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Increasing Head Start Parents' Awareness about Kindergarten Readiness

Griselda Galvan-Ramirez

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

This project focuses on informing Migrant Head Start parents of the ways they can support their children's development of kindergarten readiness. Kindergarten preparation is essential for a child's development since this is what sets the foundation for their future years in school. It also helps children make the transition to school be smooth and positive. Since many parents do not know how to get involved in their children's preparation for kindergarten. The parents in the center need help in understanding how important their role is in regards to kindergarten readiness for their children. A reason may be that parents think their children will learn on their own, and others do not get involved due to language barriers. Given this issue there is a need for parent education on kindergarten readiness in the Latino immigrant parents of the center. The parents need mentorship and guidance to help their children be ready for preschool in different areas of their development. The main areas of development I will educate the parents on how to help their children be ready for kindergarten are cognitive and linguistic development. In the first part of the workshop I will inform the parents about various reasons why kinder readiness is important. In the second part of the workshop I will show parents different activities they can do at home to help their child increase competence in their home language while gaining proficiency in English. It is important for a parent to be a guidance in their children's social emotional development and be present to nourish this which is why in the third part I will show daily activities that can help their child gain cognitive development. Parents will enhance their children's kindergarten readiness while using Spanish if this is their primary language and their cognitive development through daily activities at home. Many parents only speak Spanish since they migrated from Central and Latin America to the USA. My project will be implemented in the migrant Head Start I volunteered in Gonzales California. The head start is a

migrant program, meaning that the families there tend to be from a hispanic background and low/medium socioeconomic status which is why they travel around California for better living opportunities.

Needs Statement

Kindergarten is important for children because this is where they start to be prepared socially, emotionally and cognitively to reach their full potential. Many of the children in the USA are not prepared for kindergarten and this is something that can be prevented if their parents engage in home activities that prepare their children for kindergarten. Children who are not ready at school are more likely to repeat a grade, need special education services, and leave school prior to graduation (Gill et al., 2006). Given this information parents should have the opportunity to get the right guidance to help their child achieve kindergarten readiness which is why I have created this 3 topic workshop for my project. The first topic is the importance of kindergarten readiness. The second topic is increasing competence in the child's home language while acquiring English proficiency for kindergarten. The third topic is increasing the child's age-appropriate cognitive development for kindergarten.

Kindergarten readiness is the developmental domains that contribute to a child's ability to learn and adapt to school. Kindergarten readiness consists of 5 main domains. The first domain would be social emotional development. The second domain would be language development, the third would be cognitive development. The fourth domain would be literacy development and lastly physical development. All of these domains interconnect with each other like a domino effect so if the child is lacking one one it can affect the other. Researchers have noted that parents' beliefs play an important role in shaping children's early experiences and that children are likely to learn those skills that are prized within a culture(Harkness & Super,1992).

Readiness for school is not considered only as a specially organized activity for the development of certain universal educational skills (how to count, write, accept and set tasks) but also cognitively. Is the child ready to understand, think, and learn? The development of cognitive abilities is determined by the development of memory and attention (Zakharova et al.,2020). In this study the results of the diagnosis confirmed that the features of the mental development of the preschoolers do not allow a child to fix attention on subjects or actions for a long time, to maintain interest in the performed action. This shows us how it is important to enrich cognitive development in early childhood. Ways the parents can do this is to let children solve problems independently, read daily to their child, and ask open ended questions to expand their verbal comprehension, inferencing and verbal comprehension.

There are many different factors that can decrease kindergarten readiness on a child.. Kindergarten readiness starts from all the experiences the child goes through, whether this is at home, child care or other situations. Socioeconomic factors can play a role in the child's preparation for kindergarten. Some of these factors can be like poverty, low income, access to healthcare, and neighborhood and the environment they live in. According to Williams et al.(2019), one of the most widely recognized risk factors for school readiness is poverty. The way poverty affects children in regards to kindergarten readiness is because of the lack of financial resources and parents being more likely to have less education meaning that they can have low income jobs. Some of the children who also experience poverty tend to be in the Child Protective system causing them to have childhood trauma which affects their cognitive and emotional development. Another factor for children to not be kindergarten ready is being exposed to different types of neglect either in the prenatal stage or development stage. Children when in the womb can be exposed to drugs, alcohol and tobacco which can cause developmental

delays on the child as they grow. Having good pediatric care, interventions for parents at risk, and preschool settings have shown that are helpful to prepare children for kindergarten if the intervention and help is sought in time.

The factors mentioned above not only affect the child's ability to be ready for kindergarten but can also affect them throughout their other school years. In a study where researchers measured the association between kindergarten readiness and academic achievement, by the end of high school they found that kindergarten math skills contributed to better end-of-high school grades and lower dropout rates (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). If a child is neglected at an early age they can grow up to feel emotionally distant from their parents and others which pushes them to substance abuse. Kindergarten readiness is not only about being ready for kindergarten but rather being ready for life, and their upcoming school years since this is what sets the tone for them. If their child does well in kindergarten they are more likely to do well in school but the parents have to be active and understanding in regards to the importance of being present.

Parents need to understand the importance they have in their child's development since they are the ones who guide their children in all aspects of life. Parents need to understand that their children's well being in school starts from kindergarten and should put in all their effort for children to succeed in school. Parents can contribute to preparing their child for kindergarten by teaching good behavioral skills, school readiness and helping their children achieve their goals. Teachers and researchers have identified children's behavior skills as a critical component of children's school readiness and early success (Hartman et al., 2016). Children need to have good behavior skills like staying seated, following directions, and sharing etc. this helps the child stay out of trouble and have good conduct. In regards to school readiness parents can help by teaching

their children the ABC's, counting from 1-10 and the colors. These are basic things that the children can learn at home with the help from their parents. The parents can also set goals for their children like learning how to write their name. This helps the child gain a sense of confidence and determination which also helps them build their character and personality.

Latino immigrant parents experience transition to school differently than non-immigrant parents. The lens through which immigrant parents experience the transition to school may be greatly influenced by their own experiences from their home country (Beasley et al., 2022). Culture can be an additional factor to kindergarten readiness because many parents did not receive the guidance when they were growing up so they do not have the knowledge. Another factor of culture can be the language barrier since in the USA school is predominantly taught in English. Parents can help their children gain beginning proficiency in English while increasing competence in their home language. In the study Beasley et al.(2022) state that parent participants in this study experienced communication that was respectful of their culture by school personnel using their home language, which was very helpful to them in their children's transition. I think this is important because it made the parents be more engaged since they felt more comfortable expressing themselves which helps them be more present in their child's school life.

My capstone project addresses the need to inform Latino immigrant parents about kindergarten readiness and equip them with resources to help their children gain competence in their cognitive and language development. I will be doing this through a three topic workshop for the parents. The initial topic will be the importance of kindergarten readiness where the parents will be able to identify two or more reasons why kindergarten readiness is important. The second topic will be ways to increase competence in the child's home language while acquiring English

proficiency for kindergarten. Parents will be able to identify in my workshop two activities they can do with their child in order to increase competence in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English. The third topic will inform parents ways they can increase the child's age-appropriate cognitive development for kindergarten. Parents will be able to identify two activities from the workshop that help their child gain age-appropriate cognitive development during at home activities.

Theory

The theory that informed my capstone project is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. The main focus of this theory is that a child's cognitive development and learning ability can be guided and mediated by their social interactions. It also states that learning for a child is more of a social process than an independent process. Cultural and social factors can be the educational level of the parents, socioeconomic status, health. The social and cultural environments can be household environments, family environments, and school settings.

The first claim of this theory is that culture is significant to a child's learning and development. Some sociocultural factors from the children in my project are that all the parents are Hispanic from low socioeconomic status. All of the families that are part of the Migrant Head Start mostly work in agriculture and frequently move from county to county. The children in the program are 2 years old-5 years old. Some of the children come from divorced parents, and others their parents are not as involved in their education because they do not have the resources. Also some parents have minimal to no education and their home language is Spanish.

The second claim is that language and communication is the root of learning for a child. In my project I will teach parents that they can communicate with their child in Spanish and still be able to prepare their child for acquiring English. In regards to language development this

theory applies to my project because even if parents only know one language they can still communicate and interact with their children which helps them learn by interacting. This helps them be ready to communicate and interact with other children once they start kindergarten.

Another way this theory relates to my project is based on the ZPD/scaffolding component. ZPD or the Zone of Proximal Development is a model Vygotsky created that shows how children learn based on what a child can do with guidance and the things they can do unaided. Scaffolding is when parents help their child learn by supporting them and guiding them onto new things. This concept looks at learning from the point of view of being an apprentice vs self learning. The parents will learn new activities to try with their child so that the child can learn with support rather than on their own. Some of the activities I will show them that singing and reading books with their child can help expand their curiosity, imagination and creativity. Another activity I will show that focuses on expanding their linguistic development is using full sentences with their children at all times and engaging in a conversation with them. In regards to their cognitive development I will show them how to expand their solving problem skills by using matching games and solving puzzles. I will also show parents how they can help their child develop social-emotional skills by using a daily routine which allows their child to explore independence.

Consideration of Diversity

In Monterey County the kindergarten readiness assessment determined that only 25 percent of the children in the county are kindergarten ready. This is only one-fourth of the children who attend kindergarten each school year. Also 89% of the children who ranked at the bottom five percent of the kindergarten readiness assessment are Hispanic or Latino. The target population for my capstone project is latino immigrant parents who have their children enrolled

in CAPSLO Migrant Head Start Program, and other parents in the programs who are not latino. Most of the participants speak mainly Spanish but there are some who are bilingual. Many of the parents only attended grade school/middle school and most of them migrated here to the USA from Latin America. Most of the participants are 20-35 years old since there are some teen parents in the program.

Since most of the participants only speak Spanish my presentation to them was in Spanish. This was easy for me to understand and accomplish since I am bilingual myself. I also tried to not use too much information they were not familiar with so that they could understand the concept I was trying to explain. I tried to make it comprehensible by showing visuals and demonstrating. I used examples of everyday activities they could do at home in order to help their child be prepared for kindergarten. Some of the activities were 5 minute activities, since most of the parents do work long hour shifts. I also helped them understand the importance of kindergarten readiness and how much of an impact they are to their child's learning without making them feel bad for their parenting so far. I did this by just suggesting new activities and parenting skills rather than forcing them to implement them.

Learning Outcomes

I designed a one time workshop on kindergarten readiness for Migrant Head Start parents. My project's main focus was for parents to understand more about kindergarten readiness and how beneficial it is for their children's success in all different areas of child development with the right guidance. My workshop focused on the following learning outcomes:

1. Parents will be able to identify two or more reasons why it is important for them to prepare their child for kindergarten.
2. Parents will be able to identify two activities they can do with their child in order to

increase competence in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English.

3. Parents will be able to identify two activities that help their child gain age-appropriate cognitive development by implementing: reasoning, analyzing, exploration, during at home activities.

Methods

Location and Participants

The location I implemented my project in was Gonzalez California at the CAPSLO Migrant Head Start.. I had a total of 5 pairs of parents participating in my workshop and 2 single parents.. I recruited them by asking the site supervisor to ask the parents if they were interested in participating in a kindergarten readiness program workshop. I created a letter informing parents what my workshop was about and how they can help me with my capstone project. Six families agreed to participate. The participants were all adults ranging from ages 20-35 years old. Most of the parents only spoke Spanish and were from a hispanic background. The families were of low socioeconomic status and many did not know the importance of kindergarten readiness for their children. I had a total of 5 male and 7 females participating. Two of the female participants were single mothers.

Procedures and Materials

The workshop lasted approximately 90 minutes, with small breaks in between them. I had a total of 3 lessons to share with the parents. Each lesson lasted approximately 20 mins with 5 minute intervals for breaks. At the end of the workshop I had 15 minutes left for an assessment which consisted of a survey to see how much the parents had learned. My workshop took place in the Migrant Head Start in Gonzales California.

For my first lesson I focused on showing them the importance of kindergarten readiness. In my powerpoint I created a few slides that talked on the importance of kindergarten readiness and what kindergarten readiness was. After going through these slides I talked to the parents more about kindergarten readiness and stopped if they had any questions or concerns.

For the second lesson I focused on showing the parents that they can help their children be ready for learning English even if their first language is Spanish. In my slides I showed them bilingual songs that they can use to teach their childrens the alphabet, numbers, colors and vowels. I showed them the bilingual songs on Youtube and demonstrated how they can sing with their kids. I also did this so that the parents can feel comfortable and confident to teach their children and prepare them for kindergarten.

For the third lesson I showed parents different activities to help their children gain age-appropriate cognitive development. I showed them the activities by showing a video on Youtube. I also demonstrated how they can sing to their children to soothe them when they feel sad. I also showed them they could read a book and show pictures to their children but allow their children to use their imagination and explain what's going on in the story. I also shared ways to help them problem solve, and work with others. This will help their children with their communication skills, and social skills.

For my assessment it was a 4 question survey at the end of the presentation. My assessment was given to them on a google form that I printed out for them to fill out. Questions 1-3 asked about each lesson presented. The 4th question focused on what they took away the most from the presentation. Parents in the 4th question were able to write down their feedback and share it if they wanted to.

Results

The first learning outcome was that parents will be able to identify two or more reasons why it is important for them to prepare their child for kindergarten. To assess this LO, I used a survey/questionnaire at the end of my workshop. The question for this LO was: “¿Porqué es importante preparar a su hijo para kindergarten?” (Why is it important to prepare your child for kindergarten?) and the parents had to check off 2 boxes or more from the options provided. A passing score for this assessment question was if they checked off at least two or more options from the ones provided. Ten of the 12 parents (83%) choose 2 or more correct reasons why it was important for their child to attend kindergarten. There was 4 items and 3 were correct answers. The other 27% of the participants failed to answer this question correctly because they only identified one of the correct options. Because a high percentage (83%) of the parents answered the question correctly, I considered LO 1 to be fully met.

My LO #2 was: Parents will be able to identify two activities they can do with their child in order to increase competence in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English. The question for this LO was: “Marque las actividades que usted cree que pueden ayudar las habilidades lingüísticas de su hijo en casa.” (Check off the activities you think that can help your child’s linguistic development at home.) The parents had to check off 2 boxes or more from the options provided and if they did this would be a passing score. For this question 11/12(91%) parents choose 2 or more activities that help their child’s linguistic development. The other 9% of the participants failed to answer this question correctly because they only chose one of the options from the ones provided. The high percentage of 91% indicates that my LO was fully met.

My LO #3 was: Parents will be able to identify two activities that help their child gain age-appropriate cognitive development by implementing: reasoning, analyzing, exploration, during at home activities. The question for this LO was “Marque las actividades que usted cree que ayuden con el desarrollo cognitivo de su hijo en casa”.(Check off the activities that you think will help your child’s cognitive development.) For this question after reviewing the answers 9/12(75%) parents checked off 2 activities that helped their child's cognitive development. The other 3(25%) participants only checked off one activity from the ones provided. A passing score for my assessment questions of 75% indicates that my LO was fully met.

Discussion

The successes of my project was that my three learning outcomes were fully met. The main topic of my capstone project was kindergarten readiness and how this is important for the child's development. I focused on informing migrant Head Start parents of the ways they can support their children’s development with at home activities to prepare them for kindergarten. The learning outcome that was fully met was: #1 because parents were able to identify two or more reasons why kindergarten readiness is important. I think that this learning outcome was fully met because I provided clear and valuable information to the parents. I also think this LO was met because parents were really engaged in knowing more about kindergarten readiness since some of them did not know what it was and how important it is for their child. The other learning outcome that was fully met was #2 because parents were able to identify two or more ways they can help their child’s linguistic development. I think this LO was met because I showed them how even if they only know Spanish they can use this to show their child the colors, ABC’s and numbers by singing bilingual songs to them and other resources. I also showed them that language should not be a barrier for them to think that they can not be effective

in their child's learning, making them feel understood and confident. I also think my project was successful because the parents gave me positive feedback after the workshop. Some expressed how they did not know anything about kindergarten readiness since they had little education to none, but after the workshop they felt a sense of being able to guide their child. They shared how the topics were engaging and opened their eyes to using resources at home or everyday activities to help their child learn. This feedback is consistent with my theory because Vygotsky asserts that a child's cognitive development and learning abilities are guided and learned by their social interactions. The project worked well with my participants' diversity characteristics, since most of them only knew Spanish. I presented it fully in Spanish and the survey and discussion was also in Spanish.

I also had some limitations/challenges in my project. One difficulty I faced meanwhile trying to implement my project was scheduling a time with the parents that worked for everyone or fit into everyone's schedule. Most of my participants worked in agriculture so they did not have a set schedule time of getting out of work. Also some of them were single parents so they needed to find the proper child care on a time that worked for everyone. Another difficulty was the way I approached the parents. In the beginning this was hard for me because I did not want to make the parents feel like they were taking the workshop because their parenting skills were being doubted. I also did not want to make them feel like they were being judged of their knowledge or being told what to do with their child. I wanted them to understand that this workshop was more to inform them and give them resources to make their child's development reach their full potential for better.

I believe overall my project was successful and in the future I would like to be able to inform other parents around the area from other headstarts, and preschools about kindergarten

readiness. I would also like to partner with other resources in the area or community to be able to give these to the parents to fulfill any need they have in regards to economic, counseling, and healthcare not only for their children but as a whole for their families.

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Appendix A

Capstone Festival Slides

Increasing Head Start Parents awareness about Kindergarten Readiness

Griselda Galvan
Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

Kindergarten Readiness: refers to the developmental domains that contribute to a child's ability to transition and adapt to kindergarten.

My project focuses on informing migrant Head Start parents of kindergarten readiness. I taught them ways they can support their children's development with at home activities to prepare them for kindergarten.

The two developmental domains I focused on were cognitive and language development:

- Social and Emotional skills
- Language skills
- Approaches to learning

Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory: asserts that a child's cognitive development and learning abilities are guided and learned by their social interactions. Learning is also seen a social process instead of a independent process for the child. Children nourish this functions through cultural and social environments/factors.

- Claims that language is the root for a child's learning and development
- Scaffolding and ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)

Needs Statement

Issue/Problem: Many of the children in the USA are not prepared for kindergarten. Kindergarten is important for children because this is where they start to be prepared socially, emotionally and cognitively to reach their full potential at school.

- Children who are not ready for school are more likely to repeat a grade, need special education services, and leave school prior to graduation (Winters, Friedman, 2006).

Need: Parents need to understand more about kindergarten readiness and how beneficial it is for their children's success in all different areas of child development with the right guidance.

Project Learning Outcomes

I designed a one time workshop on kindergarten readiness for Migrant Head Start parents. My workshop focused on the following learning outcomes:

1. Parents will be able to identify two or more reasons why it is important for them to prepare their child for kindergarten.
2. Parents will be able to identify two activities they can do with their child in order to increase competence in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English.
3. Parents will be able to identify two activities that help their child gain age-appropriate cognitive development during at home activities.

Method: Location and Participants

Location: La Paz Migrant Seasonal Head Start (CAPSLO)

Participants: 12 parents: 5 couples, 2 single moms

Age Group: 20 to 35 years old (5 males and 7 females)

Characteristics:

- Latino Parents
- Mainly spanish speaking only
- Migrated to the USA
- Some only attended grade school/middle school only

Method: Procedures and Materials

One time workshop with **3** topics presented in a powerpoint. Workshop lasted approximately one hour and a half with small breaks in between each topic. A final assessment at the end of the workshop was given in a questionnaire form.

Topics :

1. Importance of Kindergarten Readiness
2. Power of Words and Language
3. My Child's Imagination and Development

Assessment Results

LO 1: Parents will be able to identify two or more reasons why it is important for them to prepare their child for kindergarten.

Method used to assess: Survey Question #1 asked them to identify why it is important to prepare their child for kindergarten with 4 different options to choose from.

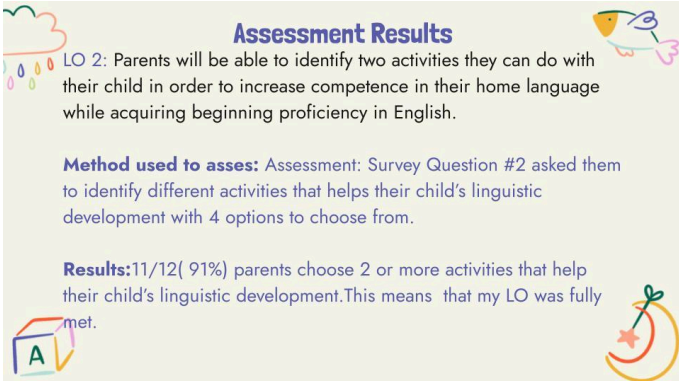
Results: 10/12 (83%) parents choose 2 or more reasons why it was important to prepare their child for kindergarten. This means that my LO was fully met.

Assessment Results

LO 2: Parents will be able to identify two activities they can do with their child in order to increase competence in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English.

Method used to assess: Assessment: Survey Question #2 asked them to identify different activities that helps their child's linguistic development with 4 options to choose from.

Results: 11/12 (91%) parents choose 2 or more activities that help their child's linguistic development. This means that my LO was fully met.

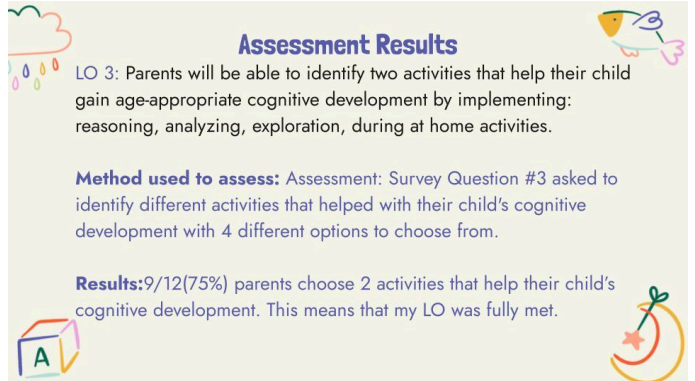


Assessment Results

LO 3: Parents will be able to identify two activities that help their child gain age-appropriate cognitive development by implementing: reasoning, analyzing, exploration, during at home activities.

Method used to assess: Assessment: Survey Question #3 asked to identify different activities that helped with their child's cognitive development with 4 different options to choose from.

Results: 9/12 (75%) parents choose 2 activities that help their child's cognitive development. This means that my LO was fully met.



Discussion

- **Successes:**
 - Received positive feedback from parents and staff at the end of the workshop
 - My LO's were met (3/3)
- **Challenges:**
 - Scheduling a time to meet with the parents that worked for all participants
 - Approaching parents
- **Future Direction:**
 - Give more community resources to parents
 - Give the workshop in other CAPSLO Head Start centers

