Findings from Evaluations of the Implementation of Multnomah County’s Early Kindergarten Transition Program

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Overview

• EKT Program Background
• EKT Implementation Research
• EKT Next Steps for Research
EKT Program Background
• In Oregon, only 10% of 4-year olds attend a publicly-funded pre-k program

• The first day of kindergarten marks the first experience that most Oregon children have in a formal, classroom-based education setting

• The transition to kindergarten is stressful for children, parents, and teachers
The original idea behind EKT:

- What if kindergarten children could practice kindergarten before school starts?
- And, what if their parents were brought into the school community as true partners at the same time?

A pilot EKT program was first implemented in 2 schools in PPS in 2010
EKT Program Growth

• 2010: 2 schools in PPS
• 2011: 5 schools in PPS
• 2012: 12 schools in Multnomah County
• 2013: 21 schools in Multnomah County
• 2014: 32 schools in Multnomah County
EKT Program Description

• **2 Core Components:**
  - Family engagement activities
  - Class time for children in KG classrooms

• **2-3 weeks long**

• **August (usually)**

• **School-based**

• **Follow-through activities**

• **Targeted**
  - Children with no preschool experience
  - Schools with the greatest needs (test scores, ELL, no preschool)

• **Collaboration:**
  - SUN Service System, SUN Community School lead agencies, School district, schools, Multnomah County library
EKT Program Goals

• **Family Engagement Activities**
  - To develop positive **relationships** between parents and other parents, school staff, and community partners
  - To increase **parent involvement** in their children’s learning at home
  - To promote good **attendance** in kindergarten
  - To increase **parent comfort and confidence** in the school environment and navigating the school systems

• **Class Time for Children in KG classrooms**
  - To increase **children’s social and emotional readiness** for school
  - To increase **children’s skills to participate in a group**
  - To increase children’s **abilities to understand and follow classroom routines**
**EKT Program Logic Model**

1. **Early Kindergarten Transition Program**
   - **Child Readiness**
     - Positive Relationships with Teachers and School Staff
     - Positive Relationships with Classmates
     - Knowledge of Classroom and School Expectations and Routines
     - Early Receipt of Special Services
     - Positive Attitudes toward School

2. **Children and Parents Enter KG Ready**
   - **Classroom Context**
     - Emotionally-Supportive Interactions
     - Productive Use of Class Time
     - Few Behavior Management Problems

3. **Improved Learning Contexts during KG**
   - **Parent Readiness**
     - Positive Interactions with Teachers and School Staff
     - Positive Interactions with Other Parents
     - Knowledge of Ways to Support Learning and Positive Behavior at Home
     - Knowledge of School Culture and Expectations
     - Positive Attitudes toward School

4. **Improved Child Outcomes at the end of KG**
   - **Family Context**
     - Close Parent-Teacher Relationships
     - Close Parent-Parent Relationships
     - Support for Children’s Learning and Positive Behavior at Home
     - Parent Involvement in School
   - **Development of Social-Emotional Skills**
   - **Development of Academic Skills**
   - **Increased School Attendance**

**Child Activities**
EKT Implementation Research
EKT Implementation Studies

• Approach to this Research
  • Responsive
  • External
  • Objective
  • Student-led

• 2 Sets of Implementation Studies:
  • **Best Practices** for Implementing EKT
    • 2012, 2013, 2014
    • Goal: to build a set of recommended best practices for implementing EKT
  • **Implementation Fidelity**
    • 2014
    • Goals: to describe implementation across all 32 EKT sites, to identify challenges to implementation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>2012 Study</strong></th>
<th><strong>2013 Study</strong></th>
<th><strong>2014 Study</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of EKT sites</strong></td>
<td>6 of 12</td>
<td>7 of 21</td>
<td>All 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semi-structured observations</strong></td>
<td>20 days in KG 14 days in Parent meetings</td>
<td>19 days in KG 15 days in Parent meetings</td>
<td>75 days in KG 50 days in Parent meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Semi-structured interviews</strong></td>
<td>35 parents/guardians 5 SUN site coordinators 6 Parent Facilitators 6 KG Teachers</td>
<td>19 SUN Site coordinators, Parent educators, and KG Teachers</td>
<td>23 SUN Site coordinators 17 Parent Facilitators 6 KG Teachers</td>
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<td><strong>Surveys</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td><strong>Decide early</strong> that a school will have the EKT program</td>
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<td>Conduct <em>planning meetings</em> that involve district, school, lead agency and county staff to clarify roles and responsibilities and to coordinate program activities</td>
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<td>Identify and implement <em>recruitment strategies</em> that target children who had no prior preschool experiences</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Ensure adequate time for planning and orientation activities for sites, parent education facilitators, and KG teachers who are <strong>new to EKT</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recognize the critical role of <em>school secretaries</em> and include them in planning and orientation activities</td>
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</table>
# EKT Kindergarten Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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</table>
| 2012 | Implement child activities in KG classrooms that are well-organized and arranged **as they will be during the school year**  
Maintain **low student-to-adult ratios** in the KG classrooms to provide support with behavior issues and to translate to non-English speakers  
Allow KG teachers to determine and implement **activities that are most relevant** in each particular school |
| 2013 | Provide **additional staffing** in KG classrooms, especially during the first week of EKT, to help teachers with children’s language barriers and behavior challenges, and provide on-going support to all EKT staff during the implementation of EKT  
Offer opportunities for children to become acquainted with **all areas in the school and all school personnel** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EKT Parent Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Host an <strong>orientation meeting</strong> for families to clarify expectations for parents’ participation, complete paper work, and build trust and relationships with program administrators, implementers, and school staff. Provide information to parents about the comprehensive set of <strong>community and school resources</strong> that are available to children and families. Implement parent activities that utilize <strong>hands-on learning strategies</strong> and result in the <strong>creation of materials</strong> that parents can use to support children’s learning at home. Provide formal and informal opportunities for <strong>parent-parent engagement</strong> and relationship-building. Conduct meetings in <strong>spaces that are arranged</strong> to promote parent-parent interactions and collaborative activities. Provide opportunities for parents to <strong>observe their child</strong> in the kindergarten classroom. Provide <strong>high quality child care</strong> during parent meetings that is developmentally appropriate and connects children to the school environment in positive ways.</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Include <strong>parents</strong> who attended EKT during prior years as <strong>assistants</strong> in the KG classrooms and as facilitators/interpreters in the parent education meetings. Offer opportunities for parents to become acquainted with <strong>all areas in the school and all school personnel</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Implementation Fidelity defined:
  • The degree to which the program is implemented as it was intended by the program developers

• 4 dimensions of Implementation Fidelity:
  1. dosage: amount of program content delivered/received by participants
  2. participant responsiveness: engagement of the participants
  3. adherence: program components are delivered/used/received as prescribed
  4. quality: theory-based ideal in terms of processes and content
2014 Study of EKT Implementation Fidelity
Study Methods

• 32 EKT sites in Multnomah County
• Mixed-Methods approach
  • Observations of each site’s parent meetings
    • 1-2 days per site
    • 50 days total
    • Field notes and structured observation
  • Observations of each site’s kindergarten classroom
    • 2-3 days per classroom
    • 75 days total
    • Field notes and structured observation
• On-line survey
  • 23 SUN Site coordinators
  • 17 Parent Educators
  • 16 Kindergarten Teachers
  • Quantitative and qualitative responses
• Administrative records
  • Parent and children’s attendance
1. Parent attendance at Family Engagement Activities

2. Child attendance at Kindergarten class time
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Tone</strong></td>
<td>Parents become upset during the meeting</td>
<td>Parents are attentive but do not smile or laugh, may seem bored</td>
<td>Parents are at ease with each other and the parent educator, laugh and smile when appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent-parent interaction</strong></td>
<td>Parents mostly keep to themselves during breaks, only interacting with each other when required to. Parents may be disrespectful and cold to each other.</td>
<td>Some parents talk with each other during breaks and group activities, however these interactions may be brief. Parents are respectful of each other but may not seem friendly and warm.</td>
<td>Most parents talk extensively with each other during breaks and group activities; parents are open, friendly, warm and respectful with each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>note: if there is no opportunity for parent-parent interaction during your session, code as n/a</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attention</strong></td>
<td>Most parents lose interest by the end of long activities, or many parents are continually distracted throughout the entire class (e.g. distracted by childcare or falling asleep)</td>
<td>In general, parents are attentive, but many become distracted by the end of long activities, or some may be continually distracted through the entire class</td>
<td>Most parents maintain high levels of attentiveness (e.g. looking at instructor, taking notes, reading materials) for the duration of the class, and no parent is continually distracted throughout the entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>No parents volunteer when asked by parent educators; class discussions are almost totally silent. Many parents refuse to participate in class activities.</td>
<td>A few parents volunteer when asked, however most remain silent; many parents are hesitant to talk during class discussion times. Many parents are reluctant to participate in class activities but may warm up by the end of the activity.</td>
<td>Many parents readily volunteer when asked to by parent educators, many parents are willing to share during class discussion time. Parents participate in a majority of class activities (e.g. brainstorming, crafts, games)</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attention</strong></td>
<td>Children fidget and move about the carpet. Children look around the</td>
<td>Children follow the instruction with their gaze. Some children are</td>
<td>Children follow the instruction with their gaze and lean forward towards the teacher. When children become</td>
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<td>room or at peers and engage in inappropriate discussion with peers.</td>
<td>distracted. There is minimal inappropriate discussion with peers.</td>
<td>distracted, they are easily redirected.</td>
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<td>Children slouch and lean away from the teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Many children do not volunteer when the teacher asks.</td>
<td>Some children volunteer when the teacher asks.</td>
<td>Many children volunteer when the teacher asks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Some children express positive emotions. Several students seem bored,</td>
<td>Many children express positive emotions. A few students seem bored,</td>
<td>Most children express positive emotions (smiles, laughter when appropriate). Only one or two students seem upset</td>
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<td></td>
<td>nervous, or upset, and a few of these children are unable to regain</td>
<td>nervous, or upset; however, most of these students regain composure</td>
<td>(frowns, tears, nervousness).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>their composure.</td>
<td>quickly.</td>
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<td><strong>Routines</strong></td>
<td>Children call out thoughts and ideas. Children interrupt the teacher</td>
<td>Children call out thoughts and ideas when the teacher stops speaking.</td>
<td>Children raise their hands when thoughts come to them and wait to be</td>
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<td>and fail to raise their hands.</td>
<td>Children respond to reminders to raise their hands.</td>
<td>prompted by the teacher to respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
<td>While moving from one task to another, children are distracted by</td>
<td>Some children move slowly to the next task or are distracted by peers</td>
<td>Children are aware of what task is coming next. They move quickly,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>peers and irrelevant objects around the room. Children fixate on</td>
<td>or irrelevant objects around the room, but they are redirected with</td>
<td>quietly, and enthusiastically to the new activity. The children settle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the previous task and struggle (whine, complain, attempt to bargain)</td>
<td>little difficulty to the appropriate new activity. Some children may</td>
<td>down into next activity with minimal reminders.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>against moving onto next task. Children need reminders to remember</td>
<td>need reminders to remember what is coming next. Children settle down</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>what is coming next.</td>
<td>with a few reminders.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EKT Program</td>
<td>EKT Parent Activities</td>
<td>EKT Class time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority given to children with no preschool</td>
<td>Supporting learning at home</td>
<td>KG teacher is from same school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program orientation</td>
<td>Organizing for success</td>
<td>School tour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG teacher has support in the classroom</td>
<td>What happens in KG</td>
<td>Introduction to school staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast and lunch for children</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Literacy activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks or lunch for parents</td>
<td>School and community resources</td>
<td>Numeracy activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow up activities planned</td>
<td></td>
<td>Movement /songs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small motor activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free choice time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Tone</strong></td>
<td>Parent education staff is aloof and condescending; ignores some parents or treats parents rudely; doesn’t seem to be enjoying program</td>
<td>Parent education staff is kind but somewhat removed; may not seem comfortable interacting with all parents; may seem nervous</td>
<td>Parent education staff is relaxed and enthusiastic; in general, staff is warm towards parents and treats all parents with respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Translation</strong></td>
<td>No translation is provided for speakers of non-English languages; most materials are provided in English only</td>
<td>As far as you can tell, translators are available for some but not all non-English languages or translators are available but are not fluent; some materials are provided in English only</td>
<td>As far as you can tell, fluent translators are available for speakers of all non-English languages; all materials are available in all languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The materials for many activities are not prepared prior to class; transitions between activities are highly chaotic</td>
<td>Most materials are ready before class, but there are some that are not; transitions between activities are somewhat chaotic</td>
<td>All materials are prepared prior to class; transitions between activities are smooth and quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>Classroom activities are largely unrelated to parents' actual lives; educators are never able to be flexible in response to parents' interests. Information is presented abstractly without real-life illustrations.</td>
<td>Classroom activities are mostly directed towards things that parents will do in the future; educators are only sometimes able to be flexible in responding to parents' interests. Instructors sometimes connect activities to real life illustrations.</td>
<td>Classroom activities are matched to things that are useful for parents right now as well as in the future; educators are responsive to parents' interests and requests. Instructors use real life illustrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical setting</strong></td>
<td>Classroom is crowded; chairs and tables are not comfortable or are in short supply; parents cannot see or interact with each other and/or instructors and translators; room climate control and/or lighting are not working; classroom is subject to frequent interruptions from outside activities (e.g. construction, other summer classes, etc)</td>
<td>Classroom is reasonably comfortable; some parents may be left out of main group; some chairs and tables may be arranged in inefficient ways; some interruptions from outside activities may occur</td>
<td>Classroom is spacious and well arranged; parents have room to take notes and do projects; tables and chairs are adult-size and plentiful; room climate control and lighting are working well; parents can see and interact with all other participants, instructors, and translators; classroom is free of distractions from outside activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructor's familiarity with material</strong></td>
<td>Educator is unfamiliar with the instructional material, often referring to and reading directly from their notes or lesson plan. Educator is unable to answer caregivers' questions without referring to notes. New lessons are never connected to previous material.</td>
<td>Educator presents information articulately, occasionally looking at notes or lesson plan. Educator can occasionally address caregivers' questions thoroughly without referring to notes. New lessons are occasionally connected to previous material.</td>
<td>Educator presents material confidently without referring to notes or lesson plans. Educator elaborates on material and often connects new lessons to previous material.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. Debriefing session will be held in November to present results from 2014 Evaluation

2. Results will:
   - expand the list of best practices for implementing EKT
   - describe implementation fidelity across all 32 sites
   - identify the greatest barriers to implementing EKT
EKT Possible Next Steps for Research
Next Steps for Research

1. Update the EKT theory of change

2. Use the measure of implementation fidelity for EKT program improvement

3. Further develop and refine the program model and program resources

4. Test the impacts of EKT
Contributors to EKT Research

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