her other friends in the

classroom, but she did not appear to be engaged. When she did her school work, she rushed through it.

Past school records.

Later in the eight weeks of the project, the new student's past school records were received by the new school. The records showed that the new student had lower ability levels than the rest of the children within the new classroom. The records showed that the child was under average in her social skills and cognitive skills. That was demonstrated in the classroom when the new student struggled to recognize personal boundaries and social cues. For example, the new student would often yell out answers rather than raise her hand. She struggled to stay on task, as a result of not understanding the work. The new student was often separated from her classmates as a result of not observing and following the classroom rules.

Post-test.

After eight weeks of interventions by the Counseling Intern, a post test was administered to the classroom teacher. The new student often drifted among groups of friends, playing with whatever interests them, but struggled to make deep connections with the friends. The new student's new classroom was very socially mature which made it more difficult for the new student to make connections. The new student enjoyed to sit by one particular friend, every chance she could, but they were often separated because they did not pay attention when sitting next to each other.

The new student had a very hard time staying on task. She was not engaged in work because it was difficult for her to understand the work. The teacher intervened by

sitting a top student next to the new student, as a role model, but academically and socially the new student was not at the same level as her classmates.

Counselor Evaluation

The administration of the pre-test, by the counselor, took place even before any connection or relationship was established between the counselor and the new student. The new student was asked questions and the responses were written down. The new student's responses helped the counselor understand the new student's concept of self within the new classroom.

Pre-test.

The pre-test, that was given the first week of school for the new student, showed that the new student did not know the names of all her friends in the classroom. The new student informed the counselor that her friends within the classroom do not ask her to play with them. As a result, the new student said her least favorite thing to do within the classroom was to play with her friends. The new student said that even though she had lots of friends, and they were not mean to her, she often chose to play by herself.

The new student informed the counselor that she did not like to answer questions in class because it was boring to talk. She said that she was quiet in the classroom and she does not talk out loud. The new student said she finished her school work on time and she behaved well in the classroom.

Post-test.

After eight weeks of interventions, the counseling intern administered the post test to the new student. When asked if the new student knew all her friends names and if she shared her toys with other children, she quickly replied "yes" and began to say the names

of the children she brought with her as big helper friends throughout the past eight weeks working together. The new student indicated that she was not quiet at school and her least favorite thing to do at school was to have to sit down and be punished. The new student indicated that she had lots of friends both in class and on the bus. The new student did not play by herself and her friends do play with her. She mentioned that she played most with one of the big helper friends that the new student chose to come with her to our sessions together.

The new student indicated that she was not quiet at school. She did not finish her school work on time and she did not like to do school work because it was boring. She mentioned that she only liked to answer questions in class during show and share time.

Family Stress

Eight weeks of interventions allowed for a relationship to be formed between the new student and the counseling intern. Talk time was allowed every few minutes when they met weekly. As a result of talk time, the counselor was made aware of many difficulties within the child's family life. The new student informed the counselor that her mom was in jail, and the new student moved into grandpa's house. A few weeks later, the new student talked about how her mom was out of jail now and the new student moved back in with mom. A few weeks later, the new student talked about how her mom was having another baby and how her mom's boyfriend tried to stab her mom's belly to kill the baby. The weekly discussions about the new student's family life, had quickly made her a regular client for the Counseling Intern to see on a weekly basis after the thesis project was complete.

Discussion

The eight week, New Student Orientation Program, was implemented to determine whether weekly interventions help new students adjust to a new school and form friendships. The weekly interventions included activities that taught the new child how to follow basic directions, play with their new friends and work together with their new friends. Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer (1992) mentioned how those same skills of having children learn more basic skills, such as following directions and playing with others were imperative for the child's development in Kindergarten.

Based on the teacher's evaluations, it was recognized that during the first few weeks of the new student's transition into the local Elementary School, the new student felt comfortable playing with a few different girls, but most often gravitated toward one particular child. Pianta & Cox (1999) stated that when transitioning to a new school, a child must cope with the new demand of gaining acceptance into a new peer group. It was shown that the new child struggled to feel part of the new peer group, when she chose to play and follow one child in particular. The new child felt more comfortable with one child, rather than the group of children.

In the literature, Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer (1992), found that in Elementary School, teachers directly instruct children and encourage them to successfully complete assignments such as math equations, writing journals and drawing pictures. The differences in expectations from school to school can often create a difficult adjustment process for the new student. That research was consistent with the results from the New Student Orientation Program. The new student struggled to successfully

complete the teacher's school work expectations. The new child struggled to be engaged in her school work and when she was, she rushed through her work.

For the New Student Orientation Program administered at this local Elementary School, the researcher did not receive past school records before administering the project to the new child. Not having that information available about the new student, it was hard for the teacher and researcher to understand the new student's behavior in class and during the project. Once received, the past school records showed that the new student had cognitive deficiencies, dysfunctional family life and low social skills. The lack of skills such as the ability to work together with others and the ability to ask politely for something, made it difficult for the new student to focus and stay on task both in class and during the project.

Spitzer, Cupp, & Parker (1995) reported that the kinds of influences parents have and how they interact with their child, allow the child to become socially competent and emotionally adjusted. That research was confirmed during the New Student Orientation Program. The child's family life was unstable and mom was in and out of jail, mom had many different boyfriends and the child had no contact with her biological father. The child's unstable home life definitely added to the child's inability to stay focused at school.

In the research it has been noted that school transitions are more difficult for children that have parents from lower status. Lower status families have diminished resources which cause a decreased amount of parenting practices and warmth and acceptance toward their child. The child's psychological adjustment in those families becomes very poor due to the many environmental struggles such as single parent

families, decreased amount of income, and violence that can lead to increased behavioral problems (West, 1995). The New Student Orientation Program has confirmed that research. Since the new student's mom was in and out of jail, she had diminished resources, such as money, food and love. The new child's mom was also a very young mom, which confirmed the research that she held a decreased amount of parenting practice and warmth toward the new student, which in turn, made the child struggle socially at school.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, the program was implemented as a case study. Only one new student, in a school of over 500 students, was used as a research subject for this project. Implementation of the program to more than one new student, would increase reliability and validity of the program. The results could then be generalized to the larger population and be considered more valid.

The program's objective was to determine whether or not the program helped the new student form friendships. Even though it has been determined that the program did help the new student's make friends, the argument is how do we measure the degree of friendships? By the eighth week, the new student names some of her "friends," but the depth of their relationship before and during the program is considered questionable. It has been questioned to what degree did the program help the new student make friends, or was her relationship with her friends established within the classroom? It would be encouraged for future research to determine how to test the degree of friendships and the effect classroom interaction has on developing friendships.

Implications for Future Research

For future research, it is suggested strongly that the researcher gather all past records of the new student from their old school district before administering the program to the new student. Past school records, evaluations, behavior plans, skill levels, and family history will help the researcher to choose a new student that has the ability to successfully complete the New Student Orientation Program. Through carefully researching the new student before implementing the project, the researcher can be aware of any cognitive deficiencies and or low skill level abilities that the new student may have and that may affect the outcome of the project.

Personal Considerations

Throughout the implementation of this project many different things were reinforced when working with children. It was most important to set clear rules and boundaries when working in a small group with Kindergarten children. The new student often struggled to stay on task, which often set the other group member to try to get off task as well. Careful and strict prompting worked well in order to remind the student's of their job and their responsibility while being in the group setting.

Setting time limits were important for successful completion of the weekly lessons, but also to make the children aware of when it was time to transition back to the classroom. Consistency from week to week in the order of the activities in the group, allowed the new student to become acclimated to the weekly agenda of the group.

The New Student Orientation Project showed how rewarding it is for children to take the lead. The new student eagerly smiled every week when she saw the researcher and knew it was her time to choose a friend to bring with her. By allowing the new

student to pick her friend weekly, not only did it make the new student feel as if she has control over the situation but it also made her feel special and dominant. Allowing the child to take the lead helps prove the success of the project. At the end of the project, the new student was asked to tell the name of her friends and she named all the friends that she chose to bring with her weekly to the New Student Orientation Program.

After completion of the New Student Orientation Program, the new student is continuing to meet with the researcher, on a weekly basis, for further counseling support. As a result of daily stressors, such as struggling to follow directions, struggling to work together with others and struggling to deal with an unstable family life, the new student will benefit from weekly counseling support.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Consent Letter

Ginther Elementary School
Elementary Classroom Teacher
Teacher Consent

Dear Teacher:

My name is Kelly Budniewski and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. I am completing a thesis/project as a graduate requirement for a degree in Counselor Education from the State University of New York College at Brockport.

The purpose of this research study is to help students that are new to the district, form friendships. Friendships are so vital in the academic and social part of a child's life. The goal of this group would be to determine if interventions have an impact on the friendships formed among Elementary School Children.

This research will be conducted through a case study. A pretest will be administered, followed by six weeks of interventions and then a post-test will be administered. The pre and post-tests will include questions about the child's perceptions of friends and friendships. During the six weeks of interventions, the children will participate in reading stories, making drawings, and learning friendship skills. The goal is to test if positive interventions determine the type of friendships the children form in school.

As the primary student researcher, I am requesting, with your approval, the ability to work with you and your students from your classroom in order to gather data for my research project. Your role would be to participate in a pre and post-test regarding, your new student. The tests would consist of five questions you would answer about your new student before the interventions and then again after the interventions. Your other role would be to allow me to work with your new student and another student of her choice, out of your classroom, once a week, for approximately eight weeks. I will provide consent forms to your students and their parents/guardians. Your signature indicates your approval of my involvement with working with your classroom. I look forward to the opportunity of working with you and your students and learning more about how friendships are formed among Elementary School Children. If you have any questions you may contact:

Student Researcher: Kelly Budniewski
(585) 637-1830

On Site Supervisor: Donna Ray Evans
(585) 637-1830

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Patricia Goodspeed
(585) 395-5493

Dr. Thomas Hernandez
(585) 395-5498

Sincerely,

Kelly Budniewski
Counseling Intern

I give Kelly L. Budniewski to work with my class to gather information to use on her thesis project about friendships at the Elementary School level.

APPENDIX B

New Student Parent Consent

Ginther Elementary School
40 Allen Street
Brockport N.Y. 14420
Statement of Parental Informed Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Kelly Budniewski and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. I am completing a thesis/project as a graduate requirement for a degree in Counselor Education from the State University of New York College at Brockport.

The purpose of this research study is to help your student that is new to the district form friendships. Since your child is new to our district I hope your new student can be part of my study since friendships are so vital in the academic and social part of a child's life. This is a new project done by a qualified Graduate student in which your new student and a possible six helper facilitators will participate. This project is a one on one intervention that is face to face using peers as helpers. If your child participates in this study, she will not miss any key important school academics such as reading, math and art. The goal of this group would be to determine if a one on one intervention has an impact on the friendships formed among Elementary School Children.

The research will be conducted through a case study. A pretest will be administered, followed by six weeks of interventions and then a post-test will be administered. The pre and post-test will include questions about the child's perceptions of friends and friendships. During the six weeks of interventions, the children will participate in reading stories, making drawings, playing games and learning about friendship skills. They will tour the school and help learn that even though someone is the same and or different from themselves they can still have a friendship with them. The goal of this intervention is to test if positive interventions determine the types of friendships the children form in school.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision as to whether or not your new student is able to participate. If you want your child to participate in this project, and agree with the statements below, please sign below. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw your child from the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and my new student has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. There will be no way to connect responses to my new student. My child's name will not be written on any

- documents. If any publication results from this research she will not be identified by name.
3. There will be no anticipated personal risk or benefits because of my child's participation in the project.
 4. My child's participation involves learning rules, reading activities and drawing activities, which will be consistent over an eight-week period.
 5. Up to 7 children will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis at SUNY Brockport.
 6. Data will be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Office at Ginther Elementary School. All consent forms and documents will be shredded at the end of the Spring 2007 semester.
 7. This research is not a part of any regular school program and is not being conducted by the school, and my child's participation will not affect his/her grades.

I am the parent/guardian of _____ . I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to my child's participation in this study, realizing she may withdraw without penalty at any time during the process. Completion of this form indicates my consent to my child's participation.

If you have any questions you may contact:

Student Researcher: Kelly Budniewski
(585) 637-1830

On Site Supervisor: Donna Ray Evans
(585) 637-1830

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Patricia Goodspeed
(585) 395-5493

Dr. Thomas Hernandez
(585) 395-5498

Signature of Consent

Date

APPENDIX C

Helper Friend Parent's Consent Letter

Ginther Elementary School
40 Allen Street
Brockport N.Y. 14420
Helper Peer Students Statement of Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Kelly Budniewski and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. I am completing a thesis/project as a graduate requirement for a degree in Counselor Education from the State University of New York College at Brockport.

The purpose of this research study is to help students that are new to the district form friendships. Friendships are so vital in the academic and social part of a child's life. If your child participates in this study, he or she will not miss any key important school academics such as reading, math and or art. If your child is not chosen as a helper friend, I would be available to help your child talk about his/her feelings about that if necessary. The goal of this group would be to determine if interventions have an impact on the friendships formed among Elementary School Children.

This research will be conducted through a case study. A pre-test will be administered to a new student within the school, followed by six weeks of interventions and then a post-test will be administered to that same new child. The pre and post-test will include questions about the child's perceptions of friends and friendships. During the six weeks of interventions, the new child will pick a friend from their classroom and they will participate in making drawings, reading stories, and learning skills. The students will draw pictures of their pets, read stories about different types of families, compare the similarities and differences among one another and learn friendship skills. The friend they choose to pick might be your son/daughter. Your son/daughter's role would be to be a big buddy friend. The goal of this experience is to test if positive interventions impact the forming of friendships among Elementary School Children.

Whether or not your child participates in this study, is your decision and will not affect your child's grades. In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision as to whether or not your son/daughter is able to participate. If you want your child to participate in this project, and agree with the statements below, please sign at the bottom. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw your child from the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

Allowing my child to participate, I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and he/she has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. There will be no way to connect responses to him/her. My child's name will not be written on any documents.

If any publication results from this research my child will not be identified by name.

3. There will be no anticipated personal risk or benefits because of my child's participation in the project.
4. My child's participation involves reading stories, making drawings and learning rules, which will be consistent over an eight-week period.
5. Up to 7 children will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis at SUNY Brockport.
6. Data will be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Office at Ginther Elementary School. All consent forms and documents will be shredded at the end of the Spring 2007 semester.
7. This research is not a part of any regular school program and is not being conducted by the school, and my child's participation will not affect his/her grades.

I am the parent/guardian of _____ . I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to my child's participation in this study, realizing he/she may withdraw without penalty at any time during the process. Completion of this form indicates my consent to my child's participation.

If you have any questions you may contact:

Student Researcher: Kelly Budniewski
(585) 637-1830

On Site Supervisor: Donna Ray Evans
(585) 637-1830

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Patricia Goodspeed
(585) 395-5493

Dr. Thomas Hernandez
(585) 395-5498

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

APPENDIX D

Teacher's Pre Test Questions about the New Student

Teacher's Pre Test Questions

1. Is the new student engaged with their peers during play time? Explain.
2. Do other children acknowledge the new student and invite him/her to play?
3. Does the new student like to answer questions or are they more shy/timid?
4. Do other children want to sit beside the new student and does the new student want to sit beside them?
5. Is the new student engaged in school work and do they finish their work on time?

Additional comments:

APPENDIX E

Student's Participation Statement of Consent

Ginther Elementary School
40 Allen Street
Brockport, N.Y. 14420
Student Participants Statement of Informed Consent

Dear student:

My name is Kelly Budniewski and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. The reason I am meeting with you is because I am doing a project for my class.

The purpose of my project is to help me learn how new students in a school make friends. Friendships are very important in order for students to do well in school. The reason we would meet is to see if having special time together, making drawings and playing games would help new students make friends.

In order for us to meet every week, I need you to say it is ok. I am asking you to tell me either that yes you want to have some special time with me or no you would not like to have special time with me out of your classroom. You can change your mind at anytime and if you decide later on that you do not want to meet with me anymore that would be ok.

I understand that:

1. I do not have to meet and I know that I decide what questions I would like to answer and talk about.
2. What I say during this project will be kept in the room. Nothing will be shared with other teachers or adults, unless it is a safety issue.
3. I will be at no anticipated harm in anyway by having special time together.
4. In this group I will meet for special time for about eight weeks.
5. Up to 7 children will take part in this study.
6. Information used and gathered will be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Office at Ginther Elementary School.

_____ Yes I agree ☺

_____ No I do not agree ☹

_____ Initials of a witness of persons 18 or older

APPENDIX F

Pre Test Questions for the New Student

Pre Test Questions for the New Student

1. What is your favorite thing to do at school?
2. What is your least favorite thing to do at school?
3. Do you have lots of friends?
4. Do your friends play with you?
5. Do you like to answer questions in class?
6. Do other children want to sit beside you?
7. Are you nervous at school?
8. Do you play by yourself?
9. Do you like to do school work?
10. Do you know all of your friend's names?
11. Are other children mean to you?
12. Do you behave in school?
13. Do you share your toys with other children?
14. Are you quiet at school?
15. Do you finish your school work on time?

Appendix G

Teacher's Post Test Questions about the New Student

Teacher's Post Test Questions about the New Student

1. Is the new student engaged with their peers during play time? Explain.
2. Do other children acknowledge the new student and invite him/her to play?
3. Does the new student like to answer questions or are they more shy/timid?
4. Do other children want to sit beside the new student and does the new student want to sit beside them?
5. Is the new student engaged in school work and do they finish their work on time?

Additional comments:

Appendix H

Post Test Questions for the New Student

Post Test Questions for the New Student

1. What is your favorite thing to do at school?
2. What is your least favorite thing to do at school?
3. Do you have lots of friends?
4. Do your friends play with you?
5. Do you like to answer questions in class?
6. Do other children want to sit beside you?
7. Are you nervous at school?
8. Do you play by yourself?
9. Do you like to do school work?
10. Do you know all of your friend's names?
11. Are other children mean to you?
12. Do you behave in school?
13. Do you share your toys with other children?
14. Are you quiet at school?
15. Do you finish your school work on time?

APPENDIX I

I Care Rules

I Care Rules

1. We listen to each other.
2. Hands are for helping, not hurting.
3. We use I-care language.
4. We care about each other's feelings.
5. We are responsible for what we say and do.