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Preschool for Parents:
A Website for Parents to Review the Benefits of a
Proper Early Childhood Education

Tahrae L. Bonnes

Northwestern College

April 2017

Abstract

Every year many parents of young children face the challenge of deciding when and where they should start their child's educational career. Parents have to decide whether to keep their kids home with themselves or send them to daycare or preschool. These are just some of the many questions that run through their minds. Not to mention, this task has become increasingly difficult because of the many changes to the educational systems. This paper will explain a website created to help parents make informed decisions about their children's early childhood education through review of the various benefits a quality preschool program can provide to young children.

Preschool for Parents: A Website for Parents to Review
the Benefits of a Proper Early Childhood Education

Most educators will tell you right away that it is important for young children to go to and fully participate in a quality preschool classroom. Educators know the many benefits of students attending preschool just from personal experiences working with children who have gone to preschool and those who have not. Elementary teachers can tell who has had a solid early childhood educational experience and who did not by the skills and preparation the students bring into the kindergarten classroom. Lee and Fox (2009) state that

Research has firmly established that children's early development, including cognitive, socioemotional, and language development, is essential for school readiness and success. In a national survey in which teachers listed, the essential qualities of being ready for kindergarten, communication skills and physical health were identified as the most important qualities. In a separate study, kindergarten teachers reported that about half of their children are unable to follow or understand directions and show a lack of required skills. (p.475)

School readiness is defined as including the readiness to learn specific content as well as the ability to be successful within the school context. "According to Carlton and Winsler (1999), success in the school context depends on the interaction of a child's emotional, behavioral, linguistic, cognitive, motivational, and physical strengths and weaknesses." (Behforooz, Capece, & Vespo, 2006) Those very characteristics and skills are taught in quality early childhood programs. The very same early childhood programs that are to be discussed on the website.

The website's main goal is to help provide further proof and resources for parents to review while considering what options are best for their young children. The website will help

parents make informed decisions for their child's educational future. In addition, it will help parents to identify a quality early childhood program.

Literature Review

Early Childhood Education has become a heated topic of discussion in the world of education and parenting. Some individuals who view sending children to preschool too early will have negative effects on young students. However, Greg Duncan, Jens Ludwig, and Katherine Magnuson state in their article, "Reducing Poverty through Preschool Interventions" that:

As neuroscience documents the process by which increasingly sophisticated skills are wired into the brain, evaluations of high-quality early education programs show that early skill building can generate a host of long-term benefits both for children in these programs and for society as a whole. (p.154)

The neuroscience research agrees with the idea that a quality early childhood education is beneficial to children and to top it off, society.

The purpose of the website is to present scholarly research that supports sending children to four-year-old preschool before they attend kindergarten. "Preschool attendance, regardless of the type of program, leads to higher scores on reading and math achievement tests in kindergarten" (Nelson, 2005, p. 220). With all of this research, parents will be able to see how a quality early childhood education can help their child academically, social-emotionally, physically, and medically.

Academics

In preschool, students are taught many of the basics needed to successfully participate in Kindergarten. In the State of Iowa, many preschools use Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum for their programs' curriculum since it aligns with Iowa's Early Learning Standards

and Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS). Creative Curriculum (2013) has 38 research-based objectives.

They inform every aspect of teaching, include predictors of school success, and are aligned with state early learning guidelines and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. The objectives cover 10 areas of development and learning, including broad developmental areas, content areas, and English language acquisition. Many of the objectives also include dimensions that guide teachers' thinking about various aspects of that objective, and help clarify what it addresses. (p.13)

Those ten areas of development are Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and the Arts. There is also English language acquisition objectives for English as a second language (ESL) students. These subject areas cover the areas of concern when it comes to pre-academics for early childhood students per Iowa Early Learning Standards and IQPPS (Teaching Strategies, 2013).

Social-Emotional

As mentioned above, one of the areas taught and developed in preschool are social-emotional skills. Sending young children to quality preschool programs gives them a chance to develop social-emotional skills like working with others, maintaining friendships, managing emotions, responding to emotional cues of others, and solving social problems. Social-emotional skills are easier to develop when surrounded by peers of a similar age range (Teaching Strategies, 2013). Keith Hyatt and John Filler (2007) point out in the research article, "A Comparison of the Effects of Two Social Skills Training Approaches on Teacher and Child Behavior" that

The importance of age-appropriate social skills to the success of children in the

classroom has been documented numerous times in literature. The lack of appropriate social skills has been associated with later difficulties in life, such as failure to complete school, difficulties with police, unemployment, social isolation, and as a limiting factor in school success. Research validates strategies for enhancing the social skill and social competence levels of young children is critical to both identifying social skill deficiencies and implementing effective plans for instructional remediation. (p.85)

Their findings solidify the idea that teaching young children social skills is paramount to their success not only in school but also in life.

Physical Health

Preschool is a time student's work to develop their fine and gross motor skills through various large and small muscle activities. Early Childhood teachers per Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS) under program standard two of curriculum. Characteristics 13 and 14 say that quality preschool programs must provide "varied opportunities and materials that support fine motor development and large motor development" (Iowa Department of Education, 2012, p.10).

Students who attend preschool are subject to medical screenings. Many schools even have health care professionals come to the school to do screenings on students' eyes, teeth, and ears. Not to mention, preschool teachers are trained to notice any issues students might have because of a disability, which would help students get the early intervention they would need to overcome those difficulties. Students with disabilities who receive early intervention services are more likely to make progress than those who go without services.

Methods

Procedure

The author has spent a lot of time working and talking with parents of early childhood students through years of teaching, parent teacher conferences, and other school activities. One of the biggest questions asked was, “Why should kids come to preschool?” Closely followed by statements made by non-educators that say that all early childhood educators do all day is finger paint and play with kids. This website was created to help the public, most importantly parents of young children, understand what happens in a preschool classroom with research-based evidence and why it is so much more than finger painting.

Communicating effectively with parents has been a difficult task for teachers and school districts alike for many years. Parents of today’s youth grew up with more technology than their predecessors thus are more apt to use tech devices and apps to communicate. The author has found that many parents enjoy surfing the internet, using social media, emailing, and text messaging as ways to communicate and gather information. Using that knowledge, the decision to create a website to educate parents on the benefits of preschool seemed just right for the job.

Creating a website can be a daunting task. There are many intricate parts to a website and it can be very difficult for an average individual to create one from scratch. That being said, the author decided to use one of the Google suite products called Google Sites. Google Sites has templates and themes to help the average person create a seamless, professional look to a website without having to understand all of the technical jargon necessary to build a website. Google Sites made it easier to create pages within the website as well as adding content and graphics. Also, Google Sites is a free app that comes with any Google email or better known as a gmail account.

The Preschool for Parents web address is <https://goo.gl/OHtJps>. It should be noted that this is a shortened website address. The original website’s address was very long. It was difficult to

fit on flyers and notes. The newer, shorter address was more appealing and easier to share with others. The author used Google's free Google URL shortener to create a shorter address.

After completing the website, the next step was letting the public know how to access the website. The author knows many individuals with young children and spread the word via social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Flyers were also posted in local post offices, restaurants, and libraries of six towns in Northern Central Iowa. (Appendix A) Students, at the school where the author works, were also sent home with notes describing the website and the benefits of visiting it. (Appendix B) The demographics of this area would be of rural living, largely Caucasian individuals ranging from poverty to upper middle class.

Analysis

The Preschool for Parents website went live at the beginning of April. (Appendix C) Since a Google Site is an editable and revisable format, the author was able to update the content and change formatting as needed. This was extremely helpful since mistakes in formatting and citations had been made in the original website.

After reviewing other research projects, the author decided to add a feedback form to see what was working and what areas still needed improvement. A Google Form was created and embedded in the feedback page of the website. The feedback form consists of seven questions for visitors to fill out. Visitors were asked for their emails, if they were parents to children under 5 years of age, if the website changed their perception of preschool, if they would be more likely to enroll their child in a preschool program, if the website would help them identify quality preschool programs, how did they hear about the website, and what information they thought was missing from the website. There was a disclaimer above the email slot of the form assuring visitors that their emails were being collected merely for data collection and would not be used

for any other purpose. (Figure 1.)

The image shows a screenshot of a feedback form titled "Preschool for Parents Feedback Form". At the top, there is a disclaimer: "Disclaimer: Your email is collected just to prove you are not the same person repeatedly answering this form. It will not be used for anything other than data collection." Below the disclaimer, there is a red asterisk followed by the word "Required". The main field is labeled "Email address *" and contains the placeholder text "Your email". The form is set against a yellow background with a decorative border at the top.

Figure 1. A photo of the email question at the top of the feedback form.

Since the feedback form was added on April 15, 2017, there have been fifty-two people to leave feedback. Of those fifty-four people, thirty-eight of those people were parents of children under 5 years of age. (Figure 2 & 3) When asked if the website changed their perception of preschools (Figure 4), twenty-five people answered yes, fifteen said a little, eight answered no, and six people answered in the other category where they were allowed to leave their own comments. (Figure 5) When reviewing the other comments, the consensus was that these individuals already had enrolled their children in preschool programs and agreed with the importance of preschool already, but that the website did reaffirm their beliefs in early childhood education.

Are you a parent or legal guardian of child less than 5 years of age? *

Yes

No

Figure 2. A photo of the parental question on the feedback form.

Are you a parent or legal guardian of child less than 5 years of age?
(54 responses)

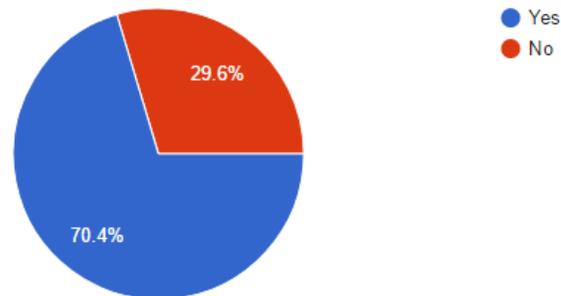


Figure 3. A pie chart showing the results of the parental question on the feedback form.

Did this website change your perception of preschools? *

Yes

A little

No

Other: _____

Figure 4. A picture of the question about preschool perceptions from the feedback form.

Did this website change your perception of preschools? (54 responses)

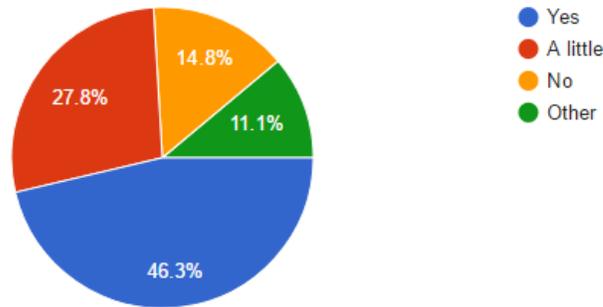


Figure 5. A pie chart showing the results of the question about preschool perceptions on the feedback form.

The next question on the form asked visitors if they would be more likely to enroll their child in a quality preschool program because of the information provided to them from this website. (Figure 6) Forty-three people answered yes, eight people answered maybe, two answered with other, and one person said no. (Figure 7) The two other answers were left a space to explain their answer. One visitor stated that he or she did not have children so it was not applicable to him or her. The other visitor explained that she and her husband had already enrolled their children in preschool.

Would you be more likely to enroll your child in a quality early childhood program because of this website? *

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Other: _____

Figure 6. A picture of the preschool enrollment question from the feedback form.

Would you be more likely to enroll your child in a quality early childhood program because of this website?
 (54 responses)

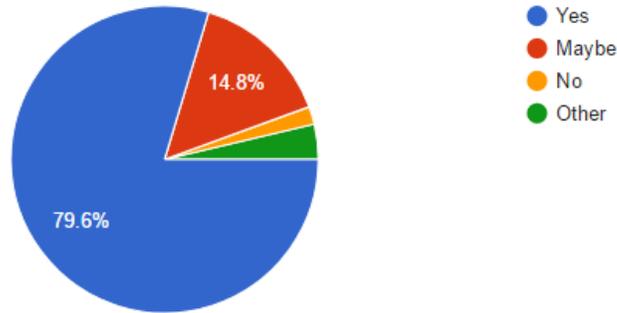


Figure 7. A pie chart showing the preschool enrollment question results from the feedback form.

The fifth question on the form asked visitors if they would be able to better identify a quality early childhood program based on the information from the website. (Figure 8) Forty-eight people answered yes. Six people answered with maybe. No one answered other or no which were the other two options. (Figure 9)

Do you feel like you would be able to tell what a quality early childhood program should look like after reviewing the information in this website? *

Yes

Maybe

No

Other: _____

Figure 8. A picture about identifying a quality early childhood program question from the

feedback form.

Do you feel like you would be able to tell what a quality early childhood program should look like after reviewing the information in this website?
(54 responses)

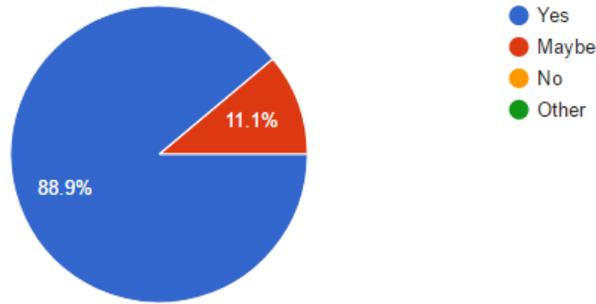


Figure 9. A pie chart showing results of the question about identifying a quality early childhood program from the feedback form.

Second to last question on the form asked visitors how they heard about the website. (Figure 10) Thirty-three people said they heard about it through social media. Fifteen people heard it through word of mouth. Four people answered other and explained they received an email from friends telling them to visit the site. Finally, two people answered that they read about the website from flyers posted out in communities. (Figure 11)

How did you find out about this website? *

- Word of mouth
- AEA representative
- Flyer
- Social Media
- Other: _____

Figure 10. A picture of the question about visitors heard about the website on the feedback form.

How did you find out about this website? (54 responses)

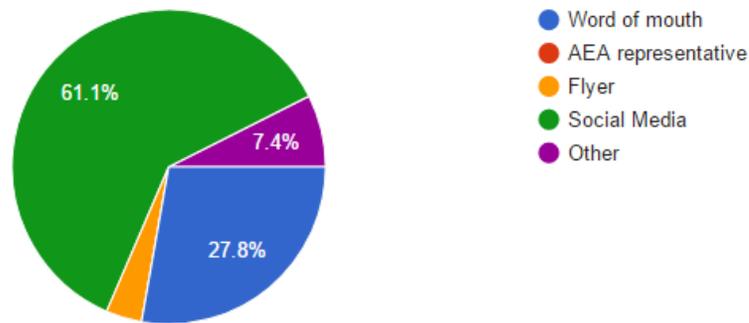


Figure 11. A pie chart of the results for the question about how visitors heard about the website on the feedback form.

The final question on the feedback form asks visitors if there was any information left off the website that they would like to see added. (Figure 12) Forty-eight people answered with some form of no implying they thought the website was good as it is currently. Three people indicated they enjoyed the list of resources for parents. Two people indicated they would like to see a schedule of events in a classroom. Two other visitors indicated that the citations page was a bit overwhelming and suggested paring down the summaries shown there. One individual suggested a revision of some of the wording. One visitor suggested creating an area for parents of children who have already attended preschool to share their experiences. Finally, one other person suggested that this information could be pertinent to all people in society not just parents of young children.

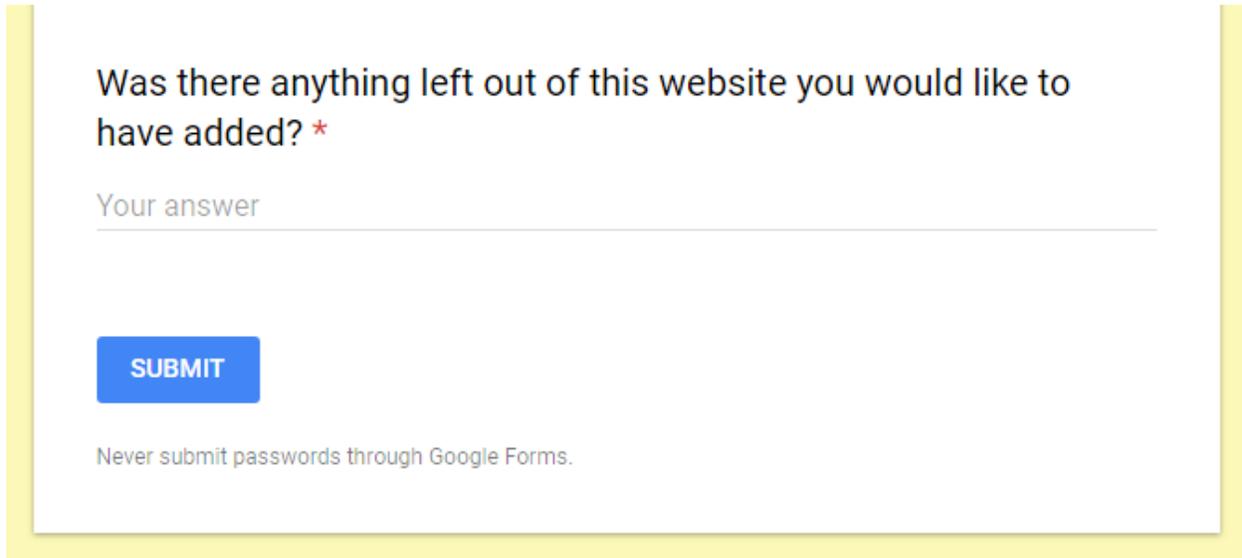
A screenshot of a Google Forms question. The question text is "Was there anything left out of this website you would like to have added? *". Below the question is a text input field with the placeholder text "Your answer". To the left of the input field is a blue button with the text "SUBMIT" in white. At the bottom of the form, there is a small grey text note that says "Never submit passwords through Google Forms."

Figure 12. A picture of the suggestions question on the feedback form.

Future Development

Looking through the feedback from visitors to the site, many individuals found the website to be informative and well put together. Others merely had suggestions on how to improve the website. As mentioned above, one of the greatest aspects of using Google Sites to create the website is that it is a revisable media. The author plans to implement some of the changes suggested by visitors such as creating a page for parents of children who have already been to preschool to share their views and experiences. The other change will be to the citations page. The author plans to revise the way the citations are listed and possibly add links to articles for visitors to read themselves. In addition, a change to the name of the website is under advisement. The author is considering calling the sight Preschool for the Public to attract more attention to the site and entice more than just parents to view the content.

When reviewing the way most people heard of the website, social media and email made up 68.5% of visitors. Word of mouth was second with 27.8%. While flyers only managed to draw in 3.7% of visitors to the site. Moving forward, the author plans to share the site with AEA

and Early ACCESS representatives so that they can pass along the website to more of the target audience, parents of young children. In addition, the author intends to share the site with local preschool teachers so that they can use it for reference in their daily work.

In conclusion, the Preschool for Parents website meets its goal of providing parents with research on the benefits of a quality early childhood education for their children. The website is a working document that can and will be updated to meet the needs of its intended audience. The feedback from visitors overall was positive and supports the need for this website to exist. The author believes that parents will now be able to make informed decisions about their child's early childhood education.

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<https://ezproxy.nwciowa.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/203865902?accountid=28306>

[ccountid=28306](#)

APPENDIX A

Preschool for Parents!

A website for parents to learn why it's important to send your child to preschool and to understand all that happens in a quality preschool classroom.

Topics covered:

- Standards
- Early Intervention
- Pre-Academics
- Social-Emotional Skills
- Physical Development



Plus, over 100 resources for parents to use in the home!!

- Activities
- Apps
- Books
- Websites



Visit <https://goo.gl/OHtJps>

(This is a shortened URL. All letters are case sensitive.)

Once there, please consider filling out the feedback form to help improve the site.

All feedback will be greatly appreciated!

Take one, please!

https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps
https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps
https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps	https://goo.gl/OHtJps

APPENDIX B

Preschool for Parents!

A website for parents to learn why it's important to send your child to preschool and to understand all that happens in a quality preschool classroom.

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Standards
Early Intervention
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Physical Development



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(This is a shortened URL. All letters are case sensitive.)

Once there, please consider filling out the feedback form to help improve the site. All feedback will be greatly appreciated!

APPENDIX C

Preschool for Parents

Home Benefits & Learning Resources For Parents Research Feedback

TEACHING PARENTS WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESCHOOL.

Every year many parents of young children face the challenge of deciding when and where they should start their child's educational career. Should they keep their kids home with themselves or family? Should they go to daycare? Should they go to preschool? How old do they have to be to go to preschool? These are just some of the many questions that run through their minds. Not to

Home Screen

Preschool for Parents

Home Benefits & Learning Resources For Parents Research Feedback

BENEFITS & LEARNING

Early Childhood Education has become a heated topic of discussion in the world of education and parenting. There are some individuals who view sending children to preschool too early will have negative effects on young students. The purpose of this website is to present scholarly research that supports sending children to four year old preschool before they attend kindergarten. With this research, parents will be able to see how a quality early childhood education can help their child academically, social-emotionally, physically, and medically.



Standards Early Intervention Social Emotional Skills Pre-Academics Physical

Benefits and Learning Page

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Resources, Resources, Resources! You don't have to pick just one! Feel free to use any of these resources with your children.

[Activities](#) [Apps](#) [Books](#) [Websites](#)

Resources for Parents Page



RESEARCH

There is a vast world of intelligent people out there who are constantly doing research into the world of education and child development. This is just a short list of articles and documents that were consulted during the making of this website.

- Teaching Strategies: The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Touring Guide [PDF]. (2013). Bethesda, MD: Teaching Strategies.Resource used to demonstrate what curriculum is being taught in preschools and how that benefits early childhood students.
- Iowa Early Learning Standards [PDF]. (2012). Des Moines, IA: Iowa Early Childhood. This document outlines the standards for early childhood education and learning in the state of Iowa.

Research Page

Preschool for Parents

Home Benefits & Learning Resources For Parents Research Feedback

Please leave feedback so that this website can be improved.

Preschool for Parents Feedback Form

Disclaimer: Your email is collected just to prove you are not the same person repeatedly answering this form. It will not be used for anything other than data collection.

* Required

Feedback Page