Summer 9-1-2024

# PERCEPTIONS OF LOW-INCOME PARENTS ON KINDERGARTEN READINESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Farrah Woodberry Owens
*Coastal Carolina University*

# PERCEPTIONS OF LOW-INCOME PARENTS ON KINDERGARTEN READINESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

Farrah Woodberry Owens

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Coastal Carolina University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
with a specialization in Educational Leadership.

Education Sciences and Organizations

Coastal Carolina University

June 2024

Doctoral Committee:

Dr. Alexander Herring, Chair
Dr. Gerard Edwards
Dr. Julie Malcolm

## ABSTRACT

There is a significant amount of research documenting the importance of school readiness and its implication for life-long consequences (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2017, 2018; Kang et al., 2017; Malsch et al., 2011). Parents play a critical role in supporting the acquisition of all skills needed to prepare children for school readiness. Readiness refers to being prepared with the necessary skills to access learning (Saracho, 2023). The purpose of this study is to explore the practices and perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness skills in the Hollywood School District (HSD) as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Students in HSD enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness at a rate lower than other students in the state of South Carolina (SC Education Oversight Committee). Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with parents of kindergarten students who scored demonstrating readiness on the KRA in a high-poverty, rural school district to gather data on lived experiences with preparing children to start school and their perceptions of readiness. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed themes of parents' perceptions of readiness and practices. The anti-deficit achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012) served as the basis for developing the research and interview questions from an asset or strengths-based mindset instead of a mindset that focused on what was lacking. Findings indicated how parents successfully prepared their children for kindergarten, their expectations of prekindergarten education, and their misconceptions and perceptions of school readiness.

*Keywords:* anti-deficit, kindergarten readiness, parental involvement, poverty

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, the late Lottie Ann Woodberry, and grandparents, the late Lee Dandy and Lorine Woodberry. They have instilled in me what one can accomplish with hard work and perseverance despite obstacles.

I can only imagine how proud they would be of me, and I wish they were here to celebrate this momentous occasion. God decided to take Grandma to her heavenly home just two months before completing this dissertation and there were many times I wanted to quit. She, Mother, and Granddad always told us, “You finish what you start!”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God be the glory for the great things He has done! There are so many members of my village that I would like to acknowledge and express gratitude for whatever role they played in helping me along this journey. I would like to thank Dr. Alexander Herring, my dissertation committee chairperson, for always providing reassurance that I was going to finish. I appreciate the feedback and guidance provided. I would like to thank Dr. Gerard Edwards and Dr. Julie Malcolm for sacrificing one of their most valuable assets, their time, and agreeing to be a part of my dissertation committee. I am grateful for the feedback and for you pushing me to think and look deeper. I would like to thank Mrs. Jane Bailey and Dr. Tamara Nance-Bethea for sharing this journey with me, motivating and encouraging me, and always having my back. There is no way I would have made it without you. I would like to thank all the CCU professors who helped expand my knowledge and understanding. Special thanks to my school family for lending listening ears when I talked about research articles I read and for the love and support you provided.

I am forever grateful to my family, who extended patience, understanding, and flexibility during the past three years. I thank Darrah for being my proofreader, Tyren for reminding me to go write, and Darryl for allowing me to vent or complain about the process. I can't wait to celebrate you finishing your journey. I want to thank Dad, Nisa, the Bethel AME Church Family, and my spiritual advisor, Michael, for your wisdom, support, and encouragement to persevere. Finally, I would like to thank my husband for his continuous motivation to complete this goal.

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten provides students with the early school experiences and foundational skills needed for future academic success. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) led to the push for high-quality universal preschool programs and increased accountability with an increase in school readiness. President Obama's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge programs have also drawn attention to school readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The goal of many recent public education policies has been to ensure school readiness for all children (Boyle & Benner, 2020), and it is considered a national priority (L. Harper, 2016; Pace et al., 2019). According to a report by the United States Department of Education in 2015, only 6 of 10 students were ready for kindergarten (U.S. Dept. of Education Finds 6 out of 10 Kids Unprepared for Kindergarten – Learning Liftoff, 2015). Only 38% of kindergarten students who entered school in the fall of 2023 demonstrated readiness in South Carolina (*SC EOC Report Finds State-Funded, Full-Day 4K Improves Kindergarten Readiness, Education Oversight Committee,* n.d.) In the United States, less than 48% of children in poverty enter school demonstrating kindergarten readiness compared to 75% of children with higher family incomes (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Isaacs et al., 2011; Williams & Lerner, 2019). Emergent literacy skills, including phonics, print awareness, and phonemic awareness, are foundational skills needed for students to be successful readers and writers. Emergent numeracy skills are also the prerequisite of more complex math in elementary, functional math, such as telling time and counting money, as well as foundational skills in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

## Problem Statement

Students in the Hollywood School District (HSD) enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness at a rate lower (i.e., 24.2%) than other students in the state of South Carolina (i.e.,

38.3%) (SC Education Oversight Committee, 2023). Thus, a significant percentage of students in HSD are not prepared to enter kindergarten. There is limited research available on kindergarten readiness and its impact in South Carolina, though there are numerous studies conducted in other countries. When students enter kindergarten behind, they typically stay behind. Historical data shows students in HSD enter school performing behind typically developing peers and the trend continues when they enter testing grades. Gaining an understanding of how low-income parents perceive kindergarten readiness will provide a context for how and why students are underperforming.

## The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness skills in the Hollywood School District. The methodology for this research was a phenomenological qualitative study. Hollywood School District served as the setting for this study. The sample size was limited to 100 parents of kindergarten students who demonstrated readiness on the KRA within the last 3 years. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and surveys via Qualtrics, a digital tool that can be customized for various audiences, data collection, analysis, and presentation (Qualtrics, 2018). Semi-structured interviews helped the researcher understand how people interpreted their experiences and the meanings they attributed to them, and they provided opportunities for flexibility (Patton, 2015). The interviews were conducted via Zoom, a cloud-based videoconferencing service that offers secure recording of online meetings or sessions (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2016). Transcriptions were imported into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program that organizes data sets and formulates reports (Hilal & Aliabri, 2013) for data analysis. Hand coding was also performed as interviews were transcribed so that initial themes and codes could be determined.

Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze data, typically data sets from interviews and focus groups in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An in-depth data collection and analysis plan is provided in Chapter 3. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do low-income parents prepare their children for kindergarten?
2. How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education?
3. What are low-income parents' misconceptions about readiness?
4. What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure their children are ready for kindergarten?

## Background

HSD is located in Hollywood County, a predominantly rural area where the unemployment rate is 4.5%, the median household income of families with children in school is $43,580 (ACS School District Profile 2017-21, n.d.), and only 11.7% of residents 25 years old a or older hold Bachelor's degrees or higher (U.S. Census). HSD has a pupil-in-poverty index of 91.8%, which is calculated by the number of students that are homeless or migrant during the current school year, have been in foster care, been enrolled in Medicaid, received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (T.A.N.F.) at any time within 3 years (SCDOE). English is the primary language in 94% of the homes of students in HSD (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), and 15% of the student population has limited English proficiency (SCDOE). Fifteen percent of the students in HSD have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), with African American students comprising 73% of that population (SCDOE). Students who enter kindergarten unprepared are likely to continue to struggle in elementary school. Historical data show students in HSD continue to perform poorly in the latter grades. For example, only 26.9% of students met or exceeded expectations in ELA

and 12% in math on the state's standardized assessments in the spring of 2023 for grades three through eight (SCDOE). End-of-course assessment data indicated that 41.2% of high school students scored a C or higher in English 2 and 18.6% in Algebra 2. This has also been the trend in HSD before the Coronavirus pandemic. Closing the achievement gap and increasing student achievement are major concerns of educators in the Hollywood School District. Table 1 shows a comparison of KRA and SC Ready scores of Hollywood School District and South Carolina for the past 3 years.

**Table 1**

*Assessment Data*

| | School Year | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2020-2021 | | | 2021-2022 | | | 2022-2023 | | |
| Assessment | KRA | ELA | Math | KRA | ELA | Math | KRA | ELA | Math |
| Hollywood School District | 15.5% | 16.8% | 6.9% | 17.9% | 19.2% | 12.1% | 24.2% | 26.9% | 12.8% |
| South Carolina | 26.8% | 42.6% | 37.3% | 36% | 46.6% | 38.9% | 38.3% | 53.9% | 40.9% |

*Note.* Percentage of students scoring "Demonstrated Readiness" on KRA and percentage of students scoring meets or exceeds on SC Ready ELA and Math

Low-income children enter kindergarten 12 to 18 months behind those with higher incomes in pre-academic skills (Barnett & Lamy, 2013; Friedman-Krauss et al., 2016). Upon entering kindergarten, African-American and Hispanic students are 10 months behind in math and 12 months behind in reading compared to white students (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2016). In the United States, only 48% of children in poverty enter school demonstrating kindergarten readiness compared to 75% of children with higher family incomes (Isaacs et al., 2011). In South Carolina, 2022-2023 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data indicates that only 28% of

kindergarten students of poverty demonstrated readiness compared to 51% of students with higher family incomes (SC Education Oversight Committee). The 2022-23 school report card data indicates that only 24.2% of kindergarten students demonstrated readiness in Hollywood School District (HSD) (SCDE).

## School Readiness

There is an abundance of research documenting the importance of school readiness and its implication for life-long consequences (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2017, 2018; Kang et al., 2017; Malsch et al., 2011). Being ready for school is the cornerstone for future academic and adulthood success (Pan et al., 2019). Several studies state that when children do not demonstrate school readiness, they experience learning difficulties, which can have economic implications (Coba-Rodriquez et al., 2020; C. Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Transitioning to kindergarten is a pivotal period in a young child's life and is an important developmental milestone (L. Harper, 2016; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015, 2017; Jose et al., 2022; Kang et al., 2017; Malsch et al., 2011). When children enter school ready to learn, they perform better academically, which leads to positive social, health, and economic outcomes.

Readiness is defined as the state of being prepared or "ready." The concept of "readiness," as related to education, is used interchangeably with school readiness and kindergarten readiness. There is currently no consensus on a definition for the term school readiness (Chorrojprasert, 2020; Pan et al., 2019; Whyte & Coburn, 2022), but it is an essential term for early childhood education (Saracho, 2023). The definition of school readiness is influenced by an individual's perception and understanding. Chorrojprasert (2020) defines it as the ability of a learner who is ready to acquire knowledge. Pan et al. (2019) state school readiness as being able to use cognitive, social, and self-regulation skills needed for future school

success. Whyte and Coburn (2022) define readiness as a set of skills or knowledge that needs to be acquired before children begin kindergarten. Jose et al. (2020) define school readiness as the capabilities of children when they start school. Theory and documented research state school readiness as being composed of behavior and cognitive skills (Duncan et al., 2018; Isaacs et al., 2011), while many governmental policymakers and the general public focus on readiness in terms of academic achievement and social skills (Pace et al., 2019; Whyte & Coburn, 2022). Though scholars and states have provided a host of definitions for school readiness, all are based on an ecological framework, like Bronfenbrenner's, which situates readiness beliefs within contexts or settings (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019). When children are ready for school, they have developed an array of skills and knowledge that will allow them to access new learning, social, and academic skills needed to be successful in life.

## Parents' Impact on Readiness

Being a parent is one of the most rewarding yet challenging jobs an individual can possess. The hopes and dreams of their child becoming successful are based on the foundation set as early as conception. Besides providing the necessities of life, parents play a significant role in their children's learning and development. Child development theories state the importance of parental involvement in promoting children's learning and parents are considered children's earliest influence regarding educational opportunities (Wood et al., 2021). Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner are several theorists of human and cognitive development. The relationships between parents and children during the early years are crucial for promoting development (Jeong et al., 2021). Parents are the primary caregivers and first teachers of young children.

Parents play a critical role in supporting the acquisition of all skills needed to prepare children for their first formal school experiences or school readiness. The relationship between a

parent and their child plays a vital role in the development of preschool children (Ho et al., 2022). These relationships determine how involved parents are in supporting school readiness. There are numerous studies demonstrating that parental involvement is positively associated with the development of readiness skills (Boyle & Benner, 2020; Coba-Rodriguez et al., 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Puccionia et al., 2020). Parenting style, expectations, education level, physical and mental health, and income of parents all impact the growth and development of children (Souza, 2020). Epstein's Model of Parent Involvement (Epstein, 2007), which describes six types of parental involvement, has several elements that support the critical role of the parents and family in child development and kindergarten readiness. Van Voorhis et al. (2013) analysis of nearly 95 studies proved a correlation between parents' involvement in engaging math and literacy and early learning and social-emotional development. The environment provided supports academic and socio-emotional development and is directly related to parental involvement (Wood et al., 2021). Parents are more likely to read to and with children in homes where children have access to books (Wood et al., 2021), which provides an opportunity for children to practice verbal and conceptual skills (Hackworth et al., 2017). Parental involvement is highly associated with the social-emotional development of children, an important domain of readiness.

Because parents play such a vital role in preparing children for their first school experience, it is important to know how they perceive school readiness. The way parents perceive readiness determines the amount and the way they support the development of the skills needed. It is also important to note that parents' perceptions of school readiness vary across demographics (Boyle & Benner, 2020). There is also a growing amount of research substantiating educational inequalities based on parental practices and the home environment, but limited studies on parents' beliefs and their role in early childhood development have been

conducted (O'Donnell, 2018). Having this knowledge can help early childhood practitioners guide parents in preparing their children. For this research, I examine the perceptions of school readiness of low-income parents.

## Closing the Achievement Gap

Closing the achievement gap is one of the primary reasons there is such an emphasis on school readiness. An "achievement gap" is the difference in standardized test scores between students from different racial and ethnic groups (Coleman et al., 1966; Hernandez, 2022; Shukla et al., 2022). It also refers to disparities in educational attainment and academic performance between various groups of students. Economic disparities and opportunity gaps exist before children begin school, resulting in later achievement gaps. Achievement gaps are the results of these disparities.

## Assessments of Kindergarten Readiness

There are various protocols available to measure and assess readiness. HSD utilizes the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010), and iReady Diagnostic Assessment (Curriculum Associates, 2015) to determine the level of readiness of kindergarten students. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) is a comprehensive tool designed to measure the readiness of incoming kindergarten students across the domains of social foundations, language and literacy, math, physical well-being, and motor development and is administered within the first 45 days of the school year (Ready for Kindergarten, n.d.). It is given and scored by the student's kindergarten teacher and involves multiple-choice and task-oriented questions along with observations (SCDOE). The Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (F&P) is administered by teachers to determine a student's independent and instructional reading level and is given at least three times

a year (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). It is also used for progress monitoring purposes and as a data source for guided reading instruction. The i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment is a web-based assessment that identifies students' needs and provides a picture of students' ability levels and the skills they need to accelerate growth (Curriculum Associates, 2015). Reading and math assessments are given in the fall, winter, and spring to determine students' performance levels. The F&P and i-Ready assessments measure academic skills, while KRA assesses all domains of readiness.

## Theoretical Framework

The anti-deficit achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012) will serve as the guiding theoretical framework informing this study. This model will help the researcher understand what positive attributes of parental involvement impact children of poverty being ready for kindergarten and how they overcome barriers. Dr. Shaun Harper (2012) used the anti-deficit model to invert questions that are typically asked about disadvantages, underrepresentation, and Black male student attrition. S. R. Harper (2012) adapted the National Black Male College Achievement Study as the basis for the anti-deficit achievement framework. Utilizing this framework allows the researcher to highlight assets instead of deficits. A deficit mindset would ask, "Why are children of poverty not demonstrating kindergarten readiness?" An anti-deficit mindset would ask, "How do parents of children in poverty successfully prepare children to demonstrate kindergarten readiness?" Goings (2016) conducted a study using the ADAF to investigate the experiences of four Black male undergraduates attending a historically Black university to present a counternarrative of deficit-based research on Black male collegiate students. Hernandez et al. (2022) also used the ADAF to examine how students experiencing adversities are resilient and remain in college to graduate despite challenges. Many similar

studies utilizing anti-deficit or strength-based approaches help scholars gain a better understanding of resilience. The resiliency theory is a strength-based approach to understanding the development of children and how they mature into healthy adults despite incurring adversity (Zimmerman, 2013). Like the anti-deficit achievement model, the resiliency theory can guide researchers in studying assets and resources as a strength-based paradigm (Zimmerman, 2013). The family resiliency model also takes an anti-deficit approach in identifying assets of families who overcome challenges. This model views the family functioning within systems while overcoming highly stressful challenges that impact the unit as a whole (Walsh, 2016). This research was conducted in a high-poverty school district with low student achievement, where families face various adversities. It is important to explore the assets of those students who have demonstrated readiness in HSD.

Because parents play such a vital role in preparing children for their first formal school experiences, it is important to understand how school readiness is perceived. It is also important to note that parents' perception of school readiness varies across demographics (O'Donnell, 2018). To better understand how low-income children enter kindergarten ready to learn, an anti-deficit approach utilizing the anti-deficit academic achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2012) will be used to gain knowledge of the parental practices and home environmental factors that positively influence readiness. Knowing how low-income parents successfully prepare their children to be ready for kindergarten and what assets they rely on will be beneficial to school administrators, early childhood teachers, and parent liaisons to help close achievement gaps. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment, and iReady are all used to identify students' strengths as well as provide information to guide

instruction to support growth. The ADAF conceptual model will help answer the research questions in the study.

## Description of Terms

A description of key terms is being provided to add clarity to the presentation of this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Though many readers will understand most of the terminology used in the study, it is important that an explanation of some terms and acronyms used in early childhood and those specific to education in the state of South Carolina is given. The following terms are presented to ensure clarity.

*Anti-deficit*—An anti-deficit or asset-based approach focuses on strengths. Deficit perspectives are typically characterized by minorities or economically disadvantaged individuals, while an anti-deficit model is strength-based (Coba-Rodriguez et al., 2020). There is a focus on what individuals have instead of what they need (Meijia et al., 2018).

*At-risk*—The term at risk has various definitions and several descriptive characteristics. One may be considered at risk when they are faced with difficult circumstances such as being homeless, mentally, physically, or learning disabled, sexually abused, orphaned, or living in poverty (Shumba et al., 2019). Children may also be considered at risk when their safety, mental and physical health, and security are compromised (Shumba et al., 2019).

*Child Development*—This is the period from prenatal development to eight years of age (Lannen & Ziswiler, 2014; Likhar et al., 2022). During this period, thinking, linguistic, cognitive, social-emotional, and regulatory skills are developed (Bakken et al., 2017). For this study, child development focused on the period from birth to five.

*Deficit*—A deficit way of thinking is when there is an assumption that students who are disadvantaged or marginalized perform poorly due to their environments or circumstances

(Patton-Davis & Museus, 2019). For this study, a deficit is a focus on what an individual lacks instead of what they have.

*Early childhood education*—Early childhood education lays the foundation for children's learning. It is the period in Child development where children are formally and informally taught (Childhood Education, 2024). The goal of early childhood education is to prepare children for formal schooling. For this study, early childhood education will be defined as the period from 3-5 years old and public or private pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs.

*Kindergarten readiness assessments*—These assessments are used to determine where students are performing developmentally and what skills and knowledge they possess in preparation for or entrance into kindergarten (Jensen et al., 2021; Whyte & Coburn, 2022). They assess skills in multiple domains, and many states utilize these measures for accountability and program evaluation purposes (Jensen et al., 2021; Regenstein et al., 2017). Thirty-seven states currently require a readiness assessment upon children entering kindergarten (Maryland State Department of Education, 2023).

*Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)*—This is a comprehensive tool designed to measure the readiness of incoming kindergarten students across the domains of social foundations, language and literacy, math, and physical well-being and motor development (SCDE). Students are rated as either demonstrating, approaching, or emerging readiness in each domain, as well as their overall score.

*Low income*—Low income is when a family falls below the 200% federal poverty threshold (see Table 2). Poverty guidelines are used to determine eligibility for specific federal and state programs such as Head Start, South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP), health insurance programs (i.e., Medicaid), or supplemental

nutrition program (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). For this study, poverty and low income will be defined as outlined by the South Carolina Department of Education. If a student is homeless or migrant during the current school year, has been enrolled in Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (T.A.N.F.) at any time within a 3-year period, or has been in foster care within a 3-year period they are considered living in poverty or low-income (SCDE).

**Table 2**

*2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines*

| Family Size | Gross Yearly Income | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 25% | 50% | 75% | 100% | 125% | 135% | 150% | 175% | 185% | 200% |
| 1 | $3,645 | $7,290 | $10,935 | $14,580 | $18,225 | $19,683 | $21,870 | $25,521 | $26,973 | $29,160 |
| 2 | $4,930 | $9,860 | $14,790 | $19,720 | $24,650 | $26,622 | $29,580 | $34,510 | $36,482 | $39,440 |
| 3 | $6,215 | $12,430 | $18,645 | $24,860 | $31,075 | $33,561 | $37,290 | $43,505 | $45,991 | $49,720 |
| 4 | $7,500 | $15,000 | $22,500 | $30,000 | $37,500 | $40,500 | $45,000 | $52,500 | $55,500 | $60,000 |
| 5 | $8,785 | $17,570 | $26,355 | $35,140 | $43,925 | $47,439 | $52,710 | $61,495 | $65,009 | $70,280 |
| 6 | $10,070 | $20,140 | $30,210 | $40,280 | $50,350 | $54,378 | $60,420 | $70,490 | $74,518 | $80,560 |
| 7 | $11,355 | $22,710 | $45,420 | $45,420 | $56,775 | $61,317 | $68,130 | $79,485 | $84,027 | $90,840 |
| 8 | $12,640 | $25,280 | $37,920 | $50,566 | $63,200 | $68,256 | $75,840 | $88,480 | $93,536 | $101,120 |

*Note.* Source: US Department of Health and Human Services)

*Parental involvement*—Parental involvement is the behaviors exhibited by parents aimed at Promoting and enhancing children's development and educational outcomes (Boyle & Benner, 2020). Parental involvement is one of the most influential factors contributing to student achievement (Wood et al., 2020). Parental involvement can be compensatory, which occurs as a result of children performing poorly, or enrichment can occur when parents believe their children have a good grasp or mastered skills (Boyle & Benner, 2020).

*Poverty*—Poverty and low income are used interchangeably to describe parents and children in this research study. Poverty is a state or condition in which an individual lacks the financial resources to maintain a standard of living (Poverty, 2023). An individual lives in poverty when income is not able to cover basic necessities (Gibson-Davis et al., 2022). Poverty is a global issue, and 20% of children in the United States live in households that make less than 60% of the national average (McCarty, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2021). A family living in poverty has an income falling below the 100% federal poverty threshold.

*Readiness*—Readiness means being prepared with the necessary skills to learn, and it is an essential term for early childhood education (Saracho, 2023). Pan et al. (2019) state school readiness as a student being able to use cognitive, social, and self-regulation skills needed for future school success. For the purposes of this study, those parents of students who had an overall score that met the criteria for demonstrating readiness on the KRA were recruited and served as participants.

*Readiness domains*—The National Education Goals Panel (1991) and the U.S. Department of Education identify five key areas as domains of readiness: health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, language and communication skills, and cognition and general knowledge (Belfield & Garcia, 2014; Pan et al., 2019; Williams & Lerner, 2019).

*Socio-economic disparities*—Economic disparities and opportunity gaps among children of various races, ethnicities, and geographical locations also exist before children begin school. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly behind their peers in learning language and socio-emotional skills needed for academic success (Hackworth et al., 2017; Nicholson et al., 2012).

## Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to inform and bring awareness to educators on low-income parents' perception of kindergarten readiness. There are both short-term and life-long consequences when students are not ready for kindergarten. Students of poverty who are not ready for kindergarten contend with higher dropout, teen pregnancies, and incarceration rates as compared to their counterparts (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Eden, 2021). Students who are not ready for kindergarten are more likely to be retained in elementary school (Bettencourt et al., 2018) and are likely to struggle throughout their academic careers (C. Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Because kindergarten readiness includes social and emotional competence, students who are not ready will have higher suspension and exposition rates (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Preschoolers are suspended three times more than students in grades K-12 and statistics show how early childhood programs are entry points to the pipeline to prison (Adumu & Hogan, 2015).

It is important to know how low-income parents of poverty in Hollywood School District successfully prepared their children to demonstrate readiness when entering kindergarten since historical data indicate low student achievement in grades K-12. Understanding parent behaviors and practices along with the home environmental factors will help school and district officials and other agencies, such as First Steps and Head Start, develop programs and services to support parents of children ages birth to three and ultimately close the achievement gap.

This research study used an anti-deficit achievement framework contrary to a deficit model that is typically used with children of poverty and other minority or marginalized groups. Research from this study will support the current literature on the anti-deficit achievement framework that has been applied to African-American college male students. High levels of poverty continue to correlate with low readiness scores, and more children must come to school

ready to learn if student achievement is going to improve. This is important since research shows this population of students contend with lower academic achievement and readiness scores than children of families with higher incomes.

There is little research showing how minority families, such as low-income, African American, or Hispanic, positively support the readiness skills of kindergarten children (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2017). Numerous studies prove the benefits of parent involvement in school readiness, but little is known about the factors that compel parents to engage in these practices (Boyle & Benner, 2020). Many studies identify the barriers to parental involvement, and its implications are quantitative. They provide demographic, empirical data showing how and why these families are considered at risk for not successfully preparing children for kindergarten (Coba-Rodriguez et al., 2020). Also, most of these studies are based on measures that are culturally biased or norm-referenced to middle-class Caucasian families. The aim of this qualitative study was to provide insight into the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of low-income parents on school readiness.

## Assumptions and Limitations

The study assumes all participants will respond to questions in the interview as honestly as possible. The participants will fully understand all the questions asked. Participants will participate in the research study of free will without any alternative motives. Because this study is concentrated within a specific area, it does not constitute how other school districts are performing.

Although this phenomenological study served to examine the perceptions of parents of poverty about kindergarten readiness and the practices and environment to provide support to young children in the Hollywood School District, limitations to this research existed. As is

common with other qualitative studies, utilizing a small purposeful sample will limit the ability for findings to be generalized to an entire population. Time constraints and the scope of this research only allowed the researcher to examine the lived experiences of participants in a rural school district. Interviews and data collection will be completed in a short period. A study with a larger scope involving more participants from a variety of communities could produce more comprehensive findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

## Conclusion

Because school readiness is so important, the National Center for Education and Statistics (NCES) conducted the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) to examine early educational experiences and their impacts on school readiness (Williams & Lerner, 2019). The ECLS-K continues to be highly documented and utilized in multiple subsequent studies (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Coba-Rodriguez et al., 2020; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2018; Pan et al., 2019). There is a significant body of literature stating school readiness is a strong predictor of academic success (Duncan et al., 2007; Duncan et al., 2018; Duncan et al., 2010; Pan et al., 2020). Students who are ready for kindergarten are more likely to have healthier lifestyles and positive social outcomes (C. Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Students who demonstrate school readiness by kindergarten are more likely to be successful in elementary school, graduate from high school, and earn more money as adults. Students need the foundational skills to be fluent readers, prolific writers, critical thinkers, and problem solvers as they matriculate through school and enter adulthood. This research is supported by the literature review in Chapter 2 and the methodology in Chapter 3.

# CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION

It is important to understand how the brain develops and how the roles of parents, the environment, and poverty play in the early years of the health and development of children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). Parents' knowledge and practices are key to children developing appropriate skills to be ready for kindergarten. School readiness has been associated with academic success; therefore, educational attainment contributes to better physical health, social well-being, and productivity as an adult (C. Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). This chapter will discuss how poverty, parental influences, and behaviors impact child development and school readiness. It includes a literature review on school readiness and its dimensions, along with an overview of school readiness assessments. Several asset-based approaches are discussed with an emphasis on the anti-deficit achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012). Tools used for data collection and analysis of this qualitative study were discussed.

## Child Development

The period from prenatal development to eight years of age is considered early childhood and is important for cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development (Lannen & Ziswiler, 2014; Likhar et al., 2022). Children between the ages of birth to five are in a critical period for developing thinking, linguistic, cognitive, social-emotional, and regulatory skills (Bakken et al. 2017) and are all interdependent areas that occur during child development years (Meriem et al., 2020). Parent interaction, the environment, and physical health and well-being are crucial to the development of all these areas. Child and human development theories state the importance of parental involvement in promoting children's learning and parents are considered children's earliest influence regarding educational opportunities (Wood et al., 2021).

## Child Development Theory

### Piaget

Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that intelligence changes when children progress through stages as their innate abilities and the environment interact with each other (Piaget, 1951). The four stages are sensorimotor, which entails object permanence and delayed imitation; preoperational, which involves the development of language skills; concrete operational; and formal operational, which is the stage of reasoning (Meriem et al., 2020). These stages serve as a continuum for cognitive development. Thought processes develop as the child ages (Senosi, 2014). Playing games like peekaboo can help children maturate through the object permanence stage. Parents can support the sensorimotor stage by providing opportunities for sensory exploration. Play is the primary means of learning, and parents can support the preoperational stage by encouraging pretend and symbolic play. Asking children open-ended questions can support development in the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage continues throughout adolescence (Saracho, 2023).

### Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1978) believed learning is a social activity where learners create new knowledge through experiences. He believed children do not develop in isolation but within social matrices or systems of social relationships influenced by social organizations (Nicolopoulou, 1993; Saracho, 2023). Vygotsky put an emphasis on the role of social interaction for cognitive development and his belief that community is imperative for "making meaning" (Saracho, 2023). He defined the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a period where children can function cognitively but need social interaction to progress to the next level. Vygotsky believed children construct knowledge through these social interactions. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky

did not believe development occurred in stages but believed language played a major role in influencing thoughts. Piaget's theory focused heavily on objects and the environment, while Vygotsky's relied on people.

**Bronfenbrenner**

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory believed people and the environment influenced each other in a continuous system of interactions. It provided an explanation of how microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems made connections to each other (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). This theory views human development as a system of relationships impacted by multiple factors in the environment, beginning with family, peers, and school and then expanding to values, beliefs, and time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem is the system that is most influential on the developing child because this is where interactions are shaped by the family and the environment. Like Piaget's, Bronfenbrenner's theory focused on objects and the environment, and like Vygotsky's it too focused on people. All three of these theorists are highly regarded by early childhood practitioners as experts in child development.

**Brain Development**

Most brain development takes place within the first year of life, and by age three, 90% of a child's brain has developed (Meriem et al., 2020). Neuroscience and behavioral research on early brain development explained how this period lays the foundation for future success and sustainability in life (Lannen & Ziswiler, 2014). Brain development is a prolonged process, with substantial changes occurring during the preschool years and continuing into early adulthood (Mungas et al., 2013; Neumann et al., 2021). Human and animal studies highlight the critical importance of early experiences in shaping brain activity for future cognition, social and

emotional skills, and physical and mental health (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Basic physical needs are key to brain growth and development.

**Cognitive Development**

Cognition involves children using reasoning, memory, thinking, and problem-solving skills to make sense of their world. It involves being able to figure things out. Cognitive development is the emergence and growth within the domains of language, memory, and executive function (Carson et al., 2015). Early years have been noted as an important developmental period for executive function which helps children to stay focused, pay attention, follow directions, and exercise self-control (Metaferia et al., 2021). Cognitive skills provide the foundation for literacy and numeracy knowledge. Brain development and environmental influences cause cognitive function to change quickly during early childhood years (Neumann et al., 2021). Language and cognitive development have a very strong relationship because language skills lay the foundation for cognitive and other social tasks (Goldin-Meadow et al., 2014).

**Language Development**

Language is the ability to communicate with others via oral, written, gestures, or facial expressions; however, spoken language is the most widely used. Language is divided into two categories: expressive and receptive. Expressive language is how language is communicated or produced, and receptive language is how language is understood. Expressive language is often confused with spoken language because speech is the form of expressive language used most often. The early stages of life are crucial in developing language skills, and they serve as predictors of later language delays (Bruce et al., 2022; Neumann et al., 2021). Early language development exists within three stages: prelinguistic, emerging language, and developing

language stage. The prelinguistic stage can exist between 0 and 12 months and is marked by nonlinguistic sounds such as crying, cooing, or babbling. The emerging language stage occurs around 18 to 24 months when children begin using simple words. Age 2 is considered a critical age for language development, and most children begin to use between 75 and 225 words (Neumann et al., 2021). The developing language stage occurs between 24 to 36 months, and a child's expressive language skills are rapidly developing. Positive parental interactions resulted in higher achievement and better memory, while negative interactions resulted in children using shorter sentences and fewer words (Perkins et al., 2013).

**Social-Emotional Development**

Social and emotional development is the ability of young children to develop relationships with peers and adults, appropriately express and manage emotions, have empathy for others, and exhibit self-control (Senosi, 2014). The acknowledgment of the importance of social and emotional competencies is increasingly recognized as needed for future success in schools and throughout adulthood (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). There is supporting evidence relating the importance of family involvement to social-emotional learning (Wood et al., 2021).

**Physical Development**

Physical activity is essential to child development and affects several areas of a child's life. Physical development is the increase in height and body mass, and the continuous increase in height and weight corresponds to muscle mass, resulting in increased strength (Senosi, 2014). Proper physical development needs to occur so that young children can establish control of gross and fine motor skills. Control of gross motor skills allows children to jump, hop, run, kick, and skip. Parents can support the development of gross motor skills by providing opportunities for

outdoor play, jumping rope, riding a bicycle, and playing on playground equipment. It is important for students to master many gross motor movements before they can perform fine motor movements. By age 5, children begin to gain control over fine-motor muscles allowing them to grasp, catch objects, button and unbutton clothes, use writing utensils, and cut with scissors (Zeng et al., 2017). It is imperative that parents provide appropriate opportunities to help students accomplish these skills. The acquisition of motor skills relies on the maturation of the brain, cognitive capabilities, and experiences (Meriem et al., 2020). The promotion of physical activity in early childhood helps develop motor skills, and advances in neuroscience have shown connections between physical activity and cognitive development (Zeng et al. 2017).

## Poverty and Impacts on Child Development

Many studies prove children exposed to early childhood poverty are at risk of developmental delays. Multiple studies show a link between early exposure to poverty and brain structure development (Luby et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2021). One study found children in poverty had reduced grey matter volume in regions of the brain associated with school readiness and achievement from 3 to 9% below developmental norms (Blair & Raver, 2016). Children receiving inappropriate amounts of sleep or rest are characteristics of poverty that can likely impact brain development and self-regulation due to plasticity (Luby et al., 2022). High levels of stress because of poverty during early childhood have been linked to changes in brain development related to emotion regulation (Francis et al., 2018). Deplorable housing conditions such as unclean water, undetected mold and mildew, infestations of pests, and exposure to environmental toxins, which are all conditions of poverty, can affect the brain’s physical development.

Waldfogel and Washbrook (2011) cited lower-quality parenting style as a factor in the cognitive and language achievement gap between children of poverty and those higher income families. Parents are instrumental in providing experiences and environments that promote cognitive and language development. Children with poor language skills are at risk for poor academic performance and low school readiness (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005; Yang et al., 2021).

Perkins et al. (2013) used the family stress and family engagement models to show the link between poverty and developmental language delays. The family stress model showed how stress increased cortisol levels in children, which affected the structures and functions of parts of the brain that support language acquisition. It is well documented how children of poverty are faced with both physical and psychosocial circumstances that increase stress. The family engagement model showed how positive or negative parental interactions affect language skills. Parents living in poverty are more likely to have an authoritative versus nurturing approach (Beasley et al., 2022; Wray, 2015), resulting in less talking and asking questions to children, which are key in developing language skills (Kalil, 2017).

Because family involvement and family dynamics are crucial to developing social-emotional skills, children in poverty typically struggle in this area. One in five children in poverty is at risk for developing social-emotional difficulties, and they are five times more likely to have challenging behaviors compared to those of peers (Ho et al., 2022; Li & Zhang, 2020). Challenges in parent-child relationships also increase the chances of incurring behavioral and psychological problems (Ho et al., 2022). Children of poverty are presented with unhealthy conditions and stresses such as poor housing, poor rest or sleep habits, poor nutrition, and lack of access to healthcare that puts their health and physical development at risk.

## Parental Influences of Children of Poverty

From conception, parents play a significant role in their children's learning and development. The relationships between parents and children between the ages of birth to four play an integral role in development (Jeong et al., 2021), and there is a significant body of literature and developmental theories supporting the importance of parental involvement (Wood et al., 2021). It is also important for parents to support the skills necessary to prepare children for their first formal school experiences. Parenting style, expectations, education level, physical and mental health, and income impact the growth and development of young children (Souza, 2020). This section of the literature review will discuss how parents living in poverty impact child development and kindergarten readiness.

### Parenting Style

Responsive parenting and support are needed for development during the early years (Jeong et al., 2021). Bornstein et al. (2008) define responsive parenting as "The prompt, contingent, and appropriate reactions parents display to their children in the context of everyday exchanges" (p. 867). This is when parents respond appropriately and consistently to their children's emotional and physical needs. Responsive parents are nurturing and provide support and reassurance to children while balancing appropriate discipline. There is a significant body of research supporting the contributions of responsive parenting to several developmental domains. Positive parent-child relationships lead to preschool children developing language skills more rapidly because of prompt responses (Bornstein et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023), better problem-solving abilities, and school readiness skills (Dewar, 2016; Landry et al., 2006). Verbal and physical behaviors such as saying "I love you," kissing, hugging, and sharing promote positive social behaviors of young children when modeled by parents (Lee et al., 2023). Recent studies

show responsive or positive parenting can help families build resilience and mitigate the consequences of poverty on child development (Cates et al., 2016; Wray, 2015). Several meta-analyses found responsive parenting is beneficial for children in poverty (Lee et al., 2023; Madigan et al., 2019). Another study found that despite socio-economic status, children who received responsive parenting were least likely to suffer from chronic illnesses and the impacts of toxic stress (Dewar, 2016). The stresses of poverty can cause parents to be disengaged and inattentive to the needs of their children, which leads to a more authoritarian or punitive approach, including the use of corporal punishment (Beasley et al., 2022; Ho et al., 2022; Wray, 2015). Parents of poverty also talk less to their children, ask fewer questions, and are not as emotionally involved when compared to counterparts with higher incomes (Kalil, 2017). When the parent-child relationship is strained, preschool children are more likely to have cognitive deficiencies and five times more likely to have behavioral and psychological problems than peers of higher socio-economic status (Ho et al., 2022). The impacts of poverty can have a major impact on parenting style, which can support or hinder school readiness skills.

**Parent Expectations**

There is a direct correlation between academic achievement and parents' expectations. In Souza's (2020) analysis of literature and data, she found that parents with higher educational attainment had higher expectations for their children, suggesting parents' educational level as an indicator of children's future academic achievement. The National Center for Children in Poverty (2019) reported only 36% of parents of children in poverty have earned a high school diploma, and a lower percentage have earned a college degree. Despite the abundance of data that suggests parents' educational level predicts future academic outcomes, some studies show

that students can achieve academically despite socioeconomic status and based on parents' expectations (Tabak, 2021).

### Parent Education Level

A parent's educational level is a strong predictor of children's academic achievement (Souza, 2020). Low educational attainment often results in parents working long hours for low wages, impacting the relationship and the amount of time spent with young children (Ho et al., 2022). Parents with low educational levels may have limited background knowledge to create opportunities or an environment to support early literacy skills (Wood et al., 2021). Despite the amount of literature supporting parent's educational level as a predictor of children's readiness success in specific domains, there is a limited amount of research available for all domains (Isaacs et al., 2011).

## Early Childhood Education

There is a substantial amount of evidence available supporting the benefits of universal pre-kindergarten (PK) programs. Improved cognitive development, socio-emotional development, executive functioning, and academic achievement in children are the result of universal pre-kindergarten programs globally (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Chor et al., 2016; Dumas & Lefranc, 2012; M. Fitzpatrick, 2008; Gormley et al., 2005; Havnes & Mogstad, 2015; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) found high-quality preschool programs increase school readiness, lower retention rates, and lower the number of students placed in special education programs (NICHD, 2002).

Head Start is a well-known and utilized PK program that supports 3- and 5-year-old students. Head Start was conceived during President LB Johnson's "War on Poverty" campaign after a recommendation from early childhood experts (Danley, 2020) and is considered the

United States leading federally funded early childhood program (Barnett, 1995; Lombardi et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2018), and since 1965 has attempted to decrease the readiness and achievement gaps between low-income preschool children and more affluent peers (Morris et al., 2018). There is presently a Head Start Program in every county in South Carolina.

South Carolina was one of the first states to implement both full-day 5K and half-day child development or pre-kindergarten programs. The South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984 sought to improve the school readiness of at-risk four-year-old students by offering a half-day program. As the result of a lawsuit in 2006, the South Carolina General Assembly created the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), which offered full-day prekindergarten in 37 public school districts (Griggs, 2016). In 2014, the South Carolina General Assembly enacted the Read to Succeed Act that changed CDEPP to the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP), which expanded pre-kindergarten to school districts with poverty indexes of 90% or higher (SCDOE). CERDEP is also available to privately owned childcare centers and Head Start.

High-quality PK programs implement developmentally appropriate learning standards and curriculum, utilize assessments that assess the academic, social-emotional, and physical needs of children to guide instruction and measure program effectiveness, employ staff that are knowledgeable of child development, and provide opportunities for family engagement (Wechsler et al., 2016).

All CERDEP and Head Start programs implement developmentally appropriate learning standards and curricula that support all developmental domains. They all utilize the SC Early Learning Standards, and all CERDEP and Head Start Programs are mandated to implement an approved research-based curriculum that supports guided learning opportunities supported by

language-rich, hands-on learning experiences with fluidity to support the needs of all students (NAEYC, 2003). A portfolio of students' work samples and both summative and formative assessments are kept to monitor growth and determine needs. Head Start, public school, and private 4K programs in South Carolina are all considered high-quality PK programs that have oversight and accountability measures in place. Thirty-seven percent of students in poverty who attended a CERDEP scored demonstrated readiness on the KRA compared to 27% of students in poverty who did not attend (*SC EOC Report Finds State-Funded, Full-Day 4K Improves Kindergarten Readiness, Education Oversight Committee*, n.d.). South Carolina's state-supported PK programs are beneficial in supporting kindergarten readiness, particularly for students in poverty.

## Children of Poverty and Early Childhood Education

Children born into poverty face many challenges before their first school experiences. Their odds of not being ready for kindergarten are significantly higher than those not born into poverty (Roos et al., 2019). Research shows prekindergarten programs can combat these issues and place children of poverty on a successful academic trajectory (Crosnoe et al., 2016; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Unfortunately, data from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) indicate only 29% of eligible 4-year-old children and 4% of eligible 3-year-old children attended state-supported universal (UPK) programs in the United States before 2020 (White et al., 2015). Along with school readiness, there is a significant body of literature supporting the benefits of children of poverty attending preschool programs (Crosnoe et al., 2016; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Evidence supports that high-quality universal prekindergarten programs have a positive impact on the matriculation of students with low SES

in later grades (Bowman et al., 2001; García & Jensen, 2007; Gormley et al., 2005; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Reynolds, 2003).

The Perry Project, the oldest, most cited early childhood study utilizing random assignment, serves as a staple for policymakers advocating universal early childhood programs (Heckman et al., 2010). This 5-year longitudinal study involved 58 three- and four-year-old African American children in Ypsilanti, Michigan (Derman-Sparks, 2016) randomly assigned to a treatment group while attending a high-quality preschool program (Gunn, 2019). This project was initiated to seek the impacts of early childhood education on children living in poverty (Derman-Sparks, 2016). Proponents of UPK used this study as an economic case to expand early education programs for disadvantaged students (Heckman et al., 2010). Barack Obama cited findings from Heckman's economic analysis of the Perry Project in his State of the Union Address to support the push for high-quality preschool for all children (Armor, 2015).

The Abecedarian Program was a well-designed randomized study involving 111 low-income children conducted at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill during the early 1970s (Armor, 2015). Participants in this study were infants who were at risk of developmental delays or potential academic failures assigned to a research-based educational childcare program or to a control group (Campbell et al., 2012; Ramey et al., 1976). Because of its success, the Abecedarian Approach is recognized worldwide as an intervention program yielding positive long-term outcomes for low-income children (Koshyk et al., 2021). Results from this project also claimed an investment return of 7.3-to-1 (Sparling & Meunier, 2019). Even with the success of these two studies, generalizing results for modern-day comparisons is debatable.

Increased preschool enrollment of children in poverty has also been noted as a cost-effective strategy for reducing the socioeconomic gap (Crosnoe et al., 2016; Heckman et al.,

2013). Results from the Perry Preschool Project, an exemplar of UPKs, showed children of poverty were less likely to be suspended from school, less likely to engage in substance abuse, or arrested but were more likely to be gainfully employed after attending preschool (Eden, 2021; Heckman et al., 2013). Long-term outcomes of early childhood programs that targeted low-income families had the strongest evidence of support for prekindergarten programs (Barnett, 1995; Blanden et al., 2016; Heckman et al., 2010; Karoly et al., 2006).

A reduction in the readiness gap by income and race has occurred in recent years due to the expansion of UPK (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Reardon & Portilla, 2016; Temple et al., 2022). Evidence also suggests high-quality universal prekindergarten programs are beneficial because Hispanic students of all socioeconomic backgrounds have improved cognitive skills, school readiness increases, and there is a decrease in the achievement gap among ethnic groups (García & Jensen, 2007). Data from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) provides evidence of universal pre-kindergarten closing the achievement gap for African American students before entering kindergarten (Awner et al., 2019).

## The History of Kindergarten

Kindergarten is considered the first formal school experience for students in many states. The origination of kindergarten in the United States dates to the 1800s after educational theorist Fredrick Froebel founded the first kindergarten in the world in Germany in 1837 (Eschner, 2017). German refugees, who were students of Froebel, started the first kindergarten in Wisconsin in their home (Eschner, 2017). As a result of the Industrial Revolution, mothers were forced to work outside of the home and needed a place for their young children to stay during the day. Elizabeth Peabody, who also studied Froebel's philosophy in Germany, began the first English-speaking kindergarten in Boston in 1860 and is well-known for advocating for the

expansion of kindergarten in the United States (Eschner, 2017). Despite its early existence and the growing number of full-day programs, there are still several states that do not provide universal kindergarten. Kindergarten is also compensatory in just a few states mandating attendance at age 5 (Milligan, 2012). In 1984, the South Carolina General Assembly required 5-year-old students to attend kindergarten but provided parents the option to join a home school association if they chose not to enroll their child in a public or private school system. Though kindergarten students are formally assessed, progress monitored, and there is educator accountability, students cannot be retained if they are not meeting grade or age level expectations in South Carolina without parent consent.

## Kindergarten and No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2002 because of the reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Its goal was to hold K-12 public schools accountable for student achievement and penalize those who did not show improvement. Students in poverty, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and minority students were the focus of this legislation. If states elected to accept federal funds, they had to follow the requirements of this law. Schools were held accountable through test scores, student growth, and national report card scores. All students were to be “proficient” in reading and math by 2014, and each year, schools were to make adequate yearly progress toward this goal. NCLB was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 but still requires high-stakes testing for accountability purposes. NCLB legislation has also forced many states to implement full-day programs in hopes of improving students’ outcomes in later grades (Milligan, 2012; Repko-Erwin, 2017).

## Kindergarten Readiness

Health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence approaches to learning, language and communication skills, and cognition and general knowledge are the five key areas or domains of readiness identified by The National Education Goals Panel (1991) and the U.S. Department of Education (Belfield & Garcia, 2014; Pan et al., 2019; Williams & Lerner, 2019). These domains are assessed by both formative and summative means when considering the readiness skills of preschool children.

### Language and Communication

The language and communication domain of readiness or development is composed of two parts. The way children understand and use language skills to communicate with others is the first part. It involves listening, speaking, writing, and building vocabulary. The other part of this domain involves developing emerging literacy skills such as story comprehension, print awareness, and phonological and phonemic awareness skills. Children must develop communicative skills, language, and literacy to communicate with others (Pan et al., 2019). Children demonstrating readiness in this domain can speak in complete sentences, listen to and answer questions about a story read, understand that letters make up words and words make up sentences for writing, and identify letters and letter sounds.

### Cognition and General Knowledge

When children build reasoning, problem-solving, memory, and thinking skills, they are developing cognition. When these skills are adequately developed, children can acquire knowledge that promotes learning (Pan et al., 2019). Children demonstrate readiness for kindergarten when they can identify similarities and differences, cause and effect, understand

and use words, and count up to ten objects. Many of these skills can be easily assessed and are typically associated with academics.

**Approaches to Play and Learning**

Approaches to learning refer to children's attitudes, habits, and learning styles that characterize how they learn (Pan et al., 2019). Approaches to play and learning may be considered the most abstract of the five domains of readiness. Self-regulation, a child's ability to attend to information, use it appropriately, and control impulsive behavior that interferes with learning, is often included in this domain (Pan et al., 2019). This area is often difficult to measure because it indirectly assesses academic skills.

**Physical Health and Well-Being**

Health and physical development refer to children's health and motor development that support engagement and learning in their environments (Pan et al., 2019). It also includes the development of both fine and gross motor skills and physical abilities, along with the rate of growth (Williams & Lerner, 2019). Many young children participate in well-child visits to a pediatrician to monitor physical health and development. Children demonstrate readiness skills in this domain when they can use writing utensils and scissors appropriately, hop, skip, throw, jump, and kick. Self-help skills such as toileting, dressing, and feeding are also observed and assessed.

**Social-Emotional**

Child development experts suggest that readiness requires competence in social-emotional skills (Pan et al., 2019). Research states when appropriate social skills have been developed by kindergarten, individuals are likely to meet social and emotional competencies in the future (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). Self-regulation is also considered an element of

social-emotional development and is important for academic achievement (Thompson & Raikes, 2007). Being able to communicate, cooperate, and form friendships are indicators within this domain. When young children can appropriately understand and express emotions, control impulses and aggression, and show empathy towards others, they demonstrate readiness in this domain.

**Table 3**

*Summary of National Education Goals Panel School Readiness Domains*

| Readiness Domain | Key Components |
|---|---|
| Language and Communication | Speaking, Listening, Vocabulary, Early Literacy |
| Approaches to Play and Learning | Curiosity, Temperament, Learning Style |
| Physical Health and Well Being | Physical Development-Growth and Physiology Physical Abilities-Motor development |
| Cognition and General Knowledge | Physical, logical, and social knowledge |
| Social-Emotional | Emotional-Self-concept and the ability to comprehend the feelings of others. Social-Ability to form and sustain relationships |

## Kindergarten Readiness Assessments

Kindergarten readiness assessments have become more widely used and accepted since the passing of legislation such as No Child Left Behind, which urged states to utilize assessments for accountability measures. Other federally funded programs, such as Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge have urged states to administer kindergarten readiness assessments (KRAs) to evaluate student's abilities as they enter school (Jensen et al., 2021). It is estimated that nearly 43 states have implemented, piloted, or developed a readiness assessment for kindergarten entry. Though there is guidance, there is no consensus on a definition of readiness despite the increase

in the use of KRAs. KRAs are used to determine where students are performing developmentally and what skills and knowledge they possess before entering kindergarten (Jensen et al., 2021; Whyte & Coburn, 2022).

Kindergarten readiness measures assess skills in multiple domains. Language and literacy measures assess students' speaking, listening, and communication skills. It also measures pre-literacy skills such as print awareness, vocabulary, and phonological awareness skills. The domain of cognition and general knowledge often assesses early numeracy and comprehension skills. These two domains are often referred to as pre-academic skills. Most readiness screeners or tests examine the physical health, well-being, and motor development of children, which assess children's ability to use fine and gross muscles and engage in physical activity. Social and emotional tasks assess self-regulation, how students express and manage emotions, and how they interact with both peers and adults. All these domains assessed should align with states' early learning standards (Regenstein et al., 2017).

Many kindergarten readiness measures require data to be collected and reported by the classroom teacher (C. Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). The validity and accuracy of the data can be questionable since some tasks on many of the assessments require teacher observations, which leads to subjectivity (Whyte & Coburn, 2022). Standardization is the norm of KRAs requiring some training for administration and scoring. In South Carolina, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) requires training and certification of those administering and the signing of a legal document assuring test security and confidentiality. KRAs are typically administered within the first few weeks of school and vary from state to state. Florida requires their assessment to be administered within the first 30 days (Florida Department of Education), while South Carolina's KRA must be administered within the first 45 days of school (SCDE). Georgia's must be

administered within the first 6 weeks of school (Georgia Department of Education). North Carolina's law requires their kindergarten readiness tool to be given within the first 60 days of school but encourages teachers to utilize the protocol as an ongoing formative assessment as a guide for personalized instruction and progress monitoring (NCDOE).

There are several goals of KRAs. They provide an overview of student's knowledge and skills as they transition to kindergarten and provide a gauge as to how prepared they are to access the curriculum (Jensen et al., 2021). There is a substantial body of literature showing a correlation between readiness scores and later achievement. KRAs can help identify those students with low scores who need early intervention and support (Regenstein et al., 2017). They can also be used for program evaluation for funding and policy decisions (Jensen et al., 2021; Regenstein et al., 2017). There is a substantial amount of funds allocated for Head Start and other universal pre-kindergarten programs, so KRA scores help determine if returns are worth the investments.

Like Maryland, Hawaii, Indiana, and Ohio, South Carolina uses the Kindergarten Ready Assessment (KRA). The KRA is a comprehensive tool designed to measure the readiness of incoming kindergarten students across the domains of social foundations, language and literacy, math, and physical well-being and motor development (SCDE). It encompasses a 50-question protocol with selected response items and performance tasks that are assessed with students one-on-one and observations that are made in natural occurrences or settings. Scoring is completed with a rubric with specific levels of criteria. Students are rated as demonstrating readiness, approaching readiness, or emerging readiness in each domain, as well as their overall score. Students with approaching and emerging scores should be supported with targeted instruction and interventions. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how parents of children

in poverty prepare and support their children's readiness skills as measured by the KRA before entering kindergarten. To better understand how children of poverty enter kindergarten ready to learn, an anti-deficit approach utilizing the anti-deficit academic achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2012) will be used to gain knowledge of the parental practices and home environmental factors that positively influence readiness. The conceptual framework will help answer the research questions in the study.

## Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

The anti-deficit achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012) will also provide a theoretical base for this study. Dr. Shaun Harper (2012) adapted the National Black Male College Achievement Study as the foundation of his anti-deficit achievement framework. This study interviewed Black college males to examine and better understand how they achieved in college despite the challenges and disadvantages they, along with their peers, encountered. Its goal was to counter the exploration of the impacts of low achievement and high failure rates, particularly in undergraduate programs, but focus on the assets Black male achievers possessed. Much of the research shows Black male achievers are often overlooked and viewed from a deficit perspective. S. R. Harper argued that Black males would be more successful if they were not stigmatized by negative assumptions and stereotypes.

With this framework, questions that are typically asked about underrepresentation, poor achievement, and inequities are inverted to shed a positive light on how and why students, specifically black males, are successful. S. R. Harper (2012) used the anti-deficit model to invert questions that are typically asked about disadvantages, underrepresentation, and Black male student attrition. Instead of asking a question from a deficit mindset, such as "Why are Black males underperforming in college?" one would ask, "How do Black males from high-poverty

schools succeed in college?" from an anti-deficit mindset (Goings, 2016). S. R. Harper's framework focused on what students had instead of what students needed (Meijia et al., 2018). As an adaptation of the National Black Male College Achievement Study, S. R. Harper (2010) developed an anti-deficit achievement framework so researchers could examine the enablers of minority student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) areas. He designed this framework to redefine how questions are framed in STEM studies (Meijia et al., 2018). He later expanded it to explore successful Black male college students. There are three major areas of this framework that focus on positive behaviors and attributes, including pre-college and socialization readiness, college achievement, and post-college success (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012).

While most studies utilizing this framework focused on the achievement of African-American males or collegiate students, there is little to no research available to support this theory applied at the early childhood level. There have been some studies conducted using the anti-deficit achievement model to examine other marginalized or minority groups at the post-secondary levels. In S. R. Harper's framework, the pre-college, socialization, and readiness section has subsets that examine familial influences, K-12 impacts, and out-of-school college preparation experiences (S. R. Harper, 2012). Like S. R. Harper's model, familial influences and experiences play a significant role in the preparation and acquisition of skills necessary for kindergarten readiness.

The family resilience theory is an extension of McCubbin's family development theory and was expanded by Froma Walsh into a systems model with the family being the center of adversity (Walsh, 2016). This model views the family functioning within systems while overcoming highly stressful challenges that impact the unit as a whole (Walsh, 2016). There has

been much research on poverty as a risk factor for families, but limited studies have been conducted on how parents positively navigate these challenges. The family resiliency model of Walsh (2003) is an asset or strength-based model that shows how families of poverty withstand adversity and adequately prepare children for their first school experiences.

The readiness gap by income and race has narrowed in recent years due to the expansion of universal prekindergarten (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Reardon & Portilla, 2016; Temple et al., 2022), but much of the research is approached through a deficit lens. The research focuses on income, parent education levels, race, and ethnicity as factors that contribute to the readiness gap between minorities and Caucasian children (Barnett & Lamy, 2013). It is important to understand how those deficits affect readiness and student achievement, but it is also important to understand how parents successfully prepare preschool children for school and the at-home resources they use as support. Like the anti-deficit achievement model, the resiliency theory can also guide researchers in studying assets and resources as a strengths-based paradigm (Zimmerman, 2013).

## Collection and Analysis of Data

This study followed a qualitative research design since the goal was to understand how people interpret their experiences and the meanings they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A survey was developed to gather demographic information and consent via Qualtrics, and semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed using Zoom. Interview transcriptions were uploaded into NVIVO, where hand coding and thematic analysis were completed. This is a brief review of the literature and a more in-depth discussion about data collection, data analysis, and how these tools were utilized will be discussed in Chapter 3.

### Qualtrics

Qualtrics is a digital tool that can be customized for various audiences, data collection, analysis, and presentations (Qualtrics, 2018). An advantage of Qualtrics is it can increase the response rates of web-based surveys (Monroe & Adams, 2012). Like Qualtrics, companies such as Survey Monkey and Amazon's Mechanical Turk develop and distribute online surveys (Miller et al., 2020). A major concern of Qualtrics and other web-based surveys is a low response rate (Monroe & Adams, 2012).

### Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative studies to gain an understanding of how people interpret their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them. Interviewing is a beneficial technique because it allows knowledge to be constructed with the interaction of the researcher and the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The benefits of semi-structured interviews are they allow for flexibility depending upon the flow of the interview (Patton, 2015), and open-ended questions are typically asked since the assumption is that participants' views are unique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### Zoom

Zoom is a cloud-based videoconferencing service that offers secure recording of online meetings or sessions (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2016). Some benefits of Zoom are its convenience, accessibility, enhanced personal interface, and limited to no travel requirements when completing a qualitative study (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Winiarska, 2017). A potential concern of utilizing Zoom in research is data may be vulnerable when saved on personal devices or cloud storage (Gray et al., 2020). Some best practices to consider when utilizing Zoom are to have a backup plan for technical difficulties, perform a practice run to

assess technology, and provide direct links to the participants (Gray et al., 2020). Another disadvantage of utilizing Zoom during an interview is that the researcher could potentially miss body language or cues that are important to the research (Cater, 2011; Gray et al., 2020).

**NVivo**

NVivo coding software, a qualitative data analysis program that organizes data sets, manages the conceptual and theoretical ideas generated in the research created, queries data, creates visual representations of data, and formulates reports about the study, was used (Hilal & Aliabri, 2013). Data types such as images, word documents, videos, or social media data can be imported into NVivo (Dhakal, 2022; Dollah et al., 2017). Some disadvantages of NVivo are it is costly and may be time-consuming for novice users to learn and understand (Dollah et al., 2017). A benefit of NVivo is it lessens the time for transcription while increasing the accuracy of the data analysis (Zamawe, 2015). Another advantage of NVivo is that it can manage and analyze large data sets (Dollah et al., 2017). The semi-structured interviews from this study were uploaded into NVivo for analysis.

**Hand Coding**

Hand coding is a technique used by researchers to read, review, and organize qualitative data. According to Creswell (2015), you must break the data apart and then put it back together in a meaningful way. It is a way of mapping out the data in a way to make sense of the research questions (Elliott, 2018). There are both advantages and disadvantages of hand coding that researchers must consider. Hand coding allows for flexibility as themes, subthemes, and codes can be adjusted as the researcher rereads data. Some disadvantages are that it can be time-consuming, and themes and codes are subjective to the interpretation of data by the reader (Elliott, 2018).

## Thematic Analysis

The process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data sets of qualitative research is called thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be used with open ended questions from interviews or focus group discussions and allows flexibility in the interpretation of analysis versus quantitative studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sunder et al., 2019). Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a guide for conducting thematic analysis in a more concise and effective manner. These are the six steps to completing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2021): Become familiar with the data, Generate initial codes or hand-coding, Search for themes, Review themes, Define themes, and Report Findings.

## Conclusion

This literature review provided an overview of child development and parental involvement of children of poverty, early childhood education and children of poverty, school readiness and assessments, and theoretical framework. The literature review discussed how poverty and parental influences and behaviors impacted child development and school readiness. It also provided a review of school readiness and readiness assessments. Much of the research stated the importance of preparing children for their first school experiences and how it is a precursor to future academic success. The literature review of the anti-deficit achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2012) showed how, despite low socioeconomic status, parents can successfully prepare their children of poverty for kindergarten. Best practices, benefits, and disadvantages of data collection and analysis tools were discussed, and Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methodology in detail.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

An abundance of literature supports how early childhood experiences are important for providing the necessary foundational skills to be successful in kindergarten (L. Harper, 2016; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015, 2017; Jose et al., 2022; Kang et al., 2017; Malsch et al., 2011). Child development theories also state the importance of parental involvement in promoting children's learning (Wood et al., 2021), and the relationships between parents and children during early years are crucial for promoting development (Jeong et al., 2021). Parents' perception of readiness determines the amount and the way they support the development of the skills needed for kindergarten.

The current study explored the lived experiences of parents living in the Hollywood School District as they prepared their children for their first school experiences. In this chapter I discussed the method chosen as well as the rationale for the decision of utilizing a qualitative approach. There will be a description of the recruitment and sample selection, data collection, and data analysis will be discussed. The role of the researchers was also addressed.

## Research Design

A quantitative research design tests theory by examining the relationship among variables that can be measured and analyzed statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), while a qualitative research design's goal is to understand how people interpret their experiences and the meanings they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This study utilized a qualitative research design to examine parents' practices, behaviors, and home environmental factors that resulted in kindergarten readiness. A quantitative study is appropriate when attempting to understand the cause and effect, make predictions, or describe

the distribution of an attribute among a specific population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The aim of this study was to understand how parental influences and the environments they provide impacted kindergarten readiness. When researchers want to empower individuals to share their stories, understand the context or setting in which individuals address a problem, find new approaches to common problems, or develop theory, a qualitative design is appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative research design was applicable to answer the research questions since they were the focus of this study. After reviewing the recommendations for using a qualitative approach, most apply to this study.

This study was interested in the assets and environment parents provide to influence the readiness of preschool children and tried to build an anti-deficit narrative on children of poverty achievement. Additionally, the research questions did not allow easily isolated or identifiable variables. A qualitative approach allowed an exploration of participants' experiences through the review of narratives to explore emerging patterns and themes in the data to evaluate the assets and environmental factors that lead to readiness as indicated on the KRA.

Ethnography, phenomenology, narrative designs, grounded theory approaches, and case studies are the major genres of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach was used because this qualitative research approach attempted to understand and describe a phenomenon while investigating the experiences of humans and alleviating the researchers' preconceived assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aimed to examine the experiences of parents of children in poverty.

## The Researcher's Role

The role of the qualitative researcher was to gain a deeper understanding of parents' perspective of readiness and how they supported their children for kindergarten. As the

researcher, I exercised reflexivity and examined if my personal biases, experiences, or beliefs influenced the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher took notes and memos as she interacted with parents and provided them opportunities to clarify and explain responses. Since the research involved studying an organization that the researcher was affiliated with or "backyard" research, consideration was taken on how not to compromise the data or put the participants at risk (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researcher provided opportunities for participants to explain their responses. The researcher's role was to be reflective but objective during the data collection process. Through this study the researcher gained a greater understanding of low-income parents' perspective about kindergarten readiness and the behaviors and environment they provided to support their children. The researcher reported factual information, and recording the conversations during the interviews was significant to data analysis. Follow-up interviews were not conducted since initial interviews were recorded and transcribed digitally.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices and perceptions of parents of children in poverty on kindergarten readiness skills in the Hollywood School District as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). To better understand how children of poverty enter kindergarten ready to learn, an anti-deficit approach utilizing the anti-deficit academic achievement framework (S. R. Harper, 2012) was used to gain knowledge of the parental practices and home environmental factors that positively influenced readiness. This conceptual model helped answer the research questions in the study. To receive thorough, in-depth descriptions or explanations of a phenomenon, research questions should be open-ended (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do low-income parents prepare their children for kindergarten?
2. How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education?
3. What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents?
4. What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure children are ready for kindergarten?

## Recruitment and Sample Selection

### Setting

Before contacting participants, the principal investigator obtained permission from the school district's superintendent to conduct research in the Hollywood School District (see Appendix A). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with parents of kindergarten students who attended one of the four schools in the district with kindergarten classes and scored demonstrated readiness on KRA within the past 3 years.

The study took place in a rural Title I public school district in Hollywood, SC. The site was purposely selected because it met the criteria for the study. The district chosen also had the groundwork for rapport established for families, which supported the legitimacy of the research and made those being interviewed comfortable in providing responses during the interview process (Roller, 2022). There were approximately 4,000 students in grades Pre-K–12 grades, and 240 of them were current kindergarten students. The district's student-teacher ratio was 23 to one, with approximately 13% of students scoring at least proficient in math and 27% in reading (SCDE). Students in the Hollywood School District (HSD) enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness at a rate of 24.2% compared to other students in the state of South Carolina at a rate of 38.3% (SC Education Oversight Committee, 2023). The pupils in poverty index was 91.8% and the district received the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) where all students received free

breakfast and lunch. The sites for this study were managed by the superintendent and principals of four schools that serve kindergarten students in the district.

**Participants**

The principal investigator sent a recruitment letter and link to a survey utilizing Qualtrics to 100 parents of students who attended kindergarten within the last 3 years in HSD. Fifteen individuals completed the survey and nine responded that they would be interested in an interview. Participants who stated they were interested in participating in the interview were contacted by telephone, and dates and times were arranged. Three participants did not answer or return calls when messages were left. The PI interviewed six parents of students who attended kindergarten in one of the four schools in HSD and demonstrated readiness on the KRA. These students also met the poverty income threshold outlined by the South Carolina Department of Education. The parents who committed to the interview provided insight into their perception of readiness and how they support their child's kindergarten readiness skills. Responses were analyzed and coded into themes.

**Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used to select the parent and student participants for the study. A purposeful sample was necessary for this study. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in a qualitative research study because it identifies and selects participants who can provide rich information (Palinkas et al., 2015). Qualitative research designs have various suggestions about sample sizes. A recommendation for a phenomenological study is three to 10 participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sampling size was appropriate for the study. Participants met the inclusion criteria for the study and provided rich data upon completion.

Subject inclusion criteria for parent and student participants:

1. Attended kindergarten in Hollywood School District
2. Attended Kindergarten between 2021–2023
3. Met income guidelines
4. Was administered the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and scored demonstrated readiness in all three performance levels in the fall of 2021, 2022, or 2023

Subject exclusion criteria:

1. Non-Hollywood School District student
2. Non-Kindergarten student
3. Did not score demonstrated readiness in all three performance levels on KRA
4. Did not meet income guidelines

Subject exit criteria:

1. Completion of the study protocol
2. Subject's withdrawal of consent

## Data Collection

Interviewing, observing, documenting, and recording are four suggested approaches to data collection for qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth, semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection tool. This approach was appropriate in a basic qualitative inquiry study since it would help me understand how people interpreted their experiences and the meanings they attributed to them. Additionally, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) believe interviewing is beneficial because knowledge is constructed with the interaction of the researcher and the participant. Semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for flexibility based on the flow of the interview (Patton, 2015). Open-ended questions were asked

since semi-structured interviews operate under the assumption that participants' views are unique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The data collection involved several steps for this study. After the designated school district was selected by the researcher, the superintendent of the Hollywood School District was notified by email and provided information about the intentions, specific details of the study, and projected dates of completion. Approval for completing data collection for the study was received in a letter from Hollywood School District's superintendent (see Appendix A). An interview protocol and interview questions were developed. The Coastal Carolina University Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation was completed, submitted to the board, and approved on March 18, 2024 (see Appendix B). After approval, a kindergarten parents' participant pool was developed based on the students who demonstrated readiness on the KRA. A letter (see Appendix C) was shared with 100 families about the purpose of the study, an explanation of procedures, information about how confidentiality will be maintained, and the risks and benefits of participation. A link to complete a survey (Appendix D) via Qualtrics about demographic information for research purposes and a request for consent was included (see Appendix E).

## Survey Data

The survey was developed and distributed utilizing Qualtrics to parents of kindergarten students who demonstrated readiness within the last 3 years on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in HSD. Qualtrics is a digital tool that can be customized for various audiences, data collection, analysis, and presentations (Qualtrics, 2018). The survey's primary goal was to gather demographic information such as income, ethnicity, education levels, parental age, gender, and marital status.

Qualtrics is a digital tool that can be customized for various audiences, data collection, analysis, and presentations (Qualtrics, 2018). An advantage of Qualtrics is that it can increase the response rates of web-based surveys (Monroe & Adams, 2012). Like Qualtrics, companies such as Survey Monkey and Amazon's Mechanical Turk develop and distribute online surveys (Miller et al., 2020). A major concern of Qualtrics and other web-based surveys is a low response rate (Monroe & Adams, 2012). The Qualtrics link also invited parents to participate in interviews which were conducted via Zoom.

Zoom is a cloud-based videoconferencing service that offers secure recording of online meetings or sessions (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2016). Some benefits of Zoom are its convenience, accessibility, enhanced personal interface, and limited to no travel requirements when completing a qualitative study (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Winiarska, 2017). A potential concern of utilizing Zoom in research is data may be vulnerable when saved on personal devices or cloud storage (Gray et al., 2020). Some best practices to consider when utilizing Zoom are to have a backup plan for technical difficulties, perform a practice run to assess technology, and provide direct links to the participants (Gray et al., 2020). Another disadvantage of utilizing Zoom during an interview is that the researcher could potentially miss body language or cues that are important to the research (Cater, 2011; Gray et al., 2020).

Parents were informed by the researcher how their participation was voluntary and how to contact the IRB office or the committee chair with any concerns. Since the interviews were conducted and recorded by Zoom, consent for audio or visual recording was also obtained (Appendix E). After receiving consent from parents, interviews through Zoom were scheduled. Six interviews were conducted, and responses were recorded. Post-interview reflections and

notes were taken to validate responses. Each parent that participated in an interview was entered into a drawing for a $100.00 gift card.

## Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth, semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection tool since they helped me understand how people interpreted their experiences and the meanings they attributed to them. Interviewing was beneficial because knowledge was constructed with the interaction of the researcher and the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The semi-structured interviews also allowed flexibility based on their flow (Patton, 2015), and open-ended questions are typically asked since the assumption is that participants' views are unique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This study examined data collected utilizing semi-structured interviews with low-income parents of children who demonstrated readiness as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. Parents were given the option to participate in an interview following the survey. Parents who agreed to participate in the interview were contacted by telephone from the contact information provided in Qualtrics, and an interview was scheduled and set up via Zoom. Zoom links were sent by email by the PI to each participant. The participant interviews ranged in length from approximately 8 to 28 minutes. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed for analysis.

The semi-structured interviews from this study were uploaded into NVivo for analysis. Semi-structured interviews were utilized along with hand coding to allow for data from transcripts to be structured into themes and patterns, which enabled the researcher to reduce data for the final analysis (Elliott, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative studies to

gain an understanding of how people interpret their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them. Interviewing is a beneficial technique because it allows knowledge to be constructed with the interaction of the researcher and the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). A benefit of semi-structured interviews is they allow for flexibility depending on the flow of the interview (Patton, 2015).

The interviews were conducted from March 18 through March 22, 2024, and ranged from 8 to 28 minutes. Narratives were created based on parents' responses. Table 4 shows the connection between the research questions, interview questions, and the theoretical framework of the study. The interview questions examined the perception of readiness of parents of children and poverty and the practices and environments they provide to support readiness. Interviews were scheduled based on parents' availability and accessibility to Zoom.

**Table 4**

*Interview Questions*

| Research Question | Interview Question |
|---|---|
| RQ1 How do low-income parents prepare children for kindergarten? | Where have you or anyone in your family taken your child for a recreational activity outside of the home, such as visiting a bookstore, library, zoo, church, movies, sporting event, etc.?<br>Have you or anyone in your family engaged in any physical activity with your child, such as riding a bike, throwing a ball, exercising, etc.?<br>Has anyone in your family engaged in arts and crafts or hands-on activities, such as coloring, painting, writing, etc., with your child?<br>What kinds of things did you do with your child or most of your family to spend time together? (Examples: cooking, eating dinner, playing board or card games, or putting puzzles together?<br>What kinds of academic activities did you do with your child? |
| RQ2 How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education? | Did you enroll your child in a pre-kindergarten program such as Head Start or private or public school preschool? Why or why not? |

| Research Question | Interview Question |
|---|---|
| | What were your expectations of the pre-kindergarten program you enrolled your child in, or what would your expectations be if you enrolled them in a preschool program?<br>How do you feel about children playing in preschool programs? |
| RQ3 What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents? | What kind of skills or knowledge do you think your child should have before beginning school? (Examples: write their name, alphabet, numbers, colors, recite the alphabet, read, etc.)<br>What other skills do you think your child needs to know before entering kindergarten?<br>Who is responsible for preparing your child for kindergarten and why?<br>What social, emotional, or adaptive skills do you think your child needs before entering kindergarten? |
| RQ4 What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure their children are ready for kindergarten? | What resources proved most effective in preparing your child for kindergarten?<br>What kinds of parenting workshops, classes, or programs you have attended or taken part in since your child was born? |

## Data Analysis

### Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted in this study. This type of analysis is relevant to phenomenological studies because it subjectively emphasizes participants' feelings, perceptions, and experiences (Chang & Wang, 2021). Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo coding software, a qualitative data analysis program that organizes data sets, manages the conceptual and theoretical ideas generated in the research created, query data, create visual representations of data, and formulate reports (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

NVivo coding software, a qualitative data analysis program that organizes data sets, manages the conceptual and theoretical ideas generated in the research created, queries data, creates visual representations of data, and formulates reports about the study, was used (Hilal &

Aliabri, 2013). Data types such as images, word documents, videos, or social media data can be imported into NVivo (Dhakal, 2022; Dollah et al., 2017). Some disadvantages of NVivo are it is costly and may be time-consuming for novice users to learn and understand (Dollah et al., 2017). A benefit of NVivo is it lessens the time for transcription while increasing the accuracy of the data analysis (Zamawe, 2015). Another advantage of NVivo is that it can manage and analyze large data sets (Dollah et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data sets of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be used with semi-structured interviews and can allow for flexibility in the interpretation of the analysis of the responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sundler et al., 2019). The researcher used six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to guide conducting thematic analysis more concisely and effectively (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Thematic Analysis*


***Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data***

After data collection from the semi-structured interviews**,** participant data were reviewed to ensure clarity of responses and familiarization of the data collected. This involved viewing Zoom recordings and transcriptions from participant interviews and reviewing the responses provided by participants to each interview question. Rereading each transcription is necessary for familiarization so that pertinent information relevant to the research questions can be recognized (Byrne, 2022). Each transcribed file in Zoom was exported into a Word document and reviewed

again for grammatical and transcription errors, along with ensuring all identifying information was removed. While the transcripts were read, meaning and patterns were noted.

***Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes***

Participants' interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo for analysis and initial code generation. While reading the transcripts line by line, labels were created, and data were organized into meaningful groups. Coding is a process that enables data collected to be categorized and thematically sorted (Williams & Moser, 2019). After rereading participants' interview transcriptions within NVivo, significant codes were established from participants' responses. These codes were formed using open coding, identifying emergent themes for categorizing data and phenomena in a conceptual framework (Williams & Moser, 2019). The codes generated from interview responses allowed analysis of the participants' lived experiences to provide insights into how they successfully prepared their children for kindergarten, their perceptions of preschool education, and their perceptions of school readiness.

***Phase 3: Generating Themes***

Categories were established from codes generated from interview transcripts to develop emergent themes, the third step of Braun and Clarke's (2006) process for reflexive thematic analysis. Themes are identified by finding relationships between codes. After reviewing codes, the codes were combined into patterns based on responses from the participants and the meanings associated with their lived experiences of preparing their children for kindergarten and their perceptions of readiness and preschool.

***Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes***

Potential themes were reviewed multiple times to look for patterns of the coded data and excerpts to support identified themes to understand better the codes selected. Potential cluster

themes were examined and corresponded to the created categories. This allowed coded materials to be analyzed and integrated with related underlying principles. The thematic analysis allowed for the development of a rich description of parents' perceptions, behaviors, and the environments they provided to support the readiness skills of children in poverty.

## Ethical Considerations

Remaining ethical while conducting research is very important. To protect the identity of the participants, schools, and the district, pseudonyms were given. Data files were kept confidential on password-protected devices and secure online sites. Any written notes and files were secured.

## Summary

The research design, theoretical framework, research questions, and procedures were discussed in the chapter to explore the perceptions and practices of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness. Because the research targeted a specific group of participants to answer the research questions, purposeful sampling was used. Data collection consisted of a demographic survey and interviews conducted and transcribed through Zoom. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the findings from the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews of parents of kindergarten students who scored demonstrated readiness on the KRA.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

## Introduction

This qualitative study was designed to delve into the practices and perceptions of low-income parents regarding kindergarten readiness skills in the Hollywood School District, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). This chapter presents the findings after a meticulous analysis of the data collected. Participant's responses are directly linked to the research questions and are accounts of their lived experiences. The narrative description of interview responses, which was used to identify and support themes, further enriches the depth of our findings. An anti-deficit approach using the Anti-Deficit Academic Achievement framework to understand how children from low-income backgrounds enter kindergarten ready to learn (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012). The aim of this framework is to counter the exploration of the impacts of low achievement and high failure rates, particularly in high-poverty areas, but focus on the assets these families possessed. This conceptual model, which is crucial to our study, helped us address the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How do low-income parents prepare children for kindergarten?

**RQ2:** How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education?

**RQ3:** What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents?

**RQ4:** What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure children are ready for kindergarten?

This chapter also includes the demographic information of participants, research and interview questions (Appendix F), and responses and results of each participant. In the final part of this chapter, you will find an analysis of the participants' answers related to the research questions that guided this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to ensure anonymity

and confidentiality. Table 5 contains demographic information from the survey each participant completed.

**Table 5**

*Summary of Participants' Demographics*

| Participant # | Gender | Age | Ethnicity | Marital Status | Educational Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anna | F | 16-29 | African-American | Never Married | 2-Year Degree |
| Barbara | F | 30-45 | African-American | Married | Professional |
| Carmen | F | 30-45 | African-American | Never Married | Professional |
| Dawn | F | 30-45 | African-American | Never Married | High School |
| Ellen | F | 30-45 | African-American | Divorced | High School |
| Felicia | F | 30-45 | African-American | Married | 2-Year Degree |

## Research Themes

In this phenomenological qualitative study of the lived experiences of low-income parents who have had a kindergarten student in HSD within the last 3 years to score demonstrated readiness on the KRA and who meet income requirements, four major themes were identified from participants' responses to interview questions. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo coding software, a qualitative data analysis program that organizes data sets, manages the conceptual and theoretical ideas generated in the research created, query data, create visual representations of data, and formulate reports (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The researcher used six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to guide conducting thematic analysis more concisely and effectively (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Thematic Analysis*


Data analysis revealed four themes: readiness preparation, the purpose of preschool, readiness perceptions, and assets. These themes answered the research questions in this qualitative study examining low-income parents' perception of kindergarten readiness (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Emergent Themes, Cluster Themes, and Applicable Research Questions*

| Emergent Themes | Cluster Themes | Research Questions |
|---|---|---|
| Readiness Preparation | Experiences<br>Materials<br>Physical Activity | How do low-income parents prepare their children for kindergarten? |
| Purpose of Preschool | Academic Preparation<br>Get Students Ready | How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education? |
| Readiness Perceptions | Academic Skills<br>Adaptive Skills<br>Social-Emotional Skills<br>Readiness Responsibility | What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents? |
| Assets | Strategies<br>Resources | What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure children are ready for kindergarten? |

## Findings Related to Research

### *Research Question 1*

Research Question 1 was, “How Do Low-Income Parents Prepare Their Children for Kindergarten?” This research question focused on the practices, environment, materials, and experiences parents provided to prepare their children for kindergarten. Interview Questions 1 through 5 were asked in alignment with RQ1:

1. Have you or anyone in your family taken your child for a recreational activity outside of the home, such as visiting a bookstore, library, zoo, church, movies, sporting event, etc.?
2. Where have you or anyone in your family taken your child for a recreational activity outside of the home, such as visiting a bookstore, library, zoo, church, movies, sporting event, etc.?
3. Has anyone in your family engaged in arts and crafts or hands-on activities, such as coloring, painting, writing, etc., with your child?
4. What kinds of things did you do with your child or most of your family to spend time together?
5. What kinds of academic activities did you do with your child?

Responses to interview questions were given by each participant which led to the development of emergent and cluster themes. Participants provided a variety of responses when asked what kinds of activities they provided their children outside of the home. Anna shared why she allowed her children to play sports.

> I’m big on sports, like at the Recreation Center in Hollywood. I’ll let Jane do that once she was that age to play. They start them off at 4. I go ahead and start them early because

> I feel like interaction is better with other children. Not only do they need to interact at home with their siblings, but also interact with other kids, so they'll know how to act around other kids.

Barbara stated in a response to Interview Question 1, "Well, I wanted him to play. So he goes to Florence. What's that place called? It's like a jungle gym. I forgot the name of it."

Carmen stated,

> We have gone to the aquarium both in Myrtle Beach and Atlanta. We went to the Zoo in Atlanta. We've gone to bookstores. We've gone to reading events at libraries like on the weekends when she was younger and not ready for school yet. She loved like the Edventure Museum, where they have all those hands-on activities.

Dawn stated, "We've visited Ripley's Aquarium before. We've been to the Riverbanks Zoo. He's been to the Science Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, Edventure in Columbia."

Ellen stated,

> Well, we go to parks. She has been to the library. We go to church every Sunday. We've been to the movies. We had a movie date 2 to 3 times. … We also go out to eat certain times, like on my days off.

Felecia stated, "Okay, well, we go to church every Sunday and Bible Study on Wednesdays. We enjoy going to the library. She does Girl Scouts, and her brothers play sports, so we're always at the Rec."

The participants shared some specific activities or materials they utilized to support academic skills. Anna shared,

> We'll listen to like Gracie's Corner. We'll listen to some educational song on YouTube. I buy the flashcards out of Dollar Tree for my daughter for her to start reading. I didn't think she could read so I got the Hooked-on-Phonics books.

Barbara stated, "And when my momma kept him, I would give her all my old teacher's stuff like a Leap Frog and stuff. She would play the videos with the letter sounds, because he knew his sounds." Carmen stated, "I didn't want her to be overwhelmed because she wasn't in school yet, so she was just like tracing letters or like practicing writing her name, so she would have that by the time she started school."

Dawn stated, "When he was maybe 2 or 3, we created him a poster board with the alphabet, numbers, colors." Ellen stated, "Mostly teaching her ABCs and her numbers. Teacher her name, how to spell it, and address. We did a lot of little things. We looked at a lot of videos to help her get started on her learning as well." Felicia shared, "We read books. We do activity little booklets that I get from like Dollar Tree or Dollar General. We work on those."

Interview Question 4, aligned to Research Question 1, asked participants to describe experiences they provided and opportunities for family engagement. Anna stated, "We'll go to the water park. We go skating. We try to come up with our ideas of somewhere to go." Barbara shared,

> And then I also took him for his birthday. I gave him the option to have a birthday party or birthday trip. So, we went to Dave and Busters, where he could just play all the video games that he wanted to do.

Carmen shared,

> And honestly, the best teaching was just from being outside. Like she would see these animals and want to know what they are and what they that do. She'll ask, 'Well, how

> does that work? Why does the flower grow over here, but not over there? Why are the rocks this color?' It's like just lots of questions about every single thing from just being outside.

Dawn also stated, "We do family game nights often or we'll go outside together as a family." Ellen stated, "I have been also teaching her how to cook like eggs and things like that." Felicia shared,

> Well, something new that we just started. We just planted a garden. So, we're excited about that. That's been taken up a lot of our time. This weekend last week just being outside getting our hands dirty and planning different stuff.

Another interview question that aligned with RQ1 asked participants to share opportunities for their families or children to engage in physical activity. Anna shared, "If the weather is nice we'll go outside. I kind of put them on a time limit, like how they do in school, like a little recess schedule, I let them come in for water break." Barbara stated,

> Well, right now, he is getting ready for softball, so we are working on step-throwing, crawling, and catching the ball with the glove. We are doing it outside. Like I said if I don't know how to do it, I'll get on YouTube and try to help him as much as I can.

Carmen shared,

> Well, yeah, when we get outside, it, it typically starts out just going for a walk, and then we end up doing everything under the sun. So, she likes to be outside on the trampoline sometimes. Just simply let her walk with me to the mailbox and come back or we just walked down the street just to come just to be outside and get some sun.

Dawn stated,

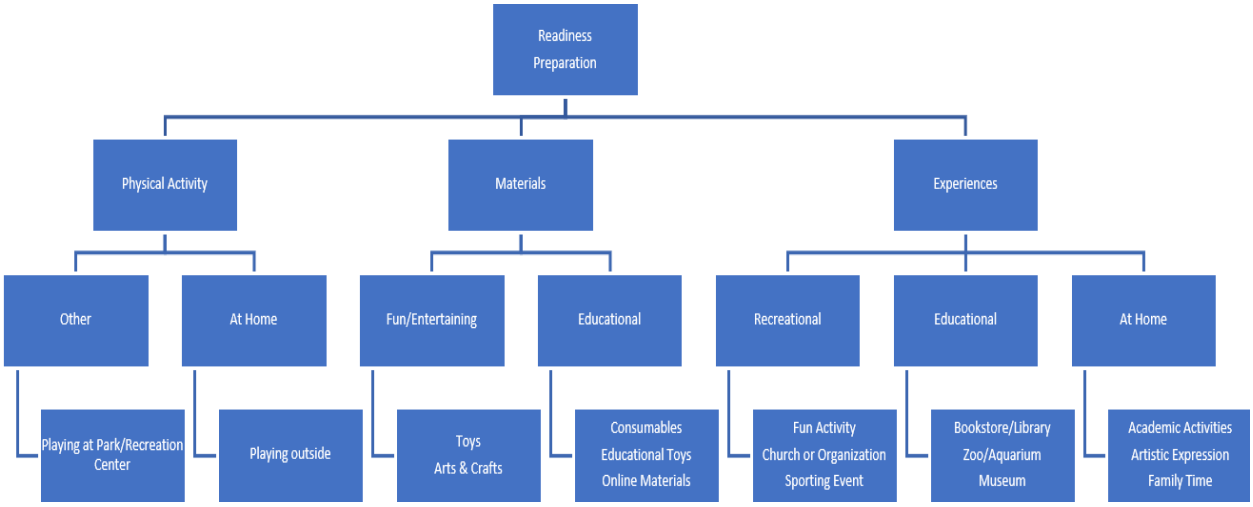
> We try to go either outside at the house or to a park. In the winter not as much, but when you fall and spring summer, we try to go out at least 2 to 3 times a week. We have a swing set at the house, or we'll go to one of the local parks.

Ellen stated, "We pretty much do that (go outside) when it's warm outside. She rides her bike. We play kickball." Felicia shared, "… and she likes to go outside and play basketball with her brothers because she is only a girl. So she gets a lot of contact sports and activities going on."

Three cluster themes were generated from the interview responses that addressed this research question related to readiness preparation: physical activity, materials, and experiences. The thematic map in Figure 3 shows the theme, cluster themes, categories, and codes for the first research question.

**Figure 3**

*Research Question 1 Thematic Map*




***Research Question 2***

Research Question 2 was, "How Do Low-Income Parents Perceive Pre-Kindergarten Education? This research question focused on parents' perceptions and values of pre-

kindergarten or preschool programs. Interview Questions 6-8 were asked so that the participants could fully respond, and the responses were analyzed to answer the research question:

6. Did you enroll your child in a pre-kindergarten program such as Head Start or private or public school preschool? Why or why not?
7. What were your expectations of the pre-kindergarten program you enrolled your child in, or what would your expectations be if you enrolled them in a preschool program?
8. How do you feel about children playing in preschool programs?

The participants shared why they enrolled their children into a preschool program and what their expectations were of that program. Anna responded,

> I figured the younger you start them, the better off they are, because if you let them sit home and when it's time for kindergarten, it's going to be hard for them to interact with other kids. I at least wanted them to know their ABCs, like the basics. Know their ABCs, the potty training, the shoe tying, at least the concept of it, and the name writing.

Barbara responded,

> I knew it was designed to get them acclimated to school life, and I didn't want him to be one of those kids that would be crying every day. I chose to put him in the school's 4-year-old program because I wanted him to have that smooth transition into the school life. I just want my baby to get the standards. I guess I wanted him to be taught the standards.

Carmen stated,

> She never had to see other kids or be away from her parents like every day, like 5 days a week, or you know, no more than one day at a time. So, Pre-K was a good option to get

> her ready, and also because she started with the Montessori program. I feel like it was a good introduction to see if Montessori was a good fit before she went into kindergarten.

Dawn stated,

> I wanted him to kind get accustomed to the structure of school and to kind of give him a head start in his education as well. I really thought it was going to be basic stuff because it was 4K, so I was thinking alphabet, colors, shapes, numbers.

Ella shared,

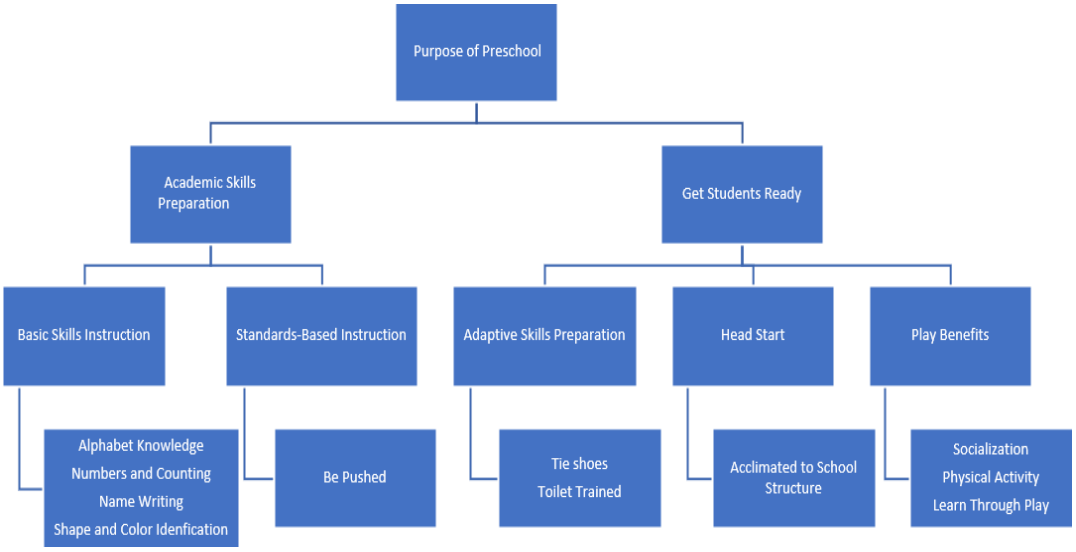
> I thought it would give her a head start with all the things that I was already helping her with like continue to help her with a name and continue with her numbers. Felicia did not have any specific expectations for the preschool program she enrolled her child in.

She stated, “At first, I was nervous because she’s our last baby going to school. But she’s so smart. So, I didn’t have any problem with, you know, being concerned about her learning.”

Two cluster themes were generated from the interview responses that addressed this research question: academic skills preparation and getting students ready. The thematic map in Figure 4 shows the theme along with the cluster themes, categories, and codes for the second research question.

**Figure 4**

*Research Question 2 Thematic Map*




***Research Question 3***

Research Question 3 was, "What are Low-Income Parents' Misconceptions about Readiness?" Research Question 3 focused on parents' perceptions and misconceptions about kindergarten readiness. Four interview questions were asked so that the participants could fully respond, and the responses were analyzed to answer the research question:

9. What kind of skills or knowledge do you think your child should have before beginning school?
10. What other skills do you think your child needs to know before entering kindergarten?
11. Who is responsible for preparing your child for kindergarten and why?
12. What social, emotional, or adaptive skills do you think your child needs prior to entering kindergarten?

Participants were asked to share what skills they felt children needed prior to entering kindergarten. Anna responded,

> So, I would say, like, Hmm, I think they call it fine motors skills. I'll say all the basics, adapting, and being around other kids. That is the main thing because if they are not around other kids and not just around their siblings.

Barbara stated, "ABCs, name, address, colors, and basic things. They need to have some sympathy. They are self-centered at that age."

Carmen responded,

> Yes, they should be able to write their name, and they should recognize letters, and even letter sounds as a plus if they know how to do. For the most part, social skills. Knowing how to play with others, being able to set boundaries, saying no, and like being okay.

Dawn stated,

> I think, before they enter kindergarten they should know most of their alphabet, depending, if they can. They should know, alphabet, colors, shapes, and their basic stuff. They should know their life skills like tying shoes if they can. But most kids wear Crocs these days. I wish I could wear my Crocs to work. And I'm just like why can't I? Of course, using the restroom, how to pull out their chair, how to sit properly, how to get their bags and jackets together, and how to feed themselves. Um, definitely some social skills. How to share and a little problem solving for their age group.

Ellen stated, "They should know how to write their names, tie shoes, they should know their numbers, and I think they should, they should be able to communicate with other kids properly."

Felecia believed,

> They should be able to form sentences. They should know, like at least some basic math like one plus one. They should be able to read some words; at least know how to spell their first name. They just have or know basic, you know, knowledge. They should be

> potty trained, know how to tie their shoe, and at least dress themselves somewhat. They need to be able to express how they feel and to say what is wrong with them and not, you know, have tantrums. They should be able to verbalize what's going on, you know, instead of just not being verbal. They need to—I feel like children need to be verbal at a young age.

All the participants cited parents as being responsible for preparing children for kindergarten. Anna shared,

> The parent is responsible because it starts at home. So, if the parent don't do it, it's only so much you can expect of the teachers. Teachers only there for a certain amount of hours, so they can't do everything. So, it starts at home.

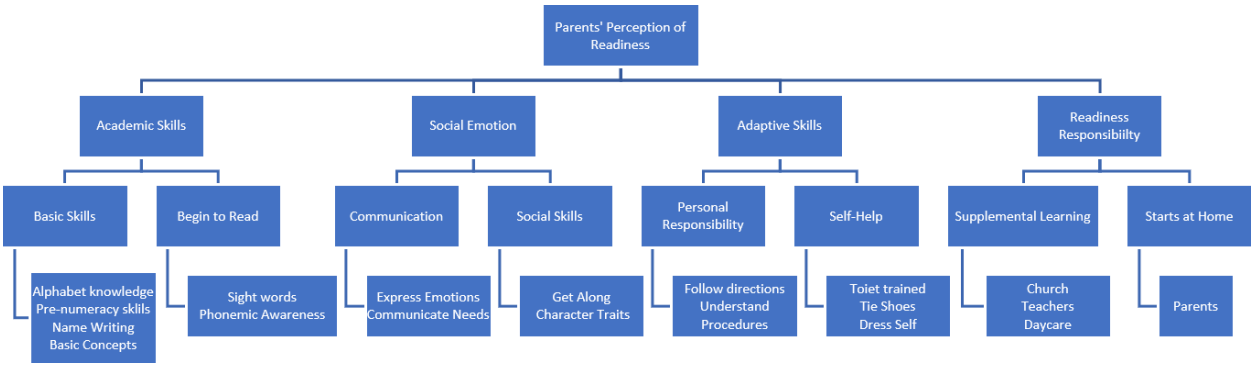
Barbara stated, "I think the parents should have them ready for kindergarten." Carmen also shared, "Parents of course. I mean because parents are the only people that see this. These kids all of the time. You can't give parties that only see these children temporarily like that kind of responsibility."

Dawn believes, "It starts at home. I think that learning has to start before kindergarten. Just like we teach them to walk and talk. Um, I think that you can start, you know, the education process to give them a head start even before." Ellen agreed: "Parents. It starts at home. It begins with, you know, with you teaching your children the sort of things that they should know before they get to go to kindergarten." Felicia stated, "The parents because we're their first teachers."

Four major cluster themes were generated from the interview responses that addressed this research question: academic skills, social-emotional, adaptive skills, and readiness responsibility. The four cluster themes related to Research Question 3 can be viewed in the thematic map in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Research Question 3 Thematic Map*




***Research Question 4***

Research Question 4 was, "What Strategies and Resources Do Low-Income Parents Utilize in Ensuring Children are Ready for Kindergarten?" This research question focused on resources and support systems parents used to help successfully prepare their children for kindergarten. Two questions were asked so that the participants could fully respond, and the responses were analyzed to answer the research question.

13. What resources proved most effective in preparing your child for kindergarten?
14. What kinds of parenting workshops, classes, or programs you have attended or taken part in since your child was born?

The participants shared some strategies they found effective in preparing children for kindergarten. Anna shared,

> I'd like buy the little flashcards for beginning words out of Dollar Tree. You can buy the flashcards, like I said, you can do Hooked on Phonics. You can do the educational things off YouTube. You can do the PBS Kids games.

Barbara shared,

> The Leap Frog videos my mama showed him when he was a baby. I believe reading books to them and also like I don't know how well it worked, but I did do it when they were in the womb. I played classical music on for both of them. I think this works well when you want your child to be privy to reading by providing environmental print.

Carmen stated,

> So, I printed a lot of things online. You can find anything you want anywhere. But what I did was basically just like the letters of the alphabet. Under each letter was like words that start with that letter, and then the letter itself was dotted so you could trace it. I laminated all of those and every day we went over them and then by Sunday they looked better than others. We would erase to go back and write them again, so you could reuse those things. Simple notebook paper. I just got her a little notebook. She wrote her name on it every day. We wrote every day. We're going to try something else and just to see practice makes perfect. Over time I was able to see her progression. I would show her the writing from August and then October. So that she could see the letters are so much better than you were in August. Online resources were really good, and PBS Kids, believe it or not. I love PBS Kids because it's something that kids want to watch and while they're watching it, they don't even realize the things they're learning.

Dawn shared,

> Flash cards. Flash cards and just using whatever is around you like one Saturday we did a picnic in the park, and he wanted pizza. So, I was like 'Pizza' 'Park.' What does it start with? Tell me the sound of a "P." And I think that you can use whatever they like. He likes dinosaurs so we'll do some learning exercises and focus on that.

Ellen stated,

> We did a lot of Sesame Street and Cocomelon. Those were her favorite learning things, especially with Elmo. Yeah. Elmo helped with a lot of stuff. That's how I trained her to go to the restroom on her own. Elmo was a big help for me to get her to go to the party. It was just a lot of little things that I used that was on YouTube to help her progress.

Felicia shared,

> Hmm! What resources? Just parenting! You have to have that one-on-one with that child, and I think a lot of it. She has older, older siblings, so being able to watch her older siblings, was able to help her to know a lot, too, because they were able to teach her different things. The respondents shared some resources they employed to help successfully prepare their children.

Anna said,

> As a matter of fact, both of my kids went through BabyNet. BabyNet came out to the house. She came to the daycare and even went to Early Head Start. BabyNet helped with speech, because a lot of people thought my son wasn't doing a lot of talking.

Barbara also shared how she took advantage of a service by stating, "And there was a woman that would come to your house and work with your children, and I can't remember the name of it, though. I got introduced to them through the daycare." Carmen stated,

> And oh, I did mention that at the library, they have, like the, like read-aloud. So, the kids were in the corner reading and listening to a book. But then there was also like little pamphlets, or like I can't think of the word. There were like little brochures talking about like techniques to help with your child read or things you can do to improve their reading skills.

Ellen responded,

> Oh well, when I had her, I was a first-time Mom so I did go to a lot of classes. Like I said we was in the State of Virginia then, so it was a lot of other classes that her school had. We went together to like afternoon program that was for parents and children. We went there to help keep us focused and to keep her on the right track. There were a lot of classes that we took.

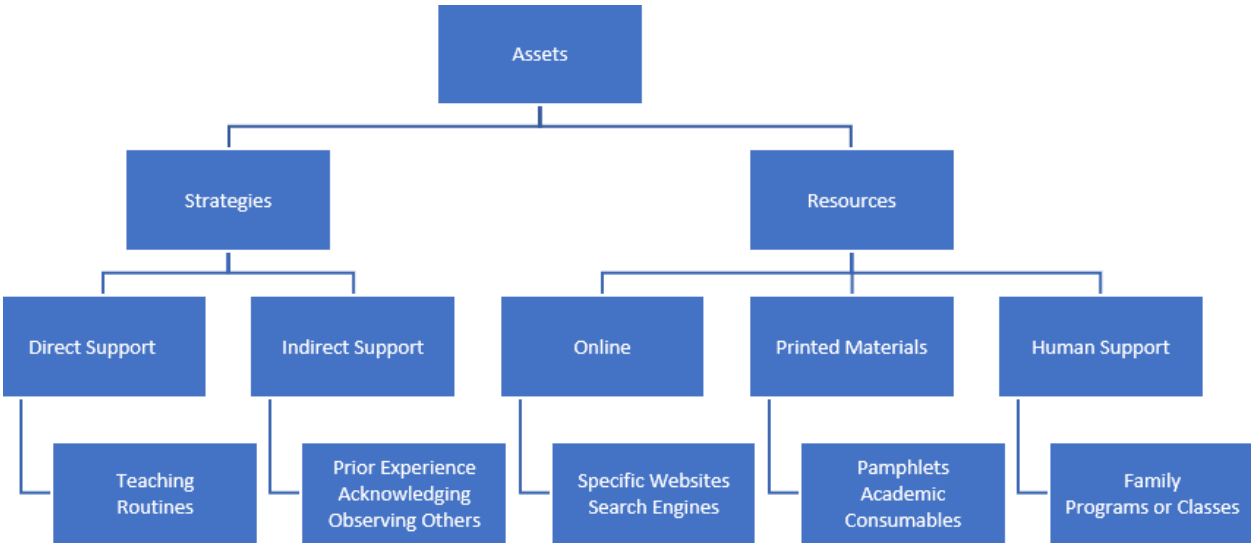
Two of the participants did not state any specifics but quoted experience as a resource. Dawn stated, “No, ma’am. This is my third child. I’m still figuring it out. But if you would have asked about my first one, I was at every class possible because I was like, who’s going to raise this baby? Felicia also shared her experience as a resource but also mentioned the support of family as an asset.

> Well, I haven’t taken any (parenting class or workshop). It’s just off of wisdom, you know and having a community around me that has helped me to be the mother that I am, you know. So her grandparents and her father, of course, just being there, and all of us pulling together to raise her right.

Two cluster themes—strategies and resources, were generated from the interview responses to address this research question. The cluster themes related to Research Question 4 can be viewed in the thematic map in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Research Question 4 Thematic Map*




## Alignment to the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

The aim of the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012) is to seek assets or strengths by inverting questions to see what one, particularly those who are marginalized, possesses instead of what one lacks. Like the ADAF, which sought to explore how to improve student success in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), this study sought to explore how to improve the kindergarten readiness of low-income families by focusing on strengths. It also provided a framework for research on the STEM pipeline, which begins at kindergarten. Familial factors of the ADAF, such as family engagement, supportive environments, family resilience, support systems, and cultural diversity, are aligned with kindergarten readiness. Child development theorists stress the importance of parental involvement in promoting children's learning (Wood et al., 2021). Vygotsky believed children develop through social interactions and relationships initiated by family engagement (Nicolopoulou, 1993; Saracho, 2023). The ADAF also stresses the importance of supportive and

nurturing relationships among immediate family members. This study is aligned with ADAF because it showed how families are resilient in preparing children for kindergarten despite financial challenges. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed people and the environment influenced each other in a continuous system of interactions, and this study aligns with ADAF in that the family provides the primary environment for early learning experiences. Collaboration and community support are also promoted by ADAF, which emerged in participants' responses. Responses from the participants clearly highlighted assets, strengths, strategies, and resources. Sample responses from the participants on their experiences related to interview questions 1 through 5 are presented in Table 7. Sample responses from the participants sharing resources, strategies, and practices they felt were effective in preparing children are presented in Table 8.

**Table 7**

*Sample of Participant Responses of How They Prepared Children*

| Participant | Response |
|---|---|
| Anna | I'm big on sports, like at the Recreation Center in Hollywood. I'll let Jane do that once she was that age to play. They start them off at 4. I go ahead and start them early because I feel like interaction is better with other children. Not only do they need to interact at home with their siblings, but also interact with other kids, so they'll know how to act around other kids. |
| Barbara | And when my momma kept him, I would give her all my old teacher's stuff like a Leap Frog and stuff. She would play the videos with the letters sounds, because he knew his sounds. |
| Carmen | We have gone to the aquarium both in Myrtle Beach and Atlanta. We went to the Zoo in Atlanta. We've gone to bookstores. We've gone to reading events at libraries like on the weekends when she was younger and not ready for school yet. She loved like the Edventure Museum, where they have all those hands-on activities. |
| Dawn | When he was maybe 2 or 3, we created a poster board with the alphabet, numbers, colors. |
| Ellen | We pretty much do that (go outside) when it's warm outside. She rides her bike. We play kickball. |
| Felicia | We read books. We do activity little booklets that I get from like Dollar Tree or Dollar General. We work on those. |

**Table 8**

*Sample of Participant Responses to Effective Strategies and Resources*

| Participant | Response |
|---|---|
| Anna | I bought the flashcards out of Dollar Tree for my daughter to start reading. I didn't think she could read, so I got the Hooked-on-Phonics books. |
| Barbara | And there was a woman that would come to your house and work with your children, and I can't remember the name of it, though. I got introduced to them through the daycare. |

| Participant | Response |
|---|---|
| Carmen | So, I laminated all of those. Every day, we went over them, and some days they looked better than others. We would erase them to go back and write them again so you could reuse those things. Simple notebook paper. Just got her a little notebook. Wrote her name on it every day. We're going to write the today. We're going to try something else and just practice makes perfect. Over time I was able to see her progression. |
| Dawn | This is my third child. I'm still figuring it out. But if you would have asked about my first one, I was at every class possible because I was like, "Who's going to raise this baby?" |
| Ellen | Oh well, when I had her, I was a first-time Mom so I did go to a lot of classes. Like I said we was in the State of Virginia then, so it was a lot of other classes that her school had. We went together to like afternoon program that was for parents and children. We went there to help keep us focused and to keep her on the right track. There were a lot of classes that we took. |
| Felecia | Hmm! What resources? Just parenting! You have to have that one-on-one with that child, and I think a lot of it. She has older siblings, so being able to watch her older siblings, was able to help her to know a lot, too, because they were able to teach her different things. |

## Findings Related to the Research

### Theme 1: Readiness Preparation

The emergent theme of readiness preparation reveals answers to research question number one, as evidenced by participants' lived experiences of how they successfully prepared their children for kindergarten with materials, experiences, and physical activity. Data were collected from participants utilizing semi-structured interviews. Participants' responses highlighted the materials, experiences, and physical activity opportunities they provided to support readiness skills. Participant data revealed that despite financial challenges, their resourcefulness gave them the necessary resources to prepare their children for kindergarten. Codes aligned with the theme of preparation were derived from interview responses. These included using flashcards, coloring books, YouTube and other online resources, activity books,

and arts and crafts. Codes also included playing outside, playing sports at the recreation center, visiting libraries, the zoo, and arcades, and engaging with family while playing board games.

### *Physical Activity*

Health and physical development ~~is~~are a domain of readiness that supports engagement and learning (Pan et al., 2019). It involves the development of both fine and gross motor skills and physical abilities and rate of growth (Williams & Lerner, 2019). All participants reflected on how they provided opportunities and experiences for their children to engage in physical activity.

A common theme that emerged during interviews with participants was allowing their children time for outside activity. Participants valued outside activity as a way for families to bond and interact with each other, too. Families engaged in outside activities by playing kickball and basketball, planting a garden, jumping on the trampoline, or walking in the neighborhood. Physical activity outside of the home environment was another category that emerged. For example, Participant 1 talked about how she enrolled her child in the local recreational program for sports as soon as she turned four. Barbara also discussed how her son played recreational sports and was currently signed up for softball. Another parent referenced going to the park as a means of physical activity for her child. All the participants responded that they were actively engaged in physical activities with their children, implying their understanding of its importance. Parents supported kindergarten readiness with opportunities for physical activity.

### *Materials*

Lack of financial resources can impact the number of toys, books, and other educational materials in the homes of low-income families. All six participants in this study shared insight into the materials they provided and their resourcefulness in obtaining them to support their

children's readiness skills. Two categories also emerged from the responses to the questions about materials used at home to support readiness.

The first category was educational materials in the home to help support readiness. All participants referred to some type of educational material used to support their child. Anna stated, "I bought the flashcards out of Dollar Tree for my daughter to start reading. I didn't think she could read, so I got the Hooked-on-Phonics books." Carmen stated, "So I printed a lot of things online. You can find anything you want anywhere." Dawn talked about creating a poster board with the alphabet, numbers, and colors to help her child learn around the age of 2 or 3. She also stated, "Using whatever is around you, like on Saturday, we did a picnic in the park. He wanted pizza so I used pizza and park. I asked what does it start with? He told me the sound of a P."

The second category was the types of fun or entertaining materials used to support readiness. All participants provided responses that included these types of materials that were fun but supported engagement and domains of readiness. Coloring, painting, and doing arts and crafts were mentioned several times. There were also several instances where the participants talked about buying these items from dollar stores. Board games were also mentioned several times, and extensive research highlights how valuable they are in supporting readiness skills in all domains. Four participants shared that having board games in their homes supported family engagement. Participant 6 stated, "We have family game night. We try to do that at least once a week." Participant 4 also shared, "We do family game nights often, or we'll go outside together as a family." Parents supported kindergarten readiness with the materials they provided.

### *Experiences*

Experiences were a cluster theme generated from the responses provided by participants to address the research question. Three categories emerged from the interview transcripts: educational experiences, at-home experiences, and recreational experiences. Preschool children provided with various experiences are more likely to perform better academically, develop stronger social and emotional skills, and have better physical and mental health later in life (Bennetts et al., 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Sheridan et al., 2010). Trips to the zoo, library, and aquarium were codes provided in the participants' responses as they relate to educational experiences afforded by parents. Two participants mentioned EdVenture Children's Museum as a place where they have taken their children. Codes such as cooking, reading, gardening, and family time were used to categorize experiences at home. Participant 6 shared how their family planted a garden together, supporting several domains of readiness. Five participants stated how they regularly played games together as a family. Activities such as coloring, painting, writing, and participating in arts and crafts were shared by all participants, which has many benefits, including developing fine motor skills, which is pertinent to kindergarten readiness. Recreational experiences were a subtheme or category that emerged from codes such as going to the movies, going out to eat, going to the arcade, skating, going to the waterpark, and going to the local recreation center. These experiences supported opportunities for development in all domains.

## Theme 2: Purpose of Preschool

The emergent theme of the purpose of preschool reveals answers to Research Question 2 as evidenced by participants' lived experiences of their perceptions of preschool education. Data were collected from participants utilizing semi-structured interviews. Participants' responses suggested that the purpose of preschool education is to prepare students academically and to get

them ready. Codes aligned with the theme of the purpose of preschool were derived from semi-structured interview responses. This included alphabet knowledge, identifying numbers and counting, identifying shapes and colors, and name writing. Codes also included getting a head start, self-help, and acclimation. A significant body of literature states the benefits of children of poverty attending preschool programs to support school readiness (Crosnoe et al., 2016; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). In addition, high-quality preschool programs implement developmentally appropriate learning standards and curricula that support the whole child and address all domains of readiness (Wechsler et al., 2016). The responses provided insight into low-income parents' perceptions of preschool education. Participants' responses revealed that they all enrolled their children in a pre-kindergarten program and that they valued preschool education.

### *Academic Skills Preparation*

Academic skills preparation was a cluster theme generated from the responses provided by participants to address the research question. Two categories that emerged from the interview transcripts were basic skills instruction and standards-based instruction. Participants frequently stated, "They need to know the basics" throughout the interview process. These basics included identifying letters of the alphabet or "know their A, B, and C's," writing and spelling names, counting or "knowing numbers," and identifying colors and shapes. Carmen stated her child already knew the basics, but preschool just "solidified" what she knew. Barbara also stated that her child knew the basics, but she wanted him to be exposed to standards-based instruction and to be pushed. Another participant stated she expected preschool or prekindergarten programs to extend the knowledge the children learned at home. Responses indicate there is a high regard for academic skills preparation in preschool. Documented research shows high-quality preschool

programs improve the academic skills of children globally (Chor et al., 2016; M. Fitzpatrick, 2008; Havnes & Mogstad, 2015; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013).

### *Get Students Ready*

Getting students ready was a theme generated from the participants' responses as well as three categories: adaptive skills preparation, head start, and play benefits. These categories were developed from codes such as tie shoes, toilet training, acclimated to school, structure, learning through play, socialization, and physical activity. Parents' responses suggest they believe preschool programs are beneficial in preparing children in other areas besides academics. Carmen shared the reason she enrolled her child in prekindergarten. "Pre-K was a good option to get her ready. Also, because she started with the Montessori program, I feel like it was a good introduction to see if Montessori was a good fit before she went into kindergarten." Dawn stated, "I wanted him to kind of get accustomed to the school structure and to kind of give him a head start in his education as well." Several participants also mentioned being acclimated to school by being able to follow the rules and procedures. Children being able to develop socially is another reason parents enrolled their children in a preschool program. Participant 1 stated, "I figured the younger you start the better off they are, because if you let them sit home, so when it's time for kindergarten, it won't be hard for them to interact with other kids." Play is a developmentally appropriate activity integral to high-quality preschool programs (Nazneen, 2016). The participants shared how play benefited both social interaction and physical activity. Responses in the interview transcripts also highlighted parents' belief that preschool programs support other readiness domains.

## Theme 3: Readiness Perceptions

The emergent theme of readiness perceptions reveals answers to research question number three as evidenced by participants' lived experiences of their perception of kindergarten readiness. Parental involvement is important in promoting children's learning paths and is the earliest influence regarding educational opportunities (Wood et al., 2021). Data were collected from participants utilizing semi-structured interviews. Participants' responses suggested what they believe students need before beginning kindergarten—categories aligned with codes derived from semi-structured interview responses. Categories included basic skills, beginning to read, communication, social skills, personal responsibility, self-help, supplement learning, and starting at home.

### *Academic Skills*

Academic or pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills were mentioned in the responses of all participants during the interview process. Basic skills and beginning to read were two categories that emerged. Based on responses, participants believed children should attain knowledge of basic skills before entering kindergarten. These include alphabet knowledge, pre-numeracy skills, name writing, and basic concept knowledge, such as identifying shapes and colors. Carmen stated, "I feel like they should be able to write their name. Yes, they should be able to write their name, they should recognize letters, and even letter sounds as a plus if they know how to do so." Dawn shared, "But you know, alphabet, colors, shapes, their basic stuff." Barbara and Felicia thought children should be able to read some words when they enter kindergarten. Barbara talked about the importance of children having phonemic awareness and phonics skills before kindergarten but also noted that many parents may not be knowledgeable about those

skills specifically. Development of language and communication, cognition, and general knowledge are the primary domains of readiness that directly impact academic skills.

### *Social-Emotional Skills*

Readiness requires competence in social-emotional skills (Pan et al., 2019) and is important for academic achievement (Thompson & Raikes, 2007). Like academic skills, social interaction was mentioned by all six participants, highlighting its relevance to school relevance. Codes such as expressing emotions, communicating needs and character traits, and getting along with others derived the category of social interaction.

### *Adaptive Skills*

Children must be able to enter a new environment or situation, take personal responsibility, and attend to age-appropriate personal needs as they transition into kindergarten. Personal responsibility and self-help emerged as subthemes or categories from the responses of the participants' interview transcripts. Codes like following directions and understanding procedures were derived from children being able to stand in line, sit properly, put chairs away, or where to hang their jackets. Self-help skills recorded from participants' responses were feeding themselves, potty training, tying shoes, and dressing themselves. Children need a certain level of independence when performing these tasks to be ready for kindergarten.

### *Readiness Responsibility*

Parents and their relationships with children play a critical role in supporting the acquisition of skills needed to prepare them for their first formal school experiences (Ho et al., 2022; Puccionia et al., 2020). All participants stated that parents are responsible for preparing children for kindergarten. Dawn stated,

> It starts at home. I think that learning has to start before kindergarten. Just like we teach them to walk and talk. Um, I think that you can start, you know, the education process to give them a head start even before.

References to church, daycare, and teachers indicated some shared responsibility, but ultimately, the participants believed parents were primarily responsible for preparing children for kindergarten. Carmen shared,

> Parents, of course. I mean because parents are the only people that see these kids all of the time. You can't give parties that only see these children temporarily, like that kind of responsibility or that kind of load. Like people at your church might be teaching something or maybe at a daycare center that they go to. But the daycare is still partially responsible. But I feel like, whatever the daycare is not teaching, or other people are not teaching, or they're not getting it from somewhere else, the parents are still responsible. You have to make sure they get it if they're not getting it from somewhere. You're the person that everyone is expecting to give it whether they get supplemental instruction from somewhere else or not.

**Theme 4: Assets**

The emergent theme of assets reveals answers to Research Question 4, as evidenced by participants' lived experiences of what resources and supports they feel were most effective in preparing their children for kindergarten. Parental involvement is important in promoting children's learning paths and is the earliest influence regarding educational opportunities (Wood et al., 2021). Data were collected from participants utilizing semi-structured interviews. Participants' responses highlighted strategies and resources used to prepare their children

successfully—categories of strategies and resources aligned with codes derived from semi-structured interview responses.

### *Strategies*

Participants reflected on the successful strategies used to help their children prepare for kindergarten. Two categories were developed from interview responses: direct support and indirect support. Direct support was those strategies that directly involved the children. Direct teaching and routines were key codes. According to participants reading with the child, working one-on-one, and modeling were effective strategies used. Establishing routines was another support several participants found noteworthy. Carmen stated,

> So, I laminated all of those. Every day, we went over them, and some days they looked better than others. We would erase them to go back and write them again so you could reuse those things. Simple notebook paper. Just got her a little notebook. Wrote her name on it every day. We're going to write the today. We're going to try something else and just practice makes perfect. Over time I was able to see her progression.

One participant stated how she demonstrated riding a bike for her child when teaching him. Another participant also talked about how older siblings modeling for her youngest child was a great strategy for helping her child learn different skills.

### *Resources*

Participants reflected on the resources used to prepare children for kindergarten successfully. Interview responses developed into three categories: online, printed materials, and human support. Key codes from the participants' responses that generated the category of online resources were specific websites and search engines. Anna stated, "You can do the PBS Kids games. What else? Like a little activity on Pinterest or just something on Google. I Google

things, and we'll do it around the house." Carmen also talked about online resources as being effective, especially PBS Kids. Pamphlets and consumables were codes used to develop the category of printed materials. Anna shared how buying flashcards from the dollar stores and using Hooked-on-Phonics helped her child be successful. Carmen talked about how a simple notebook was effective because she would have the child write her name in it daily, and she could see her progress over time. Carmen also shared how pamphlets and brochures from the library provided tips on how to help children with reading skills. Human support emerged from codes such as family and programs or classes. Grandparents, church, early interventionists, and daycare workers were types of human support the participants thought were instrumental in preparing their children for kindergarten. Felicia stated, "So her grandparents and her father, of course, just, you know, being there, and all of us pulling together to raise her right." Anna stated,

> As a matter of fact, both of my kids went through BabyNet. She came out to the house. She came to the daycare even when they went to early Head Start; BabyNet had help as far as like speech because a lot of people thought my son wasn't doing a lot of talking but just wouldn't talk to strangers. So, I actually went through BabyNet.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

Zoom Video Conferencing was used to collect all data in the study. The semi-structured interview consisted of 14 questions to gain insight into the experiences and practices provided and the perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness. The interview responses were transcribed in Zoom and verified by the researcher. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, they were given a number as a pseudonym. Privacy was also maintained by the researcher with a password-protected computer. The researcher repeatedly reviewed recordings to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. Once the audio recordings were

transcribed, they were imported into NVivo, where the researcher read and reread the responses, highlighting recurring patterns and themes. Data were coded into relevant themes, which were linked to the research questions. Precautions were taken to eliminate biases or personal beliefs about this phenomenon so the data could be analyzed accurately.

## Summary

Chapter 4 began with a brief overview and the purpose of the study. Validity and trustworthiness were discussed. Demographic information was gathered in a Qualtrics survey to understand better the participants' backgrounds. Information was also given to describe the school district in which the study took place. The themes that emerged from the relevant responses of the participants relating to the research questions were presented in this chapter. The themes are identified as

Theme 1: Parental Preparation

Theme 2: Purpose of Preschool

Theme 3: Readiness Perceptions

Theme 4: Assets

A comprehensive inventory of evidence from interview responses that support each theme with relatedness to the anti-deficit achievement framework is provided. The Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework provides a framework for research of the STEM pipeline which begins at kindergarten. Students who demonstrate school readiness by kindergarten are more likely to be successful in elementary school and graduate from high school (Duncan et al., 2007; Duncan et al., 2010). The practices, experiences, strategies, and resources shared by participants were influential and effective in successfully preparing their children for kindergarten. Responses from interviews also indicate how parents perceive prekindergarten education and how it impacts

readiness preparation. The following chapter includes a discussion of the implications of the results, limitations of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

## Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the practices and perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness skills in the Hollywood School District (HSD) as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). The problem in HSD is students enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness at a rate lower (i.e., 24.2%) than other students in the state of South Carolina (i.e., 38.3%) (SC Education Oversight Committee).

Research on parents' perceptions of readiness offered insights into lived experiences and how they successfully prepared children for kindergarten. Utilizing the anti-deficit achievement framework, the researcher was interested in the ~~assets~~asset's parents possessed instead of what they lacked or needed. Participant data revealed four key emergent themes: readiness preparation, the purpose of preschool, readiness perceptions, and assets. Chapter 4 provided the findings and a detailed analysis of the responses from semi-structured interviews guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do low-income parents prepare their children for kindergarten?

RQ2: How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education?

RQ3: What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents?

RQ4: What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize to ensure their children are ready for kindergarten?

This chapter provides a discussion of the implications of the results for each research question, limitations to the study, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

## Interpretation of Findings

### Theme 1: Readiness Preparation

Research Question 1 asked, "How do low-income parents prepare children for kindergarten?" The major theme that emerged was readiness preparation, along with the subthemes of experiences, physical activity, and materials. These themes were derived from participants' responses. There is a significant body of literature and developmental theories supporting the importance of parental involvement in child development (Wood et al., 2021). The interaction, materials, experiences, and environment parents provide are influential in developing school or kindergarten readiness skills. Economically disadvantaged children have limited readiness for school due to limited access to books, educational games, and toys in the home, as well as limited to no exposure to out-of-the-home experiences (Brophy, 2006). Responses from the participants shed light on their views of readiness preparation.

#### *Experiences*

The participants shared various experiences that were provided for children; their responses were categorized into three areas: at-home, educational, and recreational. Vygotsky (1978) believed learning involves social interaction where children create new knowledge through experiences. Participant 6 talked about how family interaction was important was important for her child's success and how they had family games nights, cooked together, and began a family garden. Many of the participants shared how they allowed their children to partake in coloring, painting, and arts and crafts activities at home. Participant 1 stated, "I buy coloring books around holidays. The little wooden paintings from Dollar Tree. I buy those. I let them sit at the table and let them paint. I let them draw a picture." She also stated how she would

hang their pictures on the refrigerator “so they can see they are appreciated” and that there is value in what they do.

Visits to the museum, library, waterpark, zoo, and aquarium were places where participants had taken their children. Participant 3 shared, “We’ve gone to reading events at libraries like on the weekends when she was younger and not ready for school yet.” Two of the participants stated they had taken their children to Edventure Museum, which is designed for young children and has various dramatic play and inquiry centers for them to engage in. Participant 5 shared that she would provide movie dates for her child, and they would go out to eat on her days off. These experiences provided opportunities for growth in all domains of readiness and child development.

***Materials***

Research states that many low-income homes lack stimulating materials such as books and other educational resources that promote readiness (Luby et al., 2022). Participants’ responses indicated materials they used to prepare children for kindergarten. These materials were categorized into educational, fun or entertaining, and online. Some of the participants also shared their resourcefulness in obtaining materials to support readiness skills. Participant 6 shared, “We read books. We do activity little booklets that I get from like Dollar Tree or Dollar General. We work on those. Of course, her homework. We do like little math games on YouTube and sometimes on the computer.” Participant 1 shared, “I buy the flashcards out of Dollar Tree for my daughter for her to start reading. I didn’t think she could read so I got the Hooked-on-Phonics books.” At least four of the participants discussed how they provided board games for their children. There is a significant amount of research stating how playing board games can support early literacy, numeracy, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills of young children

(O'Neill & Holmes, 2022; Puccionia et al., 2020). Several online resources were shared, but it is interesting that there was no mention of tablets or smartphones by any participant.

### *Physical Activity*

Physical activity is essential to child development so that children's height and body mass can grow appropriately, resulting in the control of gross and fine motor skills (Senosi, 2014; Williams & Lerner, 2019). Playing outside and participating in recreational sports was a common theme in the interview transcript. Participant 2 shared, "Well, right now he is getting ready for softball, so we are working on step throwing and crawling and catching the ball with the glove. We are doing it outside." Though all the participants made sure their children had physical activity opportunities, only one referenced a specific skill, such as coordination. Participant 3 commented, "Jumping rope and like all this stuff with coordination. We're working on those kinds of things since she likes to be outside." She also stated she allows her child to cut paper, tissue paper, and streamers, which aid in the development of fine motor skills. Early childhood theorists such as Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, and Vygotsky stated how objects, the environment, and people are necessary for cognitive development and imply the importance of parental involvement in promoting children's learning (Wood et al., 2021).

## Theme 2: Purposes of Preschool

Research Question 2 asked: "How do low-income parents perceive pre-kindergarten education?" The major theme that emerged was the purpose of preschool, and the subthemes were academic skills preparation and getting students ready. Research shows preschool programs place children of poverty on a successful academic trajectory (Crosnoe et al., 2017; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). The Perry Project and the Abecedarian Program are two of the most cited early childhood studies demonstrating the benefits of low-income children attending preschool

programs (Armor, 2015; Heckman et al., 2010). Participants were asked if their child attended a preschool program and what were their expectations of the program.

### *Academic Skills Preparation*

Learning the "basics" was a common theme with participants during the interview process. Learning to write their name, letters of the alphabet, and numbers, and identifying colors and shapes were identified as skills participants thought children should be taught in preschool. Participant 1 said, "I at least wanted them to know their ABCs, like the basics, the potty training, and the shoe tying; At least the concept of it and the name writing." Participant 2 placed a lot of value in preschool programs providing academic preparation. She stated,

> I wanted my baby to be pushed and his teacher teaching all the time. I don't care about fun, even though fun activities are good. I just want my baby to get the standards. I guess I want him to be taught the standards.

High-quality preschool programs implement developmentally appropriate learning standards and curricula that support the whole child and address multiple domains of development (Wechsler et al., 2016).

### *Getting Students Ready*

Giving students a head start and helping them become "acclimated" were common responses. Learning to get along with others, tie shoes and use the restroom were also noted by several participants. These responses indicated parents expected preschool programs to prepare students in other areas. Participant 4 stated, "I wanted him to kind get accustomed to the structure of school and to kind of give him a head start in his education as well." Ongoing research concludes children who live in poverty and attend a quality preschool program experience positive long-lasting effects (Crosnoe et al., 2017; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013).

## Theme 3: Readiness Perceptions

Research Question 3 asked, “What are the misconceptions of school readiness of low-income parents?” The major theme that emerged was readiness perceptions, and the subthemes were academic skills, adaptive skills, social-emotional skills, and readiness responsibility. The way parents perceive readiness will likely determine how they approach or address it.

### *Academic Skills*

Governmental policies have placed a major focus on readiness in terms of academic achievement (Pace et al., 2019; Whyte & Coburn, 2022). This was also evident in the participants’ responses. Participant 6 stated, “They should know, like at least some basic math like one plus one. They should be able to read some words, at least know how to spell their name.” Participant 1 shared, “I’ll say all the basics,” which included skills like name writing. Participant 4 responded, “I think, before they enter kindergarten they should know most of their alphabet, colors, shapes, and their basic stuff.” Children must develop appropriately in all readiness domains to successfully acquire pre-literacy and numeracy skills. The responses indicate the participants highly regard students having academic knowledge before entering kindergarten and many of the practices they shared involved addressing these skills.

### *Adaptive Skills*

It is important for children to successfully transition from preschool programs, homes, or daycares into kindergarten and have the skills to function and meet the needs of the new environment. All the participants indicated age-appropriate self-help and personal responsibility skills when asked what skills besides academics are needed before entering kindergarten. Participant 6 stated, “Being potty trained. Know how to tie their shoe, at least dress themselves somewhat.” Participant 4 shared,

> Of course, using the restroom, how to pull out their chair, how to sit properly, how to get their bags and jackets together, how to feed themselves. Um, definitely some social skills. How to share. A little problem-solving for their age group.

All domains of readiness are influenced by the development of adaptive skills in young children.

### *Social-Emotional Skills*

When children develop appropriate social skills by kindergarten, they are likely to meet social and emotional competencies in the future (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Pan et al., 2019). The participants in the study believed children should be able to express emotions, communicate needs, and get along with others before beginning kindergarten. Participant 5 shared, “I think they should be able to communicate with other kids properly and get along.” Participant 3 talked about how it was important for her child to be able to be respectful of others and be able to accept the word “no.” It is not uncommon to see preschool children exhibit tantrums when they are told “no.” It is important for parents to realize the importance of social-emotional development and provide opportunities for support.

### *Readiness Responsibility*

There was consensus among participants that it is the primary responsibility of parents to prepare children for kindergarten. Participant 1 often stated, “It starts at home.” Participant 2 shared, “I think the parents should have them ready for kindergarten.” Responses indicated church, daycare, and play a part in preparing children for kindergarten, but ultimately it is the parent’s responsibility: “You’re (the parent) the person that everyone is expecting to give it whether they get supplemental instruction from somewhere else or not,” stated Participant 3. Parental involvement is positively associated with the development of readiness skills (Boyle & Benner, 2020; Coba-Rodriguez et al., 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Puccionia et al., 2020).

**Theme 4: Assets**

Research Question 4 asked, “What strategies and resources do low-income parents utilize in ensuring children are ready for kindergarten?” The major theme that emerged was assets and the subthemes were resources and strategies.

***Resources***

Participants shared resources they thought were effective in preparing children for kindergarten. Online resources such as Google, PBS Kids, and YouTube were mentioned. Simple notebook paper, flashcards, Hooked on Phonics, and workbooks were consumables the participants thought were effective. Human supports like family members, early interventionists, and parenting classes were identified in interview transcripts. Anna stated,

> As a matter of fact, both of my kids went through BabyNet. She came out to the house. She came to the daycare even to Early Head Start to help with speech because a lot of people thought my son wasn’t doing a lot of talking.

Barbara also shared how members of her church were an effective human support or resource.

***Strategies***

Some effective strategies shared to answer RQ4 were direct instruction, establishing routines and schedules, and practice. Carmen shared that she had a daily routine for her daughter while they were home. Anna shared how there was an established schedule at her home as well. Modeling and demonstrating were revealed as effective strategies. Anna shared how she “demonstrated” how to ride a bike for her child, and Barbara discussed how she searched on YouTube how to help her son learn to step throw. Felicia thought learning from older siblings helped her child learn skills. Two of the participants highlighted prior experience as an effective strategy since they had older children.

## Limitations of the Study

Being aware of limitations in research will help better understand the context of the findings as well as their validity, reliability, and generalizations, which may impact results and conclusions (Ioannidis, 2007). Having only six parents participating in the study is a limitation of this study. Having a small sample size may have been the result of recruiting participants by email instead of using printed material. This study was unique in giving low-income parents an opportunity to share how they successfully prepared children for kindergarten and the study focused more on what they had versus what they lacked. Increasing the number of low-income participants interviewed may have provided additional data and insight into their school readiness perceptions.

Another limitation of this study was that it only relates to the lived experiences of African-American females, which limited diversity among the participants, and findings are relevant to them. The demographic makeup of families in the county is 57% African-American and 51% single females serving as heads of households, which may have been attributed to the homogenous makeup of participants. Having a diverse sample size may also have provided additional information and insight into how parents perceive, prepare, and support the readiness skills of children.

A third limitation was that the primary investigator was employed by the school district in which the research was conducted. At least four of the six participants' children were currently attending or had once attended the school where the researcher is the administrator. Because the participants were familiar with the principal investigator, they may have provided responses that they felt the researcher wanted to hear. Procedures and guidelines were developed before the study to minimize and prevent biases, and participants could withdraw from the study at any

time. Another limitation of the study was that children demonstrating readiness was based solely on scores from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). As presented in the review of literature, this assessment is given within the first 45 days of the school year. Some students may be administered portions of this assessment on the first day of school, while others may have it administered need the end of the first grading period. Using other measures to triangulate readiness may help determine if a child is ready for kindergarten or not. The final limitation was the interview questions led to parent responses focused more on academic and social-emotional skills rather than all domains of readiness. Developing questions that specifically addressed physical health and well-being development may have helped balance the focus.

## Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness. It also explored their perceptions of preschool education and the resources and strategies they used to successfully prepare children for kindergarten. The first opportunity for further research includes increasing the number and diversity of participants. A larger-scale study may either affirm or negate the findings that emerged from the current study. Comparing the perceptions of kindergarten readiness of low-income parents to middle- and high-income parents is another opportunity for further research. A third opportunity for further research would be to see if the children of poverty who demonstrated readiness in kindergarten continued to meet or exceed expectations in later grades.

## Recommendations for Action

This study can potentially help school administrators, early childhood advocates, and practitioners understand how parents perceive readiness. Participants' responses in this study focused on more academic or cognitive and social-emotional development than other domains of

readiness. Educators must partner with various community resources to encourage and educate parents on all domains of readiness. It is also important that all stakeholders, including parents, collectively define readiness since there is currently no consensus on a definition for the term school readiness (Chorrojprasert, 2020; Pan et al., 2019; Whyte & Coburn, 2022). The National Education Goals Panel (1991) has identified five key areas or domains of readiness that have been adopted by many states and governmental agencies. Knowing how parents perceive readiness can help determine how to educate parents in supporting their children. Promoting and recommending programs such as Countdown to Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten, which helps families become familiar with what school readiness means by offering one-on-one support from the child's potential teacher, is another recommendation for action.

This study also has the potential to help schools understand how parents perceive preschool programs and their expectations of these programs. Participants in this study shared a variety of expectations of preschool programs. Offering family orientation opportunities before students begin preschool and providing opportunities for parents and teachers to continuously communicate and collaborate about all students' needs are ways to calibrate expectations of preschool. This study also highlighted the assets, strategies, and resources utilized by low-income parents to successfully prepare children for kindergarten. The anti-deficit achievement framework inverts questions from a deficit perspective into those that ask questions from a positive or asset perspective. Developing programs and opportunities for parents to network and share strategies and resources that have proven to be effective is another recommendation for action.

## Conclusion

The findings from the study answered the research questions. The participants shared how they successfully prepared their children for kindergarten. They provided a rich description of the materials they used, experiences they provided, and family engagement activities that supported the development of readiness skills of their young children. Secondly, they expressed their expectations of prekindergarten education and provided a rationale for enrolling their children. They viewed preschool as an opportunity for children to learn the basics, become acclimated to the school environment and structure, and get ready for kindergarten. Responses from the participants indicated several misconceptions and perceptions of school readiness. Though research suggests high academic skills in kindergarten is a strong predictor of later achievement (Duncan et al., 2018), a misconception is school readiness is marked by basic academic knowledge.

When asked what other skills are necessary for readiness, participants alluded to social-emotional. Children of poverty are at risk of lacking social-emotional competency and are 5 times more likely to have challenging behaviors as compared to peers of higher incomes (Ho et al., 2022; Li & Zhang, 2020). Self-regulation, the ability to attend to information, use it appropriately, and control one's behavior through self-monitoring (Pan et al., 2019), is a component of social-emotional development that is also important for future academic success (Pan et al., 2019; Thompson & Raikes, 2007). Though the participants' responses indicated they provided experiences and opportunities for health and physical development, there was little to no specific mention of health and motor development as being necessary for readiness. Participants did indicate children should be able to perform age-appropriate self-help skills which are indirectly impacted by proper muscle and motor development. Participants provided a

variety of resources and strategies they found most impactful for developing readiness skills to answer the final research question.

There were several rationales for selecting low-income parents for this study. Low-income parents' perceptions of kindergarten readiness, which are at the heart of this study, may provide insight as to why achievement gaps occur before students begin school. Research shows that economically disadvantaged students are at risk for low student achievement (Crosnoe et al., 2016), and HSD has a high poverty rate. Secondly, parents, as the primary decision-makers, are responsible for determining if their child is ready for kindergarten or not; therefore, their perceptions of readiness are not just important but crucial to this study. How parents perceive school readiness may influence how they prepare their children for kindergarten and may inform education. The perceptions may inform educational practices, policies, and research in increasing kindergarten readiness of low-income children. The final rationale for selecting low-income parents was to examine the assets of how children are successfully prepared instead of what families lack or need. Using the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework (S. R. Harper, 2010, 2012) helped guide the development of interview questions from a strength-based approach.

Because parental involvement is linked to increased readiness skills for kindergarten students, increased parental involvement during the early years could effectively decrease the achievement gap in HSD. An increased level of understanding of factors in HSD that support parental involvement during the early years could lead to school administrators, early interventionists, and early childcare practitioners adopting more proactive strategies for promoting and supporting parental involvement during the developmental years.

## REFERENCES

ACS School District Profile 2017-21. (n.d.). Nces.ed.gov. https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/4503908

Adom, D., Yeboah, A., & Ankrah, A. K. (2016). Constructivism philosophical paradigm: Implication for research, teaching, and learning. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, *4*(10), 1–9.

Archibald, M., Ambagtsheer, R., Casey, M., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using Zoom Videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *18*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596

Armor, D. J. (2015, January 15). *The evidence on universal preschool: Are benefits worth the cost?* Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 760. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?Abstract_id=2549381

Awner, M., Melo, B., Da, S., Young, A. R., & Safer-Bakal, J. (2019, June 17). *The case for universal pre-K as a policy priority*. Brown Political Review. https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2019/04/the-case-for-universal-pre-k-as-a-policy-

Balladares, J., Miranda, M., & Cordova, K. (2023). The effects of board games on math skills in children attending prekindergarten and kindergarten: A systematic review. *Early Years*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2023.2218598

Bakken, L., Brown, N., & Downing, B. (2017). Early childhood education: The long-term benefits. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *31*(2), 255–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1273285

Barnett, W. S. (1995). Long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive school outcomes. *Future of Children, 5*(3), 25–50. https://doi.org/10.2307/1602366

Barnett, S., & Lamy, C. E. (2013). Achievement gaps start early: Preschool can help. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 98–110). Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199982981.003.0007

Bassok, D., & Latham, S. (2017). Kids today: The rise in children's academic skills at kindergarten entry. *Education Resource, 46*, 7–20. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x17694161

Beasley, L. O., Jespersen, J. E., Morris, A. S., Farra, A., & Hays-Grudo, J. (2022). Parenting challenges and opportunities among families living in poverty. *Social Sciences, 11*(3), 119. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11030119

Belfield, C., & Garcia, E. (2014). Parental notions of school readiness: How have they changed and has preschool made a difference? *The Journal of Educational Research, 107,* 138–151. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2012.753863

Bettencourt, A. F., Gross, D., Ho, G., & Perrin, N. (2018). The costly consequences of not being socially and behaviorally ready to learn by kindergarten in Baltimore City. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, 95*(1), 36–50. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0214-6

Blair, C., & Raver, C. C. (2016). Poverty, stress, and brain development: New directions for prevention and intervention. *Academic Pediatrics, 16*(3 Suppl), S30–S36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2016.01.010

Blanden, J., Del Bono, E., McNally, S., & Rabe, B. (2016). Universal pre-school education: The case of public funding with private provision. *The Economic Journal*, *126*, 682–723. http://doi.org/10.1111/ecoj.12374

Boyle, A. E., & Benner, A. D. (2020). Understanding parental educational involvement: The roles of parental general and child-specific school readiness beliefs. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *66*(2), 199–226. https://doi.org/10.13110/merrpalmquar1982.66.2.0199

Bornstein, M. H., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Hahn, C. S., & Haynes, O. M. (2008). Maternal responsiveness to young children at three ages: Longitudinal analysis of a multidimensional, modular, and specific parenting construct. *Developmental Psychology*, *44*(3), 867–874. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.44.3.867

Bornstein, M. H., Putnick, D. L., Bohr, Y., Abdelmaseh, M., Lee C. Y., & Esposito, G. (2020). Maternal sensitivity and language in infancy each promotes child core language skill in preschool. *Early Child Research Quarterly*, *2*(51), 483–489. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.01.002

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Brophy, J. E. (2006). Effective schooling for disadvantaged students. In M. S. Knapp & P. M. Shields (Eds.), *Better schooling for the children of poverty* (pp. 211–234). Mccutchan Publishing.

Bruce, M., McFayden, T. C., Ollendick, T. H., & Bell, M. A. (2022). Expressive language in infancy and toddlerhood: The roles of child temperament and maternal parenting behaviors. *Developmental Psychobiology*, *64*, e22287. https://doi.org/10.1002/dev.22287

Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, *56*(1), 1391–1412. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Campbell, F., Pungello, E., Burchinal, M., Kainz, K., Pan, Y., & Wasik, B. (2012). Adult outcomes as a function of an early childhood educational program: Abecedarian Project follow-up. *Developmental Psychology*, *48*(4), 1033–1043. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026644

Carson, V., Hunter, S., Kuzik, N., Wiebe, S., Spence, J. C., Friedman, A., Tremblay, M., Slater, L., & Hinkley, T. (2015). Systematic review of physical activity and cognitive development in early childhood. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sports*, *19*(7), 573–578. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2015.07.011

Cates, C. B., Weisleder, A., & Mendelsohn, A. L. (2016). Mitigating the effects of family poverty on early child development through parenting interventions in primary care. *Academic Pediatrics*, *16*(3), 112–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2015.12.015

Cater, J. K. (2011). Skype: A cost-effective method for qualitative research. *Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators Journal*, *4*(2), 1017–1019.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, February 23). *Child development basics*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html#:~:text=The%20early%20years%20of%20a,and%20educational%20needs%20are%20met

Chang, C., & Wang, Y. (2021). Using phenomenological methodology with thematic analysis to examine and reflect on commonalities of instructors' experiences in MOOCs. *Educational Science*, *11*, 203. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11050203

Chor, E., Andresen, M., & Kalil, A. (2016). The impact of universal prekindergarten on family behavior and child outcomes. *Economics of Education Review*, *55*, 168–181.

Chorrojprasert, L. (2020). Learner readiness—Why and how should they be ready? *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal*, *13*(1), 268–274.

Coba-Rodriguez, S., Cambray-Engstrom, E., & Jarrett, R. L. (2020). The home-based involvement experiences of low-income Latino families with preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten: Qualitative findings. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *29*(10), 2678–2696. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01781-7

Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Creswell J. W. (2015). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research.* Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Crosnoe, R., Purtell, K. M., Davis-Kean, P., Ansari, A., & Benner, A. D. (2016). The selection of children from low-income families into preschool. *Developmental Psychology, 52*(4), 599–612. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000101

Curriculum Associates. (2015). *i-Ready Diagnostic & Instruction: User guide*. https://www.curriculumassociates.com/Products/i-Ready

Danley, L. (2020, October 16). *A brief history and overview of the Head Start Program*. First Five Years Fund. https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2020/10/a-brief-history-and-overview-of-the-head-start-program/

Darling-Churchill, K. E., & Lippman, L. (2016). Early childhood social and emotional development: Advancing the field of measurement. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 45*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2016.02.002

Derman-Sparks, L. (2016). What I learned from the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project: A teacher's reflections. *Journal of Pedagogy, 7*(1), 93–106.

Dewar, G. (2016, August 2). *Sensitive, responsive parenting: How does it benefit your child's health?* Parenting Science. https://parentingscience.com/responsive-parenting-health-benefits/

Dhakal, K. (2022). NVivo. *Journal of the Medical Library Association, 110*(2), 270–272. https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2022.1271

Dollah, S., Abduh, A., & Rosmaladewi. (2017). Benefits and drawbacks of NVivo QSR application. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 149*, 61–63. https://doi.org/10.2991/icest-17.2017.21

Dumas, C., & Lefranc, A. (2012). Early schooling and later outcomes: evidence from pre-school extension in France. In J. Ermisch, M. Jantti, & T. Smeeding (Eds.), *From parents to*

*children: The intergenerational transmission of advantage* (pp. 164– 89). New Russell Sage Foundation.

Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L. S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, *43*(6), 1428–1446. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1428

Duncan, G., & Magnuson, K. (2013). Investing in preschool programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *27*(2), 109–132. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.27.2.109

Duncan, R. J., Schmitt, S. A., Burke, M., & McClelland, M. M. (2018). Combining a kindergarten readiness summer program with a self-regulation intervention improves school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *42*, 291–300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.012

Duncan, G. J., Ziol-Guest, K., & Kalil, A. (2010). Early childhood poverty and adult attainment, behavior, and health. *Child Development*, *81*(1), 306–325. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01396.x

Early Childhood Education. (2024, January 10). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_childhood_education

Eden, M. (2021). *The drawbacks of universal pre-K: A review of the evidence*. Issue Brief. Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED611913

Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(11), 2850–2861. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss11/14

Epstein, J. (2007). Connection count: Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Principal Leadership*, *2*(2), 16–22.

Eschner, K. (2017, May 11). A little history of American kindergartens. *Smithsonian Magazine*. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/little-history-american-kindergartens-180963263/

Fitzpatrick, C., Boers, E., & Pagani, L (2020). Kindergarten readiness, later health, and social costs. *Pediatrics, 146*(6), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-0978

Fitzpatrick, M. (2008). Starting school at four: The effect of universal pre-kindergarten on children's academic achievement, *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy, 8*(1), 1–40.

Fountas, I., C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2010). *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1.* Grades K-2, Levels A-N. Heinemann.

Francis, L., DePriest, K., Wilson, M., & Gross, D. (2018). Child poverty, toxic stress, and social determinants of health: Screening and care coordination. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, *23*(3), 2. https://doi.org/10.3912/OJIN.Vol23No03Man02

Friedman-Krauss, A., Barnett, W., & Nores, M. (2016). *How much can high-quality universal pre-k reduce achievement gaps?* https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NIEER-AchievementGaps-report.pdf

García, E., & Jensen, B. (2007). Advancing school readiness for young Hispanic children through universal prekindergarten. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, 19,* 26–37. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509157.pdf

Gibson-Davis, C., Keister, L. A., Gennetian, L. A., & Lowell, W. (2022). Net worth poverty and child development. *Socius, 8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231221111672

Goings, R. (2016). (Re)defining the narrative: High-achieving nontraditional black male undergraduates at a historically Black college and university. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 66(3), 237–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713616644776

Goldin-Meadow, S., Levine, S. C., Hedges, L. V., Huttenlocher, J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Small, S. L. (2014). New evidence about language and cognitive development based on a longitudinal study: Hypotheses for intervention. *The American Psychologist*, *69*(6), 588–599. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036886

Gormley, Jr., W. T., & Gayer, T. (2005). Promoting school readiness in Oklahoma. *Journal of Human Resources*, *40*(3), 533–558. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4129551

Gunn, D. (2019). *Perry Preschool project outcomes in the next generation*. NBER https://www.nber.org/digest/aug/19/operry-preschool-project-outcomes-next-generation

Gray, L., Wong-Wylie, G. Rempel, G., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research Interviewing strategies: Zoom Video Communications. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(5), 1292–1301. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol25/iss5/9

Griggs, M. (2016, September 23). *Public 4K in South Carolina: An overview of existing programs and considerations for decision makers*. Institute for Child Success. https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/publication/public4k-south-carolina-overview-existing-programs-considerations-decision-makers

Hackworth, N., Bethesen, D., Matthews, J., Westrupp, E., Can, W., Ukoumunne, O., Bennetts, S., Phan, T., Scicluna, A., Trajanovska, M., Yu, M., & Nicholson, J. (2017). Impact of a brief group intervention to enhance parenting and the home learning environment for children aged 6–36 months: A cluster randomised controlled trial. *Prevention Science*, *18*, 337–349. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0753-9

Hampden-Thompson, G., & Galindo, C. (2017). School–family relationships, school satisfaction and the academic achievement of young people. *Educational Review, 69*(2), 248–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1207613

Harper, L. (2016). Supporting young children's transitions to school: Recommendations for families. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *44*, 653–659. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0752-z

Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 148*, 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.362

Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study.* University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Havnes, T., & Mogstad, M. (2015). Is universal child care leveling the playing field? *Journal of Public Economics, 127*, 100–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.04.007

Hernandez, A. (2022). Closing the achievement gap in the classroom through culturally relevant pedagogy. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *11*(2), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v11n2p1

Hernandez, R., Covarrubias, R., Radoff, S., Moya, E., & Mora, Á. J. (2022). An anti-deficit investigation of resilience among university students with adverse experiences. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251221109950

Heckman, J. J., & Masterov, D. V. (2007). The productivity argument for investing in young children. *Review of Agricultural Economics, 29*(3), 446–493. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9353.2007.00359.x

Heckman, J., Moon, S., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The rate of return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics, 94*(1-2), 114–128. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2009.11.001

Heckman, J. Pinto, R. & Salvelyev, P. (2013). Understanding the mechanisms through which an influential early childhood program boosted adult outcomes. *American Economic Review, 103*(6), 2052–2086. http://doi.org/10.1257/aer.103.6.2052

Hilal, A. H., & Alabri, S. S. (2013). Using NVivo for data analysis in qualitative research. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education, 2*(2), 181–186. https://iijoe.org/v2/IIJOE_06_02_02_2013.pdf

Ho, L. L. K., Li, W. H. C., Cheung, A. T., Luo, Y., Xia, W., & Chung, J. O. K. (2022). Impact of poverty on parent-child relationships, parental stress, and parenting practices. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10*, 849408. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.849408

Isaacs, J., Magnuson, K., Barnett, S., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sawhill, I., & Winship, S. (2011). *Income and education as predictors of children's school readiness*. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1214_school_readiness_isaacs.pdf

Ioannidis, J. P. (2007). Limitations are not properly acknowledged in the scientific literature. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 60*(4), 324–329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2006.09.011

Jarrett, R. L., & Coba-Rodriguez, S. (2015). “My mother didn’t play about education”: Low-income, African American mothers’ early school experiences and their impact on school involvement for preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *84*(3), 457–472. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.84.3.0457

Jarrett, R. L., & Coba-Rodriguez, S. (2017). “We keep the education goin’ at home all the time”: Family literacy in low-income African American families of preschoolers. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 22*(2), 57–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2017.129586

Jarrett, R. L., & Coba-Rodriguez, S. (2018). How African American mothers from urban, low-income backgrounds support their children’s kindergarten transition: Qualitative findings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *46*, 435–444. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0868-4

Jarrett, R. L., & Coba-Rodriguez, S. (2019). “We gonna get on the same page”: School readiness perspectives from preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and low-income, African American mothers of preschoolers. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *88*(1), 17–31. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.88.1.0017

Jeong, J., Franchett, E. E., Ramos de Oliveira, C. V., Rehmani, K., & Yousafzai, A. K. (2021). Parenting interventions to promote early child development in the first three years of life: A global systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS Medicine*, *18*(5), 1–51. http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003602

Jensen, J., Goldstein, J., & Brunetti, M. (2021). *Kindergarten readiness assessments help identify skill gaps*. https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/PP-Paper1_Kindergarten-Readiness-Assessments-Help-Identify-Skill-Gaps.pdf

Jose, K., Banks, S., Hansen, E., Jones, R., Zubrick, S., Stafford, J., & Taylor, C. (2022). Parental perspectives on children's school readiness: An ethnographic study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *50*(1), 21–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01130-9

Kalil, A. (2017). The role of parenting in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. *Focus*, *33*(2), 6–8.

Kang, J., Horn, E., & Palmer, S. (2017). Influences of family involvement in kindergarten transition activities on children's early school adjustment. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *45*(6), 789–800. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0828-4

Karoly, L. A., Rebecca, K. M., & Cannon, J. S. (2006). *Early childhood interventions: Proven results, future promise*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG341.html

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice*, *23*(1), 274–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090

Koshyk, J., Wilson, T., Stewart-Tufescu, A., D'Souza, M., Chase, R. M., & Mignone, J. (2021). The ripple effect: Examining the impact on parents of an Abecedarian early child care intervention in an urban social housing development. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, *19*(1), 40–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X20966696

Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Pitts, C., & Burchinal, M. (2020). Trends in children's academic skills at school entry: 2020 to 2017. *Education Resource*, *49*(6), 403–414. http://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x20931078

Landry, S. H., Smith, K. E., Swank, P. R. (2006). Responsive parenting: Establishing early foundations for social, communication, and independent problem-solving skills. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(4), 627–642. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.627

Lannen, M., & Ziswiler, M. (2014). Potential and perils of the early years: The need to integrate violence prevention and early child development (ECD+). *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 19*, 625–628. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2014.09.014 1359-1789

Lee, J. Y., Lee, S. J., Ward, K. P., Pace, G. T., & Chang, O. D. (2023). Shared parental responsiveness among fathers and mothers with low income and early child outcomes. *Family Relations, 73*(2), 683–702. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12913

Li, Z., & Zhang, L. (2020). Poverty and health-related quality of life: A cross-sectional study in rural China. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, *18*(1), 153. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01409-w

Likhar, A., Baghel, P., & Patil, M. (2022, September 23). Early childhood development and social determinants. *Cureus*, *14*(9). http://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.29500

Lombardi, J., Harding, J., Connors, M., & Friedman-Krauss, A. (2016). *Coming of age: A review of federal early childhood policy 2000–2015*.

Luby, J. L., Constantino, J. N., & Barch, D. M. (2022). Poverty and developing brain. *Cerebrum: The Dana Forum on Brain Science, 2022,* cer-04–22. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35813304/

Madigan, S., Prime, H., Graham, S. A., Rodrigues, M., Anderson, N., Khoury, J., & Jenkins, J. M. (2019). Parenting behavior and child language: A meta-analysis. *Pediatrics*, *144*(4), e20183556. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3556

Malsch, A., Green, B., & Kothari, B. (2011). Understanding parents' perspectives on the transition to kindergarten: What early childhood settings and schools can do for at-risk families. *Best Practices in Mental Health, 7*, 47–66.

Maryland State Department of Education. (2023).

McCarty A. T. (2016). Child Poverty in the United States: A Tale of Devastation and the Promise of Hope. *Sociology compass*, *10*(7), 623‑639. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12386

Meijia, J., Revelo, R., Villanueva, I., & Mejia, J. (2018). Critical theoretical frameworks in engineering education: An anti-deficit and liberative approach. *Education Sciences, 8*(4), 158. MDPI AG. http://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8040158

Meriem, C., Khaoula, M., Ghizlane, C., Asmaa, M., & Ahmed, A. (2020). Early childhood development (0 - 6 years old) from healthy to pathologic: A review of the literature. *Open Journal of Medical Psychology, 9*, 100–122. http://doi.org/10.4236/ojmp.2020.93009

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Metaferia, B., Futo, J., & Takacs, Z. (2021). Parents' views on play and the goal of early childhood education in relation to children's home activity and executive functions: A cross-cultural investigation. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.646074

Miller, C. A., Guidry, J. P. D., Dahman, B., & Thomson, M. D. (2020). A tale of two diverse Qualtrics Samples: Information for online survey researchers. *Cancer epidemiology, biomarkers & prevention: A publication of the American Association for Cancer*

*Research, cosponsored by the American Society of Preventive Oncology*, *29*(4), 731–735. https://doi.org/10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-19-0846

Milligan, C. (2012). Full day kindergarten effects on later academic success. *SAGE Open*, 1–11. http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012442677

Monroe, M. C., & Adams, D. C. (2012). Increasing response rates to web-based surveys. *Journal of Extension*, *50*(6). https://archives.joe.org/joe/2012december/tt7.php

Morris, K., Mason, W., Bywaters, P., Featherstone, B., Daniel, B., Brady, G., Bunting, L., Hooper, J., Mirza, N., Scourfield, J., & Webb, C. (2018). Social work, deprivation and child welfare interventions. *Child and Family Social Work*, *23*(3), 364–372. https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12423

Mungas, D., Widaman, K., Zelazo, P. D., Tulsky, D., Heaton, R. K., Slotkin, J., Blitz, D. L., & Gershon, R. C. (2013). VII. NIH Toolbox Cognition Battery (CB): Factor structure for 3- to 15-year-olds. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *78*(4), 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12037

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2003). *Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation.* A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Search for public school districts - District detail for Marion 10*. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=2&ID2=4503908&DistrictID=4503908&details=

National Education Goals Panel. (1991). *The Goal 1 Technical Planning Subgroup Report on School Readiness*. National Education Goals Panel.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network. (2000). Characteristics and quality of child care for toddlers and preschoolers. *Applied Developmental Science*, *4*(3), 116–136.

Nazneen, K. (2016). The play-learning binary: U.S. parents' perceptions on preschool play in a neoliberal age. *Children and Society*, *30*(4), 290–301. https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12140

Neumann, D., Peterson, E. R., Underwood, L., Morton, S., & Waldie, K. (2021). The development of cognitive functioning indices in early childhood. *Cognitive Development*, 60, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2021.101098

Nicholson, J. M., Lucas, N., Berthelsen, D., & Wake, M. (2012). Socioeconomic inequality profiles in physical and developmental health from 0–7 years: Australian national study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, *66*, 81–87. https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2009.103291

Nicolopoulou, A. (1993). Play, cognitive development and the social world: Piaget, Vygotsky, and beyond. *Human Development*, *36*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1159/000277285

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 101, Stat. 1425 (2002).

O'Donnell, E. B. (2018). Parents' beliefs and goals in early childhood. *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice*, *18*(5), 10–29.

O'Neill, D., & Holmes, P. (2022). The power of board games for multidomain learning in young children. *American Journal of Play*, *14*(1), 58–98.

Pace, A., Alper, R., Burchinal, M., Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Paseke, K. (2019). Measuring success: Within and cross-domain predictors of academic and social trajectories in elementary school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *46*, 112–125.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, *42*(5), 533–544.

Pan, Q., Trang, K., Love, H., & Templin, J. (2019). School readiness profiles and growth in academic achievement. *Frontiers in Education*, *1*(4), 1–17. http://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00127

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Patton-Davis, L., & Museus, S. (2019). What is deficit thinking? An analysis of conceptualizations of deficit thinking and implications for scholarly research. *Currents*, *1*(1), 117–130. http://doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.110

Perkins, S. C., Finegood, E. D., & Swain, J. E. (2013). Poverty and language development: Roles of parenting and stress. *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, *10*(4), 10–19.

Piaget, J. (1951). Egocentric thought and sociocentric thought. *J. Piaget, Sociological Studies*, 270–286.

Poverty. (2023, June 26). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty

Puccionia, J., Froiland, J. M., & Moeyaert, M. (2020). Preschool teachers' transition practices and parents' perceptions as predictors of involvement and children's school readiness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *109*, 4–15.

Qualtrics. (2018). Provo, Utah, USA: Qualtrics. https://www.qualtrics.com

Ramey C. T., Collier A., Sparling J. J., Loda, F., Campbell, F., Ingram, D., & Finkelstein, N. (1976). The Carolina Abecedarian Project: A longitudinal and multidisciplinary approach to the prevention of developmental retardation. In T. Tjossem (Ed.), *Intervention strategies for high-risk infants and young children* (pp. 629–665). University Park Press.

Ready for Kindergarten. (n.d.). Southcarolina.kready.org. https://southcarolina.kready.org/cas4/sign-in/

Reardon, S., & Portilla, X. A. (2016). Recent trends in income, racial, and ethnic school readiness gaps at kindergarten entry. *AERA Open*, *2*, 1–18.

Regenstein, E., Connors, M., Romero-Jurado, R., & Weiner, J. (2017). *Uses and misuses of kindergarten readiness assessment results*. Policy Conversations. https://www.startearly.org/app/uploads/pdf/PolicyConversationKRA2017.pdf

Repko-Erwin, M. E. (2017). Was kindergarten left behind? Examining US kindergarten as the new first grade in the wake of No Child Left Behind. *Global Education Review*, *4*(2), 58–74.

Reynolds, A. J. (2003). The added value of continuing early intervention into the primary grades. In A. J. Reynolds, M. C. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Early childhood programs for a new century* (pp. 163–196). Child Welfare League of America.

Roller, M. R. (2022, February 26). *Towards a credible in-depth interview: Building rapport.* Research Design Review. https://researchdesignreview.com/2022/02/26/towards-credible-in-depth-interview-building-rapport/#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20building%20rapport

Roos, L., Wall-Wieler, E., & Lee, J. (2019) Poverty and early childhood outcomes. *Pediatrics, 143*(6), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3426

Saracho, O. N. (2023). Theories of child development and their impact on early childhood education and care. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *51*, 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01271-5

*SC EOC report finds state-funded, full-day 4K improves Kindergarten Readiness | Education Oversight Committee*. (n.d.). Eoc.sc.gov. https://eoc.sc.gov/news/2024-03/sc-eoc-report-finds-state-funded-full-day-4k-improves-kindergarten-readiness

Schmidt, K. L., Merrill, S. M., Gill, R., Miller, G. E., Gadermann, A. M., & Kobor, M. S. (2021). Society to cell: How child poverty gets "under the skin" to influence child development and lifelong health. *Developmental Review*, 61, 100983. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2021.100983

Senosi, S. (2014). The developmental stages of the child in the foundation phase: Partnership. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(23), 2049–2054. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n23p2049

Shukla, S. Y., Theobald, E. J., Abraham, J. K., & Price, R. M. (2022). Reframing educational outcomes: Moving beyond achievement gaps. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, *21*(2), es2. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.21-05-0130

Sheridan, S. M., Knoche, L. L., Edwards, C. P., Bovaird, J. A., & Kupzyk, K. A. (2010). Parent engagement and school readiness: Effects of the Getting Ready intervention on preschool children's social-emotional competencies. *Early Education and Development*, *21*(1), 125–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280902783517

Shumba, J., Rembe, S., Adewumi, T., Chinhara, H., Shumba, S., & Maphosa, C. (2019). Maintaining safety nets and peace for children and youth at risk. In S. Taukeni (Ed.), *Cultivating a culture of nonviolence in early childhood development centers and schools* (pp. 82–100). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7476-7.ch005

Souza, K. (2020). *The relationship between childhood poverty and academic success, parental influence, and health*.

https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/groups/University%20Honors%20Program/Journals_two/dis_souza_kendra.pdf

South Carolina Department of Education. (2023). *2022-2023 School Report Card.*

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee. (2023). *Analyses for the Fall 2022 Statewide Administration of the KRA.*

Sparling, J., & Meunier, K. (2019). Abecedarian: An early childhood education approach that has a rich history and a vibrant present. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, *51*, 207–216.

Sundler, A. J., Lindberg, E., Nilsson, C., & Palmér, L. (2019). Qualitative thematic analysis based on descriptive phenomenology. *Nursing Open*, *6*(3), 733–739. https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.275

Tabak, B. (2021). Education expectations and income level of families: An assessment within the framework of human capabilities approach. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 27* (1), 985–1004.

Temple, J., Ou, S., & Reynolds, A. (2022). Closing achievement gaps through preschool-to-third- grade programs. *Frontiers in Education*, 7. http://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.871973

The National Center for Children in Poverty. (2019). *Research and policy recommendations to improve the lives of low-income children and their families*. https://www.nccp.org

Thompson, R. A., & Raikes, H. A. (2007). The social and emotional foundations of school readiness. In D. F. Perry, R. K. Kaufmann, & J. Knitzer (Eds.), *Social and emotional health in early childhood: Building bridges between services and systems* (pp. 13–35). Paul H. Brookes.

United States Census. (2020).

U.S. Department of Education (2009). *Race to the Top Program: Executive summary*. http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf

*U.S. Department of Education Finds 6 out of 10 Kids Unprepared for Kindergarten - Learning Liftoff.* (2015, April 7). Learningliftoff.com. https://learningliftoff.com/grades/preschool/u-s-dept-of-education-finds-6-of-10-kids-unprepared-for-kindergarten/

Van Voorhis, F. L., Mailer, M. F., Epstein, J. L., & Lloyd, C. M. (2013). *The impact of family involvement on the education of children ages 3 to 8: A focus on literacy and math achievement outcomes and social-emotional skills*. https://www.mdrc.org/publication/impact-family-involvement-education-children-ages3-8

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Waldfogel, J., & Washbrook, E. (2011). Income-related gaps in school readiness in the United States and the United Kingdom. In T. M. Smeeding, R. Erikson, & M. Jäntii (Eds.), *Persistence, privilege, and parenting: The comparative study of intergenerational mobility*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Walsh, F. (2003). Family resilience: A framework for clinical practice. *Family Process*, *42*(1), 1–19.

Walsh, F. (2016). Family resilience: a developmental systems framework. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 13*(3), 1–12. http://doi:10.1080/17405629.2016.1154035

Wechsler, M., Melnick, H., Maier, M. & Bishop, J. (2016). *The building blocks of high-quality early childhood education programs*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/building-blocks-high-quality-earlychildhood-education-programs

Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013). Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function and emotional skills. *Child Development*, *84*(6), 2112–2130. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24029681

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, *15*(1), 1–11. http://www.imrjournal.org/uploads/1/4/2/8/14286482/imr-v15n1art4.pdf

Williams, P. G., & Lerner, M. A. (2019). School readiness. *Pediatrics*, *144*(2), e20191766. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1766

Winiarska, A. (2017). Qualitative longitudinal research: Application, potentials and challenges in the context of migration research. *CMR Working Papers*, *103*(161), 1–29. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/180968/1/1018535470.pdf

White, L. A., Davidson, A., & Millar, H. (2015). Policy logics, framing strategies, and policy change: Lessons from universal pre-k policy debates in California and Florida. *Policy Sciences*, *48*, 395–413. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-015-9234-9

Whyte, K., & Coburn, C. (2022). Understanding kindergarten readiness. *School of Education and Social Policy*, *123*(2), 344–361. https://doi.org/10.1086/721773

Wood, K., Wood, E., Gottardo, A., Archer, K., Savage, R., & Piquette, N. (2021). Workshop training to facilitate parent-child instructional opportunities for reading and social

development with kindergarten students. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 35*(3), 438–457. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2020.1736218

Wray, W. (2015). Parenting in poverty: Inequity through the lens of attachment and resilience. *American International Journal of Social Science*, *4*(2), 224–232.

Yang, N., Shi, J., Lu, J., & Huang, Y (2021). Language development in early childhood: Quality of teacher-child interaction and children's receptive vocabulary competency. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.649680

Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *The Journal of Medical Association of Malawi*, *27*(1), 13–15. https://doi.org/10.4314/mmj.v27i1.4

Zeng, N., Ayyub, M., Sun, H., Wen, X., Xiang, P., & Gao, Z. (2017). Effects of physical activity on motor skills and cognitive development in early childhood: A systematic review. *BioMed Research International*, *2017*, 2760716. https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/2760716

Zimmerman, M. (2013). Resiliency theory: A strengths-based approach to research and practice for adolescent health. *Health Education Behavior*, *40*(4), 381–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198113493782

Zoom Video Communications, Inc. (2016). *Security guide.* Zoom Video Communications Inc. https://d24cgw3uvb9a9h.cloudfront.net/static/81625/doc/Zoom-Security-White-Paper.pdf

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Letter from Superintendent

[redacted]

February 22, 2024

Dear Mrs. Owens,

On behalf of [redacted] County School District, congratulations on reaching the milestone of dissertation phase of your graduate studies. We are in receipt of your request to conduct a research study for your doctoral dissertation titled "Low-Income Parents' Perspective On Kindergarten Readiness."

Research in [redacted] County School District does not include participation of students. In accordance with our district protocol, your approval to conduct research will be contingent upon the submission of your final IRB approval letter from the Coastal Carolina University. Once this information is submitted we will follow up accordingly.

I wish you much success with your research and dissertation process.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. Again, congratulation.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Superintendent

*Educate • Prepare • Inspire*

# Appendix B: IRB Approval


March 18, 2024

Farrah Owens
Educational Sciences and Organizations
Coastal Carolina University
Conway, SC 29528

RE: perceptions of Low-Income Parents on Kindergarten Readiness: A Qualitative Study

Farrah,

It has been determined that your protocol #2024.135 is approved as **EXPEDITED** by the Coastal Carolina University Institutional Review Board (IRB) under the Federal Policy for the Protection of **Human Research Subjects Categories #6 & 7**,

*#6 - Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.*
*#7 - Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.*

This approval is good for one calendar year commencing with the date of approval and concludes on **March 17, 2025**. If your work continues beyond this date, it will be necessary to seek a continuation from the IRB. If your work concludes prior to this date, please inform the IRB.

***Approval of this protocol does not provide permission or consent for faculty, staff or students to use university communication channels for contacting or obtaining information from research subjects or participants. Faculty, staff and students are responsible for obtaining appropriate permission to use university communications to contact research participants. For use of university email to groups such as all faculty/staff or all students, requests should be made to the Provost's Office after the research protocol has been approved by the IRB. Please allow at least one week to receive approval.***

Please note, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to report immediately to the IRB any changes in procedures involving human subjects and any unexpected risks to human subjects, any detrimental effects to the rights or welfare of any human subjects participating in the project, giving names of persons, dates of occurrences, details of harmful effects, and any remedial actions. Such changes may affect the status of your approved research.

Be advised that study materials and documentation, including signed informed consent documents, must be retained for at least three (3) years after termination of the research and shall be accessible for purposes of audit.

If you have any questions concerning this review, please contact Patty Carter, IRB Coordinator, at pcarter@coastal.edu or extension 2978.

Thank you,

Stephanie Cassavaugh
Director, Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services
IRB Administrator

Cc: Alexander Herring

## Appendix C: Letter to Families Requesting Participation in the Study

Hello,

I am Farrah Owens, a school administrator in the [redacted] County School District, and I am currently a doctoral student at Coastal Carolina University. I am working on my dissertation, and I am conducting a study seeking information about how low-income parents successfully prepare their children for kindergarten.

You are invited to participate in this study because your child has scored demonstrated readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The information you provide about your perceptions of kindergarten readiness and how you successfully prepared your child is very important. You will be asked to complete a brief survey about demographic information and responses from the survey will remain confidential. You will also be invited to participate in an interview. If you would like to participate in an interview, please answer yes and leave your name, email address, and phone number in the space provided on the survey. You will also be asked to provide consent to be recorded during the interview.

An informed consent form will also be included and should answer any questions you may have before completing the survey. You will submit both the consent form and your survey responses electronically. Please complete the informed consent and survey by March 2024. Should you have any other questions, the form includes Dr. Alexander Herring, the dissertation chairperson, and my contact information. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Farrah Owens
fwowens@coastal.edu
843-250-5051

## Appendix D: Parents' Perception of Kindergarten Readiness Survey and Consent

# Parents' Perception of Kindergarten Readiness Survey

**Parents' Perception of Kindergarten Readiness**

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "Perceptions of Low-Income Parents on Kindergarten Readiness: A Qualitative Study." This study is being conducted by Farrah W Owens, a Ph.D. student at Coastal Carolina University and school administrator in Marion County School District. You were selected to participate in this study because your child scored "demonstrated" on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, an assessment given to all entering kindergarten students in the state of South Carolina.

The purpose of this study is to explore the practices and perceptions of low-income parents on kindergarten readiness skills in Marion County School District. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey about basic demographic questions such as race, gender, educational level, etc. and it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You also have the option to participate in a 30-minute interview about your perception of readiness and how you successfully prepared your child for kindergarten. If you participate in an interview, you will be entered into a drawing for a $100.00 gift card.

During this research study, no risks or discomforts are anticipated.
Unless you provide consent to the contrary, the confidentiality of your participation in this research study, your responses, or any individual results will be maintained by the PI. Confidentiality will only be violated when required by law or the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association. This usually includes, but may not be limited to, situations when your responses indicate that you, or another identified individual, is at risk of imminent harm or situations in which faculty are mandated reporters, such as instances of child abuse or issues covered under Title IX regulations. For more information about Title IX, please see the University's webpage at: https://www.coastal.edu/titleix/.

The data collected for this study will be stored for 6 months after the study is completed and then destroyed. The results of this study may be shared through academic presentations and with the Marion County School District Office of Instruction.

You do not have to agree to participate in this research study. If you do participate, you may opt out at any time. There is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing from the study. If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me by phone at (843) 250-5051 or email at fwowens@coastal.edu. My faculty advisor, Dr. Alexander Herring, can also be contacted by phone at (843) 349-6620 or by email at aherring1@coastal.edu.
The Institutional Review Board (IRB) under the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services is responsible for the oversight of all human subject research conducted at Coastal

Carolina University. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant before, during, or after the research study, you may contact this office by calling (843) 349-2978 or emailing OSPRS@coastal.edu.

This research study was approved by the IRB on March 18, 2024. This approval will expire on March 17, 2025, unless the IRB renews the approval before this date.

**Consent**
By clicking next below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this consent form, and agree to participate in this research study. You are free to skip any question that you choose. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

---

Q1 What gender do you identify with?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Prefer not to say

---

Q2 What is your age?

- ○ 16-29 years old
- ○ 30-45 years old
- ○ 46-60 years old
- ○ 61+ years old

---

Q3 Please specify your race/ethnicity.

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

---

Q4 What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2-year degree
- 4-year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate

---

Q5 What is your marital status?

- ○ Married
- ○ Widowed
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Separated
- ○ Never married
- ○ Other

---

Q6 Has your child received Medicaid or has your family received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (T.A.N.F.) at any time within 3 years? If you answered yes, please skip down to question #9.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

---

Q7 If you answered no to question #6, how many people lived in your household?

_____

---

Q8 If you answered no to question #6, what is your yearly household income?

_____

---

Q9 If you are wiling to participate in a short interview about your perception of kindergarten readiness and how you prepared your child, please provide the following information.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q10 Name

_____

Q11 Email Address

_____

Q12 Phone Number

_____

# Appendix E: Consent to be Recorded

## PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING AUTHORIZATION

I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless Coastal Carolina University, its successors, assigns, officers, employees or agents, any person(s) or corporation(s) for whom it might be acting, and any firm publishing and/or distributing any photograph, video footage or audio recording produced as part of this research, in whole or in part, as a finished product, from and against any liability as a result of any distortion, blurring, alteration, visual or auditory illusion, or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the recording, processing, reproduction, publication or distribution of any photograph, videotape, audiotape or interview, even should the same subject me or my to ridicule, scandal, reproach, scorn or indignity. I hereby agree that the photographs, video footage and audio recordings may be used under the conditions stated herein without blurring my identifying characteristics.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Farrah Owens by phone at 843-250-5051 or fwowens@coastal.edu.

The faculty advisor on this study is Alexander Herring and she/he can be contacted by phone (843) 349-6620 or by email at aherring1@coastal.edu.

**The Institutional Review Board (IRB) under the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services is responsible for the oversight of all human subject research conducted at Coastal Carolina University. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant before, during or after the research study, you may contact this office by calling (843) 349-2978 or emailing OSPRS@coastal.edu.**

I have read this authorization and have been able to ask questions of the PI and/or discuss my participation with someone I trust. I understand that I can ask additional questions at any time during this research study and am free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

**Appendix F: Interview Questions by Research Question**

# Interview Questions

**RQ 1**

1. Where have you or anyone in your family taken your child for a recreational activity outside of the home, such as visiting a bookstore, library, zoo, church, movies, sporting event, etc.?
2. How have you or anyone in your family engaged in any physical activity with your child, such as riding a bike, throwing a ball, exercising, etc.?
3. How has anyone in your family engaged in arts and crafts or hands-on activities such as coloring, painting, writing, etc., with your child?
4. What kinds of things did you do with your child or most of your family to spend time together? (Examples: cooking, eating dinner, playing board or card games, or putting puzzles together)
5. What kinds of academic activities did you do with your child? (Examples: read to or with your child, assist them in writing their name, have them identify shapes, numbers, or colors, count or say alphabet)

**RQ 2**

1. Did you enroll your child in a pre-kindergarten program such as Head Start or private or public school preschool? Why or why not?
2. What were your expectations of the pre-kindergarten program you enrolled your child in, or what your expectations would be if you enrolled them in a preschool program?
3. How do you feel about children playing in preschool programs?

**RQ 3**

1. What kind of skills or knowledge do you think your child should have before beginning school? (Examples: write their name, alphabet, numbers, colors, recite the alphabet, read, etc.)
2. What other skills do you think your child needs to have before entering kindergarten?
3. Who is responsible for preparing your child for kindergarten and why?
4. What social, emotional, or adaptive skills do you think your child needs before entering kindergarten?

**RQ4**

1. What resources proved most effective in preparing your child for kindergarten?
2. Talk about any parenting workshops, classes, or programs you have attended or taken part in since your child was born.