

Developing a Plan for Evaluating English Language Arts in Transitional Kindergarten

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Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Developing a Plan for Evaluating English Language Arts in Transitional Kindergarten

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is an opportunity given to children in California who were born in the fall to be enrolled in a two-year kindergarten program. Specifically these children are those born between September 2nd and December 2nd. This means they would be up to nine months younger than their peers when they register for kindergarten. Previously, California had one of the latest kindergarten entry cutoff dates that allowed children as young as four to enter kindergarten (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008). In 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law the Kindergarten Readiness Act (KRA). This act alters the kindergarten entry date allowing children to enter kindergarten at the age of five instead of four. As stated in Transitional Kindergarten California, the Kindergarten Readiness Act established transitional kindergarten to be a bridge between preschool and kindergarten for children born in this time frame. It was developed to meet the appropriate developmental needs of the students that had birthdays between September and December and were no longer eligible for enrolling in kindergarten until the following school year. TK is the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for those students born in that period (Transitional Kindergarten California, 2012). Now these students are the oldest students in kindergarten instead of being the younger schoolchildren as they would have been previously. At this time TK eligible students are not mandated to attend. According to the California Education Code 48200, full-time compulsory education begins at the age of six.

Currently kindergarten is considered far more academic and rigorous than it has been in the past. According to Transitional Kindergarten California, a project of Early Edge California, children in California began kindergarten at a younger age compared to children in almost any

other state in the nation. This meant that the students were often enrolled lacking the social skills, maturity, and academic skills necessary for successful learning outcomes (Transitional Kindergarten California, 2012). California does not have specific common standards for transitional kindergarten for English Language Arts. It was left open for districts to compile their essential standards. The transitional kindergarten program in a small agricultural community with majority of the population of low socioeconomic status created their own goals for children to meet in the area of English Language Arts. They also created assessments based on their goals they developed. Policy guidelines ought to be followed for what assessments need be developed and will have implications for specific instruction that might be provided (Invernizzi, Laundrum, Teichman, & Townsend 2010).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree to which Transitional Kindergarten in this small community is achieving its goals in English Language Arts. Unless the goals of the transitional kindergarten program and the results being achieved in this small community are examined, the stakeholders will not know if the program is effective. Evaluating the outcomes is significant because this is a new program in education. In 2003, Datar studied academic achievements in the areas of math and reading on specific standardized tests to understand the cognitive effects of entering kindergarten later compared to earlier. The results showed that delaying kindergarten entrance was associated with a significant increase in reading and math scores. Studies have determined that the returns on early investments in education are extensive (Transitional Kindergarten California, 2012). At this time, literature does not address how to evaluate the new programs' goals in TK in the area of English Language Arts. Because of this deficiency, this researcher will be developing a plan to assess English Language Arts in a transitional kindergarten program. When the plan is implemented it will answer the following

question: To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals? This will give teachers who have taught transitional kindergarten, educators at all levels, schools administrators, school boards, legislators, and parents a better understanding of the intended learning outcomes in English Language Arts in the transitional kindergarten program of a small community. This will also be beneficial to other transitional kindergarten programs. They will get a clear and unequivocal picture of what plans can be beneficial when assessing English Language Arts.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Recently there has been a major educational shift that focuses on instituting universal pre-kindergarten for four-year olds (Invernizzi, Landrum, Teichman, and Townsend, 2010). According to California Education Code 48000, Transitional kindergarten (TK) is not preschool. It's the first year of kindergarten for students that will attend kindergarten for two years (TK). It is part of the Kindergarten through twelfth grade system. The statute states that TK needs to use a modified kindergarten curriculum. Consequently, the program is supposed to be aligned to the California Preschool Learning Foundations (California Education Code 48000 (f)). Although the programs need to be aligned to the foundations the statute does not specify the specific goals that need to be attained in TK. Each district serving TK is responsible for creating their own goals. Goals of TK need to be examined to see if the results of the program are being achieved to know if the program is effective. This study focuses on the following question: To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals? This literature review examines the connection between appropriate developmental literacy and developmentally appropriate assessments.

Overview of the context of Literature

The key areas of literature examined are developmentally appropriate literacy and assessments. The theoretical framework is influenced by developmental appropriate practices that meet the educational outcomes needed for children. Elliot and Olliff (2008) studied the

emergent literacy as well as the letter recognition abilities through a lens using optimal developmental education for the advancement of young children. In 2008, Elliot and Oliff state that the arena in early childhood keeps moving into the current inclination of accountability. They state that it is being done even if it is by resistance, gradually pushed, and or leaping into it. When children enter kindergarten it is anticipated that they have multiple requisite skills. Consequently, early childhood educators focus on the progression of pre-reading and writing skills. For literacy development, the years from birth through five are most significant (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). Copple and Bredekamp state that the first five years also play a significant role in the social-emotional, physical development, and Elliot, likewise states that those years are the most significant in regards to the developing brain (as cited in Rushton, Juola-Rushton, & Larkin, 2009). Elliot and Olliff (2008) suggested that in order to improve the emergent literacy skills, it is crucial to create developmentally appropriate activities for children. The study suggested that the activities need to be developmentally appropriate in the following domains: social-emotional, physical, and cognitive. This was a small study and due to this Elliot and Olliff, (2008) state that “the results have limited generalizability” (Discussion section, para. 6). This researcher is reviewing this literature to establish the foundation of what needs to be learned developmentally at the age of entering TK and what is appropriate to assess if the learning outcomes are being met. This researcher is not using research that assesses “transitional kindergarten” students because this program has not been in existence for very long. At this time longitudinal studies are not available that have evaluated the learning outcomes of the TK programs.

Language and Literacy

A quantitative study by Bigras et al. (2009) focused on assessing the language support practices (LSP). Twenty two teachers in Canada used it with 4-year-old children. They assessed the language support practices developed by Girolametto et al. using the Teacher Interaction and Language Rating Scale. The study discussed how children develop language skills when they interact with adults. Children interact with the adult educators that were in their immediate environment. Authors conducting the research focused on the following questions: What LSP do educators use to build the language skills of the children under their care? What about the quality of these LSP? The last question they focused on was, are there certain educational styles that better support language acquisition by 4-year-old children in Early Childhood Education centers (ECE)? The study had limitations but learned that LSP during snack time can be an effective way to help develop language for children that may be three to four years old. The results also showed that ECE educators don't consistently use language support practices. These practices are underscored. When we build on children's knowledge of oral language we are fostering language and literacy (Gullo, 2006). This study states that this is done by engaging children's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional selves. Thus, it is done by helping children understand what is read through shared reading and having a discussion about what was read.

These studies are significant because educators can play a big role in providing stimulating practices that will support language acquisition. Also, the training educators receive in LSP is important in promoting those skills with children. Furthermore, language support practices are a part of the foundation to educational success. Gullo (2006) study states that oral language provides a foundation for literacy development. Consequently, children learn from

talking and listening. This contributes to their reading and writing. For instance, this is seeing when children develop phonological awareness and when they manipulated phonemes.

Educational Shift

There has been a major educational shift towards creating universal preschool because of concerns regarding children's primary literacy development during the beginning years in school. The concern is with the implications for literacy and assessing developmental growth (Invernizzi, et al., 2010). Studies have examined when children should began kindergarten and the tradeoffs of beginning too soon, or too late. It is difficult to evaluate the readiness of children to start kindergarten, and schools have previously used the obvious indicator of a child's age in relation to a cutoff for kindergarten entrance (Cannon, & Lipscomb, 2008). Due to a significant focus on better-quality test scores in the past, there has been an increased focus on accountability founded by, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This Act has led to kindergarten curricula having a much greater emphasis on academics in place of appropriate social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Cannon, Lipscomb, 2008). By moving the cutoff date children will wait another year before starting kindergarten. This will help the children mature: socially-emotionally, physically, and cognitively, so it provides a solid foundation for academic overlays (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2008). Furthermore, Cannon & Lipscomb (2008) discuss the tradeoffs associated with entrance age and policy decisions. One of the tradeoffs they discussed was that when children took grade-level assessments the children would be older instead of younger. This study suggested that it may be advantageous, for the state for children's test scores, to be compared when those children are closer to the optimal age in the states, as with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Developmental Literacy and Assessment

According to Intermezzi, et al. (2006) some emergent skills the children need that predict conventional reading outcomes are: phonological sensitivity, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge. The research focuses on the role of early literacy assessment, examining assessments and their key features, and discusses a widespread assessment used in the United States known as the Phonological Awareness Screening for Preschoolers (PALS-PreK). The research makes recommendations for policy and also for practice due to the findings. They concluded the assessments need to be broadly based as well as efficient to administer. The assessments must give immediate feedback that can be used for instructional benefit (Invernizzi, et al. 2006). The study suggests that PALS-PreK met that criteria because it was broadly based but it also had scientific rigor.

Invernizzi et al. (2006) raised awareness of the importance of universal preschool but most importantly the significance of the design of assessments for emergent literacy. The study gave insight on how assessments should be used for planning, implementing instruction, screening function, and for program accountability. It is also important because the research incorporates policy guidelines for what assessment should be developed and gives direction towards which instruction should be provided (Invernizzi et al. 2006).

Modglin, Molfese, Molfese, Neamon, and Walker (2004), study inspected a screening tool named Get Ready to Read (GRTR). It was developed as a brief assessment of early reading skills of children between the ages of three and four years old. The researchers were relating reading performance to other assessments that are used for phonological sensitivity and language skills, which are related to the development of reading skills. The study explains the use of common assessments used to assess reading skills using a multi-instrument battery to assess

multiple components for word-level decoding are not always feasible. The factors they found affecting the multi-instrument battery are: lengthy administration, and standardized tests which are not normed for children under five years. A better approach the study suggests is the GRTR. According to Modglin et al., GRTR is an assessment that is designed to be brief while identifying children who may be at risk of delays and allows for referral for those that may need intervention or further assessment. Modglin et al. (2004) found when scores of GRTR and cognitive assessments are correlated, the vocabulary skills were identified as significantly connected to outcomes. Phonological sensitivity had less variance compared to the vocabulary skills. Modglin et al. (2004) established that vocabulary skills and phonological sensitivity were also more crucial predictors than environmental print. They wanted to acquire an understanding of the findings in regards to older children compared to the development of reading abilities and the prompt prevention of reading disabilities that are found in children of preschool age.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (as cited in Modglin et al., 1998) notes that preschool children need awareness of how print can be translated into sounds so then they interpret it. This is known as phonological, syntactic sensitivity, letter-sound-name knowledge in support with knowledge of narrative and print conventions. Their studies have shown that cognitive abilities are predictive of reading skills of school age. Furthermore, the study states cognitive abilities set the stage for promptly identifying and remediating the abilities that are underdeveloped in the preschool period. Get Ready to Read is one option of an assessment that teachers of early childhood students can use to find a developmentally suitable tool to screen preschool age children's progress in acquiring reading-related skills. Without age appropriate assessments it is difficult to assess preschool children. The assessments of GRTR validity was compared to the Developing Skills Checklist; (DSC; CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1990). This study's limitation is that there is further

research needed for this screening tool to see if the scores relate to growth of reading abilities.

However, Modglin et al. (2004) suggest the skills addressed by GRTR are needed to be assessed for kindergarten entry, especially phonological skills and for early childhood curricula.

Academic Oriented

The expectations for kindergarten children and their educators have risen due to academic kindergarten standards (Hughes & Gullo, 2010). More children are being enrolled in prekindergarten programs. Colasanti (as cited in Hughes & Gullo, 2010) states that in the last 30 years, there has been an earlier-in-the year cutoff date for children who will enter kindergarten. Now children entering kindergarten will receive instruction that is academically oriented with teacher directed instruction, emphasis in content, skills and those academics are assessed with conventional measures. Those conventional measures can be worksheets or a paper and pencil test used to measure the learning outcomes of the children. They will have more academics compared to a classroom based on active learning founded on imagination, socialization, and creativity (Hughes & Gullo, 2010). Hughes and Gullo (2010) highlight that kindergarten assesses and models more of a primary grade. However, they point out that the essential developmental characteristics of kindergartners have not altered. Especially, the way they construct knowledge, problem solve, and interact socially. In addition, they state that educators assess children and don't realize they do not learn at the same level or in the same manner, so they shouldn't have to acquire the identical skills at the same time.

Continuous, Comprehensive, and Integrated Process

Some educators blame assessments for the inappropriate practices in kindergarten. This leads to some educators only focusing on the skills that are being assessed on the test. They do

this to ensure children meet the predetermined standards. The standards may or may not be appropriate (Hughes & Gullo, 2010). They state that assessments that are developmentally appropriate can maintain and regain joyful learning. Hughes and Gullo (2010) state that assessments have the potential to inform teaching while at the same time meeting developmental and cultural practices, and see if standards are being met. In addition, children's learning outcomes should be measured over time to see their progress and it should not just be at the end of the units where the learning outcomes are being assessed. Their study states that it is significant that we recognize the learning series that children are becoming skilled at and the progression each child is making through the learning series. Thus assessments can support teachers to see where each child is in the learning continuum. Hughes and Gullo (2010) state that recurrent embedded exams can guide instruction while monitoring progress and needs. This can be assessed through observation and then documented in the children's portfolio to document progress or mastery.

Assessments measure multiple aspects of learning (Hughes and Gullo, 2010). The assessments through observations should show us how well the standard is understood, how the information learned is being used, and how is this learned information being applied. Children learn in multiple ways. By testing only in one particular form or in one context will not show the entire picture (Hughes and Gullo, 2010). They state after observing examples of mastery of a basic foundation for the concept, then we can go on and teach whatever may be the next level of the sequenced learning.

Assessments need to be guided by the curriculum's stated learning goals and children should be assessed while engaged in their process of learning (Hughes and Gullo, 2010). They state that this leads to two benefits. The first benefit is that educators can use the assessments as

tools to alter the current curriculum to meet the needs or strengths of the children. Another benefit is that assessments can be used by educators as measures to see if the curriculum is effective. We do not need to sacrifice developmentally appropriate teaching while maintaining academic standards, “learning is personal, active, and genuine; *discovery* invites mastery and empowerment; *delight* feeds passion and a quest for more; *determination* nurtures confidence and creates a sense that learning is forever” (Hughes and Gullo, 2010, p. 59). According to this study this makes joyful learning and teaching!

Accountability

Current philosophy is that if you want to find out if a program works you assess how well a child executes on a required assessment (Meisels, 2006). Meisels (2006) states that based on this specific single data instrument, many high stakes decisions about program financial aid, employment and income of educators, and retentions are being conducted. This researcher questions how did an assessment tactic first created for middle school and high school age children become applied to children at such a young age. He also questions how a very narrow range of statistics about one child at a particular time, be used to assess instruction or curriculum? His study examines the high stake tests in preschool and disapproves of how they are used in early childhood.

In 2002 as part of the reauthorization of Title 1, *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), created the foundation for test scores to be the only way to show accountability. This led to increased focus on increasing students’ test scores on mandated tests. This was also true for young children in Head Start (Meisels, 2006). Meisels states that in 2004, Head Start was part of an extensive use of a mandated test, the *National Reporting System* (NRS) administered to children in these programs twice a year. His study suggests, policy makers and educators saw

these tests in a phase of accountability, as a solution to see who has learned what, how much they learned, and how well it was learned. The study indicates that these high stake/mandated tests do not measure curiosity, emergent creativity, or ability to be a problem solver, or provide a voice for cultural and ethnic differences (Meisels, 2006).

Children at a young age are unreliable test takers; it may be difficult to answer to a multistep direction, and children may not be able to successfully control their behavior due to multiple reasons (Meisels, 2006). Miesels also finds in this study that high-stake tests have unintended consequences; for example children can be tracked into low achieving groups. In addition, he elaborated on children's opportunities to learn differ in childhood. He states that this is also visible in the fundamental differences in society and the obstacles children of poverty face prior to entering school. In early childhood there is an abundant amount of variability and change. In a meta-analysis by La Paro and Pianta as stated in Miesels (2006,) with 70 longitudinal studies, found that instability in early childhood may be the rule instead of the exception. Due to this Miesels (2006) states that you can't capture the shifts and changes in their development, brain growth, physiology, emotional regulation, varied inheritance, and opportunities for nurturance based on one high-stake snapshot. Also, in a study using hierarchical linear modeling by Kim and Suen (2003), they report that assessments aren't able to predict certain forthcoming success for the future. They found that predictive power of early assessment can vary from situations and the assessments are not predictors of future performance. These studies help us understand that development in early childhood varies and test accountability does not look into this discrepancy. These tests are very likely to yield unsubstantiated conclusions (Miesels, 2006).

Program Quality

To measure the quality, the measure knowledge of vocabulary and early math skills will not provide data for that purpose (Miesels, 2006) but measuring data of multiple variables will provide valid information. Those variables are training of staff specifically in early childhood, low child-staff ratio, continuing professional development, developmentally appropriate practices, competitive salaries with continuity, positive interaction between children and staff, a safe caring environment and supporting strong parental involvement (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005). To study these variables we cannot rely on a mandated test and the outcomes of the children's results. Miesels (2006) suggests that a program evaluation needs to be designed. The study tells us that accountability needs to include monitoring and documentation. Evaluation doesn't just focus on the outcomes of a child on an assessment but includes variations in teachers, children and their families. Program evaluations give an understanding of what the program did and how did it achieve its purposes (Gilliam & Leiter, 2003).

Connections to the Literature

There have been numerous studies focusing on developmental practices for children in early childhood. The studies have focused on meeting the needs of children emergent literacy, letter recognition skills through developmentally appropriate practices by following these domains: social-emotional, physical, and cognitive. (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). Bigras et al. (2009), had limitations in their study but found that children develop language skills through interacting with adults during snack time at ECE centers. Another study finds oral language being groundwork for literacy development and contributes to their reading and writing (Gullo, 2006). Modglin et al. (2004), state that the GTR assessment can be used to measure phonological

sensitivity and language skills that are related to the development of reading skills. They state this brief assessment can help identify children who may be at risk or may potentially be at risk.

Conclusion

In the past there has been research conducted in researching appropriate practices in Early Child Education centers regarding appropriate practices for children in preschool and or kindergarten. Due to transitional kindergarten (TK) being a fairly new program there wasn't any research found addressing the developmental needs of students in this program. However, the children that are in TK represent students that were in preschool or were placed in kindergarten in the past depending on when they were born. The connection between appropriate developmental literacy, and developmentally appropriate assessments was also evaluated. Children need emergent skills to predict conventional reading outcomes: phonological sensitivity, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge (Invernizzi, 2006). Whitehurst and Lonigan (as cited in Modglin et al., 1998) state that preschool age children need to have knowledge of how print is translated into sounds, which is known as phonological, syntactic sensitivity, and letter-sound-name knowledge. Thus, studies show cognitive abilities are predictive of reading skills.

Invernizzi, et al. (2006), concluded that assessments need to be broadly based and give immediate feedback that can be used for instructional benefit. They state that assessments should also be used for implementing instruction, screening function, and program accountability. While Pianta et al. (2005) state we cannot rely on a mandated test and the outcomes of the children's results to evaluate the quality of programs. A very significant point made by Hughes and Gullo (2010) was that assessments should be guided by the curriculum's learning goals and most importantly children should be assessed while engaged in their process

of learning! This literature review will lead to conducting an action research plan to see: To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals?

Chapter 3

Method

Developmental characteristics of a group of children, or of each individual child need to be considered when using formal and informal assessment and evaluation conditions (Gullo, 1994). The Transitional Kindergarten program, located in a small agricultural community with the majority of the population of low socioeconomic status, created their own goals for children to meet in the area of English Language Arts. They also created assessments based on goals they developed themselves. Transitional Kindergarten was formed as a result of the Kindergarten Readiness Act, by California's State Senator Joe Simitian. This program is fairly new in the education arena and was phased in beginning in 2012. The literature at this time, does not address transitional kindergarten's goals in the area of English Language Arts. Because of this paucity an action plan needs to be developed to evaluate English Language Arts in transitional kindergarten. The action plan's outcome will answer the following question: *To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals?*

This study will be conducted by practical action research. Schmuck states that the drive of practical action research is to research a specific practice at a school with a final view of improving that certain practice (as cited in Creswell, 2012). This study will include quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering. The methodology is a good match for this research because action research allows educators to enhance their practice in education through a systematic study of local issues (Creswell, 2012). Creswell also states that action research leads to encouragement of changes in schools, fosters a democratic approach, empowers individuals

while promoting collaboration, positions educators as learners, encourages reflection on educators' practices, and promotes testing new ideas.

Participants/Setting

This study will be composed of four educators teaching transitional kindergarten. The educators teach kindergarten in four different schools in the same school district. The school district is located in Southern California in a small agricultural community with the majority of the population of low socioeconomic status. The four teachers have different levels of experience teaching Transitional Kindergarten: two have taught this new grade level for three years, the third teacher for two years, and the fourth teacher has taught TK for one year. Their classroom has a cap of no more than twenty students per classroom. Each teacher has an instructional assistant. Before the study is conducted, permission will be granted from the schools' administration. A copy of the gatekeeper letter to the administration can be found in Appendix A. Next, consent will be obtained from three of the participating teachers, see Appendix B. To diminish risk and attend to issues of ethics, I have also attached the completed National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certificate of Completion in Appendix C. These settings are conducive for this study because all the schools in which the teachers teach have a Transitional Kindergarten class that use assessments to assess English Language Arts.

Instrument

Teachers participating in this study will receive a survey addressing the developmental appropriate practices in the English Language Arts assessment in transitional kindergarten. The survey can be found in Appendix D. The survey will be used as an instrument for evaluating guidelines. Guidelines will be from Principles *Guiding Assessment Practices* (PGAP) from

Shepard, Kagan, and Wurtz (as cited in Gullo, 2006) and this researcher will be adding and or modifying the guidelines. The researcher will also use the instrument Desired Results Developmental Profile: School Readiness, California Department of Education (DRDP-SR), Child Development Division (2015) for guidelines in writing survey statements to go along with the PGAP. Creswell (2012) states that it is best to locate an instrument instead of developing one because developing one can be a very arduous process. The following is an example of a statement from the survey: *Considering that all kindergarten-age children are concrete learners, the current assessments are age-appropriate, in both content and data-collection and they avoid abstract thinking.* Another statement is: *The assessments are being conducted in situations familiar to the students.*

The participants will also be interviewed. A copy of the questions are found in Appendix E. The researcher will be asking questions relevant to the study based from learning outcomes of the literature review. One of the questions will be: *Do the assessments take into account cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds?* This is important because we need to have “the holistic weaving of context, culture, affect, and cognition, and the necessity for learners of all ages to be the masters of their own learning journeys” (Quintero, 2015, p. 2). Once the survey and interview questions are complete, the researcher will look for a pattern based on the survey and the interviews. This will give more feedback to see if there are any common goals or if the goals are lacking. These tools are a good match for this study because the survey questions and interview questions are partially composed from instruments (PGAP & DRDP-SR) that have been developed recently (Creswell, 2012). These instruments will have reliability because the questions will not be ambiguous or unclear (Creswell, 2012).

Procedure

After reviewing the literature regarding appropriate developmental goals for English Language Arts for children of Transitional Kindergarten age, ethical research protocol for this study will be followed. First, the researcher will submit the research study for approval and get it approved by the institutional review board (IRB) from the university campus to minimize any implications in violating any of the participants' rights. Next, the researcher will request permission from the school administration and from the teachers teaching transitional kindergarten in the small agricultural community. This will be done by getting approval via informed consent forms from the administration and the teachers. Further, the researcher will also present proof of the Certificate of Completion from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research, which states that a web-based training in protecting human research participants was completed. The next step will be to have the teachers complete the surveys and interview the teachers. The teachers will be given the surveys to complete on their own. They will be requested to not answer the survey as a group. The researcher wants to gather data from each teacher individually. Furthermore, this researcher will interview each teacher at their own school. This will help teachers feel more comfortable answering questions regarding their beliefs. The survey will be conducted first so that teachers do not change their thinking after the interviews.

The data from the survey instrument will be analyzed to identify the findings. Next, the researcher will analyze the interviews and look for any themes that may arise. Accurate record keeping will play an important role. Based on the analysis of the data it will be determined if the Transitional Kindergarten program in this small agricultural community has appropriate English Language Arts goals and if they are meeting those goals. Consequently, the researcher will take

the analyzed quantitative and qualitative data and create an action plan that will result in appropriate developmental goals and an assessment for transitional kindergarten in the area of English Language Arts based on the outcomes of the study conducted. The researcher will share the findings with the teachers and school district administration. Hughes states that this step will “make a difference on a larger scale” (as cited in Creswell, 2012).

My next step will be to reflect on the whole picture of the study and see what the researcher should have done differently and what went well. The most significant steps are that the research collaborates with the teachers to study the current goals of Transitional Kindergarten, to develop as a professional, to use a systematic approach of inquiry (Creswell, 2012), and lastly to have an action plan to create an assessment that best serves the developmental appropriate learning outcomes of Transitional Kindergarten students. These steps were chosen because doing action research requires you to take multiple steps of looking at data, thinking about the data and then acting on the data collected. These steps were optimal in conducting action research and are aimed at exploring a problem and developing a solution (Creswell, 2012). As the author of this study, the researcher is an insider because she teaches transitional kindergarten in this school district where the research is being conducted.

Analysis

An analysis will need to take place as mentioned. From the surveys, the researcher will analyze the quantitative data of the variables and measure them. Then measure the differences from the teacher responses gathered from the survey. Next, the researcher will need to score the data by given it a numeric score. This researcher will be using a single-item score that will have individual scores assigned to each question for each participant (Creswell, 2012). In the quantitative data, the independent variable will be the Transitional Kindergarten guidelines and

the y variable will be the learning outcomes of the students. The data contains a targeted population. The themes that arise from the interviews will need to be identified and coded as this part will be qualitative. With the interviewee responses, the researcher will seek an in depth understanding of the views the teachers have. As Creswell (2012) states, with the qualitative research, this researcher will be able to explore a central phenomenon and not develop a consensus. This research study will have culminating data based on an action research design with both quantitative and qualitative data. This researcher will use the lens of a theoretical framework that is influenced by developmental appropriate practices that meet the educational outcomes needed for children.

Conclusion

The participants in this study are four teachers who teach Transitional Kindergarten in the small agricultural community. This study may have limitations due to the sample size. Thus, it's vital for this study that all teachers participate in this study. This is a small research study that has a very small targeted population. By conducting action research with qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher will be able to explore the following question: *To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals?* Furthermore, the researcher will be able to discuss the approach implemented in this action research more in depth in the following chapter. The data will provide a transparent picture with the analysis. This will provide a critical presentation of the findings. With the data gathered, the researcher will be able to make recommendations and implement an action plan that will guide this researcher in creating an English Language Arts assessment. The assessment will assess developmental appropriate learning goals, which will support the success of all

students in Transitional Kindergarten in this small agricultural community. The development of the assessment will be guided by the Language and Literacy Development Domain from the DRDP-K and the PGAP. The evolving assessment will assess the essential English Language Arts standards on the current school district's TK report card. The completed assessment will be crucial to help meet the developmentally appropriate needs for this new grade level. It will help set a foundation for school readiness in the development of emergent literacy skills.

Chapter 4

Implementation

The California Department of Education has given the school district the task of creating their own essential standards for Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and assessments. The California Department of Education gave guidelines to establish the standards. The district used the alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with the Kindergarten Common Core Standards to create TK standards. The end goal was to have created developmentally appropriate practice. The policy guidelines need to be followed and have implications for specific instruction (Invernizzi, Landrum, Teichman, & Townsend, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which TK in this small community is achieving its goals in English Language Arts. A mixed methods survey was conducted along with a questionnaire. The researcher created two instruments, one quantitative and the other qualitative, for the TK teachers who participated in this study. The data from this study will be used to create an assessment for implementation in TK classrooms. To prepare for this assessment for English Language Arts, multiple steps needed to be taken beforehand. The completed assessment will give a clear picture of the implementation of the goals of the transitional kindergarten program and evidence of results to see what is being achieved in this grade level. It will provide evidence for the stakeholders to know if the goals are appropriate and being achieved especially in the development of emergent literacy. Evaluating the outcomes is significant because this is a new program in education and, as mentioned in Chapter 1, current literature does not address how to evaluate a TK program's goals.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the steps taken to gather data required in order to create an effective assessment of TK goals and implementation of those goals. To gather this

information it was necessary to confirm that the TK teachers used the standards and faithfully adhered to them. The following elements were looked at for this confirmation:

1. The classroom environment was set up in a way that was conducive to developmentally appropriate practices (Elliot & Olliff, 2008).
2. The children had numerous learning opportunities for the development of their literacy skills.
3. When the teachers were teaching to the standards, they created or used developmentally appropriate activities to teach those emergent skills (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). For example, a study by Gullo (2006) states that oral language provides a foundation for literacy development. Furthermore, Whitehurst and Lonigan (as cited in Modglin et al., 1998) state that preschool age children need to have awareness of how print is translated into sound. Then the children need to interpret those sounds. This stage is called phonological; syntactic sensitivity, and letter-sound-name knowledge is interwoven with knowledge of narrative and print conventions. These abilities are all predictors of success in reading.
4. Finally, the teachers assessed the students at the end of each trimester. Invernizzi et al. (2006) emphasize how assessments give insights to be used in planning and implementing instruction, and for program accountability.

In order to evaluate the program's goals, verification of the above steps were confirmed.

The Ventura County Office of Education went to each TK classroom to make sure each classroom environment was set-up to meet the needs of the children. They made the recommendations accordingly. All teachers attended TK training that identified strategies to support a modified curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. The training also

identified effective strategies that helped teachers build positive relationships and environments to support social-emotional development. Further, to allow numerous learning opportunities the current assessments are given three times per year; this allows for students to have multiple learning opportunities. Because of all the training, the TK teachers have an understanding of the alignment between the Preschool Learning Foundations and the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts.

At the end of the school year, the survey and the questionnaire addressing developmentally appropriate practices regarding the existing English Language Arts assessment for TK students were administered. Each teacher was individually given the survey. Teachers had the opportunity to choose the setting and time to take the survey. This allowed for the survey environment to be conveniently timed, less stressful, in terms of competing duties, and the teachers felt comfortable in answering the survey. The researcher sat across from the teachers. The survey was placed on the table or desk in front of them. The researcher gave each teacher clear instructions and asked them to answer the statements to the best of their ability. They were also informed that information collected was going to be kept confidential. However they were informed that the data was going to be used anonymously to develop a TK assessment that would help meet the needs that arose from the data.

Then the participants read each survey statement. They used the 5-point Likert scale on the survey, circling the degree to which they currently agreed with the statements on the survey. Each participant had the opportunity to ask for clarification regarding a survey item as they rated each statement. A participant inquired about answering Statement 10. The statement read: *The assessments are reliable with a specific purpose.* The participant circled 4, meaning that she agreed, and then said “if we are truthful.” The researcher thought that was important because

assessments can give back important information about the child being assessed but not if participants are not being truthful with the information recorded on the assessments. Each survey took about 15-20 minutes to be completed. Each participant was thanked for taking the time to answer the survey. The researcher reminded participants that the data gathered from the survey would be used as an instrument to evaluate guidelines and to see if the goals of TK in this small agricultural community are being met and to create an assessment that may be used to ensure-developmentally appropriate practices.

After the teachers had answered the survey they were given the questionnaire which consisted of interview questions. Each interview took about 20-30 minutes. Each teacher was asked 12 questions relevant to the study based on the learning outcomes of the literature review. All the teachers were separately interviewed. This way they would not be persuaded to answer in the same way as their counterparts but instead answer the questions based on the evidence they saw in their classroom. Each participant's answers were recorded in writing. The researcher made sure that the participants paused, so that there was ample time to write their responses accurately. Then, the researcher read their responses back to participants to minimize misunderstandings. All the participants had the opportunity to clarify any question as needed.

During the first interview, Question 3 was answered with a smile from the participant. This meant to the researcher that the interviewee was content in answering that question and believed firmly in the response. The question was: *Are current assessments being guided by the curriculum's stated learning goals?* The participant answered saying that *"we have done a good job aligning with common core."* The California Department of Education requires that districts align standards with Common Core. The following question (5), provided evidence that at least one participant believed in parents playing a role in their children's education: *The links between*

families and school are stronger in transitional kindergarten/kindergarten than in any other grade level. Do you agree that families can provide insights into their child's behaviors that school assessments alone cannot provide? The participant answered: *Yes, parents can provide information. In a family environment parents are their first educators.* This underscores for both parents and educators that parental involvement in children's education is a crucial component.

After administering both instruments, the researcher compiled all the data and created a table to assess the results. The researcher created two separate tables, one table for each set of data. Then, the researcher interpreted the data based on findings in the literature relevant to developmentally appropriate practices for TK students. Using the data, an assessment was created that will help meet the developmentally appropriate needs of the TK students in the small agricultural community. When creating the English Language Arts assessment the researcher wanted to ensure that it be broad-based, easy to administer and a source of immediate and meaningful feedback to be used for post-instruction interventions (Invernizzi, et al. 2006).

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the degree to which Transitional Kindergarten in this small agricultural community is achieving its goals in English Language Arts. The outcomes of the data have provided results that are important to this study. This study was guided by a Likert scale survey and interview questions. The Likert scale showed data related to evaluation of the current TK assessment. The data was analyzed and the following findings are shown on Table 1. All participants agreed with Survey Statement 1(S1); they believed the current assessments assess phonemic awareness adequately and the assessments are reliable with a specific purpose (S10). In regards to emergent skills that predict conventional reading outcomes (S2), two participants agreed and one strongly agreed. In respect to narrative and print conventions being assessed considering age-appropriate practices (S3), all participants had different beliefs. This was also true for: considering that transitional kindergarten-age children are concrete learners, the current assessments are age-appropriate in both content and data-collection; and they avoid abstract thinking (S7); all participants' selected different responses on the Likert scale. These same results were seen with the following statement: the assessments are leading to improvements in the quality of the program (S12).

Discussion of Likert Scale Assessment

In recapitulating S3, S7, and S12 all participants selected a different belief on the Likert scale. There was significant difference in those findings. In all three survey statements the participants selected disagree, neutral, and agree. Those statements are highlighted in yellow. In regards to assessments taking into account cultural and or linguistic backgrounds (S5), assessments are being assessed in all the languages the child understands or uses (S6), and

assessments value families by considering families as an important source of assessment information (S11), all participants selected disagree for all of these statements. In recap, there is evidence that there is a need to address items S5, S6, and S11 because all participants disagreed with those statements. These items are highlighted in green. It was surprising that all participants agreed with the assessments being reliable with a specific purpose (S10) but yet they didn't agree with assessments taking into account cultural or linguistic background (S5), assessing children in all the languages they understand (S6), and assessments valuing families as an important source of assessment information (S11).

Table 1

Findings of the Likert Scale

Likert Scale Results					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
S1: You believe current assessments assess phonemic awareness adequately.				3	
S2: Emergent skills the children need that predict conventional reading outcomes are: phonological sensitivity, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge. You believe current assessments do address these emergent skills.				2	1
S3: Narrative and print conventions are assessed considering age-appropriate practices.		1	1	1	
S4: Emergent writing, the ability to write using scribbles, marks, drawings, letters, characters, or words to represent meaning are currently being assessed.		2		1	
S5: The assessments take into account cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.		3			
S6: The assessments are being assessed in all the languages the child understands or uses.		3			
S7: Considering that transitional kindergarten-age children are concrete learners, the current assessments are age-appropriate, in both content and data-collection and they avoid abstract thinking.		1	1	1	
S8: The assessments allow for multiple opportunities to demonstrate a particular skill or knowledge.		2	1		
S9: The assessments are being conducted in situations familiar to the students.		1	2		

S10: The assessments are reliable with a specific purpose.				3	
S11: The assessments value families by considering families as an important source of assessment information.		3			
S12: The assessments are leading to improvements in the quality of the program.		1	1	1	

Discussion of Results of Interview Assessment

After the survey was conducted the interviews took place. The interviews were analyzed in search of any themes that may have been developed. The following themes were emphasized in the data.

- There is a need for having uniform assessment procedures for all children and there is an understanding that it is needed.
- In the survey and in the interview all participants agreed that current assessment do not take into account cultural and or linguistic backgrounds. A suggestion was made that examples in Spanish should be available.
- Based on the interview question #5 the participants do feel that families play an important role in being a source of assessment information but in the survey they all agreed that is not taking place (S11).
- Informal assessments are important and this can be done through observation, portfolios, and during curriculum activities.
- Based on the surveys and interviews the participants did not all agree that the assessments are age-appropriate.
- The assessments take too long to assess and have too many test items.

Interview Questions

1. Transitional kindergarten children vary considerably in their development, how do you feel about using uniform assessment procedures for all children?
Participant: 1 – <i>Difficult to create one for every child.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>Uniform assessments are okay for letter names and sounds. For retelling the story and phonemic awareness I don't believe that we should have uniform assessments. Every child is different.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I feel that we should have uniform assessments but address certain needs for each child.</i>
2. How do you see current assessments taking into account cultural and or linguistic backgrounds?
Participant: 1 – <i>We don't do that. We could have examples for rhyming in Spanish.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>Not at all.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I don't see current assessments taking it into account.</i>
3. Are current assessments being guided by the curriculum's stated learning goals?
Participant: 1 – <i>We have done a good job aligning with Common Core.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>I think so, I don't see any discrepancies.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>Yes, I think so.</i>
4. How do you use assessment data to modify curriculum and instruction?
Participant: 1 – <i>That's what drives your lesson. For example: a child can color but haven't been exposed to cutting.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>If I need to go back. For the <u>Three Little Pigs Story</u>, I used the puppets and Universal Access time a lot.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I may modify my pacing of the curriculum and may also go back to re-teach certain concepts.</i>
5. The links between families and school are stronger in transitional kindergarten/kindergarten than in any other grade level. Do you agree that families can provide insights into their child's behaviors that in school assessments alone cannot provide?
Participant: 1 – <i>Yes, parents can provide information. In a family environment parents are their first educators.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>Yes, I agree!</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I do believe families can provide insights into their child's behavior but there needs to be a consistent line of communication.</i>
6. Do you use informal assessments when children are engaged in curriculum activities? If yes, what are the different approaches that you use?
Participant: 1 – <i>Yes, on the first day of school I observe when they say bye Mom or the one that cries. This can be an informal assessment: point to name, recognize letters (they being taught letters), exit ticket or ticket in, sight words, check for bruises on body...</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>I do, I use observation and samples of their work.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>Yes, I document observations of students learning through play. I may ask them the beginning sounds of the name of the toys they are playing with.</i>
7. Do you conduct any assessing through observation?

Participant: 1 – <i>Constantly, every day, behavior, did they get the lesson...</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>Yes, for informal assessments.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>Yes, I do.</i>
8. Do you keep any portfolios of students' work?
Participant: 1 – <i>Yes, constantly, especially if they are going to be SST. Drawings too, journal books...</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>Yes, I keep writing samples, drawing samples, progress reports, Data Day, letter names and sounds, and sight words.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>Yes, I definitely do keep a portfolio.</i>
9. Do you feel that the assessments are appropriate for the age and development of the children in your class?
Participant: 1 – <i>Some yes but not all. Math is good.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>I do.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I feel that some are but not all of them.</i>
10. If you could change any aspect of the current assessment what would change and why?
Participant: 1 – <i>Change – Took a long time to assess. Problems with report card – reflection of the assessment – did not like sequencing and items that cannot be observed. Language Assessment – sequencing took a long time.</i>
Participant: 2 – <i>I would change more writing samples besides their name. Maybe the whole alphabet or sight words.</i>
Participant: 3 – <i>I would change the number of test items on the assessment. The assessment is too long for the students especially at the beginning of the year.</i>

Development of Assessment

Based on the analysis of the data it has been determined that there is a need to address the English Language Arts assessment in order for this small agricultural community to continue to meet their goals in English Language Arts. The data have shown that the participants do believe that current assessments are being guided by the curriculum's stated learning goals. However, the literature in this study shows that other aspects may need to be addressed. Not all students learn the same way, and whether predetermined standards are appropriate or not, developmentally appropriate assessments help children maintain and regain joyful learning (Hughes & Gullo, 2010).

The researcher analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, then developed an assessment as shown in Appendix F. It meets appropriate developmental goals and assessments for TK in

English Language Arts, based on the outcomes and guidelines of the study conducted. The guidelines were formed as a result of the data and they are also from the six Principles *Guiding Assessment Practices* (PGAP) developed by Shepard, Kagan, and Wurtz (as cited in Gullo, 2006) and from the instruments *Desired Results Developmental Profile: School Readiness*, California Department of Education (DRDP-SR), Child Development Division (2012) and *Desired Results Developmental Profile: Kindergarten* (DRDP-K 2015). This researcher also added or made modifications based on the PGAP and DRDP-SP Key Features. Shown in Table 2 are the PGAP guidelines that were implemented in compiling the assessment and Key Features from DRDP as shown in Table 3. At the beginning of this study the DRDP-K had not been developed yet and was not available for this researcher, TK programs, or for kindergarten classrooms. Based on refinements of the DRDP-SR (2012) and crucial elements for quality early childhood education the DRDP-K (2015) was developed. The DRDP-K is also aligned with the California Department of Education’s Early Learning and Development Foundations.

Table 2

Principles Guiding Assessment Practices

<u>Principles Guiding Assessment Practices</u>	
Principle 1	Assessments should benefit children.
Principle 2	Assessments should have a specific purpose and be reliable, valid, and appropriate for that purpose.
Principle 3	Assessments should recognize the developmental limitations of young children.
Principle 4	Assessments should be age-appropriate, in both content and data-collection method.
Principle 5	Assessments should be linguistically appropriate.
Principle 6	Assessments should value families.

Table 3

DRDP-K (2015) Key Features

<p>DRDP-K (2015) <i>A Developmental Continuum for Kindergarten</i> <i>For use with transitional kindergarten and kindergarten-aged children</i></p>
<p>Key Features of the DRDP-K (2015)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRDP–K (2015) is administered through observation in natural settings either through teacher observations, family observations, or examples of children’s work, which is a recommended practice for early childhood assessment that includes ongoing documentation of children's behavior in natural environments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRDP–K (2015) replaces the DRDP–SR (2012) ©.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRDP–K (2015) represents a full continuum assessment instrument for all children in kindergarten, including children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRDP–K (2015) is aligned to the Common Core Standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRDP–K (2015) takes into consideration the specific cultural and linguistic characteristics of the diverse population of children enrolled in kindergarten, including dual language learners.

The evolving English Language Arts assessment focuses on the Language and Literacy Development domain based on the DRDP-K. The assessment guides in looking at the progression of the child’s developing foundational language and literacy skills. It also assesses the essential English Language Arts standards found in the current school district’s TK report card. Each section was developed to assess a specific standard so that it is reliable and valid with its specific purpose. The assessment contains sections where a child’s skills can be measured in the child’s first language. As stated in the DRDP-K (2015), the foundation for learning English is established when language and literacy skills in a child’s first language are developed. One of the themes that arose, as was mentioned earlier, the participants felt that families do play an important role in being a source of assessment. As part of the assessment procedures teachers can request input from families because families have multiple opportunities to observe their child’s actions and activities over time. The teacher can document in the assessment the insights

that were learned from families. This helps the teacher have a more reliable picture of the child. Because informal assessments are important, teachers will be asked to document any assessments that were observed through observation, portfolios, and or during curriculum activities. It will be recommended that the assessing takes place in environments that are familiar to the students. The assessment was developed keeping in mind that it needed to be age-appropriate and required fewer test items. It assesses the following:

- Comprehension/Sequencing
- Concepts of Print
- Rhyming
- Beginning Sound
- Blending Onset and Rime (orally)
- Segmenting Onset and Rime (orally)
- Alphabet Letter Recognition – Uppercase and Lowercase
- Alphabet Letter Sound – Uppercase and Lowercase
- Communication and Use of Language

Figure 1, shows the rhyming section of the developed TK English Language Arts assessment. The entire assessment can be found in Appendix F.

Figure 1

Rhyming					
	Words	Yes/No	Student Response		
			1st	2nd	3rd
1)	jam, ham	Yes			
2)	can, man	Yes			
3)	car, bat	No			
4)	sock, clock	Yes			

5)	bell, door	No		
	Examples in Spanish		Phonetic	English Translation
Spanish Words:	maraca,	Yes	mah-rah-kah	maraca
	vaca		bah-kah	cow
	bata,	Yes	bah-tah	robe
	rata		rah-tah	rat
	pelota,	No	pay-loh-tah	ball
	jabón		hah-bone	soap

Implementation of Findings and Assessment

The researcher will share the findings with the teachers and with schools district administration. The effects that this will have in teaching will be important because we learned that assessment and learning is a continuous process. Hughes and Gullo (2010) state that children progress individually. They do this through learning sequences. Educators will need to use embedded assessments to guide instruction and to monitor progress. When children are assessed, ideally it should take place while they are engaged in the process of learning (Hughes & Gullo, 2010). Hughes and Gullo (2010) emphasize that assessments are tools that should be used to modify the curriculum to meet each child’s needs and strengths and can also be used to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum. In terms of curriculum for children it is crucial because it is a whole integrated picture that can begin with their earliest memories (Quintero, in press). Quintero states that there needs to be a holistic weaving of context, culture, affect, and cognition to enable children to be masters of their own learning journeys. In addition this learning can be assessed through critical literacy as a means of expression through constructing and critically using language. It allows for respecting children’s backgrounds, cultures, and for learning about the children through personal stories to encourage critical literacy.

Limitations

There were some limitations in conducting this study. The first limitation was that this study took place in a small school district and there was only four teachers teaching TK. However, only three of the four teachers were surveyed and interviewed. The researcher was the fourth teacher so she was not able to participate in the study. Another limitation was that at this time, the literature does not address how to evaluate the new program goals in TK in the area of English Language Arts.

Next Steps

The next step following this research project, with the purpose of investigating the degree to which Transitional Kindergarten in this small community is achieving its goals in English Language Arts, will be to share the findings with the TK teachers, support staff, administration, and all other stake holders. They need to be informed about developmentally appropriate practices, so they can have an unequivocal picture of what plans can be beneficial when assessing English Language Arts. A staff development will also need to take place. At the staff development this researcher can go over the recommendations on the **new assessments, which can be found in Appendix F**, and will also take into consideration cultural and linguistic backgrounds. After the teachers implement the new assessment and recommendations of developmentally appropriate practices, they will need to be surveyed one more time using the 5-point Likert scale. Lastly, they can be interviewed by the researcher. Once the participants have taken the survey and have been interviewed for the second time, the researcher will need to analyze the findings, reflect on them faithfully, and share the results. This will be crucial for the measurable impact that this TK program will have on early literacy skills and academic success.

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Appendix A
May 26, 2015

Assistant Superintendent
201 S. Steckel
Santa Paula, CA 93060

Dear Mrs. Assistant Superintendent,

My name is Viviana Magaña-Laureano,

I am a graduate student from California State University Channel Islands. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct a research study at your elementary schools that have a Transitional Kindergarten program. The purpose of this study is to research: *To what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals?* I chose this school district because I currently teach transitional kindergarten in one of your elementary schools and I would like to help develop optimal learning goals for the students. If approved, I plan to give surveys to the Transitional Kindergarten teachers and interview them as well. This study will occur in the spring of 2015. All participants will receive informed consent forms to sign. After obtaining permission I will go to each school site and give the surveys. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Next, I will interview the individual teachers at each of their school sites. All data and surveys will remain anonymous. The results will be reported for my graduate course. Possible benefits for participants in the study include revised developmentally appropriate learning goals in the area of English Language Arts. This will lead to students performing to reach their optimal learning outcomes.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Viviana Magaña-Laureano
California State University Student
(805) -----

Appendix B

Teacher/Participant Consent Form

Dear Transitional Kindergarten Teacher,

I would like to invite you to be part of a research study. The purpose of this study is to research: to what degree are schools that serve low socioeconomic populations in a small community with transitional kindergarten using appropriate goals in English Language Arts, and are they meeting those goals? You will be asked to complete a short survey that will take around 15 minutes to complete. You will also be asked to participate in an interview. This exercise will happen after school as your schedule permits. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study. If you decide to not participate in this study, there will be no consequences. Please feel free to ask any questions. Your name will not be included with any of the findings in the research and will not be made available. There is no harm in being a part of this study. You may benefit from being in this study by learning about the optimal developmental appropriate English Language Arts goals for Transitional Kindergarten. You will get a copy of this form to keep. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (805) --- - ----.

By signing below, you agree to be a part of this study.

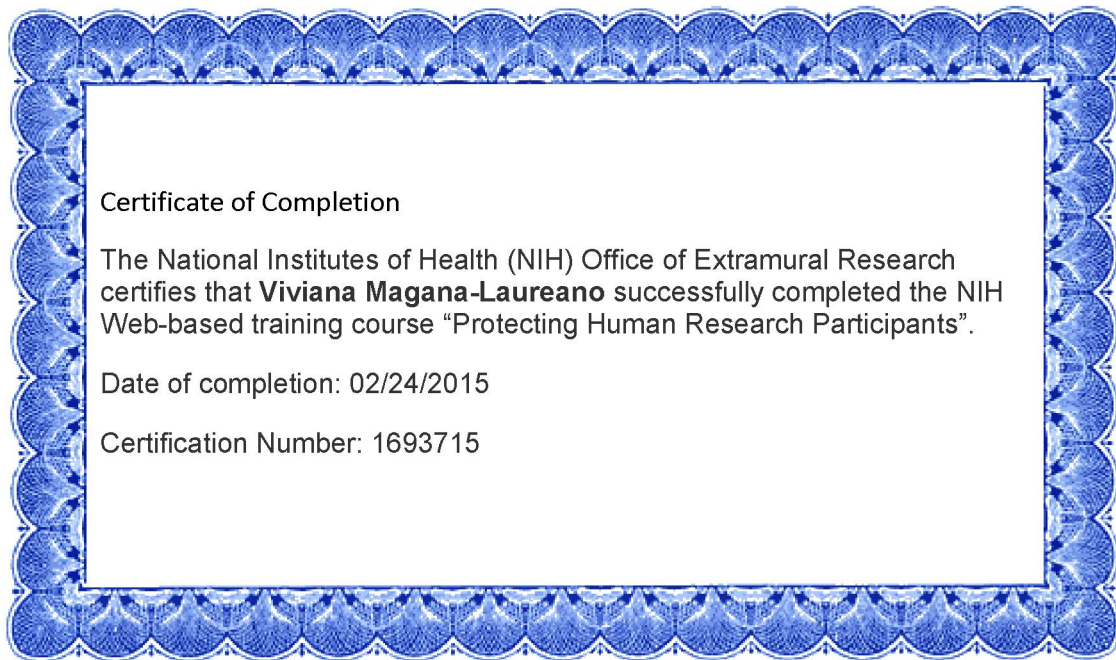
Participant Signature

**By not signing, you do not agree to be a part of this study

Researcher Signature

Date

Graduate Student, California State University Channel Islands

Appendix C

Appendix D

Survey

Use the following 1-5 scale, please indicate, by circling the most current response, the degree to which you agree with the statements listed below:

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
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1. *You believe current assessments assess phonemic awareness adequately.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
2. *Emergent skills the children need that predict conventional reading outcomes are: phonological sensitivity, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge. You believe current assessments do address these emergent skills.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
3. *Narrative and print conventions are assessed considering age-appropriate practices.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
4. *Emergent writing, the ability to write using scribbles, marks, drawings, letters, characters, or words to represent meaning are currently being assessed.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
5. *The assessments take into account cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
6. *The assessments are being assessed in all the languages the child understands or uses.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
7. *Considering that transitional kindergarten-age children are concrete learners, the current assessments are age-appropriate, in both content and data-collection and they avoid abstract thinking.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
8. *The assessments allow for multiple opportunities to demonstrate a particular skill or knowledge.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
9. *The assessments are being conducted in situations familiar to the students.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
10. *The assessments are reliable with a specific purpose.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
11. *The assessments value families by considering families as an important source of assessment information.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
12. *The assessments are leading to improvements in the quality of the program.*

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

*Appendix E***Interview Questions**

1. *Transitional kindergarten children vary considerably in their development, how do you feel about using uniform assessment procedures for all children?*
2. *How do you see current assessments taking into account cultural and our linguistic backgrounds?*
3. *Are current assessments being guided by the curriculum's stated learning goals?*
4. *How do you use assessment data to modify curriculum and instruction?*
5. *The links between families and school are stronger in transitional kindergarten/kindergarten than in any other grade level. Do you agree that families can provide insights into their child's behaviors that in school assessments alone cannot provide?*
6. *Do you use informal assessments when children are engaged in curriculum activities? If yes, what are the different approaches that you use?*
7. *Do you conduct any assessing through observation?*
8. *Do you keep any portfolios of students' work?*
9. *Do you feel that the assessments are appropriate for the age and development of the children in your class?*
10. *If you could change any aspect of the current assessment what would change and why?*

Appendix F

**Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts
Assessment**

Summary						
		1st Trimester		2nd Trimester		3rd Trimester
		Date: _____		Date: _____		Date: _____
Rhyming		_____/5		_____/5		_____/5
Sound Isolation		_____/5		_____/5		_____/5
Blending Onset/Rime		_____/5		_____/5		_____/5
Segmenting Onset Rime		_____/5		_____/5		_____/5
Total Points		_____/20		_____/20		_____/20
Rhyming						
	Words	Yes/No	Student Response			
			1st	2nd	3rd	
1)	jam, ham	Yes				
2)	can, man	Yes				
3)	car, bat	No				
4)	sock, clock	Yes				
5)	bell, door	No				
Examples in Spanish		Phonetic		English Translation		
Spanish Words:	maraca,	Yes	mah-rah-kah	maraca		
	vaca		bah-kah	cow		
	bata,	Yes	bah-tah	robe		
	rata		rah-tah	rat		
	pelota,	No	pay-loh-tah	ball		
	jabón		hah-bone	soap		
Sound Isolation						
	Words	Response	Student Response			
			1st	2nd	3rd	
1)	fan	/f/				
2)	mop	/m/				
3)	pet	/p/				
4)	dog	/d/				
5)	goose	/g/				
Examples in Spanish		Phonetic		English Translation		
Spanish Words:	mar	/m/	mah-r	sea		
	sol	/s/	s-oh-l	sun		
	luz	/l/	l-oo-s	light		
	puma	/p/	poo-mah	puma		
	gorra	/g/	go-rah	cap		

Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts Assessment

Blending Onset and Rime					
	Words		Student Response		
		Response	1st	2nd	3rd
1)	/f/ - /un/	fun	X		
2)	/h/ - /at/	hat	X		
3)	/r/ - /ed/	red	X		
4)	/d/ - /ig/	dig	X		
5)	/l/ - /og/	log	X		
Examples in Spanish		Phonetic		English Translation	
Spanish Words:	/a/ - /la/	ala	ah-lah	wing	
	/u/ - /no/	uno	oo-no	one	
	/d/ - /os/	dos	d-ohs	two	
	/p/ - /an/	pan	pah-n	bread	
	/p/ - /ez/	pez	p-es	fish	
Segmenting Onset and Rime					
	Words		Student Response		
		Response	1st	2nd	3rd
1)	jet	/j/ - /et/	X		
2)	tip	/t/ - /ip/	X		
3)	bat	/b/ - /at/	X		
4)	mud	/m/ - /ud/	X		
5)	dot	/d/ - /ot/	X		
Examples in Spanish		Phonetic		English Translation	
Spanish Words:	ven	/v/ - /en/	v-en	come	
	pan	/p/ - /an/	pah-n	bread	
	luz	/l/ - /uz/	l-oo-s	light	
	sol	/s/ - /ol/	s-oh-l	sun	
	ojo	/o/ - /jo/	oh-ho	eye	

Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts Assessment				
A	F	K	P	W
Z	B	H	O	J
U	C	Y	L	Q
M	D	N	S	X
I	E	G	R	V
T				

**Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts
Assessment**

a	f	k	p	w
z	b	h	o	j
u	c	y	l	q
m	d	n	s	x
i	e	g	r	v
t	a			

Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts Assessment

Concepts of Print Assessment

Name: _____							
Concept	Instruction	1 st Tri. NOT ASSESSED		2 nd Tri. Date:		3 rd Tri. Date:	
1. Front Cover of the book	<i>Point to the front cover of the book.</i>	Yes	Comment	Yes	Comment	Yes	Comment
		No		No		No	
2. Title	<i>Point to the title of the book.</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
3. Demonstrates awareness of how books are handled.	<i>Pick up the book.</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
4. Demonstrates turning pages properly.	<i>What should you do if you want to read the book?</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
5. Understands that books are for reading.	<i>What are books for?</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
6. Understands books have print and pictures.	<i>Point to a word. Point to a picture.</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
7. Understands the role of the author.	<i>What is the job of the author?</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
8. Understands the role of the illustrator.	<i>What is the job of the illustrator?</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
9. Understands concept of a letter and a word.	<i>Point to the first letter of a word. Point to the last letter of the word.</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
10. Understands left-right direction of print.	<i>Where do I start reading? Where do I go after that?</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	
11. Understands the meaning of a period.	<i>What is this for? Child points to the period.</i>	Yes		Yes		Yes	
		No		No		No	

Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts Assessment – Writes Own Name

1st Trimester

2nd Trimester

3rd Trimester

Retelling: The Three Billy Goats Gruff

Rubric for 3rd Trimester

Name: _____

Building			Integrating	
1	2	3	4	5
Far Below Standard	Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
<p><i>Can react to familiar books.</i> The listener is unable to provide information related to the story. or clearly misunderstood the text or makes up a story</p>	<p><i>Makes comments or asks questions about text presented in books or the environment.</i> The listener retells the story using limited detail with some inaccuracies. Does not use sequencing strategies.</p>	<p><i>Demonstrates some knowledge of main characters, events, or ideas in familiar narrative or informational text.</i> The listener retells the story using some detailed information. (Uses sequencing strategies, but doesn't get the information in the correct order, or leaves out main characters, etc.)</p>	<p><i>Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of details in narrative or informational text that includes order of events or cause and effect.</i> The listener clearly retells the story using detailed information and sequencing (beginning, middle, and end, or first, next, and last.)</p>	<p><i>Demonstrates understanding of both narrative and informational text by summarizing, comparing, or making inferences about people, objects, or events</i> The listener clearly retells the story using detailed information and sequencing (beginning, middle, and end, or first, next, and last.) & names character feelings or names why the characters do the things they do in the story</p>

Child's retelling of the story:

Transitional Kindergarten English Language Arts Assessment

Communication and Use of Language

Name: _____

Building			Integrating	
1	2	3	4	5
Far Below Standard	Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
<p><i>Uses short phrases or sentences of two words or more words to communicate</i></p> <p>Examples: I want I eat I like dogs</p>	<p><i>Uses short sentences that contain nouns, verbs, and other words, such as adjectives and recently encountered vocabulary, to communicate</i></p> <p>Examples: The <u>brown</u> bunny. The funny ran <u>fast</u>.</p>	<p><i>Uses phrases and sentences with a variety of word forms, including past tense, future tense, plurals, pronouns, or possessives, to communicate, sometimes with errors</i></p> <p>Examples: <u>His</u> birthday is tomorrow. <u>He will</u> be five. He <u>runned</u> really fast. (grammatical error)</p>	<p><i>Combines phrases and sentences with a variety of word forms to communicate ideas short narratives or to describe people, objects, or events</i></p> <p>Examples: Let's hurry and clean up so we can go outside.</p> <p>My grandma is really nice. She has white hair and I love her. Last night we made cupcakes with sprinkles. I gave one to my grandpa.</p>	<p><i>Uses much of the grammar of adult-like speech, sometimes with grammatical errors; and Adapts own speech to the level of the listener</i></p> <p>Examples: I used to like chocolate cupcakes, but now I like blueberry cupcakes.</p> <p>Begins communicating loudly and then lowers to a whisper, "I am going to read this book over there," to an adult in the room.</p> <p>Asks another child, "Do you like the red dinosaur or the green dinosaur?" then communicates to adult, "She likes the stegosaurus."</p>

