

Local Preschool Expansion in Southern California Promotes Economic Success and Equitable Outcomes

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Research Article

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Posted Date: October 1st, 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10780936/v1>

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Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Local Preschool Expansion in Southern California Promotes Economic Success and Equitable Outcomes

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Abstract¹

Investment returns to preschool doubly outweigh the costs in every instance, and extending services to all low-income working families would most effectively expand those benefits in San Diego, California. Pursuant to United Nations' Sustainable Development Education Goal 4, this study affirms preschool as a viable tool for maximizing equity and supporting economic output. This mixed methods study analyzed preschool impact on families and poverty, finding correlations between preschool and student achievement, generation of economic output from parent engagement in the labor force and the multiplier effect, and benefits to gender and social equity. Confirmed alternative hypotheses designated preschool expansion as an economically sound investment.

Keywords: Preschool impact, equity, self-reliance, early education, education policy

¹ This study utilized the study proposal draft from a previous course required for submission of this study for IRB approval. The content is very similar to the previously drafted proposal but has been revised considerably to reflect completion of the study and the findings thereof.

Introduction

Equity in all its forms—quality education and child outcomes, gender equity, socio-economic equity, gender pay parity, and lifelong learning/self-reliance—contributes to a life well lived and to the development of human capital. Equal access to education and opportunities creates a context in which human beings can thrive. The United Nations [38] has determined that all children have a right to quality education, and this study verified beneficial equitable impacts that children and their families experience when Early Care and Education (ECE) is made accessible. This study argues that targeted preschool provision in California, United States reduces reliance on public assistance, and preschool expansion in San Diego extending to all low-income working families would most effectively maximize ECE benefits and improve equity. Using triangulation within a mixed methods approach, data confirmed that preschool beneficially impacts families in several ways as well as reduces reliance on public assistance.

This study was situated in Bray and Thomas' intersectional framework [4], analyzing preschool policy from multiple levels: Macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. Using a transformative lens [19], this exploratory and correlational mixed-methods study analyzed California policy reports and studies on early education access in California. Importantly, this study examined the precedent of the first near-universal preschool rollout in the United States during World War II via the Lanham Act of 1940 [15] against the current effort to expand preschool education in California. Consistent with social justice theory, expansion of preschool access would promote equity and advance child achievement outcomes, upholding *fairness* as described by Rawls [29] and achieved by ensuring ECE access is not restricted based on unchosen circumstances [27].

The qualitative component of this study leveraged interviews and questionnaires to apply policy report data to families living in San Diego, California to determine how preschool impacts families' socioeconomic well-being. Micro-level quantitative and qualitative parent questionnaire data was analyzed thematically with qualitative macro-level data from policy reports and meso-level interview responses from site administrators to provide institutional and individual family insight about the micro- and meso-level impact of high quality ECE.

Statement of the Problem

Leveraging policy is the most effective means to maximize the critical benefits of ECE. Policy can improve gender and social equity by increasing work and educational opportunities for parents by providing high-quality education and wraparound services, consequential at all levels of analysis [37, 1, 16, 23, 21, 24, 9, 17, 7, 3, 2]. However, barriers exist. Mothers are profoundly impacted because wage gaps disproportionately affect women and are exacerbated by the motherhood wage penalty. When mothers have childcare, they can work, and reliable care encourages reliability at work, which has limited mothers' opportunities for work opportunities, advancement, and pay parity [24,7]. Successful near-universal childcare has precedent in the federally instituted 0-12 childcare program funded by the Lanham Act of 1940, which allowed mothers to work while male soldiers fought in World War II [15]. Removing barriers to access is paramount for success. With the Lanham Act childcare precedent and the recent moves of New Mexico [6], New York City [12], and San Francisco [32] to universalize ECE, San Diego would do well to expand access.

The equitable impact of preschool has global significance for working families, disadvantaged children, women, and education [7, 9, 24, 17, 2, 3, 13]. Regionally significant studies show how important effective policy and investment in high-quality ECE are [1, 9, 24, 3]. With implications for preschool provision globally, the focus of this study is to bring policy insight into the California

State Preschool Program (CSPP) for low-income students and students with disabilities, and Head Start and other early learning programs [38].

Improved social and achievement outcomes for children and employment support for parents promote social equity [14, 39, 16, 24, 7, 37]. With ECE and support services, parents can engage in gainful employment, improve self-reliance, and spend less on childcare, which has a massive impact on family income and economic utility [6, 8]. Danielson & Thorman [8] found that single-parent and Latinx households in California would see the greatest benefit from preschool expansion to all low-income families, producing benefits at all scales by reducing poverty in those demographics by 44% and 56% respectively. In San Diego, preschool expansion to all low-income working families could reduce poverty by 12% [8].

Many studies show that preschool attendance improves child development and academic outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children [3], and creates beneficial overlap between scales of analysis. High-quality preschool enhances school readiness and early literacy and numeracy, translating to better academic achievement outcomes and aiding in social development [7, 14, 9]. The HighScope Perry Preschool Project and Carolina Abecedarian program in North Carolina pioneered studies on the effects of targeted preschool on children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the 1960s and 1970s with longitudinal follow-ups to assess long-term outcomes. Their results showed incredible gains like improved school readiness, lower incarceration rates, and increased likelihood of pursuing higher education [9, 14], while more recent research showed similar benefits when high-quality preschool is provided at scale and when succeeded by quality formal education [13, 23, 21].

With preschool and ECE access, parents have more opportunities to work and continue their education, which reduces poverty [24, 7, 8, 15]. Targeted preschool programs target socioeconomically disadvantaged students to alleviate the adverse impacts of poverty on achievement while universal preschool is accessible to all students, regardless of income. Herbst [15] found that preschool families and children rely less on public financial assistance and see improved labor market outcomes longitudinally. Relevant preschool impact literature indicates that preschool not only promotes child achievement outcomes in the short- and long-term but also acts as an early start care program. This study approached preschool impacts through multiple levels of analysis to understand correlation between preschool access and the socioeconomic welfare of families.

Literature Review

Research Gap

Despite many longitudinal studies, gaps exist. Native and immigrant populations are understudied, and their unique experiences warrant further research [25, 2, 16]. Additionally, ECE impacts on parents and families holistically warrant further study. As a California resident with personal experience with CSPP services, this researcher decided to investigate preschool in the state of California, understanding that access is not universal. This study uncovered how preschool access impacts working families, particularly disadvantaged populations. While California preschool alleviates some of the strain on disadvantaged families by providing limited access, systemic barriers to access remain for families in need. Danielson and Thorman [8] explored how preschool access could support more families and found that targeting working families in San Diego would most effectively reduce poverty locally. When combined with other studies that highlight gender wage gaps, motherhood wage penalties, and work opportunities for single parent

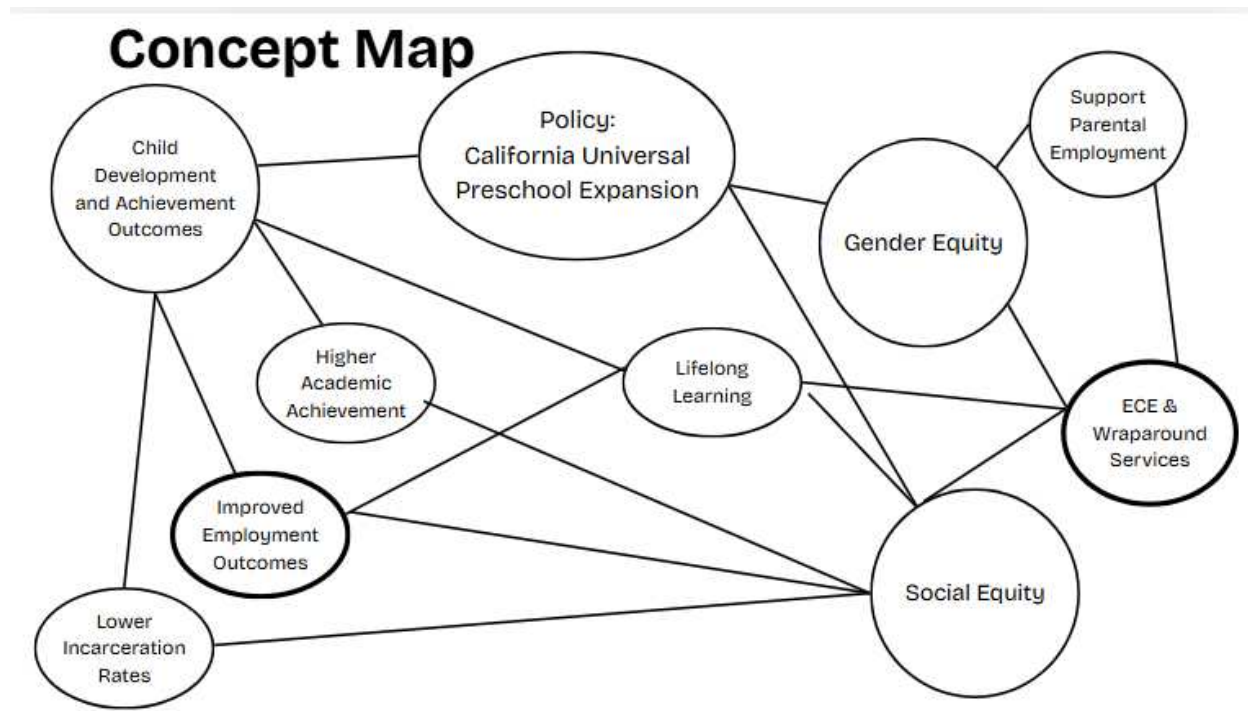
households, especially those headed by working mothers, expanding preschool access would support families more wholly than any single study of piece of literature describes. This study bridges that gap by combining existing literature on preschool access with state policy report data and insight from local families and school site administrators. Situated within the multi-level Bray and Thomas Intersectional Framework [4], the warrant to expand ECE access became clear.

Literature Search

The search for relevant literature began with broad scope, selecting global regionally and historically significant research on preschool with a focus on child achievement outcomes. Primarily using Google Scholar and ERIC, that search uncovered the themes highlighted in this literature review: child development outcomes, gender equity, and social equity, each framed in terms of policy. Upon identification of the pervasive theme of improved gender equity as a consequence of preschool access, the search scope narrowed to include the prevailing themes that propelled this research study. Central to the literature search were peer-reviewed rigorous studies published in reputable journals and policy reports, with some current events highlighting the increasing popularity of expanded access to preschool as its merits are unearthed in real time, including the recent passage of universal preschool access in New Mexico, USA [6] and the approval of universal preschool and ECE for two-year-old children in New York City [12]. Recent findings and current events were paired with notable historical studies and relevant historical literature to form a fuller understanding of preschool access and its longitudinal impact on equity.

Four main themes emerged through reviewing relevant literature on preschool and its impact on poverty and socioeconomic status: Child development and achievement outcomes, gender equity, social equity, and policy. Child development and achievement outcomes were correlated with preschool attendance, with marked impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds [13, 21, 14, 37]. This proposal's literature search led to discoveries about the correlations between ECE and preschool access and gender equity because when mothers were provided childcare, they could work and continue their education. This was true all over the world, from Bahrain [11] to Europe [24] to the United States [9]. ECE partially disrupts the motherhood wage penalty in addition to wage gaps already experienced by women all over the world [7, 24, 9]. Near-universal 0-12 care and education has precedent with the increased demand for women laborers in the United States during World War II and the resulting demand for childcare [15]. It was wildly successful and fundamentally changed how women viewed and participated in the labor force thereafter. Overlapping gender equity, social equity is impacted by preschool access in that it boosts achievement outcomes for disadvantaged students and promotes higher education later as well as reduces the impact and instance of poverty, especially among vulnerable populations [39, 8, 15]. These issues can be addressed through policy. When there is investment, data can be collected and analyzed to inform effective policy [1, 9, 24, 8]. This study meets ongoing research to target preschool access for disadvantaged children and their families in San Diego in hopes of alleviating poverty and encouraging labor force engagement, self-reliance, and achievement. Figure 1 demonstrates how these themes relate.

Figure 1
Literature Review Concept Map



Concept Map exhibits the connections between themes found in the literature. Predominant themes were: Child development and achievement outcomes, gender equity, social equity, and policy. Source: Author created graphic in Canva (2026).

Child Achievement and Development

Preschool attendance beneficially impacts child achievement and development outcomes, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds [13, 14, 21, 23, 16]. Preschool has shown to beneficially impact students in the short- and long-term, in several ways, including improved school readiness, literacy and numeracy acquisition, and greater rates of college attendance as well as lower rates of incarceration [39, 9, 15]. Because preschool mitigates the need for socially ameliorative services later in life, its cost-effectiveness is greater than it appears [30]. These impacts not only benefit individuals, but society, and contribute to improved global citizenship and economic competitiveness [26, 15]. In addition to historical longitudinal studies on small-scale targeted programs like the Perry Preschool Project and Abecedarian program from the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, recent studies on preschool impacts have shown to be scalable in partnerships with school districts with pronounced benefits [13, 21].

Gender Equity

Not only do child achievement and development outcomes improve for children who attend preschool, but numerous studies have shown that gender equity can benefit from family access to preschool and wraparound services [17, 2, 24]. Wage gaps still exist, and Misra and Strader [24], found that wage penalties disproportionately affect mothers internationally, even in developed countries that have made explicit policy priorities targeting gender pay parity. Johnson, et al. [17]

found that wraparound services mitigated the wage and employment impacts of motherhood. Similarly, Ansari, et al. [2] and Hustedt, et al. [16] discovered that ECE and wraparound services boosted opportunities for employment for parents, especially mothers. Balancing employment with rearing children compounds challenges from pay disparity and the motherhood wage penalty [9, 2, 17, 11, 3]. When mothers have childcare, they can work [7]. This tremendously impacts gender equity, and in return, social equity.

Social Equity

Families experiencing socioeconomic hardship face barriers to social equity. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit most from preschool attendance, and parents can work and pursue continuing education [14, 15, 17]. Parents in Texas directly benefitted from preschool and wraparound services within a program that included parent development to support their children [2]. When Australia made preschool universal, preschool attendance improved, though the most vulnerable indigenous and immigrant populations still struggled most [25]. O'Connor, et al. [25] indicated that the disparity in attendance could be attributed to a lack of language and cultural inclusion, but more research is needed into indigenous and immigrant populations to better understand their needs and barriers they face. Many indigenous and immigrant people seek alternate care for their children in the United States, and potential barriers to access warrant further exploration [2, 16, 33]. Agency to procure ECE access is a known barrier in some cases whereas non-availability of care services for non-traditional work schedules is another [33, 2, 8]. Wraparound services are particularly instrumental because when the school day ends, parents can continue to work while their children receive care [40, 9, 8, 2, 17, 11]. A nationally representative sample found that childcare subsidies increased the opportunities of parents to work [17]. When preschool is subsidized or provided by the state, families can redirect those costs into other needs, thereby reducing poverty and increasing equity by dismantling structural barriers to access [8, 17, 2, 9].

Policy

Policy is an effective means by which to promote equity and requires investment and data collection to ensure its efficacy [1, 9, 24, 25]. Adlerstein and Pardo [1] and Strasser, et al. [36] struggled to find adequate data to capture the state of preschool access over many Central and South American countries because, while countries had unanimously agreed on the merit of preschool access due to its many documented benefits, policy wasn't universal and investment was insufficient to inform and produce effective policy. Misra & Strader [24] examined the effects of policy on gender pay parity and workforce participation, yielding critical data that outlined deficiencies in policy. Duncan, et al. [9] examined national universal preschool options for the United States that would create affordable, subsidized ECE for families across the nation. California provides targeted preschool, but barriers to access still exist [33, 8, 40]. Danielson & Thorman's [8] policy analysis showed how targeting expansion could reduce inequity, which aligns with the verifiable longitudinal impacts childcare provision had on equity through the Lanham Act of 1940 precedent [15]. Thus, the policy and investment and data collection process is recursive to attain efficacy.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to uncover the relationships between preschool access and child achievement outcomes and various forms of equity, including gender and social equity, for the purpose of informing policy in support of preschool and ECE expansion. Studies have addressed preschool impacts separately, and this study brings them together. Preschool meets children at a critical window of development and can improve child outcomes [14, 39, 16, 3, 37, 13, 15]. Situated in the context of social and gender equity, this study unpacked the impact of policy reform in support of high-cost, high-impact interventions for those whose need is greatest as well as illuminated the spillover benefits on social and gender equity. These spillover effects come in the form of increased economic output due to greater parent engagement in the labor force and the economic multiplier effect [20], improved gender equity due to mothers, especially single mothers, having greater work and educational opportunities [33, 8, 20], and decreased rates of incarceration for preschool participants, greater long-run opportunities, and improved school readiness and academic achievement in the short- and long-terms [18]. Returns to investment in preschool more than doubly outweigh the costs in every instance [20], though socioeconomically disadvantaged students benefit most [15, 33]. Disadvantaged children experience substantial benefits from high-quality ECE that can close gaps in learning and promote achievement presently and longitudinally [13, 20, 33, 15].

Increasing opportunities for economic development and competitiveness by developing human capital for a knowledge economy reduces inequality and improves equity [34]. Small-scale, targeted preschool interventions have proven effective, and research by Duncan, et al. [9] and recent findings from Gray-Lobe, et al. [13] and Martin, et al. [21] indicate that those interventions and impacts are scalable. In an analysis of the Lanham Act of 1940, speaking of the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs, the author indicates that “the effect sizes generated by the Lanham Act are comparable in magnitude to several prominent early childhood education interventions” [15, p. 547]. The Lanham Act funded a near-universal national preschool and childcare rollout during World War II to encourage mothers’ participation in the labor force. The longitudinal benefits of preschool are apparent, leading to lifelong learning and beneficial, equitable social and employment outcomes [9].

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Approach

This study utilized the Bray & Thomas [4] intersectional framework to explore policy implications at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level scales using a transformational lens [19] to encourage expanded preschool and ECE access in San Diego, California. The transformational lens situates preschool as an agent to realize equitable change and target policy change to expand access. Using a correlational research design [28], this study examined preschool policy and its impacts on families, institutions, and the state by exploring correlations between preschool expansion and poverty, emphasizing social and gender equity and the right of every child to a quality education and lifelong learning, pursuant to SDG 4 education goals [38]. Using semi-structured interviews with school administrators, parent surveys, and document analysis in the context of state education policy, this study approached preschool with a mixed methods analysis to understand the implications of expanded preschool and how those impacts manifest in the daily lives of children, their families, and local communities.

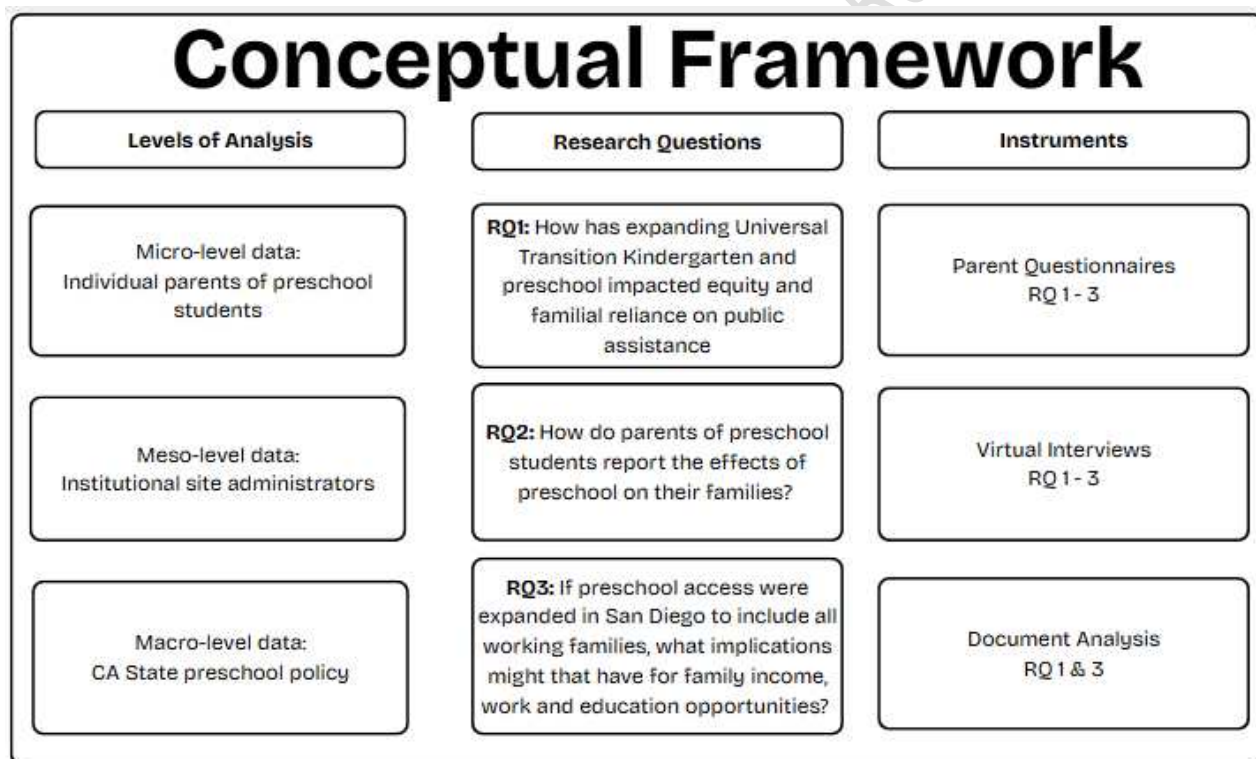
Access to preschool can alleviate poverty and improve equity and child achievement and development outcomes, and this study used instrument responses to personalize macro scale data to assess the impact of preschool on families whose children participate. Better understanding

family experiences and needs can inform policy development. In the case of San Diego, data indicate that policy should prioritize expanding preschool services to all low-income families to maximize impact while planning to expand ECE programs to prioritize low-income families of children ages 0-3. This recommendation aligns with social justice theory, wherein equity is valued above personal wealth.

The Conceptual Framework graphic in Figure 2 shows the relationship between levels of operation/analysis, instrumentation, and how each instrument functions to answer the research questions. This study utilized three instruments: questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, to collect data about how preschool impacts students, families, and communities. The instruments were used to gather and triangulate data. The document analysis served to explore preschool impacts on students, families, and communities from a macro-level, state-wide perspective while interviews and questionnaires provided insight into institutional and personal impacts at the meso- and micro-levels of analysis.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework



Bray and Thomas (1995) intersectional framework was used for multiple levels of analysis.

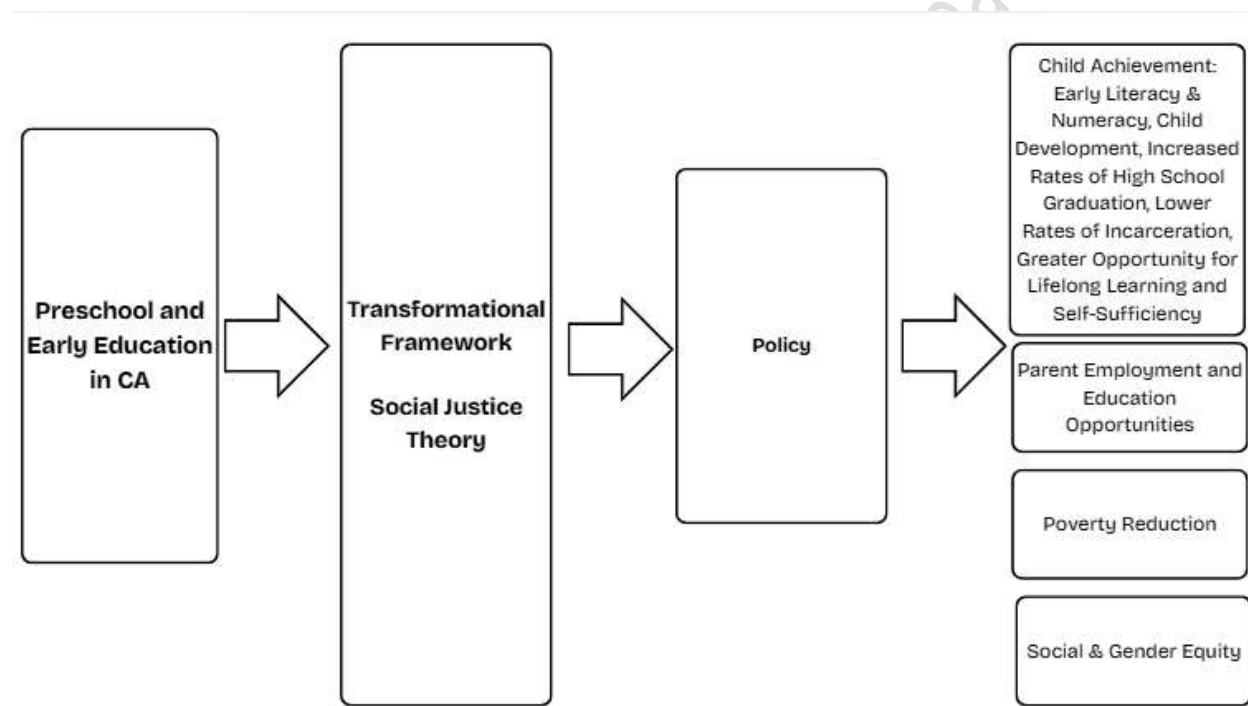
Source: Author created graphic in Canva (2026).

Social Justice Theory is used in this study in the context of a transformative lens. Through policy evolution, preschool access is expanded and social justice is furthered because increasing access to disadvantaged populations shows societal care for its least-advantaged members [29]. As Rawls [29, p. 21] argues, “persons who view themselves as equals...would [not] agree to a principle which may require lesser life prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater sum of

advantages enjoyed by others.” Figure 3 shows the relationship between preschool access, transformational policy, and the gains correlated with preschool attendance. Parvin [27], speaking on egalitarianism, echoed G.A. Cohen (2011)² on coercive redistribution, asserting that redistribution of resources, while seemingly unfair, creates more freedom than ensuring personal freedoms for the rich. This study embraced social justice through transformative policy to create what Rawls [29] describes as *fairness*, achieved by ensuring access is not restricted based on unchosen circumstances [27]. Unlike most studies on preschool benefits, this study approached the holistic context in which children develop from multiple levels of analysis. When families are supported, inequities are addressed, and access to services is made available, people can thrive.

Figure 3

Theoretical Framework



John Rawls' (1999) social justice theory carries this study, seeking transformational social justice through policy.

Source: Author created graphic in Canva (2026).

Research Design

This study assumed that parents and administrators would be willing to participate in surveys and interviews. Assumptions included research approval from a local school district and the Arizona State University (ASU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). ASU IRB approval was successfully obtained. Of the desired four purposeful school choices for the sample, this study was

² In-text citation [27]

able to obtain approval for research at one school district site, Las Flores Elementary³, and one private preschool, Salvador Preschool. While survey responses from parents were self-reported, those responses were triangulated with data gathered from interviews with school site administrators and data from California policy reports and California Department of Education (CDE) data.

To answer the research questions (RQ), a mixed methods approach was used to ensure an exploratory correlational study at multiple levels of analysis. The quantitative portion included some descriptive statistics from parent questionnaires. The qualitative component included a purposive sample from two preschool sites, using semi-structured interviews with administrators and administer surveys to parents of preschoolers. Surveys contained a combination of Likert-scale type, yes/no, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. California state policy reports were thematically analyzed to identify given themes and observe correlations between ECE participation and receipt of public assistance. Interview and survey responses were analyzed and coded thematically to identify emerging themes. Table 1 illustrates how research questions correlate to study hypotheses and how each was explored.

This study was guided by the overarching research question: How might preschool impact low-income families in San Diego in terms of poverty reduction and reliance on public assistance? The three research questions (RQ) illuminated this primary question. The null hypothesis assumed that preschool access neither has impacted families' receipt of financial assistance nor has had a significant impact on social equity.

Table 1

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions (RQ)	Hypotheses (H)	Methods
RQ1: How has expanding Universal Transition Kindergarten and preschool impacted equity and family reliance on public assistance?	H1: There has been a positive, beneficial effect on social and gender equity in the provision of UTK, preschool, and ECE, and family reliance on public assistance has reduced due to the availability of childcare and wraparound services that empowers parents to work and obtain additional education.	Document Analysis, Parent questionnaires, Interviews with site administrators

³ All school sites and participants have been given pseudonyms to protect participant confidentiality.

RQ2: How do parents of preschool students report the effects of preschool on their families?	H2: Preschool access provides parents with the opportunity to work or continue their education. This impacts social and gender equity.	Parent questionnaires and interviews with site administrators
RQ3: If preschool access were expanded in San Diego to include all working families, what implications might that have for family income and work and education opportunities?	H3 Preschool expansion would be beneficial, extending from low-income families to all eligible working families, transferring the financial burden and time commitment of childcare to institutions. More low-income families will become less reliant on public assistance and middle-income families will see significant financial relief.	Document analysis, parent questionnaires, interviews with site administrators

How each instrument engaged analysis to answer research questions and test hypotheses

To strengthen the internal validity of self-reported parent questionnaire data and interpretations, questionnaire data were triangulated with interview responses from site administrators and analyzed against findings from California preschool and ECE policy reports. While site administrators likely had biases in support of their institutions, interview response biases were mitigated by assurances that all data collected were confidential and used to improve access to families, which also would benefit institutions. Interview responses were triangulated against state policy and education data, which strengthened internal validity.

Indicators of equity were measured in several ways: Potential for poverty relief with expanded preschool access; increased parental work and education opportunities when provided access to high-quality ECE and wraparound services; and assumed long-term social and educational impacts on preschool and ECE recipients, who have shown to have substantially benefitted from early education interventions historically.

Instrumentation

This study embraced a mixed methods design and utilized three instruments at multiple levels of analysis: Researcher-created parent questionnaires, interviews with site administrators, and document analysis of California ECE policy reports. Parent questionnaires were used to generate micro-level insight into families' needs. Interviews were conducted with site administrators to verify parent-reported data and elicit meso-level insight from institutional processes and programs. And policy report data were consulted to gain macro-level insight into the state of ECE and preschool services in California as well as accessibility and benefit to families. Instrumentation at multiple levels of analysis strengthened internal validity.

Lastly, researcher analyzed policy reports and CDE data. Questionnaires consisted of Likert-scale type, multiple choice, yes/no, and open-ended questions about parents' experiences with

ECE, their reasons for choosing the site their children attend, their socioeconomic and household status, and the benefits of ECE provision as they perceive them. The purpose of the questionnaires was to understand why parents chose their respective programs for their children, what kind of services families needed, the makeup of households (single-parent, two-parent, multi-generational, multi-family), socioeconomic status, and how families obtained ECE services. Questionnaires addressed Research Questions 1 and 2. Congruent administrator interviews included questions about their respective programs, program offerings, options for low-income students, wraparound services available to families, and the nature of their funding. The purpose of the interviews was to ascertain what services students receive, the type of program opportunities available to families, how programs are funded, the nature of the population each site serves, and how each program with a different emphasis serves preschool children and their families. Interviews addressed Research Questions 1 and 3. Documents were coded thematically to answer Research Questions 1 and 3 and triangulate data from other instruments. Table 2 illustrates how instruments were applied to research questions.

Table 2

Research Questions and Instruments

Research Questions		Instruments	
RQ1: How has expanding Universal Transition Kindergarten and preschool impacted equity and family reliance on public assistance?	Parent Questionnaires helped determine the nature of the impact of preschool on families.	Interviews with site administrators served to triangulate parent responses and strengthen the trustworthiness of the data.	Document Analysis uncovered correlations between preschool expansion and its impact on low-income families.
RQ2: How do parents of preschool students report the effects of preschool on their families?	Parent Questionnaires assisted in understanding how families use and are impacted by preschool services.	Interviews helped illuminate how institutions serve preschool students and families.	Document Analysis was used to triangulate parent and administrator responses.
RQ3: If preschool access were expanded in San Diego to include all working families, what implications might that have for family income, work and education opportunities?	Parent Questionnaires provided insight into the impact of preschool services.	Interviews assisted in understanding how families, institutions, and communities might be impacted by preschool expansion.	Document Analysis explored how preschool expansion can impact poverty and resource access.

How instruments answer research questions in this study

Sampling

Sampling focused on California families whose children attended ECE in the 2025-2026 school year, after the complete rollout of Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) for all four-year-old children in California. This helped to correlate impact between ECE provision and family reliance on public assistance. This sample size was purposive, though smaller than the study aimed for because fewer schools were approved than requested. The original four sample sites represented a target cohort of various preschool options, but the approval limitations resulted in less variety and a smaller sample, including a larger proportion of more affluent families. Sampling from public and private schools provided insight into the differences between families receiving preschool services.

The qualitative sample included two local education institutions: Las Flores Elementary School is a public elementary school and provides targeted partial-day preschool to low-income students and students with disabilities through the California State Preschool Program (CSPP); Salvador Preschool is a tuition-based private school that provides full-day services and accepts CSPP subsidies. Both institutions fall within the boundaries of the San Diego County. Congruent semi-structured administrator interviews were conducted with two site administrators, and the preschool parent survey elicited 21 participants*. An analysis of the longitudinal impacts of near-universal preschool provision through the historical Lanham Act of 1940 was included for reference and comparison to current initiatives [15]. Documents used to identify given themes and triangulate sample data were California policy reports and studies from the California Budget and Policy Center [33], the Public Policy Institute of California [8], the UC Berkeley Labor Center [20], RAND Corporation studies on labor and population [18], and the Getting Down to Facts II Project [35]. Sampling is quantified in Table 3.

Table 3

Sampling

	San Diego Elementary School	Private Preschool
Policy Reports	Preschool attendance and family reliance on public assistance	
School Site Administrators (2)	Interview	Interview
Preschool Parents (21)	Surveys/Questionnaires (4)	Surveys/Questionnaires (17)

*How instruments are applied to samples: Policy reports and CDE data, parent questionnaires, and school site administrator interviews. Twenty-two parent responses were received, but *1 parent response came from a non-participating school site and was not included in the data analysis.*

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Data collection took one month. After extensive correspondence with a local school district, researcher obtained approval for one of the 3 desired study sites, Las Flores Elementary.

The private school, Salvador Preschool, approved the study concurrently with approval from the ASU IRB and the local school district site. Interviews were conducted over Zoom for one hour and in person for 30 minutes. Parent surveys were delivered electronically by Google form. Researcher worked with administrators to deliver surveys and reminders and to schedule and conduct interviews. Parent responses were allotted three weeks given the slow response rate, and interviews were completed within two weeks after obtaining ASU IRB approval. Document analysis continued for the entire collection period.

Researcher administered questionnaires to parents of preschool and ECE students to elicit feedback about the nature of families' experiences with preschool services. These questionnaires were electronic and accessible to families in English and Spanish. The purposive sample included families and administrators from two school sites. Questions included demographics, reasons for choosing preschool and for choosing the particular preschool their child attends, subsidies received, whether wraparound services were available and utilized, and how preschool impacted their household. An open comment section at the end of parent surveys allowed families to share additional information, which enhanced the richness of the data. Survey questions provided insight into the reasons behind parents' choice to access preschool, their socioeconomic situations and needs, and their household composition. These socioeconomic characteristics indicated how preschool access might affect equity because it clarified the need for access to preschool and what kind of socioeconomic impact it had on families by triangulating their demographics against those found in policy reports.

Limitations and Scope of Research

This study was limited by a small sample size; thus findings are not generalizable. However, even this small sample yielded rich feedback that complements the statistical data available about preschool such that a story can be told. The parent questionnaire data were self-reported, but they have been triangulated against administrator interview responses and California policy report data for veracity and consistency. The mixed methods nature of this study strengthened the internal validity because public policy data complemented the data from the questionnaires and interviews alone. Where there was conflict, researcher defaulted to the generalized policy report data to capture the contextual gestalt while individual experiences highlighted themes in family experiences. The local sample was not representative of California's population due to population variations within San Diego and throughout the state. However, the sample reflected a population subset with unique challenges and provided insight into the practical ways preschool impacts families.

The scope of this study is limited to ECE and preschool data and family responses, not k-12 families. The ECE and preschool subset of the population represents those who would be most impacted by preschool expansion and current preschool families. This study only utilized parent questionnaires and interviews with school site administrators due to time constraints and resource availability. This study could have been strengthened by interviews with teachers, curriculum analysis, and a larger sample size that includes more of California's preschool population. Only literature that directly relates to preschool, gender and social equity, and the impacts of preschool on child development and achievement outcomes was reviewed because those are important and consistent themes in preschool literature that created bounds for the study so it did not become convoluted or overly complicated.

Research Ethics

Approval was obtained from a local school district for one site, a local private preschool, and the Arizona State University (ASU) Institutional Review Board in March 2026. Once informed consent was collected and obtained from all participants, data collection began. Data was stored on the researcher's device under password protection with no outside or third party access, to be fully deidentified one year after the study was completed (March 2027). Administrator participants agreed to participate by signing letters of informed consent, and verbal consent was received to record at the time of each interview. The online parent questionnaire had an embedded consent requirement to continue with the survey, so participants were required to acknowledge their agreement to participate after reading the statement of informed consent. Surveys were translated into Spanish for access and inclusion. Participation in interviews and surveys was completely and explicitly voluntary.

No children or adults without the ability to consent were interviewed as part of this study. There was one subgroup of vulnerable participants, low-income parents. The only identifying information requested by survey was the school designations so that response data could be tracked by site. Parents were not required to log in or present any personal information to continue with the survey, thereby protecting all personal and identifying information. The only people to whom surveys were administered were those whose children attended participating school sites. Pseudonyms were used for site names and for administrator interviewees to further protect participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Researcher conducted congruent semi-structured interviews with site administrators of Las Flores Elementary School and Salvador Preschool, within the boundaries of San Diego County. Researcher queried each administrator about the type of students who receive preschool and ECE services (low-income, disabled, neither/both), whether only preschool or additional ECE services were provided, whether wraparound services were provided, where their funding came from, what their capacity was to serve students, and how expansion might impact their capacity to serve more students. Further questions included teacher qualifications, anticipated barriers to expansion, and the community impact of expansion. Table 4 represents how instrument data were analyzed.

Table 4

Data Analysis

	Document Analysis	Interviews	Surveys
Inductive Coding	X	X	X
Thematic Analysis	X	X	X
Triangulation	X	X	X
Descriptive Statistics	X		X

Instruments used and how they were interpreted.

Data analysis utilized Excel and Google Sheets to create spreadsheets for coding surveys and interviews. Microsoft Word and Excel provided graphs and figures. These programs enabled data presentation in a visual, categorical format to facilitate understanding and thematic analysis.

Researcher explored a correlation between eligible student participation in publicly funded targeted preschool programs and family socioeconomic welfare by analyzing data from California state policy reports. California policy report data contextualized the correlation between preschool attendance and family socioeconomic welfare while surveys and interviews provided personal and institutional insight into the direct impacts of preschool provision in San Diego. The policy reports provided contextual framework within which to illustrate the personal effects of preschool access on San Diego families, including how it impacts social and gender equity. Researcher triangulated study data [10] with those from previous studies and data derived from state records. State report findings ensured the trustworthiness of the interpretations from the data collected from school sites in this study. The small sample size limited generalizability, but survey and interview responses provided local demographics and family impacts, which helped to identify themes and barriers in family reports to generate locally grounded recommendations for policy implementation.

Coding was done methodically, using Excel, Word, and handwritten notes, and captured ideas that correlated with given themes and that overlapped over several instruments or repeated within instruments. Policy reports provided strong guidance for emergent themes because policy analysis captured the gestalt of preschool benefits and systemic problems. Most survey questions were answered, and those that lacked responses were not critical to understanding parent perspectives. For instance, one question about household size and composition lacked a single response. The only outlier response from that question was the family that didn't qualify for participation, with a household composition of nine people; all other families reported 3-4 household members, including 1-2 children. All households reported having two parents. Interview responses indicated that preschool was not available based on local school preference; rather, preschools are located strategically rather than locally, and options are limited. Private preschool is not part of school district continuity, even though some parent responses indicated that their children were zoned for the chosen preschool. A solitary response lacked the school type designation, but only preschool participants were selected, triangulated with administrator responses that there were no additional ECE services provided at either site. Some parents may have sought additional care with Head Start or other ECE programs, but no parents indicated that. One response listed San Diego, CA as their school site. Because they also indicated paid tuition, inductive reasoning suggested that the location was Salvador Preschool. Themes emerged from coding repeated data throughout and across instruments. Prevailing themes are identified in Table 6.

Results

Thematic analysis of the data identified many overlapping themes among the literature, policy report data, and interview and questionnaire responses. These included the positive effects of ECE on children, the need for childcare for parent engagement in the labor force or educational opportunities, and alleviated financial strain due to CSPP assistance. The predominant themes are displayed in Table 5, exhibiting four given themes identified through literature review and 6 themes that emerged throughout the course of data analysis. Data analysis resulted in findings that support the alternative hypotheses in response to each of the three secondary research questions that illuminated the umbrella research question. These themes and findings are consistent with literature findings and indicate that further targeted preschool expansion in San Diego would be the most effective means by which to promote equity and reduce poverty locally.

Table 5*Themes found with three instruments*

Themes	Instruments		
<i>Given Themes:</i>			
	Policy reports, CDE data, literature	Parent questionnaires	Interviews with school site administrators
Child achievement outcomes	Herbst, 2017; Saucedo, 2024; MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; literature: Heckman, et al. 2010; Vedantam, 2019; Duncan, et al. 2007	• Interest in reading • Social development • School readiness • Parents want their children to get a good education.	• Tardiness addressed and improved at public preschool site • All grades made to feel a part of the school community
Gender equity	Herbst, 2017; Saucedo, 2024; MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; literature: Blau, 2021; Misra & Strader, 2013; Crosby, et al. 2021	• Mothers can work and pursue educational opportunities • Mothers report preschool as beneficial for their mental health (6/21 respondents or 28.57%).	
Social equity	Herbst, 2017; MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; Rawls, 1999; Parvin, 2018; literature: Heckman, et al. 2010; Vedantam, 2019; Gray-Lobe, et al. 2023; Martin, et al. 2025	• Parents can work • Self-reliance • Parent mental health • Parents want their children to get a good education.	• Parent interventions and workshops provided at public preschool site • Parent engagement • Identification of barriers

			and support interventions
			• Family and community engagement: School events and parent functions
Policy	Karoly, 2009; Stipek, 2018; Saucedo, 2024; literature: Adlerstein & Pardo, 2017; Strasser, et al. 2016; Duncan, et al. 2007; Misra & Strader, 2013	• Free/subsidized preschool	• Preschool provision free or subsidized for qualifying families • Public preschool served
<i>Emergent Themes:</i>			
Fractured education administration	Karoly, 2009; Stipek, 2018; Saucedo, 2024; literature: Martin, et al. 2025; Gray-Lobe, et al. 2023; Melnick & García, 2026		• School district separate program from CSPP • Wraparound services for k-12, not inclusive of preschool
Economic engagement	MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; Karoly, 2009; Danielson & Thorman, 2019; Saucedo, 2024; literature: Blau, 2021	• Parents participate in the labor force	
Economic multiplier effect	Saucedo, 2024; MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011		
Reduced reliance on public assistance	MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; Saucedo, 2024	• Parent pursuit of higher education	
Teacher quality	Stipek, 2018; Karoly, 2009	• High-quality teachers build trust	• High-quality teachers

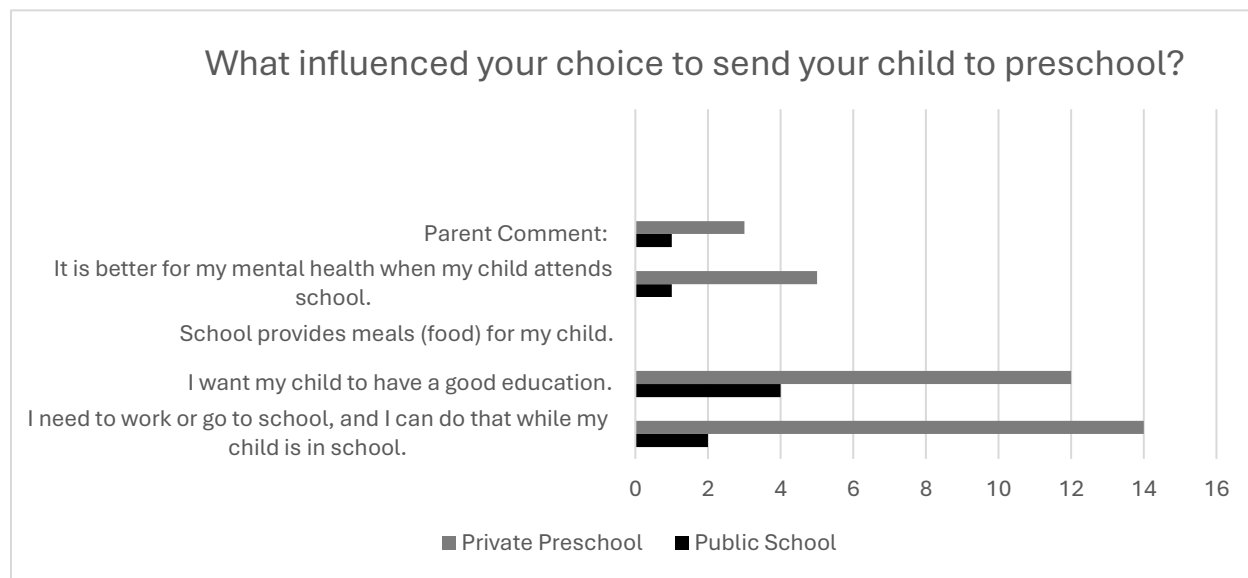
Cumulative effects of ECE	MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011; literature: Gray- Lobe, et al. 2023; Blau, 2021
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Instruments used: Policy reports, CA DOE data, and literature; parent questionnaire responses; administrator interviews. Total of ten prevailing themes identified: Four given, and 6 emerged during data analysis. Themes overlap across all instruments in four categories: Child achievement outcomes, social equity, policy, and teacher quality.

All policy reports indicated that ECE access results in families relying less on public assistance in the short term because parents are freed to work or continue education. In the long term, ECE participants are less reliant on public assistance because their economic prospects improve [20, 33, 35, 18]. It is expected that local expanded preschool access to all low-income working families would result in reduction in poverty in San Diego by 12% [8]. From both study sites, administrators expressed that UTK has moved many students from preschool into UTK because it is state-provided and free to families, though families lack the choice they had with ECE subsidies and CSPP. UTK also offers full-day services, which is crucial for working parents. UTK has successfully integrated into school districts, and ECE and preschool could do the same through partnerships with school districts. Schools reportedly could provide ECE services to more students with funding for facilities and supports. Both sites interviewed reported staffing programs with qualified teachers who were well-equipped to meet the demands of students and legal compliance. Las Flores hired early education as well as credentialed teachers while Salvador staffed classrooms with early education teachers who had two years experience and 12 units of college credit in child development while aides were required to have 3 units. Both sites had staff who specialized in different student needs using different avenues of support. All parent respondents felt confident in the care and instruction of their children at both sites. Parent responses indicated that preschool was valuable in allowing them to work or pursue continuing education. Seventy-six percent of parents in our sample reported needing preschool services to work or attend school, and 20/21 respondents were mothers. Figure 4 displays parent responses indicating their reasons for sending their children to preschool.

Figure 4

Factors Determining Enrollment



Parents were able to select all applicable responses and provide additional comments. Most parents indicated their desire for their children to have a good education and their need to work or attend school (16/21 or 76.19% for both responses), and many expressed their mental wellness with the option of preschool for their children (6/21 or 28.57%). Parent comments included: “Socialization;” “Builds great social and learning skills;” “It is a good benefit for socializing due to being the only child;” and “Christian based school with flexible schedules.”

Source: Parent response data, graph created by author.

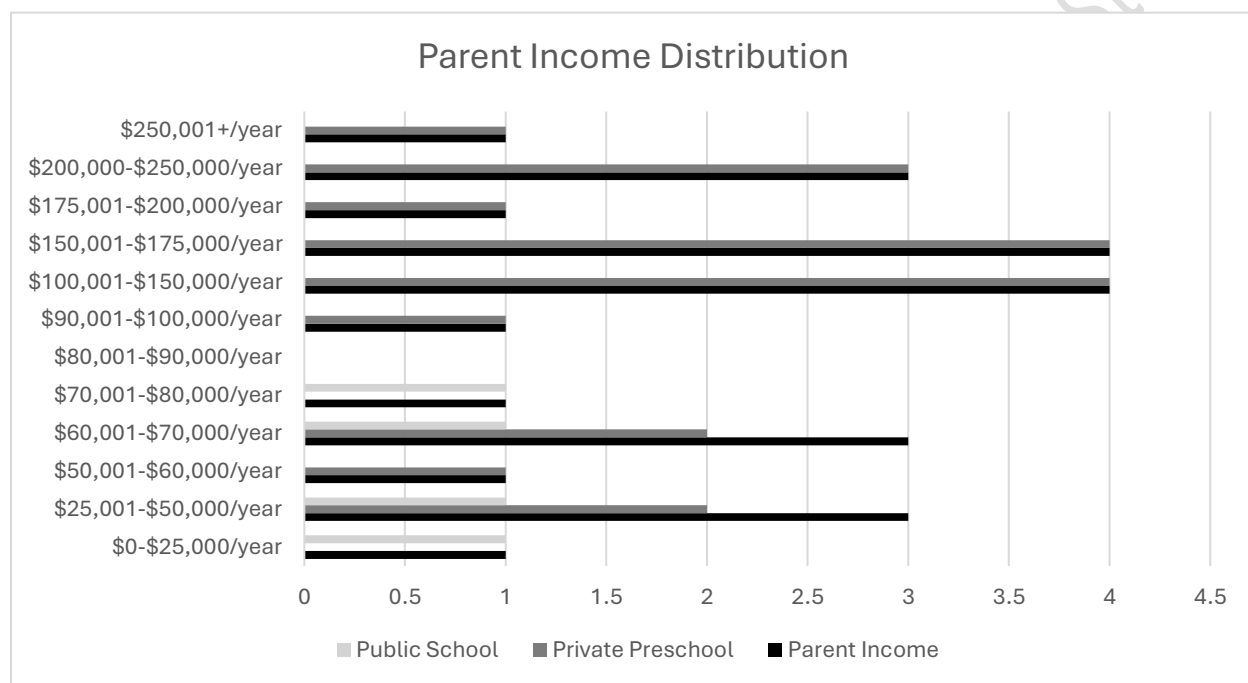
When queried about additional thoughts, nearly half of respondents (10/21 or 47.62%) indicated that their children are learning academics, interested in school, and socially engaged, all of which signal developmental gains and school readiness. Additionally, most families (20/21 or 95.24%) reported their children enjoying and engaging in reading, an indication of early literacy. Only one private school family reported their child being uninterested in books and not reading at home. Parents said of their children’s preschools: “Builds great social and learning skills.” “He has learned so much in terms of social, emotional, and academics. I couldn't be happier :)” “She loves to tell us about her days at school and things she learned or played with her friends.” Most families 17/21 (80.95%) reported their children enjoying school, and 18/21 (85.71%) reported their children learning a lot in school. All public school parents indicated their desire for a good education for their children as well as over 2/3 of the private school parents. With targeted interventions, ongoing parent workshops and community development efforts, and creating a culture of unity and responsibility, Las Flores was able to reduce absenteeism by half over three years.

When queried about socioeconomic status, all parents were forthcoming with information, presenting rich data from an albeit small sample. Six families reported relying on MediCal, California’s health insurance program for low-income qualifying families, and two of those reported relying on WIC (Women Infants Children), a Federal supplemental nutrition program for women and children. Of those reliant on MediCal, 75% of respondents were public school families

and 17.65% were private school families. One of the public school families also reported utilizing school subsidies for preschool while one private school family reported partial payment for preschool; and one family reported private preschool being free for their child. Most families reported driving their children to school 19/21 (90.5%) while one parent walked with their child and one relied on help to get their child to school. Parent income distribution and demographics are displayed in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5

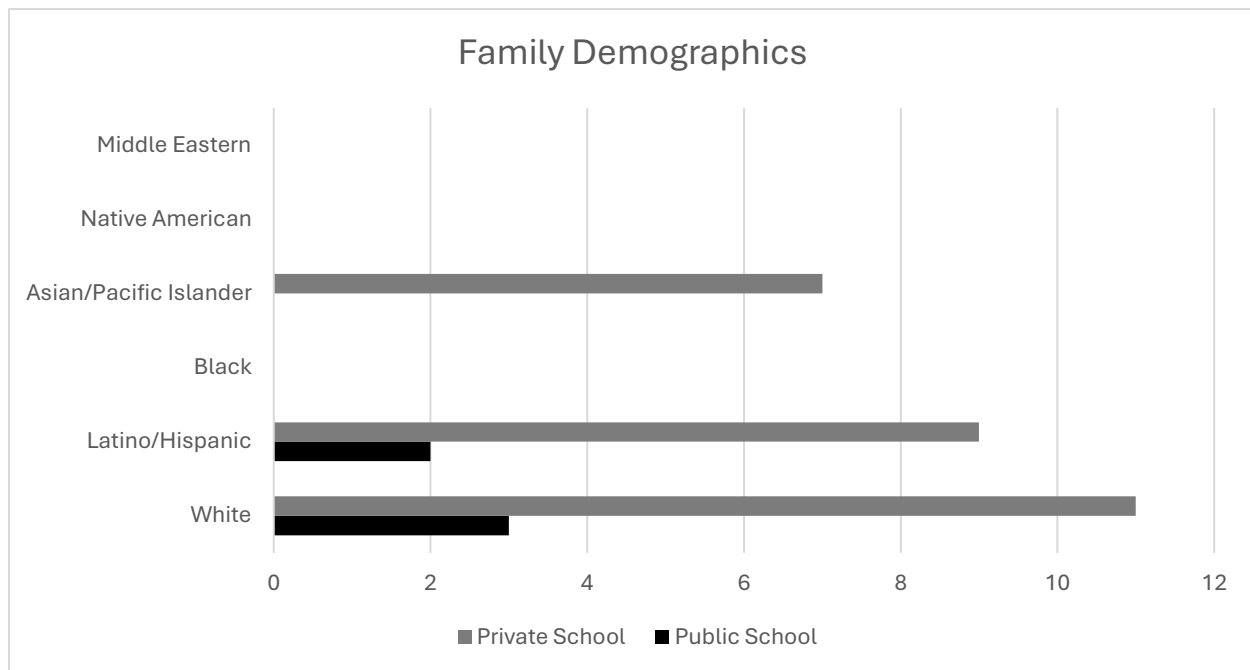
Parent Participant Income Distribution



Private preschool parents fell into the top-earning income brackets while public school participants occupied the bottom 5 income distributions. Total participants: 21
Source: Parent response data, graph created by author.

Figure 6

Family Demographics



Families were able to designate their ethnic heritage by selecting multiple responses or filling in responses. Only one response was parent-generated, and it was coded as both Asian/Pacific Islander and white, following the parent description of a biracial home.

Source: Parent response data, graph created by author.

Discussion

Children are able to close achievement gaps and fulfill potential when presented with access to high-quality services. For children who experience socioeconomic disadvantage, early interventions are critical for closing gaps and promoting achievement [18]. The initial investment is costly, but preschool impact literature and this study highlight the importance and the worthiness of investment into early interventions for children now and later, and for their families presently. The economic returns to investment are impressive, the promotion of achievement and equity are concrete, and the multiplier effect means money invested recirculates within the economy to promote wealth and productivity as well as local job creation [15, 20, 35]. There is strong evidence in support of policy-led preschool expansion, and this study highlights the importance of targeted expansion in San Diego, California to all low-income working families. This translates to macro-level leadership for meso- and micro-level beneficial impact, recirculating into macro-level economic gains.

The economic impact of ECE and preschool access is profound, empowering children and parents alike. The MacGillvary and Lucia [20] policy report along with the Herbst [15] analysis of the impact of the Lanham Act of 1940 0-12 childcare provision found staggering returns to investment. MacGillvary and Lucia [20] found that returns to investment in preschool more than double in almost every case. In the short term, parents benefit from the ability to participate in the

labor force and education, improving their economic outcomes and relying less on public assistance. Maternal employment and parent productivity benefit from dependent care. Government expenditures on ECE create local jobs and income, which ECE workers then recirculate into the economy. This is known as the multiplier effect [20]. In the long term, ECE participants are less reliant on public assistance because their achievement outcomes allowed for greater economic success and more skilled labor opportunities. Skilled labor promotes self-reliance and economic competitiveness. When ECE is implemented by policy mandate, the economy thrives and poverty lessens. In sum, ECE generates savings at all levels of government [20, 19, 15].

School readiness, early literacy and numeracy, and social development are all outcomes of preschool and ECE. These outcomes are pronounced for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and with interventions, their achievement can rival their more affluent peers [15, 39, 20, 18]. San Diego families report choosing preschool to prepare their children for school, and most (20/21) families affirmed their children's interest in books and reading, an indication of early literacy. Not only do ECE participants achieve more in the short term, but their long-term achievement outcomes benefit the whole of society, making their communities better, safer, and wealthier [15, 33]. Adults who have participated in preschool and ECE rely less on public assistance, have better employment prospects, face incarceration less often, and need fewer later interventions because needs were addressed when they were young [30, 15].

Mothers administer a significant proportion of single-parent households in California [8], and when they can work, they contribute to the economy, infuse income via the multiplier effect [20], and advance gender equity by building self-sufficiency. Mothers who can work reliably rebuff the assumption that mothers are inconsistent and less reliable, which traps mothers under a pay gap where they earn less than men and childless women in the workplace, even in developed countries that have made policy attempts to reduce gender pay disparities [24]. Gender equity is social equity. When women are treated equally, society benefits and children thrive [38].

Social equity takes many forms, and preschool promotes them all. Reduction in poverty, lower rates of incarceration, greater economic and social opportunities, and health outcomes are all furthered by the promotion of access to ECE and preschool, for children and families alike. When parents can work, they build self-sufficiency, rely less on public assistance, achieve higher education, and can make better-informed decisions for their families and futures [20]. When families have better opportunities to improve their outcomes, they can engage civically and become better global citizens [20]. Children born into disadvantaged families struggle more, but ECE and preschool can relieve that struggle, promote opportunities, and cultivate achievement at early stages of development, which compound over time [20, 35]. The Las Flores school administrator expounded on efforts to include families in their children's education and to ameliorate attendance problems by addressing the barriers that prevented students from attending school. Relationships were crucial for success in both school samples, and all parents felt that their children were safe and well cared for at school. Early interventions can lead to economic security in the long term for those who have access to services.

At the heart of change is policy. California has already implemented policy to expand preschool and ECE access, and the rollout of UTK is encouraging. But California's master plan for ECE expansion halts where this study began, and more work is necessary [5]. Due to the fragmented nature of service provision over the state of California, it's likely that further action will fall to local governance. Within California, many agencies work together to provide education and care [18, 35, 33]. The fragmentation of this structure means unequal distribution of resources, funding,

and service provision, which means that each locale must ensure that its population receives the services families need. Boston and Ohio integrated 0-12 care successfully under school district administration, which have been effective [13, 21], and Karoly [18] suggested an integrated approach for California. In the case of San Francisco, ECE and preschool expansion is underway (SFDEC). San Diego has not declared plans for continued expansion, and the consequences are dire. Furthermore, improved outreach could boost enrollment for already-eligible families who face barriers to access including agency to obtain services. San Diego locals already face high costs of living and displacement [31], and ECE and preschool expansion to all low-income families would lower barriers locally while empowering families to thrive and stay local.

Conclusion

This study expanded on existing preschool research by eliciting parent perspectives and specific school site insight into the nature of the impact of preschool on students and families. Interview and questionnaire data led to identification of themes in families' experiences and acknowledgement of barriers and supports useful to parents. With local perspectives triangulated with state policy data, this study provided insight into personal experience with policy-instituted programs. Literature and study data support expanding preschool and ECE programs in San Diego to all low-income working families most effectively would reduce poverty, promote labor force engagement among parents, reduce reliance on public assistance in the short- and long-term, and prepare young children for development, academic achievement, and economic self-reliance.

Significance

ECE carries global significance for economic and social equity, and this study focus brings understanding to the personal effects of equity-supporting policy while furthering scholarly research. Beneficial impacts reach every country that has adopted universal ECE. Parents can become self-reliant, and children succeed economically and socially. This study on ECE expansion in San Diego highlighted ways that policy can support equity and economic achievement presently and in the long-term: by promoting equity at all levels while generating economic returns and savings.

Disclosures

Funding: Author received no funding for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Competing Interests: Author declares no competing interests.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: Ethical standards were upheld in this research in accordance with the World Medical Association (WMA) Helsinki Declaration – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was ensured using pseudonyms and by limiting the collection personally identifiable information in the conduct of research. Additionally, research elicited Institutional Review Board (IRB) and study sites' approval before beginning.

Consent to Publish: Not applicable

Data Availability: Data is available upon reasonable request from the author.

Michelle Everson-Smith Graduate Research Study

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Appendix A

Instrument: Parent Questionnaires English and Spanish

Table 6

Parent Questionnaire – English

Question	Response Choices	Response Type
Informed Consent: Dear Parent or Guardian, I am currently a graduate student in the Master of Education in Global Education Program at Arizona State University. As part of my graduate project, I am conducting a research study to explore the effects of preschool on family welfare and reliance on public assistance. You are receiving this message as an invitation to participate in the study. Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a 20-30-minute online questionnaire. You will be asked about your demographics, reasons for choosing preschool or early childhood education (ECE) as an option for your child(ren), your experiences with ECE, and how your family is impacted through receiving services. When completing the questionnaire, you have the	• Yes/No	Required to continue

right not to answer any question and stop participating at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. Your confidentiality will be respected and maintained throughout the study. Any personal information will be removed from the study documents, and your name or any other identifying information will not be used in the final research report. The results of this study will be shared with my course instructor and my peers at Arizona State University and with your child's school, but your name will not be used. All names will be given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, and all data will be deidentified and securely stored in an encrypted vault.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please get in touch with the researcher, Michelle Everson by email at maevers1@asu.edu or by phone/text at 619-862-4381 or the overseeing instructors, Dr. Stephanie Hollings Nasr at Stephanie.Hollings@asu.edu and Dr. Maria Teresa Tatto Maria.Tatto@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this

research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

By submitting your survey, you are agreeing to be part of the study.

What is the name of your child's preschool or early childhood education program site (location)?
I am the preschool/early education student's _____.

- Short answer

Required to continue

Does your child attend preschool or a different early childhood education program (like Head Start)? Please type the name if it is Head Start or another program.

- Mother
- Father
- Caretaker/Guardian
- Other: _____
- Preschool
- Other: _____

Multiple choice

Multiple choice

How many of your children attend preschool or an early childhood education program?

- 1 child
- 2 children
- Other: _____

Multiple choice

Is your child's preschool part of your local/home school?

- Yes
- No, my child is zoned for a different school for k-5 or k-8.

Multiple choice

What influenced your choice to send your child to preschool?

- I need to work or go to school, and I can do that while my child is in school.
- I want my child to have a good education.
- School provides meals (food) for my child.

Multiple selections

Why did you choose this school?

- It is better for my mental health when my child attends school.
- Other: _____
- It is close to home.
- It has full-day services, which I need to work or attend school.
- It has partial-day services, which is better for my family.
- It offers wraparound services (like Primetime or before/after school care) for my child.
- My financial assistance (government money) helps me pay for this program.

Multiple selections

Do you have to pay for preschool services?

- Other: _____
- Yes, I have to pay full tuition for preschool.
- Yes, I pay part of the tuition.
- No, preschool/ECE is free for me.

Multiple selections

Does your child receive wraparound services (like PrimeTime or before/after school care) through their school?

- Other: _____
- PrimeTime
- Before school care
- After school care
- None of these
- Other: _____

Multiple selections

Do wraparound services (like PrimeTime or before/after school care) support you, as a parent, to work or attend school?

- Yes, wraparound services help me work or go to school.
- Yes, my child attends wraparound services, but I don't need that for work or school.
- No, my child doesn't use wraparound services.
- No, my preschool child does not qualify for Primetime or wraparound services because they are not available to preschool students.

Multiple choice

How does your child get to school?

- Other: _____
- I drive my child to school.
- I walk with my child to school.
- I need help from someone to take my child to school.
- My child rides a school bus to school.
- Other: _____

Multiple choice

How do you feel about the quality of instruction at your child's school? (Does your child get a good education here?)	• My child is learning a lot in school! • My child enjoys school. • I'm not sure how much my child is learning in school. • My child struggles in school. • Long Answer	Multiple selections
Please add any comments from your previous answer: How do you feel about the quality of instruction at your child's school? (Does your child get a good education here?)		Write-in response
Please add any comments from your previous answer.		
Do you feel your child is safe and well-cared-for at this school?	• Yes • No	Multiple choice
Is there anything more you would like to say about your experiences with your child attending this school?	• Long Answer	Write-in response
Does your child show interest/enjoy books?	• Yes • No	Multiple choice
How long does your child sit and listen to a story?	• A few minutes • My child likes to read the whole story. • My child likes to finish a story and then read more. • My child doesn't enjoy reading/ isn't interested in reading.	Multiple selections
How engaged is your child in reading?	• My child asks to read every day. • My child enjoys choosing books. • I choose books and make time for reading. • We don't read at home.	Likert-type/multiple selections
<i>Demographics: Questions about you and your family, which will only be used for research without identifying you.</i>		
Your family identifies by which ethnic heritage?	• White • Latino/Hispanic • Black • Asian/Pacific Islander • Native American • Middle Eastern/North African • Other: _____	Multiple choice
What is your family's primary language? (What	• English • Spanish	Multiple choice

language is spoken/used at home?)	- American Sign Language (ASL) - Other: _____	
What is your level of education?	- Did not finish high school - High school graduate - Associate degree - Bachelor degree - Master degree - PhD - Other: _____	Multiple choice
Are there one (1) or two (2) parents in your household?	- One (1) parent - Two (2) parents - Grandparent(s) - Other: _____	Multiple choice
Does your family receive public assistance?	- Yes, SSI - Yes, SSDI - Yes, CashAid - Yes, WIC - Yes, MediCal - Yes, school subsidies (financial help with ECE or preschool) - No - Other: _____	Multiple selections
What is your family's income level?	\$0-\$25,000/year \$25,001-\$50,000/year \$50,001-\$60,000/year \$60,001-\$70,000/year \$70,001-\$80,000/year \$80,001-\$90,000/year \$90,001-\$100,000/year \$100,001-\$150,000/year \$150,001-\$175,000/year \$175,001-\$200,000/year \$200,000-\$250,000/year \$250,001+/year - Prefer not to say - Short Answer	Multiple choice
How many people live in your home?	Short Answer	Write-in response
How many children live in your home?	Short Answer	Write-in response
How many adults live in your home?	Short Answer	Write-in response

Survey Complete!

Thank you for your participation! Your feedback is valuable, and I appreciate your time.

Table 7*Parent Questionnaire – Spanish Translation*

Question	Response Choices	Response Type
Informed Consent: Estimado padre, madre o tutor: Soy una estudiante de posgrado en la Maestría en Educación Global de la Universidad Estatal de Arizona. Como parte de mi proyecto de posgrado, estoy realizando un estudio de investigación para explorar los efectos de la educación preescolar en el bienestar familiar y la dependencia de la asistencia pública. Recibe este mensaje como una invitación a participar en el estudio. Su participación es voluntaria. Si decide no participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento, no se le aplicará ninguna sanción ni se perderán los beneficios a los que tiene derecho. Si decide participar, se le pedirá que complete un cuestionario en línea de 20 a 30 minutos. Se le preguntará sobre sus datos demográficos, las razones por las que eligió la educación preescolar o la educación de la primera infancia (ECE) como opción para su(s) hijo(s), sus experiencias con la ECE y cómo afecta a su familia recibir los servicios. Al completar el cuestionario, tiene derecho a no responder a ninguna pregunta y a dejar	• Yes/No	Required to continue

de participar en cualquier momento.

No existen riesgos ni incomodidades previsibles para su participación. Su confidencialidad se respetará y mantendrá durante todo el estudio. Se eliminará cualquier información personal de los documentos del estudio, y su nombre o cualquier otra información que lo identifique no se utilizará en el informe final de la investigación. Los resultados de este estudio se compartirán con mi instructor/a de curso, mis compañeros/as de la Universidad Estatal de Arizona y la escuela de su hijo/a, pero su nombre no se utilizará. Todos los nombres se asignarán bajo seudónimos para proteger la confidencialidad, y todos los datos se anonimizarán y se almacenarán de forma segura en una bóveda cifrada.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio de investigación, comuníquese con la investigadora, Michelle Everson, por correo electrónico a maevers1@asu.edu o por teléfono/mensaje de texto al 619-862-4381, o con las instructoras supervisoras, la Dra. Stephanie Hollings Nasr, a Stephanie.Hollings@asu.edu y la Dra. Maria Teresa Tatto, a Maria.Tatto@asu.edu. Si

tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como sujeto/participante en esta investigación, o si considera que ha estado en riesgo, puede comunicarse con el Presidente de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de Sujetos Humanos a través de la Oficina de Integridad y Garantía de la Investigación de la ASU, al (480) 965-6788. Por favor, infórmeme si desea participar en el estudio.

Al enviar su encuesta, acepta participar en el estudio.

¿Cuál es el nombre del sitio (ubicación) del programa de educación preescolar o de primera infancia de su hijo? Soy el/la _____ del estudiante de educación preescolar/temprana.

- Short answer

Required to continue

¿Su hijo asiste a preescolar o a otro programa de educación infantil temprana (como Head Start)? Escriba el nombre si se trata de Head Start u otro programa.

- Madre
- Padre
- Cuidador/Cuidadora/Guardian
- Otro: _____
- Preescolar
- Otro: _____

Multiple choice

Multiple choice

¿Cuántos de sus hijos asisten a un programa de educación preescolar o de primera infancia?

- 1 hijo
- 2 hijos
- Otro número: _____

Multiple choice

¿El preescolar de su hijo es parte de su escuela local/hogar?

- Sí
- No, mi hijo está asignado a una escuela diferente para K-5 o K-8.

Multiple choice

¿Qué influyó en su decisión de enviar a su hijo al preescolar?

- Necesito trabajar o ir a la escuela, y puedo hacerlo mientras mi hijo está en la escuela.
- Quiero que mi hijo tenga una buena educación.

Multiple selections

¿Por qué elegiste esta escuela?

- Las escuelas proporcionan comidas (alimentos) para mi hijo.
- Es mejor para mi salud mental que mi hijo asista a la escuela.
- Otra razón: _____
- Está cerca de casa.
- Cuenta con servicios de jornada completa, los cuales necesito para trabajar o asistir a la escuela.
- Tiene servicios de jornada parcial, lo cual es mejor para mi familia.
- Ofrece servicios integrales (como Primetime o cuidado antes o después de la escuela) para mi hijo.
- Mi ayuda financiera (dinero del gobierno) me ayuda a pagar este programa.

Multiple selections

¿Hay que pagar por los servicios preescolares?

- Otro: _____
- Sí, tengo que pagar la matrícula completa para preescolar.
- Sí, pago parte de la matrícula.
- No, el preescolar/ECE es gratuito para mí.

Multiple selections

¿Su hijo recibe servicios integrales (como PrimeTime o cuidado antes o después de la escuela) a través de su escuela?

- Otro: _____
- PrimeTime
- Cuidado antes de la escuela
- Cuidado después de la escuela
- Ninguna de estas

Multiple selections

¿Los servicios integrales (como PrimeTime o cuidado infantil antes o después de la escuela) lo ayudan a usted, como padre, a trabajar o asistir a la escuela?

- Otro: _____
- Sí, los servicios integrales me ayudan a trabajar o ir a la escuela.
- Sí, mi hijo asiste a servicios integrales, pero no los necesito para el trabajo ni la escuela.
- No, mi hijo no utiliza servicios integrales.
- No, mi hijo en edad preescolar no califica para los servicios Primetime o Wraparound porque no están disponibles para estudiantes en edad preescolar.

Multiple choice

¿Cómo llega su hijo a la escuela?

- Otro: _____
- Conduzco a mi hijo a la escuela.
- Camino con mi hijo a la escuela.

Multiple choice

¿Qué opina sobre la calidad de la instrucción en la escuela de su hijo? (¿Su hijo recibe una buena educación aquí?)

Agregue cualquier comentario de su respuesta anterior: ¿Cómo se siente acerca de la calidad de la instrucción en la escuela de su hijo? (¿Su hijo recibe una buena educación aquí?) Por favor, añada cualquier comentario de tu respuesta anterior.

¿Siente que su hijo está seguro y bien cuidado en esta escuela?

¿Hay algo más que le gustaría decir sobre sus experiencias con su hijo asistiendo a esta escuela?

¿Su hijo muestra interés / disfruta de los libros?

¿Cuánto tiempo pasa tu hijo sentado escuchando un cuento?

¿Qué tan involucrado está su hijo con la lectura?

- Necesito ayuda de alguien para llevar a mi hijo a la escuela.
- Mi hijo monta un autobús escolar a la escuela.
- Otro: _____
- ¡Mi hijo está aprendiendo mucho en la escuela!
- Mi hijo disfruta de la escuela.
- No estoy seguro de cuánto está aprendiendo mi hijo en la escuela.
- Mi hijo tiene dificultades en la escuela.
- Long Answer

Multiple selections

Write-in response

- Sí
- No

Multiple choice

- Long Answer

Write-in response

- Sí
- No

Multiple choice

- Unos minutos
- A mi hijo le gusta leer toda la historia.
- A mi hijo le gusta terminar un cuento y luego leer más.
- A mi hijo no le gusta leer/no le interesa leer.
- Mi hijo pide leer todos los días.
- A mi hijo le gusta elegir libros.
- Elijo libros y reservo tiempo para leer.
- Nosotros no leemos en casa.

Multiple selections

Likert-type/multiple selections

Demografía: Preguntas sobre usted y su familia, que solo se utilizarán para investigación sin identificarlo.

¿Tu familia se identifica por cuál herencia étnica?

- Blanco
- Latino / hispano

Multiple choice

¿Cuál es el idioma principal de tu familia? (¿Qué idioma se habla/utiliza en casa?)	• Afroamericano • Asiático / isleño del Pacífico • Nativo americano • Oriente Medio • Otro: _____ • Inglés • Español • Lenguaje de señas americano (ASL) • Otro: _____	Multiple choice
¿Cual es tu nivel de educación?	• No terminó la escuela secundaria • Graduado de secundaria • Título de asociado • Licenciatura • Maestría • Doctorado • Otro: _____	Multiple choice
¿Hay uno (1) o dos (2) padres en su hogar?	• Un (1) madre/padre • Dos (2) padres • Abuelo(s) • Otra composición: _____	Multiple choice
¿Su familia recibe asistencia pública?	• Sí, SSI • Sí, SSDI • Sí, CashAid • Sí, WIC • Sí, MediCal • Sí, subsidios escolares (ayuda financiera con ECE o preescolar) • No • Otra forma de ayuda: _____	Multiple selections
¿Cuál es el nivel de ingresos de su familia?	• \$0-\$25,000/ año • \$25,001-\$50,000/ año • \$50,001-\$60,000/ año • \$60,001-\$70,000/ año • \$70,001-\$80,000/ año • \$80,001-\$90,000/ año • \$90,001-\$100,000/ año • \$100,001-\$150,000/ año • \$150,001-\$175,000/ año • \$175,001-\$200,000/ año • \$200,000-\$250,000/ año • \$250,001+/- año • Prefiero no decirlo.	Multiple choice

¿Cuántas personas viven en tu casa?	• Short Answer	Write-in response
¿Cuántos niños viven en su hogar?	• Short Answer	Write-in response
¿Cuántos adultos viven en tu casa?	• Short Answer	Write-in response

¡Encuesta completada!

¡Gracias por su participación! Sus comentarios son valiosos y agradezco su tiempo.

Michelle Everson-Smith Graduate Research Study

Appendix B: Instrument: School Site Administrator Interview Questions

Table 8

Administrator Interview Questions

Interview Question	Probe(s)
What is your role here at this program?	
How long have you been here?	
Does this preschool program offer full-day services, partial-day, or both options?	
Does this preschool program offer general education, special education, or both?	
Are wraparound services available to working parents?	• If wraparound services are available, how are they provided? • Are wraparound services accessible to all families? • What portion of families avail themselves of wraparound services? • How are wraparound services funded and provided? (Provided by school personnel, outside agencies, or other?)
How is this preschool funded?	• Does it receive federal or state funding?
What are the qualifications for teachers?	
What percentage of families are classified as low-income?	
What percentage of families are single-parent households?	
Has the number of students increased since UTK has become universal?	
Do you think UTK has impacted preschool access?	
How would expanded preschool access affect this site?	
What kind of problems might arise in staffing, space, resource availability if preschool access expanded and this site were to accommodate more students?	
What kind of effects do you think preschool expansion might have on the community?	
Is there anything you would like to add that you think would be helpful in understanding preschool in San Diego?	

Appendix C: Instrument: Document Analysis Protocols

Table 9

Inductive Thematic Coding Spreadsheet

Themes	Document Analysis	Parent Questionnaire Responses	Interview Responses
<i>Given Themes:</i>			
Child Achievement			
Outcomes			
Gender Equity			
Social Equity			
Policy			
<i>Emergent Themes:</i>			