



A beautiful improvement in Kindergarten Readiness December 2009

Addressing Kindergarten readiness is the first step in improving education. Our community of day care providers and early childhood organizations chose the Brigance assessment to measure readiness. However, the initial step was identifying the number of four-year olds in the county. This proved to be a challenging task. In 2008, of the over 800 four-year old children residing in the Decatur school district area, 700 were assessed in March prior to entering Kindergarten and only 34% met the readiness criteria. The results were most unsatisfactory. Under the leadership of the Education Coalition and in collaboration with the Decatur Public Schools, a series of interventions were developed for the children below the readiness level. Decatur Public Schools developed a summer school program, and the Education Coalition came together to visit the homes of children to provide books and guidance to parents. Also, Kindergarten Camp was created.

The following year, the Brigance Challenge went county-wide with a challenge to all day care providers to raise the educational levels within their individual centers. Professional development opportunities for day care workers were provided using best practices and research based models. Information about improving centers and guided play was made available to all community members and additional book drives and parent nights were held. In March of 2009, almost 700 four-year olds were assessed with the Brigance and of these 61% met the readiness criteria...a vast improvement over the previous year.

But there is more to the story:

The Education Coalition in collaboration with Decatur Public Schools decided to increase the attendance of children below the readiness level in summer school and Kindergarten Camp. The number of children provided with these interventions doubled. Kindergarten Camp was held at the zoo and at a conservation area with a curriculum that was experiential based. Children learned about animals at the zoo while learning letters, colors and numbers that were related to the specific areas they were visiting. Children who might not have visited the Children's museum were afforded an opportunity to do so. Additional home visits and book give-aways for children who were unable to attend summer school or camp were also conducted.

The 225 children who participated in K-camp and/or summer school were reassessed in the fall to discover if the interventions made a difference and they did:

The percentage of children scoring at or above the Kindergarten readiness level increased to 75.5%, up from 61%! Average score for all children before any intervention was 52.2. The average score for all children after intervention was 72.7, an increase of 20.5 pts. The average score of children before intervention who later met the readiness criteria = 60.31. The average score of children after intervention of children who met readiness = 82.61, an increase of 22.3 pts. The average score of children before intervention who still did not meet readiness criteria = 45.0. The average score of children after intervention = 61.0, an increase of 16 pts (includes special needs children).

What this proves is that community collaboration really works. More of Decatur's children are entering Kindergarten with the skills necessary to begin their formal education successfully!