

Tying Early Childhood Education More Closely to Schooling: Promise, Perils and Practical Problems

ROBERT HALPERN

Erikson Institute

Background: *Over the past decade or so, the idea of joining early childhood education (ECE) and schooling has gained currency in the educational reform arena. Numerous education reform proposals and plans include ECE as a component. Scores of school districts around the country have added preschool classrooms to at least some of their elementary schools. National organizations representing governors, chief state school officers, school boards, and principals have all called for public school systems to include and integrate ECE into plans for school improvement.*

Purpose/Objective: *One specific framework for bringing ECE and schooling closer together is “prek-3rd.” The broad goal of prek-3rd is to encapsulate formal learning experiences in the 3–8 years age period and create a distinct, coherent whole out of them. In this article, I use prek-3rd as a vehicle for exploring the implications of more closely linking ECE and schooling, focusing especially on philosophical and practical issues raised by this objective. I will examine the reasoning of proponents and raise questions about their assumptions.*

Research Design: *Analytic essay.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *The example of prek-3rd suggests that there are many positive aspects to the idea of bringing ECE and early schooling closer together. These include an extended time frame for holding on to a developmental orientation; a complex view of the child, and sensitivity to individual differences; the longitudinal perspective on learning and mastery; the balance in attention to teaching and learning; and the broadened time frame for considering the transition to school. Yet, at least in the American context, it is not such a good idea to bring ECE and schooling closer together. Initiatives like prek-3rd will provide one more opening for downward pressures on early childhood providers. The schools (as a whole) have a history of failing to respect the integrity of other institutions that join them in efforts to better meet children’s needs. Thus far, all that has been accomplished by tying ECE*

more closely to schools making ECE less early-childhood-like. The needs of schools are just too powerful and end up overwhelming the identity of institutional partners. Ultimately, the risk in binding ECE and schooling more closely together derives from a set of related cultural problems. The first can best be described as losing the present to the future—the very problem with school readiness as the central goal of ECE. The second problem is a misunderstanding of the processes at the heart of child development. Children are not raw human capital to be carefully developed through schooling to meet the demands of a globalized labor force. Americans urgently have to rethink how they wish to account for children, the virtues that are important to nurture, and the role of adult institutions in the process. There is a clear risk in extending the line that already connects schooling to global competitiveness down into early childhood, asking ECE to address not only the achievement gap but the global achievement gap as well.

If the school for young children has to be preparatory and provide continuity with the elementary school, then we as educators are already prisoners of a model that ends up as a funnel . . . It's [the funnel's] purpose to narrow down what is big into what is small.

— Loris Malaguzzi, interview with Carolyn Pope Edwards (cited in Drummond, 2007, p. 211).

Over the past decade or so, the idea of joining early childhood education (ECE) and schooling has gained currency in the educational reform arena.¹ Numerous education reform proposals and plans include ECE as a component. Scores of school districts around the country have added preschool classrooms to at least some of their elementary schools. National organizations representing governors, chief state school officers, school boards, and principals have all called for public school systems to include and integrate ECE into plans for school improvement.

Those seeking a closer relationship between the two historically distinct institutions have a number of (not always compatible) concerns and goals. Proponents wish to strengthen the quality of ECE by tying it more closely to state learning standards and teacher certification regimes, and to strengthen the quality of early elementary education by infusing it with child development knowledge and perspective. The early childhood community views the linkage as a means for gaining access to new funding sources; school districts view it as a way to respond to the support needs of young families. Some proponents are motivated by a perceived need to counter the fade-out of preschool intervention effects by first or second grade. In a complementary vein, some perceive a need to begin earlier in efforts to address the so-called achievement gap between

groups of children. Not least, proponents of a closer linkage argue that it will assure a more constructive transition to schooling.

One specific framework for bringing ECE and schooling closer together is “prek-3rd” (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Kauerz, 2007; Reynolds, Magnuson, & Oh, 2006; Shore, 2009). The broad goal of prek-3rd is to encapsulate formal learning experiences in the 3–8 years age period and create a distinct, coherent whole out of them. It is simultaneously about pushing the start of schooling down from kindergarten to preschool and about extending ECE up into the early grades. The resulting conceptual and operational integration would:

- highlight the developmental underpinnings of educational experiences throughout the time period
- create a broadened time frame for the transition to school
- provide the basis for greater continuity in children’s learning experiences
- allow for a longitudinal perspective on children and closer attention to children’s unique developmental patterns, emergent strengths, and support needs
- align early childhood and early elementary learning experiences
- foster an institutional context in which beliefs, assumptions, and practices from early childhood education and schooling would more readily shape each other.

On the following pages, I use prek-3rd as a vehicle for exploring the implications of more closely linking ECE and schooling, focusing especially on philosophical and practical issues raised by this objective. I will examine the reasoning of proponents and raise questions about their assumptions. For instance, it cannot not be assumed a priori that bringing two such distinct social institutions closer together is a desirable goal, given both the theoretical differences between the two and the difference in power. Making schools the locus of ECE is likely to—indeed has already begun to—further weaken the diverse fabric of community institutions that serve young families in a variety of ways.

Prek-3rd is being promoted in a societal context with many countervailing pressures. These include growing standardization of expectations for children’s knowledge and skill throughout the age 3–8 years period, intensifying academic pressures and a push to organize learning around high-stakes standardized tests. As a result, although there is new awareness of how critical a good transition to school is to later school engagement, there is less time and space to make the transition constructive

because of heightened demands on children. Though we now have substantial knowledge about children's developmental tasks and supports needs during this age period, there is less and less place for this knowledge in school policy and practice. The discrepancy between what we know and what we practice is especially notable in learning settings serving economically disenfranchised children and children of color.

From a systemic perspective, tying ECE more closely to schooling will expose it more fully to the market-oriented policies and practices that are so strongly distorting public education (Hursh, 2007; Scott, 2011). ECE is already struggling to maintain its fragile identity as a public good, an institution outside the market. It is already struggling to hold on to a generous, inclusive view of children (and of learning), and likewise to its historic emphasis on community and the valuing of diversity. Rhetoric surrounding ECE has already begun to be co-opted by corporate executives, venture capitalists, and economists.² If ECE comes to be seen as a part of schooling, these struggles and trends likely will intensify. It too, then, will be subject to skepticism (if not denigration) as a public good, urged to develop business plans and accountability benchmarks and to promote marketlike "competition." ECE programs will be judged by their financial return to "investors"—pressured to identify successful and unsuccessful children and to view children as isolated individuals fighting for a place in an unforgiving global market.

BACKGROUND

For almost a century, ECE and schooling, as social institutions, have been about different things. The ways in which each viewed and thought about children and about learning differed in important ways, notably in how children learn, how they acquire knowledge and understanding, the social conditions under which they learn best, how to think about and measure what children know and can do, responsibilities to families, and the principal work of teachers and other caregivers. ECE historically saw a more active, "constructive" child learner than did school. It was more supportive of cooperative learning; treated domains of knowledge in a more integrated manner; and placed greater store in play as an important vehicle for learning and growth. ECE historically was primarily a psychosocial, rather than academic, institution, that is, attended more centrally to socioemotional (and physical) needs. It recognized and tried to accommodate individual differences and worked hard to include families and more often provided corollary services to them.³

To a much greater degree than with schooling, we have accepted ECE as heterogeneous, funded through varied means, sponsored by many

types of organizations, having a different profile in each community, and free to focus broadly (if diffusely). Such decentralized heterogeneity has fostered a vibrant, if fragile and inadequately resourced, set of local institutions responsive to different community conditions, family beliefs, and priorities. It has also fostered inequalities in access to good developmental experiences, based on family income, neighborhood of residence, and other variables. And it has contributed over time to the growth of a distinct early childhood “intervention” system targeted at groups of children considered to be at risk or different in some specific ways.

Although for the most part ECE and schooling have developed on different paths, they have intersected at many points and in many ways. By the early 1900s, kindergarten, which had begun as a distinct institution, was already being incorporated into schooling. By the late 1920s, nursery school leaders such as Patti Hill Smith were proposing that nursery schools should be part of the public school system (Beatty, 1995).⁴ Many of the emergency nursery schools of the 1930s and some war-related childcare centers in the 1940s were school based. The play schools of the 1920s–1950s and subsequent efforts in the late 1950s and early 1960s to adapt the British infant school model to the American context focused on fostering both a developmental perspective and continuity in learning experiences during parts of the 3–8 years age period.

Since its inception, Head Start has sponsored three national demonstration programs focused on better aligning early childhood and early elementary experiences: Follow Through, Project Developmental Continuity, and the Head Start-Public School Transition program. These initiatives focused to differing degrees and in varying combinations on curricular continuity, administrative coordination, professional development, activities to prepare children and families, communication/information sharing between Head Start and school staff, and other activities.

During the 1980s, preschool education, framed as prekindergarten, was included for the first time in the educational reform plans of a number of states. By the end of that decade, the majority of states funded “pre-k” programs through special grants or, less commonly, school aid formulas. The presence of such programs within the purview of the schools led almost immediately to questions about their appropriate relationship to K–12 schooling. The mid-1980s emergence of “developmentally appropriate practice” as a foundational concept was a direct response by the early childhood community to fears that schools had a new vehicle for pushing an academic agenda on early childhood programs (Rose, 2010). In recent years, concern about the connection

between early childhood and early elementary education—whether the need for it or the dangers of it—has been expressed in a debate about the meaning and appropriateness of the “school readiness” construct (discussed in detail shortly). There have also been numerous initiatives designed to ensure a constructive transition to school (see, e.g., the Kellogg Foundation’s “Ready Kids for Ready Schools,” Kagan, 2009).

CURRENT SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR PREK-3RD

Beyond closer attention to the transition to school, the current context for a prek-3rd framework is defined by cross-currents that both provide an impetus for this idea and complicate efforts to make it fit. At a broad level, there is a tension between the reality of an increasingly diverse, and in some instances vulnerable, population of young children and both greater and more standardized expectations at each age. The growing cultural and linguistic diversity of the American population is especially concentrated in young families. A third of young children now live in homes in which a language other than English is spoken. American parents have always varied widely in their own educational background and histories, culturally and ethnically shaped priorities in childrearing, and beliefs about their role in preparing children for the tasks of middle childhood. This multifaceted diversity is now becoming a defining characteristic of the early childhood context in the United States.

The implications of cultural and linguistic diversity are complicated by the prevalence of economic hardship among young families. Millions of children growing up in disenfranchised families and communities have less access than their more advantaged peers to all kinds of critical resources, from decent housing, to healthful and protective physical environments, to family economic security, to basic services such as health care, child care, and education. Lack of resources and all-around insecurity complicate, and often undermine, parents’ own intentions and ability to meet their children’s needs (Halpern, 1993; Kaiser & Delaney, 1996; Katz, Corlyon, La Placa, & Hunter, 2007).

Differential access to basic resources, combined with wide variability in family experience (and individual differences), contributes to heterogeneity in the personal attributes and resources that children bring to the transition to school (Burkam & Lee, 2002; Neuman, 2006). Research has nonetheless emphasized group-level contrasts, in particular, social class and ethnic group differences in vocabulary, preliteracy skills, early math skills, familiarity with specific concepts, and cultural artifacts (see, e.g., Barton & Coley, 2008).

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In some respects, ECE remains what it has long been, a decentralized, heterogeneous field with diffuse aims and variability in staffing, sponsorship and mission, and sensitivity to local conditions. As it has been for over a century, provision remains divided by social class and, to some degree, race. The long-standing compensatory thread, which posits ECE as a vehicle for supplementing (and occasionally supplanting) what low-income families provide their children, continues to evolve. Historically embodied in Head Start, compensatory education has recently become the province of the public schools as well, in those pre-k programs intended for children “at risk” of academic problems, a euphemistic way of targeting resources to low-income children and families.

Both Head Start and pre-k programs have experienced growing pressure in recent years to address in deliberate fashion the presumed deficit in basic skills among children served and to prove that they are doing so. Historically broad, diffuse aims of ECE are giving way to one central, unambiguous goal: school readiness. Early childhood educators report growing pressure to be responsive to the needs of kindergarten, first-, second-, and even third-grade teachers. In one recent study, kindergarten teachers wanted early childhood teachers to observe in their classrooms so the latter could reshape their practices to ensure that children had kindergarten-ready skills (Rice, 2007).

This shift in purpose does not sit well with at least some in the early childhood community. Drummond (2007) called the taken-for-granted assertion that the purpose of ECE is school readiness “a pernicious assertion and one that many of us in the early years community would contest . . . the purpose of preschools is for children to be and become three, four and five years old in the most enriching and challenging settings” (p. 210). Early childhood is most appropriately understood as “a life phase with its own value and purpose rather than a period of school preparation” (Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Taylor, 2005, p. 64). Affordances for learning during the early childhood years, like learning activities themselves, should be “uniquely preschool” (Bodrova, 2008).

CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The emergence of school readiness as a rationale, fulcrum, and focus of accountability has powerfully affected children’s and teachers’ experiences, as well as institutional missions. Observers report that children in preschool, especially low-income children, have less opportunity for play,

conversation, and self-initiated activity generally than in the past (Engel, 2010; Nicolopoulou, 2010; Rogers & Evans, 2007). Children at ever younger ages report feeling pressure to have to “try to get everything right” (Peters, 2000, p. 12). In some early childhood settings, teachers are actually beginning to include test preparation as a feature of classroom life (Brown, 2007).

Research has established that school-like instructional practices are developmentally inappropriate for young children (Engel, 2010). Children can usually cope with them, but the more meaningful foundations of literacy, numeracy, scientific understanding, and so forth do not look like schoolwork. One early childhood researcher points out that for young children, “mastery of academic skills is not as good a predictor of their later scholastic abilities as the quality of their play” (Bodrova, 2008, p. 360).

Yet early childhood programs are under growing pressure to emphasize those activities that do look more like formal academic work, for instance, quantitative counts of letter and word recognition. After observing (in a pre-k classroom) an hour of “chiming, repeating, reciting or recalling” focused on the letter *N*, Neuman (2006) noted that “aside from the numbing mindlessness of these exercises and their questionable age appropriateness for these children, I found this visit most disconcerting because it demonstrated a pattern of literacy learning that has become all too common in the United States” (p. 29).

BLURRED BOUNDARIES

The infiltration of schooling-related agendas and school-like learning into ECE is blurring the boundaries between the two institutions. This process threatens the very existence of ECE as a distinct institution. Pianta (2007) observed that for all practical purposes, “elementary school starts at three. . . . The K–12 establishment views preschool as school and is in fact banking on the dividends expected from early childhood programs to help improve lagging achievement” (p. 6). Pianta, and many others, views this development with approval, noting that it “is profound in its potential as an asset for promoting the success of the nation’s children” (p. 7).

To the contrary: Turning ECE into the first level of schooling and asking ECE to be a partner in addressing “lagging achievement” is problematic. It not only increases the risk of narrowing and flattening young children’s learning experiences but also pulls ECE into the high-stakes-testing, teacher-and-school-blaming accountability framework that is distorting learning in the elementary years (Brown, 2007). For example, the

Obama administration has been notably silent in response to early childhood educators' fears that results from the quality rating systems and testing emphasized in the federal Early Learning Challenge Grants program will be used "to make high-stakes decisions about early childhood educators, such as job protection or salaries" (McNeil, 2011, p. 18).

Binding ECE more closely to schooling exposes it to the neoliberal ideology behind the current accountability framework. This ideology holds that the application of market principles provides the key to addressing the challenges facing public education (Hursh, 2007; Scott, 2011). In other words, the very values, principles, and practices that have been responsible for putting so many children and their families into difficulty hold the key to addressing the consequences of that difficulty. Just as troubling, neoliberal ideology narrows the conception of education, pushing aside the nurture of children's moral, civic, imaginative, and uniquely personal selves in the service of their future competitiveness as workers in a global economy. For instance, the "National Action Agenda" of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2011), whose members include leading corporations, noted that "Governments at the local, state and national level must align their education, economic, labor, technology and commerce functions to support 21st century education [i.e., skills training] from early childhood through higher education. "

A SHIFTING K-3 EXPERIENCE

The narrowed conception and harsher learning regime putting ECE at risk have already infected the early years of schooling. A growing literature on this time period, described as the transition to school, has led to a more complex understanding of it and greater appreciation of its importance as a foundation for future learning. The transition has been described as a distinctive, and often challenging, developmental experience, a shift in children's ecological niche in the broader culture, a distinctive family experience, and a distinct set of institutional policies and practices (see, e.g., Clifford & Crawford, 2009; Margetts, 2002; Peters, 2000; Petriwskyj et al., 2005).

Entwisle and Alexander (1998) described the transition as a time of heightened sensitivity and receptivity, with most children predisposed to like school. They argued also that during this period, a transactional (or continuously reinforcing) process is set in motion. Children's initial learning and school behaviors receive more positive or less positive responses from teachers, shaping children's subsequent behaviors and, in turn, teachers' responses (feedback, views of a child, placements), and so on, creating a more positive or more negative trajectory. Habits,

dispositions, teacher perceptions of children, and self-perceptions are to some degree set during the first years of schooling and become increasingly difficult to alter.

Yet although there is growing awareness of the importance of a constructive transition, new demands are making it much more difficult to create one. These new demands can be seen clearly in a changing kindergarten. Kindergarten has long been subject to theoretical debates, for example, about the value of imaginary or symbolic play versus more “realistic” activities (Dombkowski, 2001). But there is a consensus in the literature that kindergarten has become steadily more school-like in dynamic, with greater teacher (versus child) initiative, more time spent in passive (rather than active) learning, greater emphasis on product (rather than process), more summative and less formative evaluation of children, more competition, and less room for each child’s individuality (Goldstein, 2007). Standardized, prescriptive curricula have become the norm, and direct instruction, typically focused on basic skills, has become more common (Nicolopoulou, 2010).⁵

Kindergarten has been observed to be busier than in the past, with more needing to be accomplished by teacher and children. As with preschool, there is less (and in some settings no) time for play and less opportunity to attend to children’s support needs (Peters, 2000). One study of 93 kindergarten teachers found lack of time “to support children’s social and emotional development [and children’s] need to explore and to discover things on their own” (Wesley & Buysee, 2003, p. 359). In this study, as in numerous others, kindergarten teachers reported feeling pressure to fill every minute with learning activity that is in some way “preparatory.” They also reported stress resulting from both “ignoring one’s own philosophy” and lack of open acknowledgment and discussion of the growing contradictions inherent in their work (p. 359).⁶

First grade also offers both less time and less affordance than in the past for conversation, exploratory learning, child-initiated experimentation, and cooperative learning. One young girl told Peters (2000), “I thought it was a little weird when I started [first grade]. I thought, ‘Hmm.’ Not much play time here” (p. 11). And first-grade teachers reportedly experience similar pressures as their kindergarten colleagues. Wien (2004) described the compromises an experienced first-grade teacher, “Ann,” makes in response to the constraints imposed by standardized and prescriptive curriculum (pp. 75–76). Ann was described as “fairly typical,” with a strong interest in literacy, a commitment to her children, and a practical streak. She accepts the prescriptive demands of the curriculum, implementing it “as best she can, though she sees grave difficulties for her and the children.” Ann notes that children’s “natural

rhythm or learning pace is very different from [that] of the standardized curriculum organized like a production schedule.” She continues, “I’m at a point now where I have some kids that are so critically slow they don’t finish anything” (pp. 75–76).

CONSTRAINTS TO GOOD LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE EARLY GRADES

Growing time pressures—and the need to keep moving relentlessly forward—in kindergarten and first grade only increase as children continue through the early grades. To some degree, it is developmentally appropriate—and socially normative—for demands on children to grow and learning frameworks to evolve as children grow older. Yet it appears that each successive grade level is less developmentally appropriate for children on its own terms.

This pattern is the result of a process of downward pressure that has been described as “push down” or “accountability shove down” (Goldstein, 2008). In this process, the needs, requirements, and concerns of each succeeding grade are forced into the thinking and planning of teachers in the grades below. Such pressure seems due mainly to the high stakes associated with third-grade testing created by No Child Left Behind. The stakes associated with third-grade tests force administrators and teachers to think and work backward from that point. In effect, all of children’s and teachers’ joint work, day in and day out, over the previous 3, 4, or 5 years is reduced to a child’s score on a standardized test.

Complementing and exacerbating the effects of heightened pressures on children and teachers has been a narrowing sense of what school is for, leading to a narrowing of curriculum. In a trend that is particularly pronounced among children of color and those from disenfranchised family backgrounds, emphasis on basic skills has become an end in itself rather than a means of entry into important cultural domains and social goals. Decontextualized literacy instruction and practice have come to take over the school day, crowding out other domains and disciplines (Halpern & Amendola, 2008). There is some emphasis on math, again mostly on basic skills, especially as children move toward and through third grade. But virtually no time—a handful of minutes—is spent on science, social studies, foreign languages, music, or art in the average prekindergarten-to-third grade school day (Hamre & Pianta, 2007, Table 4.1, p. 55).⁷ Even in third grade, children spend just 18 minutes daily on science.

One final problematic trend is the extreme fragmentation of learning in the elementary day—that is, the growing tendency to break down the

day into short learning segments, typically 15–20 minutes. Many times, “children are just settling down into a rhythm and it is time to transition; other times it is as if they know they just have to muddle through for a few more minutes” and will be able to escape to the next activity (Halpern & Amendola, 2008, p. 29). This trend has a number of damaging consequences. It prevents children from learning how to sustain effort on a learning activity. It teaches children that “what you are doing doesn’t matter much, since it will change in a few minutes anyway” (Wien, 2004, p. 102). From a self-regulatory perspective, it is very stressful for children to have to constantly shift attention and to be alert and focused repeatedly, with few breaks. Children who work slowly and deliberately are especially disadvantaged by this factory-like temporal regime.

Through all these various pressures, teachers at each grade level can and do manage to simultaneously balance what they know about an individual child, what they believe about good learning experiences, and where they are told that all children have to get to at the same time. They do so in part by engaging in a kind of nonviolent resistance against school bureaucracy—for instance, by treating extensive, prescriptive curricula, standards, and testing as part of the context for their work rather than as literal blueprints for it (Wien, 2004). But teachers increasingly report lack of discretion and flexibility to practice in this way (Goldstein, 2007). And they note that the resulting values quandary is personally stressful, taking a toll on their sense of professionalism.

Educators in the disciplines have been especially vocal about the damaging effects of a narrowed and flattened learning regime on both children and the future society. The irony is that the loss of depth and richness in learning, due in no small measure to practices foisted on schools by a business community worried about its future workforce, does the most harm to the very children whom the business community claims to be worried about. Gee (2000) described this as a coming “civic catastrophe” (p. 521).

THE PROMISE OF PREK-3RD

No single reform idea can counter the institutional and cultural pressures that are making for more stressful and less fruitful learning experiences for children and teachers. Prek-3rd represents not so much a direct critique of these pressures and their sources—in fact, its proponents argue for a tight embrace between preschool and school—as an alternative framework for managing them. It is also a loose framework. Although the Foundation for Child Development has taken the lead in promoting and funding it, no one individual or institution speaks for prek-3rd. No

discreet prek-3rd initiative embodies all the assumptions and elements that have been identified with this educational movement. School districts around the country that have implemented it have done so in different ways.⁸ Because it is a set of ideas as much as a particular approach to structuring schooling, the assumptions underlying prek-3rd and the arguments made for it are as important as the specific practices it promotes.

THE WHY AND WHAT OF PREK-3RD

PUTTING THE CHILD BACK IN THE PICTURE

Prek-3rd proponents try to open up learning by putting the child back in the schooling picture (Engel, 2010). Educators have to ask who children are, where they come from, and whom and what they are attached to. Goals, rights, and responsibilities might be better balanced. Responsibility for learning is better distributed, as is responsibility for school readiness. Educators are encouraged to consider equally a child's developmental profile, his or her experiences, and the nature of institutional demands (Meisels, 1999). Starting with a respect for child development creates more time and space for children to grow. Temporarily at least, it restrains the narrowing and intensification of learning described earlier.

Goals of schooling, instructional strategies, and classroom life are opened up in a variety of ways. A child development orientation gives the school some responsibility to attend to the full range of developmental tasks of the age period.⁹ It encourages educators' attention to the classroom as a community and on the need to work to foster a psychologically safe, well-regulated classroom environment with predictable routines, clear norms, and shared responsibility.

Teachers would have to be prepared, supported, and recognized for attending to a variety of tasks that get little attention in prescribed, often commercial, curricula. For instance, they would have to attend more fully to the cognitive and socioemotional foundations of learning.¹⁰ Teachers would have to help children build learning strategies—questioning, evaluating, extending—and memory abilities, and nurture metacognition, for example, by asking children to describe their ideas and thoughts and to think about what they have just learned. They would have to work to understand and query children's thought processes and attend to misconceptions (Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Ray & Smith, 2010).

Teachers would have to be sensitive to children's emotional security, individualized patterns of mastery and times frames for growth, and the

interaction among domains. They would have to notice who is not attending and, to some extent, how individual children are feeling. In general, attending to children more deeply would require a deeper than normal knowledge of children's families and life circumstances. That in turn would require systematic effort and time with families.

A child development orientation counters growing standardization of expectations and curriculum, shifting educators' attention to the need to balance developmental processes and tasks and academic demands. Educators would have to address how to reconcile the unevenness and variability of developmental processes and cycles with the standardized and rigid temporal schedules of schooling (P. Heckman & Montera, 2009). They would have to address what a whole-child orientation looks like in the classroom, including what parts of children's selves are important to attend to. They would have to rethink the question of how individualized children's school experience can and should be and what such individualization would mean for teaching-learning processes and assessment.

A DELIMITED AND BROAD AGE RANGE

In its focus on children 3–8 years of age, prek-3rd implicitly argues for the value of considering learning needs within both a specific and a broad age range. As with using child development as a touchstone, demarcating a specific age range organizes the attention of stakeholders. When prek-3rd has a recognizable identity and place in a larger school, the needs of younger children will receive more attention from administrators (balancing the more obviously pressing issues of children in the upper grades). Prek-3rd can serve as the basis for a separate school or space within a building, giving concrete expression to the idea of a smaller, focused unit. Parents may feel more welcome and comfortable, especially if they begin entering school life in the pre-k year.

In encompassing a broad age range, prek-3rd effectively extends the transition to school, while reinforcing the importance of the transition in setting patterns for the future. Its associated practices make the transition less of a dramatic departure and less of a high-stakes proposition for children and families. Prek-3rd has even been argued to provide a kind of extended early childhood intervention. A more generous, stable, and predictable learning environment is seen to address the problem of fade-out in early preschool intervention effects, presumed to be due to in part to the loss of a whole-child philosophy and in part to schools' deemphasis on family involvement and other early-childhood-like supports (Reynolds et al., 2006, pp. 3, 5).

A LONGITUDINAL LENS

The broad age range encompassed by prek-3rd is based in part on an assumption that it is most constructive to view children through a longitudinal, multidimensional lens rather than a summative one at particular points in time (i.e., as ready or not ready, competent or not at particular moments in time). From this perspective, prek-3rd posits a heterogeneous population of children moving up through (and along) a matrix of diverse learning and developmental tasks at different rates. A longitudinal perspective implies greater flexibility than is typically granted over the first years of schooling (1) for children to learn to participate in schooling with its distinct demands and (2) for individual children to progress in key learning domains (i.e., allowing individual children the time they need for mastery).

Such a perspective recognizes that children's work on developmental tasks is ongoing, overspilling the arbitrary temporal boundaries of ECE and schooling, preceding the start of school and at the same time continuing beyond the end of preschool. It reframes learning struggles, putting those at any particular moment in a broader context. That in turn implies thinking about academic "risk" more fluidly and flexibly, with perhaps less labeling.

It follows from taking a longitudinal perspective that each year's learning experiences should relate to those of previous years, fostering for children a sense of progression and continuity. In a broad way, continuity provides the skeleton for children's learning and developmental experiences. It reduces the degree of novelty a child has to cope with in moving from pre-k to kindergarten and kindergarten to first grade, minimizing the stress and disruptiveness associated with the transition to schooling. When the child is in a familiar setting, with familiar norms and expectations, adults, and children, he or she will experience fewer novel demands and conversely have more personal resources to draw on (Margetts, 2002).

ALIGNMENT OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Arrangements that support a longitudinal perspective and foster an experience of continuity for children are embodied in prek-3rd in the construct of alignment. Pianta (2005) noted that prek-3rd encompasses "alignment and integration at both structural and process levels and the need to map aligned resources onto children's developmental needs and capacities" (p. 4). Alignment therefore touches on every aspect of education, including curriculum, pedagogy, assessment (and use of infor-

mation about children), standards, classroom-level social and behavioral expectations, and schoolwide rules and norms. Each of these elements would be aligned within and across grades and worked into “a coherent plan that takes into account the developmental characteristics and abilities of children in this age period” (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005, p. 1).

In theory, alignment should be constructed upward from preschool. Subsequent learning experiences would build on prior ones. Teachers would plan across grade levels and would share their knowledge of children with those teaching subsequent grades. Alignment is supported by such institutional practices as within- and cross-grade teacher meetings and curriculum mapping. It requires development of mechanisms for teachers to share information about particular children, for example, through meetings between prior- and forthcoming-level teachers. It also implies a measure of philosophical consistency across teachers and across dimensions of school experience at any point in time, as well as across grades. For instance, teachers would have to develop at least some shared understanding of classroom management and discipline, including children’s roles within a classroom community.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS IN THE PREK-3RD FRAMEWORK

For all its attractiveness as a framework, prek-3rd is ambiguous about some important philosophical issues, leaves a number of pedagogical questions unanswered, and avoids any overt (or even covert) political critique of prevailing educational practices. One can argue that it seeks to bridge an ideological divide that cannot be bridged, by promoting a more developmentally appropriate approach to working within what has become an inherently developmentally harmful framework for schooling. In perusing the prek-3rd literature, it often feels as if proponents are not consciously aware of the battle they have joined.

THE NATURE OF LEARNING AND ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Though the prek-3rd literature implies that teachers and other school staff have to attend closely to the conditions necessary for learning, it does not take a particular philosophical stance on central issues in learning. These include what motivates children to learn and seek mastery, where knowledge resides and comes from, children’s role in choosing what to focus their energies on and in constructing knowledge, how relatively active teacher and learner are in the learning situation, and the appropriate amount of teacher discretion in designing instruction.

Prek-3rd literature notes or implies children’s need for opportunities

to apply, evaluate, and, to a lesser extent, create knowledge. One can, additionally, read some prek-3rd literature as placing children in an active role and teachers in a supportive one—for instance, observing children’s self-directed activity, scaffolding children’s efforts, reflecting with children, and documenting their work. Yet prek-3rd theorists argue also for the importance of “explicit instruction.” Hamre and Pianta (2007) appeared to view the teacher’s role as central: “Learning opportunities” are a “a set of theoretically driven dimensions of interactions between adults and children . . . [therefore] classroom interactions between adults and children should be a primary focus of study when seeking to understanding children’s development in school contexts” (pp. 50, 51).

Given its developmental foundation and longitudinal perspective, prek-3rd would seem to support gradually more deliberate instructional time each year, as well as deliberate change in the way teachers relate to children, grade by grade. For instance, teacher feedback would become gradually more task-focused, emphasizing productivity as well as process, with perhaps slightly less regard for children’s naïve perspective on questions. It is unclear how some important learning principles would shift as children get older. For example, take the ever earlier pressure for children to “get it right” when working on learning tasks. If it is acceptable—even a good thing—for younger children to make mistakes and “get it wrong” in the service of working to learn or apply a new concept, when does it become less acceptable, and by what rationale?

APPROACH TO FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

One senses respect in the prek-3rd literature for “a basic precept of modern developmental science: developmental precursors don’t always resemble the skill to which they are leading” (Engel, 2010, p. 1). Yet this literature does not emphasize in any central fashion the importance of play—particularly child-directed play—as a vehicle for important developmental work, including preliteracy.¹¹ Where the prek-3rd literature does discuss play as a developmental imperative and mode of learning, there is some emphasis on play as an “intentionally planned, teacher guided activity” (Maxwell, Ritchie, Bredekamp, & Zimmerman, n.d., p. 4). The role and value of children’s self-directed sociodramatic play is nowhere mentioned (although it is rarely discussed in general these days).

In a complementary vein given the key task for children during these years of beginning to enter into the larger culture, with its endeavors, artifacts, and disciplines, prek-3rd has to better account for the importance of disciplinary learning. That includes the ideas that (1) even

children as young as 3 or 4 or 5 years of age need room in their school lives to choose domains in which they want to concentrate their efforts at learning and mastery, and (2) as children move into the early grades, they will require varied opportunities for learning through doing, through work on consequential, socioculturally meaningful activities, and for learning with both head and hands.¹²

These precepts in turn embed the critical task of literacy development in a broader frame. Though some children need intensive instruction in the mechanics of literacy, the majority of children acquire literacy best when it is practiced in context of meaningful learning activity. Yet there is a thread of prek-3rd literature that argues for it as a vehicle for an intense emphasis on literacy instruction. Maeroff (2006) argued, for instance, that “the pre-k-3 school should exist, if for no other reason, than to be a place to underscore the primacy of reading” (p. 87).

STANCE TOWARD HIGH-STAKES TESTING

Prek-3rd implies a critique of high-stakes testing (and of the arbitrariness of third-grade testing), extensive test preparation, and current academic pressures generally, but the prek-3rd literature does not repudiate these problematic practices (see, e.g., Kauerz, 2007). In some discussions, third-grade testing is actually viewed as an important rationale for a prek-3rd approach. As two advocates noted, “The pk-3 approach focuses on children 3-8 years old because in the current wave of educational reform children face their first major academic reckoning in the third grade” (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005, p. 7).¹³ In an admiring description of one prek-3rd school that he visited, Maeroff (2006) noted that “Everything pointed toward [the end of] third grade” (p. 2). In its recent policy paper on prek-3rd, the New America Foundation stated that “educators collect data on a variety of indicators of children’s progress throughout the prek-3rd continuum, and use this data to evaluate their own efforts and inform instruction, but all eyes are clearly fixed on 3rd grade proficiency as the end goal post” (Guernsey & Mead, 2010, p. 9). Such language and arguments raise doubts about whether prek-3rd proponents are prepared to grapple with the moral and political implications of a developmentally appropriate framework.

ROLE OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Prek-3rd literature does not help much with the superficial ways in which parent involvement is conceptualized in the early school literature. Elements commonly noted include communicating with parents about a

child's progress and support needs, involving parents as volunteers at school, encouraging parents to help with homework, and, less commonly, home visits by teachers. Discussions of parent involvement rarely contemplate a more fundamental partnership. Prek-3rd literature implies support for, but does not reflect, a clear position on the value and importance of making family and community culture (including language, literature, traditions, and places) an important foundation of learning experiences. That literature is not clear about how teachers should account for what the child brings to school from family and community, for instance, specific culturally rooted strengths or orientations that are becoming part of a child's self. It also does not address how differences in the cultural backgrounds and experiences of families and school staff might be addressed. It does not address the school's responsibility when parents act in ways that may appear unsupportive of their children's learning—not responding to attempts to contact them, failing to come to parent-teacher meetings, not responding to recommendations, and so forth.

Prek-3rd proponents generally need to work through more clearly how its ideas and proposals relate to the sociopolitical context for childhood. Although proponents argue that the design of educational experiences has to begin with who children are, they do not address directly the cultural, social, and political meanings of that position. Like much educational reform discourse, prek-3rd literature neglects the nonschool factors that powerfully shape children's availability to learn. That literature discusses schools as if they were autonomous institutions, unconnected to and little affected by the geographic communities and the political and economic systems in which they reside—particularly the profound ways in which inequality in access to basic resources, continued racial and language discrimination, and societal ambivalence about diversity affect children and families.

PRACTICAL CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PREK-3RD

Given the degree to which ECE has given itself over to the needs of schools, it is ironic that practical challenges to implementing prek-3rd reside mainly in the ECE-school relationship.¹⁴ That relationship is tenuous at best in most communities. Early childhood programs and their staff are often marginalized even when they are located inside schools. For instance, little effort might be made to include early childhood staff in faculty meetings. It is rare to find a principal committed to using early childhood ideas, assumptions, and practices to shape the whole of K-3 experience.

Individual principals have begun to understand the early childhood community as a partner. But most principals and high-level administrators appear unready to open their institutions to ECE. A recent report based on a survey of 200 early childhood program directors and 400 principals concluded that (1) within the K–12 education system, there is “mis-perception” of the nature and value of children’s experiences in ECE, and (2) school leadership at all levels lacks the knowledge and will to forge equitable partnerships with early childhood institutions. The community-based early childhood program directors surveyed reported rarely engaging with school staff; principals reported the same with respect to early childhood program directors (Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum, 2009). Principals rarely encouraged or arranged for their pre-k teachers to work with others in the school, for example, through joint planning or visits to each others’ classrooms.

Recognition of ECE is an especially problematic issue for the majority of programs and providers not linked to schools. As a practical matter, it is unclear how and why such providers can work with schools without resources to support time and staff to do so. These resources have never been available to the early childhood community, and current fiscal pressures on schools make it unlikely that they will be forthcoming soon. This problem affects public school-sponsored pre-k programs as well, because in many locales, the majority of such programs are located in community-based settings. For instance, in the so called Abbott school districts in New Jersey, two thirds of children in public school pre-k programs are in community-based settings.¹⁵

To become a viable strategy, then, pre-k-3rd will require a variety of policy and substantive supports. It will require working partnerships—and formal links—between diverse early childhood providers and the schools that their children transition into, and sometimes between a pre-k program inside a school and its larger school community. It would also require formal agreements with respect to sharing information on children, procedures for developing curriculum, and procedures for establishing learning goals.

Prek-3rd will require a shared and much more fluid conception of accountability than currently prevails in schools, a conception that is not consonant with either existing or proposed teacher reward structures. As with many similar reform approaches, pre-k-3rd will have a greater chance of success in a school with a strong sense of community and a strong culture, and one with regular venues for raising and addressing problems as a community.

Observers have emphasized the difficulty of merging the prescribed curricula that dominate K-3 with developmentally appropriate practice,

given that such curricula usually fail to account for both developmental variance and sociocultural diversity among children (see, e.g., Brown, 2009). Teachers' work at fostering an individual-by-individual approach, and a longitudinal perspective on children, would be facilitated by looping (having teachers stay with children for two years), which is rare enough, and by mixed age grouping, which is even rarer. The latter is especially amenable to individualized progression, not to mention the potential for children to observe and learn from more experienced learners at work (and at play) and to learn generally from the tutorial assistance, task-focused behavior, and demeanor of older peers.

EVIDENCE HINTS AT THE CHALLENGE

A recent case study of efforts to implement prek-3rd in the Abbott school districts in New Jersey highlighted challenges at a number of levels (Rice, 2007; prek-3rd was one element in a broader strategy to expand the role of preschool in these specially resourced low-income districts). Kindergarten teachers and supervisors were frequently unfamiliar with developmentally appropriate practice. Conceptual and curricular connections between preschool and kindergarten were sometimes made but rarely extended beyond those two levels. The transition process continued to be viewed as relevant only to preschool and kindergarten. Early childhood staff up and down the line felt disconnected from everything going on above them. In fact, school-based pre-k teachers "saw their role differently and preferred to be separate from the K-3 staff" (Rice, p. 6). For their part, principals and superintendents tended to have little knowledge of good early childhood practices and thus could support the integration process only in the most general ways.

Researchers in this study concluded that for prek-3rd to work, it cannot be informally or intermittently implemented. Its concepts, vocabulary, and associated practices must be clearly defined. Instructional leaders at every level have to work hard to understand what prek-3rd is about. There is also a critical need to "align" how supervisors, principals, and even superintendents look at children, understand their learning needs, and understand what it looks like when a child has learned something. This study reconfirmed a common impression in the early childhood community that public school leaders remain unsure about how best to approach child development and ECE issues.

BRINGING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING CLOSER TOGETHER?

The example of prek-3rd suggests that there are many positive aspects to the idea of bringing ECE and early schooling closer together. As described in this article, these include an extended time frame for holding on to a developmental orientation; a complex view of the child and sensitivity to individual differences; the longitudinal perspective on learning and mastery; the balance in attention to teaching and learning; and the broadened time frame for considering the transition to school. The presence of early childhood ideas in debates about schooling and children's needs offers a potentially useful counter to the perverse processes leading to a narrowing of experience for just those groups of children who need the opposite. Yet I would still argue that, at least in the American context, it is not such a good idea to bring ECE and schooling closer together.

In a discrete vein, discontinuity between developmental institutions is not necessarily harmful to children. Some measure of discontinuity between institutions may correspond to developmental discontinuities—transformations—during this age period and may reflect different roles in children's socialization. Each institution, like each age period or level of education (e.g., kindergarten), has its own integrity; its attributes are not accidental but derived through accumulated experience.

The damaging effects of discontinuity, whether between home and school or between grades at school, derive in part from the devaluing of other or prior experiences. A measure of discontinuity in learning and developmental experiences, far from being problematic, may in fact be a good thing, with appropriate scaffolding. In an observational study of children's experiences through the transition into school, Peters (2000) found that "scaffolding and support through the transition appeared to be more important than the precise nature of the discontinuities that were faced" (p. 21). An experienced kindergarten teacher told Peters, "That's just a fact of life that the rules are different for different times and places in your life" (p. 16).

THE HEGEMONY OF SCHOOLS

A fundamental worry is that prek-3rd will provide one more opening for downward pressures on early childhood providers. For the early childhood community, prek-3rd is something of a gamble. It might seem a solution to the long-standing worry among early childhood educators that, in the American context, ECE will not be respected and supported

if it defines itself as an important social institution on its own terms (Dombkowski, 2001). Yet institutional marriage comes with risks. The schools (as a whole) have a history of failing to respect the integrity of other institutions that join them in efforts to better meet children's needs (see, e.g., Dombkowski; Halpern, 2003). Observers have already noted a process in which the rigidity and "organizational entropy that exists in schools is increasingly starting to take hold in . . . preschool programs" (P. Heckman & Montera, 2009, p. 1335).¹⁶ Alignment has too often implied "standardization of practices in early education programs such as pre-k so that they mimic as well as align with instructional strategies found in elementary school" (Brown, 2009, p. 216).

Thus far, all that has been accomplished by tying ECE more closely to schools is making ECE less early-childhood-like. The needs of schools are just too powerful and end up overwhelming the identity of institutional partners. And there is almost always a disparity in power and lack of spirit of reciprocity between schools and community-based providers. ECE providers (even pre-k teachers within schools) would likely have little voice in shaping children's educational experiences.

To the extent that pre-k-3rd continues to shift the locus of ECE to the schools, it is weakening a valuable network of community-based services. The decline in the heterogeneity of sponsorship in ECE is already contributing to loss of support for vital community institutions important to families; to a narrowed mission, with little more than lip service to family support; and to less openness to the community. Schools, more than other providers, have a history of ignoring, or at least minimizing the meaning of, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities they serve, which translates into ignoring or minimizing the particular knowledge that children from those communities bring to school.

A CULTURAL PROBLEM

Ultimately, the risk in binding ECE and schooling more closely together is not just about the power of schools and their agendas. It derives from a set of related cultural problems. The first can best be described as losing the present to the future—the very problem with school readiness as the central goal of ECE. We seem still not to have taken to heart Dewey's insight over a century ago that to meet children's needs, schooling has to be understood not as preparation for life but as life itself, broadly envisioned.

The second problem is a misunderstanding of the processes at the heart of child development. Children are not raw human capital to be carefully developed through schooling to meet the demands of a

globalized labor force. Americans urgently have to rethink how they wish to account for children, the virtues that are important to nurture, and the role of adult institutions in the process. There is a clear risk in extending the line that already connects schooling to global competitiveness down into early childhood, asking ECE to address not only the achievement gap but the global achievement gap as well.

The last part of the cultural problem, alluded to earlier, is about losing what remains of civic spaces to the market. We need a distinct ECE because we cannot afford the loss of another institution that expresses and nurtures such nonmarket values as sense of community, empathy, and the importance of diversity to a healthy society. This might seem trite, but for the fact that such institutions and such values—which provide the underpinning to working democracies—are rapidly disappearing from the cultural landscape. Early childhood education has been, and remains, a modest institution. Parts of its history have been contested—and are contestable. But it also has been a lively, heterogeneous, and open institution, and it is important to our society that it remain one.

Notes

1. In this article, *early childhood education* refers to the varied forms and sponsors of education and care to young children, typically 2 or 3 through 4 years of age. These forms have many names: nursery school, preschool, Head Start, child care, pre-k (sometimes already linked to public schools), and so on.

2. Reflecting on the well-known Perry Preschool Study, James Heckman (2008) wrote that “an estimated rate of return . . . to the Perry Program is in excess of 10%. This high rate of return is higher than the standard return on stock market equity” (p. 21).

3. More subtly, perhaps, ECE has historically had a more positive valence than schooling, in part because of the difficult, even negative, experiences that many children and youth have had with the latter.

4. Far earlier, in the brief-lived infant school movement of the 1820s–1830s, there was some effort to link up with the emerging public schools, especially in New York City and Philadelphia.

5. There may also be an assumption that, with some preschool classroom experience, children in kindergarten are ready and able to cope with more demanding/higher order material than in past times, with the same logic in turn applied to each succeeding grade. What tends to be forgotten in this pattern of reasoning is that historical kindergarten practices were only partly based on the assumption of lack of prior formal learning experience. They were also based on the idea that they fit five-year-olds developmentally. Five-year-olds learn in part through playful exploration and physical manipulation of the material world regardless of whether they have had some preschool education.

6. Kindergarten teachers are responding in diverse ways to new pressures. In describing her approach to a prescribed curriculum, one experienced teacher noted, “I don’t go from the documents to the kids, I go from the kids to the documents” (Wien, 2004, p. 25).

7. As Maeroff (2006) observed, “Time is a precious commodity in the primary classroom. Teachers dole it out sparingly, bound by priorities” (p. 119).

8. These include, for example, Montgomery County, Maryland, Bremerton and Nooksack Valley districts in Washington, and the so-called Abbott districts in New Jersey.

9. The long list of consequential tasks during this age period include growth into more formal thought, for example, learning to connect ideas and to think problems through; acquisition of formal literacy, including the tools, motivation, and other foundations of literacy, as well as continuing growth of vocabulary; and the increasingly powerful use of language itself (along with other forms of self-expression) as a vehicle for exploring and acting on the world. During these years, the child is learning to focus his or her enthusiasm and curiosity and to recognize and regulate emotions; refining a sense of agency (or self-agency); beginning to develop self expectations; developing executive skills; and learning both to seek help and to be self-reliant. The child is learning to foster and sustain friendship. He or she is learning the rules and norms of school as an institution, especially the kinds of competencies most valued in school, including verbal and analytical intelligence, speed in performance, punctuality, impulse control, and willingness to follow instructions. The child is exploring and clarifying moral and ethical norms. He or she is becoming introduced to the substantive domains, roles, and endeavors valued in the culture and acquiring basic concepts within those domains. The 3- to 8-year-old child is not only working on critical cultural tasks but also returning periodically to specific tasks in new ways as he or she acquires new cognitive capacities. In particular, there is a marked shift in cognitive, social, and emotional capacities in the middle years of this age period, the so-called 5-to-7-year shift. Developmental processes are thus marked by periodic reorganization, indeed the seeming need to remaster concepts and skills already mastered in shallower ways.

10. These range from representational thought, memory, problem-solving, children's approach to learning tasks, and their emergent habits of mind, to self-regulation, turn-taking, recognition, and understanding one's own and others' emotions.

11. There are so many reasons to argue for the importance of play that it is difficult to decide which to emphasize: learning how the physical world works; exploring scientific, math, and other principles; learning social relationships; expressing needs, fears, and ideas; exercising imagination; trying on new roles; imitating and practicing important cultural roles; learning to use cultural artifacts; learning about power; learning about perspective taking; and maintaining physical vitality.

12. The disciplines introduce children to the depth and breadth, the texture, of their culture. They build their own mental structures in children's minds. They also provide the foundations for children's vocational development.

13. This quote raises the question of the purpose of third-grade testing. Although it is indeed a major reckoning point for children, the accountability framework surrounding it suggests that it is intended as much or more as a reckoning point for teachers and schools.

14. I am holding aside the most basic practical challenge to implementing pre-k-3rd: the fact that it would take an enormous new public investment to increase participation rates in formal preschool programs enough to make pre-k-3rd a viable strategy. Current coverage of 3- and 4-year-olds in organized early childhood programs, especially publicly funded programs, is modest; 3-year-olds are especially likely to participate in less formal care and education arrangements. So-called universal pre-k remains mostly a euphemism, and progress toward it has almost come to a stop. Fewer than a dozen states include preschool at all in funding formulas for local school districts.

15. The Abbott school districts are low-income districts required by court order to provide an array of pre-k programs. They have been granted additional resources to provide these services.

16. The author continued, "Having [preschool] programs look and be much more like the schools we now have makes no sense" (p. 1336).

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ROBERT HALPERN is a professor at the Erikson Institute in Chicago. His recent research and writing have focused on the attributes of good learning experiences during the high school years. His books include *The Means to Grow Up: Reinventing Apprenticeship as a Developmental Support in Adolescence* (Routledge) and *Making Play Work: The Promise of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children* (Teachers College Press).