

EVALUATION BRIEF

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What were parents' perceptions regarding the educational benefits of the prekindergarten programs in HISD, 2008–2009?

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The Houston Independent School District (HISD) prekindergarten programs were created to provide students with the skills necessary for success in the regular school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills. However, “transition is recognized as a process that all partners experience rather than an event that happens to a child (Bohan-Baker & Little, 2004).” Texas Education Code 29.153(a) requires school districts to offer free prekindergarten programs when at least 15 children in the district: (1) are unable to speak and comprehend the English language; (2) are “economically disadvantaged” (eligible to participate in the national free or reduced lunch program); or (3) are homeless. According to Bohan-Baker and Little (2004), it is important to recognize the dynamic relationships between children, family, teachers, and community in preschool through kindergarten. To that end, this brief was designed to summarize a survey that was administered to parents of students participating in HISD prekindergarten programs during the 2008–2009 academic year.

Data and Methods

Parents with children that attended HISD prekindergarten programs during the 2008–2009 academic school year were asked to fill out a brief survey to gather perceptions of the educational benefits of HISD's prekindergarten program. To accommodate the various language competencies of all parents with children enrolled in HISD prekindergarten programs, the survey was printed in English, Spanish, and Korean. A total of 1,221 parents completed the survey.

The *Prekindergarten Education Parent Survey* contained twenty-two Likert scale questions to capture parents' perceptions and observations regarding prekindergarten educational benefits. The survey measured (1) children's growth and development, (2) school culture, and (3) program satisfaction. The responses are presented in **Tables 1** through **3**. For **Tables 1** and **2**, a four-point Likert scale was used as a format for growth and development as well as school culture questions: “Never” = 1, “Sometimes” = 2, “Often” = 3, and “Always” = 4. **Table 3** used a five-point Likert scale format for program satisfaction questions: “Not At All Satisfied” = 1, “Not Very Satisfied” = 2, “Neutral” = 3, “Somewhat Satisfied” = 4, and “Very Satisfied” = 5.

What were parents' perceptions of their child's growth and development during the 2008–2009 prekindergarten programs?

Ten items on the *Prekindergarten Education Parent Survey* asked parents about their child's growth and development. The survey responses in **Table 1** reveal that 48.6 percent of the parents indicated that their child “always” talks about his or her ideas with family and friends, while 32.4 percent responded that their child “often” discusses ideas with family and friends. It was found that 40.3 percent of the parents responded that their child “always” takes turns listening and speaking with family and friends; whereas, 18.7 percent responded that this “sometimes” happens. The data further reveal that 46.2 percent of the parents responded that their child “always” cooperates with others in play activities, while 11.6 percent indicated that their child “sometimes” cooperates with others in play activities. More than fifty (54.7) percent of parents indicated that their child “always” shows concern for others' feelings; whereas, 33.1 percent responded that this behavior is “often” displayed. The data also reveal that 63.2 percent of the parents responded that their child “always” makes friends easily with other children; and 25.6 percent indicated that their child displayed this behavior “often”.

Table 1: Parents' Survey Responses Regarding Prekindergarten Program Benefits Related to Growth and Development, 2008–2009.

	Never %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
1. Talk about his or her ideas with family and friends	1.5	16.6	32.4	48.6
2. Take turns listening and speaking with family and friends	1.0	18.7	39.1	40.3
3. Cooperate with others in play activities	.4	11.6	41.2	46.2
4. Follow rules at home	.2	24.7	51.1	23.3
5. Participate in household chores	2.3	27.7	37.2	32.6
6. Show concern for others' feelings	1.0	10.8	33.1	54.7
7. Demonstrate responsibility for his or her behavior and actions	2.1	29.1	40.5	28.1
8. Show the ability to control his or her feelings when he or she does not get his or her way	4.8	43.9	36.6	14.6
9. Respect others' space and personal belongings	1.2	29.1	41.2	28.3
10. Make friends easily with other children	.6	10.4	25.6	63.2

What were parents' perceptions of the school culture where their child attended prekindergarten during 2008–2009 programs?

Parents were asked seven questions regarding their satisfaction with different aspects of their child's prekindergarten program relative to school culture. **Table 2** revealed that 72.6 percent of the parents indicated that the teacher "always" communicates regarding their child's progress in school; whereas, 18.7 percent indicated that the teacher "often" communicates about their child's progress in school. The perception of parents and

their experience when visiting their child's class revealed, that 84.6 percent "always", whereas 11.0 percent "often" felt welcomed in the child's classroom. The item yielding the highest percentage of the parents responding "always" was "my child seems comfortable around his or her teacher" (88.4 percent) followed by "I would recommend this prekindergarten program to other parents" (85.7 percent). At the same time, 8.1 percent indicated that they would "often" recommend the program to other parents and "never" representing the highest negative response at 2.5 percent.

Table 2: Parents' Survey Responses Regarding Prekindergarten Program Benefits Related to School Culture, 2008–2009

	Never %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
11. The teacher communicates regarding my child's progress in school.	.4	7.3	18.7	72.6
12. I feel welcomed in my child's classroom.	.6	2.9	11.0	84.6
13. I feel welcomed in my child's school.	.4	5.2	11.4	81.7
14. Parents are encouraged to participate in school activities.	.4	6.4	18.1	74.2
15. My child seems happy to attend prekindergarten.	.2	3.5	13.5	82.1
16. My child seems comfortable around his or her teacher.	.2	1.7	8.3	88.4
17. I would recommend this prekindergarten program to other parents.	2.5	1.9	8.1	85.7

Table 3: Parents' Survey Responses Regarding Prekindergarten Program Benefits Related to Program Satisfaction, 2008–2009

	Not At all Satisfied %	Not Very Satisfied %	Neutral %	Somewhat Satisfied %	Very Satisfied %
18. Variety of prekindergarten school activities.	0.0	3.3	7.7	16.8	68.2
19. Quality of prekindergarten parent activities.	0.0	2.5	12.9	16.8	63.8
20. Quality of instruction in the prekindergarten classroom.	0.0	1.0	4.4	10.8	78.8
21. Quality of facilities and equipment in the prekindergarten classroom.	0.0	1.5	5.0	11.6	77.3
22. Your overall satisfaction with the prekindergarten.	.6	1.0	2.5	9.4	81.9

How satisfied were parents with their child's prekindergarten program in 2008–2009?

Parents were asked five questions regarding satisfaction with their child's prekindergarten program activities related to the quality of instruction and quality of the facilities. **Table 3** reveals that between 63.8 and 68.2 percent of the parents indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the variety of prekindergarten school activities and the quality of prekindergarten parent activities and 16.8 percent indicated that they were "somewhat satisfied." There were 3.3 percent of the parents that responded that they were "not very satisfied", with the variety of school activities in their child's prekindergarten program. Overall, more than 91 percent of the parents responded that they were either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their child's prekindergarten program.

In addition, the majority of the surveyed parents were overwhelmingly satisfied with their child's school culture and the methods by which they were welcomed. The parents were also very satisfied with the quality of activities and instruction their child received in their prekindergarten program.

Overall, the majority of the prekindergarten parents responded that they were "very satisfied" with the HISD prekindergarten program and would recommend other parents to this program.

Conclusions

The results from the *Prekindergarten Education Parent Survey* indicated that parents of prekindergarten students were able to observe and identify growth and developmental changes in their child following prekindergarten. The majority of the parents indicated that their child was "often" or "always" able to convey ideas and feelings in a positive manner toward family members, friends, and others.

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