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An Examination of Predictive Factors Related to School Adjustment for Children with Disabilities Transitioning into Formal School Settings

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AN EXAMINATION OF PREDICTIVE FACTORS RELATED TO SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TRANSITIONING INTO FORMAL SCHOOL SETTINGS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Cynthia Coss Baughan
August 2012

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Data related to the adjustment to school of 86 children with disabilities who transitioned into formal school settings in the fall of 2011 were obtained through 31 parent surveys (Transition to School Parent Survey) and 64 teacher surveys (Transition to School Teacher Survey). Data from the subscales of these surveys were used to examine the predictive association between family preparation for the transition (as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement) and parent-rated child adjustment to school, and between receiving teacher support (as measured by teacher practices) and teacher-rated child adjustment to school. Findings from this study suggest that parent satisfaction, parent involvement (when considered in combination with parent satisfaction), and high-intensity teacher transition practices may be predictors of ratings of child adjustment to school. Furthermore, variables related to children, parents, and teachers also appear to affect the predictive associations between parent involvement, parent satisfaction, and teacher practices, and ratings of child adjustment to school.
DEDICATION

I would first like to dedicate this dissertation to my dad, Dr. H. Thomas Coss, who inspired me through his more than 40 years of service in higher education, allowed me to dream while I “taught” in the empty lecture room of the Science Building as a child, and developed a passion in me for special education through our summers together at Camp Spearhead. Thank you for making me feel like I could accomplish anything and always being willing to support me while I tried.

Second, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Torrey Baughan, who always encouraged me and not once uttered a complaint throughout this process—without your support, this dream may never have been realized; to my children, Ben, Andrew, and Marilyn, who tolerated this process with smiles and enthusiastically shared my successes; to my parents, Tom and Barbara Coss, who supported me through words and deeds, including hours of taxiing children around town; to my dearest friend, Jill St. John, who shared my frustrations and joys—thank you for your willingness to listen and knowing just what I needed to hear; and to the family and friends near and far who prayed for me and cheered me on.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the children I have been privileged to teach and their families. You have inspired me and enriched my life beyond description.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Dr. Vivian I. Correa. From the brainstorming phase to refining the finished product, she has “reigned me in” when necessary and energized me through thought-provoking discussions and her passion for young children with disabilities and their families. I could never fully express the depth of my appreciation for the mentor and friend I have gained. I must also express my gratitude for the support and expertise of my committee chair, Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis, who encouraged me to pursue a doctorate and pushed me toward excellence; and for the thoughtful questioning, guidance, and feedback provided by Doctors Sara M. Mackiewicz and Martie Thompson. I can truly say that I enjoyed this journey, and recognize that the encouraging, positive, and constructive encounters with the members of this committee were instrumental in creating an environment in which I was able to grow personally and professionally. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Dr. Laura L. McIntyre and Dr. Lucy R. Betts who provided access to their measures and allowed me to incorporate them into the surveys used in this study.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, approximately 735,000 three through five year old children (under Section 619, Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) and 350,000 five and six year old children (under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) were eligible to receive special education services (https://www.ideadata.org). These data suggest that a substantial number of young children with disabilities and their families must navigate the transition from early childhood special education preschool programs to formal school settings.

The transition to formal school has been identified as one of the most significant periods in the development of young children (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Kagan, 1999; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999). The level of success experienced by a child at the beginning of formal school has the potential to establish the child’s future academic course (Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). As children enter formal school and their academic and social adjustment is evaluated, they are often categorized and may even be grouped according to performance (Berlin, Dunning, & Dodge, 2011). The effects of an unsuccessful adjustment, therefore, are likely to linger throughout a child’s school career (Berlin et al., 2011; Geva et al., 2009).

The consensus that the transition to formal school is a critical period in the development of young children has lead to explorations of this phenomenon on an international scale (e.g., Chan, 2010; Dockett & Perry, 2004; Einarsson, Perry, &
Dockett, 2008; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992; Pianta et al., 1999). These investigations have focused on examining the transition experience, the transition practices being used with children and families, the outcomes of the transition process, and the risk factors associated with transitions. Several of these investigations include large-scale studies such as the National Transition Study (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992) and the Starting School Research Project (Dockett & Perry, 2001). Lloyd, Steinberg, and Wilhelm-Chaplin (1999) suggest three general conclusions from the available research related to the transition to formal school:

1. Transition to school and subsequent success is influenced by a complex set of variables.  
2. Early education can facilitate transition and reduce some of the untoward effects on other factors in children’s lives.  
3. The context of transition appears to have powerful, but incompletely understood, influences on transition (p.307).

These statements suggest the complexity of the transition to formal school and the need for further investigations to better understand how to help children and families successfully navigate this process. This need may be even more pronounced for children with disabilities who experience heightened vulnerability during this time (Daley, Munk, & Carlson, 2011; Kemp, 2003; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2010).

The period of transition to formal school for children with disabilities is of particular concern because of the increased risk of academic and social difficulties for these children during the initial adjustment to school. Children with disabilities are more likely to lack critical academic, behavioral, and social skills that promote success in the
formal school environment (Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; Geva et al., 2009; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2010). Furthermore, children with disabilities who experience difficult initial adjustment in general education classrooms are at risk for being removed from the general education environment and placed in more restrictive settings (Turnbull & Winton, 1983; Winton & Turnbull, 1981).

Administrators, practitioners, family members, researchers (e.g., National Early Childhood Transition Center), professional organizations (e.g., The Council for Exceptional Children Division for Early Childhood), and government agencies (e.g., Office of Special Education Programs) have voiced concerns about the transition experiences of young children with disabilities for more than 30 years (Rous, Meyers, & Stricklin, 2007). These concerns have led to the development of legal mandates (e.g., Part B of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; IDEA) regarding timelines and procedures for transition. Although transition policy in early childhood special education is often directed toward the transition from infant-toddler programs (Part C, IDEA) to preschool special education services (Section 619, Part B, IDEA), several components are applicable to the transition from preschool special education to formal school settings (Part B, IDEA). An extensive literature base specifically focused on the transition of children with disabilities and their families provides guidance and recommendations to facilitate transitions (Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, 1991; Rous, Meyers, & Stricklin, 2007; Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005).

The literature base regarding the transition to formal school for children with disabilities and their families describes multiple factors related to the transition process.
These factors include the perceptions of those involved in the transition process (e.g., Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, & Fowler, 1986; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, & Hughes, 2008; Prigg, 2002), practices that have been used with children and families (e.g., Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, & Holburn, 1990; Daley et al., 2011; Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; La Paro et al., 2000), and child and contextual factors associated with the adjustment to formal school (McIntyre, Blancher, & Baker, 2006; Reitveld, 2008; Troup & Malone, 2002).

Although there is a substantial literature related to the transition experience and recommended practices, little research that has empirically investigated the effect of these practices on the transition and adjustment of children with disabilities to the formal school setting is available. This dissertation adds to the literature on the transition of preschool children with disabilities from early childhood special education to formal school by examining factors that predict school adjustment. In the following sections, a rationale for studying the transition of preschool children with disabilities to formal school is discussed. This discussion is presented in five sections: (1) perspectives on the transition to formal school, (2) the significance of studying the transition to school of preschool children with disabilities, (3) the research questions guiding this study, (4) the definitions of relevant terms, and (5) the theoretical framework that supports this investigation.

**Perspectives on the Transition to Formal School**

A comprehensive view of the transition to formal school is complex and incorporates multiple orientations. In this section, the transition to formal school will be
considered from five different, yet often interwoven, perspectives: (1) transition from a child readiness perspective, (2) transition from a family-focused perspective, (3) transition from a ‘ready-schools’ perspective, (4) transition from an ecological perspective, and (5) transition from a process-oriented perspective.

**Transition from a Child Readiness Perspective**

Traditionally, the transition to formal school has focused on children; specifically, on the characteristics and readiness of children to meet the demands of the formal school environment (Ahtola et al., 2011). Huntinger (1981) described the transition to formal school as “strategies and procedures… planned and employed to ensure a smooth placement and subsequent adjustment of the child as he or she moves from one program into another” (p.8). The focus on preparing children to move smoothly into the next environment has resulted in an extensive literature describing the skills parents, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and special education teachers consider critical for a successful transition to formal school (e.g., Baughan & Correa, 2011; Blair, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2004; Duncan et al., 2007; Kemp & Carter, 2005; Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Ritchie, Howes, & Karoly, 2008; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; National Center on Education Statistics, 2000; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). The literature indicates successful transitions to formal school are more likely to occur when children have developed social competence (e.g., peer relationships and following rules) and functional “survival skills” (e.g., following directions, working independently, participating in groups, using a variety of materials) in addition to academic prerequisites (Berlin et al., 2011; Rice & O’Brien, 1990). In fact, several researchers suggest social
competence, such as the ability to get along with teachers and peers, is more critical than cognitive abilities to a successful transition (e.g., Rice & O’Brien, 1990).

For young children with disabilities, the focus on preparing children for the next environment is often considered an essential part of early childhood special education (ECSE) preschool programs (Fowler et al., 1991). These practices often consist of helping children develop essential prerequisite skills (e.g., Kemp & Carter, 2000), helping children develop familiarity with the next environment (Petriwskjy, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005), and planning for the differences the children will encounter when entering the next environment (Fowler, 1982; Johnson et al., 1986). Polloway (1987) described four areas on which professionals should focus to promote smooth transitions and successful adjustment for children with disabilities who transition into inclusive formal school settings: academic readiness, social skills, responding to different types of instruction, and responding to different types of educational environments. This preparation is manifested in the “survival skills” training that is often a component of preschool special education programs (Daley et al., 2011). Survival skills typically include classroom behaviors that are thought to support functional independence and learning in the formal classroom environment.

A strict child-focused perspective of transition appears to place the responsibility for a successful transition on the ability of the child to develop and generalize critical prerequisite skills. Consistent with this perspective, some researchers have examined the development and generalization of survival skills with children with disabilities (e.g., Bakkaloglu, 2008; Katims & Pierce, 1995; Kemp & Carter, 2000; Rule, Feichtel, &
Innocenti, 1990). Findings in the literature indicate the acquisition of critical survival skills may ease the transition to formal school for children with disabilities (Rule et al., 1990). Although a child’s abilities and repertoire of skills can affect the transition experience, the onus for an effective transition does not solely rest within the child. Families are also considered significant contributors to successful transitions to formal school.

**Transition from a Family-focused Perspective**

A family-focused perspective of transition recognizes that families experience the transition from preschool programs to formal school along with their children. Family-focused transition planning focuses on using practices that support the family as well as the child (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Feichtl, Innocenti, & Rule, 1987; Hains et al., 1988; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; Rice & O’Brien, 1990; Rous, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1994; Sainato & Lyon, 1989; Spiegel-McGill, Reed, & Konig, 1990). Furthermore, families are viewed as valuable contributors to the transition process (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler et al., 1991; Prigg, 2002; Repetto & Correa, 1996). Substantial literature supports family involvement in the transition process (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Diamond et al., 1988; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Pianta et al., 1999) and the development of family-school partnerships (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007). In fact, Schulting and colleagues (2005) suggest that a component of measuring the effectiveness of transition practices should be whether or not they effectively increase involvement from parents. Findings in the literature indicate that being involved and prepared for the transition to formal school is
important to many parents and contributes to the satisfaction of the parents with the transition experience (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990). Preparation for the transition to formal school, however, does not only require contributions from the children and parents; teachers and schools who will be receiving children from preschool also have a responsibility in this process.

**Transition from a ‘Ready Schools’ Perspective**

As the “ready schools” movement emerged, the focus of preparation for transition shifted from the readiness of individual children for school to the schools’ readiness to receive and support children entering formal school (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001) described ready schools as those that use personalized practices focused on supporting children and families, encouraging family involvement, and connecting relevant agencies during the transition to formal school. Love, Logue, Trudeau, and Thayer (1992) described these practices as ones that promote continuity between preschool and formal school settings and minimize disruptions to the development and progress of children. Findings in the literature indicate there is often a lack of continuity as children encounter dramatic differences in the environment, expectations, and instructional delivery between preschool and formal school (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Le Ager & Shapiro, 1995; McIntyre et al., 2010; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Communication between sending and receiving schools is critical to the success of ready schools, and could help promote continuity across these environments by assisting preschool teachers in knowing how to prepare the
child for the new environment while also assisting formal school teachers in knowing how to prepare the new environment for the child.

Some researchers have examined the level of communication that transpires between sending and receiving teachers (e.g., Chan, 2010) and between receiving teachers and parents (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007). Findings in the literature indicate preschool teachers (Chan, 2010) and parents (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007) are often frustrated with a lack of meaningful communication with the receiving teachers and the subsequent level of preparation for the transition. This lack of communication and meaningful interactions may hinder the preparation of children, families, and schools, potentially contributing to poor transition outcomes for children.

From an ecological perspective, the interactions among children, parents, and teachers are an important component of preparing for a successful transition. Furthermore, an ecological perspective of the transition to formal school recognizes the importance of not only the interactions of children, parents, and teachers, but also the additional multiple contributors who share the responsibility for supporting a successful transition.

**Transition from an Ecological Perspective**

Although interactions among children, parents, and teachers are likely to have a direct affect on the transition process, there are also indirect interactions that contribute to the transition process. The ecological perspective of transition describes the transition process as transactional, involving families, peers, teachers, schools, and the community (Chan, 2010). As children, families, schools, community agencies, and other relevant individuals (e.g., related service personnel) interact, changes occur on these different
levels, affecting subsequent interactions. Understanding the interacting network of contributors within which the transition is occurring is imperative to understanding the transition experience for each child (Ahtola et al., 2011). The ecological perspective recognizes a broader context for the transition to formal school, and places responsibility for a successful transition and adjustment to school on all members of the network (Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2008). This broader context involves multiple systems and multiple interactions across time; therefore, implementing transition practices across systems and engaging families on multiple levels requires more than a one-time event.

**Transition from a Process-oriented Perspective**

The transition to formal school is a continual process that encompasses the time before, during, and after the first day of formal school (Chan, 2010; Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005; Rous et al., 2007; Troup & Malone, 2002). Some recommendations in the literature present a timeline for transition that begins at least six months before the child is to enter the new setting (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989) and includes follow-up for at least two to three months after the child changes settings (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989). Others have extended the time frame for this process to include the 12 months prior until the end of the first year of formal school (Prigg, 2002). Lazzari and Kilgo (1989) assert this process requires professionals to recognize a view of transition that extends “beyond the simple physical transfer of children and records to increasing their sensitivity to the effect on children and families of changes in status, new professional personalities, novel expectations, and unfamiliar peer groups” (Deitz & Warkala, 1993, p. 2).
In summary, current research on the transition to formal school not only explores transition as a function of child readiness and school readiness, but also considers the experience of the transition process, such as adjustment to the new environment and the collaboration among individuals and groups that support the transition process (Berlin et al., 2011). The transition to school has been conceptualized as a process, rather than a specific point in time (Petriwskyj et al., 2005; Rous et al., 2007; Troup & Malone, 2002), that occurs on multiple levels and with multiple interacting systems. This process is intended to be a coordinated (IDEA, as cited in Troup & Malone, 2002) and collaborative effort (Repetto & Correa, 1996) among family members and different agencies; however, the transition to formal school is often a complex period that can be difficult for many children and families, particularly children with disabilities.

**Significance**

Difficult transitions to formal school are a cause for serious concern. Negative experiences during the initial entry into formal school can have immediate and long-lasting detrimental effects on the academic achievement and social progress of a child (Dockett & Perry, 2004, Schulting et al., 2005). Children who experience difficulties in achievement at the time of entering formal school are at an increased risk for future academic failure. Negative transition experiences can have detrimental effects on overall school adjustment and the development of positive attitudes toward school (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000; Love et al., 1992; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). These detrimental effects of a poor transition may be even more pronounced for children with disabilities who might be moved to more restrictive
placements because of adjustment difficulties (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). Furthermore, negative experiences during the transition to formal school can also have a detrimental effect on the level of parental involvement in school (Pianta & Cox, 1999, Schulting et al., 2005), compounding the risk for poor academic outcomes.

Successful transitions in which children quickly adjust to school, however, can promote immediate and long-term school success. Quickly adjusting to the formal school environment and routines can result in greater participation and enjoyment in school (Ladd & Price, 1987). Early adjustment, therefore, is critical to set the stage for future success (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999). In light of the weighty consequences of a poor adjustment to formal school, it is important to consider the challenges children and parents may face during the transition to formal school.

**Transition and the Child**

Although teachers participating in the *Starting School* research project reported that most children experienced a successful transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2004), teachers also indicated that one in five children (20%) had a “less than successful transition” (p.219) to formal school, particularly males, children from low socioeconomic areas, and children with disabilities (Dockett & Perry, 2004). The significant number of children experiencing difficulty during the transition to formal school (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000) may be partially attributable to the myriad changes that occur during the transition period.

Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000) describe the transition to formal school as “a qualitative shift along several dimensions” (p.148). During the transition, children
experience individual, interactive, and contextual changes (Dockett & Perry, 2004). For example, on the individual level, children acquire a role that requires a greater level of independence and responsibility than expected in preschool (Dockett & Perry, 2004). Children are expected to remain alert, quiet, and still; to participate in large group activities and instruction; and to complete work independently (Johnson et al., 1986; Nelson, 2004). On an interactive level, children experience changes in the relationships they had during preschool and begin to develop new relationships (Dockett & Perry, 2004) with different peers and adults. Moving from preschool to formal school typically involves an increase in class size (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) and student-teacher ratios, a factor that affects individual student-teacher relationships (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Children often enjoy high levels of support and individual attention in preschool, but then may encounter a less individualized, less supportive approach from formal school teachers (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). While experiencing this reduction in support, children are simultaneously confronted with different and more challenging expectations from teachers and peers than in preschool (McIntyre et al., 2010). On a contextual level, children must navigate changes in the environment (Dockett & Perry, 2004). Teaching practices in formal school tend to be more formal and didactic compared to the child-centered exploration of the preschool classroom (Haines, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989). Children are expected to quickly adjust to the new physical environment, routines, and responsibilities while also negotiating new social roles and relationships (Ladd & Price, 1987). “The combination of new challenges
and reduced social and emotional support can turn the transition to formal schooling into a demanding and stressful period” (Bart, Hajami, & Bar-Haim, 2007, p.598).

**Transition and the Family**

The changes experienced during the transition process are not only potentially stressful for young children, but can also be stressful for the family. Similar to the changes children experience, parents are also faced with challenges related to changes in roles, relationships, and environments. Families not only have to adjust to new routines, schedules, expectations, and participate in collaborative relationships with new professionals, they must also figure out how to appropriately support their child (McIntyre et al., 2010). Forming relationships with professionals in formal school is a significant challenge for many parents. Parents consistently report concerns related to the difference in the relationships with formal school professionals compared to those with preschool professionals (Hains, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988), as well as the type and frequency of contacts with the formal school. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (1999) found more frequent contact between home and school in preschool than in formal school. Additionally, the contacts that occurred in formal school tended to be more negative than those that occurred in preschool.

Although the transition process can be challenging for all parents, parents of children with disabilities report considerably more challenges and concerns (McIntyre et al., 2010) and greater anxiety related to the transition to formal school than parents of typically developing children (Daley et al., 2011). Many parents of children with disabilities experience a reaffirmation of their child’s disability as their child receives a
categorical label (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). Significantly more parents of children with disabilities also report being dissatisfied with services received during the transition than parents of typically developing children (Janus et al., 2008). Additionally, parents of children with disabilities who have participated in early intervention and preschool special education programs have often formed close personal relationships with professionals who have been present during the intimate period of initial diagnosis and acquisition of services. As these children transition from early childhood special education preschool programs to formal school, parents are often forced to leave providers with whom they have worked for years and formed trusting relationships.

**Transition and Children with Disabilities**

Just as parents of children with disabilities report greater concerns than parents of typically developing children during the transition to formal school (McIntyre et al., 2010), children with disabilities also face greater challenges than typically developing children during this process, and are considered especially vulnerable during this period of time (Daley et al., 2011; McIntyre et al., 2010). Children with disabilities who experience deficits in social and communication skills (Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010), academic and behavioral skills (McIntyre et al., 2010), and motor skills (Bart et al., 2007) experience heightened risk for a difficult adjustment (Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010). For example, McIntyre, Blancher, & Baker (2006) found that children with intellectual disabilities who had entered formal school settings were reported by parents and teachers to have more behavior problems and less positive relationships with their teachers.
Children with disabilities transitioning out of preschool special education programs can encounter unique challenges that compound the inherent stresses of the transition to school experienced by most children. For example children who have participated in preschool special education programs may have had limited time in preschool and may be experiencing instruction from a general education teacher and inclusion with typical peers for the first time (Daley et al., 2011). Additionally children from preschool special education programs may have difficulty generalizing skills and shifting from more individualized instruction to group instruction (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). This may be particularly profound for children who transition from self-contained family-centered programs into general education formal school classrooms.

In summary, the transition period can be a critical crossroad for young children entering formal school. A successful initial adjustment to formal school can establish a positive academic trajectory with long-term benefits. Young children with disabilities, however, enter school with an increased risk of academic and social difficulties. Many children with disabilities and their families often experience difficult transitions from preschool special education programs to formal school settings (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Rous et al., 2007). This move typically involves changes in setting, service providers, expectations and responsibilities, philosophy and models of service delivery, and policies and procedures. These changes can not only be stressful for the children, but can also be overwhelming to the parents. Identifying factors related to effective preparation and support for both children with disabilities and their families during this transition period, therefore, is critical to promoting early adjustment to formal school and
increasing the likelihood for success. Rosenkoetter and colleagues (2009) assert that researchers need to develop a base of research-based strategies that promote successful transitions to school for young children with disabilities and their families. This study addressed this need by examining factors that may be associated with successful adjustment to formal school for children with disabilities. The following section presents the specific research questions that were addressed in this study.

**Research Questions**

The central research question guiding this study is: What factors predict school adjustment for young children with disabilities who transition from early childhood special education (ECSE) preschool programs into formal school settings? Specifically, the researcher sought to address the following questions:

1) Does family preparation for transition, as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement, predict school adjustment?

2) Does teacher support, as measured by use of transition practices provided by receiving teachers, predict school adjustment?

**Definitions of Terms**

The key terms used in this study are defined below:

- **Early childhood special education** (ECSE): preschool special education services provided specifically for children with disabilities between the ages of 3-5 years.

- **Formal school:** This is the primary school setting. In the United States, formal school begins in kindergarten. Because the term kindergarten has
been used to describe a variety of different types of settings and services both in preschool and primary school, for the purpose of this paper, the term formal school will be used to describe the first year in primary school following preschool.

- **Sending teachers/agencies:** preschool teachers, preschool settings, related service personnel, and agencies with which the child is involved during the preschool period
- **Receiving teachers/agencies:** formal school teachers, formal school settings, related service personnel, and agencies with whom the child will be involved in the formal school setting
- **High-intensity practices:** transition practices used by sending and receiving teachers that are individualized and may require a considerable amount of time and effort (e.g., home visit, telephone call, face-to-face meeting)
- **Low-intensity practices:** transition practices used by sending and receiving teachers that involve a general level of contact, typically involve all children or families in the class, and may not require substantial time or effort (e.g., sending a letter in the mail, whole class or school orientation, sending written material home with the students)
- **School adjustment:** Consistent with the description of Birch and Ladd (1997), school adjustment refers to the combination of acceptable
academic school performance, a positive attitude toward school, and appropriate involvement in and engagement with the school environment.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks on which this research study is situated are the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) and the Early Childhood Transition Framework. Both of these theories are based on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 2005) that describes the interactions between an individual and the multiple levels of the environment in which the individual is operating (see a representation of Bronfenbrenner’s model in Figure 1.1). The interactions among these different levels can have a profound effect on the development and experiences of an individual. An ecological model is an appropriate framework to study the transition to formal school for children with disabilities because of the multiple interactions among children, families, schools, and community resources that occur during this process.
Figure 1.1. A Representation of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model. This model demonstrates the interacting systems that affect human experiences and development.

Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) describe the application of the bioecological theory to transition in their Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rous et al., 2007). This model not only acknowledges the dynamic and reciprocal interactions among the systems in which the transition occurs, but it also considers how the interactions and relationships that occur throughout the transition change over time (see the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition in Figure 1.2). To better understand the transition experience, it is important to view children within their network of interacting social contexts such as parents, teachers, and multidisciplinary professionals, and to consider how these contexts directly and indirectly influence the transition and subsequent adjustment to school.
Studying transition through an ecological perspective involves identifying the links that are created between the social contexts in the network. Creating links (i.e., relationships) can promote continuity for the child, potentially easing the transition between environments (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). According to Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), “these relationships either support or challenge children’s adjustment … and predict children’s subsequent relationships in school” (p.492). It is suggested that the means to promoting a successful transition from preschool to formal school for a child is to strengthen the relationships among those in the child’s network (Ahtola et al., 2011). The authors contend that these changing interactions and relationships should not only influence the transition, but should also be considered an outcome of the transition.
This concept broadens the measure of successful transitions to include child as well as family outcomes.

**The Early Childhood Transition Conceptual Framework**

The Early Childhood Transition Conceptual Framework (Rous et al., 2007) contains two levels and was specifically designed to depict the transition experience for children with disabilities and their families. Similar to the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), the first level of the Early Childhood Transition Framework reflects the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986, 2005; see model of the Early Childhood Transition Framework in Figure 1.3). Consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s model and the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition, the transition to formal school involves interactions and changes in the micro- (e.g., formal school teacher, new classmates) and mesosystems (e.g., parent-teacher relationships) of children and parents, and is influenced by these interactions and changes (Dogaru, Rosenkoetter, and Rous, 2009). Specifically, Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, and Jung (2007) consider the influence of levels of interacting “contextual factors” (p. 139): child factors, family factors, community factors, and state factors.
Figure 1.3. The Early Childhood Transition Framework: Contextual Factors that Impact the Transition Process. Figures from "A Critical Incident Study of the Transition Experience for Young Children with Disabilities: Recounts by Parents and Professionals, Technical Report #6," by C. Dogaru, S. Rosenkoetter, and B. Rous (2009) are included with permission of the National Early Childhood Transition Center, funded by US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award # H324V020003.

In the second level of the framework, Rous and colleagues (2007) include components from organizational theory (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005). Organizational theory is relevant to the study of transitions because transitions occur within and between organizations (Dogaru et al., 2009). In the Early Childhood Transition Conceptual Framework, the interacting organizations include state level agencies and local level agencies. These agencies interact with and affect each other, as well as children and families. Likewise, children and families interact with and affect the agencies (see diagram in Figure 1.4). This model depicts the factors that affect the transition process.
and the outcomes of the process (i.e., family and child preparation, family and child adjustment).

**Figure 1.4.** The Early Childhood Transition Framework: The Transition Process that describes the essential elements of transition. Figures from "A Critical Incident Study of the Transition Experience for Young Children with Disabilities: Recounts by Parents and Professionals, Technical Report #6," by C. Dogaru, S. Rosenkoetter, and B. Rous (2009) are included with permission of the National Early Childhood Transition Center, funded by US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award # H324V020003.

This study incorporates both the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) and the Early Childhood Transition Framework (Rous et al., 2007) by considering the interacting social and contextual factors (e.g., teacher support and family preparation) involved in the transition from ECSE preschool programs to formal school settings. This research study specifically focused on the outcomes component of the Early Childhood Transition Framework by considering the preparation of families for and the adjustment of the child to formal school.

**Conclusion**

A significant number of children with disabilities transition out of ECSE preschool services into formal school. Positive experiences during the initial period of adjustment to the new setting can have a profound effect on future school success (Schulting et al., 2005). Because children with disabilities are at an increased risk for
difficult transitions (Denkyria & Agbeke, 2010; Geva et al., 2009; McIntyre, et al., 2010), it is imperative to understand the complex nature of the transition process, and the interactions of contexts that can influence the transition experience and promote quick adjustment to the formal school setting. In the following chapter, a review of the literature related to the transition of preschool children to formal school is discussed. Because there is an extensive literature base on the transition to school, this review has been divided into four areas: (1) the transition experience of children, families, and teachers, (2) practices that support children and families during the transition, and (3) factors that can influence the adjustment to formal school.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The transition from preschool to formal school has been identified as a critical period for many young children. Because a successful transition and adjustment to school can increase the potential for continued long-term success in school, it is imperative for professionals to understand the transition process to effectively support children and families. This chapter provides a synthesis of the literature related to the transition of preschool children to formal school. Although the research questions guiding this study specifically focused on the transition of preschool children with disabilities out of ECSE preschool programs, it is necessary to examine the transition to formal school as a whole to better understand the context in which this phenomenon occurs. The literature base that describes the transition process and recommended practices for promoting successful transitions extends over the last 30 years. For the purpose of this review, the researcher conducted a systematic search of the literature related to early childhood transition published beginning 1986. This date was chosen based on the reauthorization of the Education of the Handicapped Amendments (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that extended the provision of a free appropriate public education and promoted the development of early intervention systems to young children with disabilities aged 3-5 years.

To identify studies for inclusion in this review, Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Psych Info, and Teacher Reference Center databases were searched using the key words transition* and adjustment combined with
early childhood, young child*, special education, early childhood special education, formal school*, kindergarten, disabilities, parent*, and strategies. These search terms were included because they incorporate various aspects of the transition from preschool to formal school programs found in the literature. Next, the researcher conducted a hand search of nine peer-reviewed journals related to early childhood and early childhood special education. These journals were selected because they have included articles related to early childhood transitions and adjustment to school. Finally, the researcher conducted an ancestral search of references found in selected articles. The following criteria were used to evaluate articles for inclusion: (1) published in a peer-reviewed journal, (2) published between 1986 and the present, (3) examined the transition from preschool to formal school, (4) included children with disabilities and/or their families and teachers, and (5) described the findings of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method investigations.

A total of 28 articles were identified for inclusion in this review. Of these 28 articles, 2 (7%) used a quasi-experimental design, 4 (14%) used a correlational approach, 5 (17%) used a comparative approach, 4 (14%) used a qualitative approach, and 16 (57%) were descriptive, with some studies using more than one approach (Note: because more than one approach was used in several studies, percentages will not sum to 100). A summary of studies included in this review can be found in Table 2.1. Although the literature search targeted empirical articles related to special education, several additional articles related to general education were identified and used as a foundation for the research focus in this study.
Table 2.1

Summary of Studies Included in the Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Disabilities Included</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamblin-Wilson &amp; Thurman (1990)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>91 parents of children with disabilities who transitioned into special education kindergartens</td>
<td>LD, ID, Speech, EBD, HI, OI, DD, VI</td>
<td>Researcher developed parent survey</td>
<td>Parents perceived themselves as involved in the transition process. Parents who felt prepared for the transition expressed satisfaction with the transition process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, &amp; Hughes (2008)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>40 parents of children with disabilities (n=20 pre-transition in preschool, n=20 in kindergarten)</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Individual Interviews; Impact on Family Scale; Measure of Processes of Care; Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales</td>
<td>Parents perceived greater support from preschool settings than from formal school settings, reported some level of contact with the receiving school before transition, and reported slow fulfillment of support in formal school settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewett et al., (1998)</td>
<td>Qualitative-Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>4 preschool teachers</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Reflective Journals</td>
<td>Supporting children with disabilities during the transition to formal school caused considerable stress for these preschool teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, &amp; Fowler (1986)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>19 parents of children with disabilities</td>
<td>Retrospective Transition Interview; Researcher-developed rating scale</td>
<td>Parents experienced stress during transition, but were generally satisfied with and involved in transition activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemp (2003)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>33 children with disabilities, parents, kindergarten teachers, principals</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Interviews with parents, teachers, and principals</td>
<td>Parents perceived initial integration as successful. Teachers indicated integration was not easy. Parent attitudes and teacher attitudes perceived as critical to successful integration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, &amp; Wildenger (2007)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>132 parents of preschool students (15% had a child with an IEP)</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT) parent survey</td>
<td>Families experienced concerns regarding the transition and expressed a desire to be involved in the transition process and receive more information from receiving school. Families from low SES were less likely to be involved in transition activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<td>McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, &amp; Wildenger (2010)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>132 parents of preschool students ($n=29$ with disabilities, $n=103$ typically developing)</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>FEIT</td>
<td>Families of children with disabilities and families of children without disabilities expressed similar concerns regarding transition; however, families of children with disabilities expressed significantly more concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prigg (2002)</td>
<td>Qualitative-Phenomenological Study</td>
<td>6 occupational therapists</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Individual, semistructured interviews</td>
<td>Occupational therapists assumed various roles and encountered many difficulties when assisting children during transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, &amp; Holburn, (1990)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>62 kindergarteners, 28 parents, 90 professionals</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Researcher developed satisfaction survey</td>
<td>Parents and professionals expressed satisfaction with transition planning and child placement following implementation of Project Transition into the Elementary Education Mainstream (TEEM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daley, Munk, &amp; Carlson (2011)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>1989 children with disabilities, parents, 1677 kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>Speech, DD, ASD, LD, ID, SI, EBD, OI, OHI</td>
<td>Parent phone interview, Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire</td>
<td>Teachers were more likely to engage in low-intensity practices than high-intensity practices. Child and school demographic variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Researcher/Instrument</td>
<td>Findings/Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denkyriah &amp; Agbeke (2010)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>275 preschool teachers (210 in U.S., 65 in Ghana)</td>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Researcher developed survey based on Elements for Transition to Kindergarten (ETK)</td>
<td>Preschool teachers in the U.S. and Ghana agreed on the importance of the specified transition practices to support children with ASD transitioning to formal school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest, Horner, Palmer, &amp; Todd (2004)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>3 children with disabilities in kindergarten, parents, kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>ETK questionnaire for parents and teachers</td>
<td>Parents and teachers reported the specified transition practices were perceived as important; however, the actual implementation of the practices varied widely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, &amp; Stella (1988)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>30 families of preschool children with disabilities</td>
<td>Speech, VI, Motor, Genetic, EBD</td>
<td>Researcher-developed Transition Planner 1, Transition Planner 2</td>
<td>Parents perceived the implementation of transition practices as important, specifically those related to characteristics of the receiving school and teacher. Parents generally concerned about the pre-academic skills of their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings/Implications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kemp &amp; Carter (2000)</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>33 children with disabilities, 33 typically developing children</td>
<td>Observing Pupils and Teachers in Classrooms (OPTIC)</td>
<td>Following intervention students did not perform as well as typical peers, but did perform in a range that was considered average.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Paro, Pianta, &amp; Cox (2000)</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>3,595 general education kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>The Transition Practices Survey</td>
<td>General education kindergarten teachers report using similar transition practices for children with and without disabilities. Practices tended to be general in nature and are implemented after school began. The two individualized practices most frequently used with children with disabilities were contacting the preschool teacher and reading previous written records.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Ager &amp; Shapiro (1995)</td>
<td>Quasi-Experimental</td>
<td>61 preschool children with disabilities ( (n=20) intervention, (n=20) Assessment Only, (n=21) Control)</td>
<td>ESCAPE observation of classroom environment, ACCESS observation of student-teacher</td>
<td>Template matching was effective for assessing differences between preschool and kindergarten environments. Although there were no significant differences for children who</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Quintero & McIntyre (2011) | Descriptive/Comparison | 95 parents and teachers of children with disabilities ($n = 19$ ASD, $n = 76$ DD) | ASD, DD | Teacher Perceptions on Transition, FEIT | No significant difference in involvement in transition practices for children with DD and children with ASD were found. Parents reported more involvement from preschool teachers than formal school teacher. Teachers reported more concerns about children with ASD than children with DD. Kindergarten teachers tended to engage in general transition practices at the beginning of the year.

Rous, Myers, & Stricklin (2007) | Qualitative | 9 focus groups ($n = 12$ administrators, $n = 10$ parents, $n = 6$ early intervention providers, $n = 4$ preschool teachers, $n = 2$ researchers) | Not specified | Focus group interviews | Perceived critical interagency variables and categories of transition practices and activities were identified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule, Feichtl &amp; Innocenti (1990)</td>
<td>Quasi-Experimental</td>
<td>18 preschool children ($n=15$ with disabilities, $n=3$ at-risk for disabilities)</td>
<td>Moderate and mild ID; EBD, Speech, MD</td>
<td>The majority of participants mastered all but one of the skills from the intervention. A sample of the participants adequately generalized these skills to the new formal school setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geva, Yosipof, Eshell, Leitner, Valevsky, &amp; Harel (2009)</td>
<td>Comparison/Correlational</td>
<td>39 children ($n=20$ with IUGR, $n=19$ typically developing)</td>
<td>DD or at risk for DD, Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence; Academic Achievement Scale of the Kauffman Assessment Battery for Children; Tower of London Test; socioemotional composite; Adjustment Scale of Children to Kindergarten and School for Teachers; Parenting Stress Index; Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales</td>
<td>Children with IUGR entered school with significantly lower academic achievement than typically developing children. The lower achievement of the children with IUGR was through the end of the year. Social adjustment measured in preschool contributed to the variance in academic adjustment and achievement during the first year of formal school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Descriptions</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kemp &amp; Carter (2005)</td>
<td>Descriptive/Correlational</td>
<td>33 children with disabilities, kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>ID OPTIC</td>
<td>Teachers reported classroom skills, self-help skills, and compliance skills were considered essential for successful transition into an inclusive kindergarten setting. Children who were perceived by teachers to perform these essential skills were also perceived to have transitioned successfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koomen &amp; Hoeksma (2003)</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>66 children entering kindergarten ($n=30$ typically developing, $n=36$ with disabilities)</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>The inhibition and security seeking behaviors of children at kindergarten entry steadily decreased during the first five weeks of school. Children with disabilities scored consistently higher on security seeking than typically developing children. These scores were significantly related to later inhibition behaviors in children with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntyre, Blancher, &amp; Baker (2006)</td>
<td>Comparison/Correlational</td>
<td>67 children in kindergarten ($n=24$ with disabilities,</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Typically developing children generally had higher levels of self-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study Type</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reitveld (2008)</td>
<td>Qualitative Case Study</td>
<td>4 boys ($n=2$ with disabilities, $n=2$ typically developing)</td>
<td>Self-regulation task, Social Skills Rating Scale, Teacher report of school outcome measures, Child Behavior Checklist, Student Teacher Relationship Scale</td>
<td>Teacher and parent reported social skills significantly associated with positive school adjustment. Contextual factors appeared to influence the inclusion or exclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool and kindergarten classrooms more than child characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughn, Reiss, Rothlein, &amp; Hughes (1999)</td>
<td>Descriptive 32 kindergarten teachers ASD, HI, LD, ID, EBD, Speech</td>
<td>Adaptation for Kindergarten Children with Disabilities Checklist</td>
<td>General education kindergarten teachers generally perceived practices to support children with disabilities in the general education classroom as desirable, but did not consider these practices highly feasible.</td>
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</table>

Note. ASD= Autism Spectrum Disorder, DD= Developmental Disability, EBD= Emotional and Behavioral Disorder, HI= Hearing Impaired, ID= Intellectual Disability, LD= Learning Disability, MD= Multiple Disabilities, OHI= Other Health Impaired, OI= Orthopedic Impairment, SI= Sensory Impairment, SES= Socioeconomic Status, Speech= Speech/Language Disorder, VI= Vision Impairment
The themes that emerged from this review include (a) how the transition to formal school is experienced by children, families, and teachers; (b) practices implemented by teachers and school systems that support children and families during the transition to formal school, and (c) factors associated with the adjustment of children to formal school. The following sections present a review of the literature related to these three themes. In the concluding paragraphs, the connection between the findings from the literature and this study will be discussed.

**How Transition is Experienced**

How the transition to formal school is experienced by children, families, and teachers has been an area of significant interest to researchers (e.g., Chan, 2010; Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). The topic of transition in early childhood has a substantial literature describing different aspects of the transition to formal school experience. Studies that have investigated this transition from the perspective of families (e.g., Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Fisher, 2009; Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998) and children (e.g., Fisher, 2009; Lash, 2008; MacDonald, 2009; Chun, 2003; Peters, 2003; Sanagavaranapu, 2010) indicate the transition period is a time that can be difficult, often requiring support for children and parents (Mangione & Speth, 1998; Pianta et al., 2001). One type of support found in the literature is the use of collaborative practices that include parent involvement (Malsch, Green, & Kothart, 2011; Pianta et al., 2001) and communication between sending and receiving teachers. Some findings indicate, however, that teachers are frustrated with an insufficient level of contact available between agencies (Chan, 2010).
Although this is often a stressful time for parents, many parents report some level of satisfaction with the transition practices that are offered to them (Chan, 2010), and report that preschool teachers are a particularly effective source of support (Pianta et al., 2001). Findings in the literature related to the transition of children with disabilities have considerable similarities with these findings from the general education literature.

The literature search described previously yielded eight studies related to the transition to formal school for children with disabilities that describe the experiences of parents, children, teachers, and related service personnel. Following is a discussion of the findings related to young children with disabilities.

**How Parents Experience Transition**

In one of the earliest studies examining the transition experience, Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, and Fowler (1986) used the Retrospective Transition Interview (RTI), a semi-structured interview protocol, to gather information about the transition experience of 19 parents who had transitioned a child with a disability from an ECSE preschool program into a general education or special education kindergarten placement. The RTI explored issues involving the parents, the preschool, and the kindergarten. In addition to answering open-ended questions, parents also rated their satisfaction with specified transition activities (e.g., preschool parent-teacher conferences, child visits to the kindergarten, and kindergarten IEP meetings). Findings indicate overall parents reported being moderately to highly satisfied with the transition activities offered to them, and also reported being involved to some extent in the planning of their child’s transition. Although parents generally reported being involved in gathering information, visiting
future programs and teachers, attending transition meetings, and participating in decision-making, parents also described experiencing stress related to the transition. Specifically, parents expressed that before the transition they had concerns and questions about the expected timeline and process for the transition, the responsibilities of parties involved in the transition, strategies for preparing themselves and their children for the transition, and determining the best transition placements for their children.

To extend the findings of Johnson and colleagues (1986), Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) surveyed 91 parents of children with disabilities who transitioned from ECSE preschool programs into mixed-categorical special education kindergarten programs. Specifically, the researchers examined parent perceptions of the transition process related to satisfaction, service relationships, received supports, their preparation for the transition, and their involvement in the process. Parents indicated in which of the specified transition activities they participated (e.g., program planning, selecting the child’s placement, visiting the new classroom or school), rated the importance of specified transition activities, and rated their perceived preparation for and involvement in the transition process. Findings indicate parents perceived themselves as involved in the transition process, with more than half of parents in this study reporting they visited the new school setting and participated in their child’s program planning. Additionally, parents who reported they felt supported, received explanations from service providers, and felt prepared for the transition also reported feeling more satisfied with the transition process than parents who reported less support and preparation. Results further indicate the level of support from the early intervention providers was perceived as greater than
that received from the public schools, suggesting that public schools may need to increase the collaborative nature of their interactions during the transition process.

In a mixed method investigation, Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, and Hughes (2008) also considered the transition experience of parents of children with disabilities. In this exploration, 40 parents (n = 20 pre-transition, n = 20 post-transition) completed The Impact on Family Scale (Stein & Jessop, 2003), the Measure of Processes of Care (King et al., 2003), The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti, 1984), and a one item six-point rating of severity of disability, describing their perceptions of the impact of their child’s disability on the family, the processes of care delivered by service providers, their child’s adaptive skills, and the severity of their child’s disability. Additionally, the parents participated in one-on-one interviews to provide qualitative data related to the transitions of the children. Findings indicate differences between the perceptions of pre-transition parents and post-transition parents. First, the impact of the child’s disability on the family was perceived to be significantly greater for parents pre-transition than for parents post-transition. Additionally, pre-transition parents perceived the quality of care they were receiving more positively than parents in post-transition settings. This finding corroborates the findings of Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) that parents perceived a greater level of support from early intervention providers than from the public school. Although there were inconsistencies among pre-and post-transition parents in the timing of the contact they had with the receiving school and the party responsible for initiating this contact, the majority of parents in both groups reported some level of contact with the receiving school, as well as
some type of information sharing between sending and receiving schools (e.g., written or verbal). Finally, post-transition parents also report that school-based support services were not being fulfilled in a timely manner, with less than a 50% reported fulfillment of promised support by the public school at the time of data collection.

McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro Reed, and Wildenger (2007) also investigated the experiences and involvement of parents in the transition process, as well as family concerns and issues related to the transition process through a survey of 132 parents or caregivers of children who had transitioned out of early childhood programs and were beginning kindergarten; 15% had a child with an identified disability and 7.7% had a child who participated in ECSE. The researcher-developed survey used in this study, the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT), includes data from five domains: child educational history, family concerns regarding transition, family identified needs during transition, family involvement in transition related activities, and family sociodemographic information (p. 85). Findings indicate the transition period is a time of concern for parents. Specifically, parents expressed concerns related to the child attending a new setting and the skill level of the child (e.g., behavior, social, and academic skills). Parents generally expressed a desire to have more information on school expectations, the kindergarten placement and teacher, and suggestions for preparing the child for the new environment. The majority of parents also reported a desire to be involved in the transition process. Additional findings, however, indicate parents from families with “sociodemographic risk factors” (p. 85), such as government
financial assistance, were less likely to be involved in transition activities than parents from families not experiencing such risk factors.

In 2010, McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro Reed, and Wildinger extended the findings of their previous study (McIntyre et al., 2007) by comparing concerns related to the transition to kindergarten of families of children with disabilities and families of children without disabilities. Using the FEIT (see Quintero & McIntyre, 2011), the researchers examined family concerns of 132 children ($n=29$ with disabilities, $n=103$ without disabilities) who had been enrolled in early childhood programs ($n=22\%$ in ECSE; $n=78\%$ general early childhood programs) and were preparing to enter kindergarten. Findings indicate some similar general concerns for families of children with and without disabilities (e.g., new setting, getting along with others, separating from the family, and readiness and academic skills). Additional findings, however, indicate families of children with disabilities experienced significantly more concerns related to the transition of their child from preschool to kindergarten than families of children without disabilities. Specifically, these concerns were in the categories of following directions, making needs known to an adult, behavior problems, kindergarten readiness, and academic skills.

**How Children with Disabilities Experience Transition**

Although a major focus of studies in the special education literature is the transition experience of the family, Kemp (2003) also considered the experiences of 33 children with intellectual disabilities (ID) who transitioned out of a university-based model inclusive preschool program into inclusive general education kindergarten
classrooms in Australia. In this descriptive study, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the beginning (Term 2) and end (Term 4) of the kindergarten year with parents, principals, and teachers to gather data related to their perceptions of the transition process and the “initial integration” (p. 409) of the children into kindergarten classrooms. Specifically, the researcher was concerned with the perceived level of success of the transition and integration, difficulties in integrating the children, needed supports, collaboration among those involved in the transition, and factors thought to affect the success of the integration. Overall, results indicate the majority of parents reported very successful initial and long-term integration of the children, matching principal reports at Term 2 and teacher reports at Term 4. Teacher reports at Term 2, however, indicated the majority of teachers did not perceive the initial integration of the child to be easy. Surprisingly, both teachers and parents generally reported the principal made little to no contribution to the success, or lack thereof, of the integration of the child. Teachers generally reported factors “within the child” (e.g., behavior and lack of skills, p.414) as difficulties in the integration process. Many teachers reported not receiving adequate support for the integration process, and identified the need for an increase in both direct support for the child and support for the teacher. The majority of parents, however, reported receiving adequate support. Although the majority of parents reported perceived adequate support, some concern about the level of parent involvement was expressed. Finally, results also indicate factors that parents and teachers perceive as critical for successful transition and integration. There was agreement by parents and teachers that the skills of the child and the acceptance of the child by the school
community were important. Interestingly, the most important factor for successful integration generally identified by the teachers was the attitude of the family; and the most important factor generally identified by the parents was the attitude of the teacher.

**How Professionals Experience Transition**

Jewett and colleagues (1998) also examined the experience of teachers in their qualitative exploration of the journals of four ECSE teachers who supported the transition of young children with disabilities into kindergarten. As reported by these teachers, the transition process was highly stressful, fraught with barriers and emotions. Five themes emerged in the analysis of the journal entries related to the tasks involved in the transition process. First, teachers reported an “overwhelming sense of responsibility” (p. 332) in providing the level of service required by the child while also trying to create collaborative relationships with families and other service providers. Second, teachers reported frustration related to “understanding and implementing the laws” (p.333), particularly involving categorical labeling and encountering resistance to opportunities for the children to be included in less restrictive placements. Third, teachers reported challenges involved in “learning about the child and family” (p. 334), such as the development of relationships with families and other professionals, and sharing information with receiving agencies. Fourth, teachers reported their perceptions of “preparing students and families for transition” (p. 334). These teachers presented several different preparation strategies, for example, assisting children in developing important skills for the next setting; collaborating with children, families, and other professionals; and family-focused strategies such as sharing information, providing
opportunities for families to familiarize themselves with the future setting and expectations, and empowering families through connections with support systems and supporting their attempts to advocate for their child. Finally, teachers described their role and the challenges related to “serving as a liaison” (p. 335) while coordinating the transition process. Overall, analysis of the teachers’ journals indicates they incorporated many of the recommended practices found in the literature (e.g., information sharing and providing family support). The perceived overwhelming nature and stressfulness of the transition process, however, indicates this is a demanding time not only for children and families, but also for ECSE teachers coordinating the transition to kindergarten.

The transition experience does not only affect families, children, and teachers. Young children with disabilities in ECSE programs often receive services from related service personnel such as speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. In a final study that examined the transition experience, Prigg (2002) explored the perceived roles and experiences of six occupational therapists (OT) who worked with young children with disabilities or severe learning or behavior needs during the transition to kindergarten in Australia. In this qualitative pilot study, participant “behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and processes utilised” (p.102) were explored through semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis of the data revealed two major themes, the role of the OT and problems experienced by the OT during transition, as well as multiple subthemes. Occupational Therapists in this study reported their perceived roles as (a) preparing the child for the next environment (e.g., skill development), (b) providing recommendations and support to school personnel (e.g., modifications and
equipment), and (c) supporting parents (e.g., providing information to help parents make appropriate placement decisions). The perceived problems OT’s reported in this study included (a) limited amounts of time to provide optimal services to the child, (b) a lack of support from the school (e.g., not implementing recommendations), (c) uncomfortable and noncollaborative kindergarten classroom environments, and (d) their own lack of involvement in the transition planning or a reduction in their involvement after the transition. Interestingly, during the discussion of frequent lack of support from the school settings, participants reported the school principal was considered the primary person responsible for determining the success of an inclusive placement. This perception appears to contradict that described in Kemp (2003) that the principal is not integral to a successful transition to an inclusive setting for a child with disabilities.

**Summary of the Transition Experience**

In summary, the period of transition from ECSE programs to formal school settings can be a complex time characterized by concern and stress for parents and professionals (Jewett et al., 1998; Johnson et al., 1986; McIntyre et al., 2007; McIntyre et al., 2010; Prigg, 2002). These concerns are often related to the new environment (McIntyre et al., 2007; McIntyre et al., 2010), child academic skills (Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2007; McIntyre et al., 2010), child social skills and behavior (Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2010), the transition process (Johnson et al., 1986), provision of support by the receiving school (Janus et al., 2008; Kemp, 2003), and the involvement and preparation of the parents (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; Kemp, 2003).
Generally, parents report they feel supported during the transition process (Kemp, 2003); however, parents perceive a greater level of support from ECSE settings than from the receiving formal school settings (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008). Parents also indicate a desire to be involved in the transition process (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986), often seeking information about how to prepare for the transition (McIntyre et al., 2007). The perception that parent involvement and preparation are important components of the transition process is a consistent theme in the literature (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 1986; Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2007), and is suggested as a contributor to parent satisfaction with the transition process (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990). The literature identified in this review does not indicate, however, if family preparation is associated with the successful transition and adjustment of the child to the new setting.

Another theme found in the literature is the desire of parents to make connections with teachers in the new environment (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007). Parents generally reported some level of contact with the receiving school, but this level of contact varied from verbal exchanges to written communication (Janus et al., 2008). Many parents expressed a desire for greater contact with the receiving teachers (McIntyre et al., 2007). Contacts between receiving teachers and parents are perceived as an important component in the transition process and could potentially support the development of the positive attitudes that teachers and parents report as critical (Kemp, 2003). These contacts could also be important for developing a collaborative network of
support for the child that includes parents, teachers, and related service personnel (Prigg, 2002).

The transition process not only affects the individual child, but, consistent with the ecological and dynamic model of transition, it is experienced on several levels related to the child by affecting parents, teachers, related service personnel, and administrators. These levels interact with one another (e.g., related service personnel uncomfortable in the classroom) as well as with the child (e.g., parents preparing the child for the new environment) and change over time as a result of these interactions (e.g., transition planning). These interactions can potentially enhance the transition experience of the child and support success or they can present barriers to successful transition and adjustment in the new environment. One factor that can affect the types of interactions that occur during the transition and how the transition is experienced is the type of practices that are used to support children and families during the transition. The following section provides a review related to the transition practices used to support children and families.

**Practices to Support Children and Families**

In addition to the transition experience, the practices that are used to support children and families during the transition to formal school have also received significant attention in the literature (e.g., Ahtola et al., 2011; Early et al., 2001; Einarsdottir et al., 2008; Pianta et al., 1999). A number of studies in the early childhood transition literature focus on identifying the specific types of practices used to support children and families during the transition to formal school. For example, Einarsdottir, Perry, and
Dockett (2008) investigated the transition practices used by preschool and formal school teachers in Iceland and Australia and found that common practices involved having preschool children visit formal school settings, holding informational meetings for children and families, and sharing written records between sending and receiving schools. In another study, Early and colleagues (2001) investigated the types of transition practices used by kindergarten teachers in a national sample in the United States and found that kindergarten teachers generally use practices that do not involve individual contact with children and families, typically implement practices after school begins, and generally do not individualize practices for particular children and families. Similar findings were identified by Chan (2010) in Hong Kong.

Additional research has focused on intervention practices designed to help prepare children for the demands of the formal school environment (e.g., Berlin et al., 2011). Berlin, Dunning, and Dodge (2011) found that implementing a summer orientation program (STARS) for children from low income backgrounds appeared to ease the social transition to formal school with no effects found for the academic transition. Ahtola and colleagues (2011) found that implementing transition practices had a positive effect on skill development in primary school. Specifically, the more transition practices implemented by preschool and elementary teachers, the faster children developed skills from the period of preschool to spring in first grade. Although, transition practices are generally considered important to support families and children, Pianta and colleagues (1999) identified several barriers to implementing timely transition practices for
kindergarten teachers: large class sizes, late receipt of class rosters, and lack of compensation for summer work.

The extensive literature on transition practices has resulted in the identification of recommended practices, such as developing curriculum in a collaborative manner with preschool and kindergarten teachers (Ahtola et al, 2011), communicating between preschool and school settings (Fowler et al., 1991), planning for differences between sending and receiving environments (Fowler, 1982), increasing parental involvement (Schulting et al., 2005), and increasing personalized types of practices (Early et al., 2001). Recommended transition practices have also been developed for use with young children with disabilities (e.g., Sandall et al., 2005) including visiting students and families in their homes and involving families in the transition process (Fowler et al., 1991).

Although the majority of the literature on transition practices has focused on typically developing children and their families, investigations of transition practices with children with disabilities and their families have also been conducted. The literature search described previously yielded eleven studies related to the practices used to support children with disabilities and their families during the transition process. Following is a discussion of the literature related to transition practices used to support children with disabilities and their families.

**Transition Planning**

Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, and Stella (1988) investigated the use of individualized transition planners to support families with 30 families of children with
disabilities in the fall and spring of their final year of preschool. The transition planners contained items typically considered important for the transition process, but also included open-ended questions to tailor each planner to individual family concerns. Transition Planner 1: Gathering Information (TP1) was implemented in the fall to help parents identify their role in the transition process, needed information about the transition process, and information related to the performance levels of the child. After completing TP1 with a trained interviewer, preschool parents and teachers used this information to create transition plans for the parents and the children. In some cases, transition-related goals determined from the TP1 were included on the children’s Individualized Education Plans (IEP). In the spring, parents completed the Transition Planner 2: Choosing the Best Program (TP2) with the preschool teacher to help parents consider how to gather information about potential receiving programs and to prioritize characteristics they considered important for the future formal school placement. After completing the TP2, an individualized checklist was created from the information for parents to use when visiting potential placements and when making decisions about the placements. Data in this investigation were collected by asking parents at the time of completion of each planner to rate the importance of the items included on the planners and to then rank which three of the items on each planner they considered most important. Findings indicate parents generally considered all categories of items included on the planners to be between somewhat important and very important (mean ratings between 2.0- 3.0 on a 3-point scale). Additionally, 80% or more of parents rated 12 of the items across the categories as very important (3.0). Specifically, the categories of
“Specific Features of Receiving Programs” and “Teacher Characteristics” (p.212) had more items rated as important compared to items in all other categories. Interestingly, all parents expressed a concern about the pre-academic performance of their children. Findings also indicate parents generally expressed a desire to help prepare their children for the transition, including working with the child on pre-academic skills at home.

The practice of transition planning has also been examined on a system-wide level. Although there are several program model descriptions found in the literature (e.g., Deitz & Warkala, 1993; Rice & O’Brien, 1990), only one description met the criteria for inclusion in this review. Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, and Holburn (1990) described and evaluated a transition planning model, Transitioning into the Elementary Education Mainstream (TEEM), that was designed to support children and families transitioning out of ECSE programs into inclusive general education kindergarten classrooms. The TEEM model incorporated the following practices: (a) “Systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative planning” (p.95); (b) “Family support and empowerment” (p.96); (c) “Preparation of the child” (p.96); (d) “Integration and education of the child with appropriate support” (p.97); and (e) “Provision of necessary services to promote and support placement, integration, and education” (p. 97). The TEEM model was implemented across five school districts for two years. To evaluate the success of the model, effects on two outcomes were evaluated: (a) professional and parent satisfaction with the transition practices and process and (b) child kindergarten placements. Professional (n=43) and parent (n= 28) satisfaction was measured using researcher-developed satisfaction surveys. Findings from the surveys indicate a generally high level
of satisfaction from both parents and professionals (M=4.3, SD=.94 and M=4.0, SD=.44 respectively on a 5-point Likert-type scale) with the practices and process incorporated in the TEEM model. To evaluate the effect on child kindergarten placements, two factors were considered. First, the kindergarten placements of 62 children (5 with severe disabilities) who participated in the TEEM model were identified; none of the children had been placed in self-contained settings, all children were placed in their local home school, 59 were placed full-time in general kindergarten classrooms, and three were placed in prekindergarten classrooms. Second, the satisfaction of the parents (n= 28) and professionals (n= 90) with the child placements were assessed. Results indicate a generally high level of satisfaction from both parents and professionals (M=4.7, SD=.55 and M=4.4, SD=.60 respectively on a 5-point Likert-type scale) with the kindergarten placement of the children. These findings highlight the perceived benefits of comprehensive transition planning that incorporates practices on multiple levels, consistent with the ecological approach to transition.

In another study that included multiple stakeholders involved in the transitions of young children with disabilities, Rous and colleagues (2007) conducted multiple focus group interviews with a total of 44 family members, practitioners, and administrators. This study was part of a larger research project supported by the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC). The purpose of this study was to identify practices perceived to be effective in promoting successful transitions for children with disabilities and their families from early intervention to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten. Analysis revealed practices that can be grouped into two major themes:
“critical interagency variables” (p. 9) and “transition practices and activities” (p. 12). Seven subcategories of practices were identified: “supportive infrastructure, relationships and communication, continuity and alignment, preparation for transition, program visitation, instructional activities, and community resources” (p.8). Of these subcategories, the three most frequently mentioned were supportive infrastructure (e.g., transition guidelines), preparation for transition (e.g., family participation), and relationships and communication (e.g., relationships among agencies).

**Classroom Practices**

In addition to studies that have considered transition practices across systems, several studies have examined practices specifically implemented by teachers. For example, La Paro, Pianta, and Cox (2000) examined the transition practices of a nationally representative sample of 3,595 public general education kindergarten teachers, 2,014 serving at least one child with a disability and 1,399 with no children receiving special education. Data for this investigation were obtained from the National Center for Early Development and Learning Transition Practices Survey (NCEDL, 1996). This survey included a questionnaire regarding the use of 12 specified kindergarten transition practices. Teachers indicated whether or not they used each practice not at all, with children with disabilities, or with the whole class. Findings indicate kindergarten teachers with and without children with disabilities generally incorporated transition practices that were general in nature and were implemented after school had started. Teachers of children with disabilities reported using transition practices with children with disabilities that were similar to those used for the whole class, although the two most
frequently reported practices for children with disabilities, “reading written records and contacting preschool teachers” (p.10), were more individualized than the practices generally used with the whole class. The most frequently incorporated whole-class transition practices occurred after the start of school (e.g., open house and sending a letter). Although practices were similar for teachers of children with and without disabilities, teachers of children with disabilities generally reported using more individualized transition practices.

Also using a national sample, Daley, Munk, and Carlson (2011) examined the supports provided to children with disabilities during the transition to kindergarten, and the factors that predict the types of supports offered to these children. Data for this investigation were obtained from the Pre-Elementary Longitudinal Study (PEELS) database (2003 to 2007) and resulted in a nationally representative sample of 1,677 kindergarten teachers and 1,989 children who were eligible for special education services and entered kindergarten for the first time during this time period. Teachers who contributed to the PEELS database reported transition practices that were used with individual children rather than practices that were used with the children in the classroom as a whole. The transition practices examined were reported to have been provided to the children prior to kindergarten entrance. Based on previous research (e.g., Pianta et al., 1999; Rosenkoetter, Whaley, Hains, & Pierce, 2001), the specified transition practices from the teacher questionnaire were divided into two categories: “low-intensity” (i.e., not individualized and require little time and effort) and “high-intensity” (i.e., individualized and require considerable time and effort). Teachers reported which of the 11 specified
transition practices (5 “low-intensity”; 6 “high-intensity”) they used. Findings suggest the kindergarten teachers in this sample primarily engaged in low-intensity practices (M=3.5, SD=1.4) compared to high-intensity practices (M=2.5, SD=1.7). Additionally, teachers reported the five low-intensity practices as those that were most frequently implemented. Results also indicate significant differences in the transition practices that were implemented with children based on demographic characteristics and school factors. For example, more low-intensity practices were received by White children when compared to Black and Hispanic children and by children staying in the same school compared to children coming from a different setting. In fact, children who attended preschool in the same school where they were to attend kindergarten received more transition practices, high- and low-intensity, than children coming from a different setting. On the other hand, more high-intensity practices were received by children in special education classrooms when compared to children in general education classrooms. Findings from a secondary analysis designed to examine child, family, and district factors that predict transition practices also indicate significant differences in the receipt of practices that support transition. Specifically, children from large districts or districts with higher poverty were less likely to receive high-intensity practices than children from smaller less impoverished districts; children from larger districts were also less likely to receive low-intensity practices. Of further interest, transition practices and parent involvement did not appear to be associated, and parents of children with more significant disabilities were found to be significantly less involved. It is important to note, however, that the measures of parent involvement did not specifically address
parent involvement in the transition process. Additionally, children with more severe disabilities were more likely to receive only one practice, the high-intensity practice of “developing preparatory strategies for the child’s entry” (p.9). The authors suggest the findings of this study reveal that the transition practices identified in this sample remain comparable to those identified in previous literature (Pianta et al., 1999), demonstrating little progress over the past decade.

Forest, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, and Todd (2004) extended the literature with their examination of transition practices used with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) who transitioned from preschool to kindergarten. Data for this investigation were gathered through individual interviews using the researcher-developed Elements of Transition to Kindergarten (ETK) with a total of 10 parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers of three young children with high-functioning autism. The researchers were particularly interested in pilot field testing the ETK to “determine the perceived importance of each transition element (content validity) and the extent to which each element was experienced in recent transitions” (p.104). The ETK included 25 practices (e.g., created initial timeline, proposed readiness skills; evaluated the transition process) and one item with a 6-point scale to rate the perceived success of the transition. Results indicate parents and teachers consistently identified 24 of the 25 elements included in the measure as highly important. Results of perceived implementation of the practices demonstrated wide variability; however, findings indicate nearly half of the 25 elements were “perceived as prominent features” in the recent transitions (p.106). Of
particular interest, although the majority of the elements were not perceived as being implemented, all three children were considered to have had a successful transition.

In another study that also considered the transition of children with ASD, Denkyriah and Agbeke (2010) surveyed 275 preschool teachers, 65 from Ghana and 210 from the United States, to identify strategies that teachers of preschool children with ASD generally consider effective for supporting the transition to formal school settings. Data for this investigation were collected using a 10-item researcher-developed survey based on the ETK (Forest, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, & Todd, 2004). Results indicate teachers in both countries agreed on the importance of the 10 strategies included in the survey to preschool transitions (e.g., 100% agreement on early planning and preparation for the transition, and collaborating with families during the process). The top four issues identified across teachers were “(a) timing of planning and preparation, (b) helping families find resources, (c) sharing information with family, and (d) home visits” (p.267). Information about the extent to which transition practices were implemented, however, was not available.

Quintero and McIntyre (2011) also considered the transition of children with ASD in an investigation that compared the practices and concerns of parents and preschool teachers of children with ASD to the practices and concerns of parents and teachers of children with other developmental disabilities (DD). Data were collected from 95 parents and teachers of children with ASD (n=19) and DD (n=76) using a researcher-developed measure, the Teachers’ Perceptions on Transition (TPOT), the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011) questionnaire, and teacher
responses to open-ended questions. Families completed one questionnaire in the spring before the transition and a follow-up questionnaire in the fall during the first two months of the kindergarten placement. Findings indicate no significant differences in teacher involvement and parent involvement in transition practices for children with ASD and children with DD. Preschool teachers reported more concerns related to the transition of children with ASD than children with DD. Consistent with findings from previous research (e.g., Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008), parents reported more involvement from preschool teachers than from kindergarten teachers. Also consistent with previous findings, practices tended to be standard and not individualized (e.g., Daley et al., 2011). Furthermore, consistent with previously findings, parents generally reported that kindergarten teachers engaged in class-wide transition practices at the beginning of the year (e.g., Daley et al., 2011).

**Child-focused Practices**

In addition to studies that examine specific teacher practices, researchers have also examined practices aimed at preparing children with disabilities for the demands of the formal school environment. Rule, Feichtl, and Innocenti (1990) evaluated the effects of the Skills for School Success curriculum (Feichtl et al., 1987), a curriculum designed to teach “survival skills” to preschool children with disabilities in preparation for the transition to formal school. This curriculum included nine specific skills considered important for a successful transition into an inclusive formal school classroom (e.g., hanging up coat, completing tasks independently, lining up). The curriculum was implemented for three trials in inclusive preschool settings (one setting in 1986 and two
settings in 1987) with a total of 18 children ($n=15$ with an identified disability, $n=3$ at-risk for disabilities). The curriculum was implemented by two special education teachers with small groups of six participants for 1½ to 2½ hours each day. The duration of implementation was 22 weeks in the first setting, 29 weeks in the second setting, and 27 weeks in the third setting. Observers collected data using a checklist of skill components in the curriculum and time sampling procedures to measure child engagement in specified activities. Additionally, the preschool teachers of the participants completed the Kindergarten Survival Skills Checklist (Vincent et al., 1980) pre-and post-intervention. Follow-up data on six of the participants were also collected from teachers in the formal school placements using the Kindergarten Survival Skills Checklist (Vincent et al., 1980). Findings indicate the majority of participants mastered all but one of the skills (workbooks) with a significant difference found on pre and post scores for eight of the eleven skills. Teachers also perceived improvement in the skills levels of the participants in the classrooms. Additionally, findings from the follow-up data indicate six of the participants were able to generalize these skills to the new setting, requiring little to no help on the majority of the skills.

Also investigating the development of survival skills, Kemp and Carter (2000) examined the effect of a survival skills program on the classroom skills of 37 children ($n=21$ moderate, $n=11$ mild, $n=1$ severe) with intellectual disabilities (ID) who transitioned from a university model inclusive preschool into one of three types of kindergarten settings in Australia: general kindergarten classroom ($n=33$), special school ($n=1$), or a self-contained class ($n=3$). The classroom skills developed through the
survival skills program by the children with ID (experimental group) were compared to the classroom skills of 33 typically developing peers (comparison group). Children in the experimental group participated in the survival skills program (intervention) during their last year in the preschool settings. The intervention was provided in addition to the regular preschool programming and focused on developing functional skills for independence and communication that were perceived as critical for success in the general kindergarten classroom (e.g., following directions and on-task behavior). For the final term in the preschool, children in the intervention participated in a simulated kindergarten classroom for 1 ½ hours per day and began “orientation visits” (p.398). Orientation visits allowed the children to attend the classrooms in which they were to be placed the next year for one half day each week. Support personnel from the preschool accompanied the children to these settings and assisted as needed. Data were collected through classroom observations of on-task behavior and following directions (group and individual) of the 33 children who transitioned into general education classrooms during the second term of school. On-task behavior was measured using a modified version of the Observing Pupils and Teachers in Classrooms (OPTIC; Merrett & Wheldall, 1986) during two conditions: whole class teaching and independent table activities. Following directions was measured using a frequency count. Results indicate overall students in the experimental group did not perform as well as students in the comparison group on both whole group on-task and following directions conditions, with a significant difference in on-task behavior; although experimental students still generally performed in a range that would be considered average. With on-task behavior for independent table activities,
however, there was no significant difference between the groups, as well as no difference between students classified with moderate/severe ID and students classified with mild ID.

Le Ager and Shapiro (1995) conducted a two-phase study focusing on the development of an intervention to prepare children with disabilities for the kindergarten environment (Phase 1) and the effect of implementing the intervention (Phase 2). During Phase 1, data were collected through observations of preschool and kindergarten environments using templates based on the Eco-behavioral Systems for Complex Assessments of Preschool Environments (ESCAPE; Carta, Greenwood, & Atwater, 1985) and the Assessment Code/Checklist for Evaluating Survival Skills (ACCESS; Atwater, Carta, & Schwartz, 1989). Analysis of data in the templates indicated specific differences in the preschool and general kindergarten instructional environments. During Phase 2, an intervention was developed to address these differences in the environments and was implemented for eight weeks with 60 preschool children with disabilities who were divided into three groups: Intervention ($n=20$), Assessment Only ($n=20$), and Control ($n=21$). The intervention was implemented with intervention students by classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in addition to regular preschool programming, and included opportunities for independent work, following group prompts, and following individual prompts during a large group table activity. Teachers of children in the Assessment Only group were aware of the templates but were not given any information about the differences between the preschool and kindergarten environments. The Assessment Only teachers continued with their regular program. Teachers in the control condition were not aware of the templates and continued with regular
programming. Data were collected using the School Survival Skills Rating Scale (SSSRS; Sainato & Lyon, 1989). The SSSRS was complete by preschool teachers for pre-intervention and post-intervention, and by kindergarten teachers for follow-up. Findings from the posttest indicate significant differences were found for the Assessment Only group compared to the control group in three areas: behavior, work-related skills, and social/communication skills. The Assessment Only group also scored significantly higher than Intervention students on following instructions. At follow-up, however, students from the control group scored significantly higher than the Assessment Only group on independent seat work and social and communication skills. No significant difference between the Assessment Only group and the Intervention group were found at follow-up. Interestingly, however, at follow-up, two students from the Assessment Only group had been referred for and placed in special education placements, but none of the students from the Intervention group had been referred for special education services.

**Summary of Transition Practices**

In summary, parents and professionals perceive transition practices to be important supports during the transition process (Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; Forest et al., 2004; Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, & Stella, 1988; Rous et al., 2007). Consistent with the literature that describes the transition experience (e.g., Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 1986; Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2007), parents and professionals indicate practices that prepare families for the transition (e.g., information about future setting and teacher, skill development for children) and include communication among stakeholders are considered highly important (Denkyriah &
Involving parents in these types of practices can lead to greater parent satisfaction with the transition process (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990). It is unclear, however, if parent involvement and satisfaction are associated with successful transition and adjustment of the child to the formal school setting.

Transition practices can occur on several different levels (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Rous et al., 2007) to address the complex concerns and needs that often arise during the transition period. Specific transition practices have been used to help parents plan and prepare for the transition (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler et al., 1988), to acclimate families to the new setting (La Paro et al., 2000), and to teach specific skills that are perceived important in the next environment to children (Kemp & Carter, 2005; Le Ager & Shapiro, 1995; Rule et al., 1990). Findings indicate these practices can help parents feel supported (Conn-Powers et al., 1990) and help children perform appropriately in general education classrooms (Kemp & Carter, 2000; Le Ager & Shapiro, 1995; Rule et al., 1990).

Although there appears to be a general consensus that implementing transition practices with children with disabilities and their families supports successful transitions, actual levels of implementation do not reflect this perception (e.g., Forest et al., 2004; La Paro et al., 2000; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Consistent with previous findings (e.g., Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008), preschool teachers are more involved in transition practices than kindergarten teachers (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Transition practices provided by kindergarten teachers tend to be general in nature and of
a low-intensity (Daley et al., 2011; La Paro et al., 2000; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011), and are typically implemented after school begins (Daley et al., in 2011; La Paro et al., 2000). The type and timing of this implementation appears to be inconsistent with the needs expressed by parents to be prepared for the transition. Additionally, intensity and timing of transition practices do not often appear to be individualized for children who may have varying levels of concerns (e.g., Daley et al., 2011; La Paro et al., 2000; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011).

Findings in the literature indicate the potential positive effects of transition practices on the transition to kindergarten. The literature in this review, however, provides little empirical evidence of the effect that transition practices have on the success of the transition and adjustment to the new setting for children with disabilities. Although the effect of specific practices on the transition and adjustment to the new setting have not been thoroughly investigated with children with disabilities who have exited ECSE programs, the association of other factors have been examined. In the following section, the factors associated with the adjustment of children with disabilities to formal school settings are reviewed.

Factors Associated with Adjustment

In addition to examining the transition experience and the practices that are implemented during the transition to formal school, researchers have also sought to identify factors that are associated with successful transitions and adjustment to formal school. Researchers have considered how factors “within the child,” factors in the family, and factors in the school environment are associated with adjustment. Examples
of factors “within the child” that have been investigated include motor skills (Bart et al., 2007), level of engagement in school activities (Tudge, Odero, Hogan, & Etz, 2003), and child wariness (Early et al., 2002). Family factors that have been considered include child care history (Bates et al., 1994; NICHD, 2003); mother characteristics (Biringen et al., 2005); race (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch 2010); poverty (Cooper et al., 2010) and parental involvement (Cooper et al., 2010; Pianta et al., 1999; Seefeldt, Denton, Galper, & Younoszai, 1998). School factors that have been considered include the teacher-student relationship (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000); Mantzicopoulos, 2005; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004), and contextual elements of the kindergarten classroom (Early, Pianta, & Cox, 1999; Huffman & Speer, 2000).

Researchers have also considered the association between transition practices and adjustment to formal school. Schulting, Malone, and Dodge (2005) found that teachers’ transition practices may have a positive association with academic achievement in kindergarten. Similarly, Lo Cosale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, and Pianta (2008) found that teachers’ transition practices, specifically contact between preschool and kindergarten teachers, may have a positive association with the social and emotional adjustment of children in formal school. Researchers have also considered whether child and contextual factors are associated with the adjustment of children with disabilities to formal school. The literature search described previously yielded seven studies related to factors associated with the adjustment of children with disabilities and their families during the transition process. Following is a discussion of factors associated with the school adjustment of children with disabilities.
Contextual Factors

In a study that examined contextual factors related to the transition to formal school, Troup and Malone (2002) investigated the ecological characteristics of 11 inclusive kindergarten classrooms. Data were collected through classroom observations using field notes and the Kindergarten Visit Checklist (KVC; adapted from Fowler, 1982). The five categories of classroom characteristics included in the KVC are (a) schedule, (b) seating routines, (c) curriculum, (d), expectation of the child, and (e) evidence of special services (p. 342). Findings indicate these kindergarten classrooms generally incorporated high levels of teacher-directed activities and included skills-based activities such as table work and workbooks. There was little evidence of times for children to direct and choose their own activities, little evidence of hands-on materials to support worksheet activities, and little evidence of culturally relevant materials. Additionally, there were little individualized services provided in the classroom with special education services provided primarily in a pull-out model.

Reitveld (2008) also considered the kindergarten classroom environment in a qualitative case study that examined the contextual factors that affected the inclusion of two young children with disabilities who transitioned from preschool to kindergarten in New Zealand. Participants were four boys, two with Down Syndrome (DS) and two typically developing (TD). Data were collected through running records of observations in the classrooms during three time periods (last week in preschool, first six weeks of kindergarten, and once 3-4 months after beginning formal school), interviews with teachers and parents, and other sources such as field notes, permanent products, and
observations of meetings. Analysis of the data revealed three general themes: (a) Exclusion (e.g., active exclusion, passive exclusion, and teasing), (b) Ineffective or Illusory Inclusion (e.g., assigning an inferior role, including in order to take advantage of), and (c) Facilitative Inclusion (e.g., reciprocal relationships and equal status; p.3).

The goal, facilitative inclusion, is demonstrated when the child with a disability is considered an equal contributor to the class. In the preschool setting, both boys with DS experienced exclusion and both TD boys experienced inclusion. After preschool, the four boys transitioned into different kindergarten classes. Following the transition to kindergarten, one boy with DS continued to experience exclusion while the other boy with DS experienced inclusion. Likewise, one of the TD boys continued to experience inclusion while the other TD boy experienced exclusion. These findings indicate that inclusion is not necessarily dependent on the disability of the child but on the environment into which the child transitions. The environment created by the teachers in these classrooms appeared to either promote the inclusion or exclusion of the children with disabilities.

Another factor that can affect the classroom environment is the approach of the teacher toward including students with disabilities in the classroom. Vaughn, Reiss, Rothlein, and Hughes (1999) examined 31 general kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of teaching students with disabilities who transitioned from preschool to kindergarten. Data were collected by survey using the researcher-developed Adaptations for Children with Disabilities Questionnaire and two open-ended questions. The questionnaire included 28 classroom adaptations that teachers rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, and was used
to determine what adaptations were perceived to be desirable and what adaptations were perceived to be feasible in the general kindergarten classroom. Findings indicate most teachers considered adaptations that would support the inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom desirable (26 items had a median score of 5; 2 had a median score of 4). Teachers, however, also reported that 20 of the 28 adaptations were desirable but not highly feasible to implement. Specifically, providing one-on-one instruction and working with parents were considered desirable but not highly feasible. Although teachers appeared supportive of including children with disabilities as contributing members of the classroom and providing support for their development, teachers indicated they did not perceive they would be able to adapt their classrooms according to the items included on the questionnaire to meet the individual needs of the students with disabilities transitioning into their classrooms.

**Child Factors**

In addition to studies that consider the context in which transition occurs, other researchers have considered child factors that may be associated with adjustment. Koomen and Hoeksma (2003) considered the early adjustment of children to kindergarten as “achieving emotional security” (p.1319). This approach stems from the ideas that as children encounter new environments and situations, they will use certain behaviors to help them cope, and as they cope, they will regain emotional security. When young children encounter a new situation like the school setting, they often respond with two behaviors: “behavioral inhibition and security seeking from the teacher” (p. 1321). In this investigation, the researchers hypothesized that children would adapt to kindergarten
using these two behaviors. Additionally, the researchers sought to determine if the process of adjustment for children with disabilities would be different than that for children without disabilities, and if adjustment for children with additional life stress would differ from children without additional life stress. Data were collected with 66 Dutch children ($n=30$ typically developing in general education classes, $n=36$ with disabilities in special education classes) using The Inhibition Scale (Koomen, Hoeksma, Keller, & De Jong, 1999) and Security Seeking Scale (Koomen et al., 1999) on five occasions during the first 12 weeks of school. At the end of the 12 weeks, teachers collected data using the Internalizing Problem Scale and the Externalizing Problem Scale, two measures adapted from the Preschool Behavior Questionnaire (Behar, 1977). Teachers also completed a checklist on the children to indicate those who had recently experienced a stressful life event (e.g., divorce of parents, birth of sibling). Findings indicate, on average, inhibition scores and security seeking scores steadily decreased in children with and without disabilities during the first five weeks of school. The children with disabilities in special education classes consistently scored higher on the Security Seeking Scale and demonstrated greater variability on The Inhibition Scale than children without disabilities. Children who had recently experienced a life stress event maintained higher scores on The Inhibition Scale for the first eight weeks of school. Following the first 12 weeks of school, data collected from the Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior were analyzed with scores from the security seeking and inhibition scales. Findings indicate scores for children with disabilities on the security seeking scale during the first week after beginning school were significantly associated with scores on the Internalizing
Behavior Scale. This association was not indicated for children without disabilities. None of the scores were significantly associated with scores on the Externalizing Behavior Scale. The authors suggest that children with disabilities may be more sensitive to the changes experienced during the transition to kindergarten as was evidenced by higher security seeking and inhibition scores, and that the tendency to have high security seeking during the initial transition may lead to subsequent internalizing behaviors.

Geva and colleagues (2009) also considered the affect of child factors (e.g., developmental delays) on the adjustment of children diagnosed with intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) to formal school in Israel. In this investigation, the adjustment to school of an experimental group (n=20 children with IUGR) and a matched comparison group (n=19 typically developing children) were evaluated and compared through measures completed in the final year of preschool and the first year of formal school. Data were collected through seven measures (see Table 2.2 for a complete list of measures used in this study), including parent, teacher, and child reports. Findings indicate both differences and similarities between the groups during the transition to formal school. First, children in the experimental group entered formal school with significantly lower academic achievement than children in the control group. Additionally, a comparison of academic achievement before transition and at the end of the first year of formal school indicate the lower achievement of the experimental group was maintained, suggesting the difference in academic achievement between the groups was not associated with the transition but was likely due to inherent cognitive differences between the groups. Second, findings from measures of socioemotional adjustment
abilities completed before transition and at the end of the first year of formal school indicate similar levels of improvement during the first year of school for both groups. Furthermore, the preschool adjustment scores significantly predicted the academic adjustment of children in formal school. Finally, the social adjustment of the children as measured in preschool in this investigation contributed to the variance in the academic adjustment and achievement as measured in the first year of formal school.

Kemp and Carter (2005) investigated the skills associated with the adjustment of 33 children with ID who transitioned into general kindergarten classrooms in Australia and their respective kindergarten teachers. The researchers were specifically interested in identifying the skills teachers perceived critical for a successful transition, the skill performance of the children participants in the classrooms, and the association between observed skill performance and teachers’ perceptions of child performance and success in the classroom. Data were collected through two structured interviews with teachers (Term 2 and Term 4), classroom observations using the OPTIC (Merrett & Wheldall, 1986) and frequency counts of direction following. Findings indicate teachers reported “following teacher directions” (p.40) as the highest ranked skill overall. Teachers also consistently reported classroom skills, self-help skills, and compliance skills as important. Additionally, findings indicate a moderate association between the performance of certain skills (i.e., “following instruction immediately, responding to individual questions, and completing worksheets”, p. 41) and the perceived successful integration of children. Additionally, children who demonstrated better performance on classroom skills (following directions and on-task behavior) were perceived by teachers
to have transitioned successfully. Of interest, however, teacher perception of skill performance was weakly correlated with skill performance documented by trained observers.

McIntyre and colleagues (2006) examined whether specific child characteristics predict early adjustment to kindergarten, and whether children with ID and typically developing (TD) children differ on school adjustment and on possible predictors of adjustment (e.g., self-regulation, social skills, cognitive ability, adaptive behavior, and gender). Participants were 67 children with \( n = 24 \) and without \( n = 43 \) ID, their mothers, and their teachers. At 36 months of age, each child participated in a “delay of gratification” (p. 353) self-regulation task. At 60 months of age, the mother of each participant completed measures of adaptive behavior (Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales; Sparrow et al., 1994). Children were also assessed with the Stanford-Binet. In the spring of the kindergarten year, each mother and teacher completed a questionnaire related to the child’s social skills (Social Skills Rating System, Social Skills Scale; Gresham & Eliot, 1990). Teachers also completed the Teacher’s Report Form (TRF, Achenbach, 1991), the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991), and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001). Adaptation to school was scored as a composite from the TRF and the STRS. Findings indicate TD children generally demonstrated higher levels of self-regulation and social skills than children with ID. Additionally, self-regulation at 36 months, cognitive ability, and adaptive behavior were predictive of positive school adjustment. Teacher and parent reported social skills were also significantly associated with positive school adjustment. Gender was not. Overall,
teachers reported more problem behaviors and less positive student-teacher relationships for students with ID when compared to typically developing children.

**Summary of Factors Affecting Adjustment**

In summary, factors that affect the success of the transition and adjustment to formal school can be found both within the child and within the context of the transition. Characteristics that are inherently related to a disability (e.g., lower cognitive ability) accompany the child into the new setting, and may place the child at risk for a difficult transition and thwarted development (Geva et al., 2009; McIntyre et al., 2006). This is particularly the case for children who lack appropriate social skills when entering formal school (Geva et al., 2009; McIntyre et al., 2006). Children with disabilities may also be perceived as having more problem behaviors (Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2006), subsequently increasing the difficulty of inclusion. Furthermore, children with disabilities may have less positive relationships with their teachers (McIntyre et al., 2006), another factor that may jeopardize a successful transition (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Howes et al, 2000).

The literature also indicates contextual factors can affect the success of the transition to formal school, specifically, the classroom context (Reitveld, 2008; Troup & Malone, 2002; Vaughn, Reiss, Rothlein, & Hughes, 1999). The classroom environment may be a critical factor in the transition of children with disabilities who may be particularly sensitive (Koomen & Hoeksma, 2003) to the often significant differences between the ECSE environment and the formal school environment. The classroom atmosphere established by the teacher may be a contributing factor to the successful
inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classroom (Reitveld, 2008). Considering the ecological characteristics of some kindergarten classrooms (Troup & Malone, 2002), the difficulties that children with disabilities often experience when transitioning into inclusive kindergarten classrooms may be an indication of poor fit between the child and the classroom environment. Of particular concern are the findings that general education teachers may find it desirable to adapt the environment to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, but do not consider these adaptations feasible (Vaughn et al., 1999), further jeopardizing the adjustment to formal school. Additionally, the findings that teachers do not consider practices that support family involvement as feasible (Vaughan, 1999) contradicts the expressed needs of parents to be involved and prepared (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990), suggesting that there may also be a poor fit between teacher practices and parent concerns.

Findings from the literature in this review indicate children with disabilities may experience factors that can make the transition to formal school difficult and place them at risk for unsuccessful adjustment. There is indication that acquiring specific skills may be associated with successful adjustment to general kindergarten classrooms (Kemp & Carter, 2005). Little empirical evidence, however, is available to indicate what specific factors predict successful transitions and adjustment (e.g., McIntyre et al., 2006). Further investigations are needed to identify specific factors that promote successful transition and adjustment in the formal school setting for children with disabilities transitioning from ECSE preschool programs.
Constructs Related to Transition

Factors that may be related to the transition to formal school such as family preparation, receiving teacher support, and child adjustment to school are difficult to measure directly, and can be considered latent constructs (Hopwood, 2007). Findings in the literature, however, suggest potential observable indicators of these latent constructs. A conceptual model of latent constructs and potential observable indicators is provided in Figure 2.1. The following is a description of three latent constructs and the potentially related indicators identified in the literature.

![Conceptual model of latent constructs and potential observable indicators](image)

**Figure 2.1.** Conceptual model of school adjustment latent constructs and potential observable indicators. Latent constructs are represented in the figure by ovals. Observable indicators are represented in the figure by rectangles.
Child Adjustment to School

There is considerable discussion in the literature regarding what constitutes child adjustment to formal school (e.g., Bart et al., 2007; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Dockett & Perry, 2004). Measures of academic achievement and progress have traditionally been the determinant of successful adjustment (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Similar to the broadening perspectives of the transition to formal school (e.g., ecological perspective), the definition of a successful adjustment to school has also been broadened to include contextual factors beyond academics as indicators of adjustment (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Dockett and Perry (2004) conducted a survey with parents and teachers of typically developing children to identify what they perceived as indicators of successful adjustment to formal school. Findings from this survey indicate both parents and teachers considered a positive attitude toward school as an indicator of successful adjustment. Parents and teachers also considered the development of knowledge as an indicator of success; however, this was a greater priority for parents while teachers placed greater emphasis on adjusting to the classroom environment. Although there are differences in perceptions regarding the emphasis placed on academic and social performance during the initial transition to school (Baughan & Correa, 2011), there appears to be consensus that scholastic and socioemotional factors are both significant components of early school adjustment. Bart, Hajami, and Bar-Haim (2007) describe scholastic adjustment as “the child’s ability to meet academic demands, to be attentive, to participate in class activities, and become an independent student” and socioemotional adjustment as “the child’s ability to establish meaningful and positive relationships with
teachers and peers, and feel emotionally secure” (p.598). Betts and Rotenberg (2007) divided these types of skills into three factors that are perceived to reflect adjustment to formal school: (a) classroom competence and maturity, (b) appropriate on-task participation and involvement, and (c) positive dispositions toward school. Additionally, for young children with disabilities, successful integration can also be considered an indicator of successful adjustment (Chadwick & Kemp, 2002; Conn-Powers et al., 1990).

According to Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), it is critical to examine the contextual factors that directly and indirectly interact with and influence the child to get an accurate depiction of the competence of the child during the adjustment to school. Specifically, examining parent and teacher factors that directly and indirectly interact with children and may influence the adjustment to formal school for young children with disabilities could address the gap in the literature by identifying factors that may predict successful child adjustment to school.

**Family Preparation for Transition**

Family preparation for the transition to formal school may be an important factor related to the success of the transition process and subsequent adjustment. According to Deitz and Warkala (1993), the risk for a difficult transition can be reduced through preparation. Family involvement in transition planning and participation in transition activities are considered important factors related to family preparation (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler et al., 1988; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Janus et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 1986: Kemp, 2003). Parent involvement in transition planning and activities often includes involvement in IEP, transition, or informational meetings.
(Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; McIntyre et al., 2007); contributing to placement decisions (Johnson et al., 1986); communicating with sending and receiving teachers (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; McIntyre et al., 2007); visiting the new program (Johnson et al., 1986; McIntyre et al., 2007), and gathering information about transition (McIntyre et al., 2007). Parent perceptions of involvement and satisfaction with the transition process may serve as indicators of family preparation for the transition to formal school (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990).

**Receiving Teacher Support**

Teacher transition practices are perceived to be supportive of families and children during the transition process (Daley et al., 2011). The transition practices used by formal school teachers have received considerable attention in the literature (e.g., Ahtola et al., 2011; Early et al., 2001; Einarsdottir et al., 2008; La Paro et al., 2000; Pianta et al., 1999). Findings from the literature indicate specific transition practices have been used by receiving teachers to help parents plan and prepare for the transition to formal school (e.g., Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler et al., 1988; La Paro et al., 2000), but these practices tend to vary in level of intensity (La Paro et al., 2000). Teacher reports generally indicate that low-intensity practices (e.g., reviewing student written records, sending information) are more frequently used than high-intensity practices (e.g., home visits, visiting the preschool setting; La Paro et al., 2000). High- and low-intensity practices reported to have been used during the transition may serve as indicators of support provided by receiving teachers.
Conclusion

The transition to formal school is a critical period for the development of young children with disabilities. The level of success experienced during the adjustment to formal school can affect the developmental trajectory of a child and could be a determinant in whether or not placement in an inclusive environment will be maintained (Turnbull & Winton, 1983; Winton & Turnbull, 1981). Findings in the literature regarding the transition experience for families with children with disabilities appears to be consistent with the findings from research related to typically developing children and their families, with some indication that concerns and potential difficulties are intensified for children with disabilities and their families (Johnson et al., 1986; Kemp, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2010). Considering the greater concerns and potential barriers to successful transitions, the practices used with children with disabilities and their families are of particular interest. Findings from research related to practices used with children with disabilities and their families are generally consistent with findings from research related to typically developing children and their families, with minimal indication of practices that are tailored to the individual needs of students with disabilities (La Paro et al., 2000). The lack of studies related to factors associated with the successful adjustment of children with disabilities in this review compared to those examining typically developing children indicates a distinct gap in the research. Research related to typically developing children has considered multiple contextual and child level factors that are associated with successful school adjustment, including specific teacher practices that were associated with successful social and academic adjustment to formal school.
(LaCosale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008; Schulting et al., 2005). No studies that examine the association between transition practices and the adjustment of children with disabilities to formal school were able to be located for this review. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between specific factors and successful adjustment to formal school for children with disabilities.

This study addresses this gap in the research and adds to the literature by identifying factors that may be associated with the successful adjustment of children with disabilities who transition into formal school settings, specifically factors related to family preparation and receiving teacher support. In Chapter Three, an in-depth description of the methods used to investigate this topic is provided. This description includes (1) a restatement of the research question and hypotheses, (2) the design if the study, (3) the sampling procedure, (4) an explanation of the measures, (5) the procedures for conducting the study, and (6) the method of data analysis.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Young children with disabilities transitioning into formal school settings are at an increased risk for difficult school adjustment (Bart et al., 2007; Daley et al., in 2011; Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; McIntyre et al., 2010) and poor achievement. A review of the literature related to the transition to formal school indicates a need to examine the association between factors involved in the transition process and the successful adjustment of children with disabilities to the formal school setting. This study addressed this need by considering the predictive associations between factors related to child and family preparation and support during the transition and child adjustment to school. In this chapter, the methods that were used to conduct this study will be described. This description is presented in six sections: (1) the guiding research questions and hypotheses, (2) the design of the research study, (3) the settings and participants identified for participation, (4) the instrumentation, (5) the research procedures, and (6) analysis of the data.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that predict successful adjustment to school for children with disabilities. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

- Question 1: Does family preparation for transition, as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement, predict school adjustment?
Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between perceived family preparation (i.e., parent satisfaction and parent involvement) and the ratings of child adjustment to school.

Question 2: Does teacher support, as measured by the use of transition practices provided by receiving teachers, predict school adjustment?

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between reported teacher support (i.e. teacher practices) and the ratings of child adjustment to school.

These research questions reflect the theoretical framework of this study by considering the links that are created within the network of the child during the transition process. Specifically, these questions consider the links between parents and sending teachers, parents and receiving teachers, parents and children, and receiving teachers and children.

**Research Design**

This study used a correlational approach to examine the predictive associations between transition factors and the adjustment to school of young children with disabilities. The dependent variables were two indicators of child adjustment to school: (a) parent-reported child adjustment to school and (b) teacher-reported child adjustment to school. The independent variables were two indicators of family preparation, (a) parent involvement and (b) parent satisfaction, and two indicators of receiving teacher support, (a) total teacher practices, and (b) high-intensity teacher practices.
Settings and Participants Overview

The population of interest in this study was children with disabilities who transitioned into public formal school settings in Fall, 2011, their parents or caregivers, and their receiving teachers. The participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling by inviting all eligible caregivers or parents and kindergarten teachers identified by participating school districts to complete a transition survey.

Settings

Teachers of 35 public kindergarten classrooms representing 13 schools and six school districts participated in this study (three schools from district 1, four schools from district 2, one school from district 3, three schools from district 4, one school from district 5, and one school from district 6). These classrooms included three types of settings: general education classrooms (26 classrooms), developmental kindergarten classrooms (K-2; three classrooms), and self-contained classrooms (six classrooms). All but two of these classrooms were housed within a local public primary or elementary school. The two exceptions were housed within a public self-contained school that serves students aged preschool through 21 with significant disabilities. Seven of the schools serve children in prekindergarten through fifth grade; one school serves children in prekindergarten through second grade; one serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade; and three serve children in kindergarten through fourth grade. Six of the 13 participating schools had an overall low income level as indicated by Title I status. Table 3.1 includes additional descriptive data related to the participating classrooms.
Table 3.1

Descriptive Classroom Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=35</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental (K-2)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 Status</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental (K-2)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Eligible participants met the criteria for one of the following groups:

1. a child with an identified disability who transitioned into a public kindergarten program in Fall, 2011;
2. a parent or caregiver (hereafter referred to as parent) of an eligible child; or
3. a general education or special education kindergarten teacher of an eligible child.

Participating school districts identified 171 children with an identified disability who entered public kindergarten programs in Fall, 2011. Data were obtained on 109 of these children (64% response rate); however, the data related to 14 children had to be discarded because the children did not qualify under the above described eligibility requirements. Data included in this study were obtained on 86 eligible children (50%
response rate) through teacher surveys (n=64) and parent surveys (n=31); data from both a teacher and a parent survey were available for nine of these children. Of the children on which parents reported, 77.4% were male, 22.6% female; 77.4% were White, 9.7% African-American, 6.5% Hispanic/Latino, 3.2% of multiple origins, and 3.2% other; and the mean age of the children was 5 years 11 months. Of the children on which teachers reported demographic information, 81.8% were male, 18.2% female; 51.3% were White, 35.9% African-American, 7.7% Hispanic/Latino, and 5.1% of multiple origins; and the mean age of children was 5 years 11 months. Table 3.2 includes additional descriptive data related to participating students.

Of the 171 parent surveys that were disseminated, data were obtained from 31 eligible parents (13% response rate). Of the eligible parent surveys that were returned (N=31), the majority (80.6%) were completed by a biological mother (n=25). Table 3.3 includes additional descriptive data related to participating parents.

Of the 191 teacher surveys that were disseminated, data were obtained from 64 teacher surveys representing 35 different eligible teachers (34% response rate). Of the reporting teachers (N=35), the majority were white females (n=33) with certification in multiple areas (n=21) and a mean of 12.2 years of teaching experience (range=.25-30 years). Table 3.4 includes additional descriptive data related to participating teachers.
### Table 3.2

**Descriptive Child Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percentage (N=64)</th>
<th>Percentage (N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Socioeconomic Status c</td>
<td></td>
<td>65(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Kindergarten Classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>58(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>33(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental (K-2)</td>
<td>9(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Delay</td>
<td>19(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/Language</td>
<td>42(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>15(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Services Being Received</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Therapy</td>
<td>77(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>35(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy</td>
<td>6(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABA Therapy</td>
<td>3(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Support</td>
<td>3(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Support</td>
<td>3(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**

\(^a\) Based on data obtained through teacher report  
\(^b\) Based on data obtained through parent report  
\(^c\) A proxy of free and reduced lunch was used to determine socioeconomic status.
Table 3.3

**Descriptive Parent Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to Child</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Parent</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Parent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Guardian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/Living with Partner</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Degree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4

Descriptive Teacher Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>N=35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African America</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree (^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Certification (^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood/Primary Grades</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Areas</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Teaching Experience (^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool/Prekindergarten</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Kindergarten</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
\(^a\) Highest degree sums to more than 100% because of rounding.
\(^b\) Certification and Experience will not sum to 100% because several participants indicated certification and experience in more than one area.

Instrumentation

Two questionnaires were used for this study: the Transition to School Parent Survey (TSPS; see Appendix B) and the Transition to School Teacher Survey (TSTSS; see Appendix B). The TSPS is a survey that was compiled from measures used in previous research with additional researcher-developed items that was used to assess parent
involvement in and satisfaction with the transition process, and parent perceptions of the child’s adjustment to school. The TSPS included 46 items related to the following domains: child demographics (Part 1, 6 items), parent involvement in transition (Part 2, 14 items), parent satisfaction with transition (Part 3, 5 items), child adjustment to school (Part 4, 10 items), and parent and family demographics (Part 5, 11 items). The TSTS was also compiled from measures used in previous research with additional researcher-developed items, and was used to assess teacher transition practices and teacher perceptions of the adjustment to school. The TSTS included 41 items related to the following domains: teacher and classroom demographics (Part 1, 13 items), transition practices (Part 2, 11 items), and the child’s adjustment to school (Part 3, 17 items). Table 3.5 provides a summary of the scores derived from each subscale of the questionnaires.

Following is a description of how the different parts of these questionnaires related to the independent and dependent variables in this study.

**Parent Involvement (Independent Variable)**

Parent Involvement was measured in Part 2: Involvement in Transition of the TSPS using 14-items from the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition survey (FEIT; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). FEIT is a survey that investigates family perceptions of their involvement in and experience during the transition process (McIntyre et al., 2007). This survey is divided into five sections (child education history, parent concerns regarding kindergarten transition; identified needs during transition, parent involvement in kindergarten transition practices, and family demographic information; McIntyre et al., 2007, p.416). Three of these sections were of interest in this
study (child educational history, family involvement in transition-related activities, and family demographic information) and were included in the parent questionnaire. The family involvement section contained 14 specified transition-related activities to which parents chose one of three options to indicate if this was an activity they “participated in,” they “wanted to participate in but didn’t,” or they “didn’t participate in and did not wish to” during the transition process (see questionnaire items I.1-I.14 in Appendix B). Following the procedure of Quintero and McIntyre (2011), a total parent participation score for each parent was derived by summing the transition activities to which parents responded they “participated in.” Permission to use this measure was obtained from the authors on July 1, 2011. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess internal-consistency reliability of the parent involvement subscale. Based on the guidelines of Cronk (2012), this subscale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability ($\alpha = .799$).

**Parent Satisfaction (Independent Variable)**

Parent satisfaction was measured in Part 3: My Satisfaction with the Transition of the TSPS. This section contained five items: four items from the “Satisfaction Factor” of the Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) parent transition questionnaire that was used to measure perceived satisfaction with the transition process (see questionnaire items S.1-S.4 in Appendix B) and one item that was researcher developed (item S.5 in Appendix B). As reported by Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990), a factor analysis was conducted on their original 91-item questionnaire to identify associations among items. Four factors were identified in this analysis (Factor 1: Satisfaction Factor; Factor 2:
Importance of Service Relationships; Factor 3: Explanation and Support; Factor 4: Importance of Preparation). The four items from the Satisfaction Factor were adapted and included in the parent questionnaire for this study. Parents responded to the five items in this subscale by indicating a rating for each item on a five-point Likert-type scale with a rating of “5” being “agree” and a rating of “1” being “strongly disagree.” A total satisfaction score for each parent was computed by taking the mean of the parent ratings. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess internal-consistency reliability of the parent satisfaction subscale. Based on the guidelines of Cronk (2012), this subscale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability (α=.890).

Teacher Practices (Independent Variables)

Total, and high- and low-intensity receiving teacher practices were measured in Part 2: Transition Practices of the TSTS. These items were adapted from the 11 items included in the transition practices questionnaire used by Daley and colleagues (2011) to investigate the reported use of transition practices by receiving teachers. Based on the work of Pianta and colleagues (1999) and LaParo and colleagues (2000), Daley and colleagues (2011) divided these practices into two categories: high-intensity practices (6 items; see items P.2, P.6, P.7, P.9, P.10, and P.11 in Appendix B) and low intensity practices (5 items; see items P.1, P.3, P.4, P.5, and P.8 in Appendix B). Teachers completed this section of the questionnaire by indicating whether or not they used each specified practice. Three scores were derived from this subscale. Following the procedures of Daley and colleagues (2011), a score for high intensity practices was computed by summing the number of high-intensity practices the teacher reported.
Likewise, a score for low intensity practices was computed by summing the number of low-intensity practices the teacher reported (possible score of 0-5). In addition, a third score for total practices was derived from the questionnaire by summing the total number of transition practices the teacher reported (possible score of 0-11). The estimated time for teachers to complete this portion of the questionnaire was 10 minutes. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess internal-consistency reliability of the three subscales related to teacher practices. Based on the guidelines of Cronk (2012), the total teacher practices subscale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability ($\alpha=.713$). When the total practices scale was divided into two subscales (i.e., high-intensity practices and low-intensity practices), the high-intensity scale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability ($\alpha=.719$); however, the low-intensity practices subscale dropped below an acceptable level ($\alpha=.207$). Because the low-intensity practices subscale did not demonstrate an acceptable level of internal consistency-reliability, this scale was not used in analysis. Both the total teacher practices scale and the high-intensity scale were used in analysis.

**Parent-reported Child Adjustment to School (Dependent Variable)**

Parent-reported school adjustment was measured in Part 4: My Child’s Adjustment to School of the TSPS. This section included ten items, three of which were derived from questionnaires in previous research (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Forest et al., 2004; Kemp, 2003) and seven developed by the researcher based on the literature. Parents completed this section by rating the first eight items on a five-point Likert-type scale with a rating of “5” being “agree” and “1” being “strongly disagree” (see items
P.A.1- P.A.8 in Appendix B). A total parent rating of adjustment score was computed by taking the mean response of these eight items. The final two items (see items P.A.9- P.A. 10 in Appendix B) were open-ended questions. Responses to these questions were not included in this analysis. The estimated time for parents to complete this section of the questionnaire was 5 minutes. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess internal-consistency reliability of the parent-rated child adjustment to school subscale. Based on the guidelines of Cronk (2012), this subscale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability (α= .938).

Teacher-reported Child Adjustment to School (Dependent Variable)

Teacher-reported school adjustment was measured in Part 3: Child’s Adjustment to School of the TSTS. The first 16 items included in this section were taken from the Short Form Teacher Rating Scale of School Adjustment (STRSSA; Betts & Rotenberg, 2007), a 16-item questionnaire derived from the Teacher Rating of School Adjustment that examines teacher perceptions of children’s adjustment to school (Birch & Ladd, 1997). The items included in this measure were associated with three factors (e.g., maturity, positive orientation, and classroom involvement) and were rated on a three-point Likert-type scale. Teachers completed the scale by indicating if the item “doesn’t apply” (0), “applies sometimes” (1), or “certainly applies” (2) to the child (see items A.1- A.16 in Appendix B). A total teacher-reported adjustment score was computed by summing the ratings of the 16 items (possible score of 0- 32). According to Betts and Rotenberg (2007), the STRSSA was found to have acceptable internal consistency (α= .89) as well as stability over one year (r(205)=.45, p<.001). The final item (see TA. 17 in
Appendix B) was a researcher developed open-ended question. Responses to this question were not included in this analysis. Permission to use this measure was received from the authors on July 4, 2011. The estimated time for teachers to complete this section of the questionnaire was 10 minutes. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess internal-consistency reliability of the teacher-rated child adjustment to school subscale. Based on the guidelines of Cronk (2012), this subscale was found to have an acceptable level of internal-consistency reliability ($\alpha = .926$). Specific findings for each subscale can be found in Table 3.6.
Table 3.5

*Summary of Derived Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Category</th>
<th>Type of Score</th>
<th>Item Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Range of Possible Scores)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement</td>
<td>Sum of Involvement Activities (0-14)</td>
<td>TSPS, Part 2, I.1-I.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Satisfaction</td>
<td>Mean of Ratings (0-5)</td>
<td>TSPS, Part 3, S.1-S.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-intensity Practices</td>
<td>Sum of High-intensity Practices (0-6)</td>
<td>TSTS, Part 2, P.2, P.6, P.7, P.9, P.10, P.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-intensity Practices</td>
<td>Sum of Low-intensity Practices (0-5)</td>
<td>TSTS, Part 2, P.1, P.3, P.4, P.5, P.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Teacher Practices</td>
<td>Sum of Teacher Practices (0-11)</td>
<td>TSTS, Part 2, P.1-P.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-rated Child Adjustment</td>
<td>Mean of Ratings (0-5)</td>
<td>TSPS, Part 4, PA.1-PA.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-rated Child Adjustment</td>
<td>Sum of Teacher Scores (0-32)</td>
<td>TSTS, Part 3, TA.1-TA16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.6

Subscale Internal Consistency Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Practices</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.713*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Intensity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.719*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Intensity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.799*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.890*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-rated Child Adjustment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.936*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-rated Child Adjustment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.938*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Indicates an acceptable α of higher than .7.  *a A combined scale that includes both high- and low-intensity practices

Research Procedures

Before conducting this study, permission from the institutional review board of Clemson University and all participating school districts or schools was obtained. Six districts approved participation.

Following approval, the researcher obtained a list of potential participants from participating school districts or schools. Three of the districts provided a total number of eligible children, parents, and teachers for the entire district. Three of the districts required the researcher to contact individual schools (18 schools) to obtain the number of eligible participants for each school. One hundred seventy-one eligible students and their respective parents and kindergarten teachers (special education and general education) were identified as potential participants, resulting in the dissemination of 362 surveys (171 parent surveys and 191 teacher surveys). All survey materials were hand delivered to either the district office or the school principal. Following delivery of the packets, the
researcher also sent a follow-up email to the respective contacts to verify that the materials had been received. Table 3.7 includes a summary of the data collection sites.

Based on the recommendations of Kaplowitz, Hadlock, and Levine (2004), a letter of invitation and a paper mailed survey were used to maximize the potential response rate. The researcher contacted identified classroom teachers through the designated district or school contact by sending a letter describing the purpose of the research project, the expectations of the participants, and assurances of confidentiality. Teachers also received a copy of the parent invitation letter to be sent home with eligible students. Within the same week of receiving the invitation letters, each teacher was to receive a survey packet for each identified child in the classroom that included a consent form and the teacher questionnaire with a stamped and addressed return envelope. Classroom teachers also received a parent packet to be sent home with each eligible child in the classroom. The parent packet included a consent form and the parent questionnaire with a stamped and addressed return envelope. All responses, including consent forms and surveys, were mailed directly to the researcher. Two weeks before the end of the data collection period, the researcher mailed a reminder postcard for teachers and parents to either the district contact or the school principal with a request to disseminate the reminders. Materials included in the teacher and parent packets can be found in Appendix A.

Data collection occurred during the fifth through twelfth weeks of school (e.g., Margetts, 2009; Rous et al., 2007) in the fall of 2011. This time frame was chosen because the focus of this investigation was on the adjustment of the child following the
initial entrance into school (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989). Young children, including children with disabilities, have been found to demonstrate adjustment to a new school setting after five weeks (Koomen & Hoeksma, 2003). Rous and colleagues (2007) describe the “critical window of time” for children to adapt and engage in the new environment as the first four to twelve weeks of school. Although, children can continue to progress after the first 12 weeks, this growth is more likely to be an indicator of classroom instruction (Rous et al., 2007) rather than an indicator of effective transition preparation and support. Because this study explored the association of transition factors and school adjustment, only questionnaires returned within the first five weeks (or 25 days) to 12 weeks (or 60 days) of school were included in the analysis. Included surveys indicated that children on which parents reported had completed an average of 9.25 weeks of school at the time of survey completion (range 5 to 12 weeks); children on which teachers reported had completed an average of 8.68 weeks of school (range 6 to 12 weeks of school). Table 3.7 includes a summary of the data collection period.
Table 3.7

Data Collection Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Data Collection Period 2011</th>
<th>Reminder Date 2011</th>
<th>Number of Parent Surveys (N=171)</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Surveys (N=191)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ormond</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellburg 4</td>
<td>Woodland El.</td>
<td>9/22-11/14</td>
<td>10/25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellburg 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellburg 7</td>
<td>Martin-Tinley</td>
<td>9/19-11/08</td>
<td>10/25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alderson 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>Andler El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crossman El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darmanville El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forest Crest El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamond El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lawrence El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Main El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chester Road El.</td>
<td>10/11-12/2</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Data collection periods extend from the 25th day of school through the 60th day of school for each school district, excluding student holidays.
**Data Analysis**

The primary method of analysis for this study was regression. Regression is appropriate for examining the predictive relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Both bivariate and multivariate regression models were computed. Table 3.8 includes a summary of analyses.

Based on an apriori power analysis using G*Power (Erfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996), a minimum of 85 parent-teacher dyads was needed to detect a medium effect-sized association between family preparation (as measured by parent involvement and parent satisfaction) and teacher support (as measured by high-intensity teacher practices and low-intensity teacher practices) and child adjustment to school. This number was based on using four predictor variables, and a power of .80 (Lenth, 2001) for an alpha level of .05. Data from nine parent-teacher dyads were obtained. Because of the minimal data obtained from parent-teacher dyads, analyses focused on detecting a predictive association between (1) family preparation (as measured by parent involvement and parent satisfaction) and parent-rated child adjustment to school and (2) teacher support (as measured by high- and low-intensity practices) and teacher-rated child adjustment to school. A second apriori power analysis using G*Power (Erfelder et al., 1996) indicated that a minimum of 68 parent and 68 teacher surveys was needed to detect a medium effect-sized association between family preparation (as measured by parent involvement and parent satisfaction) and parent-rated child adjustment to school and between teacher support (as measured by high- and low-intensity practices) and teacher-rated child
adjustment to school. This number was based on using two predictors, and a power of .80 (Lenth 2001) for an alpha level of .05. A third apriori power analysis using G*Power (Erfelder et al., 1996) indicated that a minimum of 55 teacher surveys was needed to detect a medium effect-sized association between total teacher practices or high-intensity practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school. This number was based on using one predictor, and a power of .80 (Lenth 2001) for an alpha level of .05. Data from 31 parent surveys and 64 teacher surveys were obtained. All analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics Package 20.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Independent Variable Measures</th>
<th>Dependent Variable Measures</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does family preparation for transition, as measured by parent involvement and parent satisfaction, predict school adjustment?</td>
<td>Parent Involvement Score(^1) Parent Satisfaction Scale(^2)</td>
<td>Parent-rated Child Adjustment to School (^4,5,6)</td>
<td>Bivariate Regression Multivariate Regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does teacher support, as measured by teacher practices, provided by receiving teachers predict school adjustment?</td>
<td>Total Teacher Practices(^3) High-Intensity Practices Score(^3)</td>
<td>Teacher-rated Child Adjustment to School(^7)</td>
<td>Bivariate Regression Multivariate Regression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
\(^1\) TSPS Part 2, From Quintero & McIntyre (2011). Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT)
\(^2\) TSPS Part 3, From Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman (1990). Factor 1: Satisfaction Factor
\(^3\) TSTS Part 2, Adapted from Daley et al., (2011). Transition Practices
\(^4\) TSPS Part 4, Adapted from Conn-Powers et al. (1990)
\(^5\) TSPS Part 4, Adapted from Forest et al., (2004)
\(^6\) TSPS Part 4, Adapted from Kemp (2003)
\(^7\) TSTS Part 3, From Betts & Rotenberg (2007). Short Form Teacher Rating Scale of School Adjustment (STRSSA)
**Bivariate Regression Analysis**

Bivariate regression is used to predict the score of a quantitative dependent variable (e.g., parent-rated child adjustment to school) from a quantitative independent variable (e.g., parent involvement; Mertler & Vanetta, 2005). Four bivariate regression equations were computed to examine the predictive associations among the independent and dependent variables in the study.

**Multivariate Regression Analysis**

Multivariate regression is used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable (e.g., parent-rated child adjustment to school and teacher-rated child adjustment to school) and any number of predictors, and is appropriate to answer the research questions concerning the association between family preparation and teacher support and ratings of child adjustment to school. Four multivariate regression equations were computed, the first entering the two independent variables related to family preparation (parent involvement, parent satisfaction) as simultaneous predictors of parent-reported child adjustment to school, the second entering the two independent variables related to family preparation (parent involvement and parent satisfaction) as simultaneous predictors of parent-reported child adjustment while controlling for parent and child demographic variables, the third entering total teacher practices as a predictor of teacher-reported child adjustment to school while controlling for teacher and child variables, and the fourth entering high-intensity practices as a predictor of teacher-reported child adjustment to school while controlling for teacher and child demographic variables.
Covariates

Demographic information was obtained on children, parents, and teachers to provide descriptive data, as well as to serve as potential covariates. Covariates are secondary variables that can affect the relationship between the dependent variable (e.g., ratings of adjustment) and the independent variables of interest (e.g., parent involvement and parent satisfaction). Covariates were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) there was a level of variability in the responses related to the demographic to warrant consideration as a variable, and (2) Pearson’s correlation coefficients indicated the variable was associated with the outcome variable, or (3) Pearson’s correlation coefficients indicated the variable was associated with an outcome variable or predictor variable. This analysis controlled for covariates on the child, family, and teacher levels. The child variables controlled for included the child’s race and severity of disability (Note: a proxy of class type was used to identify children with more significant disabilities. Children whose primary placement was in a setting other than the general education classroom were coded as children with more significant disabilities). Family variables included parent’s age. Teacher variables included Title 1 status, certification in special education, and professional development in transition.

In Chapter Four, a description of the results of this investigation is provided. This description includes both descriptive data and the results of the regression analyses. A discussion of these results is found in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that predict successful adjustment to school for children with disabilities transitioning into public formal school settings. Parent and teacher surveys were used to gather data related to family preparation for the transition, teacher support during the transition, and child adjustment to school. A correlational approach was used to detect associations between family preparation (as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement) and teacher support (as measured by teacher practices) and child adjustment to school. In this chapter, the results of this study will be described. These results are presented in three sections: (1) results related to family preparation, (2) results related to teacher support, and (3) a summary of the findings. A discussion of these results is found in Chapter Five.

Family Preparation

The first research question examined in this study was: Does family preparation for transition, as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement, predict school adjustment? It was hypothesized that family preparation, as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement, would have a positive correlation with ratings of child adjustment to school.

Parent Satisfaction

Data related to parent satisfaction were collected using the Parent Satisfaction Scales of the TSPS (Part 3). A total satisfaction score for each parent was computed by taking the mean of the parent ratings across the five items in this subscale. Data on
parent satisfaction were obtained from 31 parent questionnaires. Findings indicate that parents reported, on average, a satisfaction rating of 4.34 ($SD= 0.94$; range $= 1.2-5.0$), suggesting parents as a whole were satisfied with their transition process. Table 4.1 includes the mean ratings of satisfaction for all parents for each item in the satisfaction subscale.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with current placement.</td>
<td>4.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was prepared for transition by my child’s preschool staff.</td>
<td>4.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with my role in my child’s transition.</td>
<td>4.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my child’s transition I felt involved.</td>
<td>4.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had great influence on the decisions made at the transition meeting.</td>
<td>4.129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $^5$ = Agree, $^4$ = Somewhat agree, $^3$ = Neither agree not disagree, $^2$ = Disagree, $^1$ = Strongly Disagree.

**Parent Involvement**

Data related to parent involvement were collected using the Parent Involvement Scale of the TSPS (Part 2). A total parent involvement score was computed by summing the number of transition activities the parent reported they “participated in.” Data on parent involvement were obtained from 31 parent questionnaires. Findings indicate that parents reported, on average, involvement in 9.68 transition activities ($SD= 3.17$; range $= 1-14$). The percentage of parents reporting involvement in each type of activity can be found in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2

*Percentages Rank Ordered of Parent Involvement in Transition Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of Parents (N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended annual meeting at preschool</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited the kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended kindergarten registration</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had monthly contact with preschool</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended kindergarten open house</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received written communication about transition from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kindergarten</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended transition meeting at preschool</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a transition information meeting</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received written communication about transition from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preschool</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended transition meeting at kindergarten</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a kindergarten orientation</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a phone call from the kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was part of the transition team</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a home visit from the kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family Preparation and School Adjustment**

To answer the question of whether or not family preparation for the transition predicts school adjustment, both bivariate and multivariate regressions were conducted to predict parent-rated child adjustment to school (TSPS, Part 4) based on total parent involvement (TSPS, Part 2) and mean parent satisfaction ratings (TSPS, Part 3).
**Pearson correlation coefficients.** Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the associations among independent variables, dependent variables, and covariates related to family preparation. The strongest associations were related to parent satisfaction and parent involvement. Specifically, a large (Cohen, 1988) positive association was found for satisfaction and parent-rated child adjustment to school suggesting that as parent perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process increase, parent-ratings of child adjustment to school also increase. Additionally, a moderate (Cohen, 1998) positive association between involvement and satisfaction suggests that as parent involvement increases, parent satisfaction with the transition process also increases. A large (Cohen, 1988) negative association, however, was found for parent involvement and child race suggesting that children in this sample whose race/ethnicity was non-White were less likely to have parents who perceived themselves as involved in the transition process. Parent’s age was also found to have a moderate (Cohen, 1988) positive association with child race suggesting that children in this sample whose ethnicity/race was non-White were more likely to have parents who were older. A moderate (Cohen, 1998) negative association was also found between satisfaction and parent age suggesting that younger parents in this sample were more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the transition process than older parents. Table 4.3 includes a correlation matrix of the variables related to family preparation.
Table 4.3

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Variables Related to Family Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parent-rated child adjustment to school</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parent’s age</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Child’s race</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.390*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction</td>
<td>.677**</td>
<td>-.393*</td>
<td>-.168</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Involvement</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.229</td>
<td>-.566**</td>
<td>.360*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05. **p < .001.

**Bivariate regression results.** Two bivariate regressions were conducted to examine to what degree each independent variable predicts the dependent variable. The first bivariate regression was conducted to predict parent-rated child adjustment to school based on parent satisfaction. A significant finding emerged ($F (1,29) = 24.545, p < .001; \textit{Beta} = .677$), with an $R^2$ of .458, suggesting a large association (Cronk, 2012) between parent satisfaction and parent-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 45.8% of the variance in parent-rated child adjustment to school scores. Satisfaction was a significant predictor ($\textit{Beta} = .677, p < .001$) of parent-rated child adjustment. The second bivariate regression was conducted to predict parent-rated child adjustment to school based on parent involvement. The regression indicated that parent involvement did not significantly predict parent-rated child adjustment to school ($F (1,29) = .056, p > .05; \textit{Beta} = -.044$).
**Multivariate regression results.** The first multivariate regression (Model 1) was conducted by entering the two independent variables related to family preparation (parent involvement, parent satisfaction) as simultaneous predictors of parent-rated child adjustment to school. A significant regression equation was found ($F (2,28) = 17.336, p < .001$), with an $R^2$ of .553, suggesting a large association (Cronk, 2012) between parent satisfaction and involvement and parent-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 55.3% of the variance in parent-rated child adjustment to school scores. Both satisfaction and involvement were significant predictors ($Beta = .796, p < .001$ for satisfaction; $Beta = -.330, p < .05$ for involvement) with higher levels of parent satisfaction associated with higher parent ratings of child adjustment to school, and higher levels of parent involvement associated with lower levels of parent ratings of child adjustment.

In order to account for the potential effects of the covariates, a second multivariate regression equation (Model 2) was conducted by entering the two independent variables related to family preparation (parent satisfaction and parent involvement) as simultaneous predictors of parent-rated child adjustment to school while also controlling for the parent covariate (parent’s age) and the child covariate (child race). A significant regression equation was found ($F (4,26) = 9.612, p < .001$), with an $R^2$ of .597, suggesting a large association (Cronk, 2012) between parent satisfaction and involvement and parent-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 59.7% of the variance in parent-rated child adjustment to school scores when parent’s age and child’s race were controlled for in the analysis. Satisfaction was a significant predictor ($Beta = \ldots$)
.854, \( p < .001 \) of parent-rated child adjustment to school; however, parent involvement was no longer a significant predictor. Table 4.4 includes a summary of the multivariate analyses related to family preparation.

Table 4.4

*Multivariate Regression Results Related to Family Preparation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Beta</th>
<th>Model 2 Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.796**</td>
<td>.854**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>-.330*</td>
<td>-.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s age</td>
<td></td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s race</td>
<td></td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F )</td>
<td>17.336**</td>
<td>9.612**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( N=31 \). * \( p < .05 \). ** \( p < .001 \).

**Open-ended parent responses.** The final question on the TSPS was an open-ended question that asked: Is there anything else you would like me to know about your child’s transition to kindergarten? Although responses to this question were not formally analyzed in this investigation, three general trends were noted in the responses. First, parents described specific behaviors demonstrated by the children that reflected a positive transition (e.g., a reduction in tantrums during the school day, increased excitement about school and learning, and progress related to the child’s area of concern such as social progress, increased speech, and academic growth). Second, parents reflected on the preschool’s role in preparing the child for the transition (e.g., the willingness of the
preschool teacher to help and give advice to the kindergarten teacher). Finally, parents described specific ways the kindergarten teacher supported the child and the family during the transition (e.g., making the child “feel very special,” and sending a note to welcome the child to the classroom).

**Teacher Support**

The second research question examined in this study was: Does teacher support, as measured by teacher practices provided by receiving teachers, predict school adjustment? It was hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between reported teacher support (i.e., teacher practices) and the ratings of child adjustment to school.

**Teacher Practices**

Data related to teacher practices were collected using the Transition Practices subscale of the TSTS (Part 2). This subscale contained 11 items representing specific transition practices. Teachers completed this section of the questionnaire by indicating whether or not they used each specified practice. Data on teacher practices were obtained from 64 teacher questionnaires. Findings indicate that teachers reported, on average, the use of 7.58 total transition activities ($SD= 2.18$; range= 3-11), 3.16 high-intensity practices ($SD=1.73$; range= 0-6), and 4.42 low-intensity practices ($SD=.773$; range= 2-5) with each child, suggesting that teachers were more likely to engage in low-intensity practices than high-intensity practices. The percentages of use reported for each transition practice can be found in Table 4.5.
Table 4.5

*Percentages Rank Ordered for Teacher use of Transition Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Practices</th>
<th>Percentage of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducted an open house(^a)</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent visits to the kindergarten class(^a)</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent a letter to parents(^a)</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received and reviewed written records(^a)</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent a flyer of informational brochure(^a)</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in IEP development(^b)</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed individualized preparation strategies(^b)</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited the child’s preschool setting(^b)</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with sending teacher(^b)</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed a phone call to the parents(^b)</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited the child’s home(^b)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* \(^a\) low-intensity practices. \(^b\) high-intensity practices

**Teacher Support and School Adjustment**

To answer the question of whether or not teacher support predicts school adjustment, both bivariate and multivariate regressions were conducted to predict teacher-rated child adjustment to school (TSTS, Part 3) based on total teacher practices scores and total high-intensity teacher practices scores (TSTS, Part 2).

**Pearson correlation coefficients.** Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the associations among independent variables, dependent variables, and covariates related to teacher support. The strongest correlations were related to severity of disability. Specifically, a large (Cohen, 1988) negative association was found for severity and teacher-rated child adjustment suggesting that children with more significant
disabilities (i.e., primary setting is not in the general education classroom) were more likely to have lower teacher ratings of adjustment to school than children who were not identified with more significant disabilities (i.e., primary setting is in the general education classroom); and a large (Cohen, 1988) positive association was found for severity and the total number of high-intensity practices used by receiving teachers and teacher certification in special education suggesting that teachers of children with more significant disabilities were more likely to have certification in special education and to use more high-intensity practices to prepare families. Similarly, a moderate (Cohen, 1988) positive association was found for severity and the number of total teacher practices suggesting that teachers used a greater number of transition practices (low- and high- intensity) with children with more significant disabilities. A moderate (Cohen, 1988) positive association was found for teacher practices (high-intensity and total teacher practices) and certification in special education and participation in professional development suggesting that teachers with certification in special education and teachers who had participated in professional development related to transition were more likely to use more high-intensity practices and more transition practices overall (low- and high-intensity) to prepare families. Professional development was found to have a moderate (Cohen, 1988) negative association with certification and a moderate (Cohen. 1988) positive association with Title I status, suggesting that teachers in Title I schools were more likely to have participated in professional development related to transition while teachers with special education certification were less likely to have participated in professional development related to transition. Significant moderate associations were
also found for students and teachers from Title I schools. Specifically, a moderate (Cohen, 1988) positive association was found for Title I status and teacher-rated child adjustment to school suggesting that children in Title I schools in this sample were more likely to receive higher ratings of adjustment to school than children in schools that did not have Title I status; however, a moderate (Cohen, 1988) negative association was found for severity and Title I status suggesting that children with more significant disabilities in this sample were less likely to be in a Title I school. Similarly, a moderate (Cohen, 1988) negative association between certification and Title I status also indicates that teachers with certification in special education in this sample were less likely to be in schools with Title I status. Table 4.6 includes a correlation matrix of the variables related to teacher support in Model 1 (total teacher practices). Table 4.7 includes a correlation matrix of the variables related to teacher support in Model 2 (high-intensity practices).
### Table 4.6

**Pearson Correlation Matrix of Variables Related to Teacher Support (Model 1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher-rated child adjustment to school</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Title 1</td>
<td>.467**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Severity</td>
<td>-.585**</td>
<td>-.331*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Certification</td>
<td>-.589**</td>
<td>-.488**</td>
<td>.776**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Professional Development</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.333*</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.293*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Total Practices</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.459**</td>
<td>.330*</td>
<td>.358*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .01. **p < .001.

### Table 4.7

**Pearson Correlation Matrix of Variables Related to Teacher Support (Model 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher-rated child adjustment to school</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Title 1</td>
<td>.467**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Severity</td>
<td>-.585**</td>
<td>-.331*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Certification</td>
<td>-.589**</td>
<td>-.488**</td>
<td>.776**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Professional Development</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.333*</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.293*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. High-intensity Practices</td>
<td>-.305*</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.512**</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td>.324*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .01. **p < .001.
**Bivariate regression results.** Two bivariate regressions were calculated to examine to what degree each independent variable predicts the dependent variable. The first bivariate regression was conducted to predict teacher-rated child adjustment to school based on total teacher practices. The regression equation was not significant ($F (1,62) = 2.409, p > .05$). The measure of total teacher practices was not a significant predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school. The second bivariate regression was conducted to predict teacher-rated child adjustment to school based on total high-intensity practices. A significant regression equation was found ($F (1,62) = 6.354, p < .05$), with an $R^2$ of .093, suggesting a moderate (Cronk, 2012) association between high-intensity practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 9.3% of the variance in teacher ratings of child adjustment to school. High-intensity practices was a significant predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school ($Beta = -.305, p < .05$). Additionally, the significant negative correlation between high-intensity practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school suggests that as the number of high-intensity practices used to prepare a family increases, the teacher ratings of child adjustment to school decreases.

**Multivariate regression results.** To account for the potential effects of covariates, two multivariate regression equations were conducted. The first multivariate regression (Model 1) was conducted by entering the total teacher practices as a predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school while controlling for child (severity of disability) and teacher (Title 1 school, certification in special education, professional development in transition) variables. A significant regression equation was found ($F$
(F(5, 58) = 9.478, p < .001), with an $R^2$ of .450, suggesting a large (Cronk, 2012) association between total teacher practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 45% of the variance in teacher-rated child adjustment to school scores when severity of disability, Title 1 school status, teacher certification in special education, and teacher professional development in transition is controlled for in the analysis. Total teacher practices was not a significant predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school ($Beta = .046, p > .05$).

The second multivariate regression equation (Model 2) was conducted by entering high-intensity practices as a predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school while controlling for child (severity of disability) and teacher (Title 1 school, certification in special education, professional development in transition) variables. A significant regression equation was found (F(5, 58) = 9.450, p < .001), with an $R^2$ of .449, suggesting a large association (Cronk, 2012) between high-intensity practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school that accounted for 44.9% of the variance in teacher-rated child adjustment to school scores when severity of disability, Title 1 school status, teacher certification in special education, and teacher professional development in transition is controlled for in the analysis. High-intensity practices was not a significant predictor of teacher-rated child adjustment to school ($Beta = -.029, p > .05$). Table 4.8 includes a summary of the multivariate analyses related to teacher support.
Table 4.8

**Multivariate Regression Results Related to Teacher Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Beta</th>
<th>Model 2 Beta</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Practices</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-intensity</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.029</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>-.314</td>
<td>-.293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.288*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
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<td>-.239</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>-.102</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 $R^2$</th>
<th>Model 2 $R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>9.478**</td>
<td>9.450**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=64. *$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.

**Open-ended teacher responses.** The final question on the TSTS was an open-ended question that asked: Is there anything else you would like me to know about this child’s transition to kindergarten? Although responses to this question were not formally analyzed in this investigation, four general trends were noted in the responses. First, teachers described specific concerns related to the child within the classroom (e.g., difficulty with transitions during the school day, aggressive behaviors, lack of attention, motor skills deficits). Second, teachers provided specific examples of progress the child had made (e.g., academics, increases in speech, and improvement in behavior). Third, teachers described examples of how they supported individual children and families (e.g., maintaining close contact with the parents, developing positive relationships with
families, and obtaining shadow support). Finally, teachers described basic information related to the child’s previous or current placement (e.g., perceptions of an inappropriate kindergarten placement, preschool and kindergarten placements were within the same school, or the child transitioned from a different school).

**Summary of Findings**

Findings from this study indicate that parent satisfaction, parent involvement (when considered in combination with parent satisfaction), and high-intensity teacher transition practices may be predictors of child adjustment to school. Specifically, a higher number of high-intensity practices used by receiving teachers appear to predict lower teacher ratings of child adjustment to school. Similarly, when combined with ratings of parent satisfaction, increases in parent involvement appear to predict lower parent ratings of child adjustment to school; however, higher ratings of parent perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process appear to predict higher parent ratings of child adjustment to school. Furthermore, variables related to children, parents, and teachers also appear to affect the predictive associations between parent involvement, parent satisfaction, and teacher practices, and ratings of child adjustment to school.

Chapter five presents an in-depth discussion of these findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The transition to formal school is a critical period in the development of young children (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Kagan, 1999; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta et al., 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999) as it can potentially set the trajectory for long-term school success (Berlin et al., 2011; Schulting et al., 2005). The transition period is of particular concern for young children with disabilities who are at an increased risk for a difficult adjustment to school and subsequent academic and social difficulties throughout their school careers (Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; Geva et al., 2009; McIntyre et al., 2010).

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that may predict successful adjustment to school for young children with disabilities transitioning into formal school settings.

In this study, data related to the adjustment to school of 86 children with disabilities who transitioned into formal school settings were obtained through 31 parent and 64 teacher surveys. Data from the subscales of these surveys were used to examine the predictive association between family preparation for the transition (as measured by parent satisfaction and parent involvement) and parent-rated child adjustment to school, and between receiving teacher support (as measured by teacher practices) and teacher-rated child adjustment to school.

In this chapter, a discussion of the results of this study will be provided. This discussion is presented in five sections: (1) a summary of the research findings and hypotheses, (2) the limitations of the study, (3) implications for practice, (4) implications for research, and (5) concluding thoughts.
Summary of Research Findings and Hypotheses

Although caution in interpreting some of these results is necessary because of the size of the sample, several findings from this study indicate that factors related to family preparation and receiving teacher support may be associated with child adjustment to school. This study examined two research questions, the first related to family preparation for transition and the second related to teacher support.

Family Preparation

The first research question examined in this study was: Does family preparation for transition, as measured by parent involvement and parent satisfaction, predict school adjustment? This question was designed to examine whether or not family preparation during the transition process is predictive of parent-rated child adjustment to school. It was hypothesized that family preparation, as measured by parent satisfaction with the transition process and parent involvement in the transition process, would be predictive of parent-rated child adjustment to school.

Parent satisfaction. Findings from this study indicate that parents as a whole were satisfied with their transition experiences. These findings are consistent with those of Johnson and colleagues (1986) that parents generally reported their satisfaction with transition activities as moderate to very high. Specifically, parents in this study reported, on average, the highest level of satisfaction (4.68) with the current kindergarten placements of their children and the lowest level of satisfaction (4.13) with their perceived influence on decisions made during the transition. Similar to ratings of satisfaction with their perceived influence, parent ratings of satisfaction related to feeling
involved in the transition received the second lowest satisfaction rating (4.19), again corroborating the findings of Johnson and colleagues (1986) that parents generally expressed some level of concern regarding their involvement in the transition.

Parent perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process appear to be an important factor related to transition and the adjustment to school. Specifically, findings from this study indicate that parent ratings of satisfaction with the transition process had a positive predictive relationship with parent ratings of child adjustment to school, suggesting that higher levels of perceived satisfaction with the transition process were predictive of higher parent ratings of child adjustment to school. One explanation for this finding could be related to parent reports of satisfaction with the child’s current placement (mean rating of 4.677), an indication that the child was perceived to be in an appropriate setting. This explanation is consistent with suggestions in the literature that the difficulty some children experience when transitioning to formal school settings could be related to a “poor fit” between the child and the school environment (Troup & Malone, 2002); therefore, children who transition into an environment that is perceived to be a good fit for them may not be perceived to experience the same types of difficulties.

A second explanation for this finding could be related to parent reports of satisfaction with the level of preparation they received (mean rating of 4.367). Parents who were satisfied with the level of preparation they received may have a better understanding of what was expected or how to best support their children during the transition, leading to perceptions of more successful child adjustment to school. This explanation is consistent with the findings of Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) of a
significant moderate correlation \( r = .39, p < .05 \) between responses to the Satisfaction Factor and responses to the Explanation and Support Factor, suggesting that perceived adequate support and information may help families and children successfully navigate the transition leading to perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process.

**Parent involvement.** Consistent with the report that parents as a whole were satisfied with their involvement in the transition (mean = 4.193), parents in this study reported, on average, being involved in at least nine out of 14 specified transition activities. These findings again corroborate those of Johnson and colleagues (1986) and Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) who reported that parents generally saw themselves as involved in the transition process. The most frequently reported parent involvement activity in this study was to attend an annual meeting at the preschool (90%), an increase from the findings of McIntyre and colleagues (53%; 2007), followed by visiting the kindergarten classroom (87%), an increase from the findings of Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) who reported that 68% of parents visited the kindergarten classrooms. The least frequently reported activity was having a home visit with the kindergarten teacher (19%). This finding was consistent with previous teacher reports that conducting home visits was the least frequently implemented transition practice (Daley et al., 2011). Of activities specifically related to the receiving schools or teachers, the majority of parents reported involvement in attending kindergarten registration (84%), receiving written communication from the kindergarten (81%), and attending an open house at the kindergarten (81%). These findings are also consistent with previous teacher reports that general low-intensity transition practices, such as those mentioned
above, were more frequently used by receiving teachers than more individualized, high-intensity practices (Daley et al., 2011; La Paro et al., 2000; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011).

Of particular interest were parent perceptions of their involvement in the transition team. In this study, 41% of parents identified themselves as a member of the transition team, a substantial increase from the 10% reported by McIntyre and colleagues (2007), but a decrease from the 58% who were reported by Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) as being involved in the program planning process; however, the lowest level of satisfaction reported by parents in this study was with their perceived influence on decisions during the transition. These findings suggest that although some parents may consider themselves members of the transition team, these parents may not necessarily feel empowered to be active, informed decision makers for their children (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990), potentially resulting in reduced satisfaction with the transition process.

Although findings in this study indicate that parent involvement alone does not have a significant predictive association with parent ratings of child adjustment to school, a predictive association was indicated when parent involvement was considered in combination with parent satisfaction. This association, however, was a moderate negative predictive relationship ($Beta = -.330, p < .05$) with parent ratings of child adjustment to school, suggesting that higher levels of parent involvement during the transition process were predictive of lower ratings of child adjustment to school. One possible explanation for this finding could be related to the severity of the child’s disability. For example, parents of children with more significant disabilities may be
more involved in the transition process; but, due to the severity of the disability, the child may inherently experience more difficulties during the transition (McIntyre et al., 2006; McIntyre et al., 2010) increasing the likelihood of a less successful adjustment to school.

A second explanation for this finding could be related to using the total number of activities in which parents were involved to measure parent involvement while not accounting for the nature or quality of the involvement in the transition activities. Involvement in transition activities can be positive or negative experiences for children and families, offering a variety of levels of support. For example, during a visit to a kindergarten classroom, a parent may see the room filled with children who are carrying out typical routines, allowing the parent to gain an understanding of what will be expected in this new setting; or, a parent may visit a classroom during the summer months when school is not in session. A parent who is simply involved in more activities may not have necessarily received more support and preparation, nor will the parent necessarily be more satisfied with the transition process. Previous findings in the literature indicate that the transition process is a period of significant stress for parents of children with disabilities (Fowler et al., 1988), thus potentially contributing to a decrease in satisfaction with involvement in transition activities.

One critical factor could be that parents must be satisfied with their experience in or level of support received from the transition activity for it to predict higher levels of parent-rated child adjustment to school. This explanation is consistent with findings from this study and those of Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) that parent satisfaction and parent involvement had a significant positive association.
Not only do ratings of parent satisfaction appear to be associated with ratings of parent involvement, it appears that factors related to parents and children may also affect the association between parent involvement and parent-rated child adjustment to school. Findings from this study indicate that when specific variables related to child and parent demographics were accounted for in the analysis, parent involvement no longer demonstrated a significant predictive association with parent-rated child adjustment to school. This finding suggests that there could be factors on the child and parent levels that can affect parent participation and perceptions of involvement and satisfaction in the transition process. This finding is consistent with previous research that social and economic risk factors influenced the way parents experienced and participated in the transition process (McIntyre et al., 2007), and that parents with higher levels of education reported greater levels of satisfaction with the transition process (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990).

**Teacher Support**

The second research question examined in this study was: Does teacher support, as measured by use of transition practices provided by receiving teachers, predict school adjustment? This question was designed to examine whether or not support provided by the receiving teacher to the family during the transition process is predictive of child adjustment to school. It was hypothesized that receiving teacher support (as measured by transition practices) would be predictive of teacher-rated child adjustment to school.

Findings from this study indicate that teachers were more likely to engage in low-intensity practices than high-intensity practices, with all low-intensity practices used
more frequently than any high-intensity practices. These findings are consistent with previous research that indicates kindergarten teachers are more likely to use generalized transition practices with all students at the beginning of the school year (Daley et al., 2011; La Paro et al., 2000; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Specifically, the most frequently reported low-intensity practice was to hold an open house for families (98%), and the least frequently reported low-intensity practice was to send home an informational brochure or flyer to the parents (73.4%). The most frequently reported high-intensity practices were to participate in the development of the IEP and to develop preparatory strategies for the child (70.3% reported for both). These findings are also consistent with those of Daley and colleagues (2011) who found that the three most frequently used high-intensity practices were to participate in development of the IEP (67.9%), meet with the preschool staff (59.2%), and to develop preparatory strategies for the child (55.8%). The least frequently reported high-intensity practice in this study was to conduct a home visit with the family (6.3%), similar to previous findings of 8.3% (Daley et al., 2011). These findings are also consistent with the parent reports in this study that parents were more likely to be involved in visiting the kindergarten program and receiving written information from the kindergarten than to receive a home visit from the kindergarten teacher.

Receiving teacher support during the transition process appears to be an important factor related to transition and the adjustment to school. Findings from this study indicate that receiving teacher support may be predictive of teacher-rated child adjustment to school. Specifically, the number of high-intensity practices used by
receiving teachers was found to have a moderate negative predictive association ($r = -.305, p < .05$) with teacher ratings of child adjustment to school. This finding indicates that the use of higher numbers of high-intensity practices were predictive of lower teacher ratings of child adjustment to school. One explanation for this finding could be related to the severity of the child’s disability. For example, teachers of children with more significant disabilities may use greater numbers of more individualized transition practices with the child and the family (high-intensity practices); but, due to the severity of the disability, the child may inherently experience more difficulties during the transition (McIntyre et al., 2006; McIntyre et al., 2010) increasing the likelihood of a less successful adjustment to school. This explanation may be supported by findings in this study that indicate a strong positive correlation for high-intensity practices and severity of disability, suggesting that teachers in this sample used greater numbers of high-intensity practices with children who had more significant disabilities. Furthermore, a large negative correlation was found for severity of disability and teacher-rated child adjustment to school, suggesting that children with more significant disabilities were more likely to receive lower teacher ratings of child adjustment to school.

A second explanation could be related to using a total number of practices to determine teacher support while not accounting for the quality of the practices that are implemented or perceptions of satisfaction with the practices. Similar to the explanation of parent involvement activities, teacher practices can provide positive or negative experiences for children and families, and offer a variety of levels of support. Simply implementing more transition activities may not necessarily provide more support.
Qualitative factors related to the implementation of the transition practices could be critical to the level of support that is actually provided to the family.

Not only does severity of disability appear to be associated with teacher ratings of child adjustment to school, it appears that factors related to teachers and children may also affect the association between teacher practices and teacher-rated child adjustment to school. Findings from this study indicate that when specific variables related to child and teacher demographics were accounted for in the analysis, high-intensity teacher practices no longer demonstrated a significant predictive association with teacher-rated child adjustment to school. In previous research, family and school demographics appeared to predict parent involvement in transition activities and receipt of certain transition practices from receiving teachers (Daley et al., 2011; McIntyre et al., 2006). Similar to the findings that demographic factors influenced the way parents experienced and participated in the transition process (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; McIntyre et al., 2007), teacher, parent, and child factors may also influence that way teachers, parents, and children experience and participate in transition practices provided by the teachers, thus affecting the level of support that is obtained by the family.

**Limitations**

The limitations in this study are related to the participants, measures, and scope of this investigation. First, although the sample related to teacher surveys was sufficient to examine the independent variables related to teacher support, the small sample size in this study limits the findings. As previously noted, a minimum of 68 parent and teacher surveys were required to maintain statistical power to examine multiple predictor...
variables; however, only 31 eligible parent and 64 eligible teacher surveys were obtained. Increasing the sample size in this study would strengthen confidence in the findings. Additionally, data from nine eligible parent-teacher dyads were obtained out of the minimum 85 dyads required to maintain statistical power. Increasing the number of dyads, and thus obtaining multiple measures of adjustment on each child, would also strengthen the findings of this study. Second, it is unclear whether or not the returned surveys are representative of the 362 individuals (171 parents, 191 teachers, and 171 children) to whom the surveys were disseminated. Third, characteristics of the participants may also limit these findings. The majority of students included in this study were being served in the general education classroom, with many of these students having a primary diagnosis of speech/language delay, limiting the generalizability of these findings to students with more significant disabilities being served in general education or special education classrooms. Additionally, the majority of parents included in this study were white females in two parent households (74%) who generally reported some level of education (48% higher than a high school diploma), limiting the generalizability of the findings to children from families with different demographic profiles. Finally, the participants in this study were from the same primarily rural geographic region limiting the generalizability of the findings to individuals from different geographic regions.

Limitations of this study related to instrumentation must also be considered. First, the measures used in this study included subscales that were adapted from those used in previous research (e.g., FEIT, STRSSA) or subscales with items that were researcher
developed. Additionally, these subscales had not been used in combination before this examination. Although analyses of all of the separate subscales except one (low-intensity practices) indicated an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability, it is important to consider that these measures, and the combination thereof, have not been thoroughly evaluated. Further examinations of these measures to thoroughly evaluate reliability and validity would strengthen confidence in the findings of this study. Second, the appropriateness of these measures for rating the adjustment of children with more significant disabilities is unclear; specifically, the items taken from the STRSSA (Betts & Rotenberg, 2007) were originally designed for use with typically developing children. Additionally, the parent and teacher reports were restricted to sets of pre-specified activities and practices; teacher support and parent involvement could occur in ways not specified on the surveys. Although the responses to the open-ended questions on these surveys were not formally analyzed, general trends in parent and teacher responses indicate that adding open-ended responses for both parents and teachers could further enhance understanding of family preparation, teacher support, and child adjustment to school. Third, measuring child adjustment to school based on parent and teacher perceptions could be considered a limitation of the findings of this study. Although teacher and parents perceptions are critical to consider because they influence attitudes and actions, multiple measures, including objective measures of academic and social adjustment (e.g., progress toward IEP goals, number of behavior incidents, classroom observations of students and teachers during the transition period), could strengthen the findings of a study examining the adjustment of children to formal school.
A final limitation of this study that should be considered is the scope of this examination. The transition of young children with disabilities to formal school is a complex and multifaceted process that occurs through interactions across multiple people, settings, and time periods. This study examines four potential factors related to school adjustment (parent satisfaction, parent involvement, total teacher practices, and high-intensity practices) during a specific window of time during initial transition and adjustment. Additional examinations that consider the constructs of family preparation and receiving teacher support within the broader context of the transition experience and examine factors over a longer time period before and after the transition could further illuminate the findings of this study.

**Implications for Practice**

It appears that parent perceptions of the transition process are important for successful child adjustment to formal school, particularly the perceived satisfaction with the transition process. Several studies have focused on examining parent perspectives of what is important during the transition experience (e.g., Conn-Powers et al., 1990, Forest et al., 2004; Fowler et al., 1988; Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007; Rous et al., 2007). To potentially support greater success for children with disabilities during the transition to formal school, it is critical for professionals to continue to seek parental input regarding transition procedures. Findings in this study and previous studies suggest that individual characteristics of schools, teachers, parents, and children can affect that way transition preparation and support is implemented and perceived (Daley et al., 2011; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; McIntyre et al., 2006; McIntyre
et al., 2007). Professionals must promote effective interactions and partnerships with families to learn how parents perceive their involvement in and satisfaction with the transition process (Johnson et al., 1986). Furthermore, professionals must conscientiously implement culturally responsive practices when working with families to promote empowerment for all families (Harry, Klinger, & Hart, 2005), potentially enhancing parent satisfaction with the transition process.

Additionally, it appears that simply achieving a certain level of involvement in transition activities does not necessarily promote positive child outcomes during the transition process. Developing more individualized plans for family involvement based on individual characteristics may increase the likelihood of parent satisfaction in the transition process, thus potentially promoting positive child outcomes during the transition (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; McIntyre et al., 2010).

Although continued research is necessary to examine the predictive association between implemented teacher transition practices and positive outcomes for children during the transition to formal school (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2010), professionals must consider the perceptions of parents related to these practices (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986). Previous research indicates that transition practices and procedures that have been identified and recommended throughout the literature (e.g., visiting the classroom, connections between sending and receiving teachers, creating a transition timeline) are perceived to be important by parents (Forest et al., 2004). Previous research also indicates there is variability in the way children and families may experience and participate in these transition practices.
Because parent perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process appear to be associated with positive child outcomes, educators must strive to implement transition practices in ways that promote parent satisfaction with the transition (Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990).

**Implications for Research**

This study lays a foundation for an extension of the research related to the transition of children with disabilities into formal school settings. To date no studies that specifically examine the predictive association between recommended practices related to parent satisfaction, parent involvement, and teacher practices and ratings of adjustment to school for children with disabilities have been identified. Although findings from this investigation suggest that factors related to family preparation and teacher support may be important for successful adjustment, further investigations are needed to determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented for family preparation and support during the transition period; specifically, examinations of whether or not these practices promote a successful adjustment to formal school for children with disabilities (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2010). Future research is needed to replicate this study while additionally focusing on increasing the size and diversity of the sample, as well as increasing the number of reporting parent-teacher dyads to strengthen findings through multiple measures of adjustment for each child (Pellegrini & Glickman, 1990).

Future research is also needed to address the gaps in the literature related to the predictive associations between other factors related to the transition process and a successful transition to formal school. For example, is support from sending teachers
(preschool teachers) predictive of successful adjustment to formal school? Does sending teacher support have a greater magnitude of association with child adjustment to school than receiving teacher support? Is family preparation at the preschool level during the transition predictive of successful adjustment to formal school? Does family preparation at the preschool level have a greater magnitude of association with child adjustment to school than family preparation at the formal school level?

Additional factors to include in future research could potentially include those on the child, family, teacher, classroom, school, and district levels. As additional factors are examined, a transition model could be developed and analyzed to identify the interactions among these factors and the contributions of these factors to the adjustment of children with disabilities and families to formal school settings. Furthermore, as predictive factors of successful adjustment to school continue to be identified, additional research is needed to examine the effect of interventions that include these factors on short- and long-term outcomes of children with disabilities in formal school (McIntyre et al., 2010).

Future research is also needed to examine the transition to formal school for children with disabilities from a longitudinal perspective, following children and families through the different phases of transition (Fowler et al., 1991). Longitudinal investigations could help identify strategies that may provide support tailored to meet the specific needs that children and families encounter before, during, and after the transition (McIntyre et al., 2010).

Future research is also needed to qualitatively examine factors related to the transition process. For example, research indicates that characteristics of teachers and
classrooms are perceived by parents as important factors related to the transition to formal school (Fowler et al., 1988). To better identify factors that predict successful adjustment to formal school, the effects of these characteristics, as well as the nature and quality of interactions among individuals involved in the transition process, the nature and quality of parent involvement in the transition process (McIntyre et al., 2010), the nature and quality of transition practices implemented by teachers, and the qualitative factors related to the classroom environment (Reitveld, 2008) must be examined.

Finally, in addition to strengthening and extending the findings of this study related continued research on the measures used in this study is needed. Further examinations of reliability and validity are necessary, as well as continued development of the measures to include objective measures of adjustment and open-ended responses to allow for additional qualitative investigations of the factors related to the transition process.

**Conclusion**

Researchers have documented the importance of a successful transition to school, particularly for children with disabilities who are at an increased risk for a difficult transition (Bart et al., 2007; Berlin et al., 2011; Daley et al., in 2011; Denkyriah & Agbeke, 2010; Schulting et al., 2005; McIntyre et al., 2010). To promote the successful adjustment of children with disabilities to the formal school setting, it is imperative for professionals to identify factors that will prepare and support children and families during this vulnerable time.
Findings in the literature indicate that strategies to prepare and support children with disabilities and their families during the transition to formal school are generally consistent with those used with typically developing children (La Paro et al., 2000). Research related to typically developing children has considered multiple factors that appear to be associated with successful school adjustment (LaCosale-Crouch et al., 2008; Schulting et al., 2005); however, there is a distinct lack of studies related to factors associated with the successful adjustment of children with disabilities compared to those examining typically developing children. Specifically, no studies that examine the association between transition practices and the adjustment of children with disabilities to formal school were identified. This study addressed this gap by examining the predictive association between factors related to family preparation and receiving teacher support and child adjustment to formal school.

Findings from this study indicate that parent satisfaction, parent involvement (when considered in combination with parent satisfaction), and high-intensity teacher transition practices may be predictors of child adjustment to school. Furthermore, variables related to children, parents, and teachers also appear to affect the predictive associations between parent involvement, parent satisfaction, and teacher practices, and ratings of child adjustment to school.

Although the findings from this study support extending the research related to factors that may promote the successful transition of children with disabilities into formal school settings, extensive research that examines the relationship between these and other specific factors and successful adjustment to formal school for children with disabilities
is necessary. As additional critical factors are identified and incorporated into the transition process, the likelihood of short- and long-term success for children with disabilities who are entering formal school settings will increase.
Appendix A

Survey Packet Materials
Transition to School Study

You are invited to participate in the Transition to School Study.

My name is Cynthia Baughan and I am a doctoral student at Clemson University. My professor, Dr. Katsiyannis, and I are conducting a study about the transition of children from early childhood special education preschool programs to kindergarten. The purpose of our study is to better understand your experience during the time you transitioned your child into kindergarten and to help us identify practices that will help make the transition process easier for children and families.

In the next few days, you will receive a packet from your child’s teacher that will have a letter, a short survey, and an envelope. If you choose to help us with this study, please complete the survey and send it back to us in the stamped envelope. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Cynthia Baughan & Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis
Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Antonis Katsiyannis, principal investigator, and Cynthia Baughan, student researcher. The purpose of this research is to understand your experience during the period of time when you transitioned your child out of his/her preschool placement into public school, and to help us identify practices that can help make the transition adjustment easier for families and young children.

Your participation will involve completing a short survey and returning the survey to the research team in the enclosed envelope. Your responses will NOT be shared with the classroom teacher. The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 20 minutes to fill out the enclosed survey and place it in the mail.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research and the researchers will make every effort to make this a comfortable information gathering process.

Potential benefits

This research will be beneficial in several ways. You will have the opportunity to share your experience and reflect on particular strategies and procedures to improve future transition processes. This research may help us to better understand the transition process and experience for young children and families.

Protection of confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study. Personal information is being used for comparative purposes only and all identifying information will be permanently removed from the information collected. After identifying information has been removed, copies of the survey will be stored in a locked office or on a password protected computer and kept indefinitely by the researcher for research and educational purposes.
**Voluntary participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

**Contact information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Antonis Katsiyannis at Clemson University at (864) 656-5114. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864.656.6460 or toll free at 1-866-297-3071. Email contact for the Office of Research Compliance is Laura Moll at lmoll@clemson.edu.

**Consent**

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent for me to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature: _____________________________ Date: ______________

A copy of this consent form is included for you to keep.
Información Sobre Participación en una Investigación de la Universidad de Clemson

Transición a Escuela

Descripción de la Investigación y su participación

Les invitamos participar en una investigación mantenida por Antonis Katsiyannis, el investigador principal, y Cynthia Baughan, una estudiante e investigadora. La intención de esta investigación es para entender su experiencia durante el período de transición de su niño del programa preescolar a su clase en escuela pública, y para ayudarnos identificar las prácticas que pueden facilitar la transición para familias y niños jóvenes.

Para participar, Usted va a llenar una encuesta corta y va a devolver la encuesta al equipo de la investigación en el sobre encerrado. NO vamos a compartir sus respuestas con la maestra. Su participación va a durar aproximadamente 20 minutos para llenar la encuesta encerrada y ponerlo en el correo.

Riesgos e incomodidades

No sabemos de ningunos riesgos significativos o incomodidades en esta investigación asociados con esta investigación, y los investigadores van a hacer cada esfuerzo para para hacer cómodo el proceso de ganar la información.

Beneficios potenciales

La investigación va a tener muchos beneficios. Usted va a tener la oportunidad de compartir su experiencia y reflejar en estrategias particulares y procedimientos para mejorar los procesos de transición en el futuro. Esta investigación quizás va a ayudarnos entender mejor el proceso de transición y la experiencia para niños jóvenes y para familias.

Protección de privacidad y confidencialidad

Vamos a hacer todo que es posible para proteger su privacidad. No vamos a revelar su identidad en ninguna publicación que podría ocasionar de esta investigación. Vamos a usar información personal solamente para intenciones comparativas y vamos a quitar permanentemente toda la información que puede identificar a Usted de la información
coleccionada. Después de quitar la información, vamos a guardar copias de las encuestas en una oficina cerrada con llave o en una computadora protegida con una contraseña, y vamos a guardar la información indefinidamente por las investigadoras para la utilidad educativa e investigacional.

**Participación voluntaria**

La participación de Usted en esta investigación es voluntaria. Se puede escoger no participar y se puede terminar su participación cuando quiere. Si Usted decide salir de o no participar en esta investigación, no va a estar penalizado.

**Información de contacto**

Si tengan preguntas o preocupaciones de esta investigación, o si tengan problemas durante la investigación, por favor, llame a Antonis Katsiyannis en Clemson University en (864) 656-5114. Si tengan preguntas o preocupaciones sobre los derechos de los participantes, por favor, llamen a la Oficina de Cumplimiento para Investigaciones en la Universidad de Clemson en 864.656.6460 o una llamada gratuita 1.866.297.3071. Correo electrónico para la Oficina de Cumplimiento para Investigaciones es Laura Moll en lmoll@clemson.edu.

**Consentimiento**

Yo he leído este documento de consentimiento y he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas. Yo doy mi consentimiento para mi participación en esta investigación.

Firma del participante: ___________________________ fecha: ______________

Usted debe recibir una copia de este papel de consentimiento.
Transition to School Study

You are invited to participate in the Transition to School Study.

My name is Cynthia Baughan and I am a doctoral student at Clemson University. My professor, Dr. Katsiyannis, and I are conducting a study about the transition of children from early childhood special education preschool programs to kindergarten. The purpose of our study is to better understand your experience during the time you transitioned a child coming from an early childhood special education preschool program into your kindergarten classroom, and to help us identify practices that will help make the transition adjustment easier for children and families.

In the next few days, you will receive a packet for the child that your school district identified for us. That packet will have a letter, a short survey, and an envelope. You will also receive a packet to be sent home to the parents of the child. If you choose to help us with this study, please complete the teacher survey and send it back to us in the stamped envelope. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Cynthia Baughan & Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis
Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study
Clemson University

Transition to School

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Antonis Katsiyannis, principal investigator, and Cynthia Baughan, student researcher from Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to understand your experience during the period of time when you transitioned a child out of his/her preschool placement into your public school classroom, and to help us identify practices that can help make the transition adjustment easier for families and young children.

Your participation will involve sending a parent letter and survey home with a child in your class, completing a short teacher survey, and returning your survey to the research team in the enclosed envelope. Your responses will NOT be shared with the parents. The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 20 minutes to fill out the enclosed survey and place it in the mail.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research and the researchers will make every effort to make this a comfortable information gathering process.

Potential benefits

This research will be beneficial in several ways. You will have the opportunity to share your experience and reflect on particular strategies and procedures to improve future transition processes. This research may help us to better understand the transition process and experience for young children and families.

Protection of confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study. All identifying information will be permanently removed from the information collected. The school’s and individual’s identities will remain strictly anonymous and confidential. After identifying information
has been removed, copies of the survey will be stored in a locked office or on a password
protected computer and kept indefinitely by the researcher for research and educational
purposes.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate
and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized
in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please
contact Antonis Katsiyannis at Clemson University at (864) 656-5114. If you have any
questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the
Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864.656.6460 or toll free at 1-866-
297-3071. Email contact for the Office of Research Compliance is Laura Moll at
lmoll@clemson.edu.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I give my consent for me to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature: _____________________________ Date: ______________

A copy of this consent form is included for you to keep.
Just a Reminder!

Please remember to complete and return the Transition to School survey, if you would like to participate and you have not already done so. Your response can help us find ways to make the transition to school easier for children and families. Thanks for your part in this study!

Sincerely,
Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis
Cynthia Baughan
cbaugh@clemson.edu
864-567-0830
Appendix B

Survey Instruments
Transition to School Teacher Survey

Please return by______________________. Thank you for your time!

Your School: _______________________________________________________

Part 1: About You and the Child

1. Does your school receive Title I funds?
   ___ 1. No         ___ 2. Yes

2. Which of the following best describes your class?
   ___ 1. General education classroom
   ___ 2. Self-contained classroom
   ___ 3. Developmental classroom (K-2)
   ___ 4. Other (please specify) _________________________________

3. What is this child’s date of birth? __/___/_________

4. What is this child’s primary diagnosis?
   ___ 1. Developmental Delay
   ___ 2. Speech/Language Delay
   ___ 3. Autism Spectrum Disorder
   ___ 4. Other ________________________________

5. Is your classroom the child’s primary placement?
   ___ 1. No         ___ 2. Yes

6. What percentage of the child’s time is spent in your class? _____%

7. How many children are in your class? _____

8. What is your gender? _____ 1.) Male _____ 2.) Female

9. Which category best describes your race/ethnicity?
   ___ 1. White/Caucasian
   ___ 2. Black/African American
   ___ 3. Hispanic/ Latino
   ___ 4. Asian
   ___ 5. Native American
   ___ 6. Pacific Islander
   ___ 7. Multiple Origins
   ___ 8. Other ________________________________
10. Which degrees have you received?
   ___ 1. Bachelor’s   ___ 2. Master’s   ___ 3. Doctorate

11. Check the areas of certification you hold.
   ___ 1. Early Childhood/Primary Grades
   ___ 2. Elementary Education
   ___ 3. Special Education
   ___ 4. Other (describe): ____________________________________________

12. Have you attended professional development or had specialized training to enhance children’s transition to kindergarten?
   ___ 1. No   ___ 2. Yes (please describe)
                               __________________________

13. List your years of teaching experience at each of the following levels:
   1. Below kindergarten level (e.g., preschool): ______
   2. Kindergarten: ______
   3. Above kindergarten (1st grade and above): ______

Part 2: Transition Practices

Below are listed several practices that might be used to facilitate the transition to kindergarten. Please indicate whether each practice was used for this child/family by checking either “yes” or “no.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Daley, Munk, & Carlson (2011)
**Part 3: Child’s Adjustment to School**

For the following statements think about how the child is adjusting to school. Indicate how you think these statements apply to the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TA</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Does not Apply</th>
<th>Applies Sometimes</th>
<th>Certainly Applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TA.1</td>
<td>Follows teacher’s directions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.2</td>
<td>Uses classroom material responsibly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.3</td>
<td>Listens carefully to teacher’s instructions and directions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.4</td>
<td>Is interested in classroom activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.5</td>
<td>Responds promptly to teacher’s requests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.6</td>
<td>If child’s activity is interrupted, he/she goes back to the activity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.7</td>
<td>Notices when other kids are absent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.8</td>
<td>Seeks challenges</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.9</td>
<td>Is a mature child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.10</td>
<td>Enjoys “playing school”; imitates the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.11</td>
<td>Interested in the teacher as a person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.12</td>
<td>Is cheerful at school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.13</td>
<td>Approaches new activities with enthusiasm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.14</td>
<td>Is slow to warm up to the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.15</td>
<td>Laughs or smiles easily</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.16</td>
<td>Is comfortable approaching the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Betts & Rotenberg (2007): Short Form Teacher Rating Scale of School Adjustment (STRSSA)*

**TA 17.** Is there anything else you would like to tell me about this child’s transition to your classroom?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!**
Transition to School Parent Survey

Please return by______________________. Thank you for your time!

Part 1: About your Child

1. Child’s date of birth: ____________________ Age: ______
2. Child’s Gender: Male _____ Female _____
3. What is your child’s racial/ethnic background?
   1) White/Caucasian
   2) Black/African American
   3) Hispanic/ Latino
   4) Asian
   5) Native American
   6) Pacific Islander
   7) Multiple Origins
   8) Other ________________________________
4. Does your child currently receive related services (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy) in addition to special education supports?
   0) No
   1) Yes (please specify)
       __________________________________________
   2) Don’t know
5. Name of preschool program your child attended.
       ________________________________
6. Preschool Teacher’s
   Name: _________________________________________
**Part 2: Involvement in Transition**¹

What kinds of involvement did you have (or would have liked to have had) in your child’s transition to kindergarten?

Please check *only one* box (participated in, wanted to participate in but didn’t, didn’t participate and did not wish to) for each type of involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PARTICIPATED IN</th>
<th>WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN BUT DIDN’T</th>
<th>DIDN’T PARTICIPATE AND DID NOT WISH TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.1</td>
<td>Monthly contact (e.g., phone, visit) with your child’s <em>preschool</em> teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.2</td>
<td>Annual meetings with your child’s <em>preschool</em> teacher/school staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.3</td>
<td>Attended a transition planning meeting with your child’s <em>preschool</em> staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.4</td>
<td>Attended a transition planning meeting with your child’s <em>kindergarten</em> staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.5</td>
<td>Visited your child’s kindergarten classroom and/or elementary school with your child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.6</td>
<td>Was a member of a transition planning team at your child’s <em>preschool</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.7</td>
<td>Attended a transition information meeting at your child’s <em>preschool</em> or <em>kindergarten</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.8</td>
<td>Received a phone call from your child’s <em>kindergarten</em> teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.9</td>
<td>Received a home visit from your child’s <em>kindergarten</em> teacher over the summer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.10</td>
<td>Attended a kindergarten orientation session.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.11</td>
<td>Received written communication regarding transition from your child’s <em>preschool</em> (e.g., letter or flier).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.12</td>
<td>Received written communication regarding transition from your child’s <em>kindergarten</em> or <em>elementary</em> school (e.g., letter or flier).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.13</td>
<td>Attended kindergarten registration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.14</td>
<td>Attended kindergarten open house.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹From Quintero & McIntyre (2011). *Family Experiences & Involvement in Transition (FEIT)*
### Part 3: My Satisfaction with the Transition\(^2,3\)

For the following statements, think about your experience during the transition process and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.1</td>
<td>I was prepared for transition by my child’s preschool staff.(^2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.2</td>
<td>During my child’s transition I felt involved.(^2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.3</td>
<td>I was satisfied with my role in my child’s transition.(^2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.4</td>
<td>I had great influence on the decisions made at the transition meeting.(^2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.5</td>
<td>I am satisfied with my child’s current classroom placement.(^3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Adapted from Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman (1990)  
3 Adapted from Conn-Powers et al., (1990)
Part 4: My Child’s Adjustment to School

For the following statements, think about how you and your child are adjusting to the new school and indicate how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA.1</td>
<td>My child has a good relationship with his/her teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.2</td>
<td>My child is making friends at school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.3</td>
<td>My child is learning new things in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.4</td>
<td>My child is eager to go to school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.5</td>
<td>I am happy with my relationship with my child’s teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.6</td>
<td>My contact with the teacher has been positive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.7</td>
<td>My child’s integration in his/her new classroom has been very successful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.8</td>
<td>My child’s transition to school has been very successful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PA. 9 How frequently do you have contact with your child’s teacher (e.g., notes, phone calls, meetings) each week? ________________________________

PA. 10 Is there anything else you would like me to know about your child’s transition to kindergarten?
Part 5: About You

1) What is your relationship to your child?
   1.) Biological Parent
   2.) Step Parent
   3.) Adoptive Parent
   4.) Other relative
   5.) Legal Guardian
   6.) Other (specify) _______________________________

2) What is your age? ______

3) What is your gender? _____ 1. Male _____ 2. Female

4) What is your race/ethnic background?
   1.) White/Caucasian
   2.) Black/African American
   3.) Hispanic/ Latino
   4.) Asian
   5.) Native American
   6.) Pacific Islander
   7.) Multiple Origins
   8.) Other ________________________________

5) What is your marital status?
   1.) Married or living with partner
   2.) Separated
   3.) Divorced
   4.) Single
   5.) Other ________________________________

6) What is your highest grade in school completed?
   _______________________________________

7) What is your highest degree obtained?
   0) None
   1) HS Diploma/GED
   2) Vocational Degree/Certificate
   3) Associates Degree (2-year college degree)
   4) Bachelor’s Degree (4-year college degree)
   5) Master’s Degree
   6) Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., M.D.)
8) Does your family/child qualify for government aid programs? (e.g., public assistance, SSI, Medicaid)?
   0) No
   1) Yes
   2) Don’t know

9) Does your child receive free or reduced lunch in kindergarten through the school district?
   0) No
   1) Yes
   2) Don’t know

10) Total number of children (younger than 18 years) living in the home. ______

11) Total number of adults (including you) living in the home involved in child care.______

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
Encuesta de los Padres sobre Transición a Escuela

Por favor, devuelva antes de ______________________. ¡Gracias por su tiempo!

Parte 1: De su niño

1. Fecha de nacimiento del niño: ____________________ Edad:_______
2. Sexo del niño: niño _____ niña ______
3. ¿Cuál es la raza/origen étnico del niño?
   1) Blanco/Caucásico
   2) Negro/Africano Americano
   3) Hispánico/ Latino
   4) Asiático
   5) Indio Americano
   6) De las Islas Pacíficas
   7) Múltiples Orígenes
   8) Otro ________________________________
4. ¿Recibe ahora su niño servicios relacionados (e.g., terapia de hablar, terapia ocupacional) en adición a los apoyos de la educación especial?
   0) No
   1) Sí (sea específico)
      ____________________________________________
   2) No sé
5. Nombre del programa preescolar donde asistía su niño.
     ____________________________________________
6. Maestra en el programa preescolar
   Nombre:__________________________________________
Parte 2: Participación en Transición

¿Cómo participó Usted (o cómo quisiera participar) en la transición de su niño a kindergarten?

Por favor, marque solo una caja (participé, quería participar pero no lo hice, no participé y no quería participar) para cada tipo de participación.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PARTICIPÓ</th>
<th>QUÉRIA PARTICIPAR PERO NO LO HICE</th>
<th>NO QUÉRIA PARTICIPAR Y NO QUÉRIA PARTICIPAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.1</td>
<td>Contacto mensual (e.g., teléfono, visita) con la maestra preescolar de su niño.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.2</td>
<td>Reuniones anuales con la maestra preescolar/ personal de su niño.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.3</td>
<td>Asistir a una reunión de planear la transición con el personal preescolar de su niño.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.4</td>
<td>Asistir a una reunión de planear la transición con el personal de Kindergarten de su niño.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.5</td>
<td>Visitar el salón de kindergarten de su niño y/o su escuela elementaria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.6</td>
<td>Ser un miembro del equipo de planear la transición en el programa preescolar.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.7</td>
<td>Asistir una reunión sobre información de transición en el programa preescolar o kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.8</td>
<td>Recibir una llamada telefónica de la maestra de kindergarten de su niño.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.9</td>
<td>Recibir una visita de la maestra de kindergarten de su niño durante el verano.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.10</td>
<td>Asistir una orientación de kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.11</td>
<td>Recibir comunicación escrita sobre transición del programa preescolar de su niño (e.g., carta o folleto).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.12</td>
<td>Recibir comunicación escrita sobre transición de kindergarten o de la escuela elementaria de su niño (e.g., carta o folleto).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.13</td>
<td>Asistir la matrícula de kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.14</td>
<td>Asistir la casa abierta de kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 From Quintero & McIntyre (2011), Family Experiences & Involvement in Transition (FEIT)
Parte 3: Mi Satisfacción con la Transición

Para las siguientes frases, piense en su experiencia durante el proceso de transición e indique cuanto está de acuerdo o no está de acuerdo con cada frase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Estoy de Acuerdo (fuertemente)</th>
<th>No Estoy de Acuerdo</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Estoy de Acuerdo un poco</th>
<th>Estoy de Acuerdo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.1</td>
<td>Yo estaba preparado para transición con la ayuda del personal preescolar de mi niño.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.2</td>
<td>Durante la transición de mi niño me sentí como un participante.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.3</td>
<td>Estaba satisfecho con mi parte en la transición de niño.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.4</td>
<td>Yo tenía mucha influencia en las decisiones hechos en la reunión de transición.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.5</td>
<td>Me siento satisfacción sobre la colocación de mi niño ahora</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Adapted from Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman (1990) 3 Adapted from Conn-Powers et al., (1990)
**Parte 4: La Adaptación de mi Niño a Escuela**

Para las siguientes frases, piense en cómo Usted y su niño han adaptado a la nueva escuela e indique cómo se siente.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PA</th>
<th>Frase</th>
<th>No Estoy de Acuerdo (fuertemente)</th>
<th>No Estoy de Acuerdo</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Estoy de Acuerdo un poco</th>
<th>Estoy de Acuerdo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA.1</td>
<td>Mi niño se lleva bien con su maestra.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.2</td>
<td>Mi niño tiene amigos en escuela.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.3</td>
<td>Mi niño aprende cosas nuevas en escuela.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.4</td>
<td>Mi niño quiere ir a escuela.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.5</td>
<td>Estoy feliz con la relación que tengo yo con la maestra de mi niño.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.6</td>
<td>Mi contacto con la maestra ha sido positivo.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.7</td>
<td>La integración de mi niño en su clase nueva ha tenido éxito.³</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA.8</td>
<td>La transición de mi niño a escuela ha tenido éxito.²</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PA.9** ¿Con qué frecuencia tiene Usted hacer contacto con la maestro de su niño cada semana (e.g., recados, llamadas telefónicas, reuniones)?

________________________________________________________________________

**PA.10** ¿Hay algo más que quiere decirme de la transición de su niño a kindergarten?
**Parte 5: Sobre Usted**

1) ¿Cómo se relaciona a su niño?  
   1.) Padre Biológico  
   2.) Padrastro/Madrastra  
   3.) Padre Adoptivo  
   4.) Otro pariente  
   5.) Tutor Legal  
   6.) Otro (detalles) ____________________________

2.) ¿Cuántos años tiene? ______


4.) ¿Cuál es la raza/origen etnico?  
   1) Blanco/Caucásico  
   2) Negro/Africano Americano  
   3) Hispánico/ Latino  
   4) Asiático  
   5) Indio Americano  
   6) De las Islas Pacíficas  
   7) Múltiples Orígenes  
   8) Otro ____________________________

5.) ¿Cuál es su estado civil?  
   1.) Casado o viviendo con un compadre  
   2.) Separado  
   3.) Divorciado  
   4.) Solo  
   5.) Otro ____________________________

6.) ¿Cuál grado de escuela completó Usted? ____________________________

7.) ¿Cuál es el título que ha recibido?  
   0) Nada  
   1) HS Diploma/GED  
   2) Título Vocacional /Certificado  
   3) Titulo Associates (2-años de universidad)  
   4) Licenciatura (4-años de universidad)  
   5) Un Maestría  
   6) Un Doctorado (e.g., Ph.D., M.D.)
8.) ¿Tiene su familia/niño derecho de ayuda de programas del gobierno? (e.g., ayuda pública, SSI, Medicaid)?
   0) No
   1) Sí
   2) No sé

9.) ¿Recibe su niño almuerzo gratis o a precio reducido en kindergarten por el distrito escolar?
   0) No
   1) Sí
   2) No sé

10.) El número de niños (menos que 18 años de edad) viviendo en la casa. ______

11.) El número de adultos (incluyendo Usted) viviendo en la casa que ayudan a cuidar a los niños.______

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU AYUDA!
References


Fisher, J. A. (2009). ‘We used to play in Foundation, it was more funner’: Investigating feelings about transition from Foundation Stage to Year 1. *Early Years, 29*(2), 131-145.


Psychological Assessment Resources, Lutz: FL.


