

Note to Participants:

On Oct 12, 2018 the SMU Simmons School of Education and Human Development hosted a half-day roundtable discussion to examine key issues surrounding pre-k education in Texas. Roundtable co-chairs, State Representatives Trent Ashby and Eric Johnson, want to add specific information to the excellent body of work produced by roundtable participants. This combined body of work will serve as a resource to policy makers as they enter the new legislative session in January.

Your participation by responding to the following four questions in 150 words or less per question would be greatly appreciated. The Pre-K Roundtable co-chairs would like your response by December 21, 2018.

Jill H. Allor, SMU Education Professor

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry

I'm going to limit my responses to the area of literacy since that is my specific area of expertise. I don't think these should be required, but ideally students would enter kindergarten being able to:

- a) name most or all upper- and lower-case letters*
- b) say the sound for most or all lower-case letters*
- c) (phonological awareness, segmenting/sound isolation) orally identify the first sound in a spoken word (What's the first sound in fish? Student responds /f/)*
- d) (phonological awareness, blending) say the word when given the first sound and the rest of a word (i.e., rime) to blend (Listen: /f/ ish, What word? Student responds "fish")*
- e) be familiar with basic concepts of print (e.g., one-to-one correspondence by pointing to words when echo reading, point to the title of a book, know how to care for a book)*
- f) demonstration basic listening comprehension*
- g) understand and use basic vocabulary in spoken language*

Note: a-d above are precise and very easy to measure; others are also extremely important, but more difficult to determine a minimal level of skills that would be ideal.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

In the area of literacy, the curriculum should explicitly target the skills I listed in #1.

This instruction to be extremely explicit, particularly in terms of alphabetic knowledge (letter recognition and letter sounds) and phonological awareness (especially identifying first sound and blending the first sound with the ending word part, i.e., rime). Cumulative review needs to be extensive, especially for students who are struggling. This type of instruction has been shown to change brain patterns. Especially for pre-k, instruction should include routines, repetition, and be playful and developmentally appropriate.

Jill H. Allor, SMU Education Professor (cont.)

In the area of language development, components should include targeted listening comprehension, conversation around books and other activities, and vocabulary development. An example of a strong research-based technique for language development is Dialogic Reading (G. Whitehurst and others), which specifically guides teachers to engage students in meaningful conversations and vocabulary development around books being read to them. For students with significant delays, speech/language therapy is extremely important.

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

It probably goes without saying, but exercise and nutrition play important roles in healthy brain development.

The explicit and repetitive instruction (includes extensive cumulative review) described in #2 has been shown to positively change brain patterns.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

Lack of teacher knowledge and skills related to early literacy. Teachers need to know which skills should be prioritized, how to sequence these skills effectively, and how to engage students in both aspects of the Simple View of Reading (skills that lead to word recognition + development of oral language to lead to language comprehension).

A common challenge for teachers is knowing how to say the sounds (phonemes) in the English language (or other languages) correctly in isolation and knowing how to teach students to blend (phonological/phonemic awareness).

Another common challenge is behavior management and having realistic and appropriate expectations for preschoolers. In preschool, it is critical to provide a stimulating environment for students to explore and develop skills, yet a teacher must know how to set up that environment to target priority skills and how to engage with the students explicitly in a playful and age-appropriate way.

Note: I'm happy to provide additional information, references, and more specific suggestions.

Maria Christiansen, Director of Early Childhood, Momentous Institute, Dallas

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

Skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry include a child's abilities around language both expressive and receptive; their knowledge in most "academic" areas would be included in their ability to express their learning and understandings and to explore new understandings in their environments. A student's motor skills both fine and gross motor are important for their success in future academic areas. These skills should also include a student's social emotional learning that would include their understandings of self-regulation and the beginnings of perspective taking.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

Programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum that would help remediate developmental delays are high quality environments that allow for experiences with highly trained teachers. Training of teachers is imperative in the understanding of how young children come to construct their own learning through experiences that promote foundational skills around literacy/numeracy, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor abilities. Educators with a foundation in constructivist learning and development will provide a curriculum that is appropriate for the next step in a child's learning.

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

Programs that could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development are programs that overtly teach social emotional skills. A student's ability to understand what is happening in their brain when learning and emotions are happening begins early and this awareness allows a teacher and student a basis to understand everyday interactions in a new way. Learning is happening in context of a social environment. A teacher's ability to promote learning that is just at a child's zone of proximal development as well as the ability to scaffold a student's learning allows the brain to function optimally. These experiences occur in a child centered classroom environment of choice and self-directed learning and play. A child's sense of agency in their learning is critical for brain development and pro social behaviors. A high quality program with trained teachers is key.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

Affordable quality programs are a barrier to Kindergarten Readiness as well as transportation and non-full day programs.

John Emerich, Assistant Superintendent, Crockett ISD

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

Taking care of bathroom needs, being able to sit and listen to a story, able to trace lines

Able to toilet themselves, write their own name, letter recognition, beginning sounds, number recognition, able to count items, colors, shapes, fine motor skills, cutting, reading readiness, follow directions and express feelings/ social skills. At least ten letter sounds and ability to count to ten.

Knowledge of 2d shapes, colors, knowledge of all letter sounds, and alphabet identification. They should be able to identify numbers 0-10 and one to one correspondence. Students should be able to write and spell name.

Recognize and letter sound of at least 10 letters. Number recognition 0-10. Rote count to 20 and one-to-one correspondence to 10. Recognize, spell and write first name. Know shapes (rectangle, square, circle, triangle. Know basic color (red, blue, green, yellow)

Prepositions--before, under, over, behind, in front of, next to, colors, numbers, letter recognition, sounds, social skills--kindness. Able to write their first name, know their colors and shapes, count and recognize numbers up to 10, recognize most letters

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

Lots of gross motor skills, hopping, skipping, jumping, then fine motor skills, listening to good reading, developing a love for reading

Language development Literacy Math Science Social studies Art Social development Physical development Culture development

Success for All curriculum covers all components through their curriculum. I have used it for 5 years and have seen it work!!

The difference in the knowledge that the students come into PK with has changed so drastically in my 19 years of teaching. One reason is that most district do not offer PK3 programs any longer. Those programs offered the students a jump start into school. Because that is no longer offered, our students' parents are left in charge of early learning. The parents are getting younger and younger, and don't have the parenting knowledge that parents did even 10 years ago. Children are not talked to at home, so every year, I have more students coming in with speech delays. Children are not taken out into the community to participate in things like church or even play dates at the park, so students come in not knowing how to get along with others. Outdoor play is almost nonexistent so students don't know how to catch or kick a ball any more. Curriculum has not been rewritten to keep up with these changes. Every curriculum that I have used in the past 10 years or so, assumes that children are coming in with basic skills like colors, shapes, or being able to hold a pencil. It is my opinion that either the curriculum needs to be updated to address these basic concepts or teachers need to be able to plan time into the day to address these things.

John Emerich, Assistant Superintendent, Crockett ISD (cont.)

There needs to be more singing and reciting of nursery rhymes and finger plays, more outside time, more "unstructured" center/lab times. A child is going to learn the concept of taller or shorter better by me leading them in a tower building competition in blocks then by me sitting in front of the classroom telling them and showing them pictures.

3. It has been identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

Multi-sensory teaching, hands on, fun activities that teach and reinforce skills, listening skills

Mental stimulation. Nutrition. Physical activity. Interpersonal relationships.

Success for All curriculum, more movement, tactile activities and learning labs. In short more hands on activities and less worksheets.

Most PK programs don't offer music and art. Those are both great ways to develop the brain.

Using more hands-on activities and having more break/recess time built into the day....example two 15 minute breaks verses one 30 minute break.

Marianne Gibbs, EdD, OTR

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

School readiness is much more than reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Kindergarten entry skills per this writer's expertise as an occupational therapist also include:

Social/Emotional

- *Knows first and last name*
- *Knows age*
- *Makes needs known*
- *Interacts with other children*
- *Independent in self-care activities (i.e. toileting, hand-washing, feeding, and most dressing activities)*

Gross Motor

- *Jumps*
- *Runs*
- *Hops*
- *Catches and bounces large ball*

Fine Motor

- *Engages use of wide-variety of writing tools (i.e. crayons, Crayon Rocks, short pencils, small pieces of chalk)*
- *Able to appropriately copy specific prewriting shapes: vertical line, horizontal line, circle, plus sign (+), right diagonal line, left diagonal line, and square*
- *Attempts to write own name*
- *Engages in use of scissors to snip and begin cutting with consecutive strokes*

Kindergarten readiness is comprised of social/emotional development, physical well-being, gross/fine motor development, and cognitive development elements. Requiring the aforementioned skills and others implies that children who attend preschool have access to high-quality, comprehensive preschool programs so they can be ready to learn in kindergarten.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

An emphasis on teacher training, play, music, and motor movement in the pre-kindergarten setting would help remediate developmental delays in young children. Simply stated, play IS the work of young children. Play helps young children learn about their world, how to move within it, develop efficacy and confidence, and it is the context within which young children develop the sub-skills needed for eventual academic performance (i.e. collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creative innovation).

Programmatic components of a pre-k curriculum to appropriately support children's development would include:

- *Training for educators on the development of young children regarding the brain-motor connection of movement, gross motor, and fine motor development to academic learning and school performance.*

Marianne Gibbs, EdD, OTR (cont.)

- *Appropriate opportunities in the classroom for music and movement to develop gross motor skills, which are needed to sit, stand, walk in a line, and perform all physical motor skills*
- *Appropriate opportunities in the classroom for hands-on play to develop fine motor skills needed to perform self-help tasks, manage fasteners, hold and manage a pencil for handwriting, and eventually produce compositional writing*
- *Opportunities for music and movement throughout the day to support foundational skills of academic learning including early literacy and early numeracy through development of brain-motor pathways*

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

In teaching the whole child we know that physical movement is the basis of academic learning for the young child because of its influence on brain development. Programs focused on opportunities for physical movement and involvement with music are essential in pre-k learning environments. Functional gross and fine motor movement patterns support early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness through facilitation of rhythm, organization, and sequencing skills that facilitate readiness for cognitive acquisition and task performance.

Example: By squeezing tub toys in the math center to move puff balls across the table top a child develops the palmer arch of his hand and the “open-close” pattern (sub-skills of efficient pencil grasp and scissoring in early literacy) along with the ability to practice counting (rote counting in early numeracy).

Opportunities for neural pathway development authentically exist in play activities and should be embedded in pre-kindergarten curriculum to optimally support early literacy/numeracy, social/emotional awareness, and overall physical motor ability. Meeting the physical motor development needs of young children supports future academic success.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

Identifying barriers to kindergarten readiness includes acknowledging gaps in readiness preparation prior to children transitioning to kindergarten. Barriers include, but may not be limited to:

- *Decreased awareness and training of pre-k educators on the subject of brain development of young children*
- *Lack of high-quality pre-k programs that include music, movement, physical motor, and social/emotional opportunities*
- *Lack of high-quality transition protocol and training of educators from pre-k to kindergarten*
- *Lack of highly systematic and personal connections between school personnel and families of young children to facilitate ease of transition from pre-k to kindergarten*

Marianne Gibbs, EdD, OTR (cont.)

- *Connections between school personnel and families of young children are not made early enough in pre k to ease the transition to kindergarten*
- *Lack of vertical alignment between pre-k and kindergarten programs, where kindergarten programs build off of high-quality pre-k programs*

Vicki Gibson, Education Consultant

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

The school-readiness skills and competencies that preschool children need to develop are outlined in the state standards and Head Start Outcomes Early Learning Framework. Download the Head Start Big Sheets and Texas PreK Guideline Big Sheets from our website: www.gha-pd.com. Each big sheet should be printed on 11 X 17 inch paper. That is a much easier way to review the standards and guidelines.

- *Preschool children develop foundational skills when they are exposed to high quality preschool programs that include opportunities to develop:*
- *Social-emotional skills for responsible decision-making and self-regulation*
- *Listening and speaking skills and respectful communication*
- *Word knowledge and vocabularies used in oral language (knowing word meanings and using words to communicate or ask for clarification)*
- *Phonological awareness – how sounds are used in spoken English language*
- *Sound/symbol relationships - individual sounds or phonemes, are represented by alphabet letters that are put together to form words and express ideas and feelings (emergent reading and spelling-to-write skill)*

2. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

*Most children enter preschool with **lack-of-opportunity-to-learn gaps**, **NOT developmental delays**. Lack of access to English language and rich vocabularies create the differences in some preschool children's performances.*

A lack of English proficiency due to limited access to language is a performance delay, not a disability. However without intentional intervention in language, the gap in word knowledge and oral language becomes a disability.

- *High quality teaching and supportive practice using an excellent curriculum has proven gaps can be closed in preschool when children participate in learning activities that helps children learn HOW to:*
- *Listen and follow directions, taking turns, waiting for a time to talk,*
- *Listen to stories read aloud and describe the setting, characters, main events to deepen understandings what text says*
- *Observe and describe details in pictures; prioritizing what is essential or important to see and understand*
- *Think and express ideas, thoughts and feelings about stories; making predictions and inferences and connect with personal experiences*
- *Using prior knowledge, details in pictures, and sounds in words to determine word meanings to increase vocabularies and oral language*
- *Participate in activities that develop early numeracy concepts such as number sense or basic understandings about quantities of more, less, same or equal, short/long, tall/short, etc.*
- *Participate in activities that develop scientific knowledge and encourage discovery*

Vicki Gibson, Education Consultant (cont.)

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

The Roundtable discussion included dialogue that focused on “soft skills” such as social-emotional and music and movement and inferred that was important for developing neural pathways. While that has some merit for physical coordination, enjoyment, etc., preschool programming must aggressively make every effort to close lack-of-opportunity-to-learn and achievement gaps related to emergent language, reading, and writing using developmentally appropriate materials and activities.

The evidence in four decades of developmental research clearly shows that increasing skills in word knowledge, oral language, listening/speaking and thinking ensure children have the foundational skills for identifying sounds and using them correctly in spoken language and later for decoding to read and spelling to write words. The instructional interactions between adults and children make the difference in children’s performance. That is why the state adopted speaking and listening and language guidelines. Engaging children in collaborative conversations about stories and informational text is ‘brain-training’.

Most teachers and assistants lack training in developing expectations, selecting curricula, and conducting purposeful lessons that build awareness, not focus on mastery. There is no mastery requirement in PreK. Children acquire information and practice using it to develop skills, but teachers focus on memorizing facts and naming objects...not developing thinking skills. More regulation is needed for professional development. Many “approved” forms of training can be used to satisfy the annual clock-hour requirements for childcare workers and teachers in preschool classrooms, especially Head Start. However, the quality of the approved training options is seriously lacking.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

The barriers to developmental readiness differ. Barriers to developing kindergarten readiness are usually related to poor quality preschool programming. The failure to close lack-of-opportunity-to-learn gaps related to poverty and limited access to English language is an adult barrier, yet it is often perceived to be an outcome of children’s disadvantages. Poor quality programming is a result of:

- Low expectations and lack of preparation and training; more daycare-type activities than intentional teaching and practice to actively close gaps early
- Inadequate professional development and lack of funding; limited regulation on requirements for on-going training, especially in developmental progressions and emergent skills for listening, speaking, reading, writing, early numeracy and science
- Using preschool curricula and practices that are not evidence or research-based; programming that follows trends or uninformed personal preferences that have not been proven effective for short and long term gains
- Programs that are more play-based than developmentally purposed for developing foundational skills in emergent reading and writing skills; precious resources, time and money, are wasted on large gaps of time set aside for child-directed play, as if children can teach themselves about sophisticated skills for reading, writing, math, etc. Discovery learning is important, but children need guidance in basic skills in order to “discover” with meaning.

Vicki Gibson, Education Consultant (cont.)

- Failure to monitor student's performances from year to year through 3rd grade...only then will the "tide" shift to SCHOOL readiness, not kindergarten readiness. "readiness" for kindergarten is measured by naming letters, sounds shapes, numerals and colors.
- Rote memory learning fails students about second grade. It does not require deep thinking and reasoning, questioning and comparing results...skills that involve higher level cognitive rigor than most preschool teachers include in their activities. Think about the way educated parents read and discuss stories with their own children...the experiences are developmentally appropriate and useful for building foundational skills for academic achievement and social-emotional well-being.

Patty Hannan, Play Wisely

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

Number Literacy: First, the skill of subitization up to the amount of six. Subitization is the ability for example, to see the pattern of 5 on a dice and know it is 5 without having to place count. Second, have the ability to understand that the abstract symbol 6 has a corresponding concrete amount that it represents. Third, possess a perceptual permanence of amounts. For example, if a child sees 3 things he/she should know it will always be 3 regardless of its pattern, location or presentation. Fourth, be able to finger count and place count. Fifth, possess a basic understanding of addition and subtraction.

Language Literacy: First, be capable of speaking in age-appropriate full sentences and be capable of properly communicating needs, wants and ideas. Second, possess proper use of general grammar. For example, use of adjectives before nouns, correct tense in use of verbs, proper use pronouns. Second, recognize most letters and be familiar with the sounds associated with them. Third, be able to recognize and 'read' a few familiar words including their name. Fourth, be able to write their name. Fifth, be capable of responding to age appropriate questions in a correct and timely way.

Attribute Recognition: First, recognize and verbally identify visual characteristics such as shape, size, amounts (1 through 6, a few vs. many), and basic colors (primary and secondary). Second, be able to match picture images with real objects, be able to sort a group of images by certain basic attributes. Third be able to recognize patterns and repeat them. Be able to build basic matrices using basic attributes.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

Repetition through music, physical activities, books and flash cards of basic cognitive skills such as letters, numbers, amounts and basic attributes. Coordination activities such as riding a bike, running and climbing that exercise coordination of upper and lower body parts, right side and left side and directional motion through space. Eye exercises including tracking, acuity, discrimination and orientation tasks to strengthen eye movements necessary for identifying the directionality of letters, following words left to right and up to down. An emphasis on fine motor skills, strengthening grasps, promoting finger coordination, wrist articulation and using a stabilizing hand while performing lateralized tasks. Include gross motor, visual motor and fine motor activities that will strengthen a child's awareness and use of a lateralized side.

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

Exercising Visual field navigation skills, sensory integration and coordination skills, ability to move with agility between general perceptual processing areas (from color processing to numerical processing, for example) and speed of input to output (such as communication) response times. PlayWisely has been implementing such a program in Dallas and internationally for 15 years.

Patty Hannan, Play Wisely (cont.)

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

Parent/caregiver/community support. Children need direction, attention and interaction from caregivers. The quantity and quality of experience a child receives, particularly in the earliest years actually changes the structure of the brain! These early experiences set the foundation or stage upon which all future ability is built. Positive communication, enthusiastic repetition of age appropriate interaction through various mediums, scaffolding language/communication skills, helping a child sense positive competency in their growth and development both cognitively and physically are all critical to a child's future success but is often not in place.

Susanne Malone, Early Learning Alliance

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

Recently, a workgroup from the Tarrant County Early Learning Alliance conducted a focus group with self-selected kindergarten teachers from various districts across Tarrant County (5 districts were represented). The question was, “What skills do you wish children came into kindergarten possessing.” Their overwhelming response was consistent with early learning research....

- Social emotional skills
- Fine motor skills
- Family participation

We know that while some very basic skills in letter and number identification are beneficial upon entering kindergarten, it is that child’s ability to negotiate the kindergarten environment that lends to them thriving academically. These social emotional skills include assertive communication skills, ability to follow simple instructions, ability to problem solve, freedom to be curious, and the ability to apply simple self-help skills. In addition the social emotional skills, fine motor skills, such as the ability to properly hold a pencil, are precursors to academic learning. Family participation, as indicated by the research on risk and protective factors, is a strong protective factor and indicates success in elementary school.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

- Identification, would be my first suggestion. Too many children coming into the 0 to 5 space are entering early learning environments with delays that are not properly identified. These children are often identified as “behavior problems” or “slow learners”. Proper identification and referral to appropriate supports could close the gap for these children. Unfortunately, many center staff and parents do not know what to look for and are unfamiliar with supports that can help.
- Assessment. Early learning programs should be using assessments that assist in identifying issues early. Tools such as the ASQ, the ASQ SE, and the ACE’s (childhood trauma) assessments can help identify areas needing particular attention and point administrators and caregivers towards needed services
- Evidence based models that focus on social emotional learning. Without the ability to self-regulate, resolve minor conflicts, communicate, and work with others, a child is not going to be able to focus on academics. This requires an ability to access higher centers of the brain, which needs to be taught by caregivers that are informed and trained to do so. There are powerful evidence-based models available to teach these skills.

Susanne Malone, Early Learning Alliance (cont.)

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

- Lena Pope's Early Learning Centers use the Conscious Discipline model. The model is brain based and focuses on teaching skills of self regulation, problem solving, conflict resolution, assertion, and compassion. It has been a powerful intervention that not only focuses on the children, but trains caregivers and parents to identify states of the brain that drive behavior in adults and children alike. It also focuses on the learning/school environment and promotes engagement with families, encouraging connection to the "School Family"
- Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). TBRI is a brain based model that uses the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) assessment to identify children who have experienced trauma. It teaches effective ways to interact with and reduce behavioral symptoms in children who have experienced trauma or are living in traumatic situations.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

- Lack of a clear definition of kindergarten readiness that is shared among early educators, both public and private. Without a clear understanding of what kindergarten readiness looks like, 0 to 5 providers do not know what they are preparing young children for.
- Mis-alignment between preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and school administrators in assessment of readiness. Included in this would be mis-alignment with current research in early childhood education on what a child needs to be kindergarten ready.
- Too much focus on academics and not enough focus on social emotional development.
- Limited access (and capacity) to quality early learning environments for all families, regardless of income
- Limited access to ancillary services families need to be strong and engaged in their child's learning
- Lack of professional and career development for early childhood providers. Improving the knowledge base, quality and credentials of caregiver staff.
- Wage gap between preschool and elementary school teachers resulting in less qualified teaching staff in the 0 to 5 year space.
- Lack of a quality rating system for ALL licensed child care centers and homes based care.

Dr. Cheryl Mixon, Ft. Worth ISD, Early Childhood

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

Social/emotional- children should enter school ready to interact positively with their peers and teachers. Specifically, the use verbal/non-verbal communication to build relationships, managing emotions and impulses and focusing attention on tasks are all skills necessary to become part of a classroom community.

Gross/fine motor- physical development is necessary to promote numerous components of the learning experience, including cognitive and social/emotional development. Children should be able to hold writing utensils with stability.

Language/Literacy- Expressive and receptive language are imperative as children converse and communicate their thinking, a primary element in early literacy. Children should be familiar with books, poems, songs and nursery rhymes and understand print carries a message. Noticing the differences in sounds in words is fundamental in becoming a reader. Recognizing letters connects to the understanding that letters represent sounds.

Math- counting, one-one correspondence, sorting objects and basic shape recognition are key skills they should know.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

Play-based early learning experiences that are hands-on and developmentally appropriate would address these issues.

Literacy instruction should begin with letters in children's names and include the letter sounds. There should be 3-4 books read to them daily with application of comprehension. Children need to manipulate letters in authentic activities to solidify their understandings. Authentic writing opportunities should also be a regular component in literacy.

Pre-K curriculum needs a strong math component that addresses all 5 math strands as described in the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines. Real world experiences with math are imperative to developing their skills.

The curriculum should be grounded in social/emotional development. It should be an integral part of all elements of instruction, not a standalone block in the day.

Dedicated activities that promote physical development outside of the standard recess time are necessary. Movement, music and outdoor time that is planned and purposeful would address this delay.

Dr. Cheryl Mixon, Ft. Worth ISD, Early Childhood (cont.)

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

Optimal brain development occurs through everyday experiences; therefore, it is difficult to narrow to a program. Programs that address brain development would include strategies that facilitate attachment between children and their teachers. Classroom connecting activities lead to and strengthen the children's feelings of belonging, establishing a classroom community. This lays the groundwork for brain development.

Children must feel safe in their environment to develop positive neural pathways. Those feelings of safety are based on perception of the children, not the adults. This is imperative for children who have experienced adverse situations in their families.

Programs that encourage relationship building, such as Conscious Discipline, positively impact brain development. Relationships are built on consistent and positive interactions between and among teachers and children.

Routines and practices that support organization, attention and memory also promote positive neural pathways. Further, strategies to calm and regulate emotions is another component that impacts brain development.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

One of the key barriers is a lack of sufficient funding to support high quality, full-day Pre-K. Many school districts are limited in resources to expand the Pre-K day with local funds. This often affects parents' ability to access quality programs when they work full-time.

Administrators and teachers are sometimes unaware of the most appropriate play-based, instructional practices for Pre-K children. Despite best intentions, this often results in inappropriate instruction such as worksheets and extensive seatwork. Requiring administrators to engage in early learning professional learning opportunities would likely assist in this concern. The recent TEA requirements of Pre-K teachers is working towards diminishing this concern.

Attendance and tardiness are often prevalent in Pre-K. Some parents do not realize the negative impact it has on children's learning.

Traumatic experiences play a role in kindergarten readiness, as it often manifest in behavioral challenges. Parents and teachers need to be equipped with strategies to assist and promote coping skills in young children.

Shea Stanfield-McGarrah Ed.D.

1. Identify skills that should be required upon kindergarten entry.

There is no answer that could encapsulate 150 words for this...thus the need for further emphasis on PK. We must get our children prepared early if we are going to obtain the 3rd grade reading outcome desires for Texas!

- **Language & Early Literacy**

- produce speech sounds with increasing ease and accuracy.
- use new vocabulary in everyday communication.
- begin to retell the sequence of a story.
- become increasingly sensitive to the sounds of spoken words.
- begin to identify rhymes and rhyming sounds in familiar words.
- begin to attend to the beginning sounds in familiar words by identifying that the pronunciations of several words all begin the same way.
- begin to break words into syllables or claps along with each syllable in a phrase.
- understand that letters are different from numbers.
- understand that reading and writing are ways to obtain information and knowledge.
- begin to recognize the association between spoken and written words by following the print as it is read aloud.
- identify 20 or more printed upper and lower case alphabet letters.
- ask questions and make comments about the information and events from books.
- retell or reenact stories after they are read aloud.
- attempt to write messages as a part of playful activity.
- attempt to connect the sounds in a word with its letter forms.
- begin to dictate words, phrases, and sentences to an adult recording on paper

- **Mathematics**

- arrange sets of concrete objects in one-to-one correspondence
- rote count by ones to 30 or higher
- begin to name "how many" are in a group of up to three (or more) objects without counting .
- put together and breaks apart shapes to make real-world objects
- recognize and create patterns
- begin to recognize, describe, and name shapes.
- put together puzzles of increasing complexity.
- cover an area with shapes
- begin to make size comparisons between objects (taller than, smaller than)
- begin to use tools to imitate measuring.
- describe similarities and differences between objects.
- participate in creating and using real and pictorial graphs.
- use location words (i.e. over, under.)

Shea Stanfield-McGarrah Ed.D. (cont.)

Science

- use one or more senses to observe and learn about objects, events, and organisms.
- use simple measuring devices to learn about objects.
- observe and describe characteristics of energy, sources of energy, earth materials and changes in the earth and sky.
- identify animals and plants as living things.
- group organisms and objects as living or nonliving and begins to identify things people have built.
- observe, record, and predict daily weather changes.
- demonstrate the importance of caring for our environment and our planet.
- begin to use scientific words and phrases to describe objects, events and living things. become aware of routine healthy behaviors (brushing teeth).
- begin to follow health-promoting routines (hand washing).
- begin to recognize and select healthy foods.
- know how to cross a street safely.
- recognize the danger of fire and learns to treat fire with caution.
- recognize the symbol for poison.
- recognize the danger of poisonous substances, including drugs.
- know never to take medicine unless it is administered by an adult.
- know how to get help from a parent and/or trusted adult when made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe by another person/adult.

Social Studies

- identify similarities among people like himself/herself and classmates as well as among himself/herself and people from other cultures.
- identify common events and routines (snack time, story time).
- identify common features in the home and school environment.
- begin to use words to indicate relative location (front, back, near, far).
- understand the roles, responsibilities, and services provided by community workers.
- recite the pledge
- engage in simple voting experiences

Fine Arts

- use a variety of materials to create original works.
- use art as a form of creative self-expression and representation
- participate in classroom music activities.
- begin to create or recreate stories, moods, or experiences through dramatic representations

Social and Emotional Development

- listen and contribute circle time discussions
- show initiative in independent situations
- persist in attempting to solve problems
- develop a sense of personal space.
- begin to show self-control by following classroom rules.
- begin to be responsible for individual behavior and actions.
- begin to show greater ability to control intense feelings.

Shea Stanfield-McGarrah Ed.D. (cont.)

Social and Emotional Development (cont.)

- begin to share and cooperate with others in group activities.
- respect other people's space and personal belongings.
- begin to develop friendships with others.
- begin to express thought, feelings, and ideas through language as well as through gestures and actions.
- respond to the suggestions of others.
- participate in classroom jobs.

Physical Development

- explore moving in space.
- show an awareness of name, location, and relationship of body parts.
- move within a space of defined boundaries, changing body configuration to accommodate the space.
- become more able to move from one space to another in different ways (running, jumping, skipping, hopping).
- begin to move in rhythm.
- begin to throw or kick an object in a particular direction.
- begin to play catch with a bean bag or a large ball.
- begin to develop pincer control in picking up objects.
- begin to hold writing tools with fingers instead of a fist.
- begins to use scissors.
- begin to practice self-help skills.

2. The Roundtable identified that children begin prekindergarten with developmental delays. Among the most important of these delays are early literacy/numeracy skills, social/emotional awareness, and physical/motor ability. What programmatic components of a Pre-K curriculum would help remediate developmental delays?

*A **Developmental Wellness/Play Class Program** embedding Music/Movement and Motor Skills is a perfect solution to helping student's battle underdeveloped brains. We must offer every child the opportunity to gain the physical and cognitive milestones/skills essential for school readiness. Playing has always been the first and best way to stimulate early learning and movement ability. Reading stories, singing songs, reciting nursery rhymes and playing games are some of the staples of early cognitive development. Physical play, Music/Movement experiences, rocking, crawling, running, exploring outside and observing nature are also essential to sensory and cognitive development.*

The science of learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. No longer is learning considered just about the "ABC's and 123's" but more importantly about nurturing the brain to help those skills to be deployed efficiently.

A cognitive system approach to teach a child but also to train the brain for efficient function. There are opportunities to implement innovative approaches designed to kick-start the mental processes responsible for attention, perception, reading and math, and employment of both fine and gross motor.

Shea Stanfield-McGarrah Ed.D. (cont.)

3. The Roundtable identified that early learning focuses not only on teaching a child but also on training the brain to function optimally. What programs could help develop neural pathways that influence brain development?

With the rise of neurodevelopmental issues (ADHD, ASD, Dyslexia) as well as the demands of a changing world (poverty, demographics, lack of time to parent, lack of knowledge on child development from caregivers, etc.) we must realize the importance of human biology development and the ability to even learn!

Research suggests that the focus of interventions should shift from a primary emphasis on changing the direct math and reading instructional environment to interventions that build better foundational skills of attention and fine motor skills and a better understanding of the world outside schools. Data suggest that current direct math and reading instruction is insufficient to build attention and fine motor skills. Building these skills may rely more on subjects and curricula that have been de-emphasized to provide more math and reading instruction: the arts, music, dance, physical education, and free play. Closing these gaps may be less about better math and reading instruction than about building better attention and fine motor skills and better awareness and knowledge of the external world.

4. Identify barriers to Kindergarten Readiness.

(Other than the obvious of lack of nutrition, medical care, etc.)

**Childhood Experiences (trauma) such as verbal, physical or sexual abuse, or family dysfunction like incarceration, mental illness or substance abuse (Gerwin, 2013). Research indicates that traumatic stress in childhood is the leading causes of morbidity, mortality and disability in the United States (Edwards, Shipman & Brown, 2005). Stress and trauma cross all ethnic and economic lines, with grave effects on health, learning, social-emotional development and brain development. (Children living with stress and trauma walk through our doors every day. We tend to treat their symptoms with rewards, punishments and removal instead of meeting their needs with a culture of inclusion, teaching self-regulation, healing and connection that builds resiliency)*

**Not having appropriate prior stimulation before entering Kindergarten (lack of PK, no one in the care-giving position to understand child development)*