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Educational Services for Preschool Children in Rural New York State:
Links among Community-based Organizations, Pre-kindergarten programs, and School
Districts¹

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Abstract

This report presents case studies conducted in 2008 of three school districts in rural areas of New York State. The focus of each case study was on the provision of early childcare and education in the local schools, in community-based organizations, or a combination of locations. Findings from these case studies describe obstacles and successes associated with the implementation of Pre-kindergarten programming. In particular we note the effects of the state requirement that at least 10% of the state UPK grant received by Districts be shared with a community-based organization(s), as well as the linkages and collaborations formed between these entities and other supporting organizations. In addition, we describe the capacity of these rural districts to provide these services to their local community. We also illustrate the (dis)similar ways that program quality and school readiness were defined and discussed by school personnel and community-based personnel. Finally, we emphasize the uniquely rural aspects of implementing Universal Pre-K to begin to provide an enhanced view of how the rural districts of NYS implement state UPK policy.

Introduction

Amid a growing number of states nationwide, New York State is now emphasizing state-funded pre-kindergarten education for all 4-year-olds in the state. Termed Universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) this initiative is now combined with a previous state initiative, Targeted Pre-K (TPK), creating the potential for all 4-year-olds in NYS to have access to publicly funded education prior to entry into Kindergarten. Not all school districts have accepted the state UPK funds, however; with 62% of all the districts in the state offering Pre-K programs. The rates of implementation have differed by district context. For example, in 2007-2008 96% of high needs urban districts had Pre-K enrollment, while 85% of high needs rural districts and 35% of the low need districts participated. At the request of the Rural Education Advisory Committee (REAC), we examined the ramping up of UPK using statewide data, which is described in the companion report, "The Movement Toward Universal Pre-Kindergarten: 1998-2008 in New York State". We also carried out in-depth case studies of three high-needs rural districts, which are the focus of this report.

In this report we focus on the challenges and successes associated with the implementation of UPK in rural NYS. We begin with a brief portrait of pre-kindergarten implementation in three rural, high-need school districts. These snapshots are followed by cross-site descriptions that focus on particular areas of interest including: 1) challenges in implementing a state-funded, half-day program; 2) how districts meet (or not) the state requirement to subcontract at least 10% of funds to community based organizations providing early education experiences; 3) quality, school readiness and special education definitions and issues as described by school personnel, parents and CBO employees; and 4) a description of the uniquely rural aspects and challenges of implementing pre-kindergarten policy

The use of case studies has been informative in the process of investigating the implementation of the NYS UPK program; however, it is essential to analyze and use the data from these case studies appropriately. Due to the nature of the type of data obtained through case studies, the findings are not generalizable to all districts in NYS, or even to all the rural districts. This potential weakness is overcome by the detailed information we

were able to gain about the range of programs offered in the three districts, the various stages of implementation in the cases, as well as the successes and challenges faced by the educators working in these three rural districts. Following careful consideration of the research questions, we selected three districts based on the numerous ways they could offer a real world context to relevant policy questions. The data was driven by a common set of research questions, meaning that the respondents were selected and the interview guides assembled in order to answer the established research and policy questions. Consistent procedures were used in each of the three cases in order to provide the most illustrative, detailed, and richly detailed stories of three rural districts immersed in the work of providing Pre-K education to the 4-year-olds in their communities through collaboration with other community agencies.

The Benefits of Pre-Kindergarten

The benefits of early education programs, and Pre-K in particular, have long been debated. Some of the strongest evidence for sustained effects of early education program participation comes from longitudinal evaluations of high quality, center-based programs including the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, Carolina Abecedarian Project, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers. In these studies, which used rigorous evaluation methods, short-term impacts on cognitive outcomes during the elementary years are clear. In addition, long-term benefits include higher high school graduation rates, job earnings, and rates of home ownership, as well as lower rates of teenage pregnancy, arrests for a felony and incarceration in adolescence and adulthood, and lower rates of depressive symptoms (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001; Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores, 2005; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). These effects are striking not only because they have endured over the lifetime of the children (in one study the children have been followed through age 40), but because of the substantial economic savings to the community that accompany these positive outcomes. Of note, however, is that these long-studied programs were highly structured, full-day, and often full-year in scope.

Automatically applying these findings to 9-month, half day programs should be met with caution.

In recent years, evidence from evaluations of state Pre-K programs demonstrate that children who have participated in such programs show better academic readiness skills (Lamy, Barnett, & Jung, 2005), as well as improved school attendance and performance, and reduced grade retention (Gilliam & Zigler, 2000). Oklahoma's UPK program especially shows promise. In a study that compared children with similar birthdates, but who were and were not eligible for participation due to strict birthdate cutoffs (i.e. they compared children who had birthdays just before and just after the September 1 birthdate cut off for eligibility), researchers found that children who participated in the Pre-K program showed greater gains in early reading, writing and math skills than their similarly-aged peers without such program experience (Gormley, Phillips, & Gayer, 2008).

Research has shown that the largest benefits of Pre-K participation accrue for the lowest income children (Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Because of this finding, proponents of TPK programs contend that targeted programs for poor children are more efficient and receive greater public support. In addition, because targeted programs serve smaller numbers of children, they can focus more on quality. These arguments, however, have been challenged recently by supporters of UPK programs. Evidence suggests that although the gains are greater for lower income children, a clear cut off when gains are no longer apparent is difficult to identify. In fact, middle-income children (i.e. those with incomes in the second lowest 20%, middle 20% and second highest 20%) also have the potential to benefit from such programming (Barnett, Brown, & Shore, 2004). In addition, targeted programs must spend resources on identifying and screening applicants for eligibility (a fact that is made more challenging by the oft documented mobility of low-income families), and often do not reach their intended recipients. Finally, quality may actually increase in universal systems as programs tend to be less stigmatized and can receive broader public support.

Partnerships in the Public School-Early Childhood Education Systems

New York State's pre-kindergarten program is unique (with West Virginia) in its requirement that school districts must subcontract a minimum of 10% of funds to community-based organizations. This provision has encouraged school districts and community based organizations, such as child care centers and Head Start programs, to collaborate, often for the first time. In fact, by 2006, 60% of the children in NYS's pre-kindergarten program were participating outside the school building in community-based settings (Holcomb, 2006). Benefits to these collaborations include a new appreciation for early childhood in the public school system, as well as more efficient spending of public and private dollars (Lekies, Morrissey, & Cochran, 2005). However, these collaborations also pose challenges based on factors such as the lack of an existing infrastructure in the early childhood community, little understanding of early childhood in the public education system, and the inherent difficulties of blending funding streams to create seamless programming (Holcomb, 2006). In addition, these partnerships are challenged by the potential for competition among community based organizations and public schools for teachers, 4-year-old children, and other resources. Work examining these issues with community based organizations that have chosen not to participate in the pre-kindergarten program documents a perception that enrollment of 4-year-old children has decreased and teacher recruitment has become more of a challenge in response to the introduction of NY's state-funded pre-kindergarten program (Morrissey, Lekies, and Cochran, 2007). Because the subcontracting provision within NY's pre-kindergarten legislation is both unique and potentially profound, this report pays particular attention to the partnerships and collaborations, or lack thereof, in the rural settings studied for this research.

Data and Methods

Methods

The research for this work was conducted using a case study approach (Yin, 2003) in three school districts in New York State (NYS). We purposely selected the districts (Patton, 2007) based on their years of participation in the Universal Pre-K (UPK) initiative in NYS and geographic location. The cases will be referred by pseudonym throughout this

report as Lakewood, Mountain View, and Pine Crest and are described in further detail in the next section, *Case Descriptions*. Lakewood was selected as a veteran district with regard to Pre-K provision because the district has offered services to preschool age children for more than 20 years using a mixture of targeted state aid (funds to be used for low-income children), UPK funds, and local funds. Mountain View was selected as a district new to UPK having had a locally funded Pre-K program for one year in 2006-07 and a state funded UPK in 2007-08. Pine Crest was selected as a district new to UPK and still in the planning stages. After a full year of planning, Pine Crest will begin UPK in the 2008-09 school year. Pine Crest was also selected as a 'what could be' case (Schofield, 1990) because of extenuating local characteristics. These unusual circumstances resulted in a dramatic increase in the school budget without the increasing local tax effort. In other words, Pine Crest now has a larger school budget than most communities of its kind (economically, geographically, etc.) and has chosen to invest some of these new local resources and state funds to create its new UPK program. While the circumstances of this district are unusual, this provides a chance to examine 'what could be' if other districts had an infusion of new dollars into their budget.

After site selection, the research team contacted the district superintendents (or the elementary principal in Lakewood) to explain the goals of the study and seek their participation. All three selected districts quickly agreed to participate. Site visits were conducted with the schools and were followed by visits to other relevant organizations in the communities and across the counties in which they are located. The superintendents in Mountain View and Pine Crest, and the elementary principal in Lakewood, selected the school personnel and parents to be interviewed. The list of school personnel interviewed varied across the districts, but most often included the superintendent, the principal, the UPK teacher(s), Kindergarten and 1st grade teacher(s). Other school- and district-based personnel sometimes included the business official, school psychologist or guidance counselor, support services staff (e.g. Food Services Director, Transportation) and school board members. We selected the related CBO representatives using snowball sampling (Patton, 2007), meaning that each respondent was asked to suggest additional people with

knowledge of early childhood education and educators in the community. These names were used to determine the final list of who would be interviewed in each community. The representatives from the community-based organizations (CBOs) also varied across the sites, but typically included leaders from entities like Head Start, Special Education providers, and other early care centers. The vast majority of interview participants were white (93%) females (84%). Interviewees ranged in age from early twenties to late fifties, with nearly two thirds (63%) of the participants over age 40.

All interviews were semi-structured using interview guides, which differed based on the respondent's position (i.e. parent, teachers, administrator, or CBO), and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The guides were developed by the research team based on the research questions (see Appendix A for research questions and Appendix B for the interview guide). Two members of the research team conducted most interviews with one respondent; however, a few interviews were with pairs of like respondents (i.e. two parents or two teachers) or larger focus groups (i.e. a Pre-K planning committee composed of multiple types of respondents). All interviews were conducted using a protocol approved by the Cornell University Institutional Review Board and respondents were made aware that their participation was optional and that the interviews would be audio recorded. In addition to interviews, relevant documents were also analyzed including state policy, school documentation of UPK programs, CBO mission statements, etc. Each participant was granted anonymity and informed that while we may use their words in our reporting on the study their identity would not be revealed.

All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the research team with qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti. The analysis of this work was conducted using themes developed prior to the work based on the research questions, as well as themes that emerged during the course of the project.

Case Descriptions

Lakewood

“We’ve had the [pre-kindergarten] program so long it’s become part of our culture”

Lakewood School District Administrator

Pre-Kindergarten has a long history in Lakewood School District. The district began offering Pre-K services more than 20 years ago through the NYS TPK Program. Families were eligible to participate in TPK if they met income guidelines (i.e. they qualified for free and reduced price lunch) or had children with special needs. Initially, the program was half-day with one morning and one afternoon class taught by one teacher. The program was housed in a section of the school building that was shared with a family literacy program. Bussing to and from this half day program was provided by the district. In recent years, the program added a full-day classroom and a second teacher in addition to the half-day classroom. The full-day classroom was added in response to teacher concerns that a “half day was not enough” for the children and families. In addition, the district has seen a decrease in its student population and therefore had the classroom space and staff available in order to easily add a second Pre-K classroom.

In the 2007-2008 school year, Lakewood’s Pre-K shifted from a targeted to a universal program. This change came about because of three reasons. First, parents above the income eligibility cut off for the targeted program expressed an interest in having their children attend Pre-K in the school. Second, the district examined its own Kindergarten screening data and found that children who had attended some kind of Pre-K program were more prepared to start Kindergarten. Finally, district data also suggested that children without some kind of early education experience were more likely to be classified for special education. These arguments were presented to the School Board, where they received support (although not unanimous support²) and the program was expanded to be open to all 4-year-old children in the district.

According to district officials, state funding currently covers between 85-90% of the costs for the Pre-K program. The funds cover a portion of the teachers’ salaries, as well as supplies. The remainder of the program expenses is covered through the local school

² According to one administrator, a minority of school board members expressed reservations that a Pre-K program would merely provide a free babysitting service for parents who were not concerned with their child’s education.

budget. The county currently pays for special education services, although this may change in the future if school districts are required to cover special education services for all students. The district currently has a waiver for the state requirement to subcontract 10% of the funds to CBOs. The district did send out a Request for Proposals for CBOs, but did not receive any applications from agencies wanting to offer Pre-K.

In its first year as a universal program, Lakewood offered two, full-day Pre-K classrooms in the Kindergarten wing of the school building (a change in location from years past when Pre-K was in a separate wing). As per state requirements, children are eligible to participate in the program if they turn 4-years-old by December 1. In January of 2008, there were 18 children in each classroom, with the potential to add one more child if need be. Given a choice, school administration and teachers prefer to keep the classes as small as possible, but will add additional staff as a “band aid” solution to larger classes. Recruiting of children was done largely using word of mouth, through the district newsletter (sent to all district residents) and the school website. The connection with a family literacy program (also housed in the elementary building) also assists the district in reaching families of 4-year-old children. Children were enrolled on a first come, first served basis. At the start of the school year there were approximately 5 children on a wait list to get into the program. Slots did open up during the year, but most parents on the wait list had already made other arrangements and declined to participate. A similar enrollment process is expected for the 2008-2009 school year.

A New York State certified teacher and an aide who floats between the two rooms staff each classroom. Both teachers are experienced, with one having taught pre-kindergarten for 16 years and the other for 3 years. Classrooms include children from a mix of economic backgrounds.

A typical Pre-K day begins when the children arrive on the bus at 8:30. Aides escort the children off the buses before the older children. Children hang up their belongings, and then read quietly until the morning announcements are broadcast over the school intercom system. In the morning they also typically do large-group activities such as weather and calendar, eat breakfast in the classroom, and then go to special area classes

at the gym, art room or library. While children are at special area classes, Pre-K teachers do their planning/preparation time (which is required as per the teacher contract).

Children also spend time in the classrooms in centers, have recess outside on the playground or in the gym, eat lunch, and have a quiet rest time. Afternoons typically involve more center work, including time for math and literacy activities. Children are bused back home at the end of the school day. Before- and after-school care is available for Pre-K children, with fees based on a sliding scale, but transportation is not provided if children are at school beyond the hours of the regular school day.

Family involvement takes place in a number of ways. Pre-K teachers conduct home visits with families during the summer before the program begins. These visits allow teachers and children to get to know each other before the school year starts. Both parents and teachers expressed an appreciation for these visits where, as one parent laments, the “only downside was that both my boys thought they were going to school the next day!” The school also has an open house for all interested families. Parents can volunteer in the classroom, can serve as a chaperone on field trips, and serve on a Parent Advisory Board. Parent Advisory Board meetings often center on an activity or theme (e.g. making ice cream) and are offered on different days and times to accommodate different parent schedules.

Mountain View

“[The] earlier you get them in school, the more likely you’re going to impact achievement”

Mountain View School District Administrator

Mountain View School District is in its second year operating a Pre-K program in their district. The decision to begin offering these services was made at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. The program was “planned very quickly during the summer of ‘06” and came about because of research by district administrators showing the benefits of pre-kindergarten programming for school achievement. In particular, new-to-the-school-district administrators articulate a belief that bringing children into the school setting would

help give them the best start possible in their educational career³. As this district administrator describes:

We're getting in at the front end instead of trying to save them when they're ready to drop out.

In addition to this emphasis of giving all children an early start to avoid later educational problems, Mountain View administrators also focused on the benefits of early intervention and education for special needs children.

In the first year of the program (2006-2007), funding came directly from the district budget as, according to district administrators, the district was not eligible to participate in state UPK funding⁴. In the 2007-2008 school year, the program applied for and received UPK funding through the state.

The program operates four half-day classes, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The program serves a total of 50 children (up from about 30 children in the first year of the program), a number that represents about half the number of children in Kindergarten. The program is open to any family in the district, regardless of income level. Thus far, the district has been able to enroll all interested families. In fact, getting children to register in the program has been a challenge. The district sends notices to parents, and holds town meetings throughout the summer to provide information about the program (advertisements for these meetings are placed in the newspaper and on the radio). In addition, the local Head Start program shares its wait list with the district so that the district can contact families who might not be enrolled in other programs.

Despite all of these recruitment efforts, many parents in the community have expressed a strong interest in having a full day program, as the half-day program does not

³ According to members of the local early care and education community, previous administrators had elected not to participate in the program because the state funding was not enough to operate a quality program.

⁴ Current administration officials were not present during the initial decision to implement pre-kindergarten in the district. However, their understanding is that the district was not eligible for state funding because, by the time the decision to go forward was made, the district had missed the application deadline to submit for funding and/or the only funding available was for districts that already had pre-kindergarten programs in place.

meet their needs. Even district administrators acknowledge that a full day program would better serve the community where employment opportunities are often located an hour or more drive away from home/school. The district would like to eventually operate a full-day Pre-K program, but at the moment, finding additional classrooms and funding for additional staff are challenges. In the interim, district officials express a need for more child care options that would cover the portion of the day not covered by UPK.

Another challenge to enrolling families, especially those families for whom children have not had any previous early care and education experience, is that some parents prefer to keep their children home as long as possible. According to a Kindergarten teacher, these parents contend that their children will learn what they need once they start Kindergarten. Similarly, district administrators have heard from some parents that they chose not to enroll their children because Pre-K is a new program. They want to have confidence that it's quality program and that confidence comes, in part, from a program's longevity.

The UPK program is located in the primary wing of the school building, close to the Kindergarten classrooms. Two teachers, one who is very experienced and who was integral to getting the program off the ground, and one who is new to teaching, staff UPK. The day focuses on hands-on activities (especially messy activities such as shaving cream, painting, and play doh-activities that parents are sometimes reluctant to implement) that district administrators, Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers describe as critical to developing the fine motor skills needed in later years for writing. In addition, as this Kindergarten teacher describes, the UPK program prepares children socially:

I have eight children in my classroom this year who were in last year's Pre-K within the building and those children are amazing. I mean, what I've seen in them compared to the children who didn't come from the Pre-K within the building is just outstanding...they're to be commended, the two Pre-K teachers....what they have done is given them the background, the nursery rhymes, and the social interaction.

The UPK program also fosters a love of school in very young children. This district administrator, who has a child in the UPK program, describes his personal experience:

I have to give her [his daughter] a calendar and a countdown with stickers every time we're off [from school]. There's 12 days and she gets up every morning and puts a sticker and there's a bus at the last day. So she knows that's the day to go to school. So she learned the calendar. She learned to count days because of the fact that she wants to come to school.

Parents in the district express an appreciation for the "very supportive" Pre-K teachers who pick up on issues (such as speech delays) quickly. However, in the Mountain View School District, early intervention supports (e.g. speech therapy) take place outside the UPK program. Community professionals who are involved in providing such services note that the UPK teachers are reluctant to allow special education services into their classroom for fear of disrupting the flow and taking "UPK time" away from children. Instead, the UPK teachers encourage special education service providers to reach children during non-UPK program hours.

In part because of the physical proximity of the programs, communication is ongoing between the Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers. Teachers value these back and forth communications that keep teachers informed about what each program looks like. The Kindergarten teachers in particular expressed the importance of these communications: "You wouldn't want to skip the conversation because they're [the Pre-K Teachers] with them [the children] first."

The UPK program also extends to the early education community through partnerships with the local Head Start and a community child care program. At the Head Start program, four children participate in a full-day program from 8 am to 3 pm, but funding for their early education program is split between Head Start and UPK. In other words, while the educational day for these four children is seamless (i.e. they remain in one program for a full day), the funding for these children comes from both the Mountain View School District, which pays for half of the day, and Head Start which covers the

remainder of the day. In contrast, the partnership with the community-based child care program is based on busing a child from UPK at the school, to the child care program for wrap around care. Both Head Start and the child care program expressed interest in expanding these arrangements to include more children in the future. In addition, the child care program has begun discussing the possibility of sub-contracting with the school district to offer UPK within their own child care program.

Teachers and directors at the child care program discussed the possibility of hiring a retired certified teacher as a new, part-time staff person in their program. Hiring a retired, but certified teacher part time would cost them less than hiring a full-time, certified teacher, and would therefore enable them to meet the state requirement that UPK be taught by certified teachers. To cover the additional cost of hiring this UPK teacher, the child care program would need to enroll a minimum of eight children⁵ (they estimated that they would receive approximately \$3500/child). These eight children would stay at the child care facility for a full day: half of the day would be UPK, and the second half “wrap around care”. Child care center staff noted that this kind of arrangement would eliminate the need for busing children from one program to another during the day, as well as meeting parents’ needs for full day care for their young children.

Pine Crest

“I know that we will do it [UPK], we will do it well...we will have the best. We will have the best teachers and environment and transportation and all those pieces that make this work. It’ll be done right.” Pine Crest School Board Member

The Pine Crest School District is in the planning phases of developing and implementing their UPK program. Although funding from the state has been available to the district in past years, and the school board has been interested in beginning a Pre-K program for 5-6 years, district administrators deemed the state funding not sufficient to

⁵ The child care center staff debated, but did not resolve, whether it would work if these 8 children came from more than one school district

cover the full cost of the program. In addition, there was a great deal of concern that state funding might disappear in the future and the district would not then be able to cover the costs of keeping the program. These financial concerns, however, were alleviated when, due to a unique economic opportunity, the school district budget was bolstered by a significant and annual infusion of private dollars (\$3 to 4 million/year).

Pine Crest began formally exploring whether or not they wanted to implement UPK in June 2007. District administrators pulled together a Pre-K committee that included administrators, teachers, special education staff, early childhood education service providers (e.g. Head Start, child care center), and parents. This volunteer committee, described by its members as “dedicated” and “enthusiastic”, conducted background research to explore the benefits of Pre-K for children. They concluded from this research that Pre-K has demonstrated benefits for children, especially children in poverty. They also explored whether this was a program the district wanted to implement, not just because funding was now available, but because it would fit well in the community. As this Pre-K committee member describes:

We really need to look at the whole concept of where to put a pre-K? Does it work programmatically? What do we expect of this? What does the community think? What does the teaching staff think? And we put in using a very similar process to all day kindergarten in 1984 using a very, almost identical process and it was very successful. And we put the same process in place.

In the fall of 2007 members of the Pre-K committee visited four neighboring districts that had pre-kindergarten programs in operation. At these visits they asked a set of questions to whoever was responsible for overseeing the program. After these visits, program members “got excited” about the possibilities. Findings and recommendations from the research and Pre-K program visits were first presented to the elementary school administrators. Next, they presented similar information during a public forum (advertised on the radio) attended by about 50 community members. Finally, in March of 2008, the

Pre-K committee made a formal presentation to the school board, and their recommendation to create a Pre-K program in Pine Crest was approved.

One of the main reasons why the Pine Crest School District decided to implement Pre-K was that they could serve a population of parents who are not eligible for Head Start (because they are above the income eligibility cut off), but cannot afford to pay for a Pre-K program. However, during the planning process, a major and related concern was how a Pre-K program at the elementary school might impact the local early education community. Specifically, district staff worried about how to implement their own program, but not cause harm to existing local programs. The local child care programs charge a fee for their 4-year-old programs. What would keep people there if the school district opened its doors with a program that was free to parents? The district had initial meetings with the local Head Start and two child care centers (one that has since closed) to explore these concerns. Conversations at these initial meetings, however, focused on whether the local child care center could operate the program in its entirety – receiving 100% of the state UPK grant. District administration described the local child care program staff as using an “assertive, aggressive” approach to wanting to run the program as they do for neighboring districts. The district, however, is very interested in running the program in-house. As one administrator describes:

But there’s something about our staff members and our system of doing things. We just couldn’t imagine it being done by a local provider as well. You know from the beginning we thought you know the connection to our kindergarten staff, to our early intervention programs, to our psychologists, to all the people that are here programmatically. And I think the other side of it too is that I, I would having no money, I would have a hard time saying to someone here is our grant, you know go ahead and pay somebody \$21,000. You know our starting salary is \$36,000 and...how do you say ok we don’t worry about the economics, thank you...There’s no union issues, there’s no anything. You are handing it to them, yet they have to meet all these same standards. I didn’t see that as a long-term viable model in our community, small town. ...We didn’t see continuity, there was no one with an

administrative license at that point and I still don't think there is. So I guess you'd say that that's a possessive feeling...I wouldn't call it 'we can do it better' out of arrogance...just out of experience I thought this program could be based here. We could operate this program and should be operating this program.

Representatives from the child care program⁶, who support the Pre-K concept, expressed a willingness to "help make this a success" and have "no doubt that Pine Crest will do it very right." After these initial conversations, the local child care program conducted surveys with their parents to determine their needs. Based on these surveys, the program has decided to eliminate their part-day preschool program and will instead add a "wobbler" room to their program. This move will enable them to serve more children under age 4. In addition, they will be reserving 8 slots (4 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon) in their full-day Pre-K program for parents who want wrap around care for their children participating in the district half-day UPK program. Children will be bussed by the school district from the elementary school to the child care program.

The local Head Start program serves children for a full-day program Monday through Thursday. Bussing to and from the program is provided. They currently serve about 110 children and typically have a wait list to get into the program. Although there is some concern that UPK may affect their numbers, Head Start staff has been generally supportive and appreciate the need to serve families who are not eligible for Head Start.

How the district will meet the New York State requirement to sub-contract 10% of their Pre-K funds to CBOs has not yet been decided. In fact, one district administrator recently lamented that although they now understood the requirement, "it doesn't appear logical to me". As Head Start only operates 4 days a week, they would be ineligible to receive funds. The district is still exploring how the 10% funds can be allocated and with what organization(s) they might wish to sub-contract⁷.

⁶ Child care program staff described as "assertive and aggressive" by district administration have since left the program and were not interviewed for this case study.

⁷ Informal conversations with district officials after the formal interview period reveal that the district was subsequently granted a waiver from NYS for the 10% subcontracting requirement.

The basic structure of the UPK program has been put in place, but the details of how the UPK program will be implemented are still under discussion. The district plans to operate a half-day program in two classrooms (4 sections of Pre-K; two in the morning and two in the afternoon). There are currently no plans to offer a full-day program. Each classroom will have one certified teacher and one teaching assistant. These positions have not yet been filled, but the district has received many applications for them. Children will receive lunch and breakfast (at the district's expense) and mid-day transportation will be provided (also at the district's expense; approximately \$50,000). Morning transportation will take place on the regular district bus runs and since it has been common for generations of elementary school children to ride on the same bus at middle and high school kids there is no anticipated concern of adding four-year-olds to the bus runs. For the first two years, beginning in 2008, the program will operate in a building that used to house a child care program. The building is in close proximity, across a parking lot, from the elementary building. After building renovations/additions are complete in two years, the program will move into the elementary building.

The program will serve a maximum of 72 children. As of April 2008, 40 children were enrolled. Parents have been informed about the program through the district newsletters, articles in the local newspaper, phone calls to school district families with younger siblings. In addition, the district is exploring whether they might get the names of families who applied, but did not qualify for, Head Start so that they may be contacted and informed about UPK. The district has had to respond to some uncertainty from parents in the community about what a program in a school-based setting would look like for young children.

Funding for the \$250,000 program will be split approximately evenly between the state UPK grant and district budget. The district decided to contribute additional local funds to the Pre-K budget in order to make sure as many children as possible could be served and so that proper facilities, food, and transportation could be provided. The district has done thorough budget analyses to estimate the additional costs associated with adding two additional bus runs (e.g. diesel fuel, extra miles on buses leading a need for quicker

bus replacement, additional bus driver staff time), facilities and custodial support (additional cleaning services for four-year-old-type accidents), and additional breakfasts and lunches (including the extra costs associated with transporting food to a separate building).

Table 1 - Pre-kindergarten at a glance in three rural school districts

	Lakewood	Mountain View	Pine Crest
Years offering pre-kindergarten	20+	2	0
Years offering Universal Pre-kindergarten	1	1	0; 2008-2009 will be first year
Number of pre-kindergarten children served	36	50	72 expected (40 enrolled as of April 2008)
Classrooms in school building	2	2 (4 sections)	0 (first year in former school building located across parking lot; after renovations complete, pre-k will be in the elementary building)
Full day or half day	Full day	Half day	Half day
Transportation provided	Yes	Yes	Yes
Funds subcontracted to community based-organizations	none (waiver)	Head Start (4 slots)	None (waiver)

Although a specific curriculum has not yet been selected, Pine Crest community members expect that the program will not look the same as Kindergarten. Instead, it will be very experiential and child centered where learning occurs through play. It will also be an opportunity to expose 4-year-olds to good literature, art and music, as well as to provide opportunities to learn how to take turns and be part of a team. They are not sure whether the classes will be integrated (as is done with Kindergarten and up), with children with special needs placed together with typically developing children. The school district

anticipates that the Pre-K program will allow children to be identified earlier if they are in need of instructional support, and that this will cut down on the need for remediation in later grades. In addition, they expect that the program will lead to stronger academic results and better readiness skills with the children enter early primary grades.

Findings

Half-day versus Full-Day pre-kindergarten

New York State's pre-kindergarten program provides funding for a 2 1/2 hour program, 5 days a week during the school year. Yet, despite the fact that funding is only available for a half day of programming, the issue of full day pre-kindergarten emerged as an issue in two of the three school districts included in this study⁸. In Lakewood, the veteran pre-kindergarten district, the switch to full-day, pre-kindergarten programming was made in large part because of input from teachers. This district administrator explains:

The teachers started to say, "This isn't enough. It isn't enough to have them here for this amount of time. We really need a full day." So we were able to...it was actually about numbers too...our numbers have gone down. One of the things in our district is that we have a declining population and so we...were able to convince the board to have one section of full day and one teacher to two half days. This year we have two sections of full day....Our population has gone down so we do have space in this building for the program.

The above quote also makes clear that this switch to offering two full-day programs was possible because the school could accommodate the need for additional classroom space required by such a move. In contrast, although members of the Mountain View district expressed a need for full-day programming in order to accommodate working families, space is an issue. In the words of one district administrator:

We'd have a space issue. We're already overcrowded in that building. We have classes taught in hallways and books in crannies. If we were to increase that [pre-

⁸ When Pine Crest administrators were asked about full day pre-kindergarten as a possibility, one district official commented, "Is that a popular model in other places?"

kindergarten], we'd have to have space, which we don't have, which we need. Looking at either a building project or buying modulars or something like that because we don't even have the space right now. I could double the number of sections that we offer, but [there's] just no room for it.

Another administrator agrees that space is a challenge, as is the lack of funding for a full day program:

The physical layout of this building, the limitations of the building, again financially, if we ever open it to full day instead of two teachers I would need four or five depending on how many registered. So we don't have the classrooms and definitely we don't have the finances to back it up.

But despite the space constraints, members of the Mountain View community are well aware of the challenges posed to families when faced with a half-day program. If parents are looking for work during the hours their child would be in school, the options for part time employment are limited. In the words of one administrator:

Well the issues are really for finding work that's close. The commuting distance... Middletown...is at least 35 minutes from here. So even if they worked until a half-day, they're still coming back here is almost impossible for them. Right now with the price of gas and the economy...and that's where we are in Sullivan County. Is rural. There's nothing nearby for someone to pick up 3 hours worth of work and still be home for their pre-K child.

Meeting the school bus in the middle of the day poses a real challenge for working parents. So much so, that it may preclude them from taking advantage of the "free" pre-kindergarten now being offered in the school. This director of a local child care center describes the issue:

Because that's the biggest problem working parents have with UPK is it's not accessible to them because they cannot meet that bus in the middle of the day and a lot of working class parents cannot use. It's there but they just can't benefit from saving money because it's a free program because they cannot meet that bus.

The 10% Rule: The Role of Collaboration

As stipulated in the NYS UPK legislation, 10% of the state grant must be directed to a community-based organization (CBO) through the sub-contracting of at least a portion of the Pre-K services. We learned how the districts under study are managing this requirement and we also have heard from CBOs about how other districts, those not being studied, were handling the sub-contracting. The second-hand descriptions of other districts of the percentage of funds being redirected to a CBO ranges from 0% to 100%. The school districts we studied and the CBOs in these communities both struggled to understand and accommodate this aspect of the NYS UPK initiative. The themes that emerged included the lack of options for partnering, mindsets about early education, state requirements about UPK teachers, and the juggling by CBOs to accommodate the UPK needs of multiple school districts at a time. A brief illustration of how each of the three districts is meeting the collaboration aspect of the UPK policy will be followed by further description of each of the emergent themes in the data.

Lakewood, the district with the longest history of Pre-K provision, applied for and received a waiver from the collaboration requirement for the 2007-08 school year; and therefore, they do not sub-contract any of the Pre-K services to another organization in their community. During Spring 2008, at the time of the case study in Lakewood, the administration was still considering how the 10% rule would be met in the 2008-09 school year. There is only one real option for CBO collaboration and that child care center is financially on troubled footing. Mountain View has met the state requirement by subcontracting with Head Start, though fewer than 10% of their students attend UPK. Pine Crest, while still in the planning stages, in April had yet to decide how they will fulfill this stipulation. Since that time, the district has declared it would seek a waiver given that no partnering agency chose to partner with the district. Despite that only one of the three districts is enacting this required collaboration, respondents in all three districts had rich information to provide us on the topic.

The partnering options are slim in Lakewood and Pine Crest, and although there are more CBOs in Mountain View, very few of them were actually viable partners because

of the issues surrounding teachers' credentials. In Lakewood, an administrator described two potential partners in her region:

In our district we have [a CBO], which I think is a dying childcare center, I don't think its going to be around long. They don't have certified teaching staff. And then Head Start used to pick up some of our kids and they still do, but they used to have a centralized location in the county...[now] they would have to be transported to a program 40 minutes away, and so [parents] don't always choose that option.

This administrator also recalled what she had imagined would happen in the community when UPK began:

When we first did the expansion of Pre-K, I didn't know [a CBO] that well and I was new and making lots of changes. And when we opened up our four year-old program I thought, "Well, this is great because [CBO] can assist all the three year-olds and we'll pick up all the four year-olds and we'll really be rocking in this county." Well, I took their four year-olds and I had an impact on their budget and it was not good at all. And I didn't know. It was really a good experience for me to remember and I would have known if I wasn't new at doing this stuff, but I should have had all the people at the table when we were talking about expansion and look at what needs do we have here. But I took all their people because people have to pay [there] and it's about resources. And then Head Start didn't pick up anymore of our three year-olds, so it really didn't help the three year-olds at all. I should have talked to people.

The local child care center director corroborates this story of a center not being able to fill current available slots:

Last year, or the year before, all of our four and five year olds ended up moving to the school district. So that was a significant portion of our pre-K population with the four and five year olds. And now we have three-year-olds and young four-year-olds who didn't make the cut off for pre-K but then we know that once Fall comes, if they hit the four year mark, that they'll be moving on. There's just no question about that. So for us it's kind of a...between a rock and a hard place—as far as that

goes. Because we know as our children age, especially with the early intervention, which is fantastic, I mean we're all excited about that, but we know that more and more of our children are going to be moving to other settings. It's seems inevitable at this point. So we're kind of a, as far as infants and toddlers goes, we'll have a market up to three years old and then after that, you'll see more of those children in an institutional setting.

The director of the CBO being described in the previous quote was very clear about the problem of having such a small population from which to draw:

There are 400 births in [our county], so if you look at the pool of 400 of one age group and then you kind of dwindle it down. How many will stay at home with one parent? Maybe half, so 200. How many will stay with a family member or registered provider? You really get a sense of how many of an age group are out there considering there are four centers and 20-30 [home care providers].

The effect that UPK in Lakewood had on the CBO was dramatic and exemplifies not only the challenges associated with communication and partnering in rural areas, but also how harmful lack of collaboration can really be when the population is so small and the market for private Pre-K so weak.

Pine Crest, still in the planning stages, offers an interesting comparison. There were four providers who attended their initial meeting about UPK collaboration. One of the four was already providing UPK services for another district and offered to take 100% of the funding. Pine Crest administrators were not prepared to turn over the entirety of the grant.

So I guess you'd say that's a possessive feeling. That's a feeling of, and I wouldn't call it "we can do it better" out of arrogance, it's just out of experience. I thought this program could be based here. We could operate this program and should be operating this program.

Two Pre-K providers, one parochial and one private, in the district have closed in the last year, which diminishes the options for the school district. In addition to the lack of options, the administrators also described confusion and apprehension about how the funds would actually be redirected.

But the whole idea of the 10%, how do you even begin to administer that? And how do they use it? And what accountability do they have to the school?

They also were unsure if Head Start could be a UPK partner since it is a federal program. These examples illustrate how administrators must not only decipher the state policies but also must know the other key organizations in their community and be able to reach out to them in order to accommodate this aspect of the UPK program.

There are more CBOs in Mountain View, but few that could meet the state requirement, as they understand it, of having a teacher who is certified with NYS and possesses a Master's degree. Head Start was able to accommodate a few of the children in a particular classroom with a qualified teacher; however the funding differs for those children because they are in a full-day program. A Head Start employee describes the situation:

Mountain View is paying for those children for part of the day, you know they can only fund the half-day program that they are able to do. But because they're in our program, which is a full-day, Mountain View is doing half and we're doing half.

The UPK teacher in Mountain View mentioned that they have lost students to the Head Start program because it is a full-day program and the UPK program is not. In this case (as opposed to in Lakewood where the UPK program is full-day), the school UPK program felt the competition from CBOs as opposed to the CBOs feeling the pressure of the school-based UPK program. This issue of competition and the ability of CBOs and school districts to work together to provide early education services reflects the complexity of the current early childhood education and public school systems.

In our work we heard about districts other than those we were studying. These districts were mentioned by school administrators for comparison and they were mentioned by CBOs as other partners. We discovered that many CBOs were working with several different school districts, in fact one CBO in Mountain View mentioned collaborations with 19 different districts. Obviously, the location of a CBO in relation to other districts affects its ability to collaborate with multiple districts. The idea of a CBO being able to provide UPK for a number of districts, and therefore be able to combine

funding from several streams does suggest a potential solution to some of the struggles mentioned in the previous quotations (assuming that a CBO has multiple sites in multiple districts). CBOs in Lakewood and Mountain View described the small population from which they draw and the problem of having to place UPK children in a particular classroom because of the particulars of the teacher's credentials. These predicaments suggest that multiple districts working together with one CBO could be beneficial. However, the geographic isolation and the problems with transportation across sparsely populated regions and across district lines, described more fully below, may make this multi-district collaboration very challenging in many rural regions.

Quality UPK Programming

This section details components of quality UPK programming according to our interviewees in three rural districts. Quality and the nature of collaborative relationships emerge as a cross cutting theme from which we examine perspectives on personnel, home visiting, inclusive pedagogy, and monitoring.

Personnel

"We will have the best teachers and environment and transportation and all those pieces that make this, make it work it'll be done right."

Pine Crest Administrator

It is well known that school districts must hire certified Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers and are able to pay salaries that are considered at the high end of pay in the early childhood field. CBOs sit in direct competition with school districts for qualified early childhood staff; they struggle to hire teachers and cannot come close to offering commensurate salaries. A Mountain View CBO administrator laments over the difficulty of finding good early childhood teachers, the low pay she offers and the quality of her hires:

Accessing them is a matter of paying good salaries. I think, I think the UPK programs, they themselves can draw their staff from their school staff you know, yes the teachers need a degree in early childhood education but a lot of the elementary teachers have that so they have been able to draw from their existing staff, their seasoned staff so they have great experience going into the classrooms.

...I mean when a teacher can go to a school district and make \$50-60,000 or they can work at Head Start making \$25-30, you know the caliber of the of the staff isn't as great as it would be in the school district.

Our respondents named certified early childhood staff as central to quality. We also find that certain individuals are frequently identified as the superheroes. They seem to glue the early childhood effort together, providing better-coordinated paths and services for young children. The Lakewood school district principal offers her appreciation for the effort and results of a CBO teacher's activities. These efforts define their strong partnership:

[Even Start] is a big part of our...the big picture here. It's such as strong program, we have a really good person in charge... the most amazing woman ... the person who runs the program really helps ... and it's also a key feeder into our program and because it's such as good partner, [Even Start] runs a nursery school program three times a week and they don't just limit it to their participants, so they invite other families into it and so that's another sort of entry way into the school.

While Lakewood has had many years to establish strong early childhood partnerships, the salience of "a central person" was evident regardless of the stage of UPK take up. We note in Mountain View that this person is one who can garner top down support and has the bottom up grit to pull people and a program together. Their deep and respected knowledge of early childhood is well known. A Mountain View school administrator expands this idea:

She is one of the teachers you're going to interview later, who fully supports the program. Has great knowledge of where the kids need to be and she was very instrumental in the beginning of designing what we're looking to do with the kids and our primary focus really is, has been and will be for support and language. It's a quality program.

Interviewees in all three districts, from different roles/perspectives, link other structural components to quality programming. Respondents describe the need for sufficient space, full day versus half-day programming, and timely and available transportation. Teachers also name low student-teacher ratios, a suitable playground, and time for the children to play outdoors as components of quality programming.

Home visiting

Relationships with families, in particular the relevance of home visiting, are noted in all three cases. In planning, the Pine Crest school district recognizes its importance and considers how to make it a part of what they offer. Lakewood parents noted home visiting as a bridge between school and home, critical to establishing the parent-teacher relationship. Parents acknowledge the teacher's effort to know the whole child, beyond the school context. A parent in the Lakewood school district comments:

One thing that impressed me before the pre-K programs started, the pre-K team ...invasive... but to me, I thought it was really a good thing because, you know, it's kinda hard to know where a kid is coming from unless, you know, you've actually seen their environment and I thought that was good.

From the parent's perspective (in all three cases), strong, trusting relationships with their child's teachers are particularly comforting. It is of utmost importance to have an ally with whom they can share parental concerns about their child's development and future success. A parent in the Mountain View school district appreciates the attentive and responsive nature of daughter's teacher:

I think they're very supportive. My daughter has a speech problem and the teacher, right a way she picked it up and my daughter goes to [program] in the afternoon and she's doing much better so I'm very happy... And also pre-k the teacher is trying to get my daughter prepared for kindergarten. They're really trying to get them prepared for the next year.

Collegiality

Collaborative relationships between early childhood professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, social workers, nurse, special services- occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, after school programming) both within the school district and across the community and county(ies) emerged as an overriding factor of quality. Meeting to exchange information and sharing in sponsored evening events for parents are noted as a key component of quality relationships. A Mountain View school district teacher speaks about having access to professionals who are in the know, in this case a valued school nurse:

She (nurse) is connected to the families so she's one of the first people that we all

go to, including the Pre-K ladies, go to her because she has the rest of the family information or anything that we might not have been told or might not be placed on paper, yet...she knows somehow.

The Lakewood district arranges close physical placement of Even Start, Pre-K and K programs to ensure better communication about families, children and early childhood practices. Being close by and communicating with colleagues contributes to program continuity for families and children and in Lake view, cross- system partnerships. The Lakewood Even Start CBO teacher housed in the district building explains:

That made a big difference. And then I also just try to keep close communication with all the teachers. Last year, up through last year, I was actually my office was right part of the pre-K room when it was one big room here and it was so easy to keep in touch with the pre-K teachers and know everything that was going on.

A school district teacher reflects on the support she receives for various aspects of her work with children and families. She feels privileged to have an “in house” cluster of support.

Most of the children in Kindergarten, when they’re classified...have a speech therapist that is also used for support and our psychologist is a very good person to talk to she helps us with writing behavior plans and sets things in motion that way so there is an awful lot of good knowledgeable people right here in our building that are very helpful and I think that we have enough meetings where we can talk it out. I think we laugh a lot, so I think that helps us and I hope we do that enough with the children so that it helps them as well. We are very fortunate that we have a good support group of people right in house here.

Inclusive Practices

“There isn’t any child that I don’t think would benefit from an integrative setting. So I mean there are children who need more assistance [and should] be in that setting. But they all benefit, even the typical kids.”

Mountain View CBO teacher

Coordinating services and transitions through Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education and Special Education (into school age) consistently appears as a formidable challenge to quality programming. A Pine Crest school district administrator

attempts to explain their system for coordinating special education services:

We have SPOA, which is Single Point of Access, we are talking about older children at those meetings, but those services are available for preschool age students as well. You'll hear later about an early intervention program in special education here. We've added some other things to try to come up with a more integrated environment.

While some programming and support for children with special needs can appear seamless, others situations are more confounded and complex. Relationships between school districts and CBOs are commonly developed to provide special education services, yet they vary in quantity and quality. For example, the Lakewood school district provides speech, occupational, and physical therapy to children in their UPK program with mild special needs. However, Lakewood's preschool children with the most severe needs are not served in house and are routinely placed at a smaller community setting where they receive full day educational programming and therapeutic services.

From the CBO perspective of each district, collaborations regarding special needs programming are unique and distinctive. A Lakewood CBO leader describes how her agency takes on three different school districts in the county. She alludes to the discrepant inclusive approaches in each district and the role her agency plays in each:

But really the universal pre kindergarten is, we actually go in and staff the program for them and it's an integrated program in [District A], meaning that we have special education students combined with typical students. The one in [District B] is a little bit different. Their UPK students are all typical but we still integrate them with our special needs program and the same with [District C].

We find that the nature of collaborative relationships – between school districts and CBOs - are distinct, as are the inclusive philosophies within each district UPK program. To further complicate matters, philosophies and practices between early childhood and special education are often unaligned. The intersection of these differences has real implications for the nature and quality of program and service delivery. For example, some districts request that special education services be delivered outside of UPK program time. Special education can be conceived as a “pull out” service, viewed as separate, or in one instance, a program interruption. A Mountain View CBO administrator's expands on the

demand for her agency to meet each district's unique needs; she also exemplifies aspects of the dilemma around inclusion practices:

Well, not the UPK, the preschool, I'm talking preschool special education program. We can provide services under the committee for preschool special education [CPSE] in the home, in a daycare setting, at a relative's house, at a Head Start setting, and in some instances in a UPK setting. Mountain View is not one of those. They do not want the providers in their UPK program and I understand it. It's a new program,...they've only been in operation for two years. They're just getting their feet wet...and they don't want the children to be pulled out of the program... They want us to serve the children when they're not there.

In a Head Start program in Mountain View, an administrator describes a different model, where services are "pushed in". Teachers and therapists interact to combine goals, thus working across educational and medical systems. In this setting, both children with special needs and typically functioning children benefit from professionals working in an interdisciplinary fashion.

Head Start is wonderful about allowing our providers into the facility to work right there with the kids while they're in the program so they can work with the teachers that they have, give them ideas for carryover. They're there a full day so they get 2 square meals a day plus snacks and they have worked wonderfully with our providers. There's a lot of carryover and a lot of interaction so that the children really are benefiting from being involved in the Head Start program.

Teachers and parents do positively experience inclusive pedagogy in programs that provide universal access, not only programming for children with typical and special needs, but also for children living under various socioeconomic conditions. A district Lakewood teacher notes this in a recent change, moving from a targeted Pre-K to a Universal program:

I was always the targeted Pre-K so I had the neediest,...the neediest children in my room. So this is the first year that I had a mixture of backgrounds, which is actually very nice for the children and the staff.

Similarly, two Pine Crest parents prefer an integrated setting for their children, however, they indicate different lines of reasoning or purpose. One Pine Crest parent explains that the outcome of integrated (typical and special needs children) programs is to deepen a

sense of difference and commonality. She states:

Children of all backgrounds, children of all special needs, typical kids, you know, I want my daughter to know, we didn't live just in this community. I was born and raised here but I was gone for 20 years...so I know there is more to life than just a farming community and I want her to have the safety of the rural area growing up that I had, but I also want her to know there's an entire world out there you know. We're global now. We need to... so [she] had so much empathy for other children and so much awareness that you know not everyone was just like her and it was fantastic.

Another parent values integration with senior members of the community for the purpose of weaving tight community ties through the generations. She illustrates how this factored into her choice of a CBO program for her daughter:

So we chose [this program] because it was across the road from my mother's retirement community where she works and we just thought that whole connection where you know the older members would come over sometimes. That's what was kind of promoted is the integration of the older and the younger and they'd go back and forth.

While inclusive practices of special and typical children or inter-generational integration are valued, rural parents have explicit desires for their children. Informal networks woven in the rural context remain palpable as central to a sense of safety and familiarity. A Pine Crest school district parent explains:

Just that connection of them knowing that there's so many safe people here...If you do something wrong somebody is going to see you but if you need something somebody's going to be there for you.

Monitoring Quality

As safety stands central to quality of programming in the mind's eye of many rural parents, state and federal monitoring systems begin with basic health and safety issues in programs for young children. However, we are at a time in history where program accountability is strongly emphasized. The directness of Pine Crest school district administrator underscores today's pressure and scrutiny:

We are a very highly accountable school, but we are asking you try your hardest and

that accountability is going to be almost at every case higher than ours. In almost every case- if you clearly say to a teacher, you know your, your level of expectation, ours are going to be already be very high, theirs are higher and you don't get into a circumstance where people aren't making the effort.

We encounter candid and strong opinions about early childhood program quality monitoring. A Lakewood school administrator frankly voices a concern shared in all three cases; the dire need for more childcare in rural areas and that of high quality. The Lakewood school district administrator reveals her effort and challenge to extend services and blend across early childhood systems in the effort to improve access and quality of care:

There are people who put their kids in child care situations that I find unbelievable, it's pretty bad, but I'm sure that's true everywhere...We don't have a lot of high quality child care number one. We don't have much at all. So pre-k is really about your only option and your best option. There is Head Start, but Head Start tends to be located miles from here. We asked them to be on our campus and they chose not to.

Frustration marks the quote of the Lakewood school administrator, however a less bleak truth about early childhood quality is shared by a Lakewood administrator of a CBO. She describes a systemic view that highlights growth over time. In her vision, the community boasts separate but overlapping early childhood entities, each play a role in improving quality for young children:

I think that the quality has improved greatly over the last ten years. The childcare council has become more visible in the county and active working with not just the centers, from the home childcare providers and training and bringing their quality up and getting them registered. You have the school in South Seneca taking a very central and important part in working with the UPK and the groups at that age now and, they don't do the toddlers and all of that, but that's very helpful. That increased the readiness for them to start school, having the higher educated teachers working with our young people.

Indeed, the question to our respondents about monitoring quality draws disparate reactions. From a Mountain View school district administrator we see close monitoring of children's immediate preschool progress and the anticipation for the future, long-term impact of Pre-Kindergarten experience on third grade scores. Positive child outcomes will reinforce the administrator's belief in the quality of his program and the veracity of the district's investment in UPK. He explains:

So, I think the quality of the program now and it will be and I believe in it.

I think we got to look later down the road to track some of the kids by the time we get to 3rd grade test and see how they do versus no pre-K experience

We note the struggle, particularly from the rural CBOs, to maintain quality programming in the face of a rural professional drain. More than one organization reported the difficulty in finding, hiring and retaining providers- qualified providers don't stay long in rural areas. Additionally, CBOs report that the challenge of having to meet the mandates of more than one regulatory agency and agonize over the increasing amount of paperwork. A Mountain View CBO administrator reports:

Staffing is great locally right now. We're only understaffed in the professional realm slightly. For the last three years we've been struggling with that quite a bit. But quality, we've always just kept behind, I get the high quality so I think we actually provide it. Of course you know if it's not on paper and we get audited by over three state regulatory agencies we work with there's always something. I can't say that the oversight on a state level is all that wonderful so.

Comments about the amount of paperwork regulatory audits and citations fill our respondent's reaction to monitoring quality. So much so that the research team finds it challenging to penetrate beyond understanding of how quality is managed beyond this point.

School Readiness

This section addresses how case study participants in the Lakewood, Mountain View and Pine Crest locales view school readiness. We employ a contemporary "whole child" definition of readiness that includes the following five dimensions: (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches to

learning; (4) language development; and 5) cognition and general knowledge (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995). Participants from our study express what experts say about all five dimensions, that they are inextricably linked, one cannot view any dimension separate from another. Further, we understand readiness in a cultural context and in this section aim to recognize the importance of communities, schools and families in developing children's readiness (Kagan et al., 1995).

Communities

Communities can play their part in getting children ready for school. Lakewood, with its long history of early childhood programming, demonstrates its readiness agenda in their effort to rally around early literacy. A Lakewood CBO administrator tells us of a civic initiative that "funds and put books into the hands of every child". A few years ago this initiative began with the intent to serve four year olds and its success has been transferred to threes, twos and currently the movement is to expand to infants. Undoubtedly, Lakewood buys into the "earlier is better" notion. However, these are small steps to solve the many challenges faced in rural districts. A Lakewood CBO administrator explains:

We have a county bus, we have a county profile, we have seven hundred and fifty children in this county that never had a book of their own until four that a year later have a book of their own. So, we keep doing it, we take baby steps...

The same CBO administrator reveals that readiness is part of a whole standard for the Lakewood community where "children would be born healthy, that families would have supports, that the children would be ready to succeed when they got to the schools, the schools would then support them through that period, the families would have the access the services, opportunities to give them back standard vision for community." We found evidence of the complex and multilayered confluence of challenges to school readiness: basic health, family support, school quality, and access in the rural context and so the CBO administrator resolves, "we take baby steps".

From the perspective of CBO Pre-K teachers, quality of care and school readiness go hand in hand. One Mountain View CBO teacher expands this common assumption, "if they have good infant care and toddler care they'll be ready for school." The idea that not only quality of care relates to readiness, but that earlier is better, resonated with many respondents. Children enter the preschool from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of experiences, behaviors and skills. This was palpable to teachers across the communities

in this work.

Schools

With over twenty years of prekindergarten programming, the Lakewood School District uses its own informal research to demonstrate that children with preschool experience come to kindergarten more prepared. Their extended Pre-K experience serves to ground the Lakewood school district's Pre-K funding and its recent expansion from half day to full day Pre-K programming. One Lakewood school administrator targets literacy at the core of readiness and subsequent success with test scores:

Our concern in this district in this school has been literacy and kids' ability to read and our success on test scores. So, I think it helped them to start to see that um...that this early start was helping kids with that.

This suggests a partnership or shared vision for their community, unique to the Lakewood district. In an additional comment on readiness, Lakewood reports that children without "some kind of early start," were more likely to be classified in need of special support. Early identification of learning need runs as a continuous thread to the discussion of readiness. Pine Crest and Mountain View districts, in their early stages of prekindergarten planning and implementation, name early identification and remediation as the pivotal aspect of readiness and the goal of offering UPK. A Mountain View administrator describes the lack of school readiness in the district:

For rural schools, for our area here, I say they come in... 70-75% of the kids that come in are very limited language [proficient].

An overriding sentiment shared between the two districts in their early stages of UPK programming, is that Pre-K is a preventative strategy. Pine Crest and Mountain View districts expect that UPK will both pay off in learning success and money saved on remediation and support services in later years. "It will pay dividends," reflects the expectation of a Pine Crest SD administrator. A Lakewood Pre-K teacher notes the difference between those who do- and do not- have responsive caring early on, which includes rich experiences with language:

You can tell they've had book experience, someone to talk to them, play games with them, their language is developed, as opposed to child that has never read a book.

Pre-K teachers define readiness

Not only do CBO and school district Pre-K teachers agree that early experiences matter; they generally see eye to eye on what they consider the behaviors associated with school readiness. We note the overwhelming and explicit desire of early childhood teachers across systems to have children begin school with their social and emotional needs met. Teachers agree that a child is ready for school when they feel safe away from home and can adjust to school, can attach and form relationships with a new person (teacher or peers) and are interested and ready to play cooperatively with other children. Teachers feel that children appear ready when they are confident, independent in play and self care, have the language to interact and communicate their ideas and needs, but also are able to listen in a group setting. Teachers describe how children need to be able to sit and pay attention, as well as have developed fine and gross motor skills so that they can begin to read and write. Having these basic dimensions of social emotional readiness, many teachers believe that a child can be “really productive when they enter the school district [kindergarten].” A Mountain View CBO administrator aptly sums up the shared perspective of teachers, as well as other administrators, “a self-content eager 5-year-old can learn anything.”

Kindergarten teachers define readiness

Kindergarten teachers name their own readiness expectations primarily in social emotional realm: being able to listen and follow directions, follow a classroom routine, share, be polite, be able to raise their hand, and have an interest in writing. Academic readiness ranks second to social emotional readiness from both the viewpoint Pre-K and K teachers.

Teacher's perception: Parent's role in readiness

Teachers, Pre-K and K, believe that parents hold a strong supporting role in their child's readiness for school. Teachers request that parents have their children attend pre-school regularly, a basic must for readiness. However, teachers commonly recognize that often a parent's own early failure with the school system can be a barrier to their own child's attendance. Lakewood Pre-K and K teachers spoke about how they encourage parents to see themselves as pivotal to their child's school readiness. CBO Pre-K teachers agreed that “parents are the child's first teacher.” With the parents as first teacher, and

teachers as second, teachers suggest a partnership model where they envision supporting parents to have “positive parent-child interactions”.

Home visits are reported to have great value according to Pre-K teachers. Teachers can model positive interactions and emphasize literacy experiences that carry over from the classroom setting into the home. Additionally, teachers report that they are able to understand the child better from knowing the home environment. Teachers sincerely want to “make a difference” and try to involve families. This is done through programming for parent involvement both in the educational settings (day and night) or at home. Success and optimism in this arena varies by context and teacher. A Lakewood CBO teacher reflects on her efforts to involve parents:

Well, we tried really hard to keep the parents involved and to get them in here. But a lot of it is I think we struggle because we’re encouraging, we’re really encouraging, family literacy. That’s been like a big thing for us especially this year, trying to get the parents to read to the children cause I really think that, I mean, we can do everything here but if it’s not being carried over at home I think a lot of it’s getting lost.

Another Lakewood CBO teacher is articulate about class differences between families and how that impacts her vision for the families she supports, her role and projected outcomes. She perceives her own effectiveness in this area:

Working with families with poverty and trying to give them access to some middle-class tools. Whether or not they choose to use the system, it’s sorta beyond my control. Some families, from being in the program, I think have really made a difference in their lives.

Parent's perception: Own role in readiness

We describe how teachers tend to hold parents accountable for their child's readiness for school. However, we found evidence that parents see their role differently. Parents in the Mountain View district squarely place the role of teaching onto the shoulders of teachers. They recognize that teachers push children at school and report that without it they “can’t get anywhere” while at home, “they just want to fool around all the time.” Parents appreciate the future orientation of teachers. One Mountain View parent notes that she saw this with both daughters: “Her fifth grade teacher tells me what her goals are for 6th grade, and also pre-k, the teacher is trying to get my daughter prepared for

kindergarten." A Mountain View CBO administrator echoes this phenomenon of abdicating education to teachers:

We have parents when I do the intake and they're like, they'll say you're going to teach them and they're going to learn, right?

This comment in the context of a daycare enrollment reflects another belief held by parents. Parents may hold traditional beliefs about the very nature of teaching and learning. This is best noted as the above parent asks for reassurance that her child will learn in a day care context, where extended periods of open play- versus teacher-directed instruction- are the norm.

Challenges to readiness

Teachers report several challenges to readiness. Pre-K and K teachers from all three districts and across systems reiterate how very challenging it is to work with children who have are missing early experiences. A Lakewood kindergarten teacher says:

Because [families] can't afford it and their knowledge base is limited with what they bring, because [the children] haven't been anywhere or done anything and seen anything,... people don't always talk to them about other things so they don't have that richness that the kid that has been read to all of the time or has traveled with parents to farther fields.

At the same time, teachers and administrators see that parents are overburdened and empathize with the hardship the families in their care sustain. They note that many work long hours for little pay, have little time or energy to spend with their children, and live with very little resources. A Mountain View teacher associates a high incidence of transience among the rural population as a challenge to readiness, "transient children, transient families. They come in, everyone bonds, they've adjusted and then all of a sudden they're gone like that." Under these conditions, learning and readiness for school is compromised.

Lastly, perceived stress from programming "push down" pressure emerges as a common concerns from teachers and may hamper readiness. The idea of "lost childhood," via the disappearance of play in ECE programs in both Pre-K and K, is discernable. School district teachers recognize that "children react to the pressure -and are frustrated in kindergarten". Perhaps teacher's frustration with, "too much assessment" or "pushing kids

too hard nowadays” gives voice to an agitating trend in some districts. A Lakewood school district kindergarten teacher reflects:

It is a feeling I have which is thinking that for some of the children, I just wonder are we pushing them so hard that by the time they're sixteen are they just going to want to just get out of the education, get out of school.

Rurality: The Unique Aspects of Universal Pre-K Adoption in Rural Areas

One of the main goals of these cases studies was to investigate the implementation of UPK in rural areas and to determine if there were uniquely rural challenges or successes associated with the program or simply more universal challenges. The topic of rurality was addressed in every interview, and while each respondent spoke to the impact of the rural environment on early education, not all the themes struck us as uniquely rural. For example, many respondents described the poverty in their districts, the overall economic decline, and the struggles of families where two parents work or where there is only one parent in the household. We do not doubt the tremendous impact of these conditions on the provision of early education, and particularly, the effect of these conditions on the children's readiness for school; however, these issues are not uniquely rural.

Every district we studied described transportation as their biggest challenge in providing early education and they attributed their troubles to the rurality of their district. Each of the three districts is geographically quite large: Mountain View is approximately 75 square miles; Lakewood is close to 125 square miles; and Pine Crest is over 250 square miles.. The isolation of many of the families with small children affects the length of time children spend on buses and the vast transportation costs for the districts. In response to the question of what challenges are uniquely rural, a CBO director described another school district in the same county as Mountain View:

Transportation. A lot of our families would like their children to be involved in certain types of programs but the transportation is not there. I mean [town] is one of the biggest communities in [county] and it was only this year that they started

transporting to the UPK program. Prior to that they had no busing for it and so the numbers were very small.

Mountain View offers transportation for the UPK students; however, the program is only a half-day so many families still have to piece together other accommodations for their children following the half-day at UPK. Lakewood offers both transportation and full-day opportunities for UPK students. Nonetheless, many other service providers describe the isolation and the lack of access to needed services for young children. Pine Crest has included transportation in the budget for their UPK program, which is a half-day program. An administrator describes how the cost of transportation has increased the cost of UPK, which is being supplemented by local funds.

One of the reasons that the school district is adding its own funding to the program is because we felt it was really important to provide transportation as part of the program. We saw that would be a very large barrier to why families wouldn't be able to participate in the program. So I think that that is a huge barrier and you need to [provide transportation] in a rural area because we don't have any public transportation and because our school district is so large. It also raises the costs for our program significantly because we are adding 2 more bus runs.

The cost of transportation can be quite high in any district; however, if it is considered in terms of the costs per child, the cost is dramatic in rural areas. Many of the buses in the districts under study travel vast distances with very few children on the buses because of the small population.

In addition to the transportation, the isolation and rurality has other effects on early education, and schooling in general. Respondents in all of the districts characterized the priorities of the families they serve as being different than their own, or those of the school. In Mountain View, the principal attributed these differing priorities to economic choices families are forced to make.

Right now with the price of gas and the economy. There's a lot of choices for families to be made right now. And I don't think education is a top priority because

if a family has to choose between food on the table and sending the Pre-K kid to school, I think I know the answer to that one.

In Lakewood, a teacher described her observation of how it may be hard to motivate children in school if education is not emphasized in the home.

I found it eye opening to learn what rural people sometimes think and the poorer sometimes think and they don't put the value on the same things that we do. So you have to understand that sometimes when you are still looking for that motivational piece to make the child want to do what you are trying to teach them cause it's not always on the list of the parents' [priorities] for lots of reasons.

Negative parental attitudes toward education may not seem like a uniquely rural theme, either, however, the pattern of out-migration from rural areas may be related to educational attainment. Respondents in Lakewood and Pine Crest described the pattern of out-migration of successful high school graduates and how those students who stayed in the community, tended to be those students who had more difficulty in the school system. One administrator described this phenomenon briefly:

The kids, typically, when they leave they don't come back. So the ones who stay are the ones who couldn't go away.

Respondents from Pine Crest and Lakewood articulated the difficult position in which the rural districts sit in regard to offering students the best education they can. It seems that the better able a rural school district is to educate its students, the higher the percentage of students who will move out of the community after graduation. A respondent in Pine Crest went so far as to list students as one of the local exports:

You know we basically produce three things here. We grow grass, we milk cows, we make the cheese. And the next part, we cut down trees and we make paper and we export it. We make babies and we educate them and export them.

Views about education even as early as Pre-K can still differ between educators and parents. In the views of some community members it is these inconsistencies between school and parental definitions of education and success, even Pre-K, which may

contribute to issues of out-migration. In other words, to the degree that children are well educated, according to a school-based definition, they may be more likely to move away from an isolated rural community upon high school graduation.

Conclusions

- Districts in these case studies articulate multiple reasons for beginning their UPK programs including:
 1. Increasing children’s school readiness and later achievement;
 2. Serving children and families, especially those just above income cut-offs, who currently do not qualify for other programs (e.g. Head Start);
 3. Earlier identification and support for children who may have special education needs
- The requirement to sub-contract 10% of the state UPK funds to CBOs is challenging in these rural districts. In each district, the number of CBOs is small, making it difficult if not impossible, to find appropriate partners. In addition, districts are not always clear about the specific qualifications that community partners need to have in order to be eligible to receive funds. Districts also have concerns about how CBOs will find appropriate staff (i.e. finding certified teachers who would be willing to teach for lower salaries) and how to maintain quality in programs that operate outside the school building.
- The funding provided through state grants to school districts does not cover the cost of operating a Pre-K program. Districts estimate that state funds cover somewhere between 50 to 90% of the program costs. The three districts profiled here use local funds to cover costs such as transportation, equipment, meals, and support staff (e.g. physical education teacher).
- Transportation is a major challenge in these three rural districts. For districts that run a half-day Pre-K program, extra bus runs in the middle of the day add considerable costs to their transportation budgets. For districts that do not provide transportation, families must spend significant time and money to drive their children to and/or from a half-day program. In some cases, families are unable to

meet these transportation challenges and children's enrollment or attendance is negatively affected.

- Districts struggle over whether to provide a full-day or a half-day program. In all three districts, parents in the community expressed a need for full-day programming for their children. However, the state resources do not cover a half-day, much less a full-day, of Pre-K programming.
- All three districts indicate that it is a challenge to find age-eligible children for the Pre-K program. The rural nature of these communities makes it especially difficult for school districts to reach families who do not yet have a formal connection to the district (i.e. no children have yet gone to public school) and who may be isolated and unaware of the availability of Pre-K in their community.
- Members of all three districts articulated a vision of school readiness that encompasses cognitive, physical, and social-emotional components. They emphasize the importance of children learning social skills and fine motor skills as fundamental building blocks for later reading, writing, and math skills in the early elementary grades.
- Respondents commonly name structural characteristics such as class size, teacher ratio, and teacher education as indicators of quality. Quality is also defined in terms of the relationships between programming partners- principal to teachers, Pre-K to Kindergarten teachers, Kindergarten teachers with specialists- that support programming continuity among professionals on behalf of the whole child. In one case the relationships between the community-based organizations and the school district generated a community focus and vision for literacy.

Future Research Directions

Future research will gather data from additional case studies (including districts that have not implemented Pre-K and those who subcontract out significant portions of their state grant to community based organizations). Together with data from the three cases presented here, additional analyses will explore how special education relates to early education in rural communities, especially in light of expected changes to how special

education services are to be paid for in the future (expenses paid for by districts instead of counties). Future reports will also more thoroughly explore the barriers to implementing Pre-K, as well as how districts partner with community base organizations. Finally, future research will examine quality definitional and measurement issues in early education.

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Appendix A

Research Questions

These case studies were designed, conducted and analyzed in light of the following research questions:

- i)** To what extent do rural schools in New York State serve as the location for the delivery of early childhood and supplemental services to families?
- ii)** What are the impediments to implementing quality early childhood education programs in New York State rural schools and communities?
- iii)** What are solutions that will eliminate impediments to implementing early childhood education programs in New York State rural schools and communities?
- iv)** To what extent do children in rural communities have access to other early childhood supports from such agencies as public broadcasting and libraries, government agencies, colleges and universities, public and not-for profit social services and other municipalities, such as counties, towns, villages, etc. What opportunities exist for coalition building of assets?

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Introduction/Warm-up

What is your position/title?

How long have you worked in this role?

How long have you worked in the field of education/early education and care?

Pre-K

Does your district offer state-funded pre-kindergarten?

Where does the programming take place?

Schools?

Community based child care organizations?

When did you begin offering (how long have you offered) pre-k?

How many children participate?

Wait list?

Difficulty enrolling children?

How are children identified?

Who uses pre-kindergarten?

Is it available for all 4 year olds in your community?

Are there income requirements?

Lottery system?

Has this always been the case or has pre-k been more limited or expansive in the past?

What factors led to the decision to offer/not offer pre-k?

What challenges did you face when pre-k began? How have those challenges been resolved? What challenges remain?

Transportation

Uncertainty of future funding

Not enough current funding

Quality control

Enrollment difficulties

Hiring qualified teachers

How is pre-k funded?

Are funds blended or braided?

Do pre-k children also participate in other ece programs (e.g. Head Start)?

In half day or full day programs?

What are pre-k funds used for?

Teacher salaries?

Quality improvements?

Current usage versus past usage?

What is the quality of pre-K in your community?

Other early education settings?

Has quality changed over time?

Specifically in the area of Pre-K, how are you connected to other community based organizations? In what ways do you work together to serve young children and their families?

Shared programming

Shared staffing

Shared funding

Joint trainings

other

What are the challenges to working with other community based organizations? Benefits?

In what ways do the services you provide overlap or complement offerings through other programs?

SD connections with community

What connections does your school district have with the other community organizations?

Pre-K?

Joint training of teachers?

Kindergarten readiness/transition activities?

Connections to libraries

Services for adults?

Other?

What kind of child care/early education options do the families in your community have before they come to the public school?

What do you see in the future in your community for young children and their families?

About Your Community Based Organization

Please tell me a little about your organization: who you serve, hours of operation, locations, etc.

How does your program support parents/families with young children?

And how is this the same or different than what you've done in the past?

What services do you offer for families through your program?

Adult education

Parent education

Social work

Family fun nights, Parent dinners, service events (inside and community),
community building

Referrals to local services

Pre-kindergarten

Before/after school care

Other?

How much are these services used by families? What is used most/least?

What do you see as the benefits to offering these services? Challenges?

Have there been requests for services that you do not provide? What is needed by the community? What would you offer if funding/space/staffing/transportation were not an issue?

In what ways do the services you provide overlap or complement offerings through other programs?

How does your program work with other service agencies to support families? What are the benefits and challenges to these connections?

CBO Connection to the School District

How are you connected to the school district? In what ways do you work together to serve young children and their families?

Shared programming (e.g. pre-K)

Shared staffing

Shared funding

Joint trainings

other

What are the challenges to working with the school district?

What are the benefits to working with the school district?

In what ways do the services you provide overlap or complement offerings through the school district?

Family Services

How does your school support parents/families with young children?

And how is this the same or different than what you've done in the past?

How does your school work with other service agencies to support families? What are the benefits and challenges to these connections?

What services do you offer for families through your schools?

Adult education

Parent education

Social work

Family fun nights, recitals- service or activities? Parent dinners, service events
(inside and community), weekly assemblies, community building

Referrals to local services

Pre-kindergarten

Before/after school care

Other?

How much are these services used by families? What is used most/least?

What do you see as the benefits to offering these services? Challenges?

Have there been requests for services that you do not provide? What is needed by the community? What would you offer if funding/space/staffing/transportation were not an issue?

What challenges exist for rural families in particular with regard to early childhood education?

School Readiness

How do you consider a child ready for school?

What is the nature of your relationships with young children?

How do you see your role in getting children ready for school? What experiences do you provide? What do you think is most important, critical?

How do you see parents as a support to your efforts?

How do you see administrators as a support to your efforts?

How do you see early education programs (e.g. pre-K) as a support?

Kindergarten

What does Kindergarten look like in your school?

Half vs full day?

Schedule/activities?

Numbers of classrooms and children?

What challenges do you face in being a Kindergarten teacher?

How have those challenges been resolved?

What challenges remain?

What supports do you receive as a Kindergarten teacher?

What supports would be important to put in place?

If you had infinite funds, what would you change about Kindergarten?

In your experience, how does Kindergarten connect with other early education services in the community?

Pre-K

Child care centers, Head Start, libraries, etc.

Any shared services or programs, curriculum?

Benefits to these connections?

Challenges to these connections?

How do you involve families in the school?

Volunteers, field trips, curriculum, dinners, home visits, phone calls, K orientation

What are the benefits and challenges to their involvement?

Early Education in the Community

What kind of child care/early education options do the families in your community have before they come to the public school?

What challenges exist for rural families in particular with regard to early childhood education?

Infants and toddlers?

Preschool/pre-K?

Transportation

Work schedules different than child care hours

Availability of options

What is the quality of early education settings in your community?

Parent's Relationship with School

What is the nature of your relationship to the school? Your child's teachers?
How are you connected to the programs/building/teachers?

How does your school support parents/families with young children?
What kind of support would you like?

What benefits do you derive from these relationships/connections?

What challenges do you have in your relationship with the school?

Wrap-up, feedback about the process, and next steps

What do you see in the future for young children and their families in your community?

Anything you'd like to comment on that we did not have a chance to discuss?

What feedback can you give us about this interview?

Questions we forgot?

Questions we should not ask in the future?

Comments on length, format, style?

Do you have suggestions for who we should interview?

Parents

Pre-K/elementary Teachers

Other Administrators

Child Care Teachers

Community Program directors

What format would work best? Focus groups? Individual interviews?

What would be the best way to contact these people?

Background Questions

For the record, would you be comfortable documenting your race/ethnicity? Or would you prefer not to share this information? Please let me know which category best describes you: White/Non-Hispanic, Black/African American/non-Hispanic, White/Hispanic, Black/African American/Hispanic, Bi-/multi-racial, Asian, Other.

Which category best describes your age? 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+

Which category best describes your gender? Male, female