

Ready! Set! School! Project

Focus Group Report

Group L—Session 1: 2/23/06

Location: Murray Utah, 5192 S. Green Pine Dr.

Introduction:

We have assembled three different groups of parents of pre-school aged children to provide baseline data about what they currently do to help prepare their children for school. Recording the baseline, getting acquainted with the parents and having the parents in each group become acquainted with one another is the primary goal of Session One.

Each of the three groups will meet twice more as we enter into the pilot product testing phase of the research. The second session will introduce each group to the Ready! Set! Go! Products and sample their initial reactions. The third meeting, after the parents have taken home the materials and used them with their children for about a month, will focus on detailed comments from the groups of parents after testing the product.

Group L:

The “L” stands for low income, minority, English language learners. This is a governmental demographic classification. The 12 parent participants in this group need only meet one of those three criteria. Two of the participants meet all three qualifiers.

The ethnic makeup of the group included:

- Latino—2
- Native American—4
- Pacific Islander—1
- Caucasian—5

Session Overview:

Jack Wilbur conducted the session, which lasted approximately one hour. Each of the parents were asked to state their name, indicate how many children they have and their ages.

Then each parent was given an opportunity to talk about what they do to help prepare their child for kindergarten. Who are the care providers? What sort of things does the child do with them? What do you do with your child?

The last two questions were opened up for voluntary answers. Parents were asked how they know what they teach their pre-school children. Where do they get that information?

The final formal question was designed to find out what areas of their child's development they would like more information about.

What follows is an edited, but fairly detailed transcript of their answers to the major questions:

What do they do now?

Vena—10 children, range from 5-22 year. This last one is six years removed from our next youngest. The five year old is a boy.

It amazes me how this one, who is five is more advanced. I can't remember any of my kids being as smart as this one, I think because of the technology today. Also the older kids help raise this one. Everybody wants to help. He's more my daughters' son than mine. He can get away with so much and he is so smart. He's just a little more advanced than my other kids because he has so many more people to ask questions. They always want to show him things. He and the 10 year old are very close. He's not the baby anymore, so he wants to teach the younger one everything he learns. So I've had a lot of help. He our mailman. He know what everybody's name in the family looks like, so he takes their letters and throws them on all their beds. I think of gosh, how do you know all this. Power Rangers have taught him his colors. I don't allow him to watch a lot of TV, but he learns a lot from what he sees. We're just doing pretty much what everyone else is doing. The times have changed. He gets on the internet and starts clicking. I tell him he has to wait for his brother and he says 'but Mom it's Disney dot com.' The older kids have desk-topped it and he knows what the picture looks like. He loves getting on the computer. Internet has its pros and cons, but I think he's ready for kindergarten. The older kids went to preschool, but it was his choice. I'm enjoying him. Time goes by so fast.

James (Blanding)—6 children, 5-19

She just amazes me when I see her get on the computer. She has older brothers and sisters too who are helping her. I read to her. She goes to preschool and head start. They can't handle her at head start now. She knows all her numbers now.

Kristina--1 daughter, 4 years old.

I work part time so my daughter has been in a child care situation most of her life. I'm pretty laid back in my approach. My philosophy is make learning fun. She loves to read. My Mom's a retired school teacher, so if I didn't read to her every day I'd be in trouble. She instigates through questions. She's loved leap frog and leapster. She loves playdough. Because she is an only child, we've had to work on sharing. We have her get together with other children as much as possible. When her day care provider send her home with things for me to work on with her she is resistant. She thinks of my role as mom not teacher. I'm interested to try these different tools to see if she'll still be resistant if these tools are so great she'll be excited to work with me.

Misty C—3 children, a daughter who is 3, a boy, 5, boy, and a girl who is 6.

I take a pretty laid back approach too. We do a lot of stuff through play. We lots of learning toys, leap pads, letter magnets. Colors with bath toys. My almost 5 year old does go to preschool. They do a lot of math with him. At home we do counting. We count how many things there are or how long it takes to do things. And my younger daughter is just wanting to be as old as the other two. She wants to do everything the older two do. Older daughter reads to the younger two. The thing they do at home the most is play. Preschool, church, soccer, gymnastics.

Bonnie—4 children. 3 girls, 7,4, and 2, and a boy who is almost a year.

4-year-old watches a lot of PBS. My children have a computer, but the internet is not hooked up to it. They have CD-ROM games. We read a lot. My 7-year-old does like to “help teach” my 4-year-old. She recognizes the letters in her name and can write her name. She recognizes shapes, colors, etc. I don’t sit down at a specific time to learn.

Leslie—4 children, almost 9, almost 6, almost 4, all girls, and the boy is a year.

“She is in a pre-school. Not that I depend on a lot of that, but anything she learns at school we reiterate at home. Everybody’s in school. My oldest is in school all day. We have about an hour alone from the time my daughter is kindergarten goes and when my 3-year-old goes to preschool. We’ve been working on her name. She can do about half of her name right now. The biggest thing with her is her sisters have homework and have to read, so she wants to do homework and read. So I’m always trying to find stuff for her to do, and for her to color. If they are doing letters then let’s work on your name. We read all the time. Sometimes she brings me three books and sometimes she brings me 20, but we do as much as we can in that hour and a half while her sisters are both at school. She knows her numbers and I don’t know where she learned those. You sometimes just come home knowing stuff. ABCs, I got her one of those Leap Frog things for the fridge. She loves to do that. We spell her name on the fridge or we’ll spell “hi” or we can spell her name or her sister’s name. Our new thing is recognizing letters driving down the street on billboards. She’s always interested in what things say. My kindergartener is reading so she wants to read too. Colors, we started her colors a long time ago when she was maybe 18 months. She was really she at first, but she’s really come out of her shell. People think she’s really shy, but she won’t shut up at home. I also have her in a dance class. She has her preschool friends but she doesn’t go to dance with her preschool friends. She that it’s a whole new group of friends. To me that’s important that she’s not doing everything with the same group of friends. I just figure the more I offer them the more they’ll be able to pick what they want and know they don’t have to do everything with the same group all the time.

Manuel: 4 children 19 -4.

No substantive comments.

Misty Powers: 3 children, 9, 7 and 3.

She has two older brothers. That’s how she gets her socialization. The colors, she’s got a favorite and everything is that. She’s a little bit slow. She doesn’t talk too well. We have

flashcards at home we use. We'll sit down at the computer and play phonics games. We like to cook.

Rocio: 3 children, 9, 4, almost 1.

My daughter goes to a really good program—preschool. She learns a lot there. She learns from my older son to. We use flashcards. We use the internet. We found a really good site where you can print stuff for her and laminate it and put it on the fridge. When we are in a store or something she likes to see what kind of letter. She is very excited that we now have Leap it. She has a numbers class in preschool and she has two cubes at home with numbers and letter. She goes to dance classes and she goes to church. She has many friends. She likes to talk a lot.

Fanny: 3 years old and ten months.

(She answered in Spanish and Rocio translated)

She learns a lot at school. At home she has problems learning. She doesn't want to learn letters or colors at home. She says the colors reverse. She mixes them up. At school she does everything right, but at home it is troubles. She identified the numbers letters and colors from books. At home she like to read books, color.

Cara: 3 children, the youngest is almost five (she came in late, we didn't get the ages of the other two children)

My son is four, he'll be five in April. I have an older daughter who is nine. Some of it comes from my daughter. She'll come home and share with him. We purchase books at Wal-Mart. Tear out homework pages. We have a variety or art supplies. I've taken this semester off to help prepare him for kindergarten. I made him a bunch of papers for doing upper and lower case, and connecting the dots. He can write his name. He used to do it in all upper case, but now he can write it in upper and lower case. We're teaching him the beginning of reading, like "the" and other simple words. But he's a little shy. He tends to do a lot more work in the home environment. He participates in a lot of Pow Wows we have in our culture. So they have friends there. They have friends in the neighbor hood, and cousins and relatives, and my daughter's friends. He tends to tag a long with her a whole lot. We bought those little CD-ROMs you put in the computer. That's what he was doing today for a couple of hours. At night he (husband James, who also attended) will do some of the same things. Find the CD-ROMs in the back of the books. They are like skills to coloring, matching, fill in the blanks, puzzles.

Other Questions:

Using the Internet as a parent resource:

The only thing I've done is look at PBS.org and print off coloring pages. My wife's an early childhood provider. She brings a lot of resources home.

Do any of you use a formal family resource library like the one at the Utah Family Center?

Yes, we use the one here in the Granite District.

How about the Public Library?

We get play books. There is reading time and storytelling.

What other kinds of resources or subject matters do you need more information about?

It's hard to find educational materials that have upper and lower case letters. You can find flashcards and leap pads that have both upper and lower case letters.

I wish sometimes they'd have books that tell you what level they are on. When should she be able to read these. I have books, but should I start her on them.

Sometimes the kids get frustrated if I give her an activity that she can't do.

My five year old wants to be as good at art and drafts as my nine year old. Then the three year old wants to be as good as them too. They get frustrated when they can't do it. So I have to keep it separate or specifically do something for the littlest one.

It seems like we moved away from teaching phonics. I don't know why we moved away from phonics, but I'd like to see more of it.

My preschool teaches phonics. My preschooler spells everything phonetically.