

An Appraisal of the Effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6
Children's Initiative Program as Perceived by Participating Parents

A Special Project
Presented to
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Heritage College

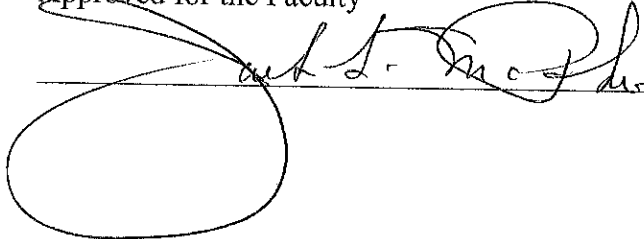
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FACULTY APPROVAL

An Appraisal of the Effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6
Children's Initiative Program as Perceived by Participating Parents

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to determine the effectiveness of the Success By 6 program in Washington State's Yakima County. This important children's initiative has focused on assuring quality early childhood development through three basic program components: outreach to families; partnerships with existing service providers; and, increased public awareness about quality early childhood development. The C.L.S. survey instrument was administered to participating parents in the Success By 6 program. The assumption was that parents participating in the Yakima County Success By 6 program would show increased awareness of the factors influencing their role in the growth and development of their child between the ages of 0 – 6.

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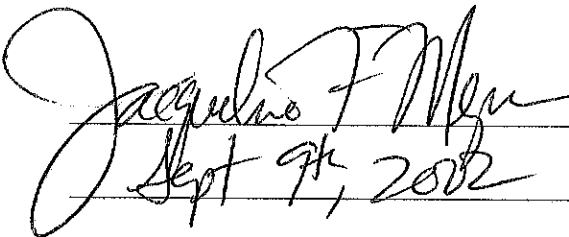
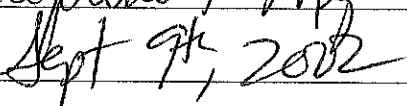
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

"From the research there are three identifiable components of parents overall attitude. One relates to valuing the parenting role. Parents who value their role, who view it as important, will be more involved. Two relates to an eagerness to be involved; these are parents who participate in activities and enjoy interacting with their children. Three relates to being psychologically available. These parents want to know what is going on. They want to know what their children are thinking and feeling. They want to know them as people." (Heath, 1999)

As stated above by Heath, parents who value parenting, who interact with their child through activities and communication, and who understand something about child psychology tend to be actively involved in the development of their child.

The present study sought to determine the effectiveness of the Success By 6 program in Washington State's Yakima County. This important children's initiative has focused on assuring quality early childhood development through three basic program components: outreach to families; partnerships with existing service providers; and, increased public awareness about quality early childhood development.

Home visits by Success By Six outreach workers linked families to human, health and dental services, and provided families with information related to the developmental stages of children ages 0 - 6. These home visits educated parents and children in a non-threatening environment and were important in establishing personal relationships. Newborn Baby Packages (N.B.P.), provided during home visits, contained materials and fact sheets descriptive of infant growth and development. N.B.P. materials focused on

such topics as home and car seat safety, oral health, the importance of reading and music, and post-partum depression. Early Literacy Kits (E.L.K.), also distributed during home visits, provided materials and activities intended to enhance children's language development.

Statement of the Problem

Stated in a form of a question, the problem that formed the basis of this study could be phrased as follows: To what extent did parents who participated in the Yakima County Success By 6 Program show increased awareness of the importance of the parents' role in the development of early childhood development as evidenced by pre- and post- test scores on the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S.)?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6 program and its efforts to develop increased parent awareness of the important role they play in early childhood development as measured by pre-and post- C.L.S. test scores.

Delimitations

A cluster sample from 84 families who participated in The Success By 6 Program and who resided in the Grandview, Granger, Harrah, Mabton, Sunnyside, Toppenish, Wapato, White Swan, Yakima and Zillah communities were surveyed for the purposes of the study. Home visitors employed by Success By 6 administered pre- and post- tests, using the C.L.S. that was administered in both English and Spanish to accommodate participating parents. Parents who completed the survey included a cross section of age, gender, income level, ethnicity, and number of children in the home.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed the Yakima Valley Success By 6 program would increase parent awareness of the importance of their role in early childhood development, as reflected in pre- and post- test scores. As pre- and post- testing of participating parents was conducted in both English and Spanish, the researcher also assumed that data obtained were accurate.

It was further assumed that, as the C.L.S. was administered to participating parents, they would develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the family-related factors addressed in the C.L.S. survey instrument and how these influences affected the growth and development of their child (i.e. transportation, budgeting, support services, support – involvement, interests/hobbies, and routines).

Hypothesis

Parents participating in the Yakima County Success By 6 program would show increased awareness of the factors influencing their role in the growth and development of their child as evidenced by pre- and post- test scores on the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S.).

Null Hypothesis

No significant difference existed between pre- and post- test scores of participating parents with regard to the factors influencing their role in the growth and development of their child.

Significance of the Project

Epstein (1992) observed there is remarkable consensus among educator as to the significant role that parent involvement plays in the growth and development of young children. Said Epstein, "Children will learn more and schools will improve if we can get parents to do a better job of supporting their children's schooling" (p.1141).

After further summarizing extensive research on parent involvement, Epstein concluded, "Students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging, and involved" (p.1141).

In his 1994 State of the Union Message, President Clinton expressed the belief that increasing parents' involvement in their children's education should be viewed as a cornerstone of school reform efforts. Parents who help and encourage their children to learn at home and who help develop positive attitudes toward school contribute to the personal growth and academic success of their children (Epstein, 1995, p.701).

Of further significance is the fact that baseline data obtained from the present study will provide as a measure for evaluating the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6 Children's Initiative.

Procedure

To investigate the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6 program on increasing the parent awareness of their role in early childhood development, an experimental research design was used. (X) parents selected for participation in the

Yakima County Success By 6 program cooperated with home visitors who administered pre- and post- C.L.S. tests.

Definition of Terms

Circle of Success – Scholarship program through Heritage College that allows students to work for Success By 6 as home visitors.

Community Life Skills Survey – The survey tool used in this experimental research.

Experimental Research – Research in which a least one independent variable is manipulated, other relevant variables are controlled, and the effect on one or more dependent variables are observed.

Frequency – A tabulation of responses from participating parents.

Mean – The arithmetic average of a set of scores.

Success By 6 – A Children's initiative that focuses on assuring quality early childhood development through three basic program: outreach to families, partnerships with existing service providers; and, increased public awareness about quality early childhood development.

T – Scores – The most basic standard score. It expresses how far a score is from the mean in terms of standard deviation units.

t – Test – A test used to determine whether the means of two groups are significantly different from one another.

Acronyms

E.R.I.C. Educational Resources Information Center

C.L.S. Community Life Skills Survey

C.O.S. Circle of Success

N.B.P. New Born Baby Packages

E.L.K. Early Literacy Kits

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

The selected literature reviewed in Chapter 2 examined studies and research related to the role of parents in early childhood education and of young children's readiness to learn. Specialized subtopics included: The Success By 6 Child Development Initiative; An Overview of Intelligence and Development Theory in Infancy and Early Childhood; Parent Involvement In the Education of Young Children; Early Childhood Brain Research; and, Summary.

Success By 6

Success By 6, a United Way children's initiative pioneered in 1988 in Minneapolis Minnesota, has been successfully implemented in 94 communities throughout the United States. The Success By 6 initiative has been dedicated to the objective of helping all children succeed for life by coordinating the services of numerous agencies to achieve measurable outcomes in the fields of health, education, safety and economic security. (Success By 6 Informational Flyer, 1996, p.1)

Success By 6 has focused on a single issue: quality early childhood development for all children from conception to age six. With that purpose in mind, Success By 6 initiative emphasized three elements: outreach to at-risk families; creating partnerships with existing service providers; and, increasing public awareness about quality early childhood development. As stated in the Success By 6 informational flyer:

Success By 6 gathers all community resources with a focused purpose of wrapping quality early childhood development around our children from prenatal to age six. This collaboration will eliminate gaps, duplication and underuse of existing services. (Success By 6 Informational Flyer, 1996)

Success By 6 has been described not as an agency or a single program but rather a community-wide initiative, which seeks to bring together resources from a partnership of private businesses, government, churches, labor, education, and health and human service organization. Research released in 1994 by the Carnegie Foundation proved that early childhood development is important because, "...by the time a child is age three, brain patterns are fully developed and early environmental influences will have long-lasting effects on brain development." (Success By 6 Informational Flyer, 1996)

United Way of Yakima, Washington recognized that Yakima County was in the midst of an unprecedented crisis that threatened the well-being and quality of life for valley residents described as follows:

Children from prenatal to age six in Yakima County are exposed to the risks of abuse and neglect; inadequate health care, nutrition and housing; criminal and gang activity. Without reversing this crisis, these children will face a lifetime of problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, dependency on government programs, chronic poor health, substance abuse and incarceration. These children will become a permanent crisis (Success By 6 Informational Flyer, 1996,p.1).

To address this crisis, United Way of Yakima County initiated a community-wide Success By 6 children's initiative to prevent social problems and to save children from

conception to age 6. Accordingly, the plan adopted by the Yakima Success By 6 program features the following vision, mission, and goals:

The Vision: All families will possess the knowledge, the skills and a sense of responsibility to assist their children in developing to their fullest potential.

The Mission: Success By 6 is a United Way initiative with the objective of helping all children succeed for life. This will be accomplished by coordinating the services of numerous agencies to achieve measurable outcomes in the fields of health, education, safety and economic security.

The Goals of the initiative are to (1) assess needs of families and children, (2) improve access to service, (3) improve children's readiness to learn, (4) ensure opportunities for parent education, (5) improve early childhood health, (6) promote public awareness, (7) develop financial resources to sustain and fund Success By 6 initiatives, (8) advocate for families with children ages 0-6, and (9) evaluate outcomes. (Success By 6 Fact Sheet, 1998, p.1)

Intelligence and Developmental Theory in Infancy and Early Childhood – An Overview

LaFroncoise (1999) described the most basic premises of Jean Piaget's Theory of Human Development as "a process of adaptation." According to this authority, Piaget viewed the highest form of human adaptation as "cognition or knowing". Piaget contended that infants did not possess concepts or ideas, were not capable of storing memories, and did not have a readily available information pool. What infants did possess were the characteristics needed to obtain information. LaFrancoise further described Piaget's Theory of Child Development as a system where infants sought for and responded to stimulation and thus built up a collection of behaviors and capabilities. As

these systems were refined, behaviors were more complex, more coordinated, and purposeful. LaFroncoise described Piaget's Theory as follows:

Through his studies, Piaget determined four factors that shaped childhood development: equilibrium, maturation, experience, and social interaction. Piaget constructed stages that described the changes in cognitive structure that occurred at certain ages. Sensormotor that took place between the ages of zero through two; preoperational occurred between the ages of two through seven; concrete operational that took place while a child was at the ages of seven through twelve; and formal operations that occurred between the ages of 11-15. (p.85)

Salzinger (1998) contrasted Lev Vgotsky's research in the the area of child development with that of Piaget. According to Salzinger, Vgotsky viewed development as a consequence of a child's interaction with other people or external social forces. This researcher explained that the central concept of Vgotsky's Theory centered on cultural and language aspects of human development. Salzinger further explained how Vgotsky viewed human development as fundamentally different from that of any other animal, as humans utilized tools and symbols to communicate thus creating a unique culture. Vgotsky's believed that culture shaped human's mental functioning and that culture was apparent in two areas: elementary mental functions and higher mental functions. Salzinger described Vgotsky's characteristics of newborns, such as the natural unlearned functions of crying, gurgling, and smelling as examples of elementary mental functions. As infants grew older and encountered more experiences, elementary mental functions

developed into higher mental functions such as problem-solving and thinking which brought about the ability to learn language.

According to Salzinger, Vygotsky noted that language made thought possible and regulated behavior. With the ability to communicate, humans would be restricted to elementary mental functions limited to behavior such as sensing and perceiving.

Language allowed individuals to interact socially. With social interaction, upbringing and teaching occurred and was essential for development Vygotsky described three stages for the development of speech: social, egocentric, and inner speech. Words that were expressed in simple or poorly understood concepts were examples of social speech also known as external speech which typically occurred up to the age of three.

Egocentric speech took place during the ages of three to seven. At this stage, children would talk to themselves out loud to control their own behavior. The final stage of development, inner speech, occurred beyond the age of seven. This stage was characterized by silent self-talk and required a higher mental functioning. Inner speech allowed children to direct their thinking and actions.

Seldin (1996) described the belief of Maria Montessori, another leader in child development, that children needed to be engaged in meaningful learning experiences. While observing young children in the classroom, Montessori recognized that children learned by touching, listening, and looking. For example, by stroking a sandpaper letter, children would have multiple opportunities to learn the letters desired and would begin associating sounds and forms of letters. Montessori designed individualized letter manipulatives that allowed children to select letters to invent whatever words they desired.

Seldin further explained how, when children approached Montessori and asked to be taught how to read and write, she began developing manipulatives that would motivate them to learn, yet appeal to them as children. Three items specifically designed to help develop language skills in early childhood classrooms were: metal insets; sandpaper letters; and, the moveable alphabet. For example, metal pieces were cut into various shapes such as ovals, pentagons, triangles and letters that allowed children to trace the different pieces. These objects allowed children to move away from the traditional wrote practice of drawing straight and curved lines. Montessori recognized that younger children had an innate interest in writing and did not view children's drawing on tabletops and floors as destructive or misbehaving. Montessori believed these actions needed to be supported and that educators needed to provide purposeful opportunities to engage in writing.

Research conducted by Jacob (1991) focused on the knowledge and mental development of young children. According to this authority, children's knowledge develops in an orderly manner and by means of three main activities:

1. Construct: Children construct knowledge by acting on the object of knowledge.
2. Expand: Children expand their knowledge by relating the object of knowledge to what they already know.
3. Own: Children come to own knowledge by using it. (p.27)

According to Jacob, Babies develop their fullest intellectual potential through exploration and play, when given great latitude to choose what they are interested in, and in an atmosphere of unconditional love, encouragement, and support. Jacob further

explained, as paraphrased below, how the four major factors of maturation, physical experiences, social transmission, and equilibration are fundamental in the development in young children:

1. Biologically, babies come quipped with certain abilities: they grasp objects; they blink; they suck; they perceive depth, they coo; they display a startled reaction when dropped. These are innate capacities, requiring no training or education. Experience, and the opportunities to exercise these skills enable the baby to improve upon them, expanding them to their natural limits.
2. Physical Experience: In the context of intellectual development, physical experience refers to a person's interaction with any aspect of the physical environment. For example, a baby pushing a ball, shaking a rattle, pulling a toy, banging on the table, or dropping a spoon to the floor allows for the discovery of the physical properties of these objects as well as how objects interact with each other. All such encounters with the physical world constitute physical experience, which is crucial to a child's mental development. It is through this form of experience that a baby builds scientific as well as logic-mathematical knowledge, all of which help a baby to interact with a variety of objects and events during his/her first two years.
3. Social Transmission: Socially transmitted knowledge and experience comes from people. Thus, the "culture of the baby" is developed and transmitted to the baby by the people around him/her. While a baby is interacting with people, a knowledge of the conventions of those people is being constructed that encompasses the mores, values, folklore, music and even rhymes of the

baby's culture. Through exposure to art, music, language, and education, children assimilate a great deal of socially developed knowledge, which forms a foundation for them to learn and from which to master their own culture.

4. Self-Regulation (Equilibrium): Equilibrium is a state, but equilibrium is an ongoing process, one of continuous mental adjustment in an effort to strike a balance between what he/she already knows and what baby is trying to understand. Children require their own amount of time to assimilate new concepts fully before they are ready to create new concepts for themselves. Like all other forms of learning, conceptual learning needs practice. A self-regulating process that motivates one to make sense of experience, to keep relating the new to the old until one sees the distinction between the two and can construct a new category of knowledge.

Parent Involvement in the Education of Young Children

Parent involvement is an issue that has become paramount in importance. Demands for higher academic standards as well as expectations by federal and state programs have generated considerable interest in this area. With achievement as the goal, and parent involvement a mandate, educators must acknowledge the need for increased parent involvement (Davies, 1996).

Davies contended that strong school-family and community ties lead to an increased in parent participation and academic achievement by students. Citing a six year study conducted by 25 researchers in six universities for the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Davies identified the following factors

as crucial for increased parent involvement: diverse family opportunities; learning at home; school-home communication; and family/student support

In a 1995 study, Tucker found that parent involvement in school curriculum programs was correlated with higher student performance on achievement tests based on that school district's program. Parents indicated when they were directly involved in and engaged with programs focused on specific content areas, and how these areas were being addressed in classrooms, they were better equipped to enhance learning opportunities at home.

Rankin (1996) conducted a study of inner-city elementary school children over a five-year period, focusing on sixty-four students and their parents in the Detroit School District. The study revealed that students achieved higher scores on standardized achievement tests such as the California Achievement Test, when parents were actively participating in their child's education. Parent participation was noted in four ways:

1. Taking time for children (e.g. playing games, engaging in conversation).
2. Showing an interest in school activities (e.g. talking about school activities, helping students with homework and expecting high standards).
3. Encouraging student reading at home.
4. Taking the initiative in contacting school personnel (e.g. conferring with teachers and the principal).

In a study of 100 elementary schools, nationwide, over a four year period McAllister (1990) found that among the 20,000 participants surveyed in the study, parents who participated in curriculum enrichment programs had children who achieved higher scores on district-wide academic achievement tests. Parents involved in this study

attended a workshop, a parent class, or an open house, which focused on revising curriculum, enhancing educational objectives, and training parents in instructional techniques.

If educators wish to increase parental involvement and extend the benefits it offers, educators must focus in part on the parent's perspective on the process. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler (1997) state, "Efforts to involve parents should be grounded in the knowledge that parents' beliefs about their roles in children's schooling and their effectiveness in helping their children succeed are the primary points of entry into increased, and increasingly effective involvement."

According to Dempsey and Sandler (1997) parent's ideas about child development, child rearing, and child outcomes are important components from the perspective of the parent involvement process. As a parent's role is socially defined, groups to which a parent belongs hold expectations about appropriate parental role behaviors, including behaviors related to involvement in children's educational processes, and communicate their role expectations to parents. These authorities expressed the belief that educators wishing to increase the benefits of parent involvement should be, "grounded in the knowledge that parent's beliefs about their roles in children's schooling and their effectiveness in helping their children succeed are the primary points of entry into increased, and increasingly effective involvement."

Furthermore, Dempsey and Sandler also described the importance of parental efficacy concerning involvement in their children's schooling. Parents with a higher sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed will tend to see themselves as capable in this area. They believe their involvement will make a difference for their children.

It was a contention of Thompson (2001) that the healthy development of every child begins with the parent-child relationship. Any experience received by an infant following birth as essential for the development of any of the five senses which help foster brain connections during childhood including: hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, and seeing.

Thompson suggested various means for providing oral language experiences for young children that do not require time consuming commitments or expensive toys and manipulatives. For example, a simple activity such as talking to an infant stimulated brain development; day-to-day activities that stimulated learning included trips to the grocery store, taking a drive to Grandma's house, and walks in the neighborhood. Through these types of activities, parents were easily able to dialogue with their child about natural, real world, experiences. Other useful suggestions for parents included: pointing out signs on the street when driving or walking, reading words aloud and explaining their meaning; identifying the colors of interesting objects; and naming items and shapes.

According to Morrogene (1990), parents who talked to their infant more frequently and used "adult words" helped their child develop better language skills. Morrogene stated, "when parents talked to their children about things that were interesting to them, while exposing them to new information and experiences, they were building the knowledge of language to be used later in reading and writing" (p14). Though infants do not understand the meaning of words, using unfamiliar words in context will help develop the skills to do so.

In her book Learning Early, Dorthy Einon (1998) explained various techniques parents could practice to assist the development of language with their young child. While sitting together sharing an activity or space, parents can describe to their child what they are doing in simple terms. For example: "I am going to wash the dishes"; "I am going to get the egg out of its shell to put into the cake mix", "I am going to put on your shoes so that we can go bye-bye."

Einon explained further that parents need to comment on what their child is doing when they are engaged in an activity. Parents were able to do this by asking questions or making comments to elicit a response about the child's interest. When asking questions, parents should ask more open-ended questions to assist the child with thinking more about the answer and how to respond, either through gestures or language.

Einon also stressed the importance of utilizing poems, rhymes and fairy tales to promote language development, even if the child does not always understand the meaning. This kind of activity is the verbal equivalent of watching television. Poems introduce the pleasures of words to young children as well as preparing them to rhyme for themselves. Over time, listening to poems and rhymes encourages children to break down the sounds that develop words. This process is an important activity in later reading development since it enhances the skill for correct pronunciation.

Larrick (1975) concluded that reading to children should begin at birth. Said Larrick, "The time to begin reading is with the first feeding, pampering and bathing. When the parent's sing, chant or engage in gentle conversations, the stage is set for the infant's participation only a few months later."

According to Moorhead (1977), children's natural love for music and making rhythms provided parents an opportunity to engage in activities with the child and that such opportunities significantly enhanced the child's ability to learn. Parent-child musical activities also fostered positive attitudes, enhanced creativity, promoted social development, boosted reading readiness and facilitated language development.

Early Childhood Brain Research

According to Nash (1997) recent studies indicated that heredity essentially determined the basic numbers and initial arrangements of neurons (brain cells) children were born with. A child's environment subsequently influenced how the circuits of the brain were arranged. Therefore, "nature and nurture" combined greatly influenced the results of children's lives" (p.3).

Dr. Peter Huttenlocher from the University of Chicago chronicled the astonishing period in brain development that occurs in an infant's life. Said Hutterlocher, "As soon as the third month of life, the brain's dendrites and axons produced great amounts of energy that facilitated an explosion of new synapses and connections"(p.4). Autopsying the brains of infants and young children who had died unexpectedly caused Hutterlocher to conclude that, "the number of synapses in one layer of the visual cortex, rose from approximately 2,500 per neuron at birth to as many as 18,000 around six months later (p.5).

According to Bales (1998), every experience that an infant had such as a mother's voice as she sings a lullaby, the bright colors or designs of a play toy, or the familiar face of a loving caregiver, provided the needed energy burst to excite and develop certain

neuron synopsises in the brain while at the same time leaving other neurons unaffected.

Bales stated,

“As time developed, neuron circuits that had been repeatedly turned on were strengthened while those that were rarely excited dropped away or pruned themselves. The developing brain was like a fertile garden. When a garden was planted, the plants were expected to grow and thrive. Like every garden, weeds started to grow and left less room for the plants to grow. Yet, once the weeds were pulled out, more room was available for the plants to grow” (p.2)

Bales further explained that the process of “pruning” helped streamline an infant’s neural dispensations and made the remaining circuits work quicker and more proficient. Without the occurrence of “synaptic pruning”, children would not be able to walk, talk or see properly.

Newberger (1997) explained how an important element of brain development included understanding the “windows of opportunities” otherwise recognized as the critical periods or time in children’s lives that specific learning took place:

The brain of a four-month-old responds to every sound produced in the entire world. But by the time babies are 10 months old, their brains have become so sophisticated that they can now distinguish the sounds of their own language and no longer pay attention to the sounds of language that are foreign.

During those times, the brain absorbed new information more easily than at any other time in life. The window for visual development occurred from birth to four years of age; language development from birth to 10 years; emotional attachment from birth to 18 months; and, music and math skills from one year to five years of age. Children need the

right experiences at the right time for their brains to develop fully. Many windows opened and closed within the first three years of life.

Newberger concluded that “the windows of opportunity” studies showed that positive, nurturing experiences during early childhood helped improve the infants chances for a brighter future. On the other hand, negative experiences, such as neglect or abandonment, may produce the opposite result. Negative experiences during infancy were more likely to cause learning delays, emotional detachments, and trouble experiencing empathy and emotional expression.

Summary

The review of selected literature presented in Chapter 2 supported the following research themes:

1. The Success By 6 Initiative has focused public and private resources on the development of young children in the areas of health, education, safety, and economic security.
2. Young children develop their fullest intellectual potential through exploration and play, when given great latitude to choose.
3. Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education has been correlated with higher student performance and academic achievement.
4. Heredity and environment combined to influence the development and behavior of young children.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

This experimental study sought to determine the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By Six program as perceived by participating parents with children ages 0-6. The Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S. - See Appendix) was used to elicit pre- and post- parental input.

In November 2001, Heritage College hired the writer (Jacqueline F. Meyer) as Coordinator for the Circle of Success and Yakima County Success By 6 program. The Circle of Success program provided scholarships, paid stipends, and childcare assistance to ten (10) Heritage College students. In return for the benefits afforded by this program, participating students provided the following outreach services to families enrolled in the Success By Six program, including: home visits; establishing parent support groups; and, providing information concerning community resources available to help families with young children. Following discussions with the Yakima County Success By Six Director, Ms. Theresa Bommersbach, the writer sought and was granted permission to undertake the present study. The writer utilized the pre- and post-test scores from the C.L.S. to determine parental perceptions concerning Success By 6 program effectiveness. Mr. Nick LeCuer, the Yakima County Success By 6 Program Evaluator, assisted in conducting an analysis of parent test scores.

Additional procedures employed by the writer included a review of selected literature, utilizing E.R.I.C. and Internet computer searches, and selected research related to early childhood education.

Methodology

The parameters for the methodology used in this study were determined by the unique characteristics of the participants, instruments, design, procedure, and treatment of data, as detailed below.

Participants

For purposes for this study, the investigator surveyed parents enrolled in the Yakima County Success By 6 program who resided in the Grandview, Granger, Harrah, Mabton, Sunnyside, Toppenish, Wapato, White Swan, Yakima, and Zillah communities.

Instruments

Statements contained in the C.L.S. survey instrument sought to elicit parent perceptions concerning factors which influenced their family situations and indirectly affected their child rearing efforts and hence, the growth and development of their children.

Specifically, the C.L.S instrument was designed to elicit forced choice responses organized into six categories including:

1. Transportation
2. Budgeting
3. Support Services
4. Support-Involvement
5. Interests – Hobbies
6. Regularity – Organization – Routines

Design

This experimental study utilized a One group Pretest–Posttest designed to elicit “Yes” or “No”, forced- choice responses to each of the questionnaire categories cited above. This design involved a single group that was pretested (O), exposed to a treatment (X), and posttested (O). The success of the treatment was determined by comparing pre- and posttest scores (Gay & Ariasian, 2001).

Procedure

The following two-step process was used to determine the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6 program as perceived by participating parents.

Step 1: Heritage College Family Outreach Workers administered the C.L.S. to parents on two occasions:

April 1- October 2001--A pre-test administered three weeks following the first home visit.

September – March 2002--A post-test was administered six months following the pre-test.

Step 2: Pre- and Post-test scores were used to calculate the mean and standard deviation for each group of parent scores.

Treatment of Data

Mean scores were calculated to measure the central tendency (i.e., arithmetic average) of parent responses to statements contained in each of the six categories in the C.L.S. survey instrument. The formula for the mean score was represented as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

As noted by Gay (2000, p.446) the $\sum X$ was the sum of all the raw scores and (N) was the total number of the participants. To find for the mean (X), add all the raw scores ($\sum X$) then divided by the total number of participants (N).

Additionally, parent responses to the forced choice items were organized into six categories consistent with the C.L.S. survey instrument, as detailed above and hand tabulated by the investigator on a frequency (f) and percentage (%) basis. Specifically, the resultant data from the total population responses were reported and analyzed as follows:

1. The total number of responses for each questionnaire item by category.
2. The percentage (%) of responses for each statement item by category.

Finally, a t-test for a non-independent sample was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the means for one sample at two different times (i.e., pretest and posttest). The t-test formula used to determine any significant difference between pre- and posttest was:

(Insert Here)

Summary

In Chapter 3, the researcher provided an overview of the processes and procedures utilized in the conduct of the project. Descriptions of the methodology employed included details concerning participants, survey instrument, research design and procedures followed. Additionally, a description of how data were treated and related to the original hypothesis was included. Data validating/invalidating the hypothesis have been presented and analyzed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By 6 program and its effort to develop increased parent awareness of the important role they play in early childhood development as measured by pre-and post-Community Life Skills Survey (C.L.S.) test scores.

From April 1, 2001, through March, 2002, 84 parents were surveyed for purposes of the study. C.L.S. pre- and post- test raw scores from participating parents were calculated by frequency (*f*), percentage (%), and mean. In addition, parents responses on the pre- and post- survey were compared using the *t*- test for non-independent samples.

Description of Environment

The study included a cluster sample obtained from a survey of 84 families who participated in the Success By 6 program and, who resided in the Grandview, Harrah, Mabton, Sunnyside, Toppenish, Wapato, White Swan, and Zillah communities. Home visitors employed by the Success By 6 program administered pre- and post- C.L.S. survey in both English and Spanish. Parents surveyed represented a cross section of age, gender, income level, ethnicity, and number of children in the home.

Hypothesis

Parents participating in the Yakima County Success By 6 program would show increased awareness of the factors influencing their role in the growth and development of their children as evidenced by pre- and post- test scores on the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S.).

Null Hypothesis

No significant difference existed between pre- and post- test scores of participating parents with regard to the factors influencing their role in their child's growth and development.

Findings

A total of 84 C.L.S. surveys were administered to parents participating in the Success By 6 program. As shown in Table 1, parents who participated in the survey resided in the following communities: Grandview 11 (13%), Granger 3 (4%), Harrah 2 (2%), Mabton 8 (10%), Sunnyside 3 (4%), Toppenish 23 (27%), Wapato 15 (18%), White Swan 7 (8%), Zillah 12 (14%).

Table 1. Parents Surveyed by Community

Community	# of Parents Surveyed
Grandview	11
Granger	3
Harrah	2
Mabton	9
Sunnyside	3
Toppenish	23
Wapato	15
White Swan	7
Zillah	12
Total	84

Table 2 has provided summaries of C.L.S. pre- and post- survey mean scores for participating parents. Of particular significance was the fact that the mean score increased in all six C.L.S. areas surveyed including transportation, budgeting, support services, support-involvement, interests-hobbies, and regularity-organization-routines.

It may be further concluded from data presented in Table 2, that parent responses evidenced the greatest degree of increased awareness in the areas of support-involvement, interest-hobbies, regularity-organization-routines and, increased understanding of these considerations in early childhood development.

Table 2. Mean Pre- and Post- C.L.S.S. Score By Survey Topics

Survey Topic	Pre-C.L.S.S Mean	Post-C.L.S.S Mean	Increase (>)	Decrease (<)
Transportation	3.2235	3.2261	>	
Budgeting	4.0357	4.4705	>	
Support Services	4.0952	4.5764	>	
Support – Involvement	5.6785	6.3411	>	
Interests – Hobbies	2.8571	3.6	>	
Regularity – Organization-Routines	6.5833	7.4235	>	
Total C.L.S.S. Score	26.727	29.635	>	

A summary of parent responses to the *Transportation* section of the pre-and post-C.L.S. survey by frequency (*f*), percent (%), and mean score has been provided in Table

3. Statements included in this section were:

1. Client has some form of regular, reliable transportation to work or for his/her needs.
2. Client can describe how to get to the grocery store, or to the doctor or clinic by some alternate method of transportation if the regular transportation is not available (e.g., if the car is broken down).

3. Client knows the location of the bus stop nearest his/her home.
4. Client has a copy of the bus schedule for the local route, or knows that a schedule can be obtained over the phone.

The mean score for “NO” responses in the *Transportation* section of the pretest was 1.777 and, for the posttest, was 1.774. The mean score for “YES” responses on the pretest was 3.223 and, for the posttest was, 3.226.

Based on data shown in Table 3, one could conclude there was an increase in parent perceptions related to *Transportation* factors associated with the parents’ role in the growth and development of their children.

Table 3. Parents Responses to the *Transportation* Section of the Pre-and Post-C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (f) and Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	66	270	336	65	271	336
Percentage	20%	80%	100%	19%	81%	100%
Mean score	1.777	3.2235	4	1.774	3.2261	4

A summary of parent responses to the *Budgeting* section of the pre-and post-C.L.S. survey by frequency (f), percent (%) and mean score has been provided in Table 4.

The statements located in Budgeting section were:

1. Client is able to pay bills (e.g., rent, utility) so that he/she is not bothered by collectors or threatened by service cut-offs (no more than one such incident in the past year).
2. Client plans the monthly spending so that there is some money left at the end of the month (or before the next check arrives) to pay for food and other essentials
3. Client has a bank account.

4. Client plans purchases to take advantage of sales or lower prices (e.g., uses discount stores, coupons, etc.).
5. Client makes no more than 3 visits per week to the food store.

It was significant to note that the frequency of parent responses to the *Budgeting* section increased from pretest to posttest from 339 to 375, an increase of 36 (8%).

Shown in Table 4, the number of "NO" responses in this section decreased by nearly 50%, from pre- to posttest. Mean scores for "NO" responses in the budget section decreased from .965 on the pretest, to .530 on the posttest. Mean score for "YES" responses increased from 4.035 on the pretest, to 4.4705 on the posttest.

This increase in scores from pretest to posttest could indicate that parent's perception regarding the influence of family *Budgeting* considerations related to the growth and development of their children had significantly increased.

Table 4. Parents Responses to the *Budgeting* Section of the Pre-and Post-C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (f) and Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	81	339	420	45	375	420
Percentage	19%	81%	100%	11%	89%	100%
Mean score	.965	4.0357	5	.530	4.4705	5

A summary of parent responses to items contained in the *Support Services* section of the C.L.S. survey by frequency (*F*), percentage (%), and mean score has been provided in Table 5. Statements included in this section were:

1. Client has the phone numbers of family or friends easily available in case of emergency or need.

2. Client knows the name of at least one neighbor sufficiently to locate the name in a phone book.
3. Client uses the yellow pages to look up numbers or to find goods or services on some regular basis (approximately once a month).
4. Client has emergency numbers easily available (e.g.; 911, doctor, poison control number).
5. Client knows where to obtain such needed services as drugstore for prescription, a car repair shop, or a post office.

As indicated in Table 5, the change in parent "NO" responses from pretest (76) to posttest (36) decreased by 40 (9%). The change in "YES" responses from pretest (344) to posttest (384) increased by 40 (9%). The mean score for "NO" responses in the *Support Service* section on the pretest decreased from .905 to .424 on the posttest. The mean score for "YES" responses on the pretest increased from 4.095, to 4.576 on the posttest. Based on these data, that there was a significant increase in parent perceptions related to *Support Service* factors associated with the parents' role in the growth and development of their children.

Table 5. Parents Responses to the *Support Services* of the Pre-and Post- C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (*f*) and Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	76	344	420	36	384	420
Percentage	18%	82%	100%	9%	91%	100%
Mean	.905	4.0952	5	.424	4.5764	5

A summary of responses from the *Support-Involvement* section of the C.L.S. survey by frequency (*f*), percentage (%), and mean score has been provided in Table 6. Statements located in the *Support-Involvement* section were:

1. Client has a close friend with whom he/she visits at least once a week by phone or in person.
2. Client has attended a part or been a guest at a meal within the past 6 weeks.
3. Client has invited a guest to his/her home within the past 2 weeks.
4. Client initiates contact by phone or in person or by letter with at least one member of own family with whom he/she does not live, within the past 2 weeks.
5. Client has made a reciprocal agreement with a friend to exchange favors or services such as babysitting or repair work..
6. Client reports conversations with people he/she has not met before in such settings as the grocery or other stores, the Laundromat, in the doctor's waiting room, in a park, or in church.
7. Client belongs to a club or other organized group that meets regularly (on a regularly scheduled basis).

The frequency of parent "YES" responses to the *Support-Involvement* increased from 477 on the pretest, to 533 on the posttest (an increase of 56 or 10%). As indicated in Table 6, "NO" responses decreased over 50% from pretest to posttest. Mean score for "NO" responses in the *Support-Involvement* decreased from 1.322 on pretest, to .659 on the posttest. The mean score for "YES" responses increased from 5.678 on the pretest, to 6.341 on the posttest. The increase in scores from pretest to posttest could indicate that

parent's perception regarding the influence of family *Support-Involvement* considerations related to the growth and development of their children had significantly increased.

Table 6. Parents Responses to the *Support – Involvement* of the Pre-and Post- C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (f) Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	111	477	588	55	533	588
Percentage	19%	81%	100%	9%	91%	100%
Mean	1.322	5.6785	7	.659	6.3411	7

A summary of parent responses to the *Interest-Hobbies* section by frequency (f), percentage (%), and mean score have been provided in Table 7. Statements included in this section of the C.L.S. survey were:

1. Client has some hobbies or recreational interests.
2. Client reads some magazine (no matter what kind) at least once a month (need not be purchased).
3. Client has visited the public library or bookmobile at least once in the past month.
4. Client keeps up with the news on TV or radio or reads a daily paper at least 3 times a week.

As shown in Table 7, the number if parent "NO" responses from pretest (96) to posttest (33), decreased by 63 (19%). "YES" responses from pretest (240) to posttest (303) increased by 63 (19%). It was significant to note that the greatest increase in parent responses from "NO" to "YES" (i.e., 71% on pretest to 90% on the posttest) occurred in this section of the survey. The mean score for "NO" responses in this section of the pretest was 1.143 and .4 on the posttest. The mean score for "YES" responses on the

pretest was 2.857 and 3.6 for the posttest. The change in scores, from pre- and posttest indicated that parent's perceptions regarding influences of their own *Interests-Hobbies* as related to the growth and development of their children, had significantly increased.

Table 7. Parents Responses to the *Interests – Hobbies* of the Pre-and Post-C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (*f*) and Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	96	240	336	33	303	336
Percentage	29%	71%	100%	10%	90%	100%
Mean	1.143	2.8571	4	.4	3.6	4.4

A summary of responses from the *Regularity-Organization-Routines* section, by frequency (*f*), percentage (%), and mean score have been provided in Table 8.

Statements included in this section were:

1. Client's clothes appear clean and reasonably appropriate for the occasion and time of day.
2. Client usually dresses in the morning rather than spending the day in bathrobe or nightclothes.
3. Client eats meals at regular times at least once a day.
4. Client eats at least one meal per day with partner, family, or friends at home.
5. Client gets some regular exercise at least 3 times a week (15-20 minutes/day or 30-45 min/ 3 times a week).
6. Client has seen a doctor for a regular checkup (other than pregnancy or illness) within the past 3 years.
7. Client has been to a dentist within the past 3 years.

8. Client has a way of keeping track of obligations such as clinic appointments or home visits (e.g., a list or a calendar).

As presented in Table 8, “NO” responses decreased by over 50% from pre- to posttest. The mean score for “NO” responses in this section decreased from 1.417 on the pretest to .577 on the posttest. Mean score for “YES” responses increased from 6.583 on the pretest, to 7.423 on the posttest. One could therefore conclude from the data that perceptions regarding the influence of family *Regularity-Organization-Routine* considerations related to the growth and development of their children had significantly increased.

Table 8. Parents Responses to the Regularity – Organization – Routines Section of the Pre- and Post- C.L.S. Survey by Frequency (f) and Percentage (%).

	Pre-C.L.S. Survey			Post- C.L.S. Survey		
	No responses	Yes responses	Totals	No responses	Yes responses	Totals
Frequencies	119	553	672	48	624	672
Percentage	18%	82%	100%	7%	93%	100%
Mean	1.417	6.5833	8	.577	7.4235	8

As data were collected during a one-year period, and as test scores were collected from one group of parents only, the researcher used a *t*-test for non-independent samples for purposes of data comparison. The values used to determine significance were published in the text Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The formula for the *t*- test for non-independent samples was:

(insert here)

The distribution of t -values with 60 degrees of freedom has been presented in Table 9. There were 84 pairs of scores, and the sum of the difference between the two sets (D) and (df) was 250. The t value was 6.170, with a degree of freedom at 60. The degree of freedom (df) was calculated by the author using the formula $N-1$, with N being the number of parents in the study. Since there were 84 students in the study, the closest degree of freedom was 60. The researcher referred to Table A.4 Educational Research, (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.615) to calculate significance. The author used the degree of freedom and t -value to check for significance. At the .05 level, the significance was 2.00, at the .01 level, it was 2.66, and at the .001 level was 3.46. The t -value of 6.170 was greater than each of those numbers, enabling the author to reject the null hypothesis on all three levels.

Table 9. Distribution of t With 60 Degrees of Freedom

df	.05	.01	.001
60	2.00	2.66	3.46

Summary

The analysis of data presented in Chapter 4 confirmed an increase in parent awareness of the importance of their role in early childhood development, as evidenced by pre- and post test scores on the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S.). Of particular significance was the fact that parent "YES" responses increased, from pretest to posttest in all 6 categories contained in the C.L.S. survey instrument. From these data, the researcher was able to support the hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis that no significant difference existed between pre-and post- survey scores of participating parents with regard to their role in early childhood growth and development.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this experimental study sought to determine the effectiveness of the Yakima County Success By Six program as perceived by participating parents with children ages 0-6. To accomplish this purpose, a review of current research and literature related to the role of parents in early childhood education and of young children's readiness to learn. Additionally, data from the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S. – Appendix) was obtained to elicit pre- and post- parental input and analyzed.

Summary

In the present study, C.L.S. surveys (Appendix) were completed by 84 parents who resided in Grandview, Granger, Harrah, Mabton, Sunnyside, Toppenish, Wapato, White Swan, and Zillah. The survey instrument (Appendix) sought to elicit parent perceptions concerning factors which influenced their family situations and indirectly affected their child rearing efforts and the growth and development of their children. Specifically, the C.L.S instrument was designed to elicit forced-choice responses organized into six categories, including:

1. Transportation
2. Budgeting
3. Support Services
4. Support-Involvement
5. Interests – Hobbies
6. Regularity – Organization – Routines

An analysis of data obtained from the survey participants supported the hypothesis that, parents participating in the Yakima County Success By 6 program would show increased awareness of the factors influencing their role in the growth and development of their children as evidenced by pre- and posttest scores on the Community Life Skills Scale (C.L.S.).

Conclusions

As reported in Chapter 2, an extensive review of current literature which focused on the role of parents in early childhood education and of young children's readiness to learn, supported the following research themes:

1. The Success By 6 Initiative has focused public and private resources on the development of young children in the areas of health, education, safety, and economic security.
2. Young children develop their fullest intellectual potential through exploration and play, when given great latitude to choose.
3. Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education has been correlated with higher student performance and academic achievement.
4. Heredity and environment combined have significantly influenced the development and behavior of young children.

Finally, from the analysis of data presented in Chapter 4 of the present study, it was concluded that parents who participated in the Success by 6 program from April, 2001, through March, 2002 experienced increased awareness of factors which influenced their family situations and indirectly affected their child rearing efforts and the growth and development of their children

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. To determine the need for a program that increases parent awareness of their role in early childhood development, parents with the unique knowledge of the local community should be surveyed.
2. To enhance the growth and development of young children, parents should be more aware and knowledgeable about factors that influence their growth and development.
3. To become a child's first teacher, parents need to: Participate in opportunities for parent education; engage their child in activities to enhance language, speech, and reading development; and, be knowledgeable about the developmental stages of children ages 0-6.

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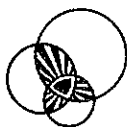
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**CLS*****COMMUNITY LIFE SKILLS SCALE**

Date: _____

Name: _____	Marital Status: _____	Age: _____	Race: _____	Sex: _____
Education: _____	Occupation: _____	Number of Children: _____	under 5 yrs: _____	5-18 yrs: _____

	YES	NO
I. TRANSPORTATION		
1. Client has some form of regular, reliable transportation to work or for his/her needs.		
2. Client can describe how to get to the grocery store, or to the doctor or clinic by some alternate method of transportation if the regular transportation is not available (e.g., if the car is broken down).		
3. Client knows the location of the bus stop nearest his/her home.		
4. Client has a copy of the bus schedule for the local route, or knows that a schedule can be obtained over the phone.		

II. BUDGETING		
5. Client is able to pay bills (e.g., rent, utility) so that he/she is not bothered by collectors or threatened by service cut-offs (no more than one such incident in the past year).		
6. Client plans the monthly spending so that there is some money left at the end of the month (or before the next check arrives) to pay for food and other essentials.		
7. Client has a bank account.		
8. Client plans purchases to take advantage of sales or lower prices (e.g., uses discount houses, coupons, etc.).		
9. Client makes no more than 3 visits per week to the food store.		

III. SUPPORT SERVICES		
10. Client has the phone numbers of family or friends easily available in case of emergency or need.		
11. Client knows the name of at least one neighbor sufficiently to locate the name in a phone book.		
12. Client uses the yellow pages to look up numbers or to find goods or services on some regular basis (approximately once a month).		
13. Client has emergency numbers easily available (e.g., 911, doctor, poison control number).		
14. Client knows where to obtain such needed services as drugstore for prescription, a car repair shop, or a post office.		

IV. SUPPORT-INVOLVEMENT		
15. Client has a close friend with whom he/she visits at least once a week. By phone or in person.		
16. Client has attended a party or been a guest at a meal within the past 6 weeks.		
17. Client has invited a guest to his/her home within the past 2 weeks.		
18. Client initiates contact by phone or in person or by letter with at least one member of own family with whom he/she does not live, within the past 2 weeks.		

	YES	NO
19. Client has made a reciprocal agreement with a friend to exchange favors or services such as babysitting or repair work.		
20. Client reports conversations with people he/she has not met before in such settings as the grocery or other stores, the laundromat, in the doctor's waiting room, in a park, or in church.		
21. Client belongs to a club or other organized group that meets regularly (on a regularly scheduled basis).		

V. INTERESTS-HOBBIES		
22. Client has some hobbies or recreational interests.		
23. Client reads some magazine (no matter what kind) at least once a month (need not be purchased).		
24. Client has visited the public library or bookmobile at least once in the past month.		
25. Client keeps up with the news on tv or radio or reads a daily paper at least 3 times a week.		

VI. REGULARITY-ORGANIZATION-ROUTINES		
26. Client's clothes appear clean and reasonably appropriate for the occasion and time of day.		
27. Client usually dresses in the morning rather than spending the day in bathrobe or night clothes.		
28. Client eats meals at regular times at least once a day.		
29. Client eats at least one meal per day with partner, family, or friends at home.		
30. Client gets some regular exercise at least 3 times a week (15-20 min./Day or 30-45 min. 3 times a week).		
31. Client has seen a doctor for a regular checkup (other than pregnancy or illness) within the past 3 years.		
32. Client has been to a dentist within the past 3 years.		
33. Client has a way of keeping track of obligations such as clinic appointments or home visits (e.g., a list or a calendar).		

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* manual required