

**THE PROMISE, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF PRE-KINDERGARTEN:
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES, CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY**

by

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School districts in Pennsylvania were able to receive grant money to implement pre-kindergarten through the Accountability Block grant program from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This study focused on five schools that implemented pre-kindergarten during the 2004-2005 school year, studying the struggles during the first two years of the programs and how the schools used strategies to build capacity to sustain the pre-kindergartens. Grant money disappears eventually and with strong competition for educational dollars, ways to build capacity to sustain effective programs like pre-kindergarten are necessary.

Site visits were used to gather the grant documents, observe the pre-kindergartens for a full session and conduct interviews with the principal, teacher and parent at each school. These three sources of data provided evidence of implementation issues, capacity building strategies, and how these strategies are connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten.

The findings indicate that the pre-kindergartens that are most likely to be sustained are those implemented by schools that use three capacity building strategies of knowledge and skills, collaborative culture and allocation of resources. The schools have and continue to seek

knowledge and skills about early childhood education; consciously, purposefully and collectively create a collaborative climate; and allocate appropriate and adequate financial and human resources are promoting the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. Transportation is a key resource for sustainability. Full-day vs. half-day programs, universal vs. targeted, quality of the program and the curriculum were not issues in the sustainability of the pre-kindergartens in this study.

Pre-kindergarten in the public school needs financial commitment from school boards and the state. Adding this program to the basic education subsidy for each school would enable all Pennsylvania four-year-olds to have access to pre-kindergarten. The Accountability Block grant could also help promote sustainability by building a framework within the grant for school districts to absorb the costs of the program over time and not risk eliminating the program when the funding is gone.

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1.0 CHAPTER

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the proposed study is to investigate the capacity building strategies used in the implementation of pre-kindergarten programs in public schools funded by the Accountability Block Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. By studying the struggles during the early years of the program and how the schools used strategies to build capacity to address those issues, other schools may be better able to understand how systems address implementation for sustainability. Grant money disappears eventually and programs must be sustained financially through other funding sources. With strong competition for educational dollars, ways to build capacity to sustain effective programs like pre-kindergarten are necessary.

Pre-kindergarten in public schools in Pennsylvania beginning with the 2004-05 school year could be funded through an Accountability Block Grant. Thirty-eight districts were awarded one of these early childhood grants and used the funds to establish, maintain or expand a pre-kindergarten program. The grants ranged in size from almost \$4 million to the Pittsburgh City Schools to a low of \$3,000 to the West Allegheny School District. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Mid-Year report on the Accountability Block Grant, there are fourteen districts that used the funds to establish pre-kindergarten, 12 districts that planned to expand an existing pre-kindergarten program and 12 districts that used the money to maintain a pre-kindergarten program (2005).

The researcher has chosen the districts that are implementing pre-kindergarten, rather than maintaining or expanding the program to study the capacity building strategies used to promote sustainability of the program. Schools that are establishing a new initiative will have different implementation issues and may use different strategies to build capacity than districts that are maintaining or expanding an existing pre-kindergarten program. Districts that are expanding or maintaining the program have had the programs in place before the grant funding was available. The grant money was used to fund an existing program that was already being sustained by the system. This study is designed to investigate the capacity building strategies used to address implementation issues to sustain a program.

Any new initiative such as pre-kindergarten changes the structure of the school and changes many of the core beliefs about education: age of public school entrance, relationship between the school and home and early childhood instructional practices. Implementing a new program creates questions and issues about how to sustain the new program. How these implementation issues are addressed by school district personnel are connected to the ability to build capacity to sustain the program. The schools that are in the beginning years of pre-kindergarten, use capacity building in different ways and different degrees to address implementation issues so that the program will be sustained. The researcher will look specifically for three capacity building strategies that are critical in sustaining a new program or initiative:

- 1) Knowledge and skills of the teachers, parents and administrators.
- 2) A school culture of collaboration, trust and communication.
- 3) Adequate human and financial resource allocation.

The three capacity building strategies listed above work together to help a system sustain a new program, such as the early childhood initiative of pre-kindergarten.

The investigator contacted participating school district personnel to schedule visits to the schools to review the Accountability Grant documents, interview the principals, teachers and parents of pre-kindergarten students and observe the pre-kindergarten program in those schools that implemented pre-kindergarten during the 2004-05 school year.

Reading and reviewing the grant application and any supporting materials of the grant application provided data about the district, the students to be served and the allocation of financial and human resources.

The principals of the schools offering pre-kindergarten were interviewed in order to learn of implementation issues, resource allocation, professional development opportunities, the climate and culture within the school and the capacity building strategies used to address those issues.

Teachers of pre-kindergarten students were interviewed in order to gain information as to their educational and professional background, professional development experiences and opportunities, and climate of the school. Their perspective of implementation issues and the capacity building strategies used to sustain the pre-kindergarten was examined from the interview responses.

Volunteer parents were contacted by the principal or pre-kindergarten teachers and asked to participate in the study. Parents of pre-kindergarten students were interviewed at the school. Implementation issues and capacity building strategies from the parents' perspective were examined.

The interviews were conversational, with guiding open-ended statements in order to gather the concerns about the implementation of pre-kindergarten and the capacity building strategies used to address those concerns. For example, "When you think about pre-kindergarten, what concerns do you have?" The administrator, teacher and parent responses were tape recorded with the participants' permission. The taped interviews were transcribed and the scripts used for further analysis. The interviews were between 30 and 50 minutes long.

The investigator spent a full day at each site, and one and a half days at one site, conducting the interviews and observing the pre-kindergarten program. The observation was for at least one full session of the program. The researcher took notes and participated in classroom activities when invited and when appropriate.

The document review, observations and interviews provided evidence of the presence or lack of the three capacity building strategies important for sustainability: the knowledge and skills of the teachers, administrators, and parents; a collaborative school culture; and adequate resource allocation. The investigator identified whether these three capacity building strategies were present, how they were used to address issues of the pre-kindergarten implementation and how those strategies are connected to the sustainability of the program.

1.1.1 Statement of The Problem

How did school district personnel use strategies of capacity building to promote sustainability of pre-kindergarten in the early years of the Pennsylvania Accountability Block Grant?

1.1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?
2. What were the concerns of administrators, teachers, and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?
3. What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?
4. How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?
5. What unanticipated events occurred during implementation and how were they addressed?

1.1.3 Operational Definitions

Accountability block grant - Pennsylvania Department of Education funding available to school districts to attain academic performance targets.

Pre-kindergarten - public school-based early childhood educational program with certified teachers serving four- year- old students prior to the kindergarten entrance age for that school district.

Implementation - the stage of an initiative when a new program interacts with the existing system and changes to the program and the system occur.

Sustainability - a process that supports the ongoing existence of a program, focusing on continuous improvement to the program and the system itself.

Early years - the first and second year of pre-kindergarten in the identified schools.

Capacity building - a process that uses strategies to increase the knowledge and skills of the individuals and the system itself, creates a climate for collaboration and continual learning, and allocates adequate financial and human resources to support teaching and learning.

1.1.4 Methodology

This study used mixed methodology, collecting data from different sources with different methods. The use of mixed methods enabled the investigator to determine what occurred, how and why it happened and articulate any unexpected events. Combining methods provided a deeper understanding of the problem through the use of document review, interviews and observations. The investigator reviewed the grant application and supporting documents, interviewed the principal, teachers and parents of pre-kindergarten students and observed the pre-kindergarten program. A mixed methodology enabled the investigator to gather the data from different sources about the concerns with the implementation of the new pre-kindergarten program, what capacity building strategies were used and how those strategies influenced the sustainability of the program. A variety of methods are necessary to get the depth of knowledge from the complex process of implementation and capacity building.

The investigator sent a letter explaining the study and a survey to gather demographic data to the thirteen districts that established a pre-kindergarten program during the 2004-05 school year. The data from the survey was the type of school, the age of the pre-kindergarten

students, the schedule for the program, the amount of the grant, who wrote the grant and a contact name for the school or district.

The next step of the study was to arrange a site visit through the contact person to study the grant documents, conduct interviews and observations. Before the visit, the principals or contact persons from the district described the study to the pre-kindergarten teachers and asked for their participation. The principals or the pre-kindergarten teachers contacted one or two pre-kindergarten parents. The principal or teacher explained the purpose of the study and asked the participating parents to be available at the school on the day of the visit.

The interviews with school district personnel included the administrator supervising the pre-kindergarten program, pre-kindergarten teachers, and pre-kindergarten parents. The interviews were conversational, with guiding questions in order to solicit the stories of the pre-kindergarten, implementation, capacity building and sustainability. The conversational interviews were about 30 to 50 minutes long and were tape-recorded. All subjects gave permission to be recorded and will be treated anonymously. The interview responses were analyzed as to the presence of each of the three capacity building strategies. Table 1.1 is an example of a rubric to document from the interviews and observation the presence or absence of the second capacity building strategy, a culture of collaboration, communication and trust.

Table 1.1 Collaborative Culture, Capacity Building Strategy #2

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	SCHOOL 5
Positive Communication					
Professional Conversation					
Professional Development Topics Present in Curriculum and Instruction					
Cooperative Planning					
Team Problem Solving Approach					
Mentoring					
Other					

Reading and reviewing the grant application and materials provided data about the district, the students to be served, and the allocation of human and financial resources for the pre-kindergarten. The grant application described what staff, materials, physical facilities, support personnel, professional development or other activities are being funded by the grant.

The observation in the classroom determined if the elements of the grant, as it was written, are being implemented in the program. The observation was for one full session of the program on a day chosen by the participating school district. The investigator participated in classroom activities when invited and when appropriate. Table 1.2 is an example of how the resource allocation will be documented from the grant application and the observation.

Table 1.2 Resource Allocation, Capacity Building Strategy #3

RESOURCE ALLOCATION	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	SCHOOL 5
Maximum Class Size of 20					
Staff/Child Ratio 1:10					
Blocks of Planning Time					
Blocks of Professional Development Time					
Appropriate Curricular Materials					
Adequate and Appropriate Materials					
Budget for Special Experiences (Field Trips, Visits, etc.)					
Access to Expertise					
Transportation					

The researcher analyzed the data collected from the document review, interview questions and observations to identify pre-kindergarten implementation issues, the capacity building strategies used to address those issues, who used the strategies, and how the strategies are connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program.

1.1.5 Procedures

1. Identify the schools that implemented pre-kindergarten
2. Design an initial survey to distribute to the thirteen Pennsylvania districts that implemented pre-kindergarten during the 2004-05 school-year using the Accountability Block grant funding.
3. Distribute surveys to request participation in the study
4. Contact the participating school districts to arrange visits

5. Design interview questions for grant writer, principal, pre-kindergarten teachers and parents
6. Design a capacity building rubric to record the evidence of the three elements of capacity building
7. Review the district's 2004-05 Accountability Block Grant application for pre-kindergarten to determine evidence of the capacity building strategies
8. Interview the building principal of the pre-kindergarten class at each school
9. Observe the pre-kindergarten classes using the capacity building rubric to record the evidence of capacity building strategies
10. Analyze the data from the observations, identifying the capacity building strategies
11. Interview the pre-kindergarten teacher or teachers at each school
12. Interview one or two volunteer parents of pre-kindergarten students at each site
13. Transcribe all the interviews
14. Analyze the data from the interview scripts, identifying implementation concerns and capacity building strategies
15. Compare the data and analysis from the document review, observation and interviews for each school.
16. Compare data and analysis from the document review and interviews from all schools.
17. Develop conclusions based on the analysis of data from the document review, observations, and interviews.

The data collected from the interviews, observations and document review was analyzed to identify issues of implementation, what capacity building strategies were used to address those issues and how they are connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. Conclusions were drawn based on the responses and patterns of the concerns about pre-kindergarten; responses and patterns of implementation issues for the pre-kindergartens; responses and patterns of the three capacity building strategies used to address the implementation issues; and the connection between the capacity building strategies and the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten.

1.1.6 Limitations/Delimitations

The limitations of a study are those factors that may affect the data that is collected and should be identified in order to acknowledge and minimize the impact on the study. In this study, the author, principal or teacher of the pre-kindergarten grant may no longer be employed by the school district. If that individual is no longer with the school, then another administrator or person responsible for the grant may be able to provide this information. The data may then be secondhand data.

Another limitation to the study is that the researcher is collecting data during the second year of implementation of the pre-kindergartens. The subjects were asked to recall attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of the previous year. Memories of early implementation issues and how those were resolved may be difficult to recreate. Second year implementation issues and the strategies used to address those issues may also be different from those used during the first year.

This study of capacity building for implementation for sustainability is limited in scope to the pre-kindergarten initiative in schools that chose to apply for this grant money to establish a pre-kindergarten program. Other programs and initiatives that are implemented in Pennsylvania

public schools and studied for capacity building strategies for sustainability may provide differing results.

1.1.7 Structure of the Research Report

1. The study
2. The review of literature
3. Findings from the five school sites
 - a. What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten?
 - b. What were the implementation concerns of the pre-kindergarten?
 - c. What capacity building strategies were used to address those issues?
 - d. How were the capacity building strategies connected to sustainability?
 - e. What unanticipated events occurred during implementation?
4. Summary and conclusions
5. Implications for policy and practice

2.0 CHAPTER

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The intent of this study is to examine capacity building strategies used by school districts to sustain the pre-kindergarten programs that were established through the Pennsylvania 2004-05 Accountability Block Grants. The decisions made by the schools and school district personnel to build the capacity of the individuals within the system and to build the capacity of the system itself influence the sustainability of any reform or change. A review of the literature includes research, literature and documents to examine a) pre-kindergarten programs in Pennsylvania public schools b) capacity building strategies and c) sustainability of new programs.

2.1.1 Pre-Kindergarten in Pennsylvania

Early childhood education can be delivered in many forms. A parent or primary caregiver of a child begins to help and teach the child to develop socially, cognitively, physically and emotionally. Other family members, relatives, babysitters and friends all contribute to the early learning of a child. Some children are cared for until school age by a parent or parents. Other children enter daycare as early as six weeks and are cared for in private, public, individual or group settings. Nursery schools, preschools, daycare and childcare can be operated by private, for-profit, nonprofit or religious organizations and serve children two, three, four and five years

old. Head Start and pre-kindergarten in public schools are available for only some of Pennsylvania's youngest citizens.

Head Start is a federally funded early intervention program for low-income children ages birth to five. In Pennsylvania, most of the children attend at the age of four. The children are eligible if the family income is 100% of the poverty level or below. However, the federal funding for Pennsylvania in 2002 of \$189.53 million only served 28,895 children, ages three and four, with an additional 28,000 eligible but not served. (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2002). Pennsylvania did not add any additional funding to this allocation in 2002. The Pennsylvania legislature in 2004 earmarked \$15 million for Head Start in addition to the federal allocation (Trust for Early Education, 2004). Oversight for Head Start programs, funding, practices and procedures is through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Private preschools or nursery schools in Pennsylvania provided early education services to over 32,000 children in 1999-2000. (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2002). Children enroll at age three or four and programs can be several hours, half -day or full-day. These private schools can be licensed by the State Board of Private Academic Schools, accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or require no agency oversight if operated by a religious or community organization. Funding is received through tuition fees or support from local organizations.

Public pre-kindergartens are programs offered through the public schools for three and/or four- year-olds. Any district may offer a kindergarten to four year olds and 30 districts did so in 1999-2000, serving 2,550 children in half-day programs (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2002). There was no specified funding for pre-kindergarten programs so districts used the state basic education subsidy or some other funding stream. The Accountability Block

Grants were available to districts in the 2004-05 school year, with \$9.35 million to create pre-kindergarten programs. (Trust for Early Education, 2004; Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2004). These pre-kindergartens enrolled another 2,995 children for a total of about 2% of four-year-olds in Pennsylvania attending a public school program. The national average for four-year-olds attending a state pre-kindergarten is 16.1% (Barnett, Hustedt, Robin & Schulman, 2004). Pennsylvania ranks 37th out of the 38 states that have a state pre-kindergarten program in attendance for four-year-olds.

With an increasing emphasis on student achievement, accountability and standards, early childhood education programs are critical for student and school success. Research shows that children who attend a high quality preschool or pre-kindergarten experience greater social and academic success in kindergarten and later in life (Espinosa, 2002; Schweinhart, 2003; Reynolds, 1999; Golin, Mitchell & Gault, 2004).

Results from three major longitudinal studies have shown the effects of preschool and early learning on cognitive, social, emotional and economic development. The High/Scope Perry Preschool study in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers study and the Abecedarian Study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina all identified children at risk for school failure and collected data through adolescence and adulthood (Schweinhart, 2003). All three studies found strong evidence of social, educational and economic effects on the participants. The studies also calculated cost-benefit analysis of the programs and found significant benefits for communities. The preschool programs in each study were considered of high quality, adequately supported financially and professionally administered.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study followed 123 African-American, low income children in Michigan from the ages of three or four through the age of 27. In 1962-1967, the

students were randomly assigned to an intensive preschool program at Perry Elementary School or a group that did not participate in the preschool program. The preschool program was considered a high quality program, based on High/Scope's participatory learning practices. At age 27, differences between the group that attended preschool and those that did not were social, economic and educational. The results of the study showed that those children who attended that preschool were more likely to be high school graduates, had a higher income, required fewer social services and were less likely to commit crimes (Schweinhart, 2003).

The Chicago Longitudinal Study is a federally funded study that measured the effects of the Child-Parent Center Program in Chicago. Beginning in 1986, 1,539 children in government funded kindergarten programs were studied. The study investigated both the short-term and long-term effects of the Child-Parent Center Program on scholastic and social development. The Child Parent Center Program is funded by Title 1 federal funds and supports children and families from preschool to third grade. The results showed that the economic benefit to a community was \$7.14 per dollar invested. The children who attended the program had increased earning potential, increased tax revenue, and reduced cost for remedial education and the criminal justice system. Children participating in the CPC program showed higher early reading and math skills (Trust for Early Education, 2004; Reynolds, 1999).

The Carolina Abecedarian Project followed children who participated in a high quality early education program in North Carolina. Children from low-income families were assigned to a group that received full-time educational care from infancy to age five. There was also a control group that did not receive any intervention. The results were similar to the Perry/High Scope Project in that academic achievement in reading and math were higher for the children in the program than the control group. Other benefits included a higher rate of attendance in a

higher educational program (40%) for the experimental group than the control group (20%). At the age of twenty-one, more than twice the number of children were attending or had graduated from a four-year college (35%) than the control group (14%). On a measure of social adjustment, the researchers found that the participants in the early education program were older when they became parents. The cost of the Abecedarian Project is about \$13,000 per child per year, about twice the average cost of a Head Start program. However, the benefits to the Chapel Hill community were estimated as outweighing the costs by four dollars for each dollar spent. The children and their mothers can expect to earn more than \$130,000 more over their lifetime than children or their mothers in the control group. Children from the early intervention program were less likely to be referred for special education for a savings of almost \$11,000 per child. Health benefits could total over \$160,000 per child because of the reduced likelihood of becoming a smoker. In the control group, there was a 55% rate of smoking in contrast to a 39% smoking rate for those who attended the program (Golin, Mitchell, Gault 2004).

Policy makers and early intervention programs often target identified children or identified communities as being at risk and in need of services to make children more ready for school. The children in the Abecedarian project were from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The researchers describe it as a middle-class community that supports early education more than most areas. The researchers concluded that the academic, social and community benefits might actually be higher for children in more disadvantaged communities and that high quality pre-kindergarten programs are of benefit to all children (Golin et al, 2004).

Gilliam and Zigler (2004) reviewed the evaluations of 20 pre-kindergarten programs in eighteen different states from 1977-2003. The researchers concluded that many of the evaluation methods were too weak to measure the effectiveness of the pre-kindergarten programs. There

was also a significant variability in length of day, teacher education and credentials, classroom setting, and types of children and families served. The studies from several states showed a modest degree of the benefits of a state-funded pre-kindergarten program.

Children from economically disadvantaged families benefit most from early educational opportunities. (Barnett, 1995; Froebel, 1875; Gilliam & Zigler, 2004). Benefits of early education for disadvantaged children are a reduction in the number of enrollments in special education, fewer retentions, and a higher high school graduation rate (Barnett, 1995). However, children from poor households are less likely to be enrolled in preschool than children from more affluent families. (Fuller & Huang, 2003). Families may not have access to public programs and cannot afford private preschool costs. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2002 that the participation rates in all early childhood education programs were higher for families at or above the poverty level. Current programs for targeted groups of children can serve all children in poverty or if the parent has limited education. However, not all eligible children are enrolled in a targeted program (Barnett & Yarosz, 2004). These families may not enroll their children because of difficulty in identification of the children, eligibility guidelines, access to the programs and the mobility of these populations.

According to the National Academy of Science, one in three Pennsylvania children lives in a low-income family, and one in six lives at or below the poverty level (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2004). Low-income families with a yearly income of \$37,700 for a family of four struggle to meet basic needs without many of the financial supports for those at or below the poverty level. The poverty line per year for a family of four is \$18,850. The Pennsylvania median income is \$47,202 (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2004). Childcare and quality early education are often difficult to find, especially in rural areas of

Pennsylvania, where half of low-income families live. In rural Forest County the low-income family rate is 58.7%, compared to the Philadelphia rate of 56.2%. (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2004). In addition, 60% of the children in Pennsylvania under the age of five have all available parents working. With two of every three Pennsylvania children in some type of childcare and one in three children in a low-income family, quality early childhood education experiences are limited by economics for these children.

In addition to the economic level of the family, other risk factors for school success are the educational level and age of the mother. One in seven children in Pennsylvania is born to a mother without a high school education. (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2004). These mothers have less success in the job market and are more likely to live in poverty with their children. They also have a greater likelihood of smoking and receive less prenatal care. All of these contribute to the delayed development of their children. One child in 11 in Pennsylvania is born to a mother under the age of 20 and one in 12 babies is considered to be of low birth weight. More highly educated mothers are more likely to enroll their children in an early childhood program. In one study, 70% of the children in a preschool program had mothers with a college degree compared to 38% of the mothers had less than a high school diploma (Barnett & Yarosz, 2004).

In addition to economic level of the family, maternal age, educational level and health factors of the mother, the native language of the family has an effect on learning readiness (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2004; Gallagher, Clayton, Heinemeier, 2001, Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Students who are not orally proficient in English, the language used in Pennsylvania schools to teach reading, may be at risk for reading difficulties. (Snow et al, 1998). Pennsylvania has just started to measure the number of students

with limited English proficiency of public school students. During the 2001-02 school year, one in 33 students or 3.1% had limited English-language ability. In 20 school districts, there were over 5% of the students without proficiency in English. (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2004).

The number of children identified as at-risk for school success has risen sharply (Gallager et al., 2001; *Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2004). The benefits of quality early education are stronger for children who are at risk for school success (Barnett, Hustedt, Robin & Schulman, 2004). With these risk factors and the one-third of Pennsylvania children living in low-income families, the need for early intervention in the education and well being of Pennsylvania children is critical (*Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children*, 2004; Gallagher, Clayton & Heinemeier, 2001).

The rapid development of the children during the first eight years emphasizes the importance of high quality early educational experiences (Bloom, 1964; Smith, 2004). Early experiences impact the development of the brain and establish the framework for cognitive development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Bloom (1964) found that 50% of a child's intelligence has been developed by the age of four. By the age of eight, a child has reached 80% intellectual capacity. Once children have reached certain developmental milestones, it becomes much more difficult to make up any delays (Bloom, 1964). The child's brain grows most rapidly before entrance to public school at age five. Sensitive care, quality education and the environment all have an effect on the whole development of the child (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2003). But not all Pennsylvania children have access to sensitive care, quality education, or a rich environment. Adding pre-kindergarten to the existing K-12 educational system in

Pennsylvania would make early childhood educational experiences accessible to more young children.

Providing universal preschool to all children within the public schools creates a uniform, established program within the accepted framework of the K-12 educational system. Preschool for all could reach the under served and disadvantaged population. All children could be provided with early education to promote school readiness and achievement. Programs would be under the guidelines and regulations of the state departments of education. Only about 2% or 2,609 four year olds attend a state pre-kindergarten. Head Start and special education programs enroll another 17%. (Barnett et al, 2004). The Accountability Block Grant added another 2,995 children during the 2004-05 school year. (*Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005*). This still leaves almost 80% of Pennsylvania's children attending either some other or no early education program. The national average for four year olds attending all state programs including pre-kindergarten, Head Start or an IDEA preschool is 34.0% (Barnet et al, 2004).

State funded pre-kindergartens would offer universal, free early educational experiences operated within the PK-12 established system. Oklahoma and Georgia offer universal, free pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds. New York, Florida, North Carolina and Massachusetts have made a commitment to state funded programs for all four-year-olds. (Mitchell, 2001, Barnet et al, 2003; Mitchell, 2004, Barnett, 2005). Studies of the Oklahoma program indicated strong positive effects on language and cognitive test scores, positive effects on motor skills and no increase in social/emotional test scores (Gormley & Phillips, 2003; Gormley & Gayer, 2003). There was also a greater impact for children of color and those who qualified for the federal free meals program.

Barnett and Yarosz (2004) argue that attendance in preschool is influenced by state policies on early childhood education. Deliberate, informed and comprehensive early childhood policies are significant. The competition for tax dollars is fierce and the importance of early childhood education funding should be articulated by all funding streams (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2001; Barber & Fullan, 2005).

Investing in pre-kindergarten is one strategy to bring about a structured, state-funded early childhood program. (Barnett, 1995; Barnett et al, 2004). The Pennsylvania legislature identified eleven research-based programs that would be eligible for funding through the Accountability Block Grant. School districts could apply for funding to implement the programs that best serve the needs of their students to raise achievement. The first funding option is for "establishing, maintaining or expanding a quality pre-kindergarten program aligned with current academic standards" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2004). Other early childhood initiatives include funding for full-day kindergarten and reducing class size in grades K-3. Over \$200 million dollars were awarded with \$2 of every \$3 spent on the three early childhood initiatives. Pre-kindergarten programs received over \$9 million dollars in thirty-eight districts (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005).

The Accountability Block grants provide an avenue to school districts to fund pre-kindergarten and add this early childhood program to their district. One of the problems with grant money and adding programs and reforms to a system is how to sustain the initiative once the money is gone. There are strategies that schools and individuals can use to impact the sustainability of the reform. These strategies build the capacity of the individuals and the system for pre-kindergarten, making it part of the system. Deliberate, informed decisions about pre-

kindergarten raise the possibility that pre-kindergarten will become part of the institution and be sustained.

Pennsylvania has made an initial step in funding early education, but Pennsylvania needs to do more in order to help our youngest students succeed academically, socially, emotionally and economically. An investment in quality, early learning experiences will benefit the state of the child in Pennsylvania and all citizens of Pennsylvania. Each individual school district and each individual school has to create its own capacity to implement and sustain pre-kindergarten, so that it becomes part of the educational and economic framework for all children in the state. Quality early childhood education increases a child's readiness to learn and succeed academically, socially and economically in later years (Espinosa, 2002; Schweinhart, 2003; Reynolds, 1999; Golin, Mitchell & Gault, 2004).

Adding the pre-kindergarten is one strategy used by the school and the state to improve the achievement of students and the school. The pre-kindergarten enhances the capacity of the school as it increases the capacity of the students. If the state provides the funding, it is enhancing the capacity of the school. Schools are successful when students are successful, which raises the capacity of the state. By funding a program for early childhood education, the school is using a strategy to raise the achievement of its young students by offering them the advantages of a pre-kindergarten program. As the capacity of the individual students is increased, the capacity of the teachers, administrators, parents and the school itself is increased.

2.1.2 Capacity Building

Capacity building is a process that results in a climate or culture of learning that is evidenced by a disposition of the individuals and the school to learn, continually increasing the knowledge and skills through high quality professional development opportunities, learning from each other, sharing knowledge and skills, creating supportive relationships and targeting the financial and human resources needed to implement and sustain the program.

Three elements of capacity building work together in combination to sustain a new program, such as the pre-kindergarten initiative. The three elements are:

1. The knowledge and skills of teachers, administrators, and parents;
2. A school culture of trust, collaboration and communication; and
3. Adequate human and financial resource allocation.

Schools that hire highly qualified professionals and continually enhance the knowledge and skills of the teachers, administrators, and parents; promote a school climate focused on learning and inquiry; and have adequate resources of high quality have the capacity for change and for the sustainability of any new program. (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996; Massell, 1998; Foley, 2001)

Many times reforms are initiated in schools that lack the capacity for the change (Foley, 2001). For a reform to be implemented successfully and sustained, the school should have both the individual and institutional capacity or competence to effectively do the work of teaching and learning. Barber & Fullan (2005) argue that every new policy, program or practice is an opportunity to question the existing capacity and promote greater capacity of the system. Identifying the existing capacities of the entire system, making changes that fit within those capacities, and providing the resources to the system to sustain those changes is a major task of

the leaders of the system. Adopting reforms that fit the capacity level of the school takes knowledge and insight. Many reforms and new programs have not been sustained because neither the school nor the individuals had the capacity to change and adopt that reform. (Foley, 2001).

Capacity building is often defined as professional development and funding (Chrispeels, 1997; Beck & Murphy, 1996). But capacity building has a more complex and deeper implication for successful implementation and sustainability of reforms. Massell (1998) terms capacity building as the need to "translate high standards and incentives into effective instruction and strong student performance" (p.1). It takes more than professional development and funding to accomplish such a task. The quality of decisions made about professional development, how the funding is allocated and what changes are made in teaching and learning as a result of the professional development and resource allocation is building capacity. Fullan (1998) describes capacity building as learning how to act together to bring about positive change and having the mechanisms for getting better on purpose. The decisions, the actions, the leadership are all done on purpose. If children are at-risk for school success, then measures should be taken to increase their ability to do the work at school. Adding pre-kindergarten is a strategy to build the capacity of the individual child and the pre-kindergarten itself becomes a strategy to build the capacity of the school to educate the students.

Individual classrooms, teachers, the school, district and state all have varying amounts of capacity. Classroom elements of capacity include teachers' knowledge and skills, student motivation and readiness and curricular materials for students and teachers (Massell, 1998; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996). School, district and state organizational capacity elements include the quality and quantity of supporting personnel for the classroom,

quantity and quality of interactions within and among the different levels of the system, material resources available, and the allocation and organization of those resources (Massell, 1998, Consortium for Policy Research in Education 1996). Fullan (1998) and Foley (2001) argue that part of capacity is the commitment, disposition, and a motivation to participate in the process of capacity building. Fullan describes it as having "to do with whether wake-up calls result in people getting out of bed and doing something" (p. 6).

2.1.2.1 Knowledge and skills

The knowledge and skills of the teachers, administrators, and parents is an essential element of capacity (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996; Massell, 1998; Foley, 2001). The expertise of the teacher is of critical value to the education of young children. Bowman, Donovan & Burns (2001) state, " the knowledge and skills of teachers are among the most important factors in determining how much a young child learns" (p. 262). Early childhood teachers must be knowledgeable in how to enable all children to succeed, be cognizant and sensitive to diverse students and their families, understand a wide range of disciplines, collaborate with colleagues and families and continually reflect on best practices for teaching and learning (Bowman et al., 2001, p. 261). Teacher quality and training had positive effects on language, cognitive and motor skills in a study of the Oklahoma universal preschool program (Gormely & Phillips, 2003; Gormley & Gayer, 2003). The National Association for the Education of Young Children's position is that "children benefit most when their teachers have high levels of formal education and specialized early childhood professional preparation" (NAEYC, 2005).

Capacity building to increase the knowledge and skills of the teachers is more than just professional development. The quality, quantity and focus of the professional development must

be aligned with the goals and mission of the school. Every educator in Pennsylvania must participate in 180 hours of professional development during a five-year period in compliance with Act 48. But not all of that professional development increases the capacity of the teacher to do the work of teaching. Capacity building through professional development improves the professional's instructional expertise so that children are taught more effectively and student achievement rises. (Copland, 2003, Beck & Murphy, 1996). Specific, informed, sustained and relevant professional development opportunities that change the practice of teaching will build the capacity of the individual teacher and the school. A school or system can plan and provide professional development, but the individual must participate and apply that learning to the classroom.

Professional development that targets content knowledge is one form of capacity building, but developing the ability of the professionals to work together effectively and with children is also important. Effective capacity building also has teachers, administrators, other staff and parents learning the elements of the change process, leadership skills, continual inquiry as a sustained effort to identify, solve and revisit problems, and how to measure student and school progress. Opportunities to practice new knowledge and skills and to teach and learn from others are also elements of capacity building (Copland, 2003; Beck & Murphy, 1996; Lambert, 1998). Developing leadership of teachers, administrators, and parents strengthens the capacity of the system and gives stakeholders a sense of collective responsibility for teaching and learning (Copland, 2003; Beck & Murphy, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Lambert, 2003).

Administrators and parents also should have knowledge and skills to support and sustain the pre-kindergarten. Principals need to recognize the differences between early childhood education and the curriculum and instructional practices of middle and upper grades (National

Association of Elementary School Principals, 1998). Materials and necessary supplies are different, as is discipline and parental involvement.

Parents should be recognized as a child's first teacher and encouraged to attend, support and become involved in the pre-kindergarten program. Orientation sessions, workshops, and trainings can provide valuable information and help parents form alliances with the school (NAESP, 1998, Pennsylvania Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare, 2005). Communication with parents through newsletters, calendars, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, memos and e-mail increases the capacity of parents to learn about their child's education, their child's school, educational practices, parenting issues and community resources (NAESP, 1998; PDE & PDPW, 2005).

2.1.2.2 Collaborative culture

A school culture of collaboration, trust and communication creates a professional learning community that is focused on the teaching and learning for everyone within the school and the community. Collaborative cultures are deeply involved in the work of the schools (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Teachers and administrators plan, team-teach, mentor, observe, perform action research and peer coach in order to improve the learning of all students. The focus is beyond individual classrooms and extends to all students and families in the school (Lambert, 1998). Professional development and professional conversation are focused with the goal of continuous improvement.

Professional development opportunities can raise the level of expertise of the educators, but the quality, quantity and participation are essential elements if the professional development is to raise the capacity of the educators and the system itself. The motivation and disposition to participate in the professional culture of inquiry and learning is important. Massell (1998)

addresses student motivation and readiness as an element of capacity, but the motivation and readiness of teachers to participate in professional learning is equally important (Fullan, 1998; Foley 2001). The motivation is to continually learn, continually study teaching and learning and how to improve student achievement.

Human capital and motivation creates a social context within the school. The relationships within the system influence the capacity and the effectiveness of capacity building strategies. An atmosphere of trust and collaboration creates a professional community within and among the different levels of the organization. (Massell 1998, Foley, 2001; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996). The school's internal social organization defines the process of work, as well as the work itself. (Duffy, Horne & Houlihan, 2004; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996). Collaboration raises morale, provides opportunities for sharing of practices and improves work effort. Strategies to create this social context within a community of practice build the capacity of the school and the individuals within the school (Copland, 2003). There is a commitment to self-improvement, the improvement of others and the school community at large. (Lambert, 1998).

Professional communities work together to identify the strengths and needs of the school, design, implement and evaluate the strategies to address those needs and create conditions for everyone to succeed. Supportive relationships at all levels create a sense of community and commitment to student learning. The learning of one educator is not isolated but influences the learning of others. (Beck & Murphy, 1996). There is also a sense of collective responsibility for the work of the school. Everyone works to develop a culture of inquiry through authentic relationships, shared work and shared responsibilities for teaching and learning (Lambert, 1998).

2.1.2.3 Resource allocation

A third major element of capacity is the adequate allocation of the resources available to the individual and the school. These resources can be time, money, technology, materials, supplies, physical facilities, curriculum and other support services. (Massell, 1998; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996; Fullan, 1998). Schools must have adequate resources to provide for the pre-kindergarten, including a financial commitment for staffing and facilities. The Accountability Block Grant provides districts with one avenue to fund pre-kindergarten. This money pays for teachers, administrators, clerical support, classrooms, furniture, curriculum materials, supplies and supporting staff. (Massell, 1998; CPRE, 1996; Fullan, 1998; Foley, 2001; Chrispeels, 1997).

Time for teachers, administrators, parents and other members of the pre-kindergarten staff to meet, plan and develop the pre-kindergarten is a strategy to build the capacity for the pre-kindergarten (Fullan, 1998; Foley, 2001; Beck & Murphy, 1996). Time can be formal and built into the daily schedule or school calendar for collaboration and sharing. Regularly scheduled grade level meetings, department meetings, mentor visits and observations all provide opportunities for discussion and reflection on teaching practice and learning. Informal time can also be created by creating a culture of communication and collaboration. Lunch hours, shared duty time, and even hallway conversations can be an arena for capacity building.

Fullan (1998) also suggests that to build the capacity of the system, there should be access to expertise. This is a resource that may require funding or a partnership with a professional development provider through intermediate units, the Department of Education, colleagues from other schools, or colleges and universities. This access to and availability of

expertise enhances the collaborative culture of the school and this resource expands the capacity of the professionals and ultimately the students.

2.1.2.4 Barriers to capacity building

There are also factors and circumstances that inhibit the capacity and efforts to build the capacity of individuals and schools and therefore, stall the reform. Strikes, building projects, a change in staff or administration and budget cuts can all impact the capacity of the system (Moffett, 2003). The timing of new programs and initiatives is very important. Schools and systems that add too many things at once are in danger of "innovation and policy overload" (Moffett, 2003, p.38). Fullan (1999) urges schools to avoid policy clutter:

Policies are introduced without attention paid to the time lines and strategies of implementation that would be needed for success. The impatient search to address urgent problems makes the system susceptible to "magical" (superficial) solutions. At the same time, there are many urgent problems and frequent changes in government. So solutions get piled upon solutions, creating overload and clutter. Even within the same government, new policies are introduced on top of yet-to-be-implemented previous policies (pp. 54-55).

If the capacity building strategies have been chosen, implemented and evaluated systematically and collectively, there is better chance that the initiative will be institutionalized or sustained. Individuals and systems with capacity recognize and believe that they can influence their own growth. They have control over their professional lives. In schools that practice capacity building, they use strategies to increase the knowledge and skills of the adults and the students, create a collaborative culture and allocate resources wisely. By raising the capacity of the students and adults, schools increase the capacity of the school itself (Beck & Murphy, 1996; Massell, 1998). New programs can better be implemented and sustained by systematic, informed capacity building decisions.

2.1.3 Sustainability

School reforms are plentiful and come in a variety of forms: individual classrooms, system-wide adoptions, site-based management, top-down, bottom-up, research-based, excellence versus equity. Maintaining good programs beyond implementation is a challenge however the reform is initiated. Sustainability of reforms is "the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvements consistent with deep values of human purpose" (Fullan, 2005, p. ix).

Pre-kindergarten is an educational reform to provide our youngest children an environment in which to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically. In order to make pre-kindergartens a permanent addition to Pennsylvania public schools, there should be conscious decisions made to build the capacity at all levels to sustain pre-kindergarten.

Programs are sustained if they become part of the daily environment of the school once the initial funding is gone. The program is not identified with one or two key people. A shared vision of the program sustains the program through leadership transfer, staff turnover, or budget cuts. The schools have built the capacity for pre-kindergarten through the knowledge and skills of teachers, parents and staff, a culture of collaboration and financial and human resources. (Duffy, Horne & Houlihan, 2004; Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996). A conscious decision is made to continue the pre-kindergarten and the strategies identified to support the program. Schools use capacity building strategies to make the program successful, affordable, and aligned with the goals of the district (Berman, Greenwood, McLaughlin & Pincus, 1975). The pre-kindergarten initiative is more likely to be sustained if the three capacity building strategies work together to continuously improve the educational opportunities for all children.

Any educational initiative or school reform attempts to change the structure of the school and challenges the core beliefs about teaching and learning (Elmore, 1996). When kindergartens expanded during the 1940's and 1950's, many core beliefs about early childhood education were challenged: the age of public school entrance, the relationship between the school and the home, and early childhood instructional strategies (Beatty, 1995; Elmore, 1996). If school districts have a strong emphasis on early childhood, the school has the initial capacity, the knowledge and skills, for early childhood education reforms. The structural change of adding the pre-kindergarten is more closely aligned with the core beliefs of the school. But other capacity building strategies, the allocation of resources and the collaborative context of the organization, will need to be addressed in order for the pre-kindergarten to be sustained.

Florian (2000) studied school districts that had implemented a reform 10 years earlier. Five factors were found that influenced the sustainability of the reform initiatives: (1) ongoing engagement and development of human capacities engaged during the reform initiative; (2) school and district cultures that value learning, innovation and collaboration; (3) district and school structures, policies and resource allocations that support reform goals; (4) leadership of schools and districts that maintain a consistent vision, a well-designed strategic plan, and positive relationships with members of the education systems; and (5) political context demands, pressures and supportive activities (p.12). These factors are not separate from each other, but rather work together to sustain or inhibit reform.

The sustainability of any new program after the initial funding source is gone requires knowledge, understanding and support from a wide range of stakeholders (Pew Charitable Trust, 2001; Gallagher et al., 2001). The National Institute for Early Education Research continues to build a research base for universal pre-kindergarten by asking questions, publishing reports, and

communicating with policy makers about the issues in early educational research. Schools can provide research, reports and evaluations of their early childhood successes to parents, the community, board members and other schools.

Several foundations are working together to establish a national base for universal pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds through public support to make preschool part of the K-12 educational system. Linking the pre-kindergarten with the larger K-12 system creates a broad base of support among parents, community members, health personnel and policy-makers (*Trust for Early Education*, 2004; Gallagher et. al, 2001). But with accountability for tax dollars so intense, there is a need to make the case for pre-kindergarten. Parents, teachers and administrators also need to increase the capacity for policy makers to understand the critical nature of quality early childhood education, implement it, and build the capacity to sustain it.

Supporting change requires a context that supports reform, a nurturing professional community, low turnover of staff, trained facilitators to manage the change, and sufficient quantity of high quality professional development (Moffett, 2000). Sustainability requires pressure or accountability and support through capacity building and finding the balance between pressure and support. (Fullan, 1998; Moffett, 2000). Change requires specific decisions to implement new programs, usually administrative. But the level and quality of support from teachers, administrators, parents and policy makers through capacity building strategies will determine whether the initiative will be successful and will be sustained. Pressure keeps change moving, support keeps it moving in the right direction.

Sustainability and change requires a climate or culture that supports reform. There needs to be strong communication between all the stakeholders. Both the quality and the quantity of interactions are important (Massell, 1998). Two-way information sharing can be through a

variety of forms including meetings, memos, parent meetings, media releases, open houses, community newsletters, open forums, etc. These high quality conversations help create professional communities built on trust and communication (Massell, 1998; Moffett, 2000).

Adding new programs to a system creates a change in the culture. The professional community, even an effective one, is changed. Sustaining the change means changing the culture to incorporate the new reform. Ongoing, abundant professional development in content, leadership, and the change process are essential for sustainability (Moffet, 2000; Copland, 2003; Lambert, 2003). Deep learning is an essential element of a collaborative culture and sustainability (Fullan, 2005).

The sustainability of pre-kindergarten or any reform effort can be jeopardized by a change in teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, legislators, governors and even presidents. Governor Rendell and a Republican Legislature committed early childhood education funds for the first time for the 2004-05 school-year. A change in leadership could change the allocation of the funding. However, if each school district builds its own capacity to sustain pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and smaller class sizes, there is greater chance for continued support of early childhood education dollars. But the communication must be two way. School district leaders must make conscious decisions to sustain the program within their own schools, so that it is politically acceptable and increases the chance for sustained funding. The state has made an initial financial commitment to pre-kindergarten, which is in it self, a capacity building strategy. The schools and districts themselves need to make decisions to build the capacity of their school to sustain pre-kindergarten.

Teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and building the leadership capacity of administrators and policy makers contribute to the sustainability of the reform. (Fullan, 2005;

Lambert, 2003; Moffett, 2000) Access to expertise for the content of professional education and for the change process builds capacity and the chances for sustainability (Fullan, 1998; Moffett, 2000).

Other educational reforms, desegregation, inclusion, education of students with disabilities and even kindergarten have all been sustained at the local level through funding, policies, state and federal law. Until state or federal law mandates pre-kindergarten programs, each district must find the means to establish, maintain or expand its own pre-kindergarten program. If a school district can demonstrate the benefits of a pre-kindergarten program, then "sustainability on the program level will take care of itself. Sustainability in the policy arena comes down to strong public support" (Klein, 2004, p. 4). Sustainability in the educational arena comes down to having the capacity to address issues so that there is a climate to adopt and adapt new programs to become part of the existing educational system.

Sustaining change requires a balance of pressure and support, accountability and capacity. Capacity building strategies chosen and used by teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers, schools, districts and the state of Pennsylvania can create early education opportunities through state pre-kindergartens to increase the cognitive, emotional, social, physical and economic opportunities for the young children of Pennsylvania.

3.0 CHAPTER

3.1 FINDINGS

The findings from the five pre-kindergarten programs are presented in this chapter. The Accountability Block Grant documents were reviewed, observations made and interviews held at each site. Each research question is examined through the information from each pre-kindergarten.

3.2 PRESENT STATUS, SCHOOL #1

What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

School #1 is an elementary school in a district located on the fringe of a mid-size Pennsylvania city. There are two schools in the district, the elementary school and a junior/senior high school with a total of about 800 students. The district administration includes the superintendent, junior/senior high school principal, elementary principal, business manager, federal programs coordinator and maintenance supervisor. Sixty teachers are employed in the district. The elementary school has 24 classroom teachers and five specialists. Title 1 is a school wide program that enables the district to provide services to all children to raise achievement levels.

The elementary school met all the criteria in attendance, academic performance and test participation for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in both reading and math for the 2004-05 school year. The junior/senior high school also met all the criteria for AYP for the graduation rate, academic performance and test participation.

The Accountability Block Grant was written by the federal programs coordinator to implement a pre-kindergarten program for the 2004-05 school year. The district was awarded \$106,154 to fund pre-kindergarten for the second program year, 2005-06. The district offered full-day kindergarten for 11 years and identified the need to provide quality early childhood educational experiences for the four-year-olds in the district.

There are two pre-kindergarten classes operating in the second year at School #1. The program is called K-4 and enrollment, according to the grant is 40 children. However, for the 2005-06 school-year, one class has 22 students and the other has an enrollment of 20 students. The district is concerned that all four-year-olds be served whether it is in the district K-4 program or the local Head Start. The Head Start children attend school five days per week for the entire school year. The district and Head Start together make a recommendation for which program is best for the four-year-old. The principal of the school is pleased with the collaboration between Head Start and the K-4 program and reported,

We have an excellent working relationship with them now. And when we do our screenings together, we kind of make that determination. And while parents can choose, they always have the right to choose, most parents will listen to our recommendation. Especially if Head Start and the school district are making the recommendation. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

Approximately half of the K-4 students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The makeup of the class is no English language learners, two children with special education services, three

children from African-American families, no Latino, migrant or Asian families represented and 37 children from Caucasian backgrounds. K-4 is offered to all children in the district with the minimum age of four and maximum age of five. Students must be five years old on or before September 1 to attend kindergarten. According to the grant, all children meeting age and residency requirements are eligible. No other determining factors are used. The district has no waiting list and enrolls all students who meet the age and residency requirement.

Both teachers have dual certification in Early Childhood/Elementary Education. One aide in each classroom supports the program along with one administrator, a music teacher, librarian, and a physical education teacher. The guidance counselor, math specialist and reading specialist also provide support for the K-4 program, students, teacher and parents.

The two K-4 classrooms are located across the hallway from the elementary office and are large, fully furnished classrooms. Each room has a separate bathroom and closet. Funding from the first year of the grant was used to completely equip each room with small tables and chairs, individual student lockers, painting easels, a sand and water table, a Lego table, housekeeping and dramatic play furniture and supplies, listening center and headsets, TV/VCR, colorful rugs, blocks, trucks, rest mats, smocks, puzzles, games, toys and art supplies. The room is decorated with purchased posters and cutouts of colors, numbers, alphabet, months, weather, calendar, birthdays, helpers and shapes. An outdoor playground unit was purchased with second year grant money. The grant also provides breakfast, a snack and lunch for each student every day.

The K-4 children attend a shorter week and shorter day than the other students in the building. The pre-kindergarten students come to school Mondays through Thursdays for the first semester. The second semester they will attend five days per week. Fridays are used for parent

trainings and home visitations that are to occur three times yearly. According to the grant document, one of the goals of the K-4 is to engage parents in the education of their children, "District level goals [for the pre-kindergarten] have been explained to parents and are regularly discussed at the home visitations that occur three times yearly" (Accountability Block Grant Application, 2005-2006, p. 7). The K-4 program is five hours per day, from 8:45 a.m. until 2:00 PM. The K-6 student day is from approximately 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.. The pre-kindergarten children arrive at school on three different buses between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. An aide rides on each bus and the children begin their day in the cafeteria to eat breakfast.

3.2.1 Observation Reflection

The day was very structured and the daily schedule was posted several places around the room. For the opening, the children sat on a large, colorful rug on assigned blocks. There were 20 children present and two children were absent. The children shared comments and stories about what they had done last night, on the bus and a field trip to the fire station on Tuesday. The teacher and aide distributed stickers to those who were sitting and listening to the others. Each child eventually got a sticker during the 15-minute opening time. The teacher and the children talked about the weather, the calendar and the schedule for the day. The children gathered later in the morning on the rug for language circle time. The teacher read a book about fall and the children asked questions and made comments throughout the story. Verbal expression, correct grammar usage, and vocabulary were all developed during this ten-minute lesson.

Direct instruction was used during three small group periods held throughout the day, each about 15 minutes long. These sessions were called small group instruction but each group had 10 students. The grant lists the student/teacher ratio as one teacher and one aide for every 20

students or 1:10. In the opinion of this observer, a small group would indicate that instruction would be delivered to a number much less than the student/teacher ratio. The size of small groups for effective literacy instruction is suggested for no more than four students. The teacher worked with half the class, 10 students, sitting at two tables pushed together. The aide worked with the other half of the class at two tables on the other side of the room. The two groups did the same activities during the three instruction periods, a *Handwriting Without Tears* lesson in a workbook, a math game and finger-painting a stop sign. The district uses a standards based curriculum and identifies specific curriculum materials to use: *Success for All*, *Handwriting Without Tears* and *Everyday Math* programs. The commercial programs purchased by the school district structured the majority of the instruction time for the children. The students practiced handwriting in a *Handwriting Without Tears* workbook, played a number recognition game from *Everyday Math* materials and listened to a big book story from the Harcourt reading series. The teacher provided the word STOP that the children glued onto their sign.

Each month, the groups switch and those who worked with the teacher will work with the aide and vice versa. The instruction and activities were the same for both groups and there was no grouping by ability, personality or behavior. The small groups appeared to have been established for classroom management rather than for differentiated instruction.

Gross motor development is an important part of the K-4 program. An outdoor playground unit was purchased with second year funds and the children go outside each day that the weather allows. If the weather is inclement, they use either the gym or a section of the cafeteria/multipurpose room. The gross motor activity time is 30 minutes. Both classes participated together and are closely supervised by the two teachers and two aides. The children are encouraged continually to move, not play. The adults suggested swinging, climbing, running,

dancing, jumping, walking on the timbers around the edge like a balance beam, and anything else to get the children to move. It is interesting that the focus is not on playing together, but rather moving, either alone or together. The focus of the gross motor period was definitely physical activity and not socialization. Many outdoor play times or recess are used for student socialization in connection with physical activity. Play is work for young children and playing together requires a different set of skills than physical activity. The teachers of these young children recognize this and encouraged the students to move, rather than play with each other.

When the children went back into the classroom, they hung up their coats, washed their hands and ate packaged fruit snacks provided by the school. They sat at the tables and in the same groups for small group instruction. The children, teacher and the aide joined the students in conversation during the snack. The adults modeled and encouraged good manners, the use of each other's names, descriptive language and proper grammar.

The largest block of time was allotted to a structured educational play period. This hour was designed to help the children plan an activity, participate and reflect on what they did. Each day the children planned with the teacher or the aide what they would do during 'work time'. After 35 minutes of work time and clean up, children recalled what they did. Language experiences, memory, language usage, names of students and objects were all addressed during the brief conversation between the student and the teacher or the aide. The principal described this part of the K-4 day as:

. . . students have to come up with a plan, speak with the teacher about what they are going to do and then in what center are they going to do it. And then they are allowed to go to that center and work, whether it be the blocks, the sand and water table, the listening center, the book corner, whatever the center is. The teachers are aware that some of the children want to go to the same centers every day so that's watched and monitored closely. So in the four days they are here, they get through their centers. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

Several children moved to other centers during the 35-minute work time. The teacher allowed this as long as the children were interacting positively with the materials and with each other. The teacher worked with several children individually during this time, finishing up some assessments and student work for children who had been absent. The children freely interrupted her and she calmly and efficiently answered their questions or comments and the children returned to their work quickly.

A quiet time was held before lunch with children using purchased rest mats. The children had assigned spots to put their mats and the teacher played classical music. The period lasted 30 minutes and some students rested comfortably, some fell asleep and some were restless for the full 30 minutes. Following the rest time, the children went to the cafeteria for lunch. All the children ate a cafeteria lunch with two choices and no children brought a packed lunch. Following lunch, the children went to the restroom and made preparations to go home. The teacher reflected with the students what they had done that day and what they would do over the weekend. The children then boarded the three buses for the ride home with their classmates and an aide.

3.2.2 Summary

In the opinion of this observer, the focus of the K-4 program at School #1 is to socialize children and their parents to the structures and routines of school. The purpose of preschool can be academic preparation, socialization with other children, socialization into the structures of school and institutional learning. At School #1 the students and teachers follow a daily schedule for activities that is posted several places in the classroom. The principal used the daily schedule to describe the program. The schedule was followed closely and all activities and lessons were

accomplished during the day. Routines and structure were emphasized with procedures for riding the bus, putting book bags on the table in the cafeteria in a certain location, assigned seats for breakfast, lunch, snack, large and small group instruction, and rest time. The schedule and routines were used to socialize the K-4 children into the school community. K-4 at School #1 emphasizes that learning the routines and structures of school are a readiness skill to help children succeed at later academic learning.

School #1 is concerned that all four-year-olds have a preschool experience. All children who were eligible are enrolled, exceeding enrollment expectations and the student/teacher ratio. The principal commented, "servicing such a high percentage of our four-year-olds at this point" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005) was one of their biggest successes.

3.2.3 Concerns

What were the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

3.2.3.1 Administrator

The principal had initial concerns about getting all the particulars of the program in place in such a short time:

I think they released the money in maybe July and you had to be implemented by September. So to start a full program in that amount of time was tough. The physical plant, accessibility, type of program, curriculum that I wanted to incorporate into my building. Those were the big concerns. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005)

The program was implemented to get parents actively involved in the schools and according to the grant document, "develop readiness skills for enrolling kindergartners," (Accountability Block Grant, 2005-2206, p. 2) The principal stated,

A very large percentage of our district is not affluent. And education is not a priority. And so if we are going to break that trend and break that idea that you go to school, mark your time and then you get a job or go on some kind of assistance program. If we're going to break that cycle, now's the time to break it. And that's why the parent involvement component is so important. That's the key. That's the key. Get into the parents. Get them early. Get them engaged. And then we'll have some success. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

3.2.3.2 Teacher

The teacher had experience teaching preschool in a parochial school and had a master's degree in early childhood. She was concerned whether the new program

was going to be developmentally appropriate. We didn't want to go into a situation where the kids would all be lined up in desks and it would be just a total focus on academics (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

The teacher also had implementation concerns centered on resources; the physical space, getting the room ready, what kind of supplies and resources would be available. She wondered,

What types of things would I have available to me to put into the room, making sure they would have all the different experiences? Would there be room for the sand and water table? Would we have a big enough area for them to sit on the carpet? (Personal interview, October 6, 2005)

The number of children in a classroom was a concern of the teacher and continues to be. The grant was established to serve 40 children. There are 42 this school year and an informal census showed that there could be about 45 children available. The district decided to serve all children. She

knew that there were going to be 20 children in the room. Would I have a helper with me, an aide, so that the children would be able to get the one on one attention they needed? (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

The teacher is now concerned about the increasing class size and explained,

They were concerned with the grant that we couldn't turn students away. Under pressure with that. So we started making sure that we took all the students from the waiting list. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005.)

3.2.3.3 Parent

The concern of the parent was the type of curriculum that the K-4 would have. Her concern was whether the curriculum would be "play based or were they looking more at the academic thing" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). The curriculum, according to the parent,

was a nice balance. She has the pre-skills for kindergarten and yet she still had playtime too. It was playtime in a structured educational way. It wasn't just random, go play kind of thing (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

The parent was also concerned about transportation to and from school for her daughter. The babysitter lived outside of the district so the mother "had to work out my own transportation" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). The parent concern about the transportation issue was partially resolved through the addition of a latchkey program before and after school. Children were cared for before and after school in the school building. However, the

. . . latchkey stopped at 8:00 when the regular school day started and their (K-4) day didn't start until 9. So, [he principal] worked that out that the K-4 teachers just kept them in the room and she could play or color and do some things there until the rest of the kids came for breakfast. (Parent Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

3.2.4 Capacity Building Strategies

What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

3.2.4.1 Knowledge and skills

The principal does not have an early childhood background but has studied the research on early childhood education. He explained,

My background is not early childhood at all, at any stretch of the imagination. If you want me to retire very quickly, put me in a K-4 classroom. I don't know how they do it. But the research is just overwhelming that the earlier you provide

literacy experiences to children, the more successful they are going to be. That, in my mind, was reason enough to try and start a program. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

The teacher is dually certified in elementary education and early childhood with a Master's Degree in early childhood education. She has taught 10 years, eight in a parochial school and this is her second year in the public school.

The district provides monthly parent training programs on issues about literacy, behavior, speech and language, fine motor skills etc. Attendance is usually about 10 or 12 parents from the families of the 42 students enrolled. According to the principal, many parents "are very disengaged from the education system" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). The principal explained that he shortened school week is to provide the teacher and other school staff the time to

get in the car and we visit these homes. We schedule appointments and we go into the homes and we go over literacy strategies they can use at home. We meet the parents. We try to get them actively engaged in their child's education" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

Professional development to the principal is that the teachers "can go to just about anything they want" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). The teacher reported that she attended the intermediate unit's teacher induction program throughout the year last year as a new teacher. There were also school wide, ongoing sessions for all staff on the new math series, Everyday Math.

3.2.4.2 Collaborative culture

The presence or absence of a collaborative culture was difficult to document with a one-day visit. Some evidence of a collaborative culture could possibly be observed, but the process

required to create such a culture is ongoing and often difficult to identify in a single observation or interview.

The communication between the adults was positive but limited to primarily management issues. There was no evidence of any professional conversation about curriculum, instruction or student achievement. All the teachers and aides were outside together for a gross motor time and the adults interacted with the children, but not with each other. The schedules in the two classrooms were exactly the same but it is unknown whether this was a result of collaboration. The aides took a lunch break during the student quiet time and the teachers ate at a separate table from the children while the two aides supervised lunch.

Professional development topics present in curriculum and instruction were indicated through the Everyday Math calendar activities. The literacy strategies as a focus for the program were evident through the reading of a story, the listening center, and conversation between the adults and the children.

There were blocks of time for planning and professional development for the teachers and the parents on Fridays during the first semester. The teachers also had one hour before and after school to plan together. However, students who had to attend the latchkey program came to the room at 8:00 a.m. and played in the room until the other students arrived at 8:45 a.m. There was evidence of collaboration between the K-4 teachers and the kindergarten teachers in the development of the goals for the pre-kindergarten program. The grant outlines how the goals were identified,

District level goals have been identified at this level for mastery. These goals were created by back mapping our kindergarten curriculum and determining readiness skills for our unique population to enter a kindergarten program (Accountability Block Grant, 2005-2006, p. 7).

3.2.4.3 Resource allocation

The grant pays for the salaries of the two teachers, two aides, furniture, equipment and supplies. The classrooms had a full range of furniture and materials to support the program: Lego table and Lego's, cubbies, big wooden trucks, dramatic play area, sand and water table, TV/VCR, big book easel/storage unit, four unit painting easel, carpet, blocks, resting mats, student smocks, commercial posters for numbers, colors, months, weather, calendar, alphabet, shapes. Each student received a breakfast, snack and lunch. An outdoor play area was also purchased with grant money. There was no lack of material resources and a full-time aide is employed for each classroom. The second year of the grant there was even an outdoor playground purchased. When consumable supplies, paper, glue, etc, ran out in the middle of the first year, the district bought more. The district pays for the transportation with three buses running separately from the other student transportation schedule. Even though the district is reimbursed some of the cost of the transportation, it is still money that has to be spent the first year; money the district has to have in order to get it back.

The pre-kindergarten class size exceeds the maximum class size of 20 children. The school held the enrollment rate for both classrooms last year at 20 students and maintained a waiting list. However, the administrators made the decision to serve all children that enrolled, creating class sizes of 22 and 20. One teacher and one aide staff the classroom, so in one room, the recommended staff/child ratio of 1:10 is exceeded.

Professional development for teachers is listed on the grant as differentiated instruction, early literacy strategies, Parent Literacy development, Pennsylvania Early Childhood Framework training, and Everyday Math. This professional development is to be ongoing for the 2005-06 school-year. The principal stated that the teachers could go to any conferences they wanted, but

especially those with an early literacy focus. "As far as staff development, it's my building policy that teachers can go to practically anything they want. Now obviously, they are always focused on early literacy interventions" (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). The teacher only identified her induction training and Everyday Math as professional development opportunities.

Field trips and special events are provided for the pre-kindergarten. The children and teacher talked about a recent trip to the fire station. The children rode the bus to the event and walked through the local neighborhood back to the school. The teacher commented that they liked to provide the children with outdoor experiences and used the walk to find signs of fall.

There was little evidence of access to expertise. The teacher attended induction training through the intermediate unit. A local college student visited for an observation but there were no other indicators of collaboration with the college.

3.2.5 Sustainability

How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

The principal reported that sustainability is a huge issue because the type of funding stream as provided by the Accountability Block Grant usually disappears after three to five years. IST funding is an example of this. In five years, all districts were to have an Instructional Support teacher or team, which was initially, funded 100% by the state to decrease special education referrals. However, the funding is no longer provided and the mandate was not enforced after about five years. Some schools have retained the IST program and others have not. So to sustain any new program, the district has to assume that the funding can disappear at any time. According to the principal,

sustainability after implementation projected is not that substantial. You're looking at yearly supplies for teachers, transportation costs and salary and benefits for teachers and aides. And that's the biggest expense (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

The administrator only tied financial resources to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. The school also has a school wide program in Title 1 and has used Title 1 funds to absorb part of the cost of the pre-kindergarten and other district programs.

The teacher's idea of sustainability was that the community would have the number of children to keep the program viable. The area has a high unemployment rate and there are "lots of people moving out of the area" so her concern was the number of students available to enroll in the program. (Personal interview, October 6, 2005)

The parent understood that funding is "always being cut back for this and that" but hopes that program is still here next year. Her daughter is to enroll next year and the fact that it is free preschool is a benefit for her.

You hate to say it, but it's free, free to parents. My 3 year olds in a private preschool right now that I'm paying for. It's nice that she'll be able to come (Personal interview, October 6, 2005).

All of the Accountability Block Grant funding for School #1 for the 2005-06 school year went to the quality pre-kindergarten program. This has advantages and disadvantages. First, all the funding can be used to start and fund a quality program. The program is not sharing resources with other grant program, such as full-day kindergarten or tutoring, as other schools did. But, if the funding is gone and the program is not firmly established, it is in danger of being eliminated because the grant covers most of the program costs. The district has not had to use any district funds to support it, other than transportation costs, and it would be an easy decision to not have to absorb all this into the district budget. The principal was not concerned about the cost of busing because of the reimbursement by the state for most of this expense.

The principal also described the issue of physical space in the building because of "an extremely large kindergarten this year. We had to add a kindergarten class so right now I have music and library sharing space. Lessons in the back of cafeterias, etc."(Personal interview, October 6, 2005) The district needed classroom space but rather than cut the K-4 program, the district decided to have music and library share a space. This identifies the pre-kindergarten as an important program during the second year of implementation.

3.2.6 Unanticipated Events

What unanticipated events occurred during implementation and how were they addressed?

One of the unanticipated events that happened was the program used all the consumable supplies by midyear. "At the midpoint of the year, we were overwhelmed that we didn't have anything left, like art supplies. They really went through the glue. So we were reordering that." (Personal interview, October 6, 2005). There did not seem to be a financial issue and the needed supplies were ordered.

Perhaps not an unanticipated event but a change in the program is the switch from four days per week to five days per week beginning in January of the second year of implementation. The only reason given for the change was by the parent who stated "In January they are going to five days as part of a transition into kindergarten five days" (Parent Personal interview, October 6, 2005). Adding the Friday to the K-4 schedule helps with sustainability because parents will not have to find childcare on the fifth day. Siblings will also have the same school schedule, which makes the program appealing to parents.

3.3 PRESENT STATUS, SCHOOL #2

What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

School #2 is a rural elementary school located outside a mid-size Pennsylvania city. There are three schools in the district, two elementary schools and a junior/senior high school. Approximately 915 students are enrolled in the district. School #2 is the smaller elementary school with 131 students in pre-kindergarten through third grade and is located in a campus setting near the junior/senior high school. Administrators in the district include the superintendent, junior/senior high school principal and assistant principal, one elementary principal, a technology coordinator and special education coordinator. The district employs 72 teachers and School #2 has nine classroom teachers and one full time Title 1 reading teacher. The music, library, physical education, speech, Title 1 math, writing, and English Language Learning teachers all serve both elementary buildings. No special education classes are located in this elementary school. The school is a Title 1 school but does not qualify for a school wide program. The district made Annual Yearly Progress in all categories at the junior/senior high school and the other elementary school in the district. School #2 was not in the calculations for AYP because there are no fifth grade classrooms in the school. Third grade PSSA scores are scheduled to be included in AYP calculations in 2006.

The Accountability Block Grant was awarded to the district to implement a pre-kindergarten program for the 2004-05 school year. For the 2005-06 school-year, the district received \$132,338.00 to maintain this program. The district has offered full-day kindergarten for more than 20 years and identified the lack of preschool opportunities for families in the area. One of the parents reported,

For the working, the middle class, there was really nothing for us. We had to pay or we had to drive, at least 15 miles, for a pre-K or a daycare (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The pre-kindergarten program at School #2 is called Pre-K and has expanded from two half-day sessions to four half-day sessions for the 2005-06 school-year. The enrollment has gone from 28 students to 64 students. The district pays for a second teacher, an additional aide and increased the support for transportation. The original teacher of the pre-kindergarten reported, "The district really supported the expansion of our program because we had such a successful first year and such good feedback" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). The principal also spoke about the ease of adding two more sessions of the pre-kindergarten,

We started having people call in September to sign up their child for the subsequent year. We kept getting phone calls and I told the secretary to take their names and numbers and we'll send out letters in the spring. So we went to the board again and we said that this is what's happening. The word is out. We have a quality program here. Now parents are clamoring to get into the program (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The district collaborates with the local Head Start in order to serve as many of the district children as possible. Parents are provided with a choice as to whether to enroll their child in a half-day school program that operates four days per week or if they qualify for the Head Start full-day five day per week program. According to the principal,

Because we knew we that we were going to have limited seating for our initial year, our thoughts were that we would try to channel those students who were eligible for Head Start into the Head Start program. So that would allow us more room for the children who didn't qualify. So, in a very nice world, all of our students would have been [served], but of course that doesn't happen. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The teacher also commented on the coordination efforts with Head Start,

We coordinated with Head Start, one of our partners through the grant. [We wanted] to make sure we have all our kids. That first year we only took 28 kids. And maybe we had three attend Head Start last year (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

This school year, 2005-2006, 12 children attend Head Start and will enroll in kindergarten at School #2 for the next school year.

The teacher is dually certified in early childhood and elementary education. The newly hired teacher is certified in early childhood education. Each classroom is supported by a classroom aide and the four sessions of pre-kindergarten share three grandmother volunteers. An Intermediate Unit speech therapist provides services to the children and the teachers collaborate with the teacher of an IU preschool located across the hall.

The two pre-kindergarten classes are housed in adjoining rooms that share a bathroom. The rooms are at the end of a wing that also has kindergarten and first grade classrooms, an intermediate unit preschool and a before and after school program, operated by a county agency. The rooms are fully furnished with small tables and chairs, a Lego table, listening center, musical instruments, child-sized kitchen appliances, sand and water table, book shelves, white board easel, drying rack, blocks, carpeting, colorful area rug, two painting easels, puzzles, trucks, individual student lockers, TV/VCR, toys, games and art supplies. Commercial decorations were displayed including the months, alphabet, calendars, days of the week, weather, shapes, colors, numbers and birthdays. The grant also supplies each student with milk and a healthy snack daily. The snacks are prepared by the cafeteria staff and include peanut butter on celery, carrots and dip, apple slices and peanut butter, strawberries, grapes, mixed nuts and dried fruits.

The pre-kindergarten operates half-day sessions, four days per week. Fridays are reserved for home visits, planning and professional development opportunities. The district provides transportation both ways on two smaller buses, with the two pre-kindergarten aides riding the buses to school in the morning and home from school in the afternoon. The bus contractor

provides an aide on the bus for the trip home for the morning students and the trip to school for the afternoon students.

3.3.1 Observation Reflection

The teacher met the children at the entrance to the school as they arrived on the two small buses. She welcomed the children and asked a question about their day, the bus ride or a family member. The two classroom aides who ride the buses with the children relayed messages from the bus driver, parents and students to the teacher also. Brothers and sisters of the pre-kindergartners stopped and visited as they waited in the entrance for the other bus to arrive with the remaining children.

The children gathered on the large colorful rug for the opening exercises, attendance, calendar activities, songs and phonemic awareness rhymes and exercises. The teacher read a big book about the letter L and the children then read together their own "L" books. Two children read the L book individually. Each child reads the book aloud to the class sometime during the week. The class focuses on one book each week. Letter recognition, letter sound, vocabulary, and print awareness are all targeted skills for each lesson and book. The pace was fast and the teacher moved from one skill to another efficiently. The aide and a grandmother volunteer checked backpacks for notes, journals, returning books and Leap Frog Pads. At the end of the day the aides then packed the children's backpacks with new library books, the letter L books, school notices and calendars, journals and folders.

Kid writing was the next lesson and the children were divided into three groups. "Grandma Patty" took 20 children to a large table to play Letter Bingo. The teacher and the aide each worked with four children. Each child told a story about what they did yesterday with a

family member. Once they told the story, the teacher helped them create a simple sentence for their tale. They then began to draw a picture in a Draw and Write Journal. When their picture was completed, the teacher had the child retell the sentence and then write each word. Each child had an alphabet strip and word posters were displayed. Different posters had fall words, color words, family words, and number words. One of the children wrote, "I ws rakeing levs." The child read the sentence, the teacher read the sentence, and then the teacher underwrote the sentence correctly, "I was raking leaves." The child read the sentence one more time and then could put any finishing touches on the picture. As each child finished, they joined the game of Letter Bingo and another student joined the teacher or the aide's instruction group. In a 30-minute period, all 18 children had done Kid Writing and played bingo.

"Grandma Lou" arrived with snack and then it was playtime. The children chose which area of play they wished to participate. Each child had a plastic card with his or her name, picture and Velcro fastening on the back. Each play area had three sign-in spots and the child placed their card on the sign-in spot. The teacher and other children could quickly see who was to be in which area and the children also learned the names of their classmates. Playtime was about 30 minutes long and the children did not stay in one play area the entire time. They were free to move from painting to the listening center; from the puppet stage to the house; from the books to the blocks. The teacher and the aide worked with some children individually on math and phonemic awareness assessments.

Clean-up time was done to music and all the children sang along as they put their toys and materials away, straightened up the room and got their coats and backpacks. The backpacks had already been filled by the aide and Grandma Patty so there was little confusion about papers and supplies. Transportation notes were checked and double-checked with the children, the

office and the before and after school program. The children were then escorted to the bus by the teacher and the aide. The teacher went on each bus and relayed messages to the bus drivers and checked on each student to wish them a good ride home and happy weekend.

3.3.2 Summary

The pre-kindergarten at School #2 is a rigorous, half-day program, incorporating academic, language, and social/emotional developmental activities. Gross motor is limited to physical education classes twice a week for 15 minutes. Fine motor skills were encouraged through handwriting and finger plays. Language and social/emotional growth were practiced during the playtime, snack time and circle time. The day moves at a fast pace, but both the teachers and the children appeared relaxed and confident in their teaching and learning.

There is a strong focus on literacy in the pre-kindergarten classroom. The teacher read a story to the children, the children read the story together and then individual children read the story. During the circle time, phonemic awareness was addressed through songs and rhymes. The children and the teacher talked about syllables, the sounds and look of the letter and how to form the letter. Kid Writing incorporates the child's own oral language into written language. Letter Bingo helps children learn the sight and sound of the letters. The Pre-K children participate in the 100 Book Challenge, which is a school wide reading competition.

The purpose of the pre-kindergarten program appears to this observer to be to enroll children in school at four years old in order to provide equitable learning opportunities for all children. One parent recognized that getting children in school earlier helps teachers identify gaps in learning earlier. She stated,

I think they're going to definitely see any kind of problems, any kinds of pluses, right at early ages. Right early, so they can hit them now, before later (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The principal also commented on the differences in the levels of enrolling kindergarteners,

As we were working more and more on the developmental continuum and addressing developmental approaches to our reading, we were beginning to see in the kindergarten classrooms of ours, such gaps. And we started discussing, probably three or four years ago, what can we do to address this (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Parents and teachers understand that the evidence of the effectiveness of the pre-kindergarten, as measured by PSSA scores, will not be available for several years. The teacher said, "And the real results are going to be when they're testing on the PSSA. We'll actually be able to show the data and how the Pre-K impacted that" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). The parent, who is a high school teacher in the district, commented, "We need this, we need this. Look at our scores. Boy, if we had those kids a little bit younger, we could start them. We wanted them to learn" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). Getting children into the school system earlier provides benefits to both the children and the district. The parent commented, "Definitely, the Pre-K program is going to benefit the child, plus the [School #2] school district" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.3 Concerns

What were the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

3.3.3.1 Administrator

The principal's first concern was that as many students as possible would attend a preschool program. She stated,

Our basic premise was that we wanted all of our four-year-olds in the community to be in a school, whether it was Head Start or our school. So that they would get a basic education" (Personal interview, October 21,2005).

The principal was also concerned about what arrangements were available for students with working parents for a half-day program, "What are our parents going to do if their children are coming to school in the morning? What are they going to do in the afternoon and vice versa?" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The content of the curriculum was considered by the principal before the pre-kindergarten began,

What are we going to do with the children? Here we have the kiddos now, what are we going to do with them? So, of course, there was a major concern (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The principal expressed that transportation was a key ingredient to implementation success of the pre-kindergarten,

And thirdly, the concern was, we spent a lot of time on transportation of our kids. Working out the nuts and bolts of that. I remember talking to the bus owners and our superintendent about - is it a requirement that these kiddos have seat belts because they're only four years old and we have to buy a new van and then since they're little ones, we probably should have an aide on that bus. It's amazing, I think we spent almost as much time on figuring out this busing as we did the curriculum, for goodness sakes. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Finally, the principal commented about the allocation of funding for supplies and materials,

And then when school started, the concerns were do we have enough equipment and materials to really go through the curriculum. And that was a learning experience throughout the year (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.3.2 Teacher

The initial concern of the teacher was that the pre-kindergarten be a program that was strongly supported by the board and the community. She wanted "to make sure this was a program that the school definitely wanted to invest this money in" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

She shared the principal's concern that as many students as possible attend a pre-kindergarten program,

Just to make sure we could get as many kids serviced in our district as possible. Because that first year was first come, first serve. Which to me was a problem. Because we want to make sure we have all our kids. That first year we only took 28 kids, and maybe three attended Head Start that year. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Another concern of the teacher was that she did not get as much support and training from the district literacy coach, as she would have liked. She commented,

I got one meeting with her all year, last year, and that was in May. So, it was not the most beneficial, but it was still nice to see how my year ended and what I could do (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.3.3 Parents

The first parent worked outside the home and her concern was what type of childcare would be available for the other half day. "My concern was that it was going to be half day, and what to do with my daughter after the half day, because I was working at the time" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

She also was concerned about transportation. Her reservation was more a personal reservation of having her daughter ride the bus. She acknowledged

I was still nervous this year with her going to kindergarten on the big bus. She was very excited. She'd been waiting to ride a bus for probably two years before she started school (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

A concern of the second parent was that all the children in the district be serviced by the pre-kindergarten.

The biggest thing is, there were some students that didn't make the cut-off. Last year, because of the money situation, they only had so many slots. And once they filled the slots, they were done (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.4 Capacity Building Strategies

What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

3.3.4.1 Knowledge and skills

The principal has been with the district for many years, teaching all grades from kindergarten through sixth grade. Early childhood is not her background, but implemented the program by

just reading the research, knowing what the payoff is with our little ones, and knowing our community, the constituency here, the lower socio-economic level of our parents, the haves and the have-nots (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

She demonstrated a knowledge of the community and recognized needs and solutions to those needs. "We were beginning to see in our kindergarten classrooms, huge gaps. And we started discussing, three or four years ago, what can we do to address this" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The teacher is dually certified in Early Childhood and Elementary Education with a Master's Degree in Early Childhood. She previously taught fifth grade for three years and voluntarily transferred to the new position of pre-kindergarten teacher. She visited other preschool programs, researched the curriculum, attended professional development sessions, ordered supplies and materials and was instrumental in designing the program. The teacher explained how she prepared to teach the pre-kindergarten,

They sent me to a ton of other preschool programs. The month of May I was barely in my fifth grade room. They sent me to all kind of different preschools around, just to observe, ask questions, see what was working for them, what wasn't. As far as professional development for curriculum, we had training on our Leap Frogs that we have, Handwriting without Tears, the Kid Writing program and the Hundred Book Challenge. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Some parents were actively involved in helping to establish the pre-kindergarten program, so they had the knowledge and skills to advocate for a new program for their children. One mother reported,

As a mother in this district, we've been asking for a Pre-K for a very, very, very long time. Even like a daycare slash Pre-K situation for the middle class families. Most of the families in this district are lower income so they always had a provider. There were places called Lincoln Head Start where they qualified to go to those preschools or those daycares. But for the working, the middle class, there was really nothing for us. When I first got hired, we talked about it, because there were a couple of other young girls and we were all getting married around the same time and we knew we would be having children. We were asking indirectly as teachers, more directly as parents. It was kind of a clash, because a lot of us went to this school district, and they hired us. So I don't know if they liked that, but we really kept on pushing, really kept on pushing. Do a little more activity to let them know, the board and the administration, that we are staying here, we're gonna have children here (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Parents are also involved in reading with their children at home through the Hundred Book Challenge. The mother explained,

This preschool, I have to read books to my son. And he has to start reading books. The books, every day, and he loves those books. He fights over the shark book,

the whale book. He can't read it, they're 64 pages long, but we read them every night. And he is so adamant about getting those prizes. The prizes are so minimal, but to him that's wonderful". Each child also receives a Leap Frog. The school provided us with one. So we work with him. I mean that's something new for him. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

There were initial parent meetings and home visits to educate the families about the new Pre-K program. One of the parents told about how parents were introduced to the pre-kindergarten,

They did have an initial parent meeting and then one of the things they did, once you enrolled, they came, Mrs.[teacher], and the aide, Mrs.[aide], they came before school started and met the student. Plus we also had an orientation at the school. I was impressed that she took the time to come to each person's home (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Professional development is a priority with this district. The district provides support for the teachers with both a reading coach and a writing coach. Grade level meetings are common and the pre-kindergarten teachers meet with the kindergarten teachers regularly. The principal reported,

Our district is way up in the ninety-five plus percentile in sending our people to staff development or providing them here in the district. Our superintendent feels very strongly that, for instance, if there is going to be a kindergarten workshop in Pittsburgh on using more literature in the classroom, you do not send one kindergarten teacher and perhaps the Title 1 reading director or the librarian. He wants all the kindergarten teachers to go so that they can go, hear, come back, and then meet and discuss and go from there. And our board has subsidized that (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.4.2 Collaborative culture

There was evidence from the observation and the interviews that a collaborative culture exists in this district. The communication between the adults was positive and focused on instruction and learning. The teacher and the aide shared strategies before the Kid Writing session began and discussed the progress of certain students in just a few words. The two groups worked near to each other and the teacher looked at student work from both groups, although she

only instructed one group. The other pre-kindergarten teacher visited the room to double-check some of the plans for next week. The students receive a weekly large group lesson from the speech and language therapist. The IU speech and language teacher consulted with both teachers as to the development of the students and lesson planning for the next week during a quick visit to the classroom.

Speech & language teacher: Should I do the position words again?

Pre-K teacher 1: No, my kids don't need that. We've been singing that song you taught them.

Pre-K teacher 2: My kids need pronouns. They still say, 'her goes'.

Speech & language teacher: Yes, they do. I will review the position words and then work on the pronouns.

This brief exchange demonstrates an understanding of the students' needs and the integration of the speech and language teachers' lessons in the general classroom. Time for planning and collaboration is necessary but often occurs in short, meaningful episodes.

Professional development topics were present during classroom instruction. Each child did Kid Writing in a small group with the teacher or the aide. There was no direct instruction for Handwriting without Tears, but the teacher used the strategies to help the students hold the markers, pencils and crayons and form the letters during the Kid Writing session. Balanced literacy is a focus for the district's professional development and the instruction reflected this. There were activities for letter recognition, sound/letter association, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension. Each student takes a book home each night, reads and records what was read with a parent. The aide and the grandmother volunteer checked the progress and sent another book home each day. Each child had his or her own little book and the class had created books to learn each other's names, the colors and numbers. Several copies of these books were in the classroom library and children

read them during playtime. Other evidence of a balanced literacy program included a listening center with books to read along, labels of materials in the room, and positive, purposeful verbal interaction between the children and between the adults and the children.

Each Friday was designated for planning time, professional development, home visits and other trainings. The two pre-K teachers planned the week together and sent home calendars so parents would be aware of the concepts and activities for the week. The teachers were also included this year in grade level meetings with the kindergarten teachers. The teacher appreciated the additional professional time with her colleagues,

This year, they seem to be putting the Pre-K teachers in with K teachers now, because we have some planning together, and just to make sure we're all on the same page with assessments and what we're doing" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The pre-kindergarten teachers also helped to develop the new kindergarten progress report.

There was also evidence of collaboration being used to solve a problem. The second year of the program created transportation issues because there were more than double the number of children to transport and longer routes required. The principal commented,

When we sat down and figured out busing, some of our kiddos were going to be on the bus a long time. I said, 'All right, everybody, go back to the drawing board, think about it, and we'll reconvene.' And believe it or not, the owner of the bus line, came and said, ' I think I have a solution for our kids'. And when he called and said I think I have a solution, that's teamwork (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

A collaborative culture focuses on the problem and the solution, not who created the problem or who provided the solution. The principal strongly supported and trusted her colleagues to help find a solution, and they did.

3.3.4.3 Resource allocation

All the money from the grant is used for the pre-kindergarten program. The salary and benefits for one Pre-K teacher is paid for with grant money and the second Pre-K teacher hired this school year is funded through district money. The furniture, materials and supplies to equip the second classroom were purchased from the grant, as well as consumable supplies for both classrooms. The grant expenditure for furniture and supplies to support instruction was \$36,527. Student transportation is a major expense, accounting for over \$40,000 of the total grant. The remaining \$15,000 was budgeted for professional development and collaborative activities with community partners. Field trips, special events and classroom visitors are supported by both the grant and the district.

Both classrooms were furnished with almost everything needed for a complete early childhood program: small tables and chairs, rugs, bookshelves, mobile student lockers, kitchen sets, easels, sand and water tables, storage racks, Lego tables, puppet stage, listening center, TV/VCR, computer, blocks, toys, games, art supplies, musical instruments, big books, books, student journals, and individual Leap Frog Pads. Each student received a snack and milk daily.

The number of students in each classroom is larger than estimated class size of 13 children, but smaller than the recommended 20 student maximum. During the 2004-05 school year, the first year of the grant, there were 28 students enrolled in the two sessions of Pre-K. This school year, there are 66 children in four sections. A teacher, aide and volunteer grandmother staff each classroom and provide a staff/child ratio below the 1:10 recommendation. The popularity of the program and the desire to serve all children enabled the district to add the second classroom at the district expense. The salary and benefits of the second teacher can be paid for next year from the grant because there will not be the need to purchase the furniture and

equipment. The district has four kindergarten classes and the principal expects that four K4 classrooms will serve all the four-year-olds in the district.

The principal expressed the concern about “what we are going to do with these kids?” (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). The principal asked the teacher to review curriculum and recommend the one that “will fit with our kids and meshes with our philosophy” (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). They chose the Creative Curriculum but supplement it with other materials such as Leap Frog pads, Kid Writing and Handwriting Without Tears. The first teacher of the K4 program spent a lot of time visiting other established pre-kindergartens in the area. She remarked,

They sent me to a ton of other preschool programs. The month of May I was barely in my fifth grade room. They sent me to all kind of different preschools around, like maybe three different counties. Just to observe, ask questions, see what was working for them, what wasn't (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The concerns about transportation were resolved by allocating more of the grant money to transportation costs so that all children are bused to and from K4. The principal commented,

We spent a lot of time on transportation of our kids. Working out the nuts and bolts of that. I remember talking to the bus owners and superintendent about it. Is a requirement that these kiddos have seat belts because they're 4-year-olds and we have to buy a new van and then since they're little ones, we probably should have an aide on that bus. I think we spent almost as much time on figuring out this busing as we did the curriculum, for goodness sakes. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

But the parents appreciated the convenience of the busing, stating, “What's nice about this is it's bused also. The bus comes directly to the house, picks him up and drops him off” (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Professional development for teachers is a commitment of the district and expertise is available through the intermediate unit, literacy and writing coaches, visiting scholars, the Tri-

State Study Council, Indiana University and the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown campus. The teacher visited other schools to observe and learn about curriculum, organization of the pre-kindergarten and instructional strategies. The district provides both a literacy coach and a writing coach who work with all the teachers, including the K4 teacher. Last year the literacy coach only met once with the K4 teacher but she has asked for more support this year. The Pre-K teachers attend grade level meetings once a month for a half-day with the Kindergarten teachers. The Pre-K teacher commented,

This year, they seem to be putting the Pre-K teachers in with the K teachers now, because we have some planning together, and just to make sure we're all on the same page with assessments and what we're doing. The last meeting we had, we helped the kindergarten teachers develop their report card. It was nice planning with them. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Groups of teachers are also sent to out of district conferences, supported by the principal and the superintendent. The principal explained,

Our superintendent feels very strongly that, for instance, if there is going to be a kindergarten workshop in Pittsburgh on using literature in your classroom, you do not send one kindergarten teacher and perhaps the Title 1 reading director or librarian. He wants all the kindergarten teachers to go so that they can go, hear, come back and then meet and discuss and go from there. And our board has subsidized that. (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.3.5 Sustainability

How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

School #2 has begun the process of sustaining the new pre-kindergarten program by doubling the enrollment in one year and financing the second teacher through district funds. The principal credited a very astute business manager who helps the district keep the programs that the kids need. She also credits the school board that

was savvy enough to know that this was good for our kids. So they bought into that whole concept. And it helped that we had two school board members whose children happened to be in that first class and they just really, that was their chance to say, 'most definitely, this program is excellent' (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Another school member's spouse works as an aide in the Pre-K classroom. The principal reported that he said, "I see my wife, what she's doing at home, making things and how she talks about the program. How can we not do this?" (Personal interview, October 21, 2005). Supportive, involved school board members observed directly the impact of the Pre-K program and were willing to invest district money to expand the program is a major step to sustainability.

One of the parents felt that if the population of children is there, that the pre-kindergarten will be sustained.

But no matter what the numbers are, we need to keep this. No matter what our population ends up being in the future, small or larger, this is a definite plus for [School district #2] (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

Another parent did not think that sustainability of the program was a concern,

I don't see it being a concern because we've had nothing but positive feedback. I know I have done nothing but brag about it. And they had to double the class size this year by getting another teacher (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

The teacher felt strongly about the sustainability of the program. She commented,

There is no way the district will get rid of this program. They've invested too much into it and I think, especially this year and definitely next year, with 60 some kids attending kindergarten, they're going to see a great, drastic improvement in what they're doing in kindergarten. And it's going to change, keep changing our grades every time these kids are moving down the line. We really promote ourselves here and it's not because of me, but it's because we have to, to keep this program going. I definitely don't see them getting rid of this. We've just had so much positive feedback (Personal interview, October 21, 2005).

3.4 PRESENT STATUS, SCHOOL #3

What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

School #3 is an elementary school in a district located near a large town in Pennsylvania. It had previously been a very rural district, but development in both housing and commercial businesses has changed the area. There are two school buildings in the district, the elementary school with grades Pre-K through fourth grade, and one building housing a middle school and a senior high school. The schools serve 799 students. District administrators are a new superintendent, middle/senior high school principal, and elementary principal. The elementary school employs 20 teachers. Title 1 is provided to students in the elementary school, but it is not a school wide program. The middle school and high school have met all the criteria in attendance, graduation, academic performance, and test participation for Annual Yearly Progress on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in both reading and math. The elementary school does not house a grade level at which the scores are used in the calculations for AYP.

The Accountability Block Grant was written by the principal and superintendent to establish a pre-kindergarten program for the 2004-05 school year and to help fund an existing full-day kindergarten. The district was awarded \$40,150 to fund pre-kindergarten for the second program year, 2005-06 and \$84,425 for the full-day kindergarten. The district has offered full-day kindergarten for 14 years. The goal of the district is for children to be in school as soon as possible. The principal explained,

We've always had this theory that the sooner we get them here, the better it would be. Because we are 45% economically disadvantaged. So our theory was to get them to school as soon as we can (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

There are other half-day preschools in the area sponsored by local churches and the local college. Head Start offers a full-day program for families who qualify.

There is one pre-kindergarten classroom with a morning and an afternoon session operating in the second year at School #3. The program is called Pre-K and enrollment according to the grant, is 30 children. Sessions are half-day or 2.5 hours and children attend five days per week. The morning session for this school year has an enrollment of 14 children and the afternoon session has 13 children. Last year 29 children finished the pre-kindergarten program.

The teacher has dual certification in elementary education and early childhood. An aide with an early childhood degree works in the classroom also. Last year, there were two aides for the pre-kindergarten program. The second aide was hired as a third grade teacher and he still visits the classroom regularly. A music teacher, art teacher, librarian and Spanish teacher all support the program.

The children in the pre-kindergarten program are over 90% Caucasian. One child is from an African American family and one child is from an Asian family. There are no other races or ethnicity represented in the Pre-K. There are eight families who qualify for free and reduced lunches, which is about 27%, below the 45% estimate for the entire district given by the principal. The minimum age for enrollment is four years old and the maximum age is five years old. Transportation is not provided so priority is given to those families who can provide the transportation and then to those students who are identified as part of a high-risk group.

The pre-kindergarten classroom is located across the hallway from the office and is the largest classroom in the building. The district first planned to locate the program in a nearby fire hall and then a church. Both buildings failed to meet inspection regulations to house the program. The multipurpose room was considered as a location until the decision was made to

purchase a modular unit. Assigning the pre-kindergarten to the modular was a concern because there were no bathrooms. A large room was needed because of the amount of furniture and play areas required for a preschool. The largest room in the building was a room shared by the art and music teachers. The art and music classroom was relocated from the large classroom to the modular.

Funding from the first year of the grant was used to completely equip the room with small tables and chairs, painting easels, a computer, TV/VCR, housekeeping and dramatic play furniture, sand and water table, puppet stage, bookshelves, beanbag chairs, toys, games and supplies. Commercial displays include the alphabet, numbers, colors, birthdays, calendar, helpers, shapes, and seasonal decorations. An alphabet tree, some calendar decorations, the schedule and list of specials were all made by hand. The children bring their own snack from home and buy either milk each day from the cafeteria.

3.4.1 Observation Reflection

Parents delivered each child to the classroom, helping the students hang up jackets, giving notes and relaying messages to the teacher. The children then sat on a large rug, with the teacher in a rocking chair. She asked each child for milk money and when all was collected, sent two children to the office with the money and the order form for milk.

The children shared stories with the teacher and each other. Halloween was only a few days past and many of the stories were about costumes, trick or treating and the candy they had collected. The teacher began the lesson when the two children returned from the office. The letter of the day was "S" and the teacher showed the children how to make an S. She used a white

board easel and the children practiced the S in the air and then traced an S on a handout. They used crayons and spread out on the carpet to practice the formation of the S.

The Spanish teacher arrived and conducted a 20-minute lesson with the children all sitting around one table. The teacher used songs to have the children identify and name colors in the room and give them directions to sit down, stand up, open the door, shut the door and move a chair. The children then learned a new color, azul, and colored a handout with blue crayons and markers. The handout had pictures of birds, water, jeans and berries.

After the Spanish teacher left, the children worked in two groups to paint a potato print turkey. The children dipped the cut potato into brown paint and then sponge painted feathers of red, yellow and orange. The aide worked with one group of children at one table and the teacher worked with another group.

For playtime, the teacher assigned three children to paint at the easel and three children were to work at the computer. At the computer center, the adult set a timer for 10 minutes and the child worked on a commercial program to identify letters. The other children chose activities and many played in the housekeeping area or with a small doll house with dolls and furniture. Several boys played make-believe super heroes, hiding under tables and behind furniture to avoid capture. Seasonal puzzles made by the teacher or the aide were on a table. These were paper turkeys and the children matched feathers according to colors or shapes. The children moved freely from one activity to another. At a signal from the teacher, all the children helped to clean up the toys and supplies that were used during the playtime.

The principal brought the milk to the classroom and the children got snacks from their book bags. Snacks included chips, cookies, candy, corn puffs, a peanut butter sandwich and a

box of raisins. One child ate four different items and some brought a fruit juice drink instead of purchasing the milk. After snack, the children moved to the rug area for another instruction time.

The teacher told a story about Sally Squirrel, reinforcing the letter of the day, S. Paper cutouts of bread, ham and cheese had pictures of objects on them. The teacher helped the children create a sandwich with only ham and cheese slices with objects beginning with the letter S. The children then moved to the two tables and traced the letter S using several different colors under the teacher's direction. The teacher and the aide then had the children trace an S with glue on a Mr. S handout. The children then sprinkled sand on the S. Mr. S is part of the Letter People Series for teaching the letters of the alphabet. The teacher commented that she provides instruction in one letter each week.

The end of the day was used to read a story about turkeys and to review a chart with all the students' names on them. The teacher and the children pointed out names that began with the letter S and which names had an S within the name. As each child identified an S, they were sent to the lockers and mailboxes to get coats, book bags and papers to go home. The children waited sitting at the tables as each parent arrived to pick up his or her child. Parents signed out their child on a form outside the classroom.

3.4.2 Summary

Overall, the practices of this pre-kindergarten were to help children learn their letters, numbers, colors, shapes and other cognitive readiness concepts. Children received instruction in the correct formation of the letters and practiced writing the letters throughout the week long attention to the one letter. The curriculum and instruction demonstrates the belief that learning the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet prepares children for school. Worksheets and

paper and pencil activities are used to practice and assess the letters. The playtime was structured and children chose activities with the exception of painting and computer time for letter recognition activities.

3.4.3 Concerns

What were the concerns of administrators, teachers, and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

3.4.3.1 Administrator

The principal's concern is that children in the area come to school earlier.

Well our concern is, we've always had this theory that the sooner we get them here, the better it would be, especially in our area. Because, as I told you, we are 45% economically disadvantaged (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

This reflects her opinion that public education can provide the tools necessary to overcome poverty.

The grant funding does not provide transportation; so many families are not able to take advantage of the pre-kindergarten. The principal remarked, "We don't have transportation and I think that's a big problem. I think we would probably get more students if we had transportation" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Physical space in the building was a problem during implementation. The art and music programs were relocated to a modular outside the school building. The principal commented,

That's another thing we could have is maybe some more space, which we don't have right now. What we did was we gave her the largest room in the building. We used to use that for art and music. We gave her that room and then we purchased a modular for the art and music. (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

3.4.3.2 Teacher

The teacher previously taught kindergarten for five years and her concern was her expectations for four-year-olds.

So I was moving down. I was really nervous. I thought, Oh my goodness, I don't know what to expect from four-year olds. I know what to expect from a five year old. But what do I expect from a four-year-old? (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

She was initially concerned about the location of the classroom when the discussions were being held about the fire hall, the church and a modular. She told the administrators,

I'm just petrified, not that something's going to come and you know, break in, when I'm there. I'm afraid if something happens to one of these children, that for me or whoever's an aide, to get across the street, or the nurse get across the street, something really horribly could go wrong with this child and then it's on my shoulders and I don't want that. (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

3.4.3.3 Parent

The father reported that he didn't see any problems or concerns and said, "I think they're doing a good job, actually" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The teacher reported that parents were concerned that the letters were being taught out of order. Parents completed an end of year survey and "questioned why the alphabet was taught out of order. 'Why are you teaching my child the alphabet out of order when they sing an ABC song?'" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The teacher also indicated that transportation was an issue with the parents. The community supported the program and she explained,

They [parents] were very positive about it starting. Last year, a lot would call and a lot of them were excited about it and then some couldn't because of the whole transportation issue. So they were disappointed in that fact because they wanted to send their kids, but couldn't because they heard it was going to be a good program and it was new and they wanted to be a part of a new program (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Some parents, according to the principal, wanted more parental involvement in the Pre-K program. She explained,

Somebody did mention they thought we should have more programs which kind of surprised me because we had, we not only had our orientation for them to come in, everyday they can come in if they have a question. They even walk in the room if there's anything they need to ask the teacher. At Christmas time, she had a little program. We had Grandparents Week where they were allowed, they could come in. We had Reading Week. They could come in. Anytime it's their birthday, they could come in. I think we had quite a bit of parental involvement if you wanted to be a part of it (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

3.4.4 Capacity Building Strategies

What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

3.4.4.1 Knowledge and skills

The principal is from the area, taught in the school and has been principal for 10 years. She said, "probably a majority of the board members, I've had their children. So they like me anyway. We have an excellent school board" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). She

definitely wanted that Pre-K because I came from a first grade background. I saw how much the kindergarten program had helped and we've had that since 1991. A full day (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

She had knowledge of the district and the needs of the community. "I was trying to make it an employee daycare too because we had a lot of young teachers. That didn't work out but hopefully that will be." (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The district has provided a summer school program for three and four year olds for four years. "We saw how successful that was and my superintendent and I both said, 'We really need a preschool'" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). She researched other preschools in the

area, consulted with the intermediate unit early childhood specialist and organized a group of teachers to visit other preschools in the area. They visited other preschools in the area and "we met and came up with an action plan on what we wanted to do, where we wanted to go, what activities we planned on doing" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). She continues to research early childhood topics. "I'm really big on getting on the Internet and finding out new things. I try to give her [the teacher] as much information as possible." (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The teacher has a degree in elementary and early childhood education. She taught kindergarten for five years and was a member of the group that observed other preschools and formulated the action plan for establishing the pre-kindergarten. She attended a conference with the librarian on early years' literature. She met with kindergarten teachers for 40 minutes during an in-service day and participated in the district in-service day. She reported that the district's professional development did not have anything specific to early childhood.

Professional development in the district is coordinated by the principal and is delivered in a variety of ways. The principal explained,

Any one of our teachers can go to any workshop they want. Anything that they see that may help them, anything with strategies, reading, any of that. They are able to attend any of them (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Act 80 days are designed to meet district needs. The principal explained, "We've had numerous workshops on all kinds of things, technology, behavioral strategies, working with difficult parents, anything like that. Everybody does those on the Act 80 days" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

There was also an early childhood workshop last year [teacher] went to. But any kind of staff development, through PATTAN or any of the early childhood programs, they're free to go to (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

After teachers attend a conference or workshop, they lead a Teachers Academy. The academy is

our teachers teaching. If they've gone to a workshop or anything that they feel might be beneficial to our teachers. So now she's going to be presenting a two-day workshop and it's right at our school. We have it right after school from 4-6:30 and about 5:00 we provide a dinner to the teachers. And we even open it up to our substitutes, any of the aides that may want to come and then they can earn Act 48 hours. (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Parents had been part of focus groups to create the district strategic plan.

When we did our strategic plan, we did a lot with focus groups. So there was a lot of parents, that was one of their top priorities too. When I brought up anything about preschool (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The principal also met with parents prior to enrollment of children in pre-kindergarten and

. . . more or less, did an orientation with them. Provided them with a manual, a little handout, what to expect, even some activities that they could do with their children, like reading to them or having their child help them, read with them and that kind of thing (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

3.4.4.2 Collaborative culture

The communication between the adults was positive but dealt with classroom management issues. The principal and the teacher shared resources about instructional strategies. The principal described this, "I'm really big on getting on the Internet and finding out new things. I try to give her as much information as possible" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). The teacher reported, "[Principal] is constantly on the Internet, putting things in my mailbox. Look at this cute idea from this website" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

There was evidence of a team approach to studying a problem. The district used community focus groups for the formulation of the strategic plan. The idea of a preschool had been in the strategic plan for several years. "We had this in our strategic plan as far as the Pre-K, which has been in our strategic plan probably for the last 10 or 12 years." (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005). A group of teachers was also formed to visit other preschools.

"They came back and gave me the information. We met and came up with an action plan on what we wanted to do, where we wanted to go, what activities we planned on doing" (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005). Several teachers were involved in the observation, discussions and decision-making about the pre-kindergarten. The participation of other teachers increases their knowledge base and the support of other staff for the new program.

3.4.4.3 Resource allocation

The Accountability Block Grant for School 3 is used to fund pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten. The pre-kindergarten money, \$40,150, is approximately one third of the total money and is used for the teacher's salary. The other two thirds of the grant, \$84,425, funds two full-day kindergarten teachers' salaries. During the first year of the grant, some grant money was used to purchase furniture and supplies, but for the second year of implementation, all the grant money is used for salaries. "Anything I purchase from now on, which I'm able to purchase anything I really want, it's district funds. We have excellent financial support, excellent." (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Transportation is not provided and is an issue with the principal and the parents. "We don't have transportation and I think that's a big problem. I think we would probably get more students if we had transportation" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). The district also cut one aide from the program. The classroom has one teacher and one aide for the classes of 14 and 13 children. The ratio is still one adult for seven children and is within the guidelines for the grant application.

The pre-kindergarten uses several different commercial curriculum materials. The principal said,

Two years ago we purchased Harcourt Trophies, the reading series. And they have the one for Pre-K so we did purchase that. We use the Scott Foresman math series. And they even have a Scott Foresman, I think it's Scott Foresman, science program too which they use (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The teacher reported,

We have the actual curriculum, the reading series and math series is all Harcourt. I use a lot of Mailbox and Preschool Mailbox magazines. The school gets a subscription to those. So I get that magazine here every month (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

She also uses a book with extender activities for all the alphabet letters, explaining,

That's where I get all the little alphabet letter puppets and that little sandwich game we played today came out of here. The reading series is real basic. This book just gives so many extra little activities and pictures and games and patterns. Whereas, the reading series would give you some different ideas, but then you have to find the patterns and resources. And it was just real basic. To me the reading series didn't seem like it was enough to fill up a whole week's worth to teach the letter (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The class sizes of 14 and 13 children are within the appropriate class size. The teacher and the aide create an appropriate teacher/student ratio. Planning time was built into the schedule with 30 minutes before the children arrived in the morning and afternoon. The teacher also prepared materials during the Spanish teacher's lesson. There was no evidence of special activities or events, such as field trips or classroom visitors.

3.4.5 Sustainability

How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

The principal of School 3 is not concerned about sustaining the pre-kindergarten with the grant money. The plans for a pre-kindergarten had been in their strategic plan for 10 or 12 years and "we probably would have started our Pre-K even if we didn't get the Accountability Block

Grant. We were ready" (Principal Personal interview, November 2, 2005). The superintendent and school board members were already in favor of a pre-kindergarten and ready to commit district funds to implementing a program. The principal commented, "I have had the backup of a superintendent. I have had the backup of a school board" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005). Parents were involved in formulating the strategic plan and participated in focus groups. The principal said, "That [preschool] was one of their top priorities too" (Personal interview, November 2, 2005).

Communicating with parents and board members about the pre-kindergarten, the children, and their successes also helps to make the program a part of the school experience. The principal explained, " I took pictures. I told them I need everyone of you to come and visit it. I have a lot of support. That, I think, is a major thing. I really have the support of my staff, of my superintendent, and the board. So I think that would sustain quite a bit of anything." (Principal personal interview, November 2, 2005).

One of the major concerns of this program is the lack of transportation. But the principal is working on partnering with a transportation service that provides busing for children in local daycares. A van would provide transportation from the daycares for a morning and an afternoon session. Working on problems and issues in order to make it easier for parents to take advantage of the program will help build enrollment and community support.

The teacher reported about a parental survey that was taken at the end of the first year,

I think this program would be very hard now to pull out of the district. Because, I think, I think the community is starting to realize what's expected of the kids each year, especially with all the tests, the PSSA tests (Teacher personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The parent commented about the opportunity for a preschool education at no cost.

I would say it's probably educationally better. I think it's nice because this is actually free. I have a friend at work that doesn't send his kid 'cause he can't afford it, so he teaches him at home (Parent personal interview, November 2, 2005).

The Accountability Block Grant funding for School 3 is divided between two programs, pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten. The Pre-K teacher's salary is the only expense paid for out of the grant this school year. During the first year, furniture, supplies and materials were purchased. They were ready for a preschool program and the money came along at the right time, an added bonus.

Physical space is an issue with sustainability. The district needed additional room for the program and decided to purchase a modular for the art and music program. The pros and cons of putting the Pre-K program in the modular were debated and the youngest students were housed within the building and the music and art programs were assigned to the modular. This identifies the new pre-kindergarten as an important program. The needs of the students were considered and got the "prime location".

3.5 PRESENT STATUS, SCHOOL#4

What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

School district #4 has four elementary schools and a middle school/high school building in rural Pennsylvania. The district educates 1374 students and employs 89 teachers. The administration consists of a superintendent, business manager, high school principal, middle school principal, elementary principal, and assistant elementary principal/ special education coordinator. The elementary schools and the middle school are identified as Title 1 schools for targeted assistance programs. All schools met the criteria in attendance, academic performance, test participation and graduation for Annual Yearly Progress on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment.

The Accountability Block grant was written by the elementary principal to improve the early childhood education in the district. According to the grant application, "We feel that the most success will be using the grant to improve our early childhood program." (Accountability Block Grant, 2005-2006, p. 2) The money was used to implement a pre-kindergarten for the 2004-05 school year and to establish full-day kindergarten in two elementary schools. For the second program year, 2005-2006, the district received \$44,797 to maintain the pre-kindergarten and \$170,183 to expand the full-day kindergarten from two buildings to all four elementary buildings.

The pre-kindergarten is a half-day program and operates a morning and an afternoon session. The children attend for 2.5 hours each day, five days per week. Enrollment, according to the grant, can be 30 children. The morning class for this school year is eight students and the afternoon session has seven children. Last year 10 children finished the program.

The teacher is certified in early childhood education and a classroom aide has medical training in respiratory therapy. The aide works for a half-day in the morning. In the afternoon sophomore students enrolled in a child development course plan activities and help in the pre-kindergarten classroom. The two high school teachers who teach the child development course supervise the secondary students.

The children in the program are Caucasian with the exception of one child who is from an African-American family. The minimum age of enrollment is four years old and the maximum age is five. The grant estimates that 67% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch. District figures for economically disadvantaged are about 35%. (<http://nces.ed.gov>) Priority is given to students high-risk as determined by a variety of screening methods. First consideration is given to those children who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Second, any student with an IEP will be considered for pre-kindergarten. Finally, the district will solicit recommendations from Head Start and the Early Intervention Program in IU#11. However, transportation is not provided, so many students eligible to attend cannot come to pre-kindergarten because parents are unable to bring them to school.

The pre-kindergarten classroom is located in the middle school/high school building. The district has offered a six-week preschool for several years through a child development course. Sophomores take this class and the students plan and conduct activities for the young children in the afternoon class. The middle/high school building was recently remodeled and furniture and equipment were already purchased for the preschool room. The room is large with an adjoining bathroom and access to a fenced in outdoor play area. The room connects to the Family and Consumer Sciences classroom. The pre-kindergarten teacher has painted several murals on the

walls of the room, including the planets, a volcano, dinosaurs, snakes, frogs and robots. He plans to paint Alice in Wonderland and more animals when money is available for more paint.

The room is furnished with small tables and chairs, a TV/VCR, computer, sink, stove and refrigerator, a housekeeping corner with child sized furniture, blocks, large wooden trucks, art supplies, games, toys, puzzles, musical instruments, a large play house, and individual student lockers. A large area rug is the gathering place in the room. A box and a wagon full of books are on the rug. The calendar is hand-made by the teacher and is posted on the white board behind the rug. Objects in the room are labeled with words printed from the computer. The white board runs the length of one wall and is hung at a height for middle and high school students.

3.5.1.1 Observation Reflection

The children were engaged in an activity when the researcher and the principal arrived in the classroom. The day's lesson was the letter F and children had made paper fish from tracing their foot and cutting it out. A paper clip was fastened to the fish. The children were fishing by sitting on a chair, which was placed on top of a table. They attempted to hook their fish with a magnet on a string tied to a yardstick. Children had several turns to fish for their fish.

The teacher and children then gathered on the rug for a lesson about colors and shapes. Each child followed a direction to pick a Connex of a particular color or shape. Connex are flexible building toys of different colors and shapes. Once all the children had picked five times and when they each counted their items to five, they made something from the Connex. As the children finished their creation, each child took a turn to ask each other what the object was, what it did and why they decided to make that. The teacher encouraged the children to listen and learn from each other. The teacher explained,

Kids learn more from their peers than they do from me anyway. 'Cause a kids says it, 'Oh, it must be true'. When kids teach kids they learn it much faster than if I do it." (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

The children put the Connex away by following instructions to return certain colors and shapes to the storage case.

The children then moved to a small table near the refrigerator and stove for snack time. The first item for snack was tuna, an opportunity for the children to taste fish, integrated with the letter of the day, F. Seven of the eight children tasted the tuna. The teacher encouraged all the children to try the tuna and told stories about how he learned to like the taste of tuna. Snacks were then distributed and were individual cereal packets. Some children ate the cereal dry and others chose to have milk put on their cereal. During the snack, the teacher played drum music and whale sounds on the computer for the children and they talked about whales and music. After snack, the teacher did a magic trick for the children, making his finger disappear. Several students thought they knew the magic, but the teacher did not reveal his secret. The next lesson was creating letters from play dough. Homemade play dough was distributed and the children made the letter F. One child did not like to get his hands dirty and he was provided with a letter puzzle to work. The teacher and the aide checked the formation of the capital letter F and then the children made animals and shapes from the play dough.

The next part of the day was the playtime. The children moved freely throughout the room, choosing to play with small toy animals in the house, playing musical instruments, doing somersaults and cartwheels on the rug, and playing with the large trucks. The aide chose an alphabet worm puzzle and two children worked with her on the floor to do the puzzle. The interview with the teacher was held at this time. The children came to him with questions and comments and he quickly and quietly talked to each child and resumed the interview.

"Teamwork" was the theme for clean up as the teacher reminded everyone that they are part of the preschool team and that everyone helps everyone. After cleanup the children returned to the rug area for a science lesson. The teacher announced that this was an anatomy lesson and used a model he called Anatomy Man. The children named several body parts on anatomy man and the teacher did a version of Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes titled Cheeks, Chins, Chests, and Bellies. The teacher asked the differences between Anatomy Man and a fish. The children talked about hair, no hair, tails, no tails and the teacher showed them lungs instead of gills.

The day ended with the story, *The Stinky Cheese Man*. The children gathered around the teacher on the rug and he read the book using character voices. He paused for children to finish the sentences of the predictable story, based on the Gingerbread Man. After the story was finished, four or five children took the book and retold the story while looking at the pictures. The other children got their coats, backpacks and paper fish and came to the rug. Those children then used the book to retell the story while the remaining children prepared to go home. The teacher and the aide walked the children to the entrance of the school for parent pickup.

3.5.1.2 Summary

Overall, the purpose of this pre-kindergarten is to help children gain confidence in themselves and their learning. Priority is given to students with economic hardship and identified learning difficulties. The pre-kindergarten helps those children gain confidence in order to learn and overcome obstacles to learning. Learning activities integrate all the senses with children listening, tasting, touching, smelling and seeing different experiences. Learning is student-centered and the children chose the story, the music played during snack time, and the activity they wanted to pursue during playtime. The teacher said,

Their confidence has picked up and they're not shy anymore. They start to explore. Their sense of self has come around. Their personalities and their sense of humor and their sense of wonder (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

Science and discovery learning, using lessons on fish, anatomy, singing and even the murals on the walls, are a strong presence in this pre-kindergarten.

3.5.2 Concerns

What are the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

3.5.2.1 Administrator

The initial concern of the principal was that the pre-kindergarten would not be able to service all of the children eligible to enroll in the program. He stated, "A concern that we had was how were we going to provide the services for everyone that would want, because we only had room for one classroom" (Personal interview, November 16, 2005). The district is in a rural section of Pennsylvania and the only early childhood education opportunities are one Head Start center and one private day care center.

However, the major obstacle turned out to be transportation. The principal went on to explain,

We really thought that there was going to be a big need and a lot of people would want to do that, to be involved. One of our problems that we had with starting the program is our transportation. There's not enough funding to do transportation. So parents have to bring the students to and from the program. What we're finding out is that without transportation, we're not having the big demand on the program that we thought we would. (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

In this very rural area of Pennsylvania, parents had a difficult time accessing the services because the transportation was not available. The location of the preschool in the high school may also be a factor because parents are not going to their "home school" but rather the larger middle school/high school building.

The principal also was concerned about the curriculum. He said,

Curriculum was hard for us because we didn't have a curriculum before we started, quite honestly. We knew what we wanted to do, but getting it down on paper was different (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

3.5.2.2 Teacher

The teacher expressed no concerns with the implementation of the program. He was worried about the lack of educational activities done at home for the children in the morning session. A survey was distributed and the responses indicated that most of the morning children watch TV and PlayStation for six or seven hours each day. The teacher explained,

Hopefully, the connections are being made in their brain, getting used to coming to school and retaining and applying the stuff they know. Making sense of things and all that (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

3.5.2.3 Parent

The school did not schedule a parent interview and no parent was willing to talk to the researcher at dismissal time.

3.5.3 Capacity Building Strategies

What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

3.5.3.1 Knowledge and skills

The principal has an early childhood and elementary degree and has experience as a preschool teacher. He indicated the bias against a male in early childhood education, starting his career as an aide and van driver for a community preschool program. When the teacher in that program left, he was offered the job. He felt comfortable recommending a male as the new pre-kindergarten teacher in the district, although it was a hard sell for the school board,

He's just excellent, really energetic, full of life. I had a hard time selling the board on a male. We have an all male board. And it was a hard time because they're like, 'Do you really want a male with these young kids? What if they have an accident? What's going to happen?' They do just what any other teacher would do. (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

The teacher holds an early childhood degree from a state university. This is his second year of teaching and his first year in the public school. He worked at a private school near Philadelphia for one year in an ungraded position, teaching students from preschool through second grade. His primary interest is pre-kindergarten and pre-school age children. The teacher said, "I like Pre-K. There's no stress. With first grade over my shoulder, I'd have to be like, sight words and reading. I like to do that anyway, but.... " (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

Professional development in the district is primarily focused on attendance at conferences and meetings. The principal described last year's early childhood professional development opportunities:

Our kindergarten and our Pre-K teacher, we're only allowed to send three people at one time now to any conference. But last year, because of starting the program, we did send the three out to the kindergarten conference, the state kindergarten conference. Juniata College is our local college in Huntingdon. Every year, they have an early childhood one-day event where the early childhood teachers can get together, share ideas and then they bring in people in the early childhood field to talk to them. So they attend that also. Other than that, that's about all we've had. It's hard to get out and get around (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

The teacher described the attendance at the early childhood conference,

Last year I went to a conference, a two-day conference down in Harrisburg. It was the national kindergarten teacher convention. That was, they hooked me up with that. They sent me down and let me do that. That was a really good experience. It was my first conference/convention. That was a really good time. A lot of it was refreshing methods that I was familiar with and a lot of it was new ideas and stuff that I got to bring back. That was really fun (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

He also mentioned that he planned on taking some classes at the Intermediate Unit when he had some free time. He is the junior high wrestling coach and "when the season is over I can use all the money I made coaching, put it toward taking classes" (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

Parent training was provided through five evening workshops to help parents "practice educational skills with their children" (Accountability Block Grant, 2005-2006, p. 2). These sessions were designed to help parents "use common items found in the home to create stimulating educational experiences for their children. We offer sessions in reading, math, science, social studies, and fine/gross motor skills" (Accountability Block Grant, 2005-2006, pp. 2-3).

3.5.3.2 Collaborative culture

The communication between the pre-kindergarten teacher and the aide was positive and many comments by both adults praised the children for knowledge, accomplishments and efforts.

While the aide was working with several children on a puzzle she encouraged them and clapped whenever they chose the right letter.

The principal and the teacher worked together to choose the curriculum and many materials for the classroom. "Me and Mr. [principal] both chose the curriculum that we use" (Personal interview, November 16, 2005). The teacher felt that the implementation and development of the Pre-K was a team effort and explained,

I knew that it was a brand new program so there'd still be rocks in the road that if I have any nervousness or anything that, any concerns, I know it would be fresh for everybody so I wouldn't be nervous bringing up things to Mr. [principal] or my supervisor. I know it would be their first year as well as mine. So it would be more of a group effort to get everything moved along smoothly. So I was excited for it. (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

The location of the pre-kindergarten classroom in the secondary building makes it extremely difficult for the teacher to collaborate with the other primary teachers. However, he did attend the conference with the kindergarten teachers. The other teachers in the middle and high school stop often,

I like being in the high school/middle school because all the other teacher as so helpful. If I ever run out of paint or anything, I can go over to the art room. They've all given me paint and stuff. All the other teachers are real helpful. They help me out. And I'm like the dumpster for the school. If they every have anything that they're throwing our, like paint or anything, they just come over and like, 'Can you use this for anything?' I can use it. You can always use extra supplies. They go through it a mile a minute, with the tearing and the cutting (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

3.5.3.3 Resource allocation

The Accountability Block Grant for School #4 is used to fund one pre-kindergarten and four full-day kindergartens. The pre-kindergarten money, \$44,797, is used to fund the salaries and benefits of the teacher and the aide, \$1000 for parent trainings and \$325 for classroom supplies. The remainder of the grant, \$170,183 is used to fund the salaries, benefits, supplies and

trainings for the four full-day kindergartens. Professional development is funded through Title II Part A federal programs money. During the first year of the grant, some money was used to fund a tutoring program. However, all funding for the current grant year is allocated for the two early childhood programs.

Transportation is not provided and has impacted the enrollment in pre-kindergarten. The principal explained,

There's not enough funding to do transportation. So parents have to bring the students to and from the program. What we're finding out is that without transportation, we're not having the big demand on the program that we thought we would (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

There are no current plans to provide transportation for the pre-kindergarten students. The district provides transportation for the full-day kindergarten students and those children ride the bus with the other elementary students to their local school within the district.

The principal and the teacher chose the curriculum after the pre-kindergarten program started.

Curriculum was hard for us because we didn't have a curriculum before we started, quite honestly. We knew what we wanted to do, but getting it down on paper was different. And then, the state came out with the Early Childhood standards, very early in draft form. So we adopted the draft as our curriculum. Now that they've revised it, we're going to adopt that then as our curriculum (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

Professional development opportunities are limited to attendance at conferences and meetings. There was no evidence of team meetings or blocks of planning time for the teacher alone or with other staff. Access to expertise is available through the intermediate unit and a nearby college. That expertise is limited to attendance at their conferences and meetings. The principal has expertise and experience in early childhood but has limited contact since the pre-kindergarten is housed in the high school building.

3.5.4 Sustainability

How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

The pre-kindergarten at School #4 is dependent on the grant money. The school board supported the program because there was no cost involved. According to the principal, "Since it [pre-kindergarten] wasn't going to cost them anything, it was OK" (Personal interview, November 16, 2005). However, the support for the program depends on the funding. The principal said,

I don't know how we would sustain it, to be quite honest with you. We've been very fortunate to get enough money at this point to run the program. Next year, as salaries go up, I can see where we're going to have to make up some differences unless, the money goes up for the Accountability Grant too (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

The teacher recognizes the dependency of his position on the grant money. He said,

I think if they pulled the grant, we would lose the program. So that's what my job's based on. If we lost the grant, they won't have money to pay me, so I won't have a job. So I don't know what they'll do then (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

Teachers with early childhood certification already employed by the district did not apply for the pre-kindergarten position. The principal explained that those teachers also recognized the uncertainty of the program,

We have a lot of teachers within that have the early childhood degree but they have not really expressed an interest in moving to that program. And a lot of it is they didn't know how long it would last. Because if the grant goes, will this position go also? (Personal interview, November 16, 2005).

In contrast, the full-day kindergarten program has expanded from two schools to all four elementary schools. The commitment to that early childhood program is reflected in the additional money and strong community support. The principal said, "I think the community is

very much supportive of the full-day kindergarten program. So I think that's not going to be a problem [to sustain]" (Personal interview, November 16, 2005). Transportation is also provided both to and from school for all kindergarten students.

3.6 PRESENT STATUS, SCHOOL #5

What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

School #5 is an elementary school located on the urban fringe of a mid size city in Pennsylvania. There are nine schools in the district, six elementary schools, a sixth grade school, a middle school and a senior high school. The district educates 5,369 students. School #5 is the smallest school in the district with 262 children enrolled in this K4 through fifth grade building. The district administration includes a superintendent, two assistant superintendents, director of pupil services, director of operations, business manager, nine principals, four assistant principals, and three associate principals. School #5 has 12 classroom teachers, 13 specialists and four aides. A full range of classes is provided in art, music, physical education, and library. The school is a Title 1 school and other services in the school include a before and after school program, tutoring, guidance counselor, nurse, psychologist, ESL teacher and three special education classrooms. All schools in the district have met the criteria in attendance, academic performance, test participation and graduation for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in both reading and math for the 2004-2005 school-year. However, the high school is identified as 'Making Progress' toward the goals of the PSSA.

The Accountability Block Grant was written by the assistant superintendent to fund four programs. A pre-kindergarten program will "meet the needs of four year old students from the neighborhoods of our lowest scoring elementary schools" (Accountability Block Grant, 2004-2005, p. 2). School #5 is located in the lowest socioeconomic area of the district and students from this neighborhood are assessed on early literacy skills and invited to participate in the pre-kindergarten. Approximately 30% of all students at school 5 qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Rates at the other schools range from 0% to 23%. The economically disadvantaged percentage for the entire district is about 8%. The grant also funds two full-day kindergarten classes, tutoring for fifth graders not mastering core competencies and a literacy coach for teachers of the primary grades (Accountability Block Grant, 2004-2005, p. 2).

The pre-kindergarten class operates in School #5 and is subcontracted through a local childcare provider. This agency also provides before and after school care and wrap-around kindergarten care for the school district. The teacher is employed by the local childcare agency but the two part-time aides are employees of the school district. One aide works three mornings and five afternoons and the second aide works two mornings. Seventeen children are enrolled in the program and approximately one fourth of those families qualify for free and reduced lunch. Three children are identified as English Language Learners and one child is from a migrant family. The class has one child who is Asian, two children from African-American families, three Latino children and 11 children who are Caucasian. Two children are eligible for special education services.

The schedule for the pre-kindergarten is a full day, five hours per day, five days per week for the full school year. Transportation is provided on a school van that makes two trips to pick

up and deliver the children. A breakfast or snack is provided to each child in the classroom and the children either purchase or bring a lunch.

The K-4 classroom is located near the elementary office and across the hall from the kindergarten classroom. The large room is fully equipped with small tables and chairs, student lockers, blocks, toys, games, books, art supplies, counters and storage cupboards. There is an attached bathroom, large closet and a kitchen area that is shared with the kindergarten classroom. The room is decorated with seasonal decorations, student work, and photographs and stories about visitors who have been in the classroom. Many of the materials and supplies are not commercial toys or supplies but either homemade materials or real-life objects. For example, the science center has a container with four or five different sets of goggles and gloves, the sand and water table holds leaves, and there are dowel rods of various diameters cut into different lengths and painted different colors. The blocks are cardboard boxes of different sizes covered in bright paper. The teacher said that using old boxes creates different sizes and these large boxes are not heavy, nor are they a danger to the children. The blocks are also much quieter when they fall.

3.6.1 Observation Reflection

The K4 day began for the students as they arrived on a van at two different times. While the first students waited for the next students to arrive, they can choose to eat breakfast or play in the block or housekeeping centers. The arrival time centers are chosen to promote social interaction and cooperation and creative play. The children have several choices for breakfast, toast with jelly or peanut butter, cold cereal, or oatmeal. The teacher, aide and children all work together at one table, preparing, eating and cleaning up.

Once all the children arrived and finished breakfast, a tape of violin music signals clean up for everyone. The children then joined the teacher on the rug for a family meeting. Greetings, songs, calendar, activities for the day, are part of the Family Meeting, emphasizing language and social interaction. The children then either go outside or to the gym for gross motor exercise. This is for 30 minutes and the aide and the children went outside while the teacher interview was held. The day was very chilly and many children did not have gloves or hats. So the aide brought them back in after about 20 minutes. The importance of physical movement was emphasized as the teacher joined the children in start/stop dancing. The children danced to music and then stopped when the music stopped. This lasted about 10 minutes and soon even the reluctant dancers were moving and getting warmed up. The teacher reminded the children to dress properly for tomorrow as they would still be going outside. She also asked the aide to remind her to gather up some more hats, gloves and extra coats for the children.

Project time was next and the children worked on an art project, centers, or small group instruction with the teacher. The art project was a cut out of their foot, which they covered with a type of art clay. The children then decorated their foot with beads, buttons, feathers, yarn, sequins, etc. The children had traced, cut out and decorated their own project. No pattern was used and the children began to recognize the differences in shapes and sizes of each other's foot. Each was very different and the variety of choices and textures in the decorative materials made each foot unique and recognizable.

The teacher worked with three different small groups of children. One group had three children and the other two groups had two children. She will work with the other half of the students during the afternoon project time in small groups also. They worked at a table with the large letters E, F, and G taped on them. Each child had a workbook and the teacher directed the

lesson about matching objects, letter recognition and object recognition. According to the teacher, the groups were leveled based on previous assessments. The other children worked with the aide writing their name or at a Bear center, a Discovery center, the listening center and the library center. Certain centers were closed and orange safety cones placed on the floor signaled that this center was closed for the day. The children had the choice to play with the blocks or the house during arrival time and these centers were closed during the project time. The centers that were open were play activities designed to promote literacy, numeracy, listening and fine motor development.

Clean-up time was initiated with music and singing. The children sang with the teacher and the aide as everyone put toys and materials away and joined the others at the Family Meeting Area. The children were then dismissed to wash hands, get lunch boxes and form a line for lunch. The teacher and the aide eat lunch with the children in the cafeteria. About half of the children had packed lunches from home and the others equally chose between the chicken nuggets and the hamburgers. Lunch is relaxed with the children sitting at two large round tables, with the aide at one table and the teacher at the other. Older siblings stop and visit the children, the teacher and the aide. After lunch the children clean up their trash and stop with the teacher and the aide at a hallway restroom.

Quiet time is about 15 minutes and the children selected books and got small pillows and rolled blankets from a large laundry basket. Each child found a spot in the room and several cluster around the teacher as she read several books quietly. The second aide arrived in the classroom and she put art supplies and papers away and placed school notices in the students' communication folders to go home. The teacher signaled to the children to put their blankets and books away and join her for a story for the whole group. After the story, the class usually has a

second Project Time. But today, one child is celebrating a birthday. The class quilt, made by the students and their families at the beginning of the year, was spread on a table. The birthday boy had the seat of honor, a birthday sash and crown. His mother, stepfather, sister and young nephew arrived with a cake and everyone joined in singing. Pictures were taken and everyone enjoyed a piece of cake and some juice or water.

The children then prepared to go home, getting book bags, papers, and coats. The first group left to ride the van home and the remaining children looked at books, colored or did puzzles at the tables.

3.6.1.1 Summary

This K4 program identifies that children learn through play. The focus of the pre-kindergarten is early literacy but the teacher incorporates music, art and science into the curriculum. Social and emotional development and fostering and celebrating family relationships are emphasized through strong family involvement and recognition of the different families and ethnicities in the class.

The teacher is very creative and models to the children that learning is fun. She dresses up as characters for Mother Nature, Mother Goose, and a mad scientist. The children sing in the morning, sing as they clean up, sing during movement, and sing at circle time. There are many enrichment activities provided for these children identified as at-risk. They go on field trips, have visitors to the classroom, and participate in a variety of art and music activities with different media.

The children have many different choices during the day. They choose what they want for breakfast, which center to play in at arrival, where to sit during Family Meeting, which songs to sing, what materials to decorate a project, which center to participate in during Project Time,

etc. These choices, however, are carefully designed by the teacher so that children have limited options yet accomplish the goal of the lesson or activity.

3.6.2 Concerns

What are the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

3.6.2.1 Administrator

The principal is new to the district and this is her first year as principal. She previously served as assistant elementary principal in another district. Several changes were made with the transportation, the scheduling and parent involvement from the first year. But those were done before she began her principalship. She answered,

I really haven't been able to focus on the K4. The reason I am able to do that is because of [teacher]. She is so wonderful with the kids. She's really put in all the effort to get the program established and going that I really haven't had to. I haven't had to deal with many problems. We had a couple issues with parents in terms of things like the busing. Really nothing that had to do with any of the programming issues (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

3.6.2.2 Teacher

The teacher is concerned with the student/teacher ratio. The maximum number of children in the program, according to the grant is 17 children. The adults include one teacher and two part-time aides. One aide works three full days and two half days and is a certified teacher. The other aide works two mornings. Even though the enrollment meets the grant guidelines, the teacher explained,

These are at-risk children. We have 17 children, one teacher, one assistant at all times. And truthfully, we could use another assistant. I do have a lot of parents help, though. That is part of our program. But you can't have all 17 doing this [writing names]. Even dividing it. You can't have groups of eight. That's not fair to them either. They need that more one on one, like in groups of four. It would be nice to have that one more teacher because then we could set up like three groups. They would get more out of it, I think. (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

Transportation was changed during the second year from the school bus to a van that makes two trips. This means that some children arrive at 8:00 a.m. and others at 8:30 a.m. At the end of the day, the first group of children leaves at 1:30 PM, followed by the second group at 2:00 p.m. The teacher is concerned about the length of the day for these young children and said,

This year we have some getting picked up at 7:30 in the morning because they don't want to use the buses because of safety issues. The buses are not really equipped for preschool children. So now we've gone to a van and the problem with the van is that we have a big fluctuation of time of groups coming. It makes a longer day. I just think that's a very early, long day for some of them (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The change in the transportation has created an instructional concern for the teacher. The staggered arrival of the children is used to provide breakfast and a play/socialization time. However, at the end of the day, instruction has to end before 1:30 p.m. so that the children are ready for the first van trip. The teacher explained,

I have to stop, literally, like at 1:30, the whole class teaching. I do continue activities at 1:30 with the other children. But last year we were able to have reflection of the day at the end, where we actually sum what we did for the day. Here, it's very hard to do that because you're really cutting into learning time because they're really leaving in the middle of that (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

3.6.2.3 Parent

Adjustment to a preschool experience and the length of the program were the concerns of a parent for her child who was in School #5. She said,

I was a little concerned that maybe [son] would be away from home, like a long period of time. He may, you know, get kind of lonesome. Because he had never been to a lengthy program such as this one (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

This family has an older daughter who rides the bus. The transportation change to the van was a concern because of how the bus schedule would impact the family. The parent explained,

I was kind of concerned because of my daughter's bus time and my son's van time, that they would kind of, you know, be side by side or maybe, if I were to bring [son] in the car, I would have to bring my daughter to school and she doesn't have to be here. It worked out wonderful between my two children. [Son] leaves at 7:30 a.m. and my daughter leaves at 8:30 a.m. (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

3.6.3 Capacity Building Strategies

What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

3.6.3.1 Knowledge and skills

The principal is new to the district and has not assumed an active role in the K4 program. She established contact with the teacher, the reading specialist and the guidance counselor and explained, "We met at the beginning of the year and as things come up, just check with each other, as needed, just keep in touch through email." (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The teacher has an early childhood degree and has worked with the childcare agency for eight years. She operated the before and after school program, taught kindergarten and this is her second year in the district K4 program.

The district provides regular parent meetings on issues of literacy, early childhood reading strategies, behavior management, and a discipline technique called 123 Magic. Home visits are scheduled three times per year and all families volunteer in some way for the K4. The teacher provides many ways for parents to become involved,

I do have lots of parents help, though. This is part of our program. The parents have to volunteer in this program. Many ways to volunteer. They have to spend, they have to come and spend a morning, generally it's the morning, whenever it's good for them. But some spend the whole day. Some spend part of the day (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

Other ways for parents to volunteer include writing letters to each student through the classroom post office and chaperoning field trips.

The teacher participates in professional development both through the school district and the childcare agency. She attends grade level meetings and

. . . early childhood developmental meetings that they've had in the school. Like all the younger teachers get together, the younger age, they get together and discuss what works. And the preschools in the area all get together, Early Learning Exchange, it's called. I have to do so many hours of classes a year, myself through [child care agency]. I'm required to do, I don't know what it is, 18 hours? (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

3.6.3.2 Collaborative culture

The district and the childcare agency have established a strong partnership to deliver pre-kindergarten and the before and after school care to the students in the school. The school provides the classroom space, the curriculum, transportation and aides for the program. The childcare agency employs the teacher.

The communication between the adults was positive and child-centered. The adults talked about and to the children in a positive way, emphasizing their strengths and accomplishments. The teacher and the morning aide both taught small groups of children and the atmosphere was

warm and relaxed. The afternoon aide, a certified teacher, spent her time cleaning, and organizing materials.

Professional development focus on early literacy was evident through the reading of books three times during the day, the teacher modeling reading during quiet time, language activities during Family Meeting, singing songs, classroom stories and books written, experience posters displayed with pictures and stories of field trips and classroom activities.

3.6.3.3 Resource allocation

The Accountability Block grant pre-kindergarten funding is used to contract with a childcare agency to provide professional and technical services for the program. The teacher explained, "So they are actually renting me. I am employed by [agency] and the school contracts with [agency] for this program." (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

Professional development for the K4 teacher is provided through the district reading specialist and the literacy coach in order to structure and develop an early literacy program for at-risk children. This is done through regular coaching sessions. The principal reported that these sessions are conducted early in the morning with the K4 teacher and kindergarten teachers.

The curriculum is district provided and the teacher uses Scott Foresman *Early Reading Intervention*, *Language for Learning* and the *Pebbles Soup* curriculums. The Scott Foresman curriculum is a literacy-based curriculum focusing on letter recognition and sounds. *Language for Learning* develops language by having children learn to follow directions and answer in complete sentences. The *Pebbles Soup* curriculum helps children learn about social, friendship, expression and self-confidence issues.

The teacher's concern about the large class size for children at-risk was addressed through the use of parent volunteers in the classroom. She encouraged parental involvement in a number

of ways and reduced the adult/child ratio by having parents help in the classroom a morning or a full day. A parent was present on the day of the observation and supervised centers and helped with small group instruction and Project Time.

3.6.4 Sustainability

How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

The success of the children is the key to sustainability, according to both the principal and the teacher. The principal identifies the success of the students as the key component in the sustainability of an initiative,

In terms of keeping the program going, I think the biggest impact is going to be to see what happens with the kids who are in the program, where they land in kindergarten and then first grade, just in terms of especially their literacy and that development because that's the focus of the program (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The teacher commented,

This past year, one of my guys from here qualified [for extended day kindergarten]. Probably more than half or two-thirds would have qualified. So it did make a difference. I think it's up to third grade is when they really look for things like this. So the next three years will tell how successful this is. (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The support of parents, teachers and the community is also important. The principal commented,

The K4 parents are really enthusiastic about it and I think we do a good job of providing some professional development for parents, if you can call it that, or parent training opportunities. I think this school, the teachers, have embraced the program. They are a part of the school. They come to all the assemblies and participate in everything (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The teacher thinks that early childhood programs in the schools provide a safe, loving place for children to begin their formal education. She explained her belief about the importance of pre-kindergarten in the school,

This is a safe place for them. It is a loving place for them to come, a very positive place. These children own this school. They're very proud that they come to this school, and that they are part of this school. The parents are thrilled that they are in this program already (Personal interview, November 17, 2005).

The parent hopes that the K4 will be sustained and she said,

it is a very beneficial program, especially for, not only my child, but other children as well. I think it would be a very, very sad thing if they wouldn't have the program. Because I think so many children that are in it benefit tremendously and get them prepared for kindergarten. (Personal interview, November 17, 2005)

The Accountability Block grant funding for the K4 in School #5 is shared with full-day kindergarten, tutoring and a literacy coach. However, by contracting the program to a childcare agency, the day-to-day operation of establishing and supervising a preschool program is managed by the outside community provider. This agency has offered before and after school care to children in the district for several years. By using a community provider, the district forms a partnership and yet has input into the identification of the students for the class, the curriculum, transportation, and hours of operation. The community provider handles the hiring, supervision, supplies, and professional development requirements of the teacher. Fortunately, for this school, the teacher is excellent with a strong early childhood background and understanding of what all children need in order to find success at school.

An early childhood team met regularly during the first year of the K4 and made several changes for the second year of the pre-kindergarten. The children travel to and from school on a van instead of the bus, the change in beginning and ending times, additional parental involvement, and the change from providing snack to breakfast. The program is under constant

scrutiny to do the little things that will make it better. By continuing to evaluate the program, use the assessments to design the instruction, more people are invested in and knowledgeable of the program. Initiatives that gain support, both through resources and community backing, are more likely to be sustained.

3.6.5 Unanticipated Events

What unanticipated events occurred during implementation and how were they addressed?

The change in administration at School #5 was an unanticipated event. The principal instrumental in implementing the K4 program moved to a central office position at a neighboring school. The new principal assumed her first solo administrative job in mid August. She admits that she has not been as involved in the pre-kindergarten as some of the other projects and initiatives in the school. However, she attributes the continuing success of the program to the leadership of the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and the expertise and experience of the teacher.

4.0 CHAPTER

4.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on capacity building strategies used in the implementation of pre-kindergarten programs in five public schools funded by the Accountability Block Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. By studying the struggles during the first two years of the programs and how schools used strategies to build capacity to sustain the pre-kindergartens, other schools may be better able to understand how to address implementation for sustainability. Grant money is temporary and in order to continue programs that add value to the education of students and the system, strategies to sustain these programs are necessary.

The researcher contacted 14 school districts that were awarded Accountability Block Grant money to implement pre-kindergarten for the 2004-2005 school year. Six schools agreed to participate in the study. One school was excluded because that program was a developmental kindergarten for five year olds who were identified as not ready for kindergarten. Site visits were arranged to gather the grant documents, observe the pre-kindergartens, and conduct interviews with the principal, teacher and a parent. The taped interviews were transcribed and the scripts were used for data analysis. The review of the grant application provided documentation of the goals, demographics of the population, and allocation of resources. The observations and interviews identified the concerns during implementation and what capacity building strategies were used to address those concerns.

4.1.1 Statement of the Problem

How did school personnel use strategies of capacity building to promote sustainability of pre-kindergarten in the early years of the Pennsylvania Accountability Block Grant?

4.1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?
2. What are the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?
3. What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?
4. How were the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?
5. What unanticipated events occurred during implementation and how were they addressed?

4.2 PRESENT STATUS

Research Question 1: What is the present status of the pre-kindergarten program as described in the grant materials and application?

4.2.1 Summary of Findings

The pre-kindergartens in this study were implemented in five schools across Pennsylvania. The districts are small in enrollment, serving between 800 and 1400 students. Only one district serves over 5,000 children. The programs were funded by Accountability Block Grant allocations ranging from \$40,000 to \$132,000. The two districts that received over \$100,000 used the grant money to fund salaries, benefits, supplies and transportation. The other districts used the grant to pay for salaries, benefits and supplies. Other funding sources were the district's general fund for salaries, benefits, transportation and professional development.

In this study, the pre-kindergartens were both universal and targeted programs. The goal of the universal programs was to serve all the four-year-old children in the community. Three of the districts enrolled all the pre-kindergarten students who registered for the program. All the schools that offered a universal program identified the lack of preschool opportunities for children in their rural area. The public school stepped in as the early childhood education provider for the children and families in the community. The other two schools implemented a targeted pre-kindergarten. The program identified a specific population and only enrolled the children who were eligible for the pre-kindergarten according to established criteria. The targeted populations were children who required special education services, children with language delays, and those identified as economically disadvantaged.

The pre-kindergartens in this study were both full-day and half-day programs. They were in session five days per week, except for one school with a four-day schedule. Class sizes are within the recommended guideline of 20 students, except for one program with 22 children. All the programs met the acceptable student/teacher ratio of 1:10 with the exception of the one site that has 22 children in the class. The teachers are all certified in early childhood education and have an aide to assist in the classroom.

The classrooms were fully equipped with more than adequate supplies and materials for fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, literacy, math and creative play. Two of the schools used a commercial curriculum, and the others used a variety of materials to support a standards-based curriculum. The pre-kindergartens used a centers-based approach, child-initiated activities, discovery and active learning, and play to help the children develop in all modalities.

Parental involvement includes home visits, volunteering in the classroom, attendance at trainings, meetings, programs, special events and celebrations. Older students, grandparent volunteers, college observers, older and younger siblings are welcomed in the classrooms. At one site with transportation provided, four parents stopped in the classroom to visit, ask a question, volunteer, or bring a birthday treat. However, the two schools that see parents every day for pick up and delivery had little parental interaction. In fact, neither of these schools arranged a parental interview as requested by the researcher.

4.2.2 Conclusions

The five pre-kindergartens in this study were part of an effort in all the districts to increase the early childhood educational opportunities in the community. The programs followed the grant application guidelines and descriptions. Funding for the pre-kindergartens was

clearly defined and provided adequate resources to implement an effective early childhood program. All the schools used a standards-based curriculum, aligned with the PDE Early Learning Standards. However, the different activities at the different schools reflected different beliefs in early learning and the purpose of pre-kindergarten.

Transportation is a key element of the pre-kindergartens. Both full-day programs provide transportation to and from school. Those two pre-kindergartens, plus one half-day program that provides transportation, have the largest number of children enrolled. The pre-kindergartens with the smallest classes do not provide transportation.

4.3 CONCERNS

Research Question 2: What were the concerns of administrators, teachers and parents during the early years of implementation of pre-kindergarten?

4.3.1 Summary of Findings

The administrators' concerns were the enrollment of all eligible four-year olds in the community, the curriculum needs of the pre-kindergarten and how to allocate financial and human resources so that the program is successful. All the teachers in this study were concerned about resources; physical space, location of the classroom, type and amount of supplies, equipment, number of children in the class and staffing. The type of curriculum to implement and whether it would be challenging and developmentally appropriate was another concern of the teachers. Would the program implement early childhood best practices or was the curriculum to be a K-6 curriculum for four-year-olds? Only one teacher had concerns that were

not related to resources. She questioned the support of the program in the community and wanted to make sure the pre-kindergarten had strong backing from the school board and administration. The same teacher had concerns about professional educational support. She wanted more training in early literacy and how pre-kindergarten instruction fit with the rest of the elementary curriculum.

The parents were concerned about the allocation of resources and how it impacted their child and family. Transportation was a major issue as to whether their child was ready to ride the bus, transportation to childcare, different bus schedules of other children in the family and the lack of transportation in two districts. The concerns about the type of curriculum reflected their desire to understand what type of early childhood education the district would offer. Would the focus be play or academic? Why is the alphabet taught out of order?

4.3.2 Conclusions

The concerns of administrators, parents and teachers focused on how to allocate financial and human resources so that pre-kindergarten was available and accessible to all children eligible for the program. Implementing a new program creates new management issues and all sites had concerns about how to address initial management issues. The sites that effectively addressed the management of resources then had concerns about community support for the pre-kindergarten and additional professional development. The personnel in those programs were planning for long-term implementation and sustainability.

4.4 CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGIES

Research Question 3: What capacity building strategies were used to address implementation concerns to promote sustainability of the pre-kindergarten program?

4.4.1 Summary of Findings

4.4.1.1 Knowledge and skills

Administrators, teachers and parents used knowledge, leadership and communication skills and strategies to educate the school board, and other faculty, parents and the community as to the necessity for the pre-kindergarten. Principals read literature and the research, studied the needs of the district and the community and convinced board members that investing in an early childhood program would be beneficial for each child, all children and the entire community. They identified a lack of preschool experiences in the area and used their knowledge and skills to implement and expand pre-kindergarten in the public school.

Three of the schools already offer full-day kindergarten, which indicates they have a knowledge foundation of and commitment to early childhood. The other two schools implemented full-day kindergarten through the grant at the same time as pre-kindergarten so they are trying to build an early childhood foundation. The administrators used leadership skills to recruit and hire teachers that were highly qualified and experienced in early childhood. A highly qualified, motivated and enthusiastic teacher engages the support of the parents and the community.

Another concern was the curriculum and what would be appropriate for pre-kindergarten. All the schools used the Early Learning Standards from PDE. Teachers and administrators studied appropriate curriculum, attended professional development opportunities and trainings,

visited other schools and programs, and used their knowledge and expertise to select appropriate curriculum. Although the Early Learning Standards were the foundation for all the pre-kindergartens in this study, the programs used many different vehicles to deliver instruction.

The schools provided training and education to parents to help support the program. All the sites held orientation meetings at spring registration or during the summer to familiarize parents with the purpose and goals of the pre-kindergarten. Three schools schedule regular home visits and two have parent meetings throughout the year. The parents at two schools were active in the implementation of the pre-kindergarten. One program encourages parent volunteers and another requires parents to volunteer in the pre-kindergarten.

4.4.1.2 Collaborative culture

Positive communication was observed at all five pre-kindergarten sites. The conversation was respectful and friendly between the adults, the children and the adults and the children. Professional conversations were heard in three of the pre-kindergartens. The teachers discussed student achievement, assessments and instructional strategies. At one site, the teacher and a parent volunteer talked about the activities and purposes of a student learning center. Professional development topics were observed in curriculum and instruction. The teachers had attended professional education sessions on Kid Writing, Everyday Math, and Language for Learning and these were all observed.

Table 4.1 below indicates the elements of collaborative culture that were observed at the five pre-kindergarten sites.

Table 4.1 Capacity Building Strategy #2--Collaborative Culture

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	SCHOOL 5
Positive Communication	X	X	X	X	X
Professional Conversation		X		X	X
Professional Development Topics Present in Curriculum and Instruction	X	X		X	X
Cooperative Planning		X			X
Team Problem Solving Approach	X	X	X		X

In this study, three schools used a team approach to solving problems and addressing implementation concerns. The sites that planned to enroll all children and have been successful in that goal used collaboration and communication to build support among all the stakeholders. One pre-kindergarten doubled the number of students from the first year to the second year, but this created very different transportation patterns. The principal, teacher, bus drivers, bus contractors, and others involved in the pre-kindergarten initiative studied the problem and established more efficient bus routes. Another school used a team of teachers, parents and community members to support the pre-kindergarten through the strategic planning process. However, the team at that site was only involved in the initial implementation and not in addressing concerns or any other continuing development.

The choice of curriculum was addressed at two schools through collaboration between the teacher and the administrator. Two sites also provided opportunities for the teacher or group of teachers to visit and observe other pre-kindergartens in the area. The principals were involved in the professional development and the teams that addressed early childhood concerns.

4.4.1.3 Resource allocation

All schools clearly defined how the grant money was to be spent. Four of the five schools in this study contributed some district money for the pre-kindergarten. The additional money was for a second teacher in one program and two districts funded the transportation of students. Those programs that did not put any grant money or district money to transportation had the smallest enrollments. The schools made a commitment to early childhood education and had the support to add their own money to expand the program.

Two pre-kindergartens in this study studied the curriculum choices for early childhood. They used knowledge and skills to study, collectively, what would fit with the children and the district. The district provided these two teachers and teams of professionals the time to study materials and visit other preschools. Access to expertise was available through intermediate units, colleges and universities, and other professional education session. Time for study and planning, grade level meetings and professional education were available through a four-day week, substitutes for half-day meetings and stipends for after school and summer trainings. Table 4.2 shows how the five pre-kindergartens allocated the available resources.

Table 4.2 Capacity Building Strategy #3 Resource Allocation

RESOURCE ALLOCATION	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	SCHOOL 5
Maximum Class Size of 20		X	X	X	X
Staff/Child Ratio 1:10		X	X	X	X
Blocks of Planning Time	X	X			X
Blocks of Professional Development Time		X			X
Appropriate Curricular Materials	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate and Appropriate Materials	X	X	X	X	X
Budget for Special Experiences (Field Trips, Visits, etc.)	X	X			X
Access to Expertise		X	X		X
Transportation	X	X			X

Two teachers were concerned about the staff/child ratio. In one pre-kindergarten, the ratio is 1:11, above the recommended staff/child ratio of 1:10. She has accepted the large class and indicated that the ratio may go as high as 1:13. The other teacher was concerned that the staff/child ratio in her classroom of 1:8 was too high for the targeted at-risk students who are enrolled. She met with the early childhood education team and they solved the problem by requiring parents to volunteer in the classroom. They used parents as a resource, reduced the ratio and garnered parental support for the program through participation.

Space was an issue at two sites. The first had problems because of lack of a classroom during initial implementation. The second school had an exceptionally large kindergarten classroom during the second year of the K4 and the kindergarten required an additional classroom. When space allocation became an issue, in both cases the K4 got the resource. Other programs, library, art and music had to accommodate the pre-kindergarten by sharing space or moving to a modular classroom. There is only so much space to allocate, and the new pre-

kindergarten was the priority. The location of one pre-kindergarten in the junior high/high school building limits collaboration and sustainability.

Time is a valuable resource and the schools provided the time for planning and professional development through a variety of means, a four day week, with Fridays for trainings and meetings, the cancellation of classes for home visits, and substitutes so that the teachers can participate in professional development activities and opportunities. They used a wide range of professionals for trainings, utilizing local colleges, Intermediate Units, neighboring schools, and on staff coaches, reading specialists, speech and language therapists and guidance counselors. University students, senior citizens, parents and older elementary students all volunteered in classrooms and help students and teachers with instruction and activities.

4.4.1.4 Conclusions

Implementation concerns were most effectively addressed when the three capacity building strategies were used in some combination with each other. The schools that could effectively implement, maintain and even expand the pre-kindergarten used the knowledge and skills they had to create a culture of collaboration and support. Solutions were seen as part of a long-term plan for sustainability and not just immediate solutions for the problem. The allocation of resources on early childhood programs as part of a larger plan indicates the district's commitment to long-term results for all children in the community. The Accountability Block Grant money helped those that were already committed to early childhood.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY

Research Question 4: How are the capacity building strategies connected to the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten initiative?

4.5.1 Summary of findings

4.5.1.1 Knowledge and skills

The administrators, teachers and parents used knowledge and skills to implement, address the concerns to sustain the pre-kindergartens. Knowledge and skills cannot reside in just one or two key people. The impact of pre-kindergarten, the benefits and the program must be shared with other teachers, parents, the board and the community. Educating others creates a collaborative culture that supports the pre-kindergarten as a vital part of the entire school system. The one district that did not educate the board about the pre-kindergarten implemented the program because it did not cost anything. That program will be difficult to sustain because the knowledge of the benefits of early childhood education was not distributed throughout the system. The decision was made to implement the program based on the minimal cost to the district. That school also did not have any teacher currently on staff apply for the position and both the teacher and the principal admitted that once the money is gone, the program would probably be too. The knowledge and commitment was not distributed throughout the system. The board, the parents, and other the staff must also have knowledge and skills about early childhood education, pre-kindergarten and how the program impacts the entire system for the program to be sustained.

Two districts reported that they had planned to implement a pre-kindergarten with district funding for the 2004-2005 school year. They had already acquired the knowledge and

established a commitment to early childhood education in their district. The structural change of adding a pre-kindergarten was aligned with the core beliefs of the school that public schools play a valuable role in early childhood education. Those schools were ready to step into the pre-kindergarten world. The Accountability Block Grant money was a wonderful timing bonus.

Once the pre-kindergartens were established, two schools continued to promote the pre-kindergarten to the school board, parents and the public. School board presentations, newspaper articles, parent programs, field trips, and parent volunteers kept the pre-kindergarten in the headlines and provided more information to all the stakeholders about the program. Teachers in two programs were also part of an early childhood team and used that opportunity to educate themselves and other school personnel about the pre-kindergarten and early childhood education.

4.5.1.2 Collaborative culture

The schools that placed a high emphasis on ongoing, intensive professional education through a variety of means are more likely to create a collaborative culture and the ability to implement and sustain an initiative. Continuous professional development in early childhood education and issues, leadership within the system and the change process all support a collaborative culture and help sustain the pre-kindergarten. Through effective and efficient professional development emphasizing early education and how the pre-kindergarten links with the entire K-12 system creates a broad base of knowledge and support among parents, board members and the community. Administrators, teachers and parents have the opportunity to study, reflect, assess and change programs and practices. They learn and practice professional conversation, cooperative planning and demonstrate the practices in their instruction and curriculum. They have a shared vision that pre-kindergarten is valuable to children, to the district and to the community. The collaborative culture through the professional education could

support a pre-kindergarten, a new math series, site-based management, or any other reform chosen by the system. It is the deep, continuous learning of everyone in the system that creates a collaborative culture that enables the system to sustain the pre-kindergarten.

Two schools indicated that for professional development teachers in the district could attend any conference of their choice. But deep learning and shared vision to sustain pre-kindergarten is not gained at one or more separate conferences a year. What are required are regular meetings with colleagues and peers to communicate the shared vision, reflect, assess and plan for curriculum and instruction for the pre-kindergarten. Two schools showed evidence of this through grade level meetings, teams of teachers meeting about the pre-kindergarten and a variety of opportunities for professional development in early childhood and early literacy. One school had several avenues for professional development, but the individual teachers determined subject matter, and the pre-kindergarten teacher did not request any specific early childhood education topics or sessions. Teachers individually selecting conferences and meetings enables the teacher to choose the priority for learning, not system wide learning. The schools that supported system wide learning have built a collaborative culture and the capacity to sustain the pre-kindergarten.

In three schools, the pre-kindergarten teachers expressed little interest in further education or collaborating with their peers. A collaborative culture has strong communication, both in quality and quantity, among all the stakeholders. The schools that have regular team meetings or grade level meetings have the opportunity to collaborate and support the pre-kindergarten. Frequent and varied communications with parents and board members can be through meetings, memos, visits, media releases, open houses, surveys and newsletters. The burden of the communication rests with the administrators and teachers. In the two schools that

provided board members and parents with frequent and a variety of communications, there is the strongest support for the pre-kindergarten. The right balance of knowledge and support are required for sustainability. By providing knowledge through notes, emails, newsletters, and presence in the classroom, the school leaders build the capacity of the parents, the board and the community to sustain the pre-kindergarten. The school that uses senior citizens as volunteers involves another population that often has little interest in the schools. Knowledge of the program through active participation creates support and again, builds more capacity for sustaining the pre-kindergarten. The sites that view parents as their partners in the education of their children improve the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. They encouraged or required volunteers in the classroom and encourage visits and contacts.

In three schools, the principal is the driving force and identified leader for the implementation and sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. The teachers in those programs are not strong advocates for the program and interacted little with parents, other staff and board members. They did not express the belief that they had an important role in the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. In the remaining two schools, the support was diffused throughout the system. The implementation and ability to build capacity is not identified with one or two key people. The distributed leadership of the pre-kindergarten and the ability and desire to collaborate will help sustain the pre-kindergarten in those schools that create and maintain a collaborative culture.

4.5.1.3 Resource allocation

Financial and human resources are the third capacity building strategy to promote sustainability. Resource allocation is more than just the money required to fund a program. However, it is often the limiting factor in how a system can allocate the resources of time, space,

materials and people. Individuals provide the knowledge and skills about programs and practices they value. A collaborative culture enables the entire system to collectively determine what they value. Not all school districts value early childhood education and would not allocate resources for a pre-kindergarten even if there were adequate resources.

The schools funded salaries, benefits, transportation, supplies, professional development and community activities. Two schools used grant money to fund transportation and one school used district funds to pay for busing. Transportation, particularly for at-risk children and families, is a key to sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. The district that made the conscious decision that all four-year-olds should attend their program, paid for the busing and succeeded in the second year of reaching almost all the available children in the area. The other two schools that funded the transportation through the grant enrolled the maximum number of students. Those programs both had active parental involvement and a strong collaborative culture in the district. The two schools that did not provide busing did not meet projected enrollment. Transportation is a key element to sustaining enrollment and garnering the support of the parents for the pre-kindergarten.

Four of the schools effectively used the space available for the pre-kindergarten. These programs were housed in large, fully equipped classrooms in elementary schools, close to the office, restrooms, cafeteria and entrances. School #4 located the pre-kindergarten in the junior/senior high school. The use of this space hinders the creation of a collaborative culture and linking the pre-kindergarten with the other early childhood programs. Planning for the location of a classroom and how a new program can connect with the rest of the system is important for sustaining the program.

Two elements of a pre-kindergarten did not have an impact on the sustainability of the program in this study. The question of full day vs. half day pre-kindergarten and universal vs. targeted programs has been an issue for policy makers at all levels. One half-day and the two full day programs in this study are likely to be sustained for different reasons. School #1 that started with a four-day week provides everything the child needs, breakfast, lunch, snack, rest mats, paint smocks and transportation. The goal is to serve all the children in the district and involve parents in their child's education. However, attendance at parent trainings was low and the school has decided to add the fifth day of instruction. The program will likely be sustained because the parents view the pre-kindergarten as free childcare. The other full day program targets at-risk students and also provides transportation. The academic success of the children, the enthusiasm of the teacher and a strong parent component combine to promote the sustainability of this pre-kindergarten.

The quality of the pre-kindergarten was not an issue for sustainability. The issue is whether the program, any program, is of value to the district. A poor quality program is just as likely to be sustained as a good program. The challenge is to ensure that programs that are likely to be sustained are those of high quality that reflect the goals and missions of the system.

4.5.1.4 Conclusions

The three capacity building strategies must work together to promote sustainability. The schools that effectively have and continue to seek knowledge and skills about early childhood education, consciously, purposefully and collectively create a climate and allocate appropriate and adequate resources are planning for the sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. The allocation of financial and human resources reflect the commitment to pre-kindergarten. The capacity is

built into the system through knowledge and skills, a collaborative culture and allocation of resources so that the system can adapt and sustain the program.

The schools that identified the value of pre-kindergarten to the community, including parents, board members and other staff, are more likely to sustain a program by increasing the knowledge, sharing that knowledge with others in the school and local community, showing them the educational, social and economic benefits of early childhood education in the public school. Making it accessible and popular, using knowledge, collaboration and resources will help sustain the pre-kindergarten.

Sustainability requires a concerted effort by all in the system to identify the need or purpose of a reform, like pre-kindergarten, then make conscious choices based on knowledge and need to ensure that the program has the resources it needs to succeed - including money, time, space, professional education, support.

School personnel understand the benefits of early childhood education are measured in the future as well as the present. It takes time to see improved academic, social and economic improvements for the children, the school, the district and the community. Those systems that plan for sustainability from the beginning are more likely to have programs that are sustained.

4.6 UNANTICIPATED EVENTS

Research Question 5: What unanticipated events occurred during implementation and how were they addressed?

There were no unanticipated events that interrupted the implementation of the five pre-kindergarten programs in such a way that they contributed to or obstructed the progress of the programs. One school has a new principal, but because of the leadership of an assistant superintendent, the teacher and a team of other early childhood professionals, the pre-kindergarten is able to continue successfully. If the leadership of a school changes, the culture of the school naturally changes. However, with a culture of collaboration for the implementation of the pre-kindergarten and the capacity built for the pre-kindergarten within the program, the pre-kindergarten is able to successfully continue.

The shortage of supplies was unanticipated in one program. However, the district bought additional materials for the program so there was no interruption to the implementation of the pre-kindergarten. Financial resources were limited, but the administration found another source to provide the supplies and materials that the program required. The second year of the grant, the district allocated general funds for supplies, based on the total from the first year. They learned to allocate their resources more effectively and had the money to provide the additional funds.

5.0 CHAPTER

5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The educational and economic value of early childhood education is well documented in the research. However, Pennsylvania lags far behind other states in offering pre-kindergarten to all children. The Accountability Block Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Education provided funding for those districts that chose to implement the program. Once those programs are implemented, how can educators build the capacity so that the programs will be sustained?

The results from this study indicate that those schools that used a combination of capacity building strategies were more likely to address concerns effectively and promote sustainability of the pre-kindergarten. The capacity building strategies used were knowledge and skills, a collaborative culture and appropriate allocation of resources. The knowledge of early childhood education and the goals and vision of the pre-kindergarten were distributed throughout the system. A collaborative culture and process was used to address concerns. Schools and systems that promote sustainability spread the knowledge to others through various publications and interactions and intense, ongoing, specific professional education about early childhood issues, the change process and leadership skills. The system made conscious decisions about how to allocate the financial and human resources so that the pre-kindergarten became part of the system.

There are several policy issues that arise from the findings of what capacity building strategies will promote the sustainability of pre-kindergarten.

5.1.1 Universal or Targeted Pre-Kindergarten

The results of this study indicated that both universal and a targeted pre-kindergarten are likely to be sustained. A universal pre-kindergarten enrolls all four-year-olds in the district. The cost of universal pre-kindergarten is high because more children are eligible. Targeted pre-kindergartens allocate resources to the most needy children and families, but then garner limited community support because of limited enrollment. Which is the way to go for school districts with limited funding? Offer pre-kindergarten to all children and gain strong community support so the program can be sustained? Or target the most at-risk children in the district and allocate resources to help them bridge the achievement gap? What about the children in the middle?

Policymakers continue to debate the issue of universal vs. targeted programs, but choosing the universal pre-kindergarten provides early learning opportunities to all and increases the likelihood that at-risk children will enroll. The targeted programs in this study had the smallest classes and failed to give opportunities to some children likely to need them. At-risk children often reflect families at-risk and those families are least likely to commit to preschool experiences, particularly if there is no transportation provided. There are also those families who cannot afford preschool experiences and are not eligible for targeted programs. Many of those children are not beginning school with some of the readiness skills that will help them succeed in school.

If both targeted and universal pre-kindergartens can be sustained, then districts should choose those that benefit the most children. Universal programs are more likely to be supported

by the community because they are available to all children and families. Universal programs cost more but have stronger public support, which enables more financial support.

5.1.2 Half Day Vs. Full Day

Both half-day and full day programs were likely to be sustained, according to the results from this study. The strategies to build the capacity had more of an effect on sustainability than whether it was a half day or full day program. The pre-kindergartens that were the most expensive were those that provided transportation, whether they were half day or full day programs. Districts will have to decide which type of program is best for their community and build the capacity to sustain whichever program they choose.

Most kindergarten programs began as half-day and have increased to full-day as the community supports the full-day program and financial resources become available. Pre-kindergartens could be offered as half-day and then the schools and the systems build the capacity and the support of the community to expand to full-day programs.

5.1.3 Public School or Community Provider

One of the pre-kindergartens in this study was contracted through a community provider. It is a high quality program that is part of a collaborative system and is likely to be sustained. Are other community providers successful in the public schools? Collaboration with other agencies to provide pre-kindergarten can be successful and effective to provide more children the opportunity to enroll in a pre-school.

5.1.4 Quality

The quality of the pre-kindergartens in this study was not investigated. Each program used the Early Learning Standards but activities were varied and focused on different experiences and strategies to help child learn and grow. How are high quality pre-kindergartens implemented and sustained? If a school can build the capacity to sustain a program, the resources should support a high quality program. How can we develop strategies to ensure the pre-kindergartens are of high quality? Some quality indicators are the education and training of the teacher, salary, access to professional development and expertise. Pre-kindergartens in this study were staffed by highly qualified teachers, were paid according to the school district salary schedule and have access to professional development and expertise. All policy makers should work to ensure that quality pre-kindergartens are offered in the public school and community setting.

5.1.5 Other Strategies to Build Capacity

This study looked at only three capacity building strategies to promote sustainability of pre-kindergarten. Further investigation of other elements of capacity building, how they can be measured, how they can be developed and how they can be applied could help administrators foster capacity building within the systems. Which capacity building strategies are essential for sustainability of certain programs? What types of professional development are most effective for sustaining which programs?

5.1.6 Other Reforms

Pre-kindergarten is one reform that Pennsylvania offers through the Accountability Block Grant program to improve student academic achievement. Other programs and reforms may require other strategies to build capacity to promote sustainability. What capacity building elements are required to sustain full-day kindergarten, literacy coaching, tutoring programs or other reforms adopted by the system? How do those elements interact to promote sustainability? Are the same elements necessary for all reforms or are there specific strategies to build capacity for certain programs?

5.1.7 Conclusion

The benefits of preschool education are clearly established in the research. The task for Pennsylvania educational leaders is to establish pre-kindergartens and promise that all children in Pennsylvania can reap the educational, social and economic benefits of pre-kindergarten. The schools that have implemented pre-kindergarten with the grant money have taken the first step by identifying the value of early childhood education and providing early learning experiences for the children in their community. The future challenge is to help all schools and systems build the capacity to implement and sustain pre-kindergarten programs for Pennsylvania's most valuable resource, our youngest students.

In order to fulfill the promise of pre-kindergarten for all children in Pennsylvania, policy makers at the state level should build the capacity for sustainability of public school pre-kindergartens through the Accountability Block Grant. While the grant money provides the impetus for school districts to initiate reforms, many schools do not have the resources or the

culture to build the capacity to sustain the pre-kindergarten. Policy makers can help schools sustain valuable programs by:

1. Funding universal pre-kindergartens through the basic education subsidies provided to school districts. Investments in early childhood education have shown evidence of academic, social and economic benefits to children, schools and communities. Consistent and stable funding through the education budget will enable all school districts to establish a state system for early childhood education.
2. Building a system for sustainability into the Accountability Block Grant structure. School districts that use the grant for pre-kindergarten must plan for sustainability over a number of years by providing district resources to replace the funding from the grants.
3. Increasing public knowledge of the benefits of pre-kindergarten for the child, the family, the school and the community. Parents, educators, business leaders and community members need to support increased funding for pre-kindergarten.

Pennsylvania's children, Pennsylvania's school and Pennsylvania as a state will benefit academically, socially, and economically from the results of a universal pre-kindergarten program. Policy makers must recognize the value of pre-kindergarten and adequately fund the program for all Pennsylvania's schools and children.

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