


MEMORANDUM

January 19, 2012

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: TRANSMITTAL OF EVALUATION MATTERS: EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS SURVEY: TEACHER NEEDS AND STRATEGIES

Attached please find a copy of the Evaluation Matters, *Early Childhood Programs Survey: Teacher Needs and Strategies*. This report examines the results of an online survey used to assess the needs of prekindergarten teachers in order to improve the operation of the Early Childhood programs in the District during the 2011-2012 school year.

Prekindergarten teachers expressed the need for training in a variety of areas and also for additional instructional/classroom materials and equipment. The teachers surveyed felt that parents could do more to prepare children for prekindergarten by focusing on reading-related activities and teaching children self-help skills and responsibility. Teachers felt that they could do more to help students to succeed by concentrating on behavior and discipline and by working on reading-related activities.

If you need further information, please call Dr. Richard H. Hinds, Associate Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services, at 305-995-1225, or Ms. Gisela Feild, Administrative Director, Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis, at 305-995-2943.

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Attachment

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Ms. Deborah Karcher
Dr. Marisel Elias-Miranda
Ms. Gisela Feild
Dr. Sally A. Shay
Selected Administrators



Evaluation Matters

Volume 1, Number 3

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Early Childhood Programs Survey: *Teacher Needs and Strategies*

1. What is the purpose of this report?

This report examines the needs of prekindergarten teachers, in order to improve the operation of the Early Childhood programs that operate in the district during the 2011-12 school year.

2. Which populations were targeted for this report?

All prekindergarten teachers in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (n≈450) were targeted to participate in a survey, the results of which are analyzed in this report.

3. How were the data for this report collected and analyzed?

Data to conduct this analysis were obtained through an online survey administered through Survey Gold. Pre-kindergarten teachers were emailed the link to the survey and completed it online between June and September 2011. The survey data were analyzed based on the percentage of teachers selecting each response for each question. Responses to the open-ended strategy questions were coded and frequencies were calculated. All percentages were calculated based on the number of respondents who answered at least one item.

4. What was the experience and educational level of the respondents?

Only 49% of the prekindergarten teachers completed the survey, therefore the results of this report may not generalize to the population. Tables 1 and 2 list the number and percentage of respondents by years of experience and educational level/area of certification.

- **Experience:** 42.9% of the teachers reported having less than five years and 33.8% reported having more than 10 years of experience.

Table 1. Prekindergarten Teacher Years of Experience

Years in Pre-K Classroom	Frequency	Percent
0 - 4 years	90	42.9
5 - 9 years	49	23.3
10 - 14 years	34	16.2
15 and higher	37	17.6
Total	210	100.0

- **Education:** 43.6% of the teachers selected bachelor, 37.8% master, 7.7% specialist, and 10.9% doctorate as the highest degree that they completed.

Table 2. Prekindergarten Teacher Educational Background

Degrees/Certifications	Frequency	Percent
Educational Level		
Bachelors	117	75.0
Masters	79	50.6
Specialist	24	15.4
Doctorate	17	10.9
Certification		
Early Childhood	113	64.9
Elementary Education	80	46.0
ESE	15	8.6
ESOL	84	48.3
French	9	5.2
Gifted	21	12.1
Mathematics	36	20.7
Reading	44	25.3
Science	30	17.2
Social Studies	27	15.5
Spanish	40	23.0

- **Certifications:** 64.9% of the responding teachers reported being certified in Early Childhood, 48.3% in ESOL, 46.0% in Elementary Education, and 25% in Reading, Other areas including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Spanish were reported by fewer than a quarter of respondents.

5. What are the professional development needs of prekindergarten teachers?

Tables 3 lists the professional development needs reported by the responding teachers.

- Over 50% of the teachers expressed a need for professional development in Science/mathematical thinking, 41% for Waterford-Reports and Materials, and 39.3% for Literacy and Language.

Table 3. Professional Development Needs

	Frequency	Percent
Conscious Discipline	52	30.1
High Scope Framework	40	23.1
HMH - Houghton-Mifflin Program	37	21.4
Literacy and Language	68	39.3
Phonemic Awareness	55	31.8
Ready Schools Miami-PLC (Professional Learning Community Training)	52	30.1
Science/Mathematical Thinking	102	59.0
Waterford-Initial	52	30.1
Waterford-Reports and Materials	71	41.0

- Of the responding teachers, 62.1% expressed a preference for online professional development. For in-person classes, the most frequently selected time was after school hours by 43.1% of the respondents, followed by Saturdays by 28.9% of the respondents.

6. What materials do prekindergarten teachers need to conduct their classes?

Table 4 lists the number and percentage of respondents who expressed a need for curriculum materials, furniture, and center- area materials.

- The majority of the respondents (62.7%) expressed a need for art supplies. The most cited core curriculum material needs were for OWL learning program materials (60.6%) and science kits (59.4%).
- The most frequently selected center area materials that were selected were role playing material (52.4%), playground equipment (51.2%), and water play materials (50.6%).
- Rugs and center furniture were the predominate furniture needs in this area (57% and 52.1%, respectively), although nearly half of the teachers also selected tables and chairs.

Table 4. Material Needs

	Frequency	Percent
Art Supplies	126	62.7
Core Curriculum Materials		
HMH	36	21.8
OWL	100	60.6
Science Kits	98	59.4
Waterford Crate	32	19.4
Waterford DVD's Reading/Math/Science	47	28.5
Center Area Materials		
Block Area	56	33.3
Housekeeping	71	42.3
Library	62	36.9
Playground Equipment	86	51.2
Role Playing	88	52.4
Water Play	85	50.6
Furniture		
Center Furniture	63	52.1
Chairs	50	41.3
Rugs	69	57.0
Tables	56	46.3

7. What strategies could parents and teachers use help children succeed in prekindergarten?

Responding teachers were asked to provide (a) up to five strategies that the parents could use better prepare children for prekindergarten and (b) up to five strategies that the teachers themselves could use to ease the children's transition from home and to help them succeed in prekindergarten. These open-

ended questions were assigned codes, which were collapsed into broad categories. Table 5 lists the number and percentage of responses in each such category.

Table 5. Strategies for Parents and Teachers

Strategy	Parents (n=132)		Teachers (n=111)	
	N	%	n	%
Language Development				
Reading activities with child	101	76.5	44	39.6
Work with child on language skills/vocabulary	60	45.5	32	28.8
Letter recognition / ABCs (visual and auditory)	29	22.0	24	21.6
Listening skills	17	12.9	14	12.6
Learn to write and recognize name	24	18.2	11	9.9
Sound recognition	7	5.3	4	3.6
Social Development				
Teach them self-help skills / responsibility	66	50.0	24	21.6
Work on child's behavior/consistent discipline/rules	48	36.4	46	41.4
Allow interaction/play with other children	20	15.2	20	18.0
Boost self esteem	9	6.8	3	2.7
General				
Use the environment and routine activities as learning tools	36	27.3	7	6.3
Use a variety of learning tools /methods	32	24.2	36	32.4
Work with child on educational activities	15	11.4	0	0.0
Parents need to be more involved	11	8.3	11	9.9
Visual/Auditory Recognition and Number Sense				
Number recognition (visual and auditory)/counting	25	18.9	19	17.1
Visual awareness (shapes, colors)	14	10.6	10	9.0
Preparedness				
Prepare for transition from home to school	23	17.4	20	18.0
Prepare them to use a variety of school supplies	16	12.1	9	8.1
Implement daily routine at home	15	11.4	9	8.1
Provide parent information on preparing child for school	5	3.8	5	4.5
Motor Skills				
Activities to strengthen gross/fine motor skills	22	16.7	10	9.0
Working on writing/coloring/drawing with child	16	12.1	7	6.3
Other				
	27	20.5	29	26.1

- Language development related responses were mentioned the most frequently by both parents and teachers. Overall, 76.5% of all respondents suggested reading strategies for parents to use to help students be better prepared for prekindergarten and 39.6% for teachers to use to help students succeed once they were enrolled. Social development related strategies were the next most frequently suggested by respondents, comprising at least half of the readiness strategies for parents and one-fifth of the success strategies for teachers.
- Within the social development category of strategies, 50.0% of responding teachers suggested that parents teach students self-help and responsibility as readiness strategies, while 41.4% of

responding teachers suggested that teachers work on the child's behavior, discipline and following rules as success strategies.

- Responding teachers had more suggested readiness strategies for the parents than success strategies for the teachers, suggesting they believe parents could do more to prepare their children for prekindergarten.

8. What are the principal conclusions of this report?

Prekindergarten teachers expressed the need for training in a variety of areas, and also for instructional/classroom material and equipment. Teachers surveyed felt that parents could do more to prepare children for prekindergarten, by focusing on reading related activities, and teaching children self-help skills and responsibility. Teachers felt that they could do more to help students succeed in prekindergarten by concentrating on behavior and discipline and by working on reading related activities.