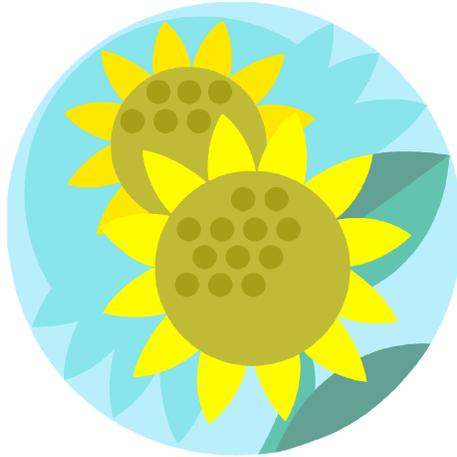


**Kinder-garden progress; how 'flowers'
may develop differently based on how old
they are as 'seedlings'**



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Abstract

What is the relationship between students' age and their performance in kindergarten including social and academic aspects? An intern looks at the oldest and youngest students in two kindergarten classrooms to see if the age of a kindergartener matters on an academic and/or social level. Observations, surveys, journals, interviews and research were all strategies used in attempt to develop answers and data concerning this concept that so many educators and parents ponder.

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A. My Teaching Context

With the professional collaboration of the Pennsylvania State University Professional Development School and the staff members at Radio Park Elementary School as part of the State College School District, I have been able to spend the year learning and growing as much as the students that I teach. I consider myself lucky to have spent the year among 46 amazing kindergarteners and worked along side three exceptional mentors. During this time I have developed an inquiry that has produced as many questions, if not more, as it has answers.

The two kindergarten classrooms that I am teaching are located at Radio Park Elementary School in State College, a suburban town in central Pennsylvania. Radio Park is a small elementary school ranging from full-day kindergarten to fifth grade classrooms.

My circumstances in this program were unique in comparison to a ‘normal’ time in the program. The first four weeks of school, I was placed in a kindergarten classroom that I became comfortable with. I met the parents and was accepted into the classroom. Due to unforeseen situations, I was then transferred into the neighboring classroom with a new mentor and 23 new students. At this time, there was no familiarity with the students or the parents. I was also not able to hear what the parents had to say at the original parent-teacher conferences and back-to-school night in the second classroom. However, I was still able to keep contact with my original classroom, but was juggled back and forth between the two. I feel that this information and exposure of conferences would have been beneficial to me in understanding the students in the new classroom.

For this inquiry, I will be focusing on two separate kindergarten classrooms, each of which I am familiar with the student body. Classroom one has 23 five and six-year-old

students, including two half-day students. The ages range by birthday, from July 2000 to August 2001. The class has cultural diversity including three English as Second Language (ESL) students. Students have come from various countries such as India, South Korea, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan and China. There are also various developmental levels, socially and academically. The students are placed into five separate groups during center times based on reading levels. There is also one student that requires an aid throughout the day for his behavior management.

Classroom two is similar to classroom one in terms of academic separation and diversity. There are 21 students in this class. This number has fluctuated throughout the year with students leaving and incoming. There are no students in this class that require ESL support but they do hail from other countries. These include; China, Korea, India and Germany. There are multiple students in this class that live with parents who do not speak English as their primary language. The ages in this class range by birthday from May 2000 to July 2001. Both classes have students that have been retained for a second time in kindergarten.

I have chosen the two oldest and two youngest students from each classroom. I will focus on the relationship between age and academic and social progression and observations. Three of the four pairs were coincidentally male and female. There are certain students that were once in the oldest groups but have been taken out of the inquiry due to variables that I have decided to omit. The students that are being observed are first year kindergarten students that do not receive ESL support. Classroom 1 includes the oldest students; O (white male) 7/25/00 and L (white female) 9/12/00, and the youngest Z (white male) 8/17/01 and K (African-American female) 8/31/01. Classroom 2 includes

the oldest students A (white male) 5/26/00 and W (Chinese-American male) 11/28/00 and the youngest H (white male) 7/25/01 and N (white female) 5/23/01. The students have been given random letters as their names to respect anonymity.

B. Rationale

I am focusing on this inquiry question because of my interest in how age affects kindergarten students. I have heard comments about young students' behaviors from educators such as, "Oh, it's because he/she is so young" and use their age as justification for the student's behavior. I would like to become more knowledgeable about this topic amongst educators using research and observations. I feel that it is important to learn more about the surroundings of the classrooms that I may encounter in the future, and I feel that becoming educated about this topic would be beneficial to assess situations that may arise. One of my questions (see heading K) is to see if these attributes, the correlation between age and academic and social progression, would continue through the grade-school years. Not knowing what grade levels I will be teaching in the future, I hope to obtain knowledge about the effects of age on students at all grade levels.

This is also an important topic for parents and interns to learn about. I have heard from the interns throughout the grade levels that age seems to be an important variable when discussing students' behavior and academics. Although, this information will only make claims based upon data about my current classes, I may be able to use this analysis for my future classes. The information that I have received from the interns and the parents have helped me to view various perspectives concerning the inquiry topic.

Lastly, have chosen this inquiry topic from a personal perspective. I have two other siblings in my family. We all have early September birthdays and my parents had to decide whether to hold us an extra year before kindergarten or allow us to begin just turning five. My older sister was the youngest in her grade starting kindergarten shortly after turning five-years-old. I am the middle child, and my parents decided to hold both my younger brother and me an extra year in nursery school and start us at six-years-old, subsequently allowing me to be the oldest in my grade. We all had different experiences. My sister struggled academically and socially, my brother struggled academically and socially, and I, thankfully, did not struggle. The lack of pattern sparked more curiosity on a personal level, and gave me another reason to complete this inquiry.

C. Literature and/or Experts

Karen Paciorek asks in her book, *Taking Sides*, “Should all children be five years of age before starting kindergarten?” The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends that children enroll in a kindergarten when they “are age-eligible”. My inquiry correlates with this question that perplexes many education researchers and experts; when is a child ready to attend kindergarten?

I interviewed an expert in the social aspects of elementary students, Mrs. Eileen Pearsall, guidance counselor for Radio Park Elementary. (See Appendix B) After interviewing with Mrs. Pearsall and discussing my inquiry topic with her, I learned so much about students’ social struggles in general. Mrs. Pearsall elaborated on some of the social aspects that students deal with, and how these aspects may pertain to younger or older students more often. A recurring phrase throughout the conversation was

‘developmental readiness’. “ When students come in younger, a number of things make it harder, (developmental readiness; socially cooperative play, readiness emotionally for coping skills/ problem solving skills, readiness for academic skills) they may not be at developmental place (cutting, gross/fine motor skills that come with age).” Samuel J. Meisels states in, *Out of the Readiness Maze*, that “readiness is a relational interactional educational construct that reflects a focus on both the child’s status and the characteristics of the educational setting.” (Meisels, 1995) Paciorek also states that “a child’s developmental readiness for learning and the developmental appropriateness of the teaching that the child receives is a strong determinate of having a positive school experience; some would say more than chronological age.” (Paciorek, 2002, 143) In terms of readiness, Wolf and Kessler write that, “recent research shows that the nature of the school program and its response to individual learning differences are more important than the child’s “readiness” level.” (1987, 45)

We discussed how there are three core parts to readiness: social, emotional and academic. If a student is lacking these parts it may appear that he or she have a behavior problem, for example, their attentiveness. Younger students may become frustrated if they are lacking these core parts, or the ‘withitness’ that older students in the class may have.

During the interview I asked about some of the other qualities that are important to have in kindergarten, relating to my parent survey. (See Appendices E/F) Mrs. Pearsall said that there is “so much kids need to learn socially that are important in kindergarten; (for example) learning to take turns, sustain attention with other kids, problem solving, using appropriate words, tone of voice, actions. If they don’t have those they can’t

cooperatively work with other kids.” I took these ideas and began to compare them with the students in my inquiry. I asked myself if the students possessed and portrayed these traits consistently. Looking through observations, I found that each student possessed some of the traits, but no student possesses all of them.

Talking about the parent survey that I sent out, I asked Mrs. Pearsall about the parents that may be questioning if their child is too young to start kindergarten (the State College rules are that the child must turn five-years-old on, or before August 31 for the cut-off). She explained that “if parents are questioning themselves...if the child seems immature, doesn’t get along with kids their age, some other skills fine/gross motor/problem solving/emotionally, he or she might want to talk to someone about that.”

Another topic that I discussed with my social expert was the idea of pre-school, or pre-kindergarten facilities. Regarding my inquiry students, six of eight attended a school facility before attending kindergarten. The two that did not were one of the oldest, and one of the youngest. (See Appendix I) Paciorek says that a student’s success throughout the kindergarten year could result in their prior experience to kindergarten with enrollment in a pre-school program. (Paciorek, 2002 ,143) Agreeing with the author, Mrs. Pearsall feels that “absolutely pre-school is a precursor to kindergarten. They begin to learn social skills and being with other kids (also) academic pieces, not to say kids can’t learn things at home. But, if they’re with other kids they grow socially, they don’t have opportunity/modeling at home without preschool.”

We discussed the difficulties of younger students, but I also inquired about problems that older students may have if their parents decided to hold them an extra year before kindergarten. Mrs. Pearsall and I discussed how if the student is more mature they might

have less patience with younger kids that aren't as mature. We also discussed problems that may happen in the future for the older students, like getting teased for being fully developed before the other students. Overall, for the older kids she felt that "(being and older student) gives (older kids) more confidence, higher self esteem just because they know more, and have more developmental readiness."

At the end of the interview she concluded that before sending a child to kindergarten the parents/guardians, and pre-school teachers need to assess the individual child and decide what their needs and strengths are to make that decision.

Another interview that I conducted was with the Instructional Support Team teacher, Mrs. Karen Foard. (See Appendix C) I was very lucky to discuss my inquiry topic with yet another expert in the school, which has so many lenses from which to view children from. I asked similar questions to Mrs. Foard as I did with Mrs. Pearsall. Mrs. Foard commented that age is *one* of the predictors of behavioral struggle, not necessarily an academic one. We discussed how the academic program in the classroom might result in a younger student's struggle. Agreeing with Mrs. Foard, Paciorek has written, "when programs for young children are developmentally appropriate, there are experiences that will meet the ability levels of all children in the room". (Paciorek, 2002, 143)

There may be tasks that involve using a great deal of fine motor skills, and younger children may not be physically capable. Mrs. Foard explained that age may "not be an indicator of academic potential, but academic performance. If age interferes with performance, they may not get what they need out of the curriculum."

As we discussed motor skills, the conversation turned to gender. A beginning wonder of mine for this inquiry topic was to see if gender would become a factor for any

academic and social struggles. Mrs. Foard explained that girls might have more fine motor skills because of their type of play (dolls, drawing, etc.) which could be related to “societal encouragement.” I commented that my inquiry boys do engage with Legos and couldn’t that also promote fine motor skills. She agreed but explained that most can’t do Bristle Blocks, overall all children are still developing their fine motor skills in kindergarten.

I also explained my wondering about the many variables that might play into a student’s academic and social struggles. She commented that home-life, parent/guardian involvement, and birth order are factors that undoubtedly contribute to a student’s academic and social performances. The amount of time that the student is exposed to academic and social involvement is vital to their successes. I looked into the students birth order (See Appendix J) to see if there were any patterns, but found none.

Another very interesting portion of the interview was the switch of discussion to the older students in the classroom. Although obvious once pronounced, Mrs. Foard said that the oldest student in the class was delayed a year before kindergarten for whatever individual reason, but if they weren’t they would have been the youngest in the classroom. Ashlesha Datar, writer of *The impact of changes in kindergarten entrance age policies on children's academic achievement and the child care needs of families*, explains that “supporters of delayed entry into kindergarten believe that children need the “gift of time” and general out-of-school experience to be able to perform better in school. Those who oppose delaying entry into school believe that school can provide the nurturing environment that helps to promote children’s learning and development.” (Datar, 2003, 21) There are many opinions that are pro and anti the delay of a child’s

entry into kindergarten.

The final portion of our interview led to discussing the AIMS web testing. I learned that this is a standardized literacy-testing tool for any grade level. In primary, it tests the ability for the students to perform well on specific test as a predictor of how well their going to learn to read. The students are tested twice throughout the year. Although, starting next year the students registered for kindergarten will be pre-screened in August to give the teachers an idea about their incoming students, and offer intervention earlier on. I asked Mrs. Foard if a student that was struggling severely and was quite young if they would alert the parents and possibly delay the student. I learned that there is no feedback about the testing given to the parents, so that would not be possible.

Specifically, my inquiry students tested at various ranges. (See within Appendix A)

Mrs. Foard sees various aged students during the day. She explained that academic achievement and social performance is based on many variables, age being of lesser importance. These variables include social economic status, birth order, personality and prior exposure to academics and social aspects before entering kindergarten.

D. Wonderings and Questions

What is the relationship between students' age and their performance in kindergarten regarding social and academic aspects?

Will gender be a noticeable factor while observing the age of the selected students?

Are there going to be patterns in social or academic behaviors among the male-male students vice versa, among the female-female students?

Are there going to be patterns in social or academic behaviors among the older-older students vice versa, among younger-younger students?

Will other variables, such as known home-life issues or slight language barriers pose a problem in observation?

If age does affect students at an academic and social level, does it continue through the grades or does it even out as students mature, what are ways that I can assess this data?

How would age affect students academically, that have come from different countries and do not possess English as their primary language in the same way as US born, English-speaking students?

How would age affect students socially, that have come from different countries and do not possess English as their primary language in the same way as US born, English-speaking students?

Will students that are repeating Kindergarten for a second time, or have been moved back into Kindergarten have similar struggles or achievements as the students who are

attending Kindergarten for the first time?

E. Inquiry vs Project

This activity is definitely an inquiry-based process. I would like to know if the age of a Kindergartener, particularly the oldest and youngest student, affects his or her progression socially and academically. I will be conducting surveys, analyzing observation taken by my PDA and myself, analyzing research, and speaking to experts about academic and social progression. The purpose of this inquiry will be to formulate connectable ideas in hopes of unearthing patterns or assumptions for my future classroom. There is no intervention within my inquiry, so it would be difficult to turn my inquiry into a project. There is also no pre or post data to be analyzed, but rather analyze and compare academic work among the older students' progression to the younger students' progression.

This process is looking at the progression of academics and social behavior of students that are the oldest in the class while comparing these observations to the youngest students in the class to see if there are any patterns that would suggest the disproval of theories surrounding younger students entering Kindergarten. I'm not sure how this inquiry research and observation will conclude. I don't know if I will find definite answers or deduce my wonderings about this topic.

F. Inquiry Plan Description

I feel that my inquiry plan description is unique to my inquiry because of the nature of my main question. I did not have an intervention that took place during the classroom to take daily observations about. Instead, my supervisor and I took

observations at different points of the day during different subjects and situations. I also undertook in other strategies to achieve well-rounded research data.

In late January-early February I began journaling about my inquiry topic ideas, and chose a topic that I thought would be the most interesting and engaging for me. (See appendix K) The first week of February I began to collect birthday information from the three kindergarten classes that would allow me to organize the oldest and youngest of the classes. (See appendix K) I created a chart that included all three classes but shortly after, decided to only work with the two kindergarten classrooms that I am involved in. The students were graphed according to birthday the oldest given the letters A to the youngest given the letter Z. Later when the final students were chosen, they were given single alphabetic names to respect anonymity.

This was also the point where I decided to exclude certain students that might sway any results. The students that I decided to use in my inquiry had to meet certain criteria. The students had to be currently engaged in their first year of kindergarten, this excluded any students that had been retained the year before. The students also had to possess English as their primary language, this excluded any students that received ESL support or presently had language barriers that may affect their academic and/or social progression. Finally, the students that I included in my inquiry data could not presently hold an IEP.

Once the students were chosen, the observations began. My supervisor and I took observations during various times. These observations were constant from the first week of February to the last week in March, two full months. The observations were of the eight students, the two oldest and two youngest in each classroom. Observations were

taken during morning routine, gathering, center time, free-choice time, recess, book-buddies with the third grade classrooms, and math lessons in the afternoon. Some notations were made and placed under two categories of 'academic' or 'social'. Although, most of the noteworthy comments were random observations jotted on the side of the paper that were compiled later on. The first two weeks a student involved in the my inquiry selection was excluded due to his or her IEP, and the next oldest student in line was placed into the data.

Soon thereafter, I started to ask the special teachers to guess who they thought the youngest and oldest students in the classroom one were (see Appendix L). I also asked them to explain what brought them to those conclusions.

Next, I wanted to collect some tangible artifacts from the students to see if I could find any patterns or correlations. I photocopied various journal writings and prompted sentences. (See Appendix M) I chose journal entries from the beginning and end of the inquiry process. I was interested to see if there was any progression among the students on an academic level through the journals. The sentence prompts allowed me to look at individually written identically worded sentences.

I also used partner work to pair up the oldest students with the younger students and observed what took place. (See Appendix N) It was interesting to see how they interacted with each other and what role, like the leader or follower, that each student portrayed. I also conducted a short interview at the end of the lesson with those students to retrieve their opinions about working with specific students.

Another piece of my inquiry plan was to obtain expert interviews from an academic and social stance. I interviewed with our guidance counselor, Eileen Pearsall,

(See Appendix B) and our Instructional Support Team teacher, Karen Foard. (See Appendix C) I was able to receive their opinions about my inquiry topic and discuss other important factors concerning academic and social concepts. These interviews were vital resources of my inquiry plan.

In early March, I sent out parent surveys and intern surveys. The parent surveys included a simple question asking their opinion on a generalized idea regarding skills for kindergarteners. The intern survey was more in-depth, and required the interns to examine their own classes and answer questions about their own youngest and oldest students. These surveys were great additions to my plan that helped me view opinions from various perspectives.

* I have come to the conclusion that the aspects of my inquiry plan description and my data collection may overlap. Due to the unique nature of my inquiry, the inquiry plan is not similar to one of an intervention plan. Therefore, the plan discusses what I had completed over the course of a few months, in turn, focusing on data from the period. This data may be repeated but in a varied form than above.

G. Data Collection

My data collection reveals how I was able to research and observe for my inquiry topic. In attempts to properly research this topic, I collected a range of information from different sources. I also took observations under different circumstances to allow for an un-bias and open view of the students selected for my inquiry.

*Due to changing circumstances mid-inquiry I was able to observe and work more with four students in the first classroom, than the four students in the second classroom. I feel

that I still gathered adequate information on all of the students to create comparisons. Consequently, there will be more data on students O,L,Z and K than A,W,N, and H.

Student statistics

Data needed to be collected regarding the personal, but legally accessible, information about the students. With the help of my mentor, I researched to find the birthdays of each student in order to select the youngest and oldest from each class. I also collected data to see if the students attended nursery school or pre-school prior to kindergarten. My mentor was able to verify the credibility of the students' original answers about their nursery school experiences. (See Appendices I/K)

Observations

Observations were a main focus of this inquiry topic. They allowed me to specifically look at individual students during different settings of the day, whenever I had the chance to generate credible, meaningful observations. I also had my supervisor take observations, in order to receive a different perspective on the same students. Observations were completed during morning meeting, gathering, center time, partner activities, recess, and whole group lessons. Some were taken and organized into the students' names with an 'A' for academic observations and a 'S' for social observations. (See Appendix O)

Interviews

Interviews were conducted throughout the inquiry process with various candidates such as: Mrs. Eileen Pearsall (guidance counselor), Mrs. Karen Foard (IST

teacher), Physical Education, Music, and Library teachers, and the students themselves. Interviews allowed me to gather first-hand information concerning my inquiry topic. (See Appendices B,C, L)

Student work

As part of my inquiry plan, I collected and photocopied various assignments by the students. I looked over journal writings and sentence prompts to see if there were any patterning indications of evidence that would lead me to generate any assumptions. I wanted to see if the older students had shown more progression during the varied times that I photocopied the journals. I also wanted to see if there was a noticeable difference between the oldest and younger students' writing. The journal writing were 'free-writes' with the students' own ideas, whereas the sentence prompts allowed me to view the same sentence written by the different students. (See Appendix M)

Journals

Personal reflections allowed me to review the information that I had collected to compile and interpret the data. I wrote about any patterns that I might have seen or any stand out information that I thought could be shared with my supervisor and in return receive beneficial feedback towards my inquiry. (See Appendix K)

Surveys

Surveys were collected from parents and PDS interns during this process. The parents survey was a simple question asking them to list the traits/skills they felt a child should have prior to entering kindergarten. This survey was intentionally short in hopes to receive more feedback. The intern survey was slightly more in-

depth and asked the interns to look at their own classes and rate their oldest and youngest students on academic and social levels. (See Appendices D-H)

H. Data Analysis

My data analysis will show how I have interpreted what I have found through data collection. When analyzing the data I was surprised to not find any patterns that would prove any assumption about students struggling with academics or social interaction based on age.

Student Statistics

- The birthday chart is a list of all the kindergarten students as of February 1, 2007. It showed the name of the students that would be chosen to participate in the inquiry study. This was the point that I decided to take out the students that were retained, or required ESL support. I also included alternates for the classes in case I thought of new criteria for the students to meet. (See Appendix K)
- The nursery school chart is a chart of the students involved in the inquiry program that shows if they attended or did not attend nursery school. This information was used in attempts to find any patterns that would help build a correlation with nursery school attendance and age. There was no pattern found. There were two students that did not attend nursery school, one of the oldest students and one of the youngest students. All other attended different pre-schools or pre-kindergartens. (See Appendix I)

Observations

- Observations of daily activity were taken for each student (again more so in the first class than the second). My supervisor took observations for approximately two weeks. (See Appendix O)

Overall observations from daily activities:

- *O: constantly moving around on carpet but usually remembers to raise hand when speaking. Social with rest of students, has many friends. Academically strong with reading, writing, and math. Usually has correct answer, regardless of behavior.*
 - *L: sits quietly on rug during gathering, works well with others, always raises hand to speak, very bright academically, high in reading, writing and math.*
 - *Z: disciplined multiple times a day for playing with toys, talking, or moving around on carpet. Trouble socially with other students, has problems finding other students to play with him. 'Outlier' in terms of intelligence, extremely gifted in all areas of academics.*
 - *K: very shy, rarely speaks aloud, struggles academically with reading, writing and math. Has never been disciplined during gathering, or carpet times.*
- Math partner lessons

During this time, I grouped the two oldest students with the two youngest; O and K were paired and L and Z were paired. The students engaged in a math partner activity that required measuring different items and writing down numerical answers. (See Appendix M) I also performed this lesson a second

time, but grouped the students differently, O and Z were paired, and L and K were paired. Both times, the two oldest took the leadership position and at times did not include their younger group members. K seemed to ‘tag’ along with both group members, and Z was distracted by other happenings around the room.

- Intentional groupings

Multiple times, I grouped the students on the carpet in chronological order. At these times, I did not notice anything different from varied seating arrangements that would secure evidence of a pattern to continue on with these groupings.

- 🌈 Interviews

- Child interviews

Various child interviews of the inquiry students were conducted throughout the inquiry process. One was a ‘best friend’ interview. I was curious to see if there were any patterns in the students that the oldest and youngest students chose. There was no pattern showing if the inquiry students chose ‘best friends’ similar to their age or not. When asking the students, the two oldest in both classes were hesitant to generate name of opposite sex, the two youngest in both classes new immediately.

noted: Z chose a girl that does not gravitate towards him during the day. He also wrote in his journal that he would take this girl to space, “but she wouldn’t want to go with me because I annoy her.”

Other child interviews such as the math lessons (See Appendix M) presented that the older students showed some resistance in working with the younger students.

The younger students, however, were indifferent.

- Special teachers

I asked the Physical Education, Library, and Music teachers to guess who they thought were the youngest and the oldest in classroom one (O, L, Z, K). The interviews showed that the teachers were unable to guess correctly the oldest and youngest students. They explained their reasoning for their guesses. It showed that many teachers base their assumptions on size and behavior. (See Appendix L)

- Parent

I also asked a parent that is a constant in classroom two to guess who the youngest and oldest students were. She guessed incorrectly and based her guesses on “maturity, and conversationist styles”.

- Expert interviews

I interviewed with the guidance counselor, Eileen Pearsall, and the IST teacher, Karen Foard. The interviews expressed the opinions of these experts in the juvenile academic and social fields. They agreed that there are many factors that may attribute to academic achievement and social performance. Age may be one of them, but there are many others. (See Appendices B/C)

- 🌈 Journals

After reading over the reflections in my journals, I was able to see the importance of other variables that might inherently affect the students as individuals. (See Appendix K)

- 🌈 Student work

- I photocopied the students’ journals and sentence prompts. I found no evidence to suggest that the older students were progressing faster than the younger

students. Some of the students started at higher academic levels than the other students, but all students showed progression. With Z and A's work I realized that it was not that they couldn't complete the work, but that they were distracted by other happenings in the room. (See Appendix M)

Surveys

- Two surveys were conducted during this inquiry process. The parent/guardian surveys (See Appendices D-H) showed that more parents/guardians that answered the survey, thought that social/emotional aspects were more important than academic or hygiene aspects that were listed. Skills that parents/guardians thought were important before entering kindergarten ranged from being toilet trained to reading small sentences. An interesting note was to see that only half of the surveys sent out were brought back, possibly stating a negative claim, towards the parental feedback concerns. Of course, many other variables are plausible to explain the lack of parent/guardian response. (See Appendix E/F)
- The intern survey was sent out to all of the PDS interns. (See Appendices G/H) This was an interesting feedback report because the feedback ranged in all primary grade levels, kindergarten to fifth grade. It showed that there was no statistical information that could be put towards making a claim that a correlation exists between students' age and social performance/academic achievement. There was a small difference under the 'social maturity and fitting in' factor when comparing all of the A's to the Z's. This may signal a problem with puberty and adolescence in students as they get older.

I. *Claims for my classrooms*

Academic and social achievement is shaped and influenced by the unique needs, abilities, and experiences of individual students.

I can claim that my students' academic and social achievement is shaped by multiple variables involved in their lives, including their personality. My future wonderings about different specifications can add to this claim. Students are all unique, and there are no 'basic' or 'control' students to create comparisons similar to a science experiment.

Claims require an adequate amount of evidence, and this claim was very difficult to collect evidence on due to legality purposes. I felt that due to upholding my professionalism and protecting the private aspects of my students' and their families, dwelling into home-life variables, although critical, was difficult to accomplish. But, how could I have possibly left this portion unlooked at, as much as I tried to not include this aspect in my inquiry?

I researched the birth order of students in attempts to find patterns with sibling exposure. (See Appendix J) Exposure is an important aspect that factors into the students perceptions and understanding of academics. As Mrs. Karen Foard explained, home life, and the amount of interaction a student receives academically with other siblings prior to attending kindergarten is a variable. The chart showed no common patterns when comparing the inquiry students. (See Appendix C)

Time in an education facility before entering kindergarten also shapes a child's social performance. (See Appendix I) Although, some of the inquiry students did not

attend nursery school, they did have older siblings. Likewise, some students that did attend nursery school have some social struggles. This is evidence that each child is unique in their own ways, and some may absorb social interaction more than others, but are still exposed to it.

 **There is no clear pattern of evidence confirming any consistent correlation between academic achievement (and progress toward that end – academic skill development) and student age.**

Studies also show that “the achievement difference between younger and older children is slight” “the small disadvantage of younger children tend to disappear as they progress through the grades.” (Wolf and Kessler, 1987, 49)

Discussing the AIMS web testing, a reading and phonemics test, with Mrs. Foard (See Appendix C), I learned that children are grouped into red, yellow or green categories. Red means to promote intervention, yellow is cautionary, and green is successful. If by just looking at the data, it shows that second to youngest kindergartener actually tested 2nd out of all the kindergarteners in the school, there would be no doubt that age has nothing to do with academic achievement. But, I decided to look more at the students’ work. I looked at the progression of the students, not the end results. When interviewing Mrs. Foard, she explained that if a student tested at a yellow (like two of my inquiry students did) and then when re-tested, was still a yellow, that would be a greater issue than if a student started at a red, and moved up to a yellow. An analogy that I discussed with my supervisor was that if two students started at different points in a race, one may be ahead of the other, but they are both traveling at the same speed...is that a

negative aspect? That is how I question the inquiry when I view the students' writing qualities. (See Appendix M) It is hard to tell which student wrote which paper, and even when asking some of the interns they guessed wrong, when trying to match students' ages up with the writing samples.

Overall, academically, students vary based on multiple factors: how much exposure they have to academics at home, if their siblings have taught them anything about school, if they can understand all of the English spoken in class, if they don't have behavior issues that may be affecting their concentration, or if they are just too hungry to focus and end up failing a test. These factors could affect any student, regardless of age.

 **There is no clear pattern of evidence confirming any consistent correlation between social performance (and progress toward that end – e.g. social skill development) and student age.**

When discussing this idea with the guidance counselor and the IST teacher of Radio Park, I asked them if they generally worked with more younger students or more older students of the grade levels. They said that they saw all different kinds of students, any age, and that there was not one group of ages that were more prevalent in their practices than others. (See Appendices B/C)

I also feel that I can make this claim based on the overall observations that I had taken throughout the inquiry process. When comparing the students, youngest to oldest, I found no superior similarities. Sometimes the oldest child in the class would chew on his shirt, for possible teething or anxiety purposes. Other times it was the youngest child in the class doing this. On one occasion, the older student in the class was playing by

himself, where as the day before that was a similar scenario to the younger student. The same with emotional outbursts or crying; I have seen each student cry on at least one occasion.

Ironically, making an overall observation, the two oldest in one class are opposite in personalities, and social performance to the two oldest in the second class. In classroom one, the two oldest are very social and outgoing. In classroom two the two oldest are more reserved. The two oldest in the first class are similar to the two youngest in the second class and vice versa with the other four students. Although, with the math partner lessons, the eldest students got along with one of the younger students, but still had some struggles. The elder students presented a tolerance with the younger students, but did not seem appreciative

(due to their facial expressions and comments) to be partnered with them. (See Appendix N)

Exposure is another important factor affecting social performance. I can use the same evidence of nursery school and siblings to show that there were not patterns found in my class that would claim age affected the students' social performance. Variations in personality that would affect social involvement can also be seen in the student profiles that I have created. (See Appendix A)

J. Conclusions

Samuel J. Meisels quotes that, "it will never be the case that all children will attain the same level of performance at a single culturally defined point in time. Individual differences and variations in development associated with both endogenous and exogenous factors make a mockery of our chronological benchmarks when we try to apply them across the board to all children." (Meisels, 1995)

This quote by Samuel J. Meisels exemplifies the intentions of my conclusions. Meisels explains that all children are inherently different. I have learned this and much more throughout this inquiry process. New understandings of my students began immediately when I had to choose which students I would be selecting. I generated criterion that the students had to meet in attempts to create observations of students that would be open and non-bias. What I found was that all children have differences that make them unique, and these differences would affect any research situation.

The specifications for each student that I required prior to beginning the inquiry were that the students were non -ESL support, were not retained, and did not have an IEP. As I created the birthday lists, I eventually discovered the students that were the oldest and youngest in each classroom, and met the criteria. They became students I (originally) considered “basic” in the regards that they did not fall into the pre-mentioned categories. I then recognized that I was typecasting some of my inquiry students as ‘outliers’. Z was beyond the academic level of his peers, and throughout the inquiry process, I considered him an outlier because of this. I also second- guessed W in the second classroom, as I saw that his work was distracted by the nature of his speaking abilities presumably due to his Chinese background. Later in the process, I also found out that K and L were adopted as infants.

Without this inquiry, I could have unfortunately gone an entire year not knowing the delicate information concerning my students, such as the adoption data. After discussing with Mrs. Foard, I realized that creating criterion for the students to meet in order to be considered subjects in my inquiry might have not been the correct approach. The students are unique and possesses personal information that creates their character.

As educators, we need to view students through multiple lenses, and this inquiry has helped me add a few to my teaching bag for the future. Overall, all of my students are outliers in their own ways.

I never would have found out this information about my students, if I had not implemented a various use of resources. These details could have been lost without the consistent drive and persistence to search for answers and constantly ask questions. This inquiry provided me with the drive to learn more about these students, and truly view them as unique individuals. I have learned to constantly ask questions and search for answers that would in the end, benefit my teaching and my students' education.

As interns, we learn that our students are individuals and instruction needs to be differentiated based on the students' ability levels. We learn that it is vital to create a safe and secure classroom for all students to bloom and progress in. As college students, we learn this information from text-books, and listen to personal accounts that are not ours. I truly understood the concept of individual differences, strengths and needs during this inquiry process. I was able to reflect upon my own data that was not lectured to me, or that I had read in a book.

It is non-intentional for teachers to make sub-conscious assumptions and create self-fulfilling prophecies for students to fit (younger students may struggle more due to their...). This inquiry has allowed me to conclude a new perspective for my future teaching. I was able to stumble upon information, because I was constantly asking numerous questions to others that I felt would aid my curiosity, and also questioned myself. For my future teaching, I have complete intentions to learn all that I can about

each student in order to successfully create the most productive program that would benefit the students' time in my classroom.

In regards to my original question, I have completed research and taken multiple steps to search for information from different perspectives, concluding that there is no definitive answer. Those who learned what my inquiry was about, were very interested in a black/white answer. As parents, they just wanted to know if it was better to send their child at five or six-years-old. The teachers that I spoke to wanted to know if it was then justifiable to let some behaviors and academic struggles pass under the assumption that "they're just young". Depending on one's viewpoint, there is no definitive answer. As I have learned, each student is an individual, and when a parent/guardian feels that that child is ready, socially and academically, to attend kindergarten then they may proceed. As for educators, I have found based on data from my classrooms, that young students can progress socially and academically just as well as older students. They may start at different levels, but can reach their goals set by themselves and their teachers.

This inquiry topic is a cyclical process that still has me searching for more answers, and generating more questions. I look forward to working with other grade levels, and having more unique individuals in my classrooms so that I may proceed to *inquire* further.

K. New Wonderings

→ What information would I have been able to put towards my inquiry, if I was able to dwell further into the students' home lives?

- What if I had included the students that were eliminated based on my required criterion? Would there have been more noticeable differences or similarities in the data?
- What if I purely focused gender differences and academics/social performance rather than age? Would there have been more noticeable differences between the sexes?
- What if I was able to complete this inquiry process in other grade levels?
- Would students in other grade levels show any patterns or evidence of age affecting their academic achievement and social performance?
- What if I had chosen more students to observe on a closer basis, for example the youngest and oldest four or five in each classroom? Would the data have changed, if so how?
- What data would I have found if I had focused on the two sets of twins in the kindergarten classrooms? (they fell into the youngest five)
 - Are their difficulties present concerning puberty and adolescence for the oldest and youngest students in the classroom, that may sway parents/guardians to send their children to kindergarten at a certain time, if so what are they?
 - What if I had tried some type of intervention during this process, for example, grouping the oldest students in the two classes together and viewing from a social perspective, how would the general data differ, if any?
 - How does age affect the oldest or youngest students that may struggle in certain aspects of the classroom as they progress into older grade levels?

→ What would I found out if I were able to inquire more about the inquiry students' siblings, and their experiences, if they were the youngest or oldest in the classroom?

L. References

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Appendices

A) Student Profiles

tackle (assessment and opinions based on observations)

- O
 - doesn't like to interrupt order (upset when we went out of order in alphabet books)
 - first to take initiative in class (accepted the challenge question immediately and asked adult)
 - leader/ most influential of students in class, others look to him for direction
 - silly, class clown
 - constantly at table with head down for misbehaving during gathering, but not for calling out, (being silly)
 - even though looks as if he's not paying attention and goofing around, can answer present question, correctly
 - is aware of behavior, knows how to 'work back' his minutes off recess
 - comes in, in the morning sometimes and blames his bad behavior the day before on 'too much caffeine'.
 - first in class to publicly discuss/get caught for mature actions. Wrote tally question at lunch to peer, "do you want to get married and kiss on the lips"
 - average/ bigger than other students

- L
 - adopted as infant
 - no nursery school
 - patient
 - presents as an 'ideal' student
 - has best friend in class, but overall social
 - very bright academically
 - never calls out, always raises hand
 - average/bigger than other students
 - AIMS web testing, tested in top third

- Z
 - extreme with thoughts and ideas, when speaking talks quickly, seems to have rapid thought process, has to say what is on mind or becomes frustrated or upset
 - constantly calling out of turn
 - disciplined multiple times during the day
 - constantly chewing on shirt (teething, or anxiety)
 - recognizes when other people do nice things
 - great manners
 - quick to give compliments
 - extreme intelligence
 - frustrated when can't verbalize thoughts

- takes twice as long to pack up/dress than other students, (once found in coatroom chewing on his boots)
 - AIMS web testing, tested #2 out of aprx. 70 kindergarteners
 - smallest students among two classes
- K
- adopted as infant
 - quiet, shy
 - does not participate voluntarily
 - well behaved
 - plays alone at recess
 - struggles with writing, but doesn't verbalize problems
 - has progressed academically throughout year
 - smaller than other students
 - AIMS web testing, -tested in yellow
- A
- extreme with thoughts and ideas, when speaking talks quickly, seems to have rapid thought process, has to say what is on mind or becomes frustrated or upset
 - appears wired
 - in beginning of year, quiet, shy, now developed 'silly' outward behaviors
 - had made negative comments that caused for parent contact
 - holds up feelings, then 'errupts'
 - attachment issues with other students, becomes slightly 'obsessed'
 - very bright, can read almost anything
 - AIMS web testing, tested #1 out of aprx. 70 kindergarteners
 - average size to other students
- W
- beginning of year struggled slightly with Chinese to English language
 - slightly defiant earlier in year, seemed to adjust as of late
 - not interested in arts/crafts (culture issue)
 - social with other students
 - bright, higher than average testing,
 - average/biggest of other students
 - AIMS web testing, tested high but low in phonemic awareness (possible due to language barrier)
- N
- very social and conversational
 - AIMS web tested in top half of kindergarten students
 - had issues with bossing students around
 - leader qualities
 - active in discussions and gatherings
 - intelligent, progressed in reading/sound spelling
 - average size of other students
- H
- no nursery school

- AIMS testing, tested low in the 'yellow'
- struggled in beginning of year with academics (reading, writing, math)
- has progressed well throughout year with all academics
- conversationalist, talkative
- social, many friends
- 'silly' 'all-boy' (stereotypical I know) behaviors (similar to O)
- smaller than other students

B) Interview with Mrs. Eileen Pearsall, guidance counselor

Eileen Pearsall

School guidance counselor

Thursday March 29

In your experience, have you found any information to suggest that younger students (in any grade) struggle more due to their age?

depends on kid, mat be times when kids is younger can be social issues arise make it, mismatch , as they go thru certain periods, adolescence certain development time periods is hard times. sometimes they might sense they're less mature.

Elaborate more on the relationship between age and social behavior in the classroom:

come in when younger, number things make it harder, developmental readiness -> socially cooperative play, readiness emotionally for coping skills/ problem solving skills, readiness for academic skills because may not be at developmental place, cutting, gross/fine motor skills come with age... younger kids without readiness for three parts social/emotional/academic, create kids that look like they have behavior problems, don't have attentiveness, don't have long attention span for academic or social. encounter more frustration that have 'with-itness'

for a k-ner they're not at that place like other students, brings in behavior problems, frustration. crying, grabbing, outward frustration seen, externally to other kids, internal anxiety- chewing on shirt.

so much kids need to learn socially that are important in k-ner, learn to take turns, wait, sustained attention with other kids, problem solve, inner change/ cooperative with other kids. do they use appropriate words, tone of voice, actions, if they don't have those they can cooperatively work with other kids

Organizationally, don't have maturity to organize themselves. stations can blow them away... developmentally appropriate practices. research is big piece of thinking about kids. If kids are too young, not going to be ready.

How would parents/ know → there is cut off, natural cut off parents are supposed to go by, Aug bday if a parent is questioning themselves...if they're immature, doesn't get along with kids their age, some other skills fine/gross motor/problem solving/emotionally, if they have questions and are concerned, they might want to talk to someone about that...well I'm not sure if they're ready. Boys are especially more immature. a boy at this level id be more concerned, talk to pre-schools.

Absolutely for pre-school, precursor to k-ner, begin to learn social skills, being with other kids/academic pieces. Not to say kids can't learn things at home. If they're with kids they grow socially, they don't have opportunity/modeling at home without preschool. so many kids go now, those who don't

boredom, if they're beyond academics causes behavior problems.

what about older kids/problems → on other hand, more mature less patience with younger kids that aren't mature, getting into older kinds of things, emotionally developing getting teased if you're fully developed.

as a parent and professional, does bring about some things, more for some kids than others. still subtly for kids that are ready academically issues socially can effect them emotional.

younger end is harder end, better to have maturity then less maturity

gives more confidence, higher self esteem just because they know more, more **developmentally readiness.**

higher expectations, worried about kids air on side of holding them. good self esteem, emotionally/socially ready already feelings like cant do it as well as everyone else.

even drawing, asking kids to do things, if they're younger they may not be ready.

overall, look at individual child, what are their needs and strengths.

Preschool teachers opinions to send kids of to K

how does the parent feel about it

if parent has strong opinion, child could be more successful, where is the parent coming from.

C Interview with Mrs. Karen Foard, Instructional Support Team teacher

Karen Foard

IST

Do you feel there is a relationship between age and academic struggle/progression/success?

age is one of the predictors, August bday is going to have difficulties, not necessarily as academic as behavior. less academic than behavior correlation, how well can they sit, how long can they focus are they 'wigglebuts' more correlation with fine motor skills more academic program, that child may struggle not an indicator of academic potential, but academic performance if age interferes with performance, are they able to get what they need out of curriculum

girls/boys

more little girls have more fine motor skills because of their play... instead of boys legos, good, most cant do bristle blocks still learning fine motor bull in china shop society encourages, what we push, LOOK at inquiry kids play issues/ wants

Exposure birth order, siblings, how much time has family spent on pre-academic skills number one lots of time, number two not so much kid after kid

guessed Z- way isolate, knowledge based, solid outlier in performance OUTLIER doesn't fit into norm of younger child

just made cut off, parents may have chose to hold them before O would have been youngest, parents made decision to keep him back why>?

grouping

based on sex, skills at that exact moment in time AIMS web nothing that is read that is tracked for rate of progress on age if age played into it, kid could mature would relate if increase take off as young, received more help

AIMS standardized screening tool, at any grade level, reading primary, ability to perform well on specific test is predictor of how well they're going to learn to read
K-letter names, just knowing letter names, they should learn to read
have to know by end of year
all year long program---

screen before K- gives ideas of how many kids come into doer with letters and sounds
no feedback, to parents, about progress, this year we did screening, no intervention until
January. kids who didn't know them in Sept. still behind in Jan. why would we wait 4
months for intervention, maybe they need to be exposed,

kids that are screen into 'red group' greens are a go, yellows are a caution
reds are intervention needed, whoever is red will automatically start with letter
intervention
pace of introduction to letter, they won't be able to get, other kids just need the exposure,
quick concept

Oct. will start intervention groups,
first grade, letter sounds, if you know the sounds of letter you can read anything, gives
them start
kids that can't segment, not out of woods, not predictor, but refinement
can't associate letters, but can segment words, red flag

**no not see kids younger here overall
have had both**

intervention between IST and teacher important, AIMS web pick out things that teacher
can't, pure learning disability kids low kids are teacher guts, but advantaged kids with
resources older siblings, good compensatory behavior, are fluent but then making them
do it with print, they can't

screening will be done on all K got all the reds, some stayed yellow, did their yellow
keep them yellow, or did they get from yellow to green. did they go from yellow
prediction to red by the end of the year
the kids that were not bad yellow, did they stay yellow or did something click, the ones
that did click were they young yellows, or was an old yellow that wasn't making the
progress. young ones might not have been ready yet
Jan scores

Z-#1 Z/ A tried to spell words
K low phonemic seg. yellow, adopted
L adopted
O top third

A- #2

W-

H- yellow in certain spots, low in sounds, nonsense, if he stayed yellow he would be at risk for first grade, has motivation

N-green (top half)

chewing- could be teething, anxiety

Myers Briggs, little kids does personality effect

did the younger vs older, in terms of personalities were they more likely to be certain

age is not predictor

SES

birth order

personality

exposure

D) Parent Survey (blank)

Dear parents/guardians,

I hope everyone has had a great start to this Spring season! As part of being a Penn State student, I have research papers that are required. I was wondering if you could list what traits and/or skills you feel are necessary for a student to have before entering kindergarten?

I appreciate your time,
Miss T

F) Chart based on parent comments/ full compilation of parent comments

Parent Surveys:

List what traits and/or skills you feel are necessary for a student to have before entering kindergarten?

Total number of surveys	Hygiene/health comments	Academic comments	Social/emotional comments	Total comments overall
11	5	15	37	57

DATA

Parent Surveys

11 Total

Academic comments:

15

Social/emotional comments:

37

Hygiene:

5

Total comments:

57

Comments:

Ability to sit still for 5 minutes or more

Ability to follow simple instructions

Some emotional maturity- ability to 'hold it together' with minor frustrations

no hitting

independence

interest in learning

 knowing letters and numbers

social awareness-interest in making friends

 know the alphabet

some social skills- getting along with others

respecting teachers and other children

~potty trained

 know ABC's

 know the sounds of each letter

exposure to other children how to treat other respectfully

~basics (potty trained, dress themselves)
 told how important it is to listen and pay attention, sit still
 well socialized child/ sharing interacting with others
 identify colors, letters, and numbers
 desire to learn
 understanding of respect for self and others as well as property
 good physical development, holding pencil etc.
 strong emotional development
 knows rules, routines, and manners
 communication skills
 ability to interact with other children in social situations
 ability to follow simple instructions
 willingness and interest in learning new things—curiosity
 confidence
 a little independence
 self control
 understand what it is to be a good friend
 respectful of other and self
 eagerness and enthusiasm to learn
 letter recognition
 sing some songs
 write letters, numbers, and at least their name
 able to eat lunch independently
 good habits like
 ~--cover your mouth when you sneeze
 ~-- wash your hands often
 ~-- flush the toilet
 some social skills – learning how to interact in a group situation
 understanding your ABC's
 some letter recognition
 counting skills at least to 10
 starting to write first name
 some understanding of the computer
 understanding appropriate play with others
 able to interact with other kids
 can write name and small words
 read small words and sentences
 “Personally I think social skills are the single most important thing kids need before entering kindergarten.”
 do they play nice with others
 do they share
 do they include the kid that might not be included otherwise
 do they have the courage and tools to appropriately address other kids that they disagree with
 can they separate from mom and dad without a great deal of anxiety
 follow directions

second on list → safety/common sense

do they have the ability to remain safe on and around the school buses

how independent are they

do they know the appropriate people in the community to seek assistance from if they need it

can they tell someone their name, their parents name and where they live

G Intern survey (blank copy)

Hey everyone!!

I know we're all very busy with inquiry and teaching at this point of the year, but I was wondering if you could take a few moments to fill this survey out for my inquiry. You can look at it now, but it really helps to keep these questions in mind for the length of a full day of school, etc but and fill out the actual answers after you've had a chance to observe your students in relation to these questions. I hope that makes sense.

Thanks so much!! :)

p.s. please keep all the kids' names to yourselves, I need the info anonymous [and I don't want to cross any lines of confidentiality, even if by accident].

[If you intern in more than one classroom, fill this out with just one of the classes in mind.]

Grade level: _____

Age Range in your classroom: _____

"My inquiry has a lot to do with examining the patterns (if there are any) among student age and performance. In case you already know who are the oldest and youngest students in your classroom, I want you to try to imagine for a moment that you did not. To yourself - meaning I don't need/want to know your guesses - who would you guess to be the two oldest students in your classroom? Who would be the two youngest? I'm curious - meaning this is something I WOULD like you to answer - what would inform your hunches/guesses and whether or not you were right. For instance, was your guess based upon how they look physically? How they perform academically? Social skills?

The next thing I need you to do is actually find out who the oldest two students and the youngest two students are in your classroom; you might have this info on a birthday list in your room or you might have to check in the office, etc.

For the remainder of the survey, I'd like you to answer the questions with those four

Any additional comments on Student B:

3) In your opinion, how does Student Y compare with the rest of your class in terms of...

Overall Academic Performance

5		4		3
	2		1	

Social Maturity and "Fitting In"

5		4		3
	2		1	

Any additional comments on Student Y:

4) In your opinion, how does Student Z compare with the rest of your class in terms of...

Overall Academic Performance

5		4		3
	2		1	

Social Maturity and "Fitting In"

5		4		3
	2		1	

Any additional comments on Student Z:

Thanks again, good luck with your inquiry!

H) Intern survey (filled out)

Hey everyone!!

I know we're all very busy with inquiry and teaching at this point of the year, but I was wondering if you could take a few moments to fill this survey out for my inquiry. You can look at it now, but it really helps to keep these questions in mind for the length of a full day of school, etc but and fill out the actual answers after you've had a chance to observe your students in relation to these questions. I hope that makes sense.

Thanks so much!! :)

p.s. please keep all the kids' names to yourselves, I need the info anonymous [and I don't want to cross any lines of confidentiality, even if by accident].

[If you intern in more than one classroom, fill this out with just one of the classes in mind.]

Grade level: ___ 1st _____
Age Range in your classroom: _____ 6-7 years _____

"My inquiry has a lot to do with examining the patterns (if there are any) among student age and performance. In case you already know who are the oldest and youngest students in your classroom, I want you to try to imagine for a moment that you did not. To yourself - meaning I don't need/want to know your guesses - who would you guess to be the two oldest students in your classroom? Who would be the two youngest? I'm curious - meaning this is something I WOULD like you to answer - what would inform your hunches/guesses and whether or not you were right. For instance, was your guess based upon how they look physically? How they perform academically? Social skills?

Response: I would think the older students would understand and perform better academically because they have had more time in school (as compared to the younger students). They might also look older physically, taking on less child features. The older children would have better social skills and would be better able to handle situations. In my classroom, I know this to be true because the children whose birthdays were in October, November, and December exhibit these behaviors, they perform better academically (these are probably within the top reading and math groups), they look older, and they handle situations better because of their social skills.

The next thing I need you to do is actually find out who the oldest two students and the

-----This student goes to Title 1 and ESL. She also has trouble fitting in with the other girls in my class. She is in the lowest math and reading groups.

INursery School/ Pre kindergarten chart

Name	Attended pre-school	No pre-school
O	*	
L		*
Z	*	
K	*	
A	*	
W	*	
N	*	
H		*

J Inquiry student sibling chart

Siblings

Students	Oldest or youngest in class	Oldest of siblings	Middle of siblings	Youngest of siblings
<i>O</i>	<i>Oldest</i>		x	
<i>L</i>	<i>Oldest</i>			X adopted
<i>Z</i>	Youngest	x		
<i>K</i>	Youngest			X adopted
<i>A</i>	<i>Oldest</i>	x		
<i>W</i>	<i>Oldest</i>		x	
<i>N</i>	Youngest	x		
<i>H</i>	Youngest			x

K Journals

Journal 2/2

Jessica Toepfer

Sight Word Inquiry

I have come up with a new inquiry idea. Kaitlin and myself were discussing some of the struggling students' problems with sight or 'popcorn' words. Her class creates chants and songs to almost every sight word. Carol's class and Janie's class do not use this strategy when learning sight words. I was pondering the idea of "how can I help struggling readers with their sight word proficiency, what strategies would be most effective?" Variables are a large issue when formulating an inquiry topic. These students may be affected by the fact that this is half way through the year and I would be bringing in new strategies for them to use.

In terms of benefits from an inquiry, this idea would be the most beneficial for the students, possibly over my other independence inquiry topic. I also feel that there may be a wide array of literature based on this topic that I could research. I also would like my inquiry topic to be used in my own classroom when I start teaching. This idea of sight word strategies would be limited to a kindergarten or first grade setting. Whereas, the independence topic could be applied to various grade levels. I believe my next step will be to email Bernard and decided whether or not the sight word inquiry is to 'projecty'.

Age-effects of Kindergarten Inquiry

Today, Cole and I discussed a new idea about the age of kindergarteners and educators' perceptions of their level of academic and social abilities throughout the year. I would like to better understand how age affects a student coming into kindergarten. It is important to focus on the fact that I would only base my inquiry primarily on age, not other factors. I think it would be important to take into consideration certain variables that may affect this inquiry. A variable that I would take into consideration would be if the student had attended a pre-school program prior to entering kindergarten. I would also be collecting my baseline data by surveying teachers and interns about their assumptions concerning age and behavior/academics in the classroom. I would ask what their underlying ideas are now, and possibly what they used to think. I also plan on interviewing the special teachers. I would ask them to guess which children were the youngest in the classroom, and which were the oldest. After telling them the answer, I would record the response. I would then ask them to give a few traits of situations about the youngest students and ask if they feel it is due to age.

A subquestion of my inquiry topic would to see if age affects the classroom as the students get older, progressing onto higher grades. I would like to create some charts based on teachers' responses that may show this data to see if there is any correlation. With this information, I could better understand some of my students in my future classrooms, especially if I am placed in an older grade level and have a student with behavior or academic problems.

I think educators, parents, and interns would be interested in an inquiry topic like this. Many educators may wonder if they are just giving the student a reason to have certain struggles in the classroom due to their age. These findings would only be relevant to the students that I observe and work with but it may make people think differently. Parents would be interested if they are worried about sending their child that may be younger than the rest of the incoming class. The findings of my inquiry may sway their decision or at least make them question their decisions about such events in their child's lives. Finally, interns could look at this inquiry topic to for their future classrooms as I would. An inquiry topic needs to be important to me and I feel if I can continue learning about this topic and formulate more questions that it will be at the head of my inquiry list of ideas.

Journal 2/9
 Jessica Toepfer

February 9

I have already come up with two stipulations that may need to be enacted within my inquiry idea. I know I said that I was going to focus on only age without including other variables, but I fear that this may not be successful. I have made a chart that includes the five oldest and five youngest students in each of the kindergarten classes, including alternates. Cheryl's class includes so many alternates due to the first variable that I may consider. I may change my requirements as the 'youngest' or 'oldest', only if they are born in this country and not in ESL classes and are attending kindergarten for the first time. The inquiry idea is supposed to be looking at the effects of age on kindergarten students when looking at academic and social aspects. I may not be giving some students the right assessment when they are first learning the English language. I also may not want to include students in the older group that are repeating kindergarten (Y and E). These two variables may have to be included for my inquiry wondering.

Class	Oldest	Birthday	Youngest	Birthday
Carol Grim Room 17	A O	7/25/00	V Pk	6/12/01
	B L	9/12/00	W Ka	6/30/01
	C Ed	9/12/00	X Ts	7/31/01
	D Sia	10/4/00	Y Z	8/17/01
	E Sa	10/5/00	Z K	8/31/01
	* Sr	10/12/00	* Sy	5/24/01

Janie Brown Room 16	A Ye	5/1/00	V Ce	5/10/01
	B Tr	5/15/00	W Ea	5/18/01
	C A	5/26/00	X En	5/18/01
	D W	11/28/00	Y N	5/23/01
	E Re	1/10/01	Z H	7/25/01
	* Nk	1/10/01	* Kh	5/2/01
Cheryl Isola Room 15	A Jh	5/3/00	V An	6/7/01
	B Rd	8/1/00	W Mn	6/23/01
	C Er	9/20/00	X Ma	8/31/01
	D Ne	9/28/00	Y Yi	10/25/01
	E Ke	11/4/00	Z Cn	11/9/01
	* Ls	11/9/00	*Lh	5/24/01
			*Jn	5/18/01
			*Hy	5/8/01
			*En	4/30/01
			*Me	4/6/01
*alternates				

I believe I will use this chart as the first pieces of my own observational data collection. I would remove the names when documenting anything that would be presented to the public.

When I went to visit the office today, I also ran into a slight problem. I asked the office staff if I could have a copy of all of the classes' students including their birthdays. I wanted to start collecting information to aid in the creation of my surveys. Deidre had overheard my conversation and it turns out that due to legality purposes, this would not be possible to access even if all information from the sheets and surveys were kept anonymous. This is a detrimental effect to my wonderings about the progression throughout the different grade levels. When continuing to speak to Deidre, she had decided that I might use the AIMS information by contacting Karen Ford. The AIMS testing scores are only for one year, but it something to further look into. Deidre also thought that the inquiry topic was a good idea because it's something that many people contemplate being an educator and parent.

L Interviews with Special teachers, parent, supervisor

Specials Teachers:

Special A: **Z** and E-youngest

H and Sr- oldest

“I wanted to guess some as the oldest because of their experiences”

Special B: E, T youngest

K, Sr oldest

“based on behavior, the youngest being the most out of control, **L** is quiet shy behaves opposite of older sister”

Special C: **Z** and E- youngest

Sy, Sr- oldest

“based oldest guesses on maturity, higher level thinking” –thinks having older siblings makes correlation with higher level thinking”

Supervisor original guesses: G, J, B – youngest

P, Sa oldest

Parent consistent in classroom:

E, L, M- youngest

P, G- oldest

“oldest based on personality, confidence and outwordness” Disagreed with H, “he’s a conversationalist”

N) Student math lesson interviews/observations

Math Lesson Interview/ Observations (1)

- Partner activity, partnered them up youngest-oldest , opposite sex, (observations and child interview), asked students how they felt working with their partners
-both older students made faces when receiving their partner assignment
O- told me what I wanted to hear, that he and his partner (K) took turns, cooperated and said nice things to each other.

K- “we worked together” (I observed bossy comments from O to K during activity) When asked, K was indifferent towards working with O again.

L- hesitant to answer questions, (her nature or she was afraid to be honest, because it might not have been what I was looking for) When asked, said that she would work with another boy again, when asked if she would work with Z, was hesitant then stated, “he kept knocking over the sticks” (popsicle sticks lined up to measure objects)

Z- “best person I could have worked with, she lets me sit next to her, she’s really nice”

During the activity, L and O took the leadership positions, did not create small-talk with their partners, just seemed anxious to complete activity. “Dragged” their partners along with the activity.