

Michigan Kindergarten Teacher Opinion Survey

Key Findings



Background

As part of our shared mission to ensure that every young child in Michigan has a Great Start and arrives at the kindergarten door healthy and ready to succeed in school, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation recently collaborated with Lake Research Partners to conduct an online survey of Michigan kindergarten teachers. The main focus of this initiative was to gather valuable information about the school readiness of young children in Michigan based on the professional opinions of kindergarten teachers, with specific emphasis placed on the readiness of the 2008-2009 cohort of kindergarten students. The purpose of the survey was also to gauge kindergarten teacher opinions on issues surrounding school readiness, potential reasons for school unreadiness, and to gauge resources available statewide that support school readiness. This survey was funded through W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Michigan Head Start State Collaboration Office.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by Lake Research Partners (LPR) from February 25 through March 11, 2009 and April 29 through May 26, 2009, with a total of 675 Michigan kindergarten teachers statewide completing the approximately 15-minute online survey. Disseminated electronically to all building administrators of public schools identified as having kindergarten students, the field of targeted participants included almost 2000 public schools in Michigan. Email addresses used for survey communications were drawn from a list of public school building administrators in Michigan provided by the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). The building administrators were asked to forward the online survey to kindergarten teachers in their school. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.8%.

Key Findings

- 32% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WERE **NOT SATISFIED*** WITH THE ABILITIES OF THEIR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WHEN THEY STARTED SCHOOL THIS YEAR, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 50% BEING ONLY **SOMEWHAT SATISFIED**.
- IN COMPARISON, **ONLY 10%** OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WERE NOT SATISFIED* WITH THE ABILITIES OF THOSE KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WHO HAD ATTENDED A **GREAT START READINESS PROGRAM** (STATE-FUNDED PRESCHOOL FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED 4 YEAR OLDS).
- ACCORDING TO MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS, ON AVERAGE, ONLY **65%** OF CHILDREN ENTERED KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS THIS YEAR **READY TO LEARN** THE CURRICULUM.
- 86% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS REPORT THAT STUDENTS WHO ARE BEHIND ACADEMICALLY AT KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE HAVE AN **IMPACT** ON THEIR ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY PROVIDE INSTRUCTION TO THE **REST OF THE CLASS**.

Key Findings continued...

📌 MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS RANK “NOT PARTICIPATING IN A **PRESCHOOL** PROGRAM AT AGE 4” AS A MAIN FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENTS STARTING SCHOOL ACADEMICALLY BEHIND.

📌 97% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS BELIEVE THAT IT IS MORE **COST-EFFECTIVE** IN THE LONG TERM TO PREPARE CHILDREN **BEFORE** THEY ENTER KINDERGARTEN VERSUS TRYING TO CATCH THEM UP ONCE THEY ENTER KINDERGARTEN.

📌 98% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SAY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR MICHIGAN TO MAKE A **SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT** IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS AND SERVICES.

📌 97% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SAY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A COMMUNITY ENTITY, SUCH AS A **GREAT START COLLABORATIVE**, THAT FOCUSES ON THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN 0-5.

📌 ACCORDING TO MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS, THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE **SCHOOL READINESS** OF MICHIGAN STUDENTS ARE:

1. **Create a system for children birth to five** that includes parent education, high quality child care and early education opportunities, and social, emotional and physical health supports for every child.
2. **Improve early childhood education** so children are better prepared when they enter kindergarten.
3. **Expand access to high-quality preschool** for at-risk 3-4 year old children., and social, emotional and physical health supports for every child.

📌 90% OF MICHIGAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SAY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND UNIONS TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT A SCHOOL READINESS AGENDA FOR MICHIGAN CHILDREN, EVEN IF IT MEANS PUTTING SOME **SCHOOL AID FUNDS** INTO **EARLY CHILDHOOD** EFFORTS.

*Or “only a little satisfied”.

Next Steps

The Early Childhood Investment Corporation will be working in collaboration with state and local partners to further disseminate and evaluate the data collected in this survey effort. The ECIC anticipates the need to provide technical assistance to Great Start Collaboratives surrounding analysis of regional and statewide data. An in-depth report, including detailed data analysis and connections to relevant early childhood research, is anticipated in the coming months. Similar initiatives in other states have offered great insight into the status of young children and have informed early childhood policies and systems accordingly. Given the increasing numbers of vulnerable young children in Michigan and the relentless threats to the programs ensuring their care and education, it is the sincere hope of the ECIC that these findings also impact the priorities and policies of Michigan’s decision-makers, at both the state and local level.

Contacts

Questions? For more information, please contact Jessica Gillard, ECIC Specialist for Early Education, at jjillard@ecic4kids.org.

Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC)

221 N. Pine Street, Lansing, MI 48933.

Tel: 517.371.9000

Fax: 517.371.9080

