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A Longitudinal Assessment of the Educational
Status of Children Enrolled in a
Title I Preschool Program

by

Mary Corriveau

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in Learning Disabilities in
the Graduate Division of Rowan University
1999

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved April 26, 1996

ABSTRACT

Mary L. Corriveau
A Longitudinal Assessment of the Educational Status of Children
Enrolled in a Title I Preschool Program
1999
Dr. Urban
Masters of the Arts in Learning Disabilities

This study attempts to determine if children who have been through the Title I Preschool program require less special services than the rest of the district in subsequent years. The sample consisted of children who had been through the Title I Preschool program during the 1991-1992 school year through the 1997-1998 school year and are still currently enrolled in the Gloucester Township School District. Computer records were used to check the number of children who had received the benefit of the Title I Preschool program and were receiving services as of Oct. 15, 1998. The percentage of Title I students receiving services was then compared to the percentage of the rest of the district receiving services. The results seem to show a positive effect on emotional stability as observed by the overall decreased need for Primary Prevention services. Speech services seem to be increased for the Title I group. Reading assistance seemed to change depending on grade level, while math need decreased but only until second grade. The Title I group had about a 3% higher chance of special education classification, and if they are retained, it will most likely happen by placing them in a transitional first grade.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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This study attempts to determine if children who have been through the Title I Preschool program require less special services than the rest of the district in subsequent years. Overall, the study shows that the children who had received the benefit of the Title I Preschool program continue to have difficulties throughout their school years. The one exception to this is in the area of Primary Prevention where the Title I children show a marked decrease in the need for services.

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Chapter 1 - Statement of the Problem

Background

In the early 1800's, a German educator named Friedrich Froebel came up with the radical idea that young children actually learn through play. His ideas were brought to the United States by German immigrants and were the foundation for the first kindergartens. At first these kindergartens were privately run by churches or philanthropic groups, but over time they became incorporated into the public school system. (Rippa, 1997, p156)

The idea of kindergarten continued to flourish, and today even in States where kindergarten is not mandatory, 95% of all children attend kindergarten. (Cotton & Conklen, 1989)

With the passing years, kindergartens became less of a place to learn through playing and more of an academic undertaking. Most kindergartens today are not developmentally appropriate, since they are highly structured, academically oriented, and heavily reliant on textbooks. (Mitchell, Seligson & Marx, 1989, p.227&228) More and more children are expected to walk into the kindergarten classroom already knowing a great deal of cognitive and linguistic information. Even the new core curriculum standards for New Jersey read "...children will enter school ready to learn." The standards do not

state ready to play or ready to develop. The say ready to learn, and most people associate learning with academic book learning.

In order to achieve this goal and to improve their child's chances for academic success most parents with financial means, and even those who must make great sacrifices, insist on sending their children to school before kindergarten. These private schools or preschools, allow their children to enter kindergarten with an advantage compared to other students who do not attend.

In order to provide equal opportunities, all types of low cost or no cost preschools are being viewed as a necessity by child advocates. Funding for these schools range from private donations to federal grants. Many, like Head Start, gear their services toward low income and minority families. Some private preschools cater to certain races or nationalities. In Gloucester Township, Title I funds are used to finance a free preschool for children who will be four years of age by September 30th and who could have some developmental delays.

Title I funds, provided by the Federal Government, may be used by the school district for any number of services that will assist children with delays. Gloucester Township has decided to use some of these funds to help students who may not be ready for kindergarten without some assistance. For the past six years eligibility has been determined on the basis of a preschool assessment using the Brigance Preschool Screening. Any child in the district is eligible for testing regardless of race, religion, financial status, or even their ability to speak English. After all testing is complete the children with the lowest scores are accepted into the program until all available slots are

filled. In recent years, special education students who were thought to be too high achieving for the self contained preschool disability class but were not yet ready for kindergarten, were included in the Title I preschool program.

Many of the students tested for this program fall below the score at which the test makers suggest that more intense testing should take place, for possible special education placement. Therefore, many students might be eligible for special education but the Title I program is used prior to having a child classified, and if the child is successful they may not be classified at all. This does not mean that later, possibly 3rd or 4th grade this child will not need to be classified.

Theory

It is believed by many that children exposed to developmentally appropriate preschools will have less difficulties than children who have not attended preschool, or have attended a preschool that is not developmentally appropriate. Advocates feel that by supporting developmentally appropriate preschools we will see an increase in self esteem, improved social skills, lower retention rates, lower drop out rates, and increases in academic achievement.

Value of the Study

At a time when more and more tax dollars are being spent on education, it is important to see if the money being spent is actually beneficial. Many people are now advocating more preschools at public expense. Just as many people are wondering if this increased cost will really provide a better education for children. This study should help to see if money is being wisely spent. Also, if the data shows that being exposed to preschool lowers the number who are retained and the number of students that need special services, the cost of preschool will actually lower overall expenditures.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine if children who have attended the Title I preschool program in Gloucester Township require less additional special educational services in later years.

Research Questions

In order to accomplish the general purpose of this study, the following research questions will be answered.

Question 1. Will children who attend Title I Preschool require less special services in the form of BSIP Math, BSIP Reading, Speech, and Primary Prevention?

Question 2. What is the retention rate of children who have attended Title I Preschool?

Question 3. Will children who attend Title I Preschool require less placement in special education than children who do not attend Title I Preschool?

Definitions

Brigance Pre-School Screening - A short test of skills to see if a child should be referred for more in depth testing(Brigance, 1985). It is used in Gloucester Township to determine who is accepted into the Title I Preschool program.

New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards - A set of academic standards that all children are expected to achieve.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices - Sometimes referred to as DAP - A way of teaching that takes into account the age and developmental development of a child.
(Walt & Monroe, 1998)

Title I - Money from the Federal Government distributed to school districts to subsidize programs that help “children that are not learning at the same rate as others of their chronological age.” (Williams & Fromberg, 1992, P.169)

Limitations

This study is limited by the lack of a real control group. The best control group would consist of children who had been tested on the Brigance Preschool Screening, and scored below average, but had not attended pre-school. It is not possible to find this specific group of children or to know which children attended preschool. Therefore, for this study the control group will be all the children in the district. The Title I preschool children will be compared to the general population of Gloucester Township by grade and services being rendered. Since all children in the district may be tested, the group being studied should actually be lower than the rest of the population. Also, since only the records from Gloucester Township are available any children who have left the district can not be included in the study.

Also, in Tables 1-6 it was not possible to disaggregate the special education students; therefore, there were special education students included with the groups of students receiving the various services listed.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

Review of the Literature

There is a growing interest in the need for preschool, especially for at risk children. At risk children face an educational cycle which perpetuates failure. This cycle works the same way as the cycle of poverty or the cycle of abuse. It is passed on from parent to child. A child who cannot keep up with his or her peers faces early failure in school. This failure causes the child to be discouraged early and to have animosity toward school and education. These children usually drop out of school. When they have children they do not have the skills necessary to pass on the basic foundations of language, writing, and cognitive skills which will be needed in school. These children then show up for school in the same predicament as their parents, destined for failure, and the cycle continues (Sticht, 1992). Everyone agrees that some type of intervention is needed to stop this cycle. The disagreement occurs when discussing what type of intervention is the best. This study will focus primarily on the intervention of preschool for at risk children. While there is not extensive research in this area, there is sufficient research to show that while preschool helps children enter school ready to learn and increases academic skills in the short term, these effects do not always continue in the long term. While academic skills are the most notable and the easiest to compare, more and more people are beginning to look for other benefits. According to Zill and Wolpov, “social and emotional maturity” are “more

important than mastery of simple facts” (1991, P.14). Now that preschools have been in existence for some time, more interest is being shown in doing longitudinal studies with these preschool children. Many people are trying to decide exactly what to study.

J. Markowitz (1996) conducted a research study on which types of longitudinal studies would be of most interest to State Directors of Special Education. Her study centered on questions about children who received special education services under the age of five. According to her study, the main area of interest was in the high school graduation rate for these students. The next area of interest included the child’s home language and economic situation, and the child’s post secondary status such as, if the child went to college or if they were employed after high school. Rate of retention, changes in disability classification, suspension and expulsion rate, family satisfaction with the preschool and special education services, and the child’s need for English as a Second Language services in elementary and secondary years were other important factors of interest to these states. Only three out of the nine states surveyed stated that achievement data would be of high interest (Markowitz, 1996). It is true that this information would have to be written under “other”, but it was mentioned in the questionnaire that this information was available and since most studies are geared toward this comparison it would seem logical that this information would be of interest.

The above report concentrated on special education students who had received services before the age of five. Other research specifically on special education generally showed more interest in where the special education students were placed after preschool, their current placement, and the stability of the children’s placement (Hudson & Stile,

1990; Stile et al., 1992). In the Hudson and Stile report (1990) there was also interest in the differences between the placement of preschool graduates in urban and rural districts. For the most part, both studies showed that children placed in self-contained special education classrooms usually remained there throughout their school years. They also both showed that students who were put in regular education classrooms, with or without special education services, also usually remained in those regular education classrooms throughout their school years. The Stile study (1992) states, “that if any doubt exists about the most appropriate placement option, place the child in regular education or regular education with support” (P.13). Rural and urban differences were addressed in the 1990 study (Hudson & Stile). This study showed a much higher likelihood of being put in a self-contained special education classroom if you live in an urban area rather than if you live in a rural area.

While research in preschools for special education students seemed to show less interest in academic scores, preschools for at risk children seemed to show a much higher interest in achievement. Some of these studies are very short term such as the study of the Nashville Metropolitan Schools in Tennessee to test their new pre-kindergarten program. This study used standardized achievement tests to test “listening, reading, and math scaled mean scores” (Lueder, 1990, P.72) of kindergarten students who had been through a pre-kindergarten program which included parent involvement. These scores were compared to two control schools with the same type of background. The scores showed a significant difference between the Nashville students who had been through preschool and the control groups. While this information is great, it is not surprising. The surprising

part is that in an area where very few parents ever get involved “more than 97 percent of the parents indicated that they were more involved with their children, felt better about the school and were better able to help their children” (Lueder, 1990, P.73).

Another report that showed a significant academic difference at the end of first grade was done as far back as the 1960's. E.J. Campbell (1964) did a thesis that showed children who had been through nursery school in Wenonah public school had significantly higher scores in reading achievement at the end of first grade than a similar group of students in the same school who had not been to nursery school. This research was repeated on the same students at the end of the second and the third grade, but no significant differences were shown between these two groups in these years. The same type of test was done in 1996 by L.A. Wildrick. In this study children who were old enough for kindergarten were tested. Children scoring low were recommended for participation in a developmental kindergarten program before kindergarten. One group of children participated and another group did not. The children who did not participate in the developmental kindergarten and were never retained later scored higher than the developmental kindergarten group, but students who did not participate and were subsequently retained scored significantly lower than the developmental kindergarten group (Wildrick, 1996). This seems to tell us that an extra year before kindergarten is only as good as the test that decides that they should be retained. If the child really is ready they will do better to go on, but if they are not they are better off if they are retained before kindergarten rather than after.

Almost all of the major research in academic benefits shows the “washout” effect, where early major gains shown by the group being studied level off within a few years making their academic results equivalent to the control group (Evans, 1985; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985; Cotton & Conklin, 1989). The only exception found left many unanswered questions. K. Roberson described a specialized public preschool in South Bay Union school district in Imperial Beach, California (1998). She compared the scores of the children who went through a specialized preschool program with the district scores and Title I student’s scores, but she did not state whether the districts scores included the preschool group or what type of services Title I students were receiving. She also writes, “in 1987...the district began a systematic look at the improvement of student achievement...the district established VIP Village in 1992” (Roberson, 1998, P.70). Even if it was the beginning of the year, the children who graduated from that first year would only be in third grade when she compared their CTBS/4 (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills - Form 4) for the 1996 - 1997 year. Yet the scores of the preschool group in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were just as high. This would seem to prove that the scattered preschool programs before the full establishment of the VIP Village were just as good as the ones after.

Even though most studies show the “washout” effect in achievement, there are consistent reports that show major benefits in other areas. In five different studies, children who went through a preschool program had a much lower percentage of students placed in special education programs than a control group of similar children. The studies that reported this finding were the Rome Headstart Program, The Perry Preschool Project,

The Early Training Project, New York Pre-kindergarten, and The Mother-Child Home Program (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985). All of the above programs and an additional one, the Harlem Study, show a lower rate of retention for children who have been through preschool. Some of the other benefits of a pre-kindergarten program include a higher likelihood of pregnant teenagers completing high school after the birth of their child, and they are less likely to drop out of school (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985).

While so much time and energy is being spent deciding whether or not preschool is really a necessity, we must also keep in mind the type of preschool we are discussing. With the quest for higher standardized test scores, many preschools are becoming less developmentally appropriate for young children. One study by Schweinhart & Weikart (1998) actually studied three types of preschool. The first type was “Direct Instruction” where “teacher presented activities and the children responded...activities were sequences of academic lessons, emphasizing positive reinforcements of correct responses” (P.58). The second type studied was the “High/Scope Curriculum” in which “teacher and child planned and initiated all activities and worked together” (P.58). The third type studied was the “traditional Nursery School” which “was a child-centered approach in which children initiated activities and the teacher responded to them” (P.58). This study was done when the children were 23 years of age. This study showed no significant differences between the Nursery School group and the High/Scope, but it did show significant differences between these two groups and the Direct Instruction group. One of the most striking differences is in the area of their emotional health. “Only 6 percent of either the High/Scope or the Nursery School group needed treatment for emotional

impairment or disturbance during their schooling, as compared to 47 percent of the Direct Instruction group” (P.58). The no program group only had a rate of 17 percent. The Direct Instruction group also had a higher rate of arrests, misconduct, and difficulty dealing with others. The Direct Instruction group was also less apt to graduate college, to engage in volunteer work, or to be married (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998). This study puts developmentally appropriate practices in a whole new light. Although more studies need to be done to see if these results hold up, every preschool teacher should consider this study while teaching children.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Procedure

Population

Gloucester Township is the third largest municipality in Camden County and has an excess of fifty five thousand residents. It houses the largest elementary/middle school district in the state. The school district consists of three middle schools, seven elementary schools, and a Title I preschool building. Over all, the district educates over 7,900 students from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Method of Sample Selection and Collection of Data

The sample for this study consisted of all the current Gloucester Township students who attended the Title I Gloucester Township Preschool Program during each of the following school years: 1991-1992, 1992-1993, 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997, and 1997-1998. This results in seven preschool classes for the sample. This group will then be compared by grade to the current Gloucester Township students who did not attend the Title I Preschool program. When calculating the number of students who will require special education services, the group of students who were already classified before entering the program will be eliminated from the count, since we are trying to determine how many students will require special education services after

attending. Also, when checking the number of students who have been retained and the number of students who have been placed in special education, all of the years between the time the child left preschool and the completion of the 1997-1998 school year will be reviewed. In order to include current sixth graders who began pre-school in the 1991-1992 school year, the October 15, 1998 count for pupils enrolled in special education will be used.

Instrumentation

First, the names of all of the students who attended the Gloucester Township Title I Preschool program during 1991-1992 through 1997-1998 and are currently still enrolled in the Gloucester Township School District will be pulled from the computer. Each child's name will then be entered into the computer and checked to see if they were retained, put into special education, or are receiving services. The services that will be recorded are BSIP (basic skills improvement program) in both Math and Language Arts, Speech, and Primary Prevention. The number of students retained and the number of students put into special education will each be divided by the total number of the sample group to get a percentage for each of these groups which will then be compared to the percentage of the district. The numbers for services will be collected by the grade in which each child is presently enrolled.

Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation

This study will attempt to determine if children who have attended the Title I preschool program in Gloucester township schools require less additional special education services in later years. Data has been collected on both the children who have been through the Title I preschool program and on the remainder of children who have not been through the program. The results from both groups have been recorded and will be shown in the order of the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1. Will children who attend Title I preschool require less special services?

An inspection of Table 1 shows that children who have had the benefit of the Title I preschool program and who are now in kindergarten, first grade, or transitional first, require less services for BSIP Math than the rest of the district. Children who have been through the Title I preschool program and who now are in the second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth grade, require more services in BSIP Math.

Table 1

PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN BSIP MATH IN 1998						
GRADE	IN TITLE I PRE-K			NOT IN TITLE I PRE-K		
	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT
K	86	3	3.49	625	27	4.32
1st & T1	84	1	1.19	828	57	6.88
2nd	36	4	11.11	838	2	.24
3rd	28	1	3.57	833	4	.48
4th	82	2	2.44	805	5	.62
5th	63	3	4.76	807	6	.74
6th	48	7	14.58	861	8	.93

An inspection of Table 2 shows that children who have had the benefit of the Title I preschool program and who are now in kindergarten, third grade, fourth grade, or fifth grade, require less services in BSIP Reading. Children who have been through the Title I preschool program and are now in the first grade, transitional first, second grade, or sixth grade require more services in BSIP Reading than the rest of the district.

Table 2

PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN BSIP READING IN 1998						
GRADE	IN TITLE I PRE-K			NOT IN TITLE I PRE-K		
	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT
K	86	3	3.49	625	27	4.32
1st & T1	84	6	7.14	828	52	6.28
2nd	36	1	2.78	838	5	.60
3rd	28	0	0	833	5	.60
4th	82	0	0	805	7	.87
5th	63	0	0	807	9	1.12
6th	48	1	2.08	861	14	1.63

An inspection of Table 3 shows that children who have had the benefit of the Title I preschool program and are the subjects of this study, require proportionately greater speech services than the rest of the Gloucester Township school district.

Table 3

PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN SPEECH IN 1998						
GRADE	IN TITLE I PRE-K			NOT IN TITLE I PRE-K		
	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT
K	86	17	19.77	625	22	3.52
1st & T1	84	13	15.48	828	59	7.13
2nd	36	7	19.44	838	75	8.95
3rd	28	9	32.14	833	87	10.44
4th	82	10	12.20	805	52	6.46
5th	63	7	11.11	807	43	5.33
6th	48	2	4.17	861	31	3.60

An inspection of Table 4 shows that children who have had the benefit of the Title I preschool program and who are now in a kindergarten, second grade, third grade, or fourth grade, require less Primary Prevention services than the rest of the district. Only the children who have been through the Title I preschool program and are now in first or transitional first grade required more services for Primary Prevention. The fifth and sixth grade classes are not considered since Primary Prevention is not given in those grades.

Table 4

PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN PRIMARY PREVENTION IN 1998						
GRADE	IN TITLE I PRE-K			NOT IN TITLE I PRE-K		
	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT	TOTAL #	ELIGIBLE	PERCENT
K	86	0	0	625	9	1.44
1st & T1	84	7	8.33	828	23	2.78
2nd	36	1	2.78	838	40	4.77
3rd	28	0	0	833	2	.24
4th	82	0	0	805	1	.12
5th	-	-	-	-	-	-
6th	-	-	-	-	-	-

Research Question 2. What is the retention rate of children who have attended the Title I preschool program?

An inspection of Table 5 shows that children who have attended the Title I preschool program during the 1996-1997 year had a 9.59% rate of being retained. Most of those children would have been retained in a transitional first grade. Many people do not believe that a transitional first grade is really a retention. Therefore, for this study, Table 5 also includes a percentage of the children who were retained if the transitional first grade is not considered a retention. If transitional first is not considered a retention, the children who went through Title I preschool program during the 1996-1997 school year had only a 1.37% retention rate.

Children who completed the Title I preschool program during the 1995-1996 school year had a 26.53% rate of retention. Again, most of those children were retained in a transitional first grade. If transitional first is not considered retention only 6.12% were retained.

Not one of the children who went through the Title I preschool program during the 1994-1995 school year were retained. Of course, this was a small group of children since most of the children who went through Title I preschool program during this year were not recorded into the computer.

During the 1993-1994 school year, 31.08% of the children who went through the Title I preschool program were retained. If transitional first is not considered retention then only 16.22% of the children were retained.

Children who went through the Title I preschool program during the 1992-1993 school year were retained 40.26% of the time. Only 12.99% of these children were retained if transitional first is not considered retention.

Children who went through Title I preschool program during the 1991-1992 school year were retained 26.15% of the time. If transitional first is not considered retention, this group was only retained 4.62% of the time.

Table 5

RETENTIONS OF CHILDREN IN TITLE I PRE-K AS OF 1998					
Year in Pre-K	Total #	# Retained	# Retained not T1	A	B
1996/1997	73	7	1	9.59	1.37
1995/1996	49	13	3	26.53	6.12
1994/1995	5	0	0	0	0
1993/1994	74	23	12	31.08	16.22
1992/1993	77	31	10	40.26	12.99
1991/1992	65	17	3	26.15	4.62
Column A is the percent of students retained Column B is the percent of students retained if TI is not considered retention					

The next step would be to compare the number of children who went through the Title I preschool program and were retained with the number of children in the rest of the district who were retained. Unfortunately, this is not possible since no computer records are kept indicating the number of students that are retained each year.

Research Question 3. Will children who attend the Title I preschool require less placement in special education than children who do not attend Title I preschool?

An inspection of Table 6 shows that children who attended the Title I preschool program and who were not classified before entering the program had a 13.47% chance

being classified special-education after preschool. It also shows that the Gloucester Township School District has a 10.40% population of special education students.

Table 6

STUDENTS CLASSIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION AFTER TITLE I PRE-K as of 1998		
# Classified	# Students	% Classified
54	401	13.47

STUDENTS CLASSIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION IN DISTRICT as of 1998		
# Classified	# Students	% Classified
812	7804	10.04

Summary

In many cases no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding the effects of the Title I program. In the area of special services it seems that the Title I preschool program does not decrease the chances of children needing speech services, but it does decrease the need for Primary Prevention services. This could indicate that the Title I preschool program helps children to feel good about themselves and therefore decreases the need for additional emotional assistance. In the area of math, children who have been through Title I preschool program have less need for services until they get to second grade, and then

their needs increase. In reading, there seems to be no consistency. Children who have been through the Title I preschool program, seem to do better in kindergarten and then get worse until third grade. Their improvement continues through fifth grade and then worsens again in sixth grade.

As for the number of children retained, it seems that the numbers should increase as the children have been in school for a longer period of time, but this is not the case. The number of children retained gets larger and then smaller and then larger and continues to get smaller. Many other things besides academics, such as different attitudes about retention, or a particular teacher's standards, may also be playing a role in the retention rate. The group of students who went through the Title I preschool program during the 1992-1993 school year has a very high retention rate although it is not quite so bad if transitional first grade is not considered retention.

It also seems that there is a higher chance of a student being classified special education if he has been through the Title I preschool program. This is not surprising since many of the students who were eligible for the Title I program may also have been eligible to be tested for special-education. Actually, the percentage is not much higher than the rest of the district considering that children become eligible for the Title I preschool program because they have scored the lowest in the district on the Brigance testing.

Chapter 5 - Summary, Conclusion & Discussion

Summary

This study attempts to determine if children who have been through the Title I Preschool program require less special services than the rest of the district in subsequent years. The sample consisted of children who had been through the Title I Preschool program during the 1991-1992 school year through the 1997-1998 school year and are still currently enrolled in the Gloucester Township School District. Computer records were used to check the number of children who had received the benefit of the Title I Preschool program and were receiving services as of Oct. 15, 1998. The percentage of Title I students receiving services was then compared to the percentage of the rest of the district receiving services. The results seem to show a positive effect on emotional stability as observed by the overall decreased need for Primary Prevention services. Speech services seem to be increased for the Title I group. Reading assistance seemed to change depending on grade level, while math need decreased but only until second grade. The Title I group had about a 3% higher chance of special education classification, and if they are retained, it will most likely happen by placing them in a transitional first grade .

Conclusion

The study seems to indicate that the children who have had the benefit of the Title I Preschool program, continue to experience difficulties throughout their elementary school years. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine from this study if they would have had more difficulties if they had not participated in the program. This study would have been more informative if the Title I Preschool group could have been compared to a group of children who had been selected for the program but did not participate. We would then have been able to determine more accurately the effectiveness of the program.

Although the study indicates that children who have completed the Title I Preschool program continue to have difficulty academically, they seem to show a marked increase in emotional health. Compared to the rest of the Gloucester Township District, the Title I Preschool group requires less Primary Prevention services. This is a significant statistic since there is no way to eliminate children who had received preschool services other than Title I from district records. This study could indicate that the Title I Preschool Program benefits children in ways that are difficult to assess.

Discussion

In almost every study that has been recorded, including this one, preschool programs do little to increase academic abilities for any extended length of time. I believe that the educational community must determine what they expect a preschool program to

achieve. If higher report card scores and standardized test scores are the only determination of value, then preschool programs are probably a waste of time and money. If, on the other hand, the educational community values emotional health, then developmentally appropriate preschool programs could be a valuable asset. While many studies have been performed to determine the academic benefits of preschool, very few have been performed to determine the emotional benefits of preschool.

This study is only an indication of the emotional benefits of the Title I Preschool program. It is also limited since it only compares the Title I students to the total district population and does not eliminate district children who have received an equally appropriate preschool program. This study also does not explore whether either group is receiving services other than Primary Prevention and does not go into the emotional health of children above the fourth grade. This information could change the total outlook of the results.

In the future, I think more effort should be given to the study of the emotional benefits of programs like Title I Preschool. These benefits could be determined by checking such things as the types of counseling services given, dropout rates, and the ability to get along with peers. The problem with this type of study is that it is very time consuming and requires an extended length of time to study. In order to get statistics for things like drop out rates, data would have to be collected on children who have and who have not been through developmentally appropriate preschools for at least 15 years. This would be very time consuming and can not be done by sitting in front of a computer and just pulling up records.

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