KINDERGARTEN READINESS HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

A Project

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

A Project

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Department of Child Development
Abstract

of

KINDERGARTEN READINESS HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

by

Megan Joan Kays

Many children begin kindergarten unprepared; and when children begin unprepared, it is difficult for them to catch up to their better-prepared peers (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). Recent research demonstrates that parent involvement plays an important role in kindergarten readiness, as well as later academic success. However, parents are not always aware of the ways in which they can help to prepare their children for kindergarten. Parents need information regarding current kindergarten standards so they can help prepare their children. Therefore, a kindergarten readiness handbook was created for parents. This handbook was informed by the literature regarding kindergarten readiness, parental involvement, social-emotional development, language development, literacy development, and mathematical development. The California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 was also reviewed. The current handbook provides parents with information about kindergarten readiness, parent involvement, and the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (i.e., Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development). The handbook also suggests ways parents can foster readiness at home, focusing on the conversational
activities of Emotion Coaching, Shared Book Reading, and Math Talk. The author utilized academic research, the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1, and parent-child conversational activities to create the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents.

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Christi Cervantes, Ph.D  
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Date
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Megan Kays
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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

All parents want their children to be successful in school. They are willing and able to help prepare their children for school, but they often need guidance about school readiness that reflects current school standards. In recent years, both state and federal governments have been changing the curriculum standards for kindergarten (Severeide, 2007). Curriculum standards inform the types of academic activities children will be engaged in while at school. The recent changes to kindergarten curriculum have, in turn, changed the construct of kindergarten readiness (Gullo & Huges, 2011). For example, literacy skills, as well as writing and math activities, used to be introduced in kindergarten. However, the new curriculum standards have moved the introduction of these academic activities to early childhood/preschool education, thus intensifying the academic instruction in both preschool and kindergarten. As a result, children need to have more advanced academic knowledge and social-emotional competencies to be successful in kindergarten than was previously necessary (Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; Logue, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Kindergarten is not a mandatory grade in the California school system, though most children do attend. Children who begin kindergarten adequately prepared are more successful throughout their educational career than their unprepared peers (Duncan et al., 2007; Romano, Badchishin, Pagani, & Kohe, 2010; Sabol & Pianta, 2010). Current
education research has demonstrated that 37% of children begin school unprepared for the demands of the kindergarten classroom and curriculum (Landry, 2005). Kindergarten readiness does not just focus on children; it includes the assistance of family, school and community (Children N., 2009; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Lewit & Baker, 1995; National Goals Panel, 1994; Piotrkowski, Botso, & Matthews, 2000). However, providing this assistance can be difficult because there is no short or clear-cut definition of kindergarten readiness, in that readiness includes competencies in multiple developmental domains. These competencies have been shown to positively influence children’s academic success in kindergarten and beyond (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

Another issue is that current kindergarten readiness information is not always available to parents. Although kindergarten readiness is at the forefront of educational research, the information is often only disseminated to the professional education community. With the advent of the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (CDE, 2008), the California Department of Education (CDE) offered a set of early learning standards (Scott-Little et al., 2006) developed by the State of California. The developmental domains, as well as the skills and knowledge included in the CPLF, are an operationalized view of kindergarten readiness (Scott-Little et al., 2006). These standards have been provided to early childhood educators with information regarding competencies necessary for successful entry in to kindergarten. Unfortunately, this professional knowledge has not yet been synthesized and shared with parents. Previous research has shown a positive relationship between parental involvement and school success (Arnold, Zelijo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008; Berger, 1991; Nokali, Bachman, &
Vortuba-Drzal, 2010 Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Therefore, parents should be given information about kindergarten readiness because they cannot help their children prepare for what will come in kindergarten if they are not aware of what is expected.

**Purpose of the Project**

Kindergarten readiness is a much-researched topic in the academic and professional realm (de Cos, 1997; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Lin et al., 2003; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DeGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007; Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999; Piotrkowski et al, 2000). However, this information is not reaching parents. Parents need access to information about kindergarten expectations (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). The aim of this project is to develop a clear and comprehensive kindergarten readiness handbook for parents.

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents has four main objectives. First, the handbook will discuss the concept of kindergarten readiness. Second, it will explain the importance of parent involvement in early education. Third, the handbook will introduce parents to the CPLF (CDE, 2008) and provide a summary of the developmental domains and competencies outlined in the CPLF: Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. Each of the domains will be discussed in non-academic language that will be accessible to parents with varying levels of education. Fourth, the handbook will explain three types of parent-child interactions that directly correspond to the three developmental domains.
Significance of the Project

Kindergarten Readiness Issues

Interest in kindergarten readiness became a national focus in 1991 (NEGP, 1994), with the introduction of National Education Goals. The first national education goal was readiness: “By the year 2000, all children in American will start school ready to learn” (NEG, 1994, p. 9). Despite the national focus on education and school readiness, many children still begin kindergarten lacking the skills necessary for school success. For example, a national survey of American kindergarten teachers found that 46% felt that at least half of their students were unable to follow directions, a competency that falls under the domain of social-emotional development, and thus these children were not fully prepared to engage in formal schooling (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000).

Furthermore, a study conducted in San Francisco, California found that 45% of children who entered kindergarten in 2007 needed additional support in at least one developmental domain (Children Now, 2009).

In the current economic environment, schools are continuing to lose funding. In order to balance the budget deficits, some schools are choosing to increase class sizes (Unhold, 2011). If children are not fully prepared for the demands of kindergarten and are placed in a large class, it may be more difficult for them to receive the additional help they may need. Thus, it is important for children to be adequately prepared for kindergarten.
Parental Involvement

A large body of research has shown that parental involvement is beneficial for children’s educational outcomes (Arnold et al, 2008; Berger, 1991; Nokali et al., 2010; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Some research on parent involvement has examined ways parents can foster academic development at home. For example, Senechal and LeFevre (2002) conducted a five-year longitudinal study of parental involvement in literacy development. They found that early exposure to reading, when guided by parents, was predictive of emergent literacy skills. In general, when parents facilitate learning at home, they help their children develop more independence in the classroom setting (Parker et al., 1999; Welch & Barzanna, 1999). Some studies have examined parental involvement in education and its relationship to social and behavioral skills in children. For example, a study of children in a third grade class found that increased communication between parents and the school helped to foster an increase in at-home reinforcement of classroom behavioral norms. This reinforcement was related to a decrease in delinquent or externalizing behavior. This study demonstrated that when parents were aware of what was expected of their children at school, they helped to foster those competencies in the home (Nokali et al., 2010).

When parents are not given information about school expectations, they are not able to fully prepare their children for what will come when school begins. A recent study of parents whose children were about to begin kindergarten reported that they had concerns regarding the academic and behavioral competencies necessary for kindergarten
(McIntyre et al., 2001). In addition, Grace and Brandt (2006) surveyed kindergarten parents, teachers, and administrators regarding perceptions about school readiness. They found that parents rated the transition process, as well as home-school communication, as important factors in school readiness. Parents want more information about kindergarten readiness so they can support their children during the transition process. Kindergarten teachers also felt strongly that parents need to teach and practice readiness skills with their children (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

**California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1**

The *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CPLF) was published by the California Department of Education in 2008. This volume was created to foster a statewide understanding of the competencies children should be developing in a quality preschool educational program. The targeted knowledge and skills are in line with the competencies children should demonstrate when they enter kindergarten. The CPLF offer early childhood educators a guide to the observation of behavior, which could allow for identification of potential delays in development. These learning foundations also give early childhood educators a basis from which they are able to plan curriculum, activities, and interactions that will foster the growth and development of the competencies children need to be successful in kindergarten. The CPLF has been divided into four developmental domains: Social-Emotional, Language and Literacy, English Language, and Mathematics. The domain entitled English Language Development was created for children who are not native English speakers. This domain will not be included in the
handbook. The next three sections will briefly discuss the three developmental domains that will be presented in the handbook.

**Social-Emotional Development.** The Social-Emotional development plays an important role in successful school entry. Competencies in this domain allow children to regulate their own behavior, successfully separate from their parents, and feel excitement about learning. Some research has demonstrated that kindergarten teachers believe self-regulation and ease of separation from parents is key for successful school entry (Smith, 2005). This domain has been divided into three strands: Self, Social Interaction, and Attachment. Each of these three strands is further divided into several sub-strands.

**Language and Literacy Development.** The domain of Language and Literacy discusses foundational academic skills. Children’s early oral language skills have been shown to influence school readiness (Forget-Dubois, Dionne, Perusse, Tremblay, Lemelin, & Boivin, 2009). In addition, literacy is an area in which many children are failing. For Example, a national report published in 2010 estimated that two thirds of fourth graders struggle to read at grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This domain has been divided into three strands: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Each of these three strands is further divided into several sub-strands.

**Mathematical Development.** The domain of Mathematical Development has been divided into five different strands: Number Sense, Algebra and Functions, Measurement, Geometry, and Mathematical Reasoning. Research has demonstrated that early exposure to mathematics helps to foster these skills (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005;
Griffiths, 2007). Thus, early exposure to mathematics can help develop a strong foundation on which children can build.

**At-Home Kindergarten Readiness Activities**

Research has demonstrated that, when parents are given information about school expectations, they are able to reinforce those expectations at home (Nokali et al., 2010). The information in the CPLF has the potential to be useful for parents because it will allow parents to reinforce skills and knowledge necessary for kindergarten in the home. Research has also demonstrated that, through parent-child interaction, parents are able to foster academic development (Parker et al., 1999; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, 2006). In conjunction with information regarding kindergarten readiness, parents should also be aware that they are able to foster development through everyday interaction that they have with their children.

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents will offer three types of parent-child conversational activities that are linked to the development of the three CPLF developmental domains. First, parental emotion coaching will be discussed as a type of interaction that fosters social-emotional development. Second, shared book reading will be addressed as a way for parents to foster their children’s language and literacy development. Third, math talk will be discussed as a means for fostering children’s mathematical development.

These activities were chosen because the author wanted to offer parents activities that would be easy to incorporate into everyday life. Conversational activities do not
require an extra time commitment because, most likely, parents are already engaging in some form of daily conversation with their children. Conversational activities also do not require parents to have advanced knowledge or purchase extra materials. Recent research has demonstrated that emotion-coaching, shared book reading, and math talk are conversational activities that foster development in the domains discussed in the handbook. Thus, these activities offer parents a simple way to promote the development of kindergarten readiness skills and knowledge at home.

**Methods**

**Target Audience**

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook targets parents whose children will soon attend kindergarten in Sacramento, California. The handbook will be made available for distribution at two early childhood education centers, one in Carmichael and one in Sacramento. The handbook was written in language that is accessible to parents of all educational levels who are able to read in English.

**Procedures for Developing the Handbook**

The development of this handbook included an in depth look at research and theory on the topics of kindergarten readiness, parental involvement, social-emotional development, language development, literacy development, and mathematical
development. Based on her work with parents preparing their children for kindergarten, the author believed some of the information in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CPLF; CDE, 2008) should be disseminated to parents. Thus, the author translated the professional language of the CPLF and adapted the skill explanations into meaningful information for parents. Finally, the creations of the handbook required an examination of previously created parent handbooks.

**Handbook Content and Organization**

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents has four sections. The first section offers a discussion of the concept of kindergarten readiness. The second section explains the importance of parental involvement in academic success. The third section provides information about the CPLF (CDE, 2008), specifically who created them and for what reason. This section also explains the following developmental domains: Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. Along with explanations of the domains, real-life examples of developmental skills are provided. The fourth section of the handbook describes the parent-children interaction activities of emotion coaching, shared book reading, and math talk. These activities are offered along with vignettes that help parents understand how to engage their children in these activities.
Limitations of the Project

The creation of this handbook included information from the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008). One limitation of this handbook is that it does not include the developmental domain entitled English Language Development and is available only in English. This domain is not included because the handbook was created for parents of native English speakers. Thus, this handbook would need to be modified in order to serve a non-native English speaking population. A second limitation is that the handbook only includes information from *Vol. 1* of the CPLF. Since the inception of this handbook *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 2* (CDE, 2010) has been published and a *Vol. 3* is in the process of being published. These subsequent volumes discuss different developmental domains than those included in *Vol. 1* (e.g., Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Development, History, and Science). Future handbooks should offer parents information about these different developmental domains. The third limitation of the handbook is that it offers activities focused on the three overarching domains, but it does not offer distinct activities for each sub-strand of each developmental domain. Future handbooks could include a more extensive set of suggested activities. The fourth limitation of this handbook is it has not been evaluated to determine whether it is beneficial for the target population. Future research could evaluate whether the handbook effectively answers parents’ questions about kindergarten readiness.
Organization of the Project

The second chapter of this project will begin with a discussion of the two theoretical frameworks that informed the creation of the handbook. It will then provide an extensive look at kindergarten readiness, parent involvement, the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008), and the conversational activities of emotion coaching, shared book reading, and finally, math talk. The third chapter of this project will describe the creation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents, including a discussion of the design as well as the contents. The fourth chapter will discuss limitations of the handbook and offer suggestions for future research in this area. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents is in Appendix A.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Kindergarten readiness is an important topic in the field of education. In the United States, 37% to 50% of children have been considered not prepared for kindergarten when they began (Landry, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). First, these unprepared children have been shown to struggle with social-emotional skills such as following directions, working independently, and working in a group. Second, these children lack the academic skills necessary to be successful (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). When children begin school unprepared, it is difficult for them to catch up, academically and socially, to their adequately prepared peers (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). These children may also experience negative feelings towards school, which research has shown can persist throughout their educational career (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Although kindergarten readiness has been established as an important factor for overall school success, there is no consensus about what constitutes readiness. There is no nationally accepted definition of kindergarten readiness because different states have different elementary school curricula. Thus, states have begun to define kindergarten readiness in relation to the development of early learning standards (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006). These early learning standards are organized into sets of developmental
domains along with skills that are demonstrated in those domains. The purpose of the early learning standards is to provide early childhood educators with information about early development in order to foster kindergarten readiness within their programs.

At home, parents can foster the skills and knowledge that children need to be successful in school (Nokali et al., 2010; Parker et al., 1999; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). However, the learning standards information is not generally shared with parents of children who are preparing to begin kindergarten. Parents want information regarding the skills and knowledge their children need for success in kindergarten, so they can properly prepared their children for the transition to formal schooling (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Ritchie, Howes, & Karoly, 2008; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of the current project is to provide parents with a handbook that presents the concept of kindergarten readiness and explains the importance of parental involvement. The handbook then provides information on kindergarten readiness adapted from the CPLF (CDE, 2008), as well as everyday social interactions that parents can engage in with their children in order to foster kindergarten readiness skills.

This chapter begins with a section on the theoretical frameworks used in the development of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook: specifically ecological systems theory and socio-cultural theory. The next two sections review the literature on (a) kindergarten readiness and (b) parental involvement in education. Published research in these areas is generally conducted within the confines of formalized educational programs and does not include children and families who do not participate in these programs. The next section focuses on California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol.
The final section of this chapter discusses the at-home conversational activities of emotion coaching, shared book reading, and math talk. Overall, these theories, bodies of literature, learning foundations, and at-home activities informed the creation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents.

**Theoretical Framework**

Two theoretical frameworks were utilized in the creation of this handbook project. The first, ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1986, 2006) provides a framework for thinking about children’s kindergarten readiness and the multiple factors that influence it. This theory also establishes the necessity for informing parents of the social and cognitive demands that their child will face upon entering kindergarten, as this will strengthen the connection between the home and school contexts. The second theory, socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) provides a framework for addressing how everyday social interactions foster development of new social and cognitive competencies. Subsequently, the kindergarten readiness handbook includes suggested parent-child social interaction activities that focus on the competencies children need for kindergarten.

**Ecological Systems Theory**

Researchers, as well as the federal government, have not been able to agree on a definition of kindergarten readiness. Instead, they point to different groups and organizations that influence this readiness, including parents, early childhood educators,
communities, and schools (Lewit & Baker, 1995; NEGP, 1997; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Ecological systems theory can help to understand how these different groups affect kindergarten readiness. According to Bronfenbrenner, the father of ecological systems theory, five different systems exist that directly or indirectly influence the developing child: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1974) proposed that all activities and interactions in each system influence children’s development, even activities and interactions in which the children are not active participants. The mechanism by which the environment influences child development is through a series of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Proximal processes are repeated reciprocal interactions between the developing child and the people, objects, and symbols within the environment. In order for development to occur proximal processes must be repeated multiple times and as the children grows the interactions become more complex (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The power of the proximal processes to influence child development is mediated by the characteristics and experiences of the child, as well as the characteristics of the adult, object, or symbol (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Children are at the center of the first system, entitled the microsystem, and within that system exist the multiple contextual environments with which the children directly interact. These different contexts include a child’s home, school, and places such as community centers, or the neighborhood park (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In each setting children engage in activities and interpersonal interactions that influence development of
competencies necessary for kindergarten readiness. For example, parent-child conversational activities such as emotion coaching, shared book reading, and math talk may be particularly important for kindergarten readiness. When home activities such as these support children’s learning in the home, then the microsystem is a positive influence on the development of kindergarten readiness skills.

The mesosystem is the next ecological system that influences development. This system is defined as the connections between the multiple contexts within children’s microsystem. For example, a parent’s connection and conversation with her child’s teacher would be a part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It should also be noted that a negative relationship between school and home contexts could, in turn, negatively affect the child. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents will build a connection in the mesosystem between school and home. The handbook will give parents information that teachers have and will allow for informed conversations between parents and teachers.

The exosystem is the system that influences children but does not directly include them (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This system indirectly influences children through the influence it has on the people and settings that children directly interact with. Examples of the exosystem include parental work place, as well as state and local government agencies. When looking specifically at kindergarten readiness, the creation of the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vo. 1 (CDE, 2008) occurred in the child’s exosystem yet the CPLF may have changed the early childhood education program where the child is enrolled.
The macrosystem refers to the culture, including norms and beliefs, in which children are developing (Thomas, 2005). An example of an influence that stems from the macrosystem is the American cultural belief that anyone can achieve his or her dreams, the American Dream ideology. This national ideology includes the idea that education is the pathway to achieving one’s dreams. The influence of this belief in education can then be related to the federal government decision to make school readiness the first goal of the National Education Goals (NEG, 1994).

Ecological systems theory aids in understanding how national curriculum goals have affected state level kindergarten curriculum standards. The changes to state level kindergarten curriculum standards prompted the creation of early learning standards. The creation of early learning standards then changed preschool programs and pre-formal educational experiences of developing children. The author’s Kindergarten Readiness Handbook provides parents with current information about the skills and knowledge necessary for successful school entry. Parents should have the most up-to-date information because they are an important part of children’s microsystems and have the ability to create an environment at home that promotes learning and development.

**Socio-cultural Theory**

The development of kindergarten readiness skills and knowledge is not an individual achievement. Children develop skills through interactions with different environments and people. The inclusion of everyday social interaction activities in the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook was informed by socio-cultural theory. According to
this theory, children’s development occurs through social interaction that is rooted in cultural norms and beliefs (Thomas, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986). Social interaction and communication create pathways for development and promote learning (Leseman, Rollenberg, & Rispens, 2001).

In order for development to occur, social interaction should include the developing individual and a more knowledgeable other (Leseman et al., 2001). The more knowledgeable other is defined as any person who has more knowledge of the specific task or activity that is the focus of the social interaction (Leseman et al., 2001; Thomas, 2005). The more knowledgeable other will be able to accomplish the task or skill correctly (Gredler, 2012). Therefore, it is important for parents to understand that they are a more knowledgeable other, and as such are able to help their children develop through parent-child social interaction. It is also important for parents to understand that communication with their child can promote development. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook suggests conversational activities that academic research has demonstrated to foster development.

The zone of proximal development is the area of development between what the child has already mastered and what he or she is able to accomplish with assistance from a more knowledgeable other (Eun, Knotek, & Heining-Boynton, 2008; Pellegrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding is the assistance and guidance provided by the more knowledgeable other to the child that allows him or her to accomplish the task (Thomas, 2005). Scaffolding inside the zone of proximal development can promote internalization of the task the child previously needed guidance to complete (Griffin &
Cole, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). When the child is able to complete the task on his or her own without assistance, internalization has occurred (Eun et al., 2008; Griffin & Cole, 1984; Pellegrini et al., 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, a parent helping to guide their child’s hand while the child is learning to write his or her name is scaffolding. Once the child is able to write his or her name without guidance internalization has occurred. The handbook will offer parent-child interaction activities that parents can use to scaffold their children’s development of the skills and knowledge. Through this communicative interaction, parents may be able to foster internalization of the skills children need to be successful in kindergarten.

**Kindergarten Readiness**

Though kindergarten readiness has been a national focus since the National Education Goals Panel presented readiness as the first education goal for America (NEG, 1994), it is not difficult to understand why parents are confused about kindergarten readiness. First, a nationally accepted definition of kindergarten readiness does not exist. Second, current research has demonstrated that parents, preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers do not share the same idea or beliefs regarding kindergarten readiness (Grace & Brandt, 2006; Barbarin, Early, Clifford, Bryant, Frome, Burchinal, Howes, & Pianta, 2008; Hains et al., 1989; Welch & White, 1999). Third, school districts offer only age as a solid determinant of whether a child is able to enroll in kindergarten,
even though research has not found that age indicates school readiness (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; Morrison, Griffith, & Alberts, 1997; Smith, 2005). The next three subsections will examine these three issues surrounding kindergarten readiness. The fourth section will discuss the relationship between kindergarten readiness and later academic success.

**What is Kindergarten Readiness?**

The National Education Goals Panel (1989) established that readiness for school is the first step toward improving the educational outcomes of students in the United States (NEG, 1993). This panel also established that school readiness is more likely when (a) children have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs, (b) parents act as their children’s first teacher, and (c) children are healthy and well nourished when they begin school. However, no definition of kindergarten readiness was offered. This may be because there are many factors involved in readiness and it involves the participation of multiple groups and organizations.

Lewit and Baker (1995) noted the importance of distinguishing between readiness for school and readiness to learn, building on the National Education Goals Panel assertion that children should start school ready to learn (NEG, 1994). They explained that readiness to learn is generally associated with children’s cognitive ability. This type of readiness focuses on the academic demands of kindergarten. In comparison, readiness for school is associated with children’s social-emotional competencies and self-care abilities, in conjunction with children’s level of academic understanding. The national
government’s promotion of school readiness in terms of readiness to learn may help explain why research has demonstrated that parents feel that academic abilities are very important to kindergarten readiness (Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999). Lewit and Baker (1995) also highlighted the fact that, even though the federal government established the importance of school readiness, they did not define who was responsible for fostering kindergarten readiness.

Academic research has identified different domains that are important to kindergarten readiness. For example, Piotrkowski et al. (2000) operationalized kindergarten readiness in much the same way as the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) did: in terms of external factors that influence readiness. They noted, similarly to the NEGP, that children’s school readiness depends on access to high quality childcare, preschool and libraries. However, Piotrkowski et al. (2000) added that schools should support teachers and parents by offering transition programs and individualized learning plans. They also explained that parents should create rich learning environments in the home and engage in parenting that is both nurturing and supportive. However, these recommendations again do not offer a clear definition of kindergarten readiness.

Since the introduction of the NEGP, state and local governments have created documents called early learning standards. Recent research has postulated that early learning standards are an operational definition of kindergarten readiness (Scott-Little, et al., 2006). These documents include information about different developmental domains and the skills and knowledge that children should be developing in each domain during their preschool years. Early learning standards have been distributed to early childhood
educators to help align preschool program curriculum with public kindergarten curriculum (Logue, 2007). The *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008) is an example of an early learning standards document, and it will be discussed in depth in a later section. Early learning standards documents are very dense and written in professional language. Thus, these documents are difficult for parents to understand. In order for parents to understand kindergarten readiness, these documents should be translated into non-professional language and offered to parents along with suggestions for activities that parents can engage in with their children to foster development. This is one of the purposes of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents.

**Variations in Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness Skills**

The lack of a nationally agreed upon kindergarten readiness definition has caused confusion for the people who are actively preparing children for kindergarten. Parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers share the responsibility of assessing and fostering school readiness; however, many studies have shown that these groups do not share the same expectations regarding kindergarten readiness (Hains et al., 1989; Lin et al., 2003; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999).

First, research shows that preschool and kindergarten teachers differ in their expectations for school readiness (Hains et al., 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000). For example, Haines et al. (1989) found that preschool teachers actually held higher academic and social expectations for children beginning kindergarten than kindergarten teachers
did. In fact, preschool teachers’ school readiness expectations were so high that they more closely matched with the expectations for children exiting kindergarten. There may be two reasons for this discrepancy. Preschool teachers may have an unclear picture of current curriculum standards, or they may feel pressure from parents who also have an inaccurate understanding of kindergarten readiness.

Second, research shows that parents have different expectations for kindergarten readiness compared to kindergarten teachers. For example, Welch and White (1999) found that parents placed more emphasis on academic preparations, such as the ability to complete practice worksheets and recognize letters of the alphabet. In contrast, kindergarten teachers felt that social preparation was more important for school readiness and they highly rated the ability to communicate needs and show excitement towards learning new things as important for kindergarten readiness. Piotrkowski et al. (2000) also found that parents felt that academic knowledge was more important to kindergarten readiness than did kindergarten teachers. They postulated that this mismatch might stem from parents’ desire for their children to adapt quickly to the demands of kindergarten curriculum.

These differing perceptions of the skills needed for kindergarten readiness may cause confusion for children entering kindergarten (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Because parents and preschool teachers hold higher expectations of academic readiness than do kindergarten teachers (Hains, 1989; Welch & White, 1999; Piotrkowski et al., 2000), they may not devote as much time to reinforcing skills in non-academic areas such as social-emotional development.
Parents’ perceptions of kindergarten readiness are important because those perceptions guide the types of skills and knowledge that they foster in the home, which in turn relates to children’s development of particular skills. Parental beliefs about readiness influence the way they interact with their children and what skills they teach their children. Barbarin, Early, Clifford, Bryant, Frome, Burchinal, Howes, and Pianta (2008) demonstrated that parent beliefs about necessary kindergarten readiness skills related to the types of skills their children actually mastered. For example, parents who rated self-regulation as important for kindergarten readiness had children who were better able to control their behavior in the school environment. Barbarin et al., (2008) postulated that children are aware of the skills that their parents value, and they attempt to master those skills. This further highlights the fact that parents should have accurate information about kindergarten readiness.

**Age As a Factor for Readiness**

School districts have established that children’s age is the one kindergarten readiness factor that is not flexible (La Paro & Pianta, 2000). For example, children who want to enroll for kindergarten in the San Juan Unified School District (Carmichael, CA) for the 2012-2013 school year must be 5 years of age by November 1, 2012 (retrieved from www.sanjuan.edu/departments on March 14, 2012). Consequently parents may also view age as the most reliable determinant of readiness. Some parents may believe that their five-year-old child is ready for kindergarten, but in reality their child may lack the social or cognitive abilities to be successful in kindergarten. In contrast, some parents
may believe their child who is younger than five-years-old is not ready for kindergarten when in fact their child does possess the necessary social and cognitive skills. Parents may feel this way because age is the only tangible readiness factor that is provided by their children’s school and school district.

It is important, then, to evaluate what research says about age as a readiness factor. Age can be used as a determinant; but because there exists a natural variability of development within age groups, not all children who are five years of age will be able to successfully navigate the demands of a kindergarten classroom (Lewit & Baker, 1995). Though age has been the one constant determinant of school readiness, research does not support it as an independent predictor of school success (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook will help to provide parents with information regarding the skills and knowledge needed for kindergarten so they can make an informed decision within the age guidelines of the school district.

**Kindergarten Readiness and Later Academic Success**

Current academic research has evaluated the relationship between of children’s skills at school entry on later academic success. Duncan et al. (2007) examined six longitudinal studies to determine the relationship between children’s skills and knowledge at school entry and their later academic achievement. This study found that children’s academic knowledge in math and reading school entry was predictive of later academic achievement. Attention, a skill related to self-regulation, was also predictive of
later academic success. This study demonstrates the importance of fostering the development of both academic knowledge and social skills prior to kindergarten entry.

Romano, Babchishin, Pagani, and Kohe (2010) replicated the previous study and found that the social emotional behaviors of impulsivity and anxiety were predictive of later academic struggles. While advanced pro-social skills at the time of school entry were predictive of later academic success, Sabol and Pianta (2012) found a similar relationship. The findings from these studies highlight the fact that parents need to be aware of the importance of social-emotional development for kindergarten readiness because research has demonstrated that parents place more emphasis on academic skills and knowledge for kindergarten readiness (Hains et al., 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999).

**Parental Involvement in School Readiness**

Parental involvement in education is a significant predictor of school readiness and academic achievement (Englund, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007). There are multiple parental involvement factors that affect school readiness. First, parents should provide a safe, healthy, and positive home environment (Piotrkowski et al., 2000). This type of environment promotes physical health, which parents and teacher agree is an important factor for kindergarten readiness (Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999). Second, they should be aware of their children’s
social behaviors, in terms of social interactions with both familiar adults and peers, at home and at school. Third, they should engage their children in social and cognitive activities at home (Gronnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008). Fourth, once their children have begun school, parents should take a personal interest in their children’s academic and social progress (Gronnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). The next two sections will focus specifically on the need for parents to engage their children in cognitively and socially stimulating activities at home (Gronlick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008).

**Parent’s Involvement in Children’s Cognitive Stimulation**

Parents provide their children with cognitively stimulation when they actively engage with their children in conversation or play (Hsin, 2009). Begum (2007) found that when parents engage children in cognitively stimulating activities at home, children have higher math and reading achievement in kindergarten and first grade. Research also has shown that parents who create a rich learning environment in the home and scaffold their children’s learning have more academically successful children (Englund et al., 2004; Lara-Cinismo et al., 2008).

This research demonstrates the importance of parent-child interaction that is cognitively stimulating. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents suggests conversational activities parents and children can participate in because research has found that parent-child conversations are cognitively stimulating. Cognitively stimulating
activities may help children to feel excitement about learning, which may translate to their experience in kindergarten.

**Parent Involvement in Children’s Social Stimulation**

Socially stimulating activities include interactions between children and their parents or peers. Research has demonstrated that children who frequently engage in social activities have a higher level of comfort interacting with peers and being in a classroom setting, as compared to children who do not frequently participate in social activities (Ladd & Hart, 1992). Parents are the organizers of peer interaction outside of the pre-formal school setting and need to be aware that they can foster their children’s social development by offering their children opportunities to be social. Allowing for this type of play engagement is related to parents’ ability to help prepare their children for kindergarten.

Nokali, Bachman, and Vortuba-Drzal (2010) found that, when parents were made aware of school expectations, high levels of parental involvement were (a) positively associated with children’s positive social-emotional behaviors (e.g. cooperation with school routine, following directions, initiating compromise with peers, and controlling emotions during conflict) in school, and (b) negatively associated with problem behaviors (e.g. aggressive, withdrawn, and anxious behaviors) in school and at home. This research shows that, in addition to offering social stimulation, parents can also help their children develop social-emotional skills that are necessary for school success, which further illustrates the need to inform parents about what their children need to be successful.
**Hindrances to Parental Involvement**

Traditional parental involvement roles include volunteering in the classroom, attending parent teacher conferences and back to school nights, and organizing extra-curricular events (Ferrara, 2009). Through mailers and orientation nights, parents are given information about ways they can be involved in their children’s educations (Berlin, Dunning, & Dodge, 2011). This type of information may discourage parents from becoming involved because they are unable to participate in these opportunities. Many parents are not able to be highly involved in the school institution because of their work schedules (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). Some parents may find it difficult to be involved in these ways because they have other children and do not have available childcare (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). However, this type of involvement focuses on the school, and not on parental engagement in their children’s education and development at home. Parents should be made aware that they can be engaged in their children’s educational development at home and on their own time.

Parental involvement in school is different than parental engagement in the learning process in the home and school environment. When parents are actively fostering learning in the home, there are many beneficial educational outcomes (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Research conducted on at-home literacy is a good example of this. Senechal (2006) examined the amount of literacy activities children experience in the home. They found a positive reciprocal relationship between storybook reading at home and kindergarten vocabulary levels, as well as the amount of reading for pleasure children engaged in while at kindergarten.
It seems that schools are mainly providing parents with information about how they can be involved with the institution. Schools do not seem to be providing parents with tools to help them engage in their children’s learning and educational development at home. This information gap can discourage parents from becoming involved and engaged in their children’s education. Thus it is important for schools to view parents as central partners in education rather than just volunteers at the school (Crawford & Zygouris, 2006). In order to strengthen the bonds between home and school, parents need to be given information similar to what is available for educators.

**Parent Training**

In order to help children develop the skills to be successful in school, parents need to feel confident in their ability to help their children academically and socially. Cuckle (1996) conducted interview research with parents regarding their ability to help their children read at home. Of the 11 parents interviewed, only three parents felt completely comfortable in their ability. Parents were concerned that they would be teaching their children differently than the teacher would and that this would cause their children confusion. Along these lines, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) postulated the importance of parental self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as a person’s belief that they are able to accomplish a specific goal or task. Parental self-efficacy has been found to play an important role in parental involvement, in that parents who feel they will be successful in helping their children are more likely to be involved and engaged in their children’s educational journey (Green, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007).
Parent training is a way for parents to feel more secure in their ability to foster their children’s development. When parents are presented with understandable ways to prepare their children for kindergarten, they will do so (La Paro et al., 2003). This intervention study, conducted by La Paro et al. (2003), offered parents information about home activities to help prepare their children for the transition to kindergarten. It included discussions that parents could have with their children about behavioral expectations, meeting new peers, and what activities the children could expect when they entered kindergarten. Parents involved in the study rated this information as very helpful.

The “Getting Ready” intervention took a different approach to parental involvement (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). Parents were instructed in three areas: warmth and sensitivity, support of autonomous behavior, and active participation in their children’s learning. Children of parents who participated in this program showed advances in their levels of secure attachments to parents and teachers. These children also demonstrated increased initiative in their learning and social interaction in the school and home setting. Finally, these children showed a decrease in anxious or withdrawing behavior. Overall, the intervention was beneficial for children entering kindergarten. Parents need information about how they can positively assist their children because this research has shown that those interactions can have lasting academic effects.

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook will provide parents with information about the social and cognitive demands of kindergarten. The handbook will also provide everyday social interactional activities for parent to do with their children. The types of
engagement activities explained in the handbook emphasize warm and positive interactions that foster children’s growing independence and give children an active role in learning.

**California Preschool Learning Foundations**

In the past decade state governments have begun to produce early learning standards. These documents offer an operationalized view of kindergarten readiness (Scott-Little et al., 2006) since no nationally accepted definition exists. Early learning standards are different for each state because elementary school curriculum standards are different in each state. Early learning standards offer information about developmental domains and the skills within those domains that early childhood educators should be promoting in their programs. The domains, as well as the corresponding skills, are aligned with kindergarten curriculum standards. The *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CPFL) (CDE, 2008) is an example of early learning standards. Thus, CPLF is the definition of kindergarten readiness in the State of California. Though this information is available for download on the California Department of Education’s website, it is written for educators and not parents. The information is available but may not be meaningful to parents who do not have a professional background in early childhood development and education. The author postulates that this information has not been disseminated in a meaningful way to parents because the California Department of Education is still in the process of creating and publishing subsequent volumes that
discuss other developmental domains. However, parents want non-professional explanations about skills and knowledge their children need to be successful in kindergarten. The CPLF has been included in this review of the literature because the information offers a clear view of kindergarten readiness in the State of California. Through a discussion of the developmental domains included in the CPLF and additional academic research on those domains this section provides the foundation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook For Parents.

The following sub-sections will discuss the educational domains presented in the CPLF. Each domain includes different strands and sub-strands that explore the different types of abilities that fall under each domain. The following sub-sections will only discuss Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. Thus, English Language Development will not be discussed.

**Introduction to the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1**

*The California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008) explains, through academic literature and examples, the skills that typically developing 4 and 5 year-old children should be able to master with appropriate and nurturing engagement. The competencies are in concordance with the kindergarten curriculum standards in the State of California. The CPLF covers four developmental domains: Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, English Language Development, and Mathematical Development. English Language Development will not be discussed because it applies to children who are learning English as a second language and is
therefore beyond the scope of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents. The creation and explanation of each domain evolved from a combination of current educational and developmental research as well as practical information from domain experts. The CPLF was not created as a curriculum for utilization. Instead, it was created for preschool teachers to review and then create a classroom and curriculum that fostered the development of these domains.

**Social-Emotional Development**

It is important for parents to have information about the social-emotional competencies necessary for kindergarten because research has demonstrated that parents tend to focus on academic skills (Piotrkowski et al. 2000; Welch & White, 1999). They may not be aware that the social-emotional domain is very important for kindergarten readiness. Research has shown that self-regulation and social competence play important roles in kindergarten readiness as well as later school success (Duncan et al., 2007; Romano et al., 2010). It is also important for parents to understand the social-emotional demands of kindergarten because they can encourage social-emotional competence through parent-child interactions.

Social-emotional skills develop through a myriad of everyday experiences. These experiences include children’s relationships with parents as well as with siblings and peers. Within these relationships, children experience conversations, guidance, and nurturing that help to develop social emotional skills. Research has found that, when parents are aware of their own emotions and label emotions, their children have better
emotional knowledge (Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010). Parents should facilitate a developmentally appropriate understanding of others’ feelings and should encourage sociability, responsibility, self-control, and empathy. Research has demonstrated that positive peer interaction and cooperative play abilities are related to successful entry to school (Ladd & Price, 1987). The CPLF divided Social Emotional Development into three strands: Self, Social Interaction, and Relationships. Within each strand are several sub-strands that aid with understanding the overarching strand.

**Self.** The strand entitled Self looks at the development of internal social processes that guide children’s behavior. The first sub-strand is Self-Awareness, which is explained as children’s ability to understand their own characteristics and abilities, as well as the characteristics and abilities of those around them. For example, a child who is developing self-awareness may announce that she is now able to write her name by herself; but when she was three years old, she was not able to write her name without help. Self-awareness is important because it influences the development of personal interest and motivation (Denham & Brown, 2010). Personal interest in activities, as well as motivation, can influence children’s level of engagement in tasks presented to them. Thus, it is important for self-awareness to be coupled with self-regulation.

The Self-Regulation sub-strand addresses children’s developing ability to regulate behavior and impulses. CPLF explains that children between 4 and 5 years of age are not able to fully control their emotional responses and may at times need adult guidance for successful emotional and behavioral regulations. The development of self-regulation has clear connections with classroom conduct, which is rated highly by
kindergarten teachers as necessary for successful school entry (Smith, 2005). When children are able to regulate their emotional responses, they are more able to focus on what is being taught. Children’s ability to focus has a positive impact on academic success (Ray & Smith, 2010). In contrast, children who have a difficult time controlling their emotional responses also struggle with attention and task completion (Ray, & Smith, 2010), which makes it difficult for them to navigate the demands of a kindergarten classroom.

The *Social and Emotional Understanding* sub-strand addresses children’s developing ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. Children may also develop the understanding that their feelings and emotions are different from the feelings and emotions of others. In addition, they should be developing the ability to verbalize their own emotional experiences. Once children are able to understand that their feelings, beliefs and emotions may differ from their peers, they are able to see the perspective of their peer, and thus able to have more successful peer relationships (Denham & Brown, 2010).

The *Empathy and Caring* sub-strand addresses children’s developing ability to evaluate and have a sympathetic reaction to another’s distress. For example, a child developing this ability may try to comfort a peer who is upset. Development in this area, similar to Social and Emotional Understanding, helps children to understand the perspective of another child (Zin et al., 2004). Empathy and caring abilities foster children’s ability to have positive interactions with peers and make friends. Research has
demonstrated that positive friendships are related to better adjustment to school (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996).

The final sub-strand is Initiative in Learning, which focuses on children’s developing confidence in their own ability to learn, their desire to seek learning opportunities, and their level of persistence when faced with a problem to solve. Children who demonstrate desire to learn will have increased levels of engagement learning tasks. High levels of learning engagement are related to success in school (Blair, 2002).

**Social Interaction.** The second strand of Social Emotional Development, as defined by the CPLF (CDE, 2008), is Social Interaction. This strand examines children’s developing behavior towards others in their daily environment. Parents play an important role in children’s development in this area, because they regularly interact with their children and also set up informal opportunities for children to play with peers outside of the preschool or early childhood educational setting (Ladd & Hart, 1992).

The first sub-strand, labeled Interaction with Familiar Adults explains children’s developing ability to have sustained interactions with familiar adults. This begins to occur around 4 to 5 years of age. Sustained interactions are periods of time when children are engaged in an activity or conversation with a familiar adult. During these interactions children may take on the role of initiator in conversations and activities. They may also feel comfortable asking for guidance and responding cooperatively when guidance is given. Development in this area is essential for kindergarten in that children will need to feel comfortable communicating their needs to their teacher or and the adult volunteer in the classroom (Berlin et al, 2011). Though this sub-strand is not referring to children’s
interactions with their parents, parents can offer children opportunities to speak with familiar adults in order to help foster development in this area.

*Interaction with Peers* is the next sub-strand, and it is quite complex because peer interactions and relationships are such a large part of formal schooling. The competencies children should be developing include the ability to actively engage with one or more peers and work towards a shared and co-constructed goal. Children who engage in positive peer play are more likely to have positive attitudes towards learning (Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000). Children should also be engaging in more conflict resolution that includes using their language.

The next sub-strand is *Group Participation*, which explains that children should be learning how to function within a group setting as a cooperative participant. Recent research has demonstrated that group participation mediates peer acceptance in kindergarten classrooms, which positively impacts children’s experience and enjoyment of school (Buhs & Ladd, 2001). Group participation involves the development of the skills mentioned above, interaction with familiar adults and peers. In kindergarten children will be asked to participate in group activities, both inside the classroom by the teacher and outside on the play yard by her peers. The class may sit and count the numbers on the calendar together. Outside the children may engage in a game of tag.

*Cooperation and Responsibility* is the final sub-strand in the Social Interaction strand of the CPLF. Cooperation and responsibility are important factors in a positive school transition. Children need to be able to stand in line, wait their turn, sit for circle time, and take care of their belongings (Berlin et al., 2011). This sub-strand examines the
development of children’s intrinsic desire to abide and cooperate with adult guidance and instruction, as well as the pride they feel in their ability to do so.

**Relationships.** Relationships are the third and final strand in the domain of Social and Emotional Development. The first sub-strand within this strand is *Attachment to Parents*. This sub-strand explains that children should be developing the desire to seek out their parent(s) to help them when difficulties arise, for guidance with problem solving, and for emotional support when needed. This also includes developing the understanding that the relationship is both mutual and reciprocal. Children who feel secure in the relationship with their parents are able to function better in a school setting (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

*Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers* is the next sub-strand. This is much the same as the previous sub-strand. The relationship that children are able to develop with their teacher or primary caregiver can influence subsequent teacher-child relationships throughout their education (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This positive relationship may also help to motivate children to be successful. It is important to note that positive teacher-child relationships have demonstrated a positive relationship with academic achievement and a negative relationship with behavioral problems in elementary school (Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011).

The final sub-strand is entitled *Friendships*, as this age sees the development of lasting and mutual relationships with a more exclusive set of peers. Children’s ability to develop friendships in kindergarten can help with adjustment to formal schooling (Ladd et al., 1996). This ability is fostered by children’s development of emotional regulation,
social-emotional understanding, caring and empathy, and interaction with peers. Peer relationships/friendships are positively related to school success (Altermatt, 2011). Peer relationships/friendships can provide academic resources, for example, when children ask their friends for assistance on difficult academic tasks (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Language and Literacy

The domain of Language and Literacy illustrates the oral language and emergent literacy competencies children should be developing between 4 and 5 years of age in order to be ready for kindergarten. It is important for parents to have information about these competencies necessary for kindergarten because parents may not realize how many opportunities they have in their everyday life to foster the language and literacy development of their children. Parents’ everyday conversations with their children can foster language development through the introduction of new vocabulary (Goodwin, 2007). Also, research has demonstrated, that when parents encourage and engage in reading at home, they foster children’s literacy development (Lever & Senechal, 2010; Senechal, 2006). There are three strands in the developmental domain of Language and Literacy: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

Listening and Speaking. Listening and Speaking is the first strand in the Language and Literacy domain. The ability to listen as well as speak is important for early school success because language helps to guide interactions children have with their
teacher and peers. This strand has been divided into three sub-strands: *Language Use and Convention, Vocabulary, and Grammar*.

The *Language Use and Convention* sub-strand focuses on competencies related to children’s ability to use language in different settings for different purposes, both basic and complex. Children should also be developing the ability to speak with and understand speech from familiar and unfamiliar adults and children. Early language skill is predictive of school readiness (Forget-Dubois et al., 2009). A child’s level of language proficiency can have lasting effects. For example, current research found an association between poor language skills and peer rejection (Menting, van Lier, and Koot, 2011). Parents’ conversations with their children foster language development by providing the opportunity for children to practice speaking and by introducing them to new vocabulary (Goodwin, 2007).

The *Vocabulary* sub-strand focuses on children’s growing vocabulary, which should be expanding to include more complex words and the ability to use symbolic and comparative language. Vocabulary development is very important because it is linked to reading comprehension (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). Parents should expose their children to new words as often as possible, as varied word exposure has been linked to higher vocabulary knowledge (Hart & Risley, 1992).

The final sub-strand, *Grammar*, focuses on children’s developing ability to (a) produce and comprehend complex sentences that convey three to four ideas, as well as (b) use more advanced word forms and correct verb tense forms. Through conversation, parents can model advanced grammar rules and engage in the scaffolding of their
children’s use of correct grammar (Schiller, 2009). For example, when children use incorrect verb tense forms such as “I run into the table” instead of “I ran into the table”, parent can gently correct them by repeating the sentence with corrected grammar.

**Reading.** The strand Reading includes five sub-strands. This is understandable because there are many steps to achieving the skill of reading. The first sub-strand is *Concepts about Print*, which involves children’s developing understanding that letters and the written words symbolize specific meanings. Children are learning that reading is the tool that adults use to understand words and gain information. Research has demonstrated that, when parents point to words as they read them, their children will spend more time looking at the words and develop more advanced concepts about print (Evans, Williamson, & Pursoo, 2008).

The next sub-strand is *Phonological Awareness*, which addresses children’s awareness of individual sounds in spoken words. The development of phonological awareness is a process that builds upon itself. Initial phonological awareness can be seen when children begin to manipulate words and syllables when looking at photographs that represent the words. As children’s phonological awareness becomes more advanced, they are able to hear different beginning letter sounds and rhymes, and demonstrate the ability to manipulate these sounds with or without accompanying pictures. Research has demonstrated that phonological awareness skills in kindergarten are related to reading skill in second grade (Furnes & Samuelsson, 2011). Phonological awareness also plays a role in children’s ability to speak clearly (Ray & Smith, 2010).
Alphabets and Word/Print Recognition, the next sub-strand, focuses on the development of letter recognition. This development begins when children recognize their own name and commonly occurring words, and then advances to an understanding of letter names, both upper and lower case (Elliott & Olliff, 2008). This understanding then grows to include knowledge of letter sounds. Print recognition is predictive of children’s reading development (Adams, 1990). Parents can assist children in their development of word/print recognition by point out letters and words in everyday life.

The next sub-strand is Comprehension and Analysis of Age-Appropriate Text. This sub-strand explains that children should be developing the ability to listen, understand, and absorb information presented in age appropriate text. Children may also begin to make inferences about what will occur next in the story, and make meaningful connections between stories they hear and their own real-life experiences. Early exposure to books and frequent shared book reading time can help to advance development in this area (Lever & Sénéchal, 2010; Pagan, Lever, & Ouellette, 2008).

The final sub-strand is Literacy Interest and Response. Children’s competency in this area is demonstrated through a growing intrinsic desire to read and engage in increasingly advanced literacy activities and routines. Frequent exposure to books has been shown to increase reading for pleasure in kindergarten age children (Sénéchal, 2006). Research has demonstrated that children who read for pleasure outside of school have higher reading achievement in comparison to children who do not spend time reading for pleasure (Pagan, 2011). Parents can create an environment at home that
promotes development in this area by reading with their children and offering children constant access to books.

**Writing.** The final strand within the Language and Literacy domain is Writing. The development of writing skills is not only cognitive. It also includes physical development, specifically fine motor coordination. Emergent writing skills begin with children’s ability to grasp a writing instrument and control their body in a way that allows them to use that instrument. Children are then able to advance to creating shapes and letter-like symbols that represent their ideas. They should then be able to advance to writing the letters of their own name. Research has demonstrated that scribbles are the precursor for writing ability, and that exposure to print at home can assist in the development of writing abilities (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011). Parents can offer children opportunities to use writing instruments and ensure that children always have access to books at home. These practices will help to foster writing development.

**Mathematical Development**

The last CPFL domain to be discussed is the domain of Mathematical Development. There are five strands explained within the domain of Mathematical Development. These strands were created with the idea of creating a foundation that directly correlated to the mathematical program that the children will see in their formal school years. The five strands are as follows: Number Sense, Algebra And Function (classification and patterning), Measurement, Geometry, and Mathematical Reasoning. Early mathematic skill is predictive of later mathematic achievement as well as, later
reading achievement (Duncan et al., 2007). Research has shown, that when parents assist their children with mathematical ideas at home, children's mathematical proficiency increases (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Starkey, Klein, & Wakeley, 2004).

**Number Sense.** The development of mathematical skill begins with counting, and the Number Sense strand addresses developmental competencies directly related to a child’s ability to count. These competencies can be seen in children’s developing ability to count to 20 and recognize the written representation of numbers. Children may also advance to show they can identify amounts without counting the number of objects in a very small group, as well as count objects up to 10. Children may also develop an understanding of the concept of “less” and “more”, and begin to demonstrate the ability to subtract and add small numeric values. Children who demonstrate strong number sense when they begin school may find it less challenging to learn more complex mathematical concepts (Jordan, Kaplan, Olah, & Locuniak, 2006; Kurdek & Sinclair, 2001).

**Algebra and Functions.** The second strand is Algebra and Functions. This section focuses on children’s developing competencies in classification of objects and pattern comprehension. Children who are developing foundations in this strand may demonstrate the ability to sort objects based on specific classifications. These children may also demonstrate an understanding of and identify simple patterns, and they may be able to complete the pattern. These children also begin to create their own simple patterns. Children’s ability to recognize and understand patterns helps them to develop an understanding of units of measure and may provide a foundation for multiplicative understanding in later years (Papic, 2007).
**Measurement.** Children who are developing competencies in the area of measurement will demonstrate their ability to compare objects based on the object’s size. They may also be able to order objects by size i.e. smallest to largest. Children may also begin to utilize everyday objects to create their own measurement ratios. An example of this is children using a block tower to measure their own height. In order for children to demonstrate development in measurement they also need to have an understanding of measurement language (i.e. bigger, smaller, shorter, longer) (Greenes, 1999). However this understanding is generally pre-quantitative (Geary, 1994). Thus, parents are able to foster development in this area by offering children examples of measurement language.

**Geometry.** Children who are developing competencies in this area are beginning to identify shapes and recognize those shapes when they are represented in the child’s everyday environment. Research has demonstrated that children develop a stronger understanding of shapes when they have shapes to touch and manipulate (Clements, 1999; Notari-Syverson, & Sadler, 2008). These children may be able to manipulate shapes to create pictures and designs. They may also be gaining an understanding of the position of objects in relation to other objects. Children’s ability to understand spatial relationships and awareness is related to their mathematical understanding (Clements, 1999; Clements & Sarama, 2011).

**Mathematical Reasoning.** Mathematical reasoning is the final strand of the Mathematics domain. Mathematical reasoning is simple to observe as it develops within a child. When children begin developing an understanding of the previously discussed sub-strands (i.e math sense, algebra and functions, measurement, and geometry) and begin to
incorporate those ideas into the way they examine the world they are utilizing mathematical reasoning (English, 2004). A child who is in the process of creating these competencies will begin using math in their daily life (English, 2004; Hunting 2003). These children may begin recognizing when they need more of something and exactly how much more they need. For example, a child may express that he or she has five napkins but needs six napkins to complete the task of setting the table.

**At-Home Conversational Activities**

This section will discuss three conversational activities parents and children can engage in at home: Emotion Coaching, Shared Book Reading, and Math Talk. These conversational activities were chosen because they offer parents a simple way to promote kindergarten readiness skills and knowledge through everyday interaction. Conversation is a way for parents to provide cognitive stimulation for their children (Hsin, 2009). Research has demonstrated that these conversational activities foster development of the skills and knowledge in the three developmental domains included in the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents.

**Emotion Coaching**

Social-Emotional development is the largest domain in the CPLF because (a) social-emotional development is very important to kindergarten readiness, and (b) social-emotional development involves mostly abstract ideas, compared to a domain such as
language and literacy. Thus, it is important to inform parents of the importance of social-emotional development and provide ways for parents to foster development in this area. Emotion coaching is a parent-child interaction activity that is suggested in the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook. Emotion coaching is a way for parents to react and speak to their children about their emotions. Parent-child emotion conversations allow for the use of emotion vocabulary, open-ended questions about the causes and results of emotions, and talk about the emotions of others (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002).

Emotion coaching is a conversational activity that is beneficial for children’s development of social-emotional competencies. First, the way in which parents react to emotions has the potential to influence their children’s beliefs about how to express emotions and how to talk about that expression (Zeman, Perry-Parish, & Cassano, 2010). Second, parents who engage in emotion coaching offer their children opportunities to discuss different emotions and the appropriate expression of those emotions. These parents talk about a variety of positive and negative emotions, which may influence the amount of emotion language children are exposed to and in turn incorporate into their own vocabulary (Baker, Fenning, & Crnic, 2011). Children whose parents engage them in emotion talk have a higher level of emotional understanding (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). Third, this increase in emotion language may work to prevent externalizing behavior, in that children receive guidance in developing emotional regulation competencies (Havighusrt, Wilson, Harley, Prior, 2009). Menting, van Lier, and Koot (2011) found associations among language deficits, peer rejection, and externalizing behavior. It is possible that children who experience emotion talk in conversation with
their parents may be better equipped to deal with negative emotions with peers and may be better able to demonstrate empathy and caring towards peers. Fourth, parents who are comfortable taking emotional moments and using them as an opportunity to teach are also more likely to model healthy and appropriate emotional responses (Havighusrt et al., 2009).

Emotion coaching is a conversational activity parents can engage in with their child everyday. Parents need only the framework for guiding these emotion coaching conversations, then they can begin to foster skills from CPFL domain of Social-Emotional Development at home. Emotion coaching can foster children’s development of self-regulation, emotional understanding, and empathy and caring, which are sub-strands of the Self strand. Advanced emotional understanding, empathy, and caring can aid a child when interacting with familiar adults and peers, which are sub-strands of the Social Interaction strand. Children who are competent in the domain of Social-Emotional Development experience positive relationships with peers, teachers, and parents, and are more successful in school (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). Emotion coaching can help children to become more competent in the domain of Social-Emotional Development. Thus, emotion coaching can help to foster kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Emotion coaching can occur whenever children are struggling with a situation. Parents can engage children in conversation about emotionally beneficial ways to deal with the situation. If children are too upset, parents can wait until they are calm and then talk about ways to deal with the upsetting situation the next time it occurs. Parents can
also engage in emotion coaching while reading a book or watching a television show. They can talk with their children about the emotion the character is experiencing and how the children think the character should express that emotion.

**Shared Book Reading**

Shared book reading is an activity that parents can engage in with their children. An effective type of parent-child reading includes parents allowing children to try and read words, parents asking children questions about the story while reading and children connecting ideas from the story to real-life experiences (Weigel, Lowman, & Martin, 2007). Shared book reading uses dialogic reading strategies. With dialogic reading, the child acts as the storyteller and the adult acts as the facilitator. Parents help children increase engagement in shared book reading when they prompt children to make connections between their own lives and the story, when they re-read the story, and when they ask children to retell the story in their own words (Blom-Hoffman, O’Neil-Pirozzi, & Cutting, 2006). This type of reading interaction has been shown to improve children’s language and literacy skills (Weigel et al., 2007; Sénéchal, 2006; Lever, & Sénéchal, 2010).

Parents can begin shared book reading with their children as soon as they begin to verbalize. This type of activity presents children with the opportunity to experience print as well as new vocabulary. If parents point to the words as they read the story, children may spend more time looking at the print in the story, thus increasing their print awareness (Evans, Williamson, & Pursoo, 2008). This type of engagement fosters many
of the skills assigned to the domain of Language and Literacy Development in CPFL such as vocabulary, concept about print, and literacy interest and response. Exposure to print has also been positively linked to writing development (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011).

In a study conducted by Lever and Sénéchal (2010), kindergarten-age children were offered a shared book reading intervention, which assessed and attempted to improve the children’s narrative abilities. The children who received the intervention were read to by research assistants and asked questions about the elements of the story as it was unfolding. The children who participated in the intervention showed linguistic improvements; specifically in the structure of the narratives they produced. The children were also found to use more connecting words such as “and” and “then.” Shared book reading has the ability to enhance language development when children are prompted in meaningful ways.

Partridge (2004) offered strategies for parents to maximize the influence of shared book reading. First, parents should establish a specific and regular time for reading. During that time, both parent and child should be actively engaged. Parents should make reading 15-30 minutes per day the goal. Second, parents should be aware that they are able to simplify the language of a book in order to make the language match their child's level of linguistic development. Third, parents should understand that rereading a book the child likes allows the child to focus on different aspects of the book during repetitive readings. Finally, parents should also be aware of their child's level of engagement. Parental interaction should always be warm and supportive and the child should be
actively engaged (Sheridian et al., 2010). When the child is no longer engaged, the interaction should end.

**Math Talk**

Children are able to observe mathematical relationships in their natural environment (Linders, Power-Costello, & Stegelin, 2011). An example of this is children's acute ability to understand when another child receives more objects than they do. Children’s natural curiosity about the world around them opens doors for mathematical discussion. For example, parents can ask children questions that involve mathematic concepts. For example, when a parent and child are walking and they see a dog, the parent can ask their child “how many legs does a dog have?” or “Are there more red flowers or purple flowers on this bush?” Through these discussions, parents can incorporate mathematics into everyday interactions. As previously noted, children's mathematical proficiency increases when parents include mathematical ideas in the home (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

Some current research on the development of mathematical skill in young children focuses on mathematical language. Klibanoff, Levine, Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, & Hedges (2006) examined the amount of “math talk” and its relationship with mathematical concepts development. Math talk is defined as mathematically relevant language. Math talk in practice included counting objects and discussing the total amount, talking about number order, talking about number recognition, as well as simple addition and subtraction. This research found that when preschool and day-care providers
used more “math talk” during the course of the day, their students had higher conventional mathematical knowledge. It is also important to note that positive mathematical experiences early on will help to foster a sustained interest in mathematics through a child's educational experience (Linders, Power-Costello, & Stegelin, 2011).

Parents can incorporate math talk into their everyday interactions with their children. They can encourage their children to count during daily activities to foster number sense (Sarama & Clement, 2005). Parents can point out patterns in daily life and prompt their children to determine what comes next to foster algebra and functions (Papic, 2007). They can model the use of measurement language to foster their children’s understanding of measurement (Greenes, 1999) and point out shapes in daily life to foster geometric knowledge (Clement, 1999; Notari-Syverson, & Sadler, 2008). Finally, parents can talk about the use of math in everyday life to foster mathematical reasoning. These conversations will help children’s develop mathematic knowledge. When math interactions are short and fun, children seemed to engage in self-directed math talk (Griffiths, 2007). Thus, parents need to be aware that math talk should be enjoyable and timed to suit their children’s level of engagement.

Conclusions

This chapter has looked at four major areas regarding preparation for kindergarten. First, Social Ecological Systems theory and Socio-cultural theory help to explain (a) that changes in kindergarten standards affect all the children and parents who
are beginning kindergarten, and (b) that parental social interaction can help to foster a child’s development of the skills and abilities needs for kindergarten. Second, current kindergarten readiness research demonstrates that ideas about kindergarten readiness vary between professionals and parents. This may be because the information regarding kindergarten readiness has not been provided to parents in a meaningful way. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook will work to remedy this problem. Research has demonstrated that kindergarten readiness is positively related to later academic success (Duncan et al., 2007; La Paro & Pianta, 2000; Romano et al., 2010; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Third, this chapter demonstrated the importance of parent involvement in education, as documented in academic research. Fourth, this chapter discussed the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (CDE, 2008) and summarized the information from each of the domains to be included in the handbook. Finally, this chapter offered empirical data about ways in which parents can interact with their children to help them develop the kindergarten readiness skills and abilities. The next chapter will offer specific procedural information about the creation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook.
Chapter 3

METHODS

Project Design

Researchers and practitioners agree that parents, as well as schools and communities, all play a role in preparing children for successful school entry (Giallo et al., 2010; Green et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2007; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nokali et al., 2010; Parker et al., 1999; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Ramey, & Ramey, 2004). The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook was created to help strengthen the bond between home and school. Parents are in a unique position to help prepare their children for what will be expected in a formal school setting. This handbook was created and designed to encourage parents towards fulfilling that role by providing (a) information about the concept of kindergarten readiness; (b) an explanation of the importance of parental involvement in kindergarten readiness; (c) information about the current standards for the three developmental domains (Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development); and (d) conversational activities that parents can engage in with their children to foster development in these domains.

Each domain addressed in The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook is linked to an at-home parent-child interaction activity for the promotion of kindergarten readiness competencies. The domain entitled Social-Emotional Development suggests parental
emotion coaching as a way for parents to foster social-emotional skills. The domain entitled Language and Literacy offers shared book reading as a way to promote language and literacy skills. The domain of Mathematical Development presents math talk as a way for parents to foster mathematical skills.

**Target Audience**

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents was created for parents of children who will be attending kindergarten at any public elementary school in Sacramento, California, although the principles described are likely applicable to a wider audience of parents. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook discusses competencies that children ages 4-5 years are developing. However, parents of younger children could use the competencies and at-home activities to foster development. This handbook will be disseminated to parents in the Sacramento City and the San Juan Unified school districts because the author has strong professional relationships with early childhood education programs in both districts, as described below.

Parents within the targeted school districts vary in terms of educational level and socio-economic status. However, while working in both districts, the author found that most parents had questions regarding kindergarten readiness and how they could better prepare their children. Therefore, the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents was written for parents of all education and socio-economic status levels. However, one
limitation is that it was written and prepared for distribution in English; thus parents who do not read English will not be able to utilize this handbook.

**Procedure**

The creation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents required an in-depth examination of research related to: kindergarten readiness, parent involvement, *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008), and parent-child interaction activities. The author also reviewed previously created handbooks for parents, as well as websites and brochures regarding kindergarten readiness.

**Literature Review**

The research regarding kindergarten readiness and its positive relationship to later academic success (Duncan et al., 2007; La Paro & Pianta, 2000; Romano et al., 2010, Sabol & Pianta, 2012) was the starting point for the literature review that informed the creation of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook. This research demonstrated that children need assistance from multiple groups in order to be adequately prepared for the demands of kindergarten. This literature also demonstrated a lack of consensus regarding the definition of kindergarten readiness. This information led to research about issues surrounding kindergarten readiness such as perceptions of kindergarten readiness and age as a determining factor for readiness.
The review of literature regarding parent involvement demonstrated that parents play an important role in academic success. This body of literature led to research regarding types of parental interaction that fosters development. Research demonstrated that emotion coaching aids in social-emotional development (Havighusrt, et al, 2009; Menting et al., 2011; Zeman et al., 2010). Shared book reading was found to help foster language and literacy skills (Evans et al., 2008; Lever and Sénéchal, 2010; Partridge, 2004; Weigel et al., 2007). Math talk was found to help develop mathematical knowledge (Klibanoff et al., 2006; Linders et al., 2011). These are the parent-child interaction activities offered in the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook.

**Utilizing the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008)**


In order to translate the academic information in the CPLF into a valuable resource for parents, the author began by reading and re-reading the document. Second, the author examined the information and made connections between the three domains in the CPLF and child development research regarding kindergarten readiness. Third, the author examined academic research connected to the development of skills and
knowledge discussed in each strand and sub-strand of the three developmental domains. Fourth, the author combined the CPLF information, recent academic research, and her own knowledge and experience with early childhood to create descriptions of each domain, strand and sub-strand that are understandable for parents with different levels of education. Finally, the author incorporated her knowledge of early childhood development with the non-professional descriptions of each sub-strand to create real-life examples. These examples offer parents a guide to observing their children’s behavior.

Additional Preparatory Work

The creation of this handbook also included an evaluation of the resources currently available to parents regarding kindergarten readiness. Websites and parenting magazines offered information about kindergarten readiness; however the information was either very generalized to fit any state or very specific to the state where the information originated. The author also found many books and e-books available to parents, however in order to obtain the information parents needed to make a purchase. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook was created specifically for parents in Sacramento, CA and will be available free of charge. A review of these previously created parent guides provided the author with ideas about the type of language that is accessible to parents. These creations also influenced the author’s use of an introductory letter to prepare parents for the information included in the handbook.
Content and Organization of the Handbook

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents offers parents information about the developmental domains necessary for kindergarten readiness. This Handbook also suggests ways for parents to use conversational interaction to foster kindergarten readiness skills. The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents has four main sections. First, the handbook discusses the concept of kindergarten readiness and explains to parents why readiness is so difficult to define.

Second, the handbook offers an introduction to the importance of parental involvement in academic development and the current scholarly research that demonstrates this. This section goes on to explain that beneficial parental involvement in education can occur in the home. Finally, this section explains that parents are capable of fostering their children’s school readiness competencies through everyday conversational interactions.

Third, the handbook introduces parents to the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (CDE, 2008). The introduction to the CPLF advises parents about the purpose and authorship of the CPLF and provides an explanation of why information and ideas adapted from the CPLF are important for parents to know. This section concludes with an in-depth look at the following learning domains from the CPLF (CDE, 2008): Social Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. It presents these developmental domains in non-professional language that is accessible to parents of differing educational levels. At the beginning of each
developmental domain section there is an explanation of the importance of that specific
domain in regards to kindergarten readiness. Then the strands and sub-strands are
summarized and real-life examples are given.

Fourth, the handbook suggests interactional activities parents can do with their
children at home to foster development. The activities recommended were emotion
coaching, shared-book reading, and math talk. Each activity is explained, and is
connected to the developmental domain it fosters.

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents was organized and presented
in such a way as to provide parents with a comprehensive and understandable resource
regarding kindergarten readiness. The author began with an introduction letter to orient
parents to the different sections of the handbook. The author provided a table of contents
so that if a parent is interested in a specific section, he or she can go directly to that
section. The author wrote the handbook in non-professional language to help ensure that
parents with different levels of education can understand the ideas presented. The
handbook begins with background information about kindergarten readiness, parent
involvement, and the CPLF. This information was included to give parents the foundation
for the creation of the handbook. For each developmental domain, the author began with
an overview of the skills and knowledge included in the domain. The author also
provided connections between the overarching domain and kindergarten readiness to help
parents to see the value of each domain. The author provided examples for each sub-
strand to help parent understand how the sub-strand definition was connected to their
child. Finally, the author included activities that parent could engage in with their
children at home to reinforce the idea that parental involvement is important for kindergarten readiness and future academic success.

**Role of the Researcher**

The author spent four years teaching at a church-based preschool program in the San Juan Unifies School District. The preschool program was geared towards kindergarten readiness. The author developed and implemented curriculum that fostered kindergarten readiness. During her tenure with this program, the author administered pre-kindergarten assessments and conducted parent-teacher conference regarding kindergarten readiness. Parents had many questions about the skills children need to be successful in kindergarten. They also seemed unclear about the importance of social-emotional development as a factor for kindergarten readiness.

These experiences demonstrated to the author a need for a Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents. The author proceeded to examine current research regarding kindergarten readiness. This process led her to the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008) to which, prior to her investigation, the author had not been exposed. The author felt the information presented in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008) should be adapted and disseminated to parents in non-professional language. This may help parents to create a learning environment in the home that fosters the development of the skills and abilities children need to be successful in kindergarten.
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this project was to research and create a handbook for parents to inform them of the skills and knowledge necessary for their child to be successful in kindergarten. Current research has demonstrated that success in kindergarten is positively related with continued academic success (Giallo et al., 2010). The handbook was specifically created for parents because parent involvement in education is also beneficial to students’ academic success (Arnold, Zelijo, Doctoroff & Ortiz, 2008; Berger, 1991; Nokali, Bachman & Vortuba-Drzal, 2010; Senechal and LeFevre, 2002).

The handbook was created using the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008). The CPLF was created for Early Childhood educators; however, the author felt that parents are also able to foster the growth and development in the domains explained in the CPLF: Social Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. The handbook includes a description of each of the domains and the skills that can be observed, using non-professional language.

The handbook also offers three types of activities that parent can engage in with their children. The three activities are the following: emotion coaching, shared book reading, and math talk. All three activities have been shown to foster development.
Emotion coaching has been shown to foster emotional regulation, social-emotional understanding, and self-awareness development (Zeman et. al., 2010; Ramsden, & Hubbard, 2002). Shared book reading had been shown to foster development of vocabulary and speaking skills, as well as pre-literacy skills (Partridge, 2004; Senechal, 2006, et. al. 2008; Evans et. al. 2008; Wasik, 2010). Math talk has been shown to help build knowledge of mathematics and thus, foster mathematical development (Klibanoff et. al., 2006).

These conversational activities are simple for parents to incorporate into everyday life. They do not require parents to purchase extra materials or to have advanced knowledge. Though these activities do not address every sub-strand within each domain, they do address many. The author felt that offering too many activities would be daunting for parents. Offering one activity for each domain, that addresses multiple sub-strands, is more manageable and may increase the likelihood of parents utilizing the suggested activities.

Overall, the handbook offers parents guidance about the skills and knowledge their children needed for kindergarten as well as proposing activities that parents can engage in at home to help foster those skills and knowledge.
Strengths of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook

The Kindergarten Readiness Handbook for Parents provides a free guide to kindergarten readiness that reflects the current kindergarten curriculum standards in the state of California. Parents play a very important role in preparing their children for formal schooling. This handbook allows parents to fulfill that role with confidence because parents will have valuable and understandable information regarding the concept of kindergarten readiness and the skills and knowledge their children need to be prepared. The inclusion of real-life examples may help parents to observe and understand their child’s development.

In the author’s experience, the fast paced world can interfere with a parent’s level of engagement in their child’s development. The handbook provides tangible ways for parents to engage with their children and promotes parent-child interaction as the key to fostering development. These activities do not require the purchase of any special books, DVDs or equipment. Parents can simply enjoy interacting with their children, and the interaction may help to promote the skills and knowledge important to kindergarten readiness.

Challenges of Creating the Handbook

The creation of the handbook was challenging for multiple reasons. First, the author wanted to provide parents with information about kindergarten readiness. However, there is a large body of literature regarding readiness and the author did not
want parents to feel overwhelmed by the handbook. Thus, the author had to determine which information would help parents understand and facilitate readiness and which information would be more confusing than helpful. Second, the author felt it was important for parents to have background knowledge regarding the academic research that informed the creation of the handbook. However, it was challenging to explain complex academic research in non-professional language. Third, the author does not have personal experience preparing her own child for kindergarten so the examples provided in the handbook were taken from her experience as a teacher. Parents’ experiences with their children do not often occur in the school setting. The author had to adapt her experiences and infer about the way in which children behave outside the school setting to provide examples that were tailored to suit the needs of parents.

**Limitations of the Project**

The author has identified four main limitations on which future handbooks could expand. The limitations that exist in this handbook are (a) the exclusion of English Language Development from the handbook; (b) the inclusion of only one volume of the CPLF; (c) the activities suggested do not address every sub-strand of each developmental domain but they do address the over arching domain; and (d) no formal evaluation of the handbook’s usefulness for parents. Other limitations identified are parental motivation, availability, interest, and ability to utilize the handbook. The Kindergarten Readiness
Handbook for Parents does not address cultural, educational, and economic differences that may limit parent participation.

First, the handbook was created using the skill domains presented in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1* (CDE, 2008). However, there is one domain that was not utilized in the creation of the handbook, English-Language Development. This domain explains the development of English Language learning in children whose native language is not English. This developmental domain was not discussed because the author does not speak or write in any other language, thus the handbook itself was written in and will be distributed in English. It will not be helpful to parents who do not read English. Future versions of the Kindergarten Readiness Handbook could include the domain of English-Language Development, and be offered in languages other than English.

Second, the handbook utilized the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1*. Since the author began to create the handbook, *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 2* (CDE, 2010) has been published, and *Vol. 3* is currently in process. *California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 2* (CDE, 2010) includes the developmental domains: Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Development, and Health. These domains were not included in the current handbook because the resulting handbook would have been very dense and may have deterred parents. Future Kindergarten Readiness Handbooks should attempt to include information about the domains discussed in the most recent volumes.
Third, the handbook suggests emotion coaching, shared book reading, and math talk as conversational activities parents can engage in with their children to foster kindergarten readiness. These activities were chosen because recent academic research demonstrated them to foster development in the three developmental domains discussed: Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. Though these activities foster development in these areas, they do not address advancement in every sub-strand. Thus, future handbooks could include supplemental activities for each sub-strand of the developmental domains.

Fourth, the creation of this handbook did not include an evaluation of its usefulness. The handbook was created and will be distributed to parents. No evaluation will be made to see if it is helpful to parents and their children. The purpose of this project was to create a handbook for parents and the author felt that an evaluation was outside of the scope of the current project. Thus, future handbooks could offer a questionnaire for parents to evaluate whether they feel their questions were answered, or if more information should be included. Future research could also evaluate whether child whose parents utilized the handbook demonstrated successful school entry.

**Future Directions**

This Kindergarten Readiness Handbook was created to help parents understand the skills and knowledge their children need to be successful in kindergarten. However, research shows that parents have questions about the routine of school, as well as district
policies (Wesley and Buysse, 2003). This handbook is a starting point. Different schools and districts have different policies; providing parents with this handbook and supplemental information about the school and school district would offer parents even more information. This type of information would also help to strengthen the bond between the microsystem contexts of school and home.

It is important to note that kindergarten readiness involves many parties including parents, teachers, administrator, the community, and most centrally, the child (Hains et al., 1987; Lin, Lawrence, Gorrell, 2003; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Grace, & Brandt, 2006; Welch, & White, 1999). This handbook was created for parents because past research has shown that parents have questions about kindergarten readiness (Dodd, 1996; Wesley and Buysse, 2003; Smith, 2005). The academic and educational communities need to remember that not all parents can or have the desire to read academic literature. Tools that are available to educators should also be made available to parents in formats that are understandable and motivate them to gather necessary information. This handbook is an example of the resources the author feels should be made readily available to parents.
APPENDIX A

KINDERGARTEN READINESS HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS
Kindergarten Readiness Handbook

For Parents
Hello Parent,

You have a child starting kindergarten. Do you have questions about what skills and knowledge your child needs to be successful in kindergarten? This handbook has been created to help answer some of your questions about what your child needs in order to be successful in kindergarten. This handbook begins with a discussion of what kindergarten readiness is and how it is related to continued academic success. Second, this handbook explains the important role you play in preparing your child for kindergarten. Third, the handbook will give you information about the areas of development the State of California thinks are important for children beginning kindergarten. Fourth, the handbook will suggest different ways to for you to help your child develop his skills in these areas.

You play a very important role in preparing your child for kindergarten; you are your child’s first teacher. I know that you want what is best for your child; so as you read this handbook, remember that you know your child best. Let your knowledge of your child guide the way you use this handbook.

Although there is no definition of kindergarten readiness that is agreed upon by professional educators, there is specific knowledge and skills that are acknowledged as foundational for kindergarten readiness. This handbook will first give to you a description of what those skills and abilities may look like in your child. Then this handbook will provide you with conversational activities you can engage in with your child to foster the development of these skills and abilities. Conversations are a simple and enjoyable way for you to help your child to build knowledge and develop skills essential to kindergarten readiness.

You can begin to reinforce behaviors and skills at home that your child will need to be successful in school. You can help create an environment at home that builds a love of language, literacy, and mathematics. Your involvement now and your continued involvement will be a valuable asset to your child’s academic success.
The information and activities in this handbook are meant to be enjoyable and engaging for you and your child. Therefore, it is important that you aim to be warm and sensitive to your child’s emotions and their desire to continue the activity. For example, if your child seems distracted or disinterested you can positively and gently try to draw them back into the activity; and if that is unsuccessful, leave the activity and try again at a different time. It is also important that you help your child begin to do things for himself. For example if you are rereading one of your child's favorite books you can begin a sentence and then pause for him to fill in the word or phrase. Another example of this is if your child is helping you make cookies, which is an example discussed in a later section, you can allow your child to retrieve the ingredients from your cupboards on his own. Finally, it is important that you, as well as your child, are actively engaged in the activity. This means that both you and your child are completely focused on and enjoying the activity.
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What is Kindergarten Readiness?

Kindergarten readiness does not have a nationally accepted definition. There are multiple reasons for this. First, kindergarten readiness cannot be explained in a few sentences; it includes many specific skills and knowledge. Academic research has investigated multiple areas of development that may influence kindergarten readiness. These domains included social-emotional development, language development, as well as the development of math and reading skills, all of these developmental domains will be discussed in further sections.

Second, kindergarten readiness is different in each state because kindergarten curriculum differs in each state (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006). Therefore, state governments have developed their own early learning standards. These early learning standards have been created to help early childhood teachers create classrooms and curriculum that are in line with the kindergarten. So, the information included in early learning standard is the state government’s definition of kindergarten readiness (Scott-Little et al., 2006). The early learning standards for California are the California Preschool Learning Foundations (CDE, 2008), and will be discussed in a future section. This handbook will explain the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (CPLF) (CDE, 2008). This handbook will also give you activities you can do with your children to help you foster your child’s development of the skills and abilities discussed in the California Preschool Learning Foundations Vol. 1 (CDE, 2008).

Academic research has demonstrated that kindergarten readiness can play a large role in later academic success. For example Duncan and his colleagues (2007) found that early math, reading, and attention skills are predictive of later academic success. Also, Romano and his colleagues (2010) found that pro-social behaviors (e.g. sharing and following directions) in kindergarten were strongly predictive of
later math and reading achievement. This research helps to demonstrate why it is so important for you as a parent to know about the skills and knowledge needed for kindergarten. If your child begins kindergarten with a strong foundation in math, reading, and social-emotional competencies he is more likely to be successful throughout his academic career.

**The Importance of Your Involvement**

Many educational studies demonstrate that parent involvement in children’s education is an important factor in their academic success. For example, Marcon (1999) found that early parent involvement, such as parent-child conversations and play in the home, was positively related to the development of basic school skills such as, language, social, and self-help skills. Further research on parental involvement has also demonstrated that involvement that occurs in the home is strongly linked to student achievement (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). Involvement at home can include reading with your child, playing games that include math concepts such as counting and number recognition, walking around your neighborhood and pointing out letters, and encouraging your child to engage in self-help skills (i.e, toileting, hand washing, taking care of belongings, and communicating needs).

You are your child’s first teacher and your involvement in your child’s education can begin long before he or she begins school. First, you can provide a safe, healthy and positive home environment (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000). Second, you can engage your child in activities and ask questions that encourage exploration (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). For example, if you and your child are at the park you can ask him questions about the birds and insects he sees and encourage him to make connection between his past experiences with insects and birds. Your home and
neighborhood are educational environments; you do not need any special tools or equipment. You can use activities and conversations to help your child develop the skills and knowledge he or she will need for kindergarten (Englund et al., 2004).

Parental involvement in the home can play a very important role in a child’s development of the skills and knowledge needed for kindergarten readiness. A recent study demonstrated that, when parents were made aware of the behavioral expectations at school, they engaged their children in activities that fostered the development of those skills at home (Nokali, Bachman, & Vortuba-Drzal, 2010). Parental involvement that includes an understanding of school expectations is positive for children; the children in this study were better able to follow directions and school routines, as well as control their emotions during a conflict. These types of skills fall under the domain of social emotional development. A child with competencies in this domain will be able to make appropriate classroom decisions and interact successfully with his or her teachers and peers. These abilities help children feel more comfortable in the classroom and more confident in their learning (Denham & Brown 2010).

In addition to social-emotional skills, parents can also promote their children’s language, literacy skills, and mathematic knowledge. A significant amount of research has looked at reading in the home and its relationship to the development of language and literacy skills. One study found that parental storybook reading at home was positively related to children’s ability to engage in literacy instruction at school (Saracho & Spodek, 2010). Another study found that young children who experienced regular storybook reading at home continued to have high level language and literacy skills in fourth grade (Senechal, 2006). Research has also demonstrated that, when parents use mathematical ideas at home children's math proficiency increases (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Overall, current academic research has clearly demonstrated that parental involvement is important for school success and that parents are capable of fostering the development of the knowledge and skills children need for kindergarten.
The concept of kindergarten readiness is difficult to understand because it has no agreed upon definition. Kindergarten readiness includes knowledge and skills in multiple developmental domains. Because no agreed upon definition exists, perceptions of kindergarten readiness differ between kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers (Hains et al., 1989). For example, this research has demonstrated that preschool teachers place more emphasis on academic skills than kindergarten teachers do. In contrast, kindergarten teachers feel that social-emotional skills (i.e. following directions, ability to communicate needs, and ability to take care of one’s belongings) are more important for kindergarten readiness. This confusion among professional educators may in turn cause confusion for you. Research has also demonstrated that parents, similarly to preschool teachers, believe that academic skills and knowledge are very important for kindergarten readiness (Welch & White, 1999). The CPLF were developed to foster alignment between preschool curriculum and kindergarten curriculum. This handbook was created to add parents to this equation, and foster alignment between home, preschool, and kindergarten.

**California Preschool Learning Foundations**

The *California Preschool Learning Foundations* (CPFL) was published by the California Department of Education in 2008. The CPLF was published to help preschool teachers and daycare providers understand the developmental skills that students should be learning. Education specialists, child development specialists, and university professors who specialize in the fields of social-emotional development, language development, literacy development, and mathematical development developed the CPLF. The knowledge and skills presented in the CPFL are developmentally appropriate for 4 and 5 year old children. The information in the CPLF was given to early childhood teachers to help them prepare environments that fostered kindergarten readiness.
The CPLF are available on the California Department of Education website: [http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoollf.pdf](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoollf.pdf). This document is 192 pages long and was written for educators. Though this document is available to you, it is not written for you. This handbook, on the other hand, was written specifically for you. The handbook utilizes information about the developmental domains children need for kindergarten as described in the CPLF. However, the handbook also provides a clear connection between the targeted knowledge and skills and kindergarten readiness, as well as in-depth examples. The handbook also suggests conversational activities you and your child can participate in to foster the development of the knowledge and skill necessary for kindergarten readiness. It is important for you to have this information so that you can fulfill your role as your child’s first teacher, and feel confident that you are properly preparing your children for kindergarten.

The next section will discuss three developmental domains from the CPLF: Social-Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Mathematical Development. The following developmental skill areas and descriptions were adapted from the CPLF. As you read about them please remember the skills and description are skills that your child is in the process of developing. This information can help you to foster that development.

**Social-Emotional Development**

School is a place where social interaction occurs, and children learning through their social interactions with teacher and peers. Children who have demonstrated competencies in the area of social emotional development have been shown to perform better in school, as well as on standardized achievement tests (DiPerna & Elliot, 1999; Malecki & Elliot, 2002).

Previously discussed research demonstrated that parents sometimes place higher emphasis on academic preparation. But it is important to remember that social-emotional development also plays a large role in kindergarten readiness.
Children who feel positively about their ability to navigate the social interactions of the classroom environment are better able to stay engaged in academic activities (Denham & Brown, 2010).

This area of development includes your child’s self-understanding and regulation, her social interaction skill, and her relationships with the people around her. These skills are important for kindergarten because your child will need to be able to control her behavior; she will need to be able to stand in line, wait for her turn, sit for circle time, and take care of her belongings. Your child will also need to be able interact with her teacher and the other kids in her class.

The following sections discuss the different three specific areas of social-emotional development: Development of Self Understanding, Development of Social Interaction Skills, and Development of Relationship Skills. Each section consists of multiple terms that describe development. For each term, there is a definition and a real-life example. These are skills that your child should be in the process of developing.

1. Development of Self Understanding

Your child is beginning to develop an understanding of who she is. She may begin to notice differences between people. She is learning about her emotions and how to control her own behavior. She is also discovering things that she likes and dislikes, as well as what tasks she is capable of completing.

1a. Self-Awareness: This developing awareness can be seen in your child’s ability to describe himself and his thoughts and feelings. Your child may also compare his current abilities to what he used to do. Development in self-awareness is also related to your child’s belief in his ability to complete new tasks based on his awareness of the tasks he is already able to complete independently. Your child will also look for acknowledgment from you when he attempts/does something new. This concept is related to kindergarten readiness because, if your child has
developed positive self-awareness, he will be more likely to participate in new educational experiences in kindergarten (Denham & Brown, 2010).

**Example (1):** Your child draws a picture and for the first time draws the family dog. Your child then comes to show you his accomplishment. He may say something like “It is Rex, I never drew Rex before.” Or “I drew Rex, I like Rex so I wanted him to be in my picture”. This shows your child’s awareness of his feelings and new skill development.

**Example (2):** You and your child are at the park and your child wants to go across the monkey bars alone. So she goes to do the monkey bars and is not able to complete them on her own. She is upset that she was not able to complete them alone. In this situation you can encourage her to try again and allow her to go across as many as she is able to do alone. Then you can offer help to finish the task. After this experience you can discuss how many she was able to complete alone. The next time you and she go to the park, attempt to increase the number she is able to go across on her own.

**1b. Self-Regulation:** This developing skill can be seen in your child growing ability to control her feelings and behaviors, either on her own or with a little bit of adult help. Your child may also show a growing ability to focus her attention on one activity. Self-regulation development is very important to kindergarten readiness because self-regulation has been linked to attention abilities as well as academic achievement (Duncan et al., 2007; Trentacosta & Izard, 2007).

**Example (1):** Your child spent time building an airplane out of connecter blocks; then while flying it around the house she falls down; you may see her trying not to cry because of the fall. This shows your child understands that she will need to regulate her crying in some social situations.

**Example (2):** Your child is playing in the backyard/park with his sibling and they get into an argument. He may use words to resolve the problem instead of acting aggressively, or he may come to you for help instead of losing his temper. This shows your child’s developing ability to regulate negative emotions during conflicts.

**Example (3):** You and your child are at the zoo, and there is an exhibit with a coloring activity. Your child is very excited to participate in the coloring
activity, but the line to participate is long. She waits patiently for her turn to participate in the coloring activity, and then takes her time and care in completing the task. This shows your child’s developing ability to regulate her desire to engage in an activity as well as her ability to regulate her attention to that activity.

1c. Social-Emotional Understanding: This development can be seen in your child’s ability to understand that people’s feelings and thoughts make them act in certain ways and that different situations can make people act in certain ways. Your child may also begin to understand that sometimes people’s thoughts or ideas can be different from their own. He or she may also begin to understand and label emotional differences between people. This understanding is related to kindergarten readiness because, as children start to understand that situations can influence feelings and behaviors in the people around them, they also learn how to appropriately respond in those situations.

Example (1): Your child is playing with a friend and his friend becomes upset, then your child tells you “Jordan was mad because he thought we lost the ball, but we found it”. This shows your child’s understanding of the causes of his friend’s negative emotions and his ability to verbalize that understanding.

Example (2): You and your child are talking about his day at preschool. He tells you that, because his teacher was so proud that he was able to listen nicely while the class read a story, she gave him a “good listener” sticker. He is very proud of this and wants to listen nicely every day so he can get a sticker everyday. This shows your child’s understanding of his teacher’s feeling and how his behavior influenced his teacher’s feelings.

Example (3): Your child comes home from preschool and tells you that he wants to invite Danny to his birthday party because he is really nice, but he doesn’t want to invite Tommy because he hits his friends. This shows your child understands that some children interact well with other children and some do not.

1d. Empathy and Caring: This development can be seen in your child’s desire to help another person when that person is feeling upset. Your child may feel comfortable helping that person. Development in this area helps your child to
understand the perspective of another child (Zin et al., 2004). Empathy and caring abilities will foster your child’s ability to have positive interactions with peers, and may help your child to make friends. Research has demonstrated that positive friendships are related to better adjustment to school (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996).

**Example (1):** You are at the park with your child, and your child goes to play in the sandbox. A child near your child is building a sand castle. When someone steps on the sand castle, your child goes to help the other child rebuild the sand castle. This shows that your child understands another child’s perspective and that he cares about others.

**Example (2):** Your family dog died one year ago. Your child is playing with his friend, and they start to play a doggy game. Your child’s friend starts to cry and tells your child that his dog just died. You hear your child tell his friend that his dog died and he was very sad too. This shows your child's developing ability to make connections between his feelings and his friend’s feelings.

**1e. Initiative in Learning:** This development can be seen in your child’s excitement for learning new things and their ability to keep trying to figure out a new way or a new activity. Your child’s initiative to learn is related to her motivation to learn new things. Internal motivation to learn new things is important for kindergarten because learning new and complex skills is what your child will be doing in kindergarten.

**Example (1):** You and your child are playing a matching game, and even though your child is not finding matches, he continues to play and feel excited about the game. This shows your child’s persistence in participating in a task that is not easy for him.

**Example (2):** You and your child were in the backyard and you saw a ladybug. Since that experience, she has been fascinated with bugs. She wants to read books about bugs, watch TV shows about bugs, and go outside to look for bugs. She is excited to learn more about bugs and is constantly looking for more new bug information. This shows your child’s active desire to learn more new information.
2. Development of Social Interaction Skills

This area focuses on the ways your child interacts with other people. Social interaction is very important for kindergarten because in kindergarten your child will be introduced to many new children and adults. He will need to feel comfortable participating in conversations with new children and adults. Kindergarten teachers feel that the ability of a child to communicate his or her needs is an important factor for kindergarten readiness (Hains et al., 1989). In fact, recent research has demonstrated the importance of both peer and teacher-child relationships in kindergarten readiness and later academic success (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Your child should feel comfortable engaging with others because it will help him to feel comfortable in kindergarten.

2a. Interaction with Familiar Adults: This development can be seen in your child's ability to begin and participate in longer conversations with adults she knows. During these interactions she should feel comfortable asking the familiar adult questions, as well as be able to answer questions she is asked. This developing ability is related to kindergarten readiness because your child will need to feel comfortable interacting and communicating with her teacher and possibly adult volunteers in the classroom.

Example (1): At a family gathering your child runs up to her uncle and begins to tell him about her recent trip to the zoo, and asks him questions about times that he has been to the zoo. This shows your child's ability to start a conversation and engage in a reciprocal interaction, and it shows interest in the adult's experience.

Example (2): You and your child go to the doctor for a check-up. While you are the doctor, your child begins to tell the doctor about how she fell off her bike and scraped her arm. The doctor asks what she did to heal her wound. She tells him that her mommy cleaned her scrape and put a bandage over it. Then she shows the doctor her bandage. This shows your child’s developing ability to start and engage in a conversation appropriate to the situation as well as ask and answer appropriate questions.
2b. Interaction with Peers: This development can be seen in your child’s ability to play positively and cooperatively with his friends. You may also see your child and his friends play more imaginative games where they each have parts. Finally your child may seek an adult to help solve a problem with a peer. Alternately, development in this area may lead to the use of hurtful language when he has a disagreement with his peer. Peer interaction plays an important role in kindergarten readiness because your child will be constantly interacting with peers in the classroom. Also, research has demonstrated that positive peer interaction is related to positive school adjustment (Ladd et al., 1996).

Example (1): Your child is playing with a group of children he knows; they are working together to build a fort, and each child is acting out a role in the play. This shows your child’s ability to positively engage with his friends in more complex games.

Example (2): You and your child are at the park and your child wants to play in the sandbox. Your child goes to the sandbox and starts digging with his blue shovel. Another child comes over and asks if he can dig also. Your child and his new friend begin to dig a large hole and pretend that it is a tunnel to the ice cream store. They begin to talk about what type of ice cream they will get when they go through the tunnel to the ice cream store. This shows your child’s developing ability to engage with new or unfamiliar children in a positive way.

2c. Group Participation: This development can be seen in your child’s ability to participate willingly in group activities. Group participation involves some of the skills mentioned above, particularly the ability to interact with familiar adults and peers. Your child will need to be able to follow direction given by a familiar adult and feel comfortable interacting with peers during group activities. In kindergarten your child will be asked to participate in group activities, both inside the classroom
by the teacher and outside on the play yard by her peers. The class may sit and count the numbers on the calendar together. Outside the children may engage in a game of tag.

**Example (1):** You are at the park with your child, and he willingly begins to play tag with a group of children. Your child follows the rules of the game; and when your child has to leave, he informs the other children that he is leaving, and he will play with them next time. This shows your child’s level of comfort joining a group of children and engaging the activity correctly.

**Example (2):** You and your child go to the library to story time. Your child sits with the other children and listens to the story about going on a bear hunt. Your child remains with the other children after the story to sing a song about going on a bear hunt that is led by the librarian. This shows your child’s growing ability to participate in a group activity that requires regulation of attention and the ability to follow directions addressed to an entire group of children.

2d. **Cooperation and Responsibility:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability cooperate when adults ask her to do something; she may also do things without being asked. She may also start working together with her peers to get things done. Development in this area is reflective of your child’s growing feelings of responsibility for her actions and pride when she is able to behave in a responsible way. This area is related to kindergarten readiness because in kindergarten children need to cooperate with classroom routines and begin to take responsibility for their behavior and belongings (Berlin et al., 2011).

**Example (1):** Your child spills her orange juice on the table, and begins to clean it on her own without any prompting from you. This show your child’s understanding that she is responsible for the mess and responsible for cleaning it.

**Example (2):** Your child is throwing her toys on the floor; when you ask her to stop, she does and begins to clean up the toys on the floor. This shows your child’s developing understanding that she needs to cooperate with adult requests.
3. Development of Relationship Skills

Relationships play an important role in kindergarten readiness. Your child should feel comfortable being away from you so she can enjoy her kindergarten experience. It is good for your child to be able to build relationships with her teacher and peers so she can learn, explore, and flourish in her kindergarten class. Research has demonstrated that children who form positive bonds with their kindergarten teachers experience later positive behavior skills and academic success (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The relationship that your child is able to develop with her kindergarten teacher will lay the foundations for her relationship with teachers throughout her school career. Relationships with peers, as previously discussed, have a positive link to school adjustment and later academic success (Denham & Brown, 2010; Ladd et al., 1996).

3a. Attachment to Parents: This development can be seen in your child seeking your help or support during a difficult situation, and cooperating with your suggestions. Your child may also begin to help you and make things for you, and be aware and concerned about your feelings. Your child should be able to separate from you and engage in activities with peers and familiar adults or caregivers.

Example (1): Your child may start bringing home crafts she made for you while at preschool/daycare. This shows that your child is able to actively engage in school while you are not there.

Example (2): Your child may just wave to you from the door of her classroom and begin a school activity. This shows that your child feels comfortable separating from you and is secure in the knowledge that you will return.

3b. Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers: This development can be seen in your child's growing ability to feel interest in his caregiver/teacher's feelings and personal history, to ask the teacher or caregiver for help with a difficult situation, and cooperate with the suggestions given. The relationship a child develops with his kindergarten teacher can influence subsequent teacher-child
relationships throughout his education (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This positive relationship may also help to motivate your child to be successful.

**Example (1):** Your child may begin to talk about his primary caregiver/teacher at home, and want to make crafts or gifts for them.

**Example (2):** Your child may also tell you about the feelings that his primary caregiver/teacher had during the day, such as “Today Miss Megan was unhappy because we were not listening to her words.” Or he may say, “Today Miss Megan was so happy because we lined up nicely after recess.”

**3c. Friendships:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing desire to have more exclusive and lasting friendships. Your child’s ability to develop friendships in kindergarten can help with her adjustment to formal schooling. This ability is connected to your child’s emotional regulation, social-emotional understanding, caring and empathy, and interaction with peers. Peer relationships/friendships are positively related to school success (Altermatt, 2011). Peer relationships/friendships can also provide academic resources, as when children ask their friends for assistance on difficult academic tasks (Denham & Brown, 2010).

**Example (1):** Your child may begin to ask to have play dates with the same one or two children. This shows that your child is developing intimate friendships with a couple other children.

**Example (2):** You may also notice that, when your child plays, he is focused on playing with one or two specific children. This shows that your child is developing more exclusive friendships.

**Language and Literacy Development**

This area of development focuses on the skills your child is developing in the areas of language and literacy. The language skill areas are important for your child’s entry to kindergarten, as she will need to be able to effectively communicate with her teacher and peers. It is also important for your child to have some strong literacy foundations when she enters kindergarten because she will be expected to read some simple sight words and simple sentences by the end of kindergarten. A
strong early foundation in language and literacy predicts children’s later reading skill through the third grade (LeFevre, 2002). This developmental domain includes three skill areas: The Development of Listening and Speaking Skill, The Development of Reading Skills, and The Development of Writing Skills.

1. The Development of Listening and Speaking Skills

This area looks at the development of your child’s listening and speaking skills. Research has demonstrated that early oral language skills promoted in the home through parent child reading are predictive of kindergarten readiness (Forget-Dubois, Dionne, Lemelin, Perusse, Tremblay, & Boivin, 2009). Your child’s ability to listen is important for kindergarten because he will need to listen to his teacher to be successful in the classroom. Your child also needs to be able to speak understandably so he can communicate with their teacher and peers.

1a. Language Use and Social Conventions: These developments can be seen in your child’s growing ability to communicate. Your child may use language to make a prediction, solve a problem, or find out information. Your child’s speech should be understandable to both familiar and unfamiliar children and adults. Your child may begin to use different types of conversations styles when she is speaking to an adult or a child. And you may begin to see that your child’s story telling ability is improving, whether she is telling a story about something that actually happen or a story she is making up.

Example (1): You may notice that your child makes statements such as “It is Monday, I go to school on Monday.” This shows your child’s ability to use language to make predictions.

Example (2): Your child may ask you questions at the grocery store about what you are buying and why. This shows your child’s use of language to gain information.

Example (3): You may notice that your child uses “Mr.” and “Mrs.” when
referring to adults. This shows your child’s developing knowledge that different types of speech are used with different types of people.

**Example (4):** Your child may begin to tell you long and detailed stories about something that happened at school or something that she made up. These are examples of advances in your child’s use of language as a communicative tool.

**1b. Vocabulary:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing vocabulary for the activities he engages in, the toys he plays with, and real life objects he sees. Your child may understand categories and words that apply to different categories such as dogs and types of dogs, or trains and types of trains. He may also begin to use comparing words to describe objects such as “This is a picture of a real train, but my train is a toy train.”

**Example (1):** If your child is interested in dogs, he may start using words for different types of dog, and he may begin to say, for example, “I like the Dalmatian.”

**Example (2):** If you ask your child to put on her shoes, she may say, “It is not raining today so I will wear my running shoes not my rain boots”, because she has developed the vocabulary for which type of shoes she wears and why.

**1c. Grammar:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability to understand and use longer and more complex sentences. Your child also may begin to use correct verb tenses when speaking.

**Example (1):** You may notice that you are able say, “Go downstairs and get your shoes and socks, and put your jacket on” and your child is able to comprehend this complex sentence and complete all the tasks.

**Example (2):** You may also notice that your child used to say, “I liked when we goed to the zoo”; but now she says, “I liked it when we went to the zoo”. This shows your child is beginning to understand the use of past tense forms of verbs tense and is able to use them correctly.

**2. Development of Pre-Literacy Skills**

Learning to read requires many steps. Your child is able to begin this process
by developing the skills discussed in this section. You can help your child develop these skills by reading with them as often as possible. One study found that children who experienced storybook reading in the home then entered kindergarten with advanced vocabulary knowledge and in fourth showed advanced reading comprehension skills and enjoyment of reading (Senechal, 2006).

2a. Concepts about Print: This development can be seen in your child’s growing understanding that letter and words have specific meanings, and that reading is the way to express the specific meaning.

   Example (1): When you are driving you may notice that your child asks you what signs say. This shows that your child is recognizing words in her environment and wants information about those words.

   Example (2): Your child may start looking at books with more interest and may pretend to read on his own. This shows that your child’s desire to read words.

2b. Phonological Awareness: This development can be seen in your child’s growing awareness of the individual sounds in words. Your child may start to put together sounds to make words. Your child may also be able to take word sounds apart, such as “c-at” for “cat”. Your child may also begin to notice rhyming, put together words that rhyme.

   Example (1): When you are driving, your child may see a stop sign and make the “SSSS” sound for the beginning sound of “stop”. This shows your child’s ability to distinguish the beginning sounds of words.

   Example (2): When you and your child are reading, your child may be able to sound out words with you. This shows your child’s growing phonological ability.

2c. Alphabetics and Word/Print Recognition: This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability to recognize his own printed name. Your child may also recognize other letters and words he sees often. He may be learning letter
names and be able to recognize both upper and lower case letters. Your child may also begin to show his level of phonological awareness in connection with his growing understanding of Alphabetics by learning the sounds that different letters make.

**Example (1):** Your child sees his name written on something in the house; he is able to identify that it is his name. This shows your child’s growing ability to recognize his written name.

**Example (2):** While you are at the grocery store, your child may point out letters he recognizes on different products. This shows your child’s ability to recognize letters in multiple contexts.

**2d. Comprehension and Analysis of Age-Appropriate Text:** This development can be seen in your child’s developing ability to remember and retell stories she hears often. Your child may also make connections between stories she is reading and her own real life experiences, or take information from stories and apply them to real life situations.

**Example (1):** If you and your child read a story about camping, she may begin talking to you about the camping trip you recently went on. This shows your child’s ability to connect ideas from book to her real life experiences.

**Example (2):** Your child may come home from preschool/daycare and tell you about the story the teacher read to her. This shows your child’s ability to retain information from a story and share the remembered information.

**2e. Literacy Interest and Response:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing enjoyment of reading and his growing desire to look at books on his own.

**Example (1):** Your child enjoys sitting and looking at books alone. This shows your child’s growing desire of read.

**Example (2):** Your child really likes bugs and asks for more books about insects. This shows your child’s interest in using book to learn new information.

**3. Development of Pre-Writing Skills**

Learning to write, like learning to read, is a process. When your child is in
kindergarten, she may need to write her name. You can help your child develop this skill by giving her crayons or markers and allowing her to draw. These drawings, even if they are scribbles, are part of the learning process.

3. Writing Development: This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability to hold and control a writing tool. Your child may also begin to create shapes or letters on paper that represent her ideas. She may also start writing her own name; though it may not be correct, she is making an effort to try.

Examples: (1) Your child is coloring, and you notice that his scribbles have become recognizable shapes and pictures. This shows that your child has developed the fine motor skill to manipulate the crayon to create specific images.

Example (2): Your child asks you to write her name for her so she can practice writing it on her own using your version as a model. This shows that your child has the desire to learn to write her own name.

Mathematical Development

It is important for children to have a foundational understanding of mathematics when they enter kindergarten because early success in math has been shown to affect math skill later in a child’s educational journey. Many children struggle with mathematics. National research has shown that by eighth grade 29% of students are unable to complete grade level math (National Assessment for Educational Progress, 2009). However, research has shown that when parent assist their children with mathematical ideas at home, their children’s mathematical proficiency increases (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). This domain includes the strands: Number Sense, Classification and Patterning, Measurement, Geometry, and Mathematical Reasoning.

1. Number Sense: This development can be seen in your child’s growing understanding of numbers. For example, your child may start counting up to 20, and may begin to match number names with the written number. Your child may be
counting objects up to 10 and may understand that the last number counted is the total number of objects. Your child may be starting to understand the concepts of more and less of something; he may also be starting to understand that, if you put two groups of marbles together, you have more marbles; and if you take a group of marbles apart, there are fewer marbles in each group.

**Example (1):** Your child begins to identify numbers she recognizes on the calendar at home. This shows your child’s growing knowledge of numbers.

**Example (2):** When you ask your child to pick three books to read before bed, she does not need assistance to know how many books “three” refers to. This shows your child’s understanding of number amounts.

**Example (3):** When your child is playing with cars, he may ask you to get down the other box of cars because he wants more cars. This shows your child’s developing understanding of more.

**Example (4):** Your child is eating animal crackers and may count how many crackers she has. Then when she eats a cracker she is aware she has one less. This shows your child’s developing understanding of less.

### 2. Classification and Patterning

This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability to sort objects into categories, and he may be able to recognize simple patterns and create his own simple patterns.

**Example (1):** You child may be able organize M & M’s by color. This shows your child’s developing ability to classify items with similar characteristics.

**Example (2):** If your child is wearing a striped shirt she may be able to identify that her shirt has the pattern of pink-purple-pink-purple. This shows your child’s growing ability to identify patterns.

### 3. Measurement

This development can be seen in your child’s growing understanding of size or weight. She may also be developing the ability to measure items with the help of an adult.

**Example (1):** You may notice that your child picks something up and says “that’s heavy.” This shows your child’s developing understanding of weight.
**Example (2):** Your child may be able to put his toy animals in order according to size, smallest to largest. This shows your child’s developing awareness of relative size.

**4. Geometry:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing ability to identify different shapes, and to understand up/down, in/out, in front/behind, and on top/under.

**Example (1):** Your child may identify that her cracker is the shape of a circle. This shows your child’s developing understanding of shapes and ability to identify shapes in her world

**Example (2):** You may also notice that your child understands directions like “Put the remote under the TV” or “Can you put the crayons in the box?” This shows your child’s understanding of spatial relationships.

**5. Mathematical Reasoning:** This development can be seen in your child’s growing use of math in his daily life, such as needing more of something and saying the number of how much more he needs.

**Example (1):** Your child may be setting up a tea party for her dolls and tell you that she needs three more cups for her dolls. This shows your child’s growing use of math in her daily life.

**Example (2):** Your child is making valentines cards for his classmates and tells you he needs one more piece of paper because he has ten kids in his class. This also shows your child’s growing use of math in daily life.

**At-Home Conversational Activities for Fostering Kindergarten Readiness**

This section offers conversational activities you can engage in with your child. Emotion coaching is a way for you to talk with your child about emotions and increase his self-awareness, self regulation, and social emotional understanding. Shared book reading is a way for you to actively include your child in reading. Math talk is a way for you to encourage mathematical development by identifying math concepts in everyday life. These activities are easy to use and do not require any
special materials. If you chose to engage in these conversational activities at home, you can promote the skills and knowledge your child needs to be ready for kindergarten.

This section is organized into three sub-sections. Each sub-section will describe one activity, how it is connected to kindergarten readiness, and how you can use it at home. Each sub-section will end with real-life examples of parents engaging in these activities with their children.

**Fostering Social-Emotional Development: Emotion Coaching**

Social-Emotional development is the largest domain in the CPLF and this handbook because (a) social-emotional development it very important to kindergarten readiness, and (b) social-emotional development involves mostly abstract ideas. Emotion coaching is a beneficial way for you to react to your child's emotions and have conversations about his emotions. Your child needs to be able to control and communicate his emotions, and understand the emotions of others in order to be successful in kindergarten. The way you react to your child's emotions influences his beliefs about how to express and regulate emotions (Zeman, Perry-Parish, & Cassano, 2010). Parent-child emotion conversations allow for the use of emotion vocabulary, open ended questions about emotions, and talk about the emotions of others (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). These conversations can foster self-awareness, a skill necessary for kindergarten readiness, because children are learning and talking about their reaction to different emotions and situations. This increase in emotion language may work to prevent negative behavior, because your child will be offered the opportunity to develop emotional regulation competencies (Havighusrt, Wilson, Harley, & Prior, 2009).

Emotion Coaching is a teaching opportunity you can engage in with your child at any time and anywhere. Emotion coaching involves you and your child identifying emotions and having discussions about those emotions. If your child is experiencing a negative emotion, you can discuss appropriate ways for your child to
deal with that emotion. Whenever your child is struggling with a situation, you can engage him in conversation about emotionally beneficial ways to deal with the situation. If your child is too upset, you can wait until he is calm and then talk about ways to deal with the upsetting situation when it occurs the next time. You can also do emotion coaching when you are reading a book or watching a television show. You can talk with your child about the characters’ emotions and ask her how she thinks the characters should express those emotions.

These types of discussion are beneficial for your child on many levels. Emotion Coaching helps your child learn emotional self-regulation because she will have a more advance understanding of her own emotional responses. Research has shown that, when parents have positive and helpful reactions to their children’s emotions, they develop better emotional regulation (Lukenheimer, Shields, & Cortina, 2007). Emotional regulation plays an importance role in your child’s attention ability. These discussions can also help your child’s development of social-emotional understanding and empathy because your child will have a more advanced knowledge of emotions and may be able to use that knowledge when she is interacting with her peers.

Example (1): You and your child are at grocery store and the checkout person offers your child a sticker. When you arrive at the car, your child is angry because she did not pick the sticker she wanted. You can explain to her that it is fine that she is angry, and she can say that she is angry. You then explain to her that next time you go to that grocery store she should use her nice words to ask the checkout person for the sticker she wants.

Example (2): A father and daughter are at home and the daughter breaks one of her toys. She begins to cry. Father and daughter talk about how it is ok to be sad when something breaks and it is ok to cry to express the emotion of sadness. Father and daughter talk about ways to fix the toy.
Fostering Language and Literacy Development: Shared Book Reading

Shared book reading interactions have been shown to improve children’s language and literacy skills (Weigel et al., 2007), and these skills are important to kindergarten readiness. Lever and Senechal (2010) found that when children experienced shared book reading, they showed spoken language improvements such as increased use of connecting words like “and” and “then”. Shared storybook reading in the home is positively related to vocabulary development and literacy comprehension. Also, exposure to print through reading has been positively linked to writing development (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011). This activity will help to foster the skills and knowledge discussed in the CPLF Language and Literacy developmental domain.

Shared book reading is an enjoyable activity that will help foster your child’s language and literacy skills. Shared book reading involves you and your child reading a book together. While you are reading the book, you can ask your child questions about the story, relate images or topics from the story to real life experiences. You can encourage your child to sound out words with you and point to familiar letters. You can also count objects that occur repeatedly in the book, and generally engage you child in the activity of reading. This kind of shared book reading uses dialogic reading strategies in which your child acts as the storyteller and you act as a facilitator. Your goal is to help increase your child’s engagement through prompting her to make connections between the story and her life, re-read the story, and retell the story in her own words.
It is important to establish a reading routine to make sure that it happens everyday. Your child may want to reread her favorite books and that is great. Rereading books allows your child to focus on different aspects of the book during different readings. You should also feel free to change the language of the story you are reading to better match your child’s current language level. Be sure to pay attention to your child’s level of engagement. If your child is not interested in the current book, you can have her pick another. Finally, enjoy this time with your child.

**Example (1):** A mother and daughter sit down to read the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. This is a story about caterpillar that eats many different things until he is full and then he makes a cocoon and becomes a butterfly. While reading the story the mother prompts the daughter to sound out the words caterpillar and hungry. The mother asks the daughter about what foods she likes to eat when she is hungry. Finally, the mother and daughter talk about when they saw butterflies at the park. This is an example of Shared Book Reading using dialogic strategies.

**Example (2):** A father and son sit down to read the book *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, which is the son’s favorite book. This story is about a little boy, Max, who is angry with his mother and he uses his imagination to travel to a world where he is the king of the wild things. The father and son have read this book many times; so while the father is reading, he pauses in the middle of sentences to allow his son to complete the sentence. There is a part in the story where Max and the wild things have a wild rumpus; during this section the father prompts his son to get up and dance around like a wild thing. Finally, the father asks his son where he likes to go in his imagination.

**Fostering Mathematical Development: Math Talk**

An easy way to foster your child’s mathematical development at home is using “Math Talk”. Math talk includes talk about the following: counting objects, total amounts, shapes, simple addition and subtraction, and written numbers (Klibanoff, Levine, Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, & Hedges, 2006). Research has demonstrated that frequent age appropriate math talk can advance a child’s mathematical knowledge (Klibanoff et al., 2006). You can talk to your child about
mathematical concepts at any time. Learning mathematical language is an important factor in learning mathematical concepts.

Here are some examples of times when you can engage in math talk with your child. When you are looking at images that include numbers, you can talk about the number you see and ask your child what comes before or after that number. You can count with your child and talk about total amounts. You can talk about if your child has more and less of something. You can also encourage your child to think about simple addition and subtraction, such as “You have three cookies left. If you eat one, how many will you have left?” You can invite your child to help you with a baking project and talk about measuring cups and amounts in the recipe. You can also have conversations with your child about shapes and patterns she sees in the world. All of these conversations help your child build her mathematical knowledge. These types of conversations can help to foster development of the mathematic knowledge discussed in the CPLF Mathematical Development domain.

**Example (1):** A father and son are picking up apples that have fallen from the family apple trees. The father asks his son to count the total amount of apples, and he suggests they count them together. The father and son talk about the different colors and types of apples, put the apples in piles based on color, and then count the total amount in each pile. The father and son talk about the different sizes and weights of the apples. And finally, the father and son guess how many apples they need in order to make an apple pie.

**Example (2):** A mother is going to make cookies for her daughter’s class. She asks her daughter to join her, and together they look at the recipe.

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons hot water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Cream together the butter, white sugar, and brown sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Dissolve baking soda in hot water. Add to batter along with salt. Stir in flour, chocolate chips, and nuts. Drop by large spoonfuls onto ungreased pans. Bake for about 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until edges are nicely browned.

The mother and daughter look through the recipe together and talk about the amount of each ingredient needed. The mother asks her daughter to help get out 2 eggs. The mother and daughter work together to measure each ingredient and put it in the bowl. Once the dough is prepared the mother and daughter count the amount of cookies on each cookie sheet. Once the cookies are finished baking the mother and daughter count the total amount of cookies. Then the mother and daughter each eat one cookie and the daughter announce how many cookies are left for her class.

Remember that your child does not need to display all of these abilities in order to be successful in kindergarten, but if they are beginning to develop these abilities they are on the right track. You can help them on that track. But always remember to be sensitive to your child’s desire and level of engagement.
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