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A handbook for parents of kindergarten students at Stockbridge Elementary School

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A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS
AT STOCKBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education,
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Caroline Ann Gunnett

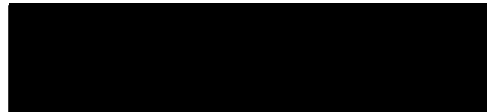
School of Education

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

April 1990

Approved by:



Official Advisor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the letter 'J'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to my friend, Sharon Grimes. Her encouragement and interest in this project helped me to complete it.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Justification of the Problem

"Since 1974, the opportunity to attend kindergarten in the United States has changed from being a privilege to a right — or even a requirement" (Robinson, 1987). Its major focus has changed from being purely socialization and a link between home and formal schooling to being the beginning of formal schooling with high emphasis on academics. In a recent survey of state department personnel, those in Ohio indicated that the major focus of its program is academic (Robinson, 1987). An Oregon study showed emphasis on academic skills had increased 68% (Hitz & Wright, 1988). The kindergarten curriculum of today is increasingly demanding.

Through conferences and discussions with parents, the writer has found that many of them are not familiar with the restructuring of the kindergarten program. They are amazed and perhaps even bewildered at first by all that will be required of their child in kindergarten.

The parents need to be informed concerning what their child will be doing in kindergarten in order to be supportive of the purpose and to be able to help their child be successful. They also need to be aware of how they can help their child adjust to school and to become more independent of their parents.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to design a handbook for the parents of the kindergarten students at Stockbridge Elementary School of Columbus Public Schools.

The handbook explains the present kindergarten program at Stockbridge and informs the parents of ways in which they can help their child have a happy, successful experience in kindergarten.

Procedures

Subjects and Settings

The handbook is designed for the parents of kindergarten students at Stockbridge Elementary School. It is in the southern part of Columbus. The student body includes neighborhood children and children bussed in from nearby neighborhoods. The majority of the students who are bussed are in the morning class. There is a mix of both blacks and whites. There is one kindergarten teacher. There are two classes which are daily, half-day sessions. Some of the students have had pre-school experiences such as Head Start.

Design

The information included in the handbook has been determined by state requirements for entrance into kindergarten, the Columbus Public Schools' Course of Study, and Stockbridge rules, regulations, and information. It also addresses ways parents can make the adjustment to beginning school more pleasant and easy for their child.

The handbook is concise and easy to read. The handbook will lend itself to being a handy, informative guide for parents of kindergarten students at Stockbridge. It should lend itself to being updated easily from year to year as information changes, such as starting times.

Methodology

The writer expects to use the handbook in the Fall when the children enter kindergarten and when new students enroll throughout the year.

The means of publishing a copy of the handbook for each child's parents will be duplicating machines in the school.

Definition of Terms

Daily, Half-day Sessions — Each class meets every day for two and a half hours either in the morning or the afternoon.

Course of Study — Description of the courses offered by Columbus Public Schools and the skills taught in each.

Restructuring — Changes made in the design and emphasis of the kindergarten.

Results

The result of the study is a handbook for the parents of all kindergarten students at Stockbridge. It is assumed by the writer that the handbook will be an aid to the parents in helping them to understand the Stockbridge program and requirements that will be made of their child; and that it will aid them in preparing their child for success in kindergarten. The handbook's use will be

limited in that it will be prepared specifically for parents of Stockbridge kindergarten students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

History of Kindergarten

Kindergarten had its start in Germany in 1837 with Friedrich Froebel.

The Froebelian kindergarten combined a religious philosophy of striving for unity of Man with God with the belief in the purity of the child's spirit as an inner force for development. . . . Thus Froebel's kindergarten included the following elements: play, considered important for self-development; special games and songs, which served to enhance learning; construction with materials that had symbolic meaning as well as manipulative value; practice at various tasks, especially gardening, that served to build character, and nature study, which Froebel considered uplifting (Cohen & Rudolph, 1977, p. 4).

One of his students, Mrs. Carl Schurz, introduced his concept in America by starting a kindergarten for her children, family, and friends in her home in Wisconsin in 1856. By 1860, Elizabeth Peabody had founded the first English speaking kindergarten in Boston and helped organize a teacher training center. In 1873, St. Louis public schools had added kindergarten to its system (Cohen & Rudolph, 1977).

As kindergartens became more a part of America's society, changes were necessary to meet the needs of the young, particularly the disadvantaged child. Also there were changes in educational thinking toward a more liberal approach

and Froebel's rigid structure of materials and sequence of tasks were deemed inappropriate.

Patty Smith Hill was an early innovator in changing the approach to kindergarten in America. She stressed the principles of democracy and respect for the individual and a curriculum relevant to the needs of the children (Cohen & Rudolph, 1977).

Originally kindergartens were seen as a way of social reform. The teacher was also a social worker. They had been used to having the children in the morning and working with their mothers in the afternoon at mother's meetings or through home visits. When kindergartens were made part of the public schools, they were often given the leftovers in facilities and supplies for the rooms. Administrators also felt it a waste of public funds to have the room stand empty for half a day and thus required the kindergarten teachers to teach two half-day sessions (Ross, 1976). This eliminated the possibilities for working as closely with the children's mothers and for home visits as they had been accustomed to doing.

Initially, there was conflict between kindergarten teachers and the "old guard" primary teachers who were strong on discipline. Primary teachers felt children who had had kindergarten were less formal and harder to indoctrinate in the strict discipline they demanded. Many of the kindergarten teachers bowed to the pressures from the primary teachers to make kindergarten more strict in discipline. Eventually, primary teachers relaxed their discipline to add some of the games, songs, and exercise that the kindergarten teachers had incorporated in their classes.

The goals of kindergarten have changed as have the methods to obtain these goals. Ohio kindergartens' main emphasis is academic (Robinson, 1987). Different scheduling is offered to accomplish these goals. Columbus offers half-day sessions every day, full-day sessions for those children at risk, and all-day, every day sessions for all kindergarten students at that school. The curriculum is the same in each setting as guided by the Course of Study and state regulations. Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Health, Art, Music, and Physical Education are taught and a grade is received in each subject.

Communication with Parents

Kindergarten is like the beginning of a long journey. It is eagerly anticipated by the parents and the child. Preparations are made as the starting date approaches. Yet, as with any journey, there may be feelings of anxiety as well as anticipation. Parents are concerned about their child's happiness and success in school.

When the child enters school, he/she will be part of many new and exciting experiences that will stimulate growth emotionally, mentally, and physically. However, some of this newness will also bring feelings of conflict. There will be new authority figures to whom the child must relate, perhaps in a way much different from their parents. The values and expectations under which they operate at school may vary from those at home (Berson, 1959). Parents and teachers can make this beginning less stressful by working together.

Educators encourage a partnership in the education process.
. . . Because it works, proving a strong correlation between this partnership, good communication must exist between home and

school to avoid misunderstanding and clear up problems when they occur (O'Brian, 1989, p. 106).

Teachers need to enlighten parents about what their children really need so that parents want that for their children and will support a curriculum that meets those needs (Hill, 1987).

When parents begin to participate in school affairs at the kindergarten level, they assure a better life for their children and a more enlightened community for themselves (Berson, 1959, p. 107).

In order to get parents involved in their children's education, the teacher must be able to communicate with the parents in an effective way right from the start. Continued, frequent communication is important. The purpose of the communication should be apparent to the parent. It is a two-way street. When parents do respond to the teacher's communication and feel that they are being heard and that their opinions count, they will be more aware of what is going on, how they can help, and thus can be more supportive of the program. This cooperation between parent and teacher will definitely have a positive effect on the child's learning.

Parents' expectations are based largely on their own experiences in school (Herrera & Wooden, 1988). Kindergarten has changed a great deal since its beginnings and particularly within the last two to three decades. The parents need to be aware of this restructuring as they relate to what will be expected of their child.

The function of kindergarten has changed. At times its sole purpose was for socialization and seen as a transitional period in which the child learns to function within "democratic group living" (Weber, 1969, p. 230). Other educators

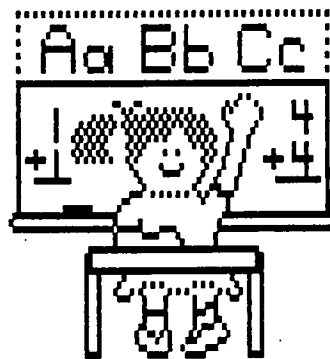
viewed this as stifling to self-realization and individualism and wanted less emphasis on rigid procedures as were first used in the Froebelian kindergarten. In the 1960s the emphasis changed to a more intellectual approach when there was much concern about being behind other countries academically. There are still concerns today that American children are behind their peers from other countries. Now kindergartens are expected to meet all the three functions in a blend of styles that produces a student ready to compete intellectually, get along with others and adapt to the group, yet hold his own and develop his potential to its utmost. This is an overwhelming demand not only for the child but quite often more so for the parents when they become aware of the situation.

Therefore, a handbook that will inform the kindergarten parents of the specific qualities of the kindergarten program at Stockbridge is the necessary beginning of a continuing process of communication among the school, the teacher, and the parents of the kindergarten students.

CHAPTER III

HANDBOOK FOR KINDERGARTEN PARENTS

**HANDBOOK
FOR
KINDERGARTEN
PARENTS**



**STOCKBRIDGE
ELEMENTARY**

STOCKBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
3350 SOUTH CHAMPION AVENUE
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43207
365-5450

Dear Parents,

This is the beginning of a very exciting and important year for you and your kindergarten child. If you have not had a child in kindergarten recently or this is your first experience with kindergarten since you went to school, you'll probably be amazed at the changes that have been happening.

Kindergarten offers many opportunities for your child to develop socially, physically, emotionally, and academically. It is the beginning of your child's formal schooling.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you about the kindergarten program at Stockbridge. I hope it will give you a better understanding of what is required in kindergarten and how you as parents can help your child to be successful this year. Together, you and I can help your child toward achieving a happy and successful year in kindergarten.

Sincerely,

Caroline Gunnett
Kindergarten Teacher

KINDERGARTEN SCHEDULE

There are two kindergarten classes at Stockbridge. They meet at the following times.

Morning class: 9:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Afternoon class: 12:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Placement in each class is determined by whether or not bus transportation is needed and by the size of the class. The majority of the students who are bussed will be in the morning class depending on their addresses and the bus routes. Those children who are not bussed will be in the afternoon class or may be placed in the morning class to balance the number in each class.

Each session includes a variety of activities to meet the needs of the children. There will be:

WORK AND PLAY PERIODS
QUIET AND ACTIVE PERIODS
LARGE AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
INDIVIDUAL AND WHOLE CLASS ACTIVITIES
ACTIVITIES WITH SPECIALISTS IN MUSIC, ART, AND PHYSICAL
EDUCATION
WEEKLY USE OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY
WEEKLY USE OF THE COMPUTER LAB AND IN CLASS COMPUTER
TIME

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL**Readiness Skills**

**RECITES FIRST AND LAST NAME
RECITES ADDRESS
RECITES TELEPHONE NUMBER
RECITES BIRTHDATE
NAMES THE EIGHT BASIC COLORS
SHOWS SKILL USING CRAYONS
SHOWS SKILL USING SCISSORS
MANAGES OWN CLOTHING**

Your child may already have these skills or may need to develop them. They will be stressed during the first grading period and expanded upon as necessary the rest of the year. You can help your child by helping him/her learn the first five skills and by providing opportunities at home to use crayons, pencils, scissors, and paste under your supervision. This activity develops small muscle control and eye-hand coordination which is important for reading.

Your child will be better prepared for school if he/she has learned to:

**TIE SHOES
PUT ON AND TAKE OFF JACKETS OR COATS WITHOUT HELP
USE THE BATHROOM PROPERLY AND FASTEN HIS/HER OWN
CLOTHING AND WASH HIS/HER HANDS
KEEP TRACK OF AND TAKE CARE OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

Send your child to school well rested and having eaten a good breakfast or lunch.

Have your child arrive on time — neither too early or late.

Pick up your child promptly. The children will enter and leave the building through the door facing South Champion Avenue next to the gym. They should be picked up at that door, not at the room.

Put your child's name on ALL items your child wears or brings to school. Many children's things look exactly alike.

If you need to send money to school, put it in a SEALED envelope. Write your child's name, room number (Room 6), the purpose for the money, and the amount on the outside of the envelope. REMIND THEM NOT TO OPEN IT.

If your child is ill, KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME. Children should not return to school until they have been without fever for 24 hours.

Notify the school when your child is absent. A phone call to the secretary (365-5450) and/or a note sent when the child returns as to the reason for the absence is necessary.

Keep the school informed of any changes in phone numbers where you can be reached in an emergency or in case of your child's illness. You will be notified if your child becomes ill or injured at school.

KINDERGARTEN AT STOCKBRIDGE

What is taught is determined by state requirements and the Columbus Public Schools' Course of Study. The children will work on and receive grades in the following areas during their year in kindergarten.

READING — textbook One Potato, Two

- Comprehension — understanding what is read
- Recognizing capital and lower case letters out of sequence
- Associates sounds with letters
- Develops sight vocabulary

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Expresses ideas orally
- Responds to stories and poems
- Develops skill in handwriting
- Expresses ideas through writing

MATHEMATICS

- Counts objects at least to 20
- Recognizes numerals 0-12
- Develops skill in solving problems
- Understands math concepts

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Awareness of holidays and time passing
- Seasonal changes differences in the weather
- Awareness of rules and why they are necessary
- Ability to interact with others in positive ways
- Develops respect for and dignity of self and others
- Adapts to the classroom environment

SCIENCE

- Awareness of the environment
- Uses skills of observing, experimenting, comparing, classifying, investigating, discovering, and questioning
- Shows awareness of the needs of living things: plants, animals, humans
- Awareness of matter and energy
- Awareness of space

HEALTH

Body awareness
Five senses
Develops good self-concept
Shows responsibility for behavior — can solve small problems
Understands need for good nutrition
Shows knowledge of good health habits and safety practices

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Basic movement skills
Physical fitness
Playing safely

ART

Identifies colors, shapes, lines, textures
Expresses ideas in a visual form
Shows skill in using a variety of art materials

MUSIC

Develops listening skills
Recognizes pitch, beat, loud-soft, like-unlike
Sings individually and with a group
Plays instrument — matching rhythm

WORK HABITS

Following directions
Completing work on time
Taking care of personal and classroom materials
Takes pride in work
Works independently

PERSONAL/SOCIAL GROWTH

Works and plays well with others
Follows classroom and school rules
Shows self-confidence

REPORTING PROGRESS TO THE PARENTS

Report Cards

There are four grading periods each year. Each grading period has nine weeks in it. A report card will be sent home at the end of each grading period. An interim report is sent home at the middle of each grading period. The purpose of the interim report is to let the parents know if their child is doing satisfactory work or needs to improve to bring up the grade.

The following system is used for grading:

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| S | ----- | The child is successful most of the time and shows a real grasp of the material. He/she works well independently. |
| P | ----- | The child is frequently successful and works on his/her own part of the time but may need some extra help. |
| N | ----- | The child is not usually successful and does not work well independently. |

Conference Days

There are two conference days each year. These are days set aside for parents and teachers to get together to discuss the child's progress in school and how they can work together for the child's benefit. Additional conferences may be set up at the parent's or teacher's request if necessary.

Classroom Visitations

Classroom visitations are another way parents may wish to become informed about their child's progress. The more the parent shows an interest in what the child is doing, the better understanding the child has of how important his/her school work is. Arrangements for this should be made in advance with the teacher.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS TO ASK THEMSELVES

If parents can answer *yes* to the following questions, they are beginning to provide their child with the chance to develop skills and attitudes that will help them to be successful in kindergarten.

Do I encourage my child to be independent and provide opportunities for him/her to make decisions of which he/she is capable?

Do I help my child meet and get along with other children? Do I take an interest in his/her friends?

Do I provide many different types of activities from which my child can gain experience, knowledge, and enjoyment?

Do I teach my child to be truthful and show responsibility?

Do I realize my child's uniqueness and allow him/her to grow and mature at his/her own rate?

Do I help my child respect the rights and property of others?

Do I encourage my child to be courteous and use good manners?

Do I show an interest in what is happening to my child in school? Do I praise my child for his/her accomplishments? If he/she is having difficulty achieving success, do I remember to praise the effort that went into the trying to do the work?

Do I spend some time each day reading to my child?

Do I take time to talk with my child and really LISTEN to him/her?

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents of kindergarten children may be unaware of changes that have taken place in the requirements of kindergarten in recent years. The kindergarten year is also their first connection with school in regard to their child. It is necessary for the parents to have a good understanding of what will be expected in order for them to be supportive of their child and of the program. A good means of communication is the teacher's key to helping them achieve this goal.

This handbook is meant to specifically reach the parents of kindergarten students at Stockbridge Elementary, a Columbus Public School. It explains the program at Stockbridge and how parents can help their child have a happy, successful year in kindergarten. It is the first step in an ongoing process of communication that will continue throughout the year between the school and parents. The handbook gives an overview of kindergarten at Stockbridge including what will be studied and the types of activities used to accomplish this.

The handbook is brief and to the point in order to encourage its being read and to serve as a starting point for further communication between the teacher and parents. It should be given to the parents when the child is enrolled. If they get the handbook in the Spring during Kindergarten Roundup before their kindergarten year, they will have the summer to work on readiness skills.

The writer believes it will be appropriate to conclude the year's communication with the parents by developing a questionnaire that will allow the parents input on future issues of the handbook. Parents will comment on what they felt was helpful, what needs to be expanded, what should be included that was not.

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