

Ready or Not?

Preschool Outcomes in Middletown, Connecticut

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Ready or Not? An Exploration of School Readiness in Middletown, Connecticut

Executive Summary

Overview of the Project

A research team of four Wesleyan University students collaborated with the Middletown School Readiness Council (MSRC), a state-funded organization based in Middletown, Connecticut, to evaluate the effectiveness of the city's twenty preschool programs in preparing their students for kindergarten. The report addresses *which* schools led to *what* particular student outcomes and, to a lesser extent, *why* discrepancies might exist. Understanding the relationship between child outcomes, school performance, and the reasons behind these results will allow for future program improvement where needed by providing appropriate resources and support.

Project Design

- To address our first aim, we turned to the DIAL-3 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning Test 3rd edition) data that we received from the MSRC.
- We sought to supplement the existing data with information on social-emotional readiness and, therefore, to provide a complete picture of school readiness.
- We constructed three supplemental surveys that were administered to preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and preschool program administrators. These surveys aimed to gather additional information on the social-emotional domain and background characteristics of the various programs.

General Findings

1. Middletown performed *above* the national average on the DIAL-3 test.
2. Attending preschool made a difference. Both preschool and family day care programs had positive effects on the school readiness of their students.
3. Certain preschools prepared their students for kindergarten better than others.
4. Race, socioeconomic status, and time spent in preschool played a huge role in students' preparedness at kindergarten entry.
5. Kindergarten and preschool teachers agreed that the social-emotional domain of readiness is extremely important.
6. Overall, preschool and kindergarten teachers had similar expectations for success.
7. Due to the potential unreliability of some data and an extremely small sample size, we were unable to draw strong conclusions about the specific factors leading to variability in school readiness outcomes.