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## **Abstract**

## **Dedication**

## Acknowledgments

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## INTRODUCTION

Whether a child is taught in preschool facilities or home-schooled, early childhood education programs can help young children use their problem-solving skills and learn cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Researchers in early childhood development have shown that guided play can be an effective approach in the pre-kindergarten classroom. Guided play refers to play-based learning experiences that are child-directed but structured by educators to support specific learning goals. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recognized that parents who understand what happens in the pre-kindergarten classroom or a child-care facility have better connections when their child transitions from home to school (NAEYC, 2020). Cross City Learning Center (a pseudonym) provides students with the opportunity to participate in various developmentally appropriate experiences. Cross City Learning Center creates an atmosphere of creativity and exploration for children to grow and learn at their highest capacity.

Some students may enter pre-kindergarten without developing social, emotional, and behavioral skills. However, research suggests that teachers can support the development of these skills to help students succeed in kindergarten. While Bear's findings provide general insight into early childhood education, the specific impact at [your site's pseudonym] is based on observations and practices implemented by educators there. Parents provide essential resources for reinforcing these skills for their children; however, many parents need to be adequately trained to help their children develop these skills. Parents are their children's first teachers, and children learn some of these skills at home before they enter school. When parents establish a consistent routine with their children, the child becomes more structured in the classroom (Baker, 2018).

Educators work with parents to help struggling children with social and emotional behaviors by using activities that children can use at school and home. Parents can help by being present, observant, and sharing their input with the teacher. Research suggests that educators should support parents in understanding the curriculum and how it is designed for the pre-kindergarten classroom. This helps ensure that parents are informed about the goals and structure of their child's learning experience

Pre-kindergarten educators, in collaboration with parents, will work together to develop a solid literacy foundation and social-emotional skills, preparing children for school and equipping them to meet any challenges they may face (Wesman, 2020). The participants in the workshop gained a deeper understanding of the Creative Curriculum and its importance in the pre-kindergarten classroom at Cross City Learning Center. Creative Curriculum supports children's development as inquisitive learners. By applying what they learned in the workshop, participants were able to promote communication and learning with their children at home. Feedback from the participants, collected at the end of the interviews, highlighted how the workshop helped them better support their children's educational journey.

Children learn to read, write, and count by using knowledge through activities that will help them learn (Ofstead, 2019). As highlighted in the previous section, educators at Cross City Learning Center work with parents to develop a strong foundation for children's learning and well-being. In this context, play serves as a crucial aspect of young children's early learning, development, and well-being (Ofstead, 2019). By incorporating play into the curriculum, educators can foster inquisitive learning and support children's social-emotional growth. Through play, children have the opportunity to become prepared to develop skills that they will use later

in life. During play, children learn about the environment around them, the activities the teacher will use, and how to work with their peers (Mardell, 2019). Children get to make their own choices by being able to move freely in the classroom. Play is a component of developmentally appropriate practices DAP in early childhood education (NAEYC, 2020). It supports the domains to help them learn and grow.

The workshop took place for 6 weeks for the participants who signed informed consent forms at Cross City Learning Center. The workshops consisted of weekly presentations and activities done by the participants. During each session, the participants were divided into small groups. An icebreaker was given each week to help the participants get acquainted with each other. Creating a workshop for parents is a way to educate them on topics that they do not understand (Ofstead, 2019). Educators should support parents and encourage them to get involved in activities so they can use them at home with their child. During workshops, parents can learn about their children's language development and learning styles.

Early childhood education and child development are the beginning stages to helping a child become effective in pre-kindergarten and life (Freeman, F. 2019). Parents understand that their child will always be learning new things in each stage of their life. This participation allowed for an exchange of ideas and information with the participants about what to expect at each milestone while their child is attending school. The workshop content with the use of a powerpoint presentation, was part of the data that highlighted the areas of Creative Curriculum, play-based learning, and domains. The activities were hand-on experiences for the participants while having fun completing them.

The workshops were designed on a weekly basis. The activities were planned for the parents and children to complete each week. The activities covered all areas of development such as social, emotional, and cognitive the use of demographic questions, surveys, and questionnaires provided data collected at the end of the workshop, focusing on participants' cognitive responses, attitudes, and feedback regarding the material covered. The feedback from the participants allowed the researcher to understand any confusion parents had beforehand. By the end of the sessions, parents were more involved and very excited about their children's accomplishments. The workshops were beneficial to the children by having the parents there to support them and helping their academic success, so they can become motivated at home as well as at school.

There were three research questions that were the driving questions for this project:

1. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of Creative Curriculum?
2. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of social and emotional development of their children?
3. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the role play in pre-kindergarten learning?

When parents and educators build a relationship with each other, they build a rapport together (Jubilee Centre, 2017). During the workshops the participants were able to move around freely. There were 12 participants each week, and the research represented an approach for enhancing the children's learning goals. The primary goal of the workshop was to evaluate a method for the researcher to work collaboratively with parents and children (Ofstead, 2019). The workshops appeared to be a positive experience for the researcher and the participants providing

them with valuable information on developmentally appropriate activities , an understanding of Creative Curriculum, play-based learning, and domains and how each plays a part in the development of their child in pre-kindergarten.

## **SECTION 1: PLANNING**

### **Statement of the Problem**

The transition from home to school and from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten is a critical developmental stage for young children. The role of both parents and educators is vital in supporting children through these transitions, ensuring they develop the necessary skills to succeed in their academic journey. The goal of the pre-kindergarten program was to utilize the Creative Curriculum to help children transition from home to school and from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten by the end of the school year. Parents, as their children's first teachers, played a crucial role in making the transition easier by supporting language, social, and emotional skills at home. Educators, as influential figures in the classroom, guided children through their learning experiences, fostering these important skills in the school setting.

Although their child may lack social, emotional, and behavioral skills, educators can help them by providing parents with resources about the Creative Curriculum while their child is attending the pre-kindergarten program. Early childhood educators focus on using a curriculum that is helpful to children when building their academic skills (Ofstead, 2019).

According to NAEYC, young children can engage in open-ended and self-taught play alone without the help of an adult and these traits can help them build the foundation when they are older. Adults do not see play as a way that children can learn. Play is how children make connections with their peers and how they will find out about life around them. Early child researchers describe how young children learn best when they are given activities that support the whole child (Nix et al., 2018).

The problem this study addresses is the lack of understanding among parents regarding the Creative Curriculum used in pre-kindergarten classrooms. This knowledge gap can affect their ability to support their children's learning and development effectively at home, which may hinder the transition from home to school and from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten. This will allow parents to create activities that their child would be interested in at home. During this action research plan on parents' beliefs about play-based learning, educators can provide the parents with information that they can use in and out of the classroom.

## **Organizational Context**

### **Problem Statement**

This action research plan aimed to help parents understand the Creative Curriculum and play-based learning in the program they chose for their pre-kindergarten child. The information gathered for this action research will come from quantitative data, interviews, surveys, and observations. Parents' perceptions of the training will be explored through their responses during a 6-week workshop at the attending school.

### **Site Context**

Cross City Learning Center (a pseudonym) is a constructivist school, grounded in the theories of cognitive and social development, as proposed by theorists like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Berger, 1966). The center uses Creative Curriculum to educate its students because they believe children learn best when actively engaged with peers, teachers, caregivers, and the environment they come from. Cross City Learning Center emphasizes the development of both performance and behavioral skills in students. During the time of employment at the school, the educator worked to help parents understand Creative Curriculum by involving them both inside and outside the classroom. Educators must be knowledgeable about the program and understand the importance of parents' perspectives on Creative Curriculum and play-based activities.

Cross City Learning Center (a pseudonym) serves children in pre-kindergarten, providing a supportive and developmentally appropriate environment for early learning. The school has 10 full-time teachers and 150 students enrolled, with a student-to-teacher ratio of 15:1. It is a constructivist school, focusing on hands-on learning and active engagement, and operates for children ages 3 to 5. The school is structured with classrooms dedicated to different learning areas, including literacy, math, social-emotional development, and play-based exploration. The center has a diverse student body, with 60% of students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 40% speaking English as a second language.

The school utilizes Creative Curriculum to ensure that each child receives a well-rounded early education. Educators actively observe and assess students throughout their day, using their insights to plan individualized lessons that meet the needs of each child. The learning

environment is intentionally set up with various centers for children to explore, including dramatic play, sensory, science, and art stations, encouraging curiosity and exploration.

### **Site Roles**

At the school, responsibilities included providing learning materials and resources to both parents and children. Parents were encouraged to volunteer and provide feedback throughout the school year as the program was implemented. This collaborative approach helped ensure that both the school and families worked together to support the children's development and learning. Administrators ensure the logistics are in place by accepting the program and ensuring the school has a sponsorship to make the pre-kindergarten programs efficient. The administration at Cross City Learning Center uses the communication portal where parents can view daily reports, provide feedback, and record notes from their child's teacher. Creative Curriculum is designed to build children's confidence and critical thinking skills through hands-on, project-based investigations. This approach empowers children to be confident, creative, and caring learners by engaging them in play-based, hands-on activities that incorporate language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day. The curriculum is taught by educators that are qualified in early childhood education and play-based learning. Each educator has a CDA (Child Development Associate Certificate), Bachelors or Masters degree in Early Childhood Education or Early development. Creative Curriculum is the main curriculum at Cross City Learning Center because it helps to guide the teachers in the classroom.

### **Site Support**

The director, known as the project manager at Cross City Learning Center, offered support by facilitating communication with the parents of children in the pre-kindergarten classroom. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school's owners. The director used the policies and guidelines that the school used to ensure the researcher followed the professional development standards. The director allowed the researcher to use the school during the days of non operation to work with the participants on the weekly sessions. The recruitment took place at the school and a flyer was placed on the outside of the pre-kindergarten classroom visible for the participants to view it. The director's role is to support families and communicate with them during the operation of school hours and if any changes are made.

### **Intervention**

Educators can assist parents by creating activities that children can use both at school and at home. Additionally, it is important for educators to help parents understand what is being taught in the classroom, ensuring alignment between home and school learning. Parents that understand what is happening in their child's pre-kindergarten classroom have a wonderful experience when they transition to kindergarten. When educators engage parents, their children will have healthy intellectual development.

During this action research plan, Creative Curriculum, domains, and play-based learning were the main focus. Creative Curriculum is designed for pre-kindergarten students to get help in all 7 domains in the pre-kindergarten classroom. During the action research plan, a 6-week workshop was conducted to introduce parents to the Creative Curriculum, its domains, and

play-based learning. Data, including interviews, surveys, and questionnaires, were then collected to analyze the impact of the training and assess parents' understanding and perceptions of these concepts. The workshop was given to the participants so that they could understand how their children learn and play in the pre-kindergarten classroom. The workshop consists of three parts:

1. An introduction to the Creative Curriculum and its domains
2. Activities used in the school
3. Play-based learning and how it can be applied both in the classroom and at home

Creative Curriculum addresses each child's needs. It prepares the pre-kindergarten student for kindergarten with a pre-kindergarten curriculum that outlines each child's progress and development level from birth to 8 years old, as well as for children with disabilities. Creative Curriculum creates a classroom that honors each child's background, culture, and learning experience while attending pre-kindergarten. Creative Curriculum converts theory and research into best practices by defining the educator's role in content teaching and learning in early childhood education. Creative Curriculum focuses on how well a child will develop socially and cognitively.

Creative Curriculum activities are created by using 7 domains in the area of child development. All of the domains are aligned with 69 indicators. Educators assess children throughout the year and use the data to individualize instruction and promote guidance for the families. In the pre-kindergarten classroom at Cross City Learning Center, educators utilized a formative assessment tool called Work Sampling Online to measure children's progress throughout the calendar year. This tool allowed educators to track developmental milestones and academic growth in various areas such as social-emotional skills, language development, and

cognitive abilities. As part of the intervention, parents were introduced to the Creative Curriculum and its domains through a 6-week workshop. The workshop focused on explaining the principles of the curriculum and how play-based learning supports children's development. Educators used Work Sampling Online to provide parents with real-time feedback on their children's progress and demonstrate how specific learning objectives were being met. The purpose of this intervention was to enhance parents' understanding of the curriculum and actively involve them in supporting their children's learning both at school and at home. The data collected through interviews, surveys, and questionnaires helped assess the effectiveness of the training and the impact it had on parents' engagement and understanding of the Creative Curriculum.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to address the problem by implementing Creative Curriculum and play-based learning strategies, helping parents understand that their pre-kindergarten child will learn through engaging experiences in the educational setting. When parents become involved in their child's academic needs and collaborate with the teacher, they are better positioned to support their child's development both at home and in the classroom.

This action research plan is important because it provides stakeholders in early childhood education with insights into how parents perceive the role of play in the pre-kindergarten classroom, particularly in relation to the Creative Curriculum. Understanding these perceptions can help educators and policymakers better support the integration of play-based learning and tailor their approaches to enhance parental involvement. It explains how children will not be affected, because their parents are not educated on the topic. Pre-kindergarten offers flexibility

for young children so they will be taught through the teaching models that are used in the educational setting (Nix et al., 2018).

### **Review of the Literature**

Piaget and Vygotsky's developmental theories emphasize that play-based learning supports a child's overall growth—cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. This means that play helps children not only learn and think but also interact with others, understand their emotions, and develop physical skills. This literature review focused on the importance of parental involvement in pre-kindergarten school setting, the effectiveness of play-based learning, the Creative Curriculum and domains used to encourage participation from parents in child development. Several foundational theories can explain how children learn and the role of family dynamics within cognitive, social, and emotional development, all leading to parental involvement in early childhood education.

### **The Constructivist Theory**

Constructivist theory states that children construct their knowledge based on life experiences, not by receiving information. This concept was first pioneered by Jean Piaget (1971), who proposed that cognitive development unfolds in stages where children interact with their environment. Children learn through hands-on learning, hands-on activities, and when figuring out concepts, they do so by trial and error (Nix et al., 2018). For example, in a play-based early childhood classroom, when the child is playing with building blocks, they are not just observing stacking activities, but play allows them to explore concepts such as balancing, structure and spatial awareness. When a parent gets involved, they can have a conversation and ask, "What if

you stack the bigger block on top?" They are setting up the groundwork for the child's critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Early childhood education dates back as far as the 1800s, and it is still evolving. Schools are still using the support of the theorists even today. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are two theorists used in this action research plan because of their research on constructivism and early childhood. Piaget focused on how humans combined experiences with ideas from the outside world (Piaget, 1971). Constructivism was not a specific pedagogy, but it did explain how learning occurred in the environment. According to research, Constructivist scholars created meanings by watching how children interact in and out of the classroom (Nix et al., 2018). Play is an important part of a child's development that serves as an introduction to increased skills and life changes that they will go through. Vygotsky's (1978) theory on sociocultural development supported his perspective on the importance of play. Vygotsky stated children and adult interactions are part of the educational process and how it develops the child's thinking through others around them. Theories before Piaget and Vygotsky did not directly include play as one of the aspects of cognitive thinking, constructivists saw it as an important part that's affecting the children's social and emotional interests in the classroom (Qew, 2021).

Piaget's work was expanded by Lev Vygotsky in 1978 in the sociocultural theory that stressed the importance of social interaction in learning (Qew, 2021). A concept Vygotsky described is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which describes tasks that the child is capable of with support, but not independently. Parents are the first more knowledgeable people in a child's life. Parents use scaffolding which is delivering appropriate support and then reducing it, helping children learn new skills and knowledge.

Scaffolding is when a child learns a new concept or skill. When a parent helps a child recognize letters while reading a storybook, for example, the parent might encourage the child to read independently until the ZPD is extended progressively. In the context of pre-kindergarten education, the collaborative learning approach is an excellent foundation for school readiness. Recent research shows that if parents participate in guided play at home, children show higher cognitive development, language acquisition and numeracy skills (Qew, 2021). Interactive storytelling or educational games are applied to parent involvement strategies based on constructivism to reinforce learning and develop a curious level of competence (Qew, 2021).

Creative Curriculum is a play-based learning approach that focuses on the child's curiosity, their exploration in the classroom, and how they develop physically, socially, and cognitively (Bjorklund, 2018). Creative Curriculum builds the foundation through hands-on and project-based activities. The importance of play has been researched by various theories over the years (Nix et al., 2018). Traditional education systems used to focus on learning through apprenticeships but changed that theory because theoretically, children began to acquire education through skilled practice rather than the use of teaching (Qew, 2021).

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in 1979 is a complete view of how the child's different environmental systems influence the child's development (Qew, 2021). Children are influenced by interconnected systems, including the microsystem (immediate environment), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (indirect environmental factors), as well as the macrosystem (cultural values and norms). However, the microsystem of parental involvement exists between parents, teachers, and peers. The mesosystem is relevant when parents and teachers work together to support a child's learning (Nix et al., 2018). Direct communication creates a link supporting the mesosystem and brings parents into the loop.

regarding their child's academic journey. Sharing how a teacher counts objects while presenting a math activity during a small group and is an example that a teacher can share for a home-based activity, which aligns parental practice with classroom objectives and helps provide a consistent learning environment (McKee et al., 2021).

Bronfenbrenner stressed that a supportive mesosystem can manage the problems within other systems. An example of this is if a child is experiencing some form of economic hardship (exosystem) and has positive interactions with school staff, parents can relieve stress and teach that child how to be resilient. Ecological principles are actions within schools that are implementing family engagement models like parent-teacher conferences and curriculum nights. Studies have demonstrated that success academically and socially is more likely in children with involved, actively involved parents (McKee et al., 2021). Home school partnerships used by pre-kindergarten programs and reported higher literacy rates and lower behavioural problems. In this ecological model, it is clear that the home and school environments need to work together to best shape the child's development by using the same open goals and communication (McKee et al., 2021).

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in 1978, suggests that family dynamics, emphasizing interdependence among family members, shape children's development. A change in one family member's behavior can trigger responses in the entire system, highlighting the interconnected nature of relationships within the family (McKee et al., 2021). This theory in early childhood education recognizes that parental involvement cannot be seen in isolation. A positive supportive family environment has been proven to help a child's emotional well-being and academic success. The children can build up emotional security and cognitive growth when parents set a consistent home routine like reading with them to bed. If a child has

trouble regulating emotions by being actively involved with the counselor at school and implementing the positive behavior reinforcement strategies at home, the parents are more likely to see better behavior in the child at school. Nix et al. (2018) exemplify this reciprocal interaction in which a child's school experiences change as the patterns in the family system change.

Sonnenschein & Munsterman (2021) developed the concepts of family roles, boundaries, and emotional triangles. These dynamics often have practical effects on how parents handle their child's educational responsibilities. A clear family boundary structure, that outlines a clear parental role versus a clear child role, can encourage your child to take responsibility for completing simple things, such as packing their school bag (Gross et al., 2020). In programs established in pre-kindergarten for family engagement, family-centred practices are commonly used by educators because a child's success is based more on a collaborative partnership. For instance, emotional intelligence parent workshops would teach parents what the child needs from their point of view and to help reduce family stress and create positive interactions (Boonk et al., 2018). Strong family-school partnership research finds that family and school relationships strengthen children's emotional and social outcomes. Research has found that schools that involve parents during family nights, parent advisory boards, and home learning projects have higher student engagement and lower absenteeism (Longo et al., 2017).

Various early childhood programs are available to parents who have young children attending prekindergarten. The program may focus on the education and needs of the child, while other pre-kindergarten programs will provide the parents with a comprehensive system that includes health, nutrition, family engagement, social services, and early development (Barnett, 2018). Early childhood programs were designed to meet the needs of children from birth to five

(Xunyi Lin, 2018). Pre-kindergarten programs are provided in childcare centers, public and private schools, and home-based settings.

Home-based programs are typically run by a caregiver or someone in the child's family. They have a small group of children and usually include arts and crafts, storytime, and games.

Child-care Centers are designed for a large group of children ages ranging from birth to pre-kindergarten. Non-profit organizations, businesses, or churches usually run them. Childcare centers offer children learning activities and educational opportunities like music, art, and physical education.

Preschools are run by public and private schools and child-care centers. They are prepared for children ages 3-5 to help them transition to kindergarten. Their programs provide age-appropriate activities like math, literacy, social studies, and science, which can help boost a child's early development. Headstart programs were created to service low-income children and their families. They are funded by the government which provides services like early childhood education, family support, and healthcare. Headstart programs can help children ages 3 to have access to the program to meet their educational needs.

Each program has its strengths and weaknesses, but parents can do their research to see which program is right for their child. Early childhood programs are beneficial because they can help children develop cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral skills. Educators and administrators can help parents consider choosing a program by educating them on the design of the program which will help meet the child's developmental needs and how the program will help the child maintain their achievements. Early childhood education programs have 4 main developmental goals: Social-emotional, physical cognitive, and language. Social-emotional

development focuses on how the child interacts with their peers, teachers, and caregivers. Social development is a way in which the child expresses themselves and manages their own emotions, and how they use their emotions around others. They start to feel who they are, able to tell adults and peers how they feel and interact with other people besides their parents and family.

Educators and parents can work together to help with this development by practicing sharing, taking turns, and positive cues that the child can learn while at home and school.

Physical development includes the physical growth and changes the child will go through such as height and weight. This development serves the gross motor and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills involve using large arms, legs, and back muscles. Fine motor involves using the smaller muscles such as the hands, wrist, and fingers. Educators get children to use these motor skills at school by creating games and activities they can share with parents to use at home. Cognitive development is using problem-solving skills, thinking skills, and knowledge. Children began to use intellectual growth as the brain developed. This development helps children to understand and learn the world around them. Jean-Piaget study of cognitive development has 4 stages: sensorimotor stage (birth to 2) which is when the child learns object permanence by the end of this stage. The preoperational stage (ages 2-7) is known as the symbolic stage where children begin to use their imagination. The concrete operational stage (ages 7-11) is where the child begins to understand their thoughts and feelings and they think more logically. The formal operational stage (ages 12 up) is the final stage of cognitive development where the child's logical thinking has increased and they can support each other by using activities where children can use parallel play and imagination. Language development is when a child communicates with others and is verbally able to express how they feel. Educators can help children in this stage of development by reading to them, singing songs, and nursery rhymes, and by making

general conversations with the child. Parents can do the same at home by asking open-ended questions and teaching them new vocabulary words.

### **History of Pre-k programs**

Pre-kindergarten is a voluntary program for children aged 4 and 5 years old. Early childhood education dates back as far as the 1500s. Early childhood education has some of the greatest theories that contribute to child development and education. Some of these theorists are names that we still study in the 21st century. Some theorists have shaped the educational system in early childhood education (Wong, 2019). Jean Rousseau is another founder of Early childhood education. Many schools still use some of his principles today in classrooms. Jean Rousseau pointed out that education should be centered around each child, and the experience should be sensory-driven. Jean Rousseau believed that math, art, physical movements, and language should be incorporated into the child's everyday education setting. Some theorists specialized in teaching and used their methods to prevent their research from being fraudulent and used in schools improperly (DeAngelo, Holmes, 2017).

Educators have embraced these methods and shared the information with their parents over the years (Ansari, 2018). Maria Montessori looked at education as a way to enhance the lives of children in the learning environment. Maria believed that if a child's senses were educated, the child's intelligence would follow. A Montessori classroom will focus on the children's interactions with real-life materials. In the Montessori classroom children are free to move as they would like, choose their activities, and work at their own pace. In a Montessori classroom, instead of the children being taught, they lead and the teacher will provide the materials and activities that will interstate them in the classroom.

Early childhood education is not only a form of learning for children, it plays a valuable part in a young child's life of social, emotional, and physical growth (Ali & Bahari, 2020). During the early stages of a child's life, the brain is growing at a fast pace of development. This is referred to as the "Critical period" because the brain is learning and forming. Early childhood education programs provide teachers and parents with hands-on learning experiences that they can share. When educators understand early childhood education, they can teach children how to engage in problem-solving tasks (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2021).

Some of the theories, such as Jean Piaget, a constructivist theorist of cognitive development, and Lev Vygotsky's social-cultural theory have influenced the standards of early childhood education of practice. They have also had influences on the curriculum that pre-kindergarten and other programs use (Saracho and Spodek, 2017). The following information in this part of the action research plan will pertain information on how the theory behind each of the activities will help the parents understand the best practices and why it is important for them to know how each one helps their child developmentally.

Play in pre-kindergarten plays is a tool where children develop cognitive, social, and emotional skills by using their imagination and activities that they can do at their own pace. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky believed that children learn best when they are playing and exploring. Piaget's perspective is that children can learn new skills when they are playing with their peers. Lev Vygotsky's belief is that instead of children learning through play, they can learn through teacher-led activities in reading and math.

### **Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education**

The involvement of parents in early childhood education in children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Syakhrani & Aslan 2024). Home-to-school connections strengthened through active engagement in a child's learning process increase rates of academic success and well-being (McWayne, Melzi & Mistry, 2022). In this section, types of parental involvement, parental roles as teachers, and reasons why parental participation is not more common are discussed. Sonnenschein & Munsterman (2021) Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement provides a structured approach to understanding how parents can engage in their children's education (Salac & Florida, 2022). Each type bridges home and school, promoting holistic development by fostering collaboration, communication, and active participation. Parenting involves creating a supportive home environment where children feel safe and encouraged to learn (Lara & Saracosti, 2019). Parents play a crucial role by establishing consistent routines that promote physical and emotional well-being. For instance, ensuring a regular bedtime helps children stay well-rested and ready to learn. Creating a dedicated study area at home further reinforces a child's focus, responsibility, and academic engagement.

Reaching out to parents and building mutual understanding and connection to the school (Newman et al., 2019). Digital platforms such as BrightWheel, Procare, and Class Dojo can be used by schools to provide parents with information about their children's progress. For example, a teacher shares a picture of a child's art project and suggests learners continue the learning from home with a discussion of shapes and colors. Communication is maintained throughout this to maintain the involvement of parents in the process. Volunteering contributes parents to actively participating in the school environment and all students' learning (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017). Activities parents help their children within the classroom, like reading circles, help parents model fluent reading or help children who are struggling with literacy. Volunteering is also an

opportunity for parents to see what effective teaching is and then reinforce learning at home (Pek & Mee 2020). Practical activities extend classroom instruction to learning at home (McCombes, 2020). The math concepts of counting, measuring, and understanding fractions can be taught through simple tasks like baking cookies. By teaching together, and providing home learning kits which include games and activities, teachers can help parents and children learn together.

Key to this decision-making for parents is how their involvement in the classroom is through parent-teacher association (Kemp, 2017). In this case, parents serving on the curriculum review committees can advocate for play supported by developmental research. Active involvement means parents have a say in what school policies and what educational programs will be (Marschall & Shah 2020). By collaborating with the community, learning opportunities are expanded through existing local resources and partnerships (Ho & Cherng, 2018). Field trips to a local science museum or historical site during which students learn through experience complement classroom instruction. Community partnerships provide relations for families to obtain valuable services, for example, libraries, tutoring groups, and extracurriculars (Hoffses, 2018). Engaging with a child's education is more than just showing up to school events (Nix et al., 2018). Among others, it involves the promotion of a supportive home environment, participation in school governance, and linking with meaningful communities of residence. Active involvement in all these areas on the part of parents leads to healthy learning and development throughout and beyond the classroom.

### **Parental Roles as Teachers and Co-Educators**

Research consistently demonstrates that children achieve higher academic and social success when parents adopt the role of teachers at home (Hoffses, 2018). Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) found that parental engagement in learning-related activities significantly

improves children's literacy, numeracy, and social skills. Parents can be co-educators by integrating educational activities into daily routines (Amponsah et al., 2018). For example, reading bedtime stories fosters language development and comprehension skills. Encouraging children to count items during grocery shopping strengthens math skills while making the experience enjoyable and practical (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Children learn through imitation, making parental behavior a powerful teaching tool (Assefa & Sintayehu, 2018). A parent who demonstrates curiosity by asking questions like, "Why do leaves change colour in the fall?" encourages scientific thinking. Engaging in hands-on experiments at home, such as creating a DIY volcano, can ignite children's interest in STEM subjects (Erol & Turhan, 2018). Parental involvement extends to teaching social and emotional skills through everyday interactions (Hoffses, 2018). Role-playing activities can teach conflict resolution while expressing emotions through art projects, which helps children articulate their feelings. Creating a home environment that fosters empathy, patience, and teamwork builds strong character foundations (McArdle et al., 2018).

### **Home-School Alignment**

Aligning home-based activities with classroom learning creates a consistent educational experience (Guy-Evans, 2020). For instance, if a classroom focuses on the alphabet, parents can reinforce this by playing letter-matching games or creating letter-themed scavenger hunts at home. Teachers can support this process by providing monthly newsletters with suggested activities (Hoffses, 2018).

The research shows that when parents act as active co-educators, children show more enthusiasm for learning, better classroom behaviour, and improved problem-solving abilities (McArdle et al., 2018). Schools can strengthen this partnership by offering workshops or family

engagement nights where parents learn techniques to support their child's development (Development Academy of the Philippines, 2018).

### **Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Despite its importance, several barriers limit parental involvement in early childhood education. Understanding these challenges helps educators design interventions that encourage participation (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Time Constraints is one of the most common barriers to time. Many parents work full-time, making attending school events or consistently supporting home-based learning activities difficult. For example, a single mother working two shifts may struggle to participate in parent-teacher meetings despite having a strong interest in her child's education (Bunijevac, 2017). Limited educational resources means not all families can access educational materials such as books, learning kits, or internet-enabled devices. In low-income households, parents may prioritise basic needs over purchasing educational tools. Schools can address this by creating lending libraries or providing digital learning tablets for home use (Al-Dababneh, 2018).

Lack of understanding of play-based learning because some parents may not misunderstand play-based learning, viewing it as "just play" rather than a structured educational approach. For example, a parent unfamiliar with early childhood education might question why their child is playing with sand instead of practising writing skills. Schools can host informational workshops to explain how play-based activities develop essential cognitive and motor skills (McArdle et al., 2018).

Cultural differences are cultural beliefs about parental roles in education vary widely. In some cultures, education is viewed as the sole responsibility of teachers, limiting parental

involvement. Schools serving diverse populations should implement culturally responsive practices by offering bilingual communication channels and culturally relevant learning activities (Fan et al., 2018). Socio-economic factors status significantly affects parental involvement. Families facing financial hardships may lack transportation to school events or access to quality childcare. In such cases, schools can offer virtual meeting options and provide school bus services for family events when possible (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Educational background is for parents with limited formal education may feel intimidated or ill-equipped to support their child's learning. For instance, a parent who struggles with reading might be hesitant to read books aloud with their child. Literacy workshops and one-on-one coaching can empower parents to engage confidently in their child's education (Child Trends, 2018). Addressing these barriers requires collaboration between schools, families, and communities. By fostering inclusive policies and support programs, educators can bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring that all children have equitable learning opportunities (McArdle et al., 2018).

### **Physical Development**

Play-based learning immensely benefits physical development in early childhood. It supports both fine and gross motor skills. Active play encourages movement, exploration, and body control, contributing to children's overall health and well-being (Ginsburg, 2007). Through various structured and unstructured activities, children build strength, coordination, and motor planning abilities essential for lifelong physical development.

Outdoor play activities involving running, jumping, climbing and balancing can develop gross motor skills. Games such as tag or hide and seek utilise large muscle groups and improve increased agility, coordination, and muscle strength. Specifically, obstacle courses in which kids must crawl under tables, hop on one foot, or balance on a beam help to develop core strength,

spatial awareness and motor planning. Although active play experiences build endurance, improve children's physical fitness, and advance cognitive development through goal orientation (Wickstrom et al., 2019), research indicates these active play experiences are few and mostly absent.

Manipulative play activities that require fine motor skills, which involve small objects such as threading beads, completing puzzles, or stacking blocks, help to practice these skills. Molding clay into different shapes helps with finger dexterity, grip strength, and hand-eye coordination, which are all important for writing, cutting with scissors and dressing independently. Wickstrom et al (2019) argue that play-based instruction contributes to developing fine motor skills needed for further academic work. Moreover, creative arts such as drawing, painting, and crafts aid in further refining aural precision and control from repetitive, hands-on practice (McArdle et al., 2018).

Another important outcome of play-based learning is sensory integration. Sand, water, or textured sensory play helps children explore tactilely, regulate the senses, and develop body awareness. Children integrate sensory input by squeezing playdough, pouring water in a container, or digging in a sandbox; these activities help them develop motor coordination (Nilsson et al., 2018). These multisensory experiences strengthen fine and gross motor development and increase curiosity and exploration (Syrjämäki et al., 2019).

### **Types of Play**

*Dramatic play* is where children will begin to use their imagination. *Constructive play* is when the children begin to use items to build and create structures, problem-solving, and spatial reasoning. *Socio-dramatic play* is when the child begins to use empathy and socialize with other students in the classroom. This is when they learn to interact with their peers during play.

The activity in the workshops for this action research plan was beneficial to the participants because the children were able to learn literacy, social skills, and emotional skills. The benefits of each activity helped the children with:

1. Cognitive development- problem-solving and thinking skills.
2. Emotional regulation- the children were able to manage their fears.
3. Experiential learning- when children learn things by experiences and reflection.

Developmentally appropriate practices do not always mean that children will play without a learning environment or the instruction that comes directly from the educator (NAEYC, 2020), Educators who teach at such schools as Title 1 schools have a higher quality of learning experiences when their learning activities are considered higher on the spectrum of other schools (Hirsh-Pasek et.,al, 2020). Guided play gives the teachers the chance to focus on the children during play and set a specific goal (Wickstrom et al., 2019). During guided play, the teacher will not take over while the children play but will ask questions during the child-directed exploration. During the workshop, the researcher allowed the participants to guide the activities while facilitating them by using observations. Guided play is a way to share new information through knowledge so children can explore in the classroom (Wickstrom et al., 2019). When parents know what is being taught, it helps them to support their child and they will have an understanding of what is being introduced in the classroom.

### **The Importance of Play-based Learning**

Play-based learning is a developmentally appropriate approach that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. Unlike traditional teacher-led instruction, play-based learning integrates meaningful, hands-on activities where children actively explore

and discover (Sydon & Phuntsho, 2021). This section examines how play-based learning enhances cognitive development, fosters social and emotional skills, and promotes physical development through structured and free-play experiences. Play-based learning nurtures cognitive development by supporting critical thinking, language acquisition, and problem-solving skills. Research highlights that guided play encourages academic readiness while sparking intellectual curiosity in young learners (TeGrootenhuis, 2021).

**Language Development-** Through interaction, children expand their vocabulary and strengthen communication skills during play. For example, in a pretend-play "grocery store" area of the classroom, children use descriptive language while "buying" and "selling" items. They practice conversation skills, learning new words like "purchase," "price," and "cashier," and gain experience with sequencing and storytelling (Wickstrom et al., 2019). **Problem-Solving Function-Play** supports executive functions such as working memory, attention control, and cognitive flexibility. Children explore concepts like balance, stability, and spatial awareness in a block-building activity. If their structure collapses, they troubleshoot by adjusting the design, thus practising resilience and adaptive thinking (Lippard et al., 2019).

**Mathematical Thinking-** Numeracy skills develop naturally during play-based activities involving counting, sorting, and measuring. Consider a child playing with stacking rings of various sizes. They intuitively grasp size comparison, sequencing, and basic geometry concepts as they arrange the rings from largest to smallest. Teachers can extend this by asking, "How many rings are there?" or "Which ring is the biggest?" (Wickstrom et al., 2019). **Scientific Inquiry-** Science concepts emerge through nature-based play, such as observing insects in a school garden or experimenting with water on a sensory table. Children engage in inquiry-based

learning by making predictions, observing outcomes, and drawing conclusions (McArdle et al., 2018). This hands-on exploration lays the groundwork for scientific reasoning and critical thinking. Research underscores that play-based learning provides a stimulating environment where children acquire foundational skills essential for lifelong learning and development (Nilsson et al., 2018).

### **Social and Emotional Development**

Play-based learning offers children wonderful opportunities to develop important social and emotional skills. As we interact with our peers, children learn to live cooperatively, and empathetically, negotiate conflict, and regulate their emotions – skills that will carry over to success in the classroom and life (Wickstrom et al., 2019). Playing is by studying what children choose to engage in when they play. Adults will listen to how they communicate, as it fosters collaborative tasks, expression of their feelings, and helps children navigate social dynamics.

Group play activities occur naturally and create an atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork. Collaborating with children to play a fort-building game or play a role-playing game shows them how to share materials and how to take turns to do things and work together towards one common goal. For example, a group of children playing restaurant must instance roles of 'chef', 'waiter' and 'customer'. This activity promotes listening, compromise, and expressing ideas concerning creating mutual understanding and building collective problem-solving (Nilsson et al., 2018). Cooperative play in early childhood, however, helps build foundational social competencies such as teamwork and joint decision-making (Syrjämäki et al., 2019).

Play-based learning also offers emotional regulation (Qayyum et al., 2024). Play is a safe and supportive environment that allows kids to express their emotions, manage their frustrations, and practice resilience. For example, if a child is struggling to solve a big puzzle, they might first

express anger but learn patience after encouragement and repeated attempts. Just like playing 'house' or acting out a story helps children to process real-life emotions by assuming different perspectives, role-play scenarios allow children to process emotions through role-playing such as a family scenario, story playing or acting. This role improves emotional awareness and empathy (Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2017). Lippard et al. (2019) note that through play-based learning children can begin practice with the exploration of complex emotions; both supporting social-emotional development and cognitive flexibility.

Disagreements lead to natural conflict resolution in play. But in the experience of children trying to make sense of social tensions, these moments can become useful learning experiences. For instance, if an adult is playing pretend with two children who want to be the "doctor" in a pretend hospital game, a teacher or caregiver would help the children figure out, through for example turn-taking, or role-sharing, how to negotiate the turn-taking. These are interactions that teach children assertiveness, negotiation and perspective-taking, which are important dimensions of supporting constructive conflict resolution (Nolan & Paatsch, 2018). Play also encourages self-confidence and independence. Completing challenging tasks, for example, having a child finish a complicated jigsaw puzzle, can also lead to a child feeling a sense of achievement and thus building a child's self-esteem. Children are given the space to create art with tools and materials via open-ended play that gives them the choice, the chance to take creative risks, and the opportunity to celebrate themselves (TeGrootenhuis, 2021).

Physical development is play-based learning immensely benefits physical development in early childhood. It supports both fine and gross motor skills. Active play encourages movement, exploration, and body control, contributing to children's overall health and well-being (Ginsburg, 2007). Through various structured and unstructured activities, children build strength,

coordination, and motor planning abilities essential for lifelong physical development. Outdoor play activities involving running, jumping, climbing and balancing can develop gross motor skills. Games such as tag or hide and seek utilise large muscle groups and improve increased agility, coordination, and muscle strength. Specifically, obstacle courses in which kids must crawl under tables, hop on one foot, or balance on a beam help to develop core strength, spatial awareness and motor planning. Although active play experiences build endurance, improve children's physical fitness, and advance cognitive development through goal orientation (Wickstrom et al., 2019), research indicates these active play experiences are few and mostly absent.

Manipulative play activities that require fine motor skills, which involve small objects such as threading beads, completing puzzles, or stacking blocks, help to practice these skills. Moulding clay into different shapes helps with finger dexterity, grip strength, and hand-eye coordination, which are all important for writing, cutting with scissors and dressing independently. Syrjämäki et al (2019) argue that play-based instruction enormously contributes to developing fine motor skills needed for further academic work. Moreover, creative arts such as drawing, painting, and crafts aid in further refining aural precision and control from repetitive, hands-on practice (McArdle et al., 2018).

Another important outcome of play-based learning is sensory integration. Sand, water, or textured sensory play helps children explore tactilely, regulate the senses, and develop body awareness. Children integrate sensory input by squeezing playdough, pouring water in a container, or digging in a sandbox; these activities help them develop motor coordination (Nilsson et al., 2018). These multisensory experiences strengthen fine and gross motor development and increase curiosity and exploration (Syrjämäki et al., 2019).

Physical play also promotes health and well-being in general by encouraging regular exercise and decreasing behavior. Doing exercises is a way to increase awareness of the environment, like nature walks or gardening. Physical play helps to have a lifelong love of outdoor exercise. Connecting children with nature by having them do activities such as building a garden bed or collecting leaves in a park can be a way to get some physical activity while teaching them about sustainability (Morris et al., 2018). The sequential combination of physical and sensory activities promotes holistic development and prepares children for healthier lifestyles.

### **Creative Curriculum**

Creative Curriculum focuses on the whole child. Creative Curriculum provides lesson plans and handbooks that teachers can use in the classroom. Creative Curriculum provides teachers with details on classroom organization, teaching strategies, and age-appropriate activities. It was designed to focus on project-based investigations meaning it addresses the development of the child. Creative Curriculum covers teacher-led engagement and large and small group activities, which are centered around 11 interest areas: blocks, dramatic play, games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, cooking, computers, and outdoors.

Creative Curriculum is a commitment to early childhood educators to help them keep up the pace in the classroom. This curriculum is research-based and offers exploration as a way of learning that can help children develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong thinking skills. Educators can plan and implement a developmentally appropriate content-rich program for children in pre-kindergarten. The foundation of Creative Curriculum provides educators with a breakdown of enrichment to help them build a strong quality pre-kindergarten classroom

environment. It also presents all of the information that educators need to set up their programs. There are 5 aspects of the Creative Curriculum: 1. How the children develop and learn 2. The learning environment 3. What the children will learn 4. Caring for the children 5. Partnerships with families. Creative Curriculum is the interest areas that bring the 5 aspects to life, by applying each one to the 11 interest areas and outdoor play. It also describes the materials for guiding the children's development and learning. Creative Curriculum is the literacy that prepares the educators with the knowledge and tools to help them prepare the children to read, write, and learn. Creative Curriculum includes strategies so the children can gain literacy skills and experiences in each interest area. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based framework for promoting play-based learning through intentional teaching and child-centred exploration. It focuses on developmental domains that enable children to learn for a lifetime and enhance cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and language development. This section details the major components of the Creative Curriculum, their implementation in early childhood classrooms, and how parental involvement amplifies their implementation.

### **Creative Curriculum Overview**

Veldhuis et al (2021) Creative Curriculum uses play-based learning guided by intentional teaching practices to reinforce holistic child development. This approach allows for active exploration that stimulates cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and literacy skills. According to Piaget (1964), children learn best through discovery and critical thinking, and play is at the heart of the curriculum's design. Its implementation includes theming units, learning centres, and formative assessment-guided collaborative projects. Counting games, animal-themed stories, and science experiments on animal life cycles could all come together for a thematic unit like "Farm Animals." Teachers divide classrooms into dramatic play, art and science exploration learning

centres to allow children to learn independently but with assistance from teachers as appropriate (Veldhuis et al., 2021).

Planning is based not just on what children want to learn, but what they need to learn, developmental milestone goals, and intentional teaching, a fundamental pillar of the Creative Curriculum that lends itself to focusing on children's interests while developing children's interests in abilities. For example, if children are interested in insects, a science station with a collection of bug models and magnifying glasses could be set up for curiosity and observation. Portfolios and learning journals are used for formative assessments to document progress and to inform instruction. A second vital aspect is the aspect of cultural responsiveness, where teachers include varied culturally rich stories through multilingual storybooks or holiday celebrations to make the environment more inclusive (Papavlasopoulou et al., 2017).

Project-based learning adds another layer to the curriculum with hands-on, collaborative activities and tasks. Building a model city out of recycled materials encourages creativity, builds environmental awareness and encourages teamwork. They support making education principles that align with the Creative Curriculum and using problem-solving and design thinking in DONE projects (Child Trends, 2018). This comprehensive approach will enable children to receive a wholly rounded education, with their curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning skills nurtured.

### **Parent-Teacher Collaboration**

Creative Curriculum does not believe that the teachers and parents should be doing more than another, and the home provides the necessary continuum of learning that bridges from classroom to home. Active parental engagement is always a constant research stress point that increases the importance of children's academic, social and emotional development (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Schools build strong parent-teacher relationships and systems that support

whole child development through regular updates, progress reports and newsletters, that they can communicate on weekly themes, home based activities, and learning tips. For instance, suppose the lesson is on "Weather and Seasons," the teachers may want the parents to get involved in a simple at-home weather-tracking activity, reinforcing the ideas discussed in class. This shared responsibility guarantees children learn all the while they are across different environments. This enables parents to see the objectives in class and how they can recreate and expand learning experiences at home.

### **Workshop for Parents**

This section aligns with the existing literature on parent involvement and its impact on early childhood education. Workshops for parents are a key component in helping them support their child's development in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning. For example, a workshop titled "Supporting Early Literacy at Home" might focus on techniques such as storytelling, phonics games, and reading routines that encourage language development. This approach empowers parents to actively participate in their child's learning process.

The literature suggests that interactive, hands-on learning is particularly beneficial for children's development, with activities like counting games and measuring during cooking being particularly effective in fostering early math skills. In line with this, take-home kits aligned with classroom themes further bridge the gap between home and school learning. For instance, during a gardening unit, children may receive seeds, soil, and instructions to plant at home, reinforcing

concepts learned in class. Families are encouraged to document the plant growth, using journals or photos, which not only supports the child's learning but also fosters family bonding.

## **Parent Participation**

Parent participation can include helping the teachers by being involved in career days, cultural celebrations, and field trips. Through personal experiences (such as Career Day, when parents talk about their professional roles), parents can link academic lessons with real-world applications (Al-Dababneh, 2018). Continuous engagement is enabled by digital platforms such as ClassDojo, which enables teachers to share activity updates, learning milestones and personalised feedback grounded in photos and text (Child Trends, 2018).

The Creative Curriculum promotes continual parental involvement through communication, home-based activities, and interactive school events to support children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. This collaborative model strengthens the home-school relationship and enhances children's learning experience and an inclusive, supportive community of educators.

Parent-focused interventions enhance children's cognitive, social, and emotional development by fostering active parental engagement in early education. Research-based programs like parent training initiatives, home-school partnerships, and family engagement models have proven to support children's learning outcomes. Parent training programs support parents with practical strategies for supporting their children's development. Programs like Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) provide real-time coaching, enhancing parental confidence and reducing child behavioural issues. Culturally responsive programs like Opening Doors empower diverse families through culturally relevant learning practices, fostering school

readiness. Programs offering hands-on practice, such as the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI), demonstrate long-term gains in literacy and math (Gonzalez & Beck, 2020)

**Home-School Partnerships** strengthen learning by bridging classroom and home environments. Schools using communication tools like ClassDojo which is what pre-kindergarten use to ensure real-time updates and parental involvement in children's progress. Parent-teacher conferences and workshops on literacy and behavior management further increase engagement, with research showing a 25% rise in parental participation where regular workshops are offered (Gonzalez & Beck, 2020). Collaborative decision-making, parent volunteers, and home-learning extensions like "Family Learning Bags" promote deeper academic engagement (Gonzalez & Beck, 2020).

**The impact on Learning Outcomes** is significant, as family engagement consistently correlates with better academic performance, school adjustment, and reduced behavioural problems (Harris & Goodall, 2020). Studies show that children with engaged parents score higher on standardised tests, adjust better socially, and demonstrate improved classroom behavior. These effects extend into long-term success, including higher graduation rates as the child gets older. Parent-focused interventions thus remain critical for fostering well-rounded child development.

## **Domains**

There are 5 learning domains that educators use as codes in pre-kindergarten: 1. Physical development and motor skills (PDM) 2. Communication language and literacy (CLL) 3. Social and emotional development (SED) 4. Approaches to play and learning (APL) 5. Cognitive development and general knowledge (CD). Each domain contains a strand, a standard, and an indicator. For example, the coding for PDM 6.3b is PDM is the domain 6 is the standard 3 is the age group b is the indicator. The strand for the domain is motor skills, which lets the educator

know what the activity will be about. The *standard* will talk about what the child is doing and the *indicator* that describes the observable skill the children will exhibit as they develop. The rationale explains the indicator in a more detailed way and the examples of learning to help build a specific indicator skill for children. 6 letters are used as indicators and they are letters a through f.

The purpose of domains is to promote the best learning experiences for children ages birth to five years old. Domains were written to create skills and concepts that pre-kindergarten children can develop throughout life. Domains were introduced to early childhood education programs in 2010, they are divided into age groups as the framework for early learning programs. Educators in pre-kindergarten plan their lesson plans and activities around the domains. This will give them a better understanding of where the children are at that age. Educators in pre-kindergarten design their lesson plans and activities around the key domains of development outlined in the Creative Curriculum. By focusing on these domains such as social-emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development educators gain a deeper understanding of where children are in their developmental stages. This helps them tailor their teaching to meet the specific needs of each child, ensuring a more personalized and effective learning experience.

In addition to these instructional strategies, systems theory and change theory provide valuable frameworks for understanding how change occurs within educational systems. Systems theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of all components within an educational environment, including children, teachers, parents, and the curriculum. By recognizing how these elements

interact, educators can better understand how changes in one area, such as teaching methods or parental involvement, can impact the entire system of learning.

Change theory, on the other hand, focuses on how change can be effectively implemented and sustained within organizations or systems. In the context of early childhood education, change theory helps to explain how introducing new strategies—like integrating play-based learning or modifying lesson plans around the domains can lead to positive outcomes. For example, through the implementation of Creative Curriculum and parent workshops, educators can support both academic and behavioral changes in children, while also encouraging growth in their relationships with families.

### **Action Research Methods**

This section outlines the action research process used in this study, focusing on identifying a problem, creating and implementing an intervention, and evaluating and analyzing the results. Action research follows a systematic approach, which consists of 10 key steps that help researchers address real-world problems through iterative cycles of planning, action, and reflection.

The following are the research questions included in the plan:

1. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the Creative Curriculum?
2. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the social-emotional development of their children?

3. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the role of play in pre-k learning?

### **Participants and Stakeholders**

This action research plan took place at a private, NAEYC-accredited learning center that housed children from birth to pre-kindergarten and adhered to the guidelines and principles of NAEYC and their requirements on high-quality play-based learning. The study was conducted at Cross City Learning Center for the following reasons:

- The researcher's children attended the school.
- Cross City Learning Center uses the Creative Curriculum, which was central to the study.
- The school has strong parental support and engagement throughout the school year.

The participants for this action research plan were the parents of the children attending the Cross-City Learning Center. Permission was given by the initial owner of Cross-City Learning Academy before the action research plan had started. The project was announced and posted to inform parents and invite them to participate in the workshop for this action research plan. The flyer served as an invitation for parents to provide their permission and support for the study. In total, 12 participants enrolled in the workshop, contributing to the success of the plan.

There were a total of 12 participants for the workshop used in this action research plan. Parents were asked to complete a screening question and sign consent forms, they were given research questions, surveys, questionnaires, and training questions after the workshop was completed. The

identity of each participant was protected during the time of the action research plan because the researcher had them send all forms, and surveys via email.

*Intervention Implementation Plan*

*Professional Development Outline*

<b>Session 1 Week 1&amp;2</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
Creative Curriculum Domains	How Many Letters Are In Your Name?  Apple Patterns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Powerpoint Presentation</li> <li>2. Overview of Creative Curriculum</li> <li>3. Presentation of Activities</li> <li>4. Observations</li> <li>5. Observation Feedback of Activities</li> <li>6. Weekly Icebreaker</li> </ol>
<b>Session 2 Week 3&amp;4</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
The activities implemented at school will align with the Creative Curriculum and will emphasize play-based learning to support the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of pre-kindergarten children.	ABC Letter Match  Emotions Bingo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Powerpoint Presentation</li> <li>2. Overview of Activities that Teachers Use in The Classroom.</li> <li>3. Presentation of Activities</li> <li>4. Observations</li> <li>5. Observation Feedback of Activities</li> <li>6. Weekly Icebreaker</li> </ol>
<b>Session 3 Week 5&amp;6</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Agenda</b>

Activities Parents Can Use at Home  Play-based Learning	Mood Face Board  Friendship Cards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Powerpoint Presentation</li> <li>2. Overview of Activities that Parents Can Use at Home</li> <li>3. Presentation of Activities</li> <li>4. Observations</li> <li>5. Observation Feedback of Activities</li> <li>6. Weekly Icebreaker</li> </ol>
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*Data Collection plan*

The following table outlines the research questions, data to be collected, data sources, timing, and the types of data collection methods used in this study. These methods will help assess the effectiveness of the intervention and provide insight into how the training impacted parents' understanding of the Creative Curriculum, social-emotional development, and the role of play in pre-kindergarten learning.

<b>Research Question(s)*</b>	<b>Data to be Collected**</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>When Collected</b>	<b>P or O or both +++</b>
How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the Creative Curriculum?	Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews	Parents	Spring, 2024	both
How did the training for parents impact their	Questionnaires, and interviews	Parents	Spring, 2024	both

understanding of the social and emotional development of their children?				
How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the role of play in pre-k learning?	Interviews	Parents	Spring, 2024	both

*Data Analysis Plan*

<b>Data Source/Type</b>	<b>Data Analysis Procedures</b>
Surveys	<p>Likert scale surveys and the results will be tabulated for percentages.</p> <p>Use of data mining tools in software such as Tableau</p> <p>Rating scale will be used to rate the parents' level of satisfaction</p> <p>Paper surveys, number scales, and word rating scales will be used.</p> <p>Demographic survey for each participant</p>

	<p>Statistical measures of Quantitative data such as the Mean. Median Mode.</p>
<p>Internal Records</p>	<p>They are existing generated administrative data that has been compiled and stored over time within the school’s system.</p> <p>Records involve enrolment data that has(birth, race, guardian details, attendance, and academic performances) of each student)</p> <p>Compiled records will be done according to ethical standards i.e. use of code words, pseudo, and informed consent in particular cases that will be focused on during the presentation. However, most generated data will be generalized.</p> <p>SPSS and Tableau will also be used in this segment as it compliments Excel and PowerPoint presentations from Microsoft.</p>
<p>Questionnaires</p>	<p>Questionnaires will be used in this segment to collect feedback and impressions from the parents.</p> <p>A hybrid selection of open ended in one part and close-ended in the other part will be preferable as it enables parents to respond to specific queries while also being able to be free with their opinions</p>

	<p>The Closed ended section will use multiple choices for precise thematic calculation while open ended will assist in finding additional thematic patterns that could have been missed. Also, it is important to reduce the chances of research bias that could be present in the closed ended section.</p> <p>Data mining tools to be used are Tableau for visual presentation while IBM SPSS is important for the consolidation of statistical data. The two software integrate hence one data file generated from one side can be used by the other software for cross analysis or the purpose of presentation.</p> <p>Developing themes from the data.</p>
Interviews	<p>Interviews will be divided into two sections, face to face, and virtual interviews, to accommodate willing participants that can make it on site and the ones who will be onsite but will have access to the internet.</p> <p>Compliments Questionnaires and observation, as verbal and non verbal cues will also be compiled and used for the report if necessary. It is easier to tell what makes the participants happy/sad or whatever mood that might be presented during answering the question.</p>

	<p>The advantage of interviews is that questions asked from questionnaires can be customized for each participant</p> <p>Tools used to collect data will be the virtual platform, Google Meets. As it is a platform that exists in all mobile and computer operating systems and is also simple to use.</p> <p>Thematic analysis is ideal for this study as it allows for flexibility in identifying and analyzing patterns across qualitative data. By focusing on recurring themes within parents’ responses, this method can provide insights into their perceptions, experiences, and any shifts in understanding resulting from the workshop.</p>
<p>Observations</p>	<p>Participant observations will be used in this study.</p> <p>Observations of parents with their children engaging in activities presented in the sessions will be used to record how the invention has influenced how parents interact with their children.</p> <p>Video recordings will be present.</p>

**Expected Outcomes**

During this action research plan, a six-week workshop was conducted with 12 participants. The objective was to provide parents with valuable insights into their child's learning process, enabling them to better understand how their child develops cognitively, socially, and emotionally. The workshop aimed to equip parents with strategies and activities they could implement at home, like the approaches used by educators in the classroom, thereby enhancing the alignment between home and school learning environments. Creative Curriculum, play-based learning, and domains were the three main topics during the workshops. Some of the participants struggled with structure, meaning they thought that making the child sit still and quietly was a way to get them to learn and focus. As an educator, the researcher knew that structure is having a routine, it has to be consistent, and not too predictable. During a conversation on socialization in the workshop, parents learned that their child was being taught how to socialize and remain calm while playing with their peers at school.

After the first activity in the workshop, parents were more understanding while working with the children. The researcher observed the participants during each session to assess their engagement and understanding of the material. The goal was to highlight the significance of parental involvement in enhancing the success of their child's early development, emphasizing how active participation in their child's education can positively influence cognitive, emotional, and social growth. The participants were asked during a conversation "why did you choose Cross City Learning Center?" all 12 participants were motivated by the reputation of the school. They talked about the budget and how pricey it was, but it was worth the sacrifice because of the information they were taught during the tour. However, they had no general knowledge of how play helped their child because they had questions about it. After the presentation on play, the participants' view on play had changed. The presentations were derived from the observations

and interviews given before the workshop had started. Although the 12 participants stated that they had based their research on their child attending school so they could gain academic readiness for kindergarten. The data showed the researcher that the parents need to understand Creative Curriculum, play-based learning, and domains.

Play-based learning has been common in pre-kindergarten classrooms for years and is linked to social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development (Managhan, 2020). Educators know how important the curriculum is because it provides the skills for children to learn and also it sets the foundation of their academics. During this workshop, the researcher introduced Creative Curriculum to the participants and how it is used in early childhood education. According to Parker and Thomsen (2019), Creative Curriculum supports the whole child with long term growth and development throughout their life. The researchers' presentation on Creative Curriculum showed the participants how the activities fostered their artistic, logical, and thinking skills. After the workshop, the participants have an understanding that Creative Curriculum is purposeful play when children are encouraged to discover and explore the classroom to support their skills and academic growth.

Parents' perceptions of how their child learns is very important. Parents should be educated on how early childhood is the most complex time in their child's life (Pyle, 2017). Educators share activities providing parents with resources where parents can find learning activities that they can create at home. During the workshops, the participants showed excitement when instructed to each activity during the sessions. A few participants reported that they were not aware of how easy it was to create activities at home and how the researcher helped them by providing them with a powerpoint presentation with resources. The workshops allowed the participants to learn about play so they can tap into their child's imagination, sharing

a conversation during dinner time, and a strong bond while using home-based activities, creating simple games, and getting down on the floor with them to play with them, will bring them closer to their child and help build their self-esteem and confidence.

The researcher used the results as the goals of the participants and the future of their children's learning by using the plan used from the powerpoint presentations. The generalizations were based on the observations, interviews, and surveys. Socialization was valued during the discussions along with play-based learning, Creative Curriculum, and the learning domains. The participants had no knowledge on play-based learning before the workshops, but their beliefs changed at the end of the workshop. The participants had to be educated on early childhood education. It is ok to reflect on their experiences and listen to them share their thoughts, but helping them on their goals and beliefs will make them more satisfied (Zosh, 2017). The participants shared their experiences after the workshop. Although the participants had different views about play-based learning and Creative Curriculum, they shared their concerns with other participants during each session. Some of them support play-based learning, while others do not. Some of the participants felt play as being that the children were not learning academically.

The participant's voice is important, because it helps to build a school-home connection while supporting the child's learning experiences. The workshop helped the researcher build a strong partnership with the participants. Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, and Eggers-Pierola (1995), provided research and shared how parents did not understand what pre-kindergarten or the learning environment provided. The goal of the workshops is to support the participants by helping their child transition to kindergarten without having any learning difficulties. This action research plan helped the researcher by allowing the participants to express themselves, gather information to support their child, and share their ideas during the weekly sessions.

### **Action Research Questions**

4. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the Creative Curriculum?
5. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the social-emotional development of their children?
6. How did the training for parents impact their understanding of the role of play in pre-k learning?

### **Data Sources and Collection**

### **Data Analysis**

### **Limitations**

The participants for this action research plan are the parents of the children that attend Cross City Learning Center. The pre-kindergarten program is an educational program in the southeastern region for children ages 4-5 years old. Pre-kindergarten is voluntary for children in public and private school learning centers. The children that attend pre-kindergarten during the school calendar year will transition into kindergarten the next school year. The parents in the action research plan yielded mixed views, because they had a hard time understanding how play is used in the pre-kindergarten classroom. Albatataineh (2018) revealed that although parents

have not been educated on play, they lacked specific knowledge about it. Parents often struggle to understand the value of play-based learning because they tend to focus too heavily on direct teaching, rather than creating an environment that fosters exploration and self-directed learning (Harris, 2022). In this study, a sample size of 12 participants was used, allowing for a focused analysis of how the workshop impacted parents' understanding of the role of play in early childhood development.

Despite the recognized benefits of parental involvement in early childhood education, research in this field faces several challenges. Cultural and socioeconomic factors, program sustainability issues, and methodological constraints often hinder the effective implementation and evaluation of parent-focused interventions (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Addressing these barriers requires context-specific strategies and innovative research methodologies. Cultural beliefs and socioeconomic status (SES) significantly impact parental involvement. Different cultures view education roles uniquely, with some parents considering teachers solely responsible for academic learning. Socio-economic status further complicates involvement, as parents from low-income backgrounds may lack time, transportation, or educational resources (Harris & Goodall, 2020). Language barriers also prevent effective communication, particularly for non-English-speaking families. Solutions include bilingual staff, translated materials, and culturally responsive programs.

Sustaining parent-focused programs requires consistent funding, administrative support, and professional development. Initiatives like Parents as Teachers (PAT) depend on government grants, which, when reduced, can halt program delivery. Leadership changes also disrupt established programs. Institutionalizing family engagement policies can ensure long-term

stability, and ongoing teacher training boosts parental participation (Fan & Chen, 2023). Research faces challenges like self-reported data biases, short-term study durations, and limited mixed-method approaches. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies can offer more accurate, holistic insights. Addressing these limitations through comprehensive designs ensures reliable, context-sensitive findings for advancing parental engagement research (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2021).

The participants for this action research plan are the parents of the children that attend Cross City Learning Center. The pre-kindergarten program is an educational program in the southeastern region for children ages 4-5 years old. Pre-kindergarten is voluntary for children in public and private school learning centers. The children that attend pre-kindergarten during the school calendar year will transition into kindergarten the next school year. A workshop is planned to help participants, by providing them with the techniques that educators use in pre-kindergarten learning centers (NAEYC, 2017). Workshops can help parents obtain valuable information about strategies that the school uses while their child is attending during that time. During the time of this action research plan, parents and the researcher may build a professional relationship that could cause a conflict of interest. Some may argue that because of the closeness of the researcher and the participant, it could strengthen their relationship because of the information they will share (Fan & Chen, 2023). The researcher must remain humble and not share any personal experiences during the time of the workshop.

Qualitative data is used to collect data for this action research plan because of the human experiences with the help of interviews, surveys, and open-ended questions. The limitations of this study will include generalizations from research findings. The information is true and will reflect the experiences and thoughts of the participants. The participants in this action research

plan are ages 30-45 with incomes higher than \$50,000-\$100,000 per year. All of the participants are from the same geographical area. The findings are limited by the participants' perspectives on how their children will transition from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

The sample selection was used by the purposive sampling, which refers to the researcher selecting the participants based on the experience that are relevant to the research questions and the topic at hand. The participants who were chosen want to get an in-depth understanding of play-based learning in their child's classroom. In purposive sampling, the researcher has a specific purpose in this case (Davis, 2019). The researcher did collect data from experiences of the participants by using the feedback they will provide at the end of the 6-week workshop. Purposive sampling is the best fit for this plan because the population of content is small, the interest of the study is specific population, and to study a certain topic that is new to them. The limitations of this action research plan included the difficulties parents had with play-based learning, Creative curriculum, and domains. The findings were deprived from the action research methods. With this design of the action research, the findings were given from the participants. The responses were taken from the experiences and feedback from the participants. The participants for this action research plan are the parents of the children attending pre-kindergarten at Cross City Learning Center.

### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the research findings being accurate and trustworthy (Fillmore & Snow, 2018). The research must be a true reflection of the participants' experiences while under investigation. During this action research plan, qualitative data was used to collect data from interviews, observations, and questionnaires. Member checking is a tool that gathers data from

the relationship between the researcher and the participants. It allows the participants to expand on their experiences. During the workshops, the participants were able to expand on their experience while learning about play-based learning and Creative Curriculum.

### **Dependability**

Dependability focuses on data collection, open-ended questions, and any unanswered questions that the researcher may have. In this action research plan, interviews, observation, and questionnaires were used to collect data from participants. All documentation would come from everyone involved including the stakeholders such as administration, parents, and children. According to Fan & Chen (2023), dependability is designed as the correct description of conclusions and explanation. In this action research plan, the documentation was drawn from the feedback by the participants.

Peer debriefing is another form of communication used at the time of the plan and it helped to create communication that can create trust. During qualitative research, both the researcher and participants will actively build a relationship and trust amongst each other.

### **Transferability**

In addressing the issues of the transferability of this action research plan, Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta (2018) stated that the research can be a little tricky and does not provide a description to enable the researcher interested to reach a conclusion about whether it can transfer the influence of their values and passions. The intent for this action research plan was to share feedback of how the participants came to the understanding of how play-based learning and Creative Curriculum was helpful to their children that attended the pre-kindergarten program at Cross City Learning Center. In making the research transparent, the researcher used the 6 week

workshop to gather information that influenced the participants and collected data from questions asked by them.

The data helped the researcher to make observations transferable. When enhancing transferability, the researcher needed to provide the participants with a detailed description of the study. A power-point presentation was used during the workshop for each participant to understand what is being taught. One way to build trust with participants of any plan, is to involve them in the design. The researcher must invite them to share any questions they may have during the time of the action research plan. The participants build trust when the researcher explains to them their goals, benefits of the plan, any risks that will be taken, and whether there will be challenges. Before this action research plan started, the researcher had a conversation with each participant about why they would gather information from them. The interviews were in a natural setting located at Cross City Learning Center, where the workshops had taken place. Consent forms were signed at the first session so the participants could feel safe while data was collected/ The participants were aware that all the data would not be shared with anyone that was excluded from the research.

When conducting research, trust is important when building relationships with participants and stakeholders. The participants should know that they are protected from any harm, but they have the willingness to step back if they do not feel validated. Participants may withhold information at any time during the process. During this action research plan, the researcher used observations and interviews to receive data from the participants. Before the workshops started, the researcher explained the purpose of the plan, used informed consent, ensured confidentiality, built a rapport, put a flyer with instructions of the action research plan at the school. Below is a list of strategies that can be used to help gain trust from the participants:

**The purpose of the research-** before the action research was started, the research helped the participants understand the importance of their involvement and what they could expect and what they would learn by providing the objectives for each activity.

**Informed Consent-** the informed consent forms were given before the workshops had started. Consent forms ensure each participant what their participation would involve, the rights they have, and the action research purpose. Consent forms also informed them of the data protection and how it will protect the participants before and after the plan was over.

**Confidentiality-** the researcher used protocols to protect that data by using a flash drive to keep all forms confidential and anonymous and the participants names were not used during the workshops.

**Building a Rapport with Participants-** although the participants were the parents of the children at the school where the researcher was employed, conflict of interest was not an issue. The researcher had gained respect and empathy from the participants. It is important to listen and show interest in the participants and their experiences.

**Instructing of the Action Research Plan-** Research questions, demographic questions, and interviews was used and a timeline of the plan and activities that would be used weekly in each session.

**Respecting the participants-** the researcher respected the boundaries of each participant by including their cultural values that they may have. The researcher was mindful of the language used and any differences that the participants would have during each session.

In conclusion, researchers' primary goal is to understand that the participants are the keyholders and that they can improve their experiences by understanding their behaviors, needs, and attitudes when conducting research and collecting data. To achieve this, the researcher must establish trust with the parents. When the participants feel safe and comfortable, it will lead to better outcomes once the plan is over (Soto, 2018).

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical considerations are respecting a group of people's rights, responsibilities, and welfare while conducting research (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2018). Ethical considerations are very important in research when researchers are working with participants. The participant's rights, dignity, and well-being must be protected. Researchers have to gain informed consent to research human participants. The researcher must uphold the principles of ethics to build trust between them and the participants. During the time of this action research plan, the participants were aware that all of the information they obtained was confidential and only discussed among them and the researcher.

### **The Belmont Report**

The Belmont Report outlines three ethical principles in research, which are also relevant to education and they are: Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons means all of the participants used in this action research plan should be treated with autonomy. The research used should be treated fairly and well during the process. An autonomous person is someone who can make their own decisions and be able to use their views. The researcher must

respect the autonomy of the participants by allowing them to voice their opinions and make their own choices.

Educators should lead but not find themselves in a situation where they cannot say what they need to say to their participants. Beneficence is the second ethical principle where the participants must be shown respect and protected from any harm during the action research plan. Beneficence covers all of the acts of kindness while working with the participants. This means not harming the individuals, but trying to understand the research without judgement. The last principle is Justice, which means that each participant is treated fairly and each person will benefit equally during the time of the action research plan. All information must be kept confidential during the time of research. Confidentiality is when the researcher and participant work together and the researcher must secure all information and store it in a secure and safe place.

## **Bias**

Bias can happen when unanswered questions in research occur during the sampling or testing of data collection. The researcher must ensure there are no systematic errors that could influence the results of any studies, conclusions, or personal beliefs. Understanding bias in research with the design and methodology when the researcher is collecting data for the action research plan (Harris & Goodall, 2020)

## **Types of Bias**

*Observer bias* is the type of research participants can see what they will expect, want to see during the research, and what is about to occur during that time. Observer bias can affect the

results during any experiment. Observer bias comes from the opinions and expectations of the participants during the time of data collection and observations (Bhandari, 2023).

*Interview bias* comes from the researcher during the plan or study. The results come from the way the questions are asked and the responses from the participants. Sensitive or personal topics can cause the participants to feel uncomfortable, and it could affect the researcher from building a rapport with the participants. The researcher must have a topic that the participants can relate to or learn from (Harris & Goodall, 2020).

*Researcher bias* occurs when the researcher has their own beliefs and expectations of the research design or data collection process. Researcher bias can be purposeful, meaning they can claim that the plan worked knowing that it did not, or by letting their feelings or assumptions influence the questions they may ask (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2021)

### **Conflict of Interest**

Conflict of interest exists when the individual of research shows interest in the participant's considerations, which can cause a conflict. While collecting data, the researcher may compromise their relationship with the participants by using the study for financial gain (Doyle et al, 2023). A conflict of interest may even occur when no wrongdoings, illegal acts, or improper results can come from it. Educational research is one of the vital sources of knowledge for educators, policy holders, and the children attending schools. It also involves ethical challenges that can affect the conflict of interest, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Volochnsky, 2018).

Conflict interest can lead to harm of a study if the participants feel they do not have the confidence to help the researcher (Fan & Chen, 2023). The Institutional Review Board must

ensure that the business interests do not impede the protection of human subjects during the research. If a researcher has an actual conflict of interest, the Institutional Review Board will do investigations on the information and will require the disclosures from the researcher before they will conduct research with their participants. The researcher's relationship with their participants so it will not be impacted at all (Fan & Chen, 2023). To prevent conflict of interest, list all social and personal activities during the plan, and examine their current relationships with each participant.

### **Site Permission**

When planning to conduct research for any study or plan, there must be a written statement from the institution with an approval letter. The permission form must include the name of the committee and an approval letter, and each participant must submit a written statement. The researcher must submit a detailed letter of how the action research plan will take place. The researcher of this action research plan will provide an informed consent form for each participant to sign and a copy will be presented to the committee board at the school where the researcher is employed.

### **Intellectual Property**

Intellectual property ensures that the researcher is the inventor or creator. Intellectual property is when a creator uses their mind to invent something. During this action research plan, the researcher is the creator and has gained full permission from the school administration to use technology and parental information that they will collect. At the learning center, the administrators, caregivers, and the researcher are the ones who will lead the intellectual property. Intellectual property rights include patents, copyrights, and trademarks. The researcher created

the action research plan, but the school owns the intellectual property. The researcher should establish and take ownership of the intellectual property so they can reap the benefits of their creation (Gonzalez & Beck, 2020).

Intellectual property helps the researchers protect their rights when creating an invention or product. Intellectual property will make sure that the creator will benefit from their work. There are two types of intellectual properties and they are copyrights and industrial property. Copyrights are how they protect their own work and no one can use their creation without their permission. Industrial property is a trademark or patent. Trademarks can identify a product that a researcher will use. Anyone that uses a trademark must sign a trademark application first. A patent is the right to an invention and any person who created it can sell or distribute it.

Intellectual property rights are very much needed in research (Narayanan, 2010). These rights are given to an inventor or creator so that their work is not used without their permission (Sharma, 2014). During this action research plan, the researcher created a workshop to raise awareness of play in the pre-kindergarten setting. There were regulations that the researcher had to use so the participants could feel safe and protected.

## SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION

### Process Analysis

The results of this action research plan are based on interviews conducted with the 12 participants, who are parents of children attending Cross City Learning Center. These interviews provided valuable insights into how the workshop influenced their understanding of the Creative Curriculum and play-based learning. To improve outcomes, the interviews were conducted by the research questions and training questions planned by the researcher. The interview questions were adopted due to the situation of the participants not understanding play-based learning, Creative Curriculum, and domains.

**Participants 1 and 2** were Pam and Jim. She and her husband, both African Americans, had 3 children. Both Pam and Jim earned college degrees, Pam held a degree in Public relations and Jim held a degree in Electrical Engineering. Pam worked at an elementary school in a suburban neighborhood. Pam had 3 siblings and grew up with her parents in a suburban neighborhood. Pam's parents were both educators and retired in the profession. Jim worked as a train machine operator for the metro area of the city. Jim's mother, a retired educator, and his late father, an architect, both brought unique perspectives to the study due to their professional backgrounds.

**Participants 3 and 4** were Brooke and Alex. Brooke and her fiance had 1 child. Brooke earned her college and Alex was a Commercial Truck Driver. Brooke had 2 siblings and they grew up with a single mom in the metropolitan area. Brooke works as a radiologist technician at a local hospital. Brooke is planning to attend college to pursue her degree in nursing, because of her love for premature babies. She was a premature baby at birth. Alex's mom was a real estate agent

and his dad was the owner of a trucking company, which influenced him to become a truck driver. Alex talked about how he allowed his wife to handle most of the educational needs, because he is gone four days a week. Alex's parents divorced when he was 14 years old. Alex opted out of going to college because he wanted to own his own commercial truck, because it was a good income source to help put his wife through nursing school. Both parents were involved deeply into their child's educational needs and showed excitement to learn about it.

**Participants 5 and 6** were Eliza and Timothy, who have 3 children. Both Eliza 40, and her husband Timothy 40, earned college degrees. Eliza held a masters in Nursing and Timothy obtained a masters in Engineering. Eliza works at a local elementary school as a Nurse Practitioner and she talked about how exciting it was to work at a school so she can have time off with her children during holidays and other breaks. Eliza grew up with her parents in a suburban neighborhood. Eliza told stories of her childhood and how she followed in her mom's footsteps and became a Nurse. Eliza was an only child, but she always wanted three children, because she did not want her children to be lonely as she was growing up. Timothy grew up in an urban area with his parents. Timothy has two siblings and he talked about them often. Timothy's mom was an educator and his dad owned a restaurant. Timothy said he wanted to attend the workshops because he wanted to understand the developmental milestones of children because they were having difficulty with one of their children academically.

**Participant 7** is Veronica, a 35 year African American widow mom of 1. Veronica is a college graduate with a career in school counseling. Veronica is a first time mom and became a widow a year ago. Veronica was an only child and grew up in a suburban neighborhood with her mom. Veronica's mom was a seamstress who owned an in-home business. According to Veronica, her mom was devoted to sewing because it was her passion. Veronica is very close to her mom.

Veronica attended a private school during her high school years because her mom felt private school was best for her education.

**Participants 8 and 9** were Kelvin and John. Kelvin 40 and John 35 a Caucasian male and African American male. who adopted 2 children. Kelvin earned his degree in educational leadership and John earned his Associates degree in management. Kelvin grew up in the inner city with his aunt who adopted him when he was 2 years old. Kelvin attended school in the inner city where he grew up. Kelvin works downtown as a receptionist for an early learning center. Kelvin often talked about his upbringing with his aunt who was a supervisor at the cafeteria at a local school. John works as a manager at a store located in a shopping mall. John grew up with his parents in a suburban neighborhood. John explained that he was there because he wanted to understand early childhood education as a whole.

**Participants 10 and 11** were Heather and Robby, caucasian parents of 2 children. Both Heather 35, and Robby 35, had earned college degrees. Heather owned her own salon and Robby is a dentist. Robby owns a dental office in an urban area. Heather grew up in a suburban neighborhood two houses down from her husband Robby. Heather's parents owned a popular restaurant, where she worked during her highschool years. Heather had one sibling and talked about her parents often. Robby's mom was a doctor and his dad was a manager of the sanitation department. Both Heather and Robby attended the workshops because they had an autistic child and wanted to know as much as they could about Creative Curriculum.

**Participant 12** was Angie, a 42 year old Caucasian woman. Angie attended college and earned her degree in social work. She stated that she wanted to learn more on Creative Curriculum and

socialization. She has one child that attends the school. She wanted to attend the workshops to obtain information on socialization and play-based learning.

In addition to the interviews and observations, which took place during the workshop in a classroom at Cross City Learning Center were part of the data collection. The notations of each participant's behavior during the activities enhanced the data collection by documenting their knowledge and concerns they may have about play-based learning, Creative Curriculum, and domains at Cross City Learning Center pre-kindergarten classroom. The weekly attendance was good because the participants were involved in their child's early learning. All 12 participants attended each week. Pam and Jim could not attend the 5th week due to a death in the family. During the weekly sessions, the dad had a lot of questions. During this process analysis, the researcher was able to see that the participants lacked a clear understanding of play-based learning and Creative Curriculum at Cross City Learning Center. The data from the interviews and observations indicated that the parents required more detailed information about the outcomes of early childhood education.

All 12 participants were involved in their children's education. Heather and Robby were both very busy, but they attended each week and were pleased to see how the other parents were able to answer questions because of their knowledge on early learning. Veronica, Angie, and Kelvin were the parents who wanted more information on play-based learning, because they had the least understanding on the topic. Veronica stated how she "would get upset when she would walk in the classroom and see her child playing, but never took the initiative to talk to the teacher to get an understanding of play" in the classroom.

The participants were given a set of questions during the process analysis. The demographic questions were given before the interview and the training questions were given at the end of workshop and they are:

### **Demographic Questions**

1. How many children do you have in the pre-k program?
2. How long has your child attended this school?
3. At what age did your child enter the pre-k program?
4. What factors influenced your decision to enroll your child at this school?
5. What are your expectations for your child this school year?

### **Questions Related to Training**

1. Creative Curriculum has 7 domains: physical development, language and literacy, social and emotional development, cognitive development, math, science, and art. What is your understanding (after the training) of social and emotional development?
2. What experience have you had with play-based learning prior to the training?
3. What is the understanding of play-based after training?
4. How did the training change your opinion of how children learn in pre-k?

The answers indicated varying results in terms of the participants' experiences on the topics of play-based learning, Creative Curriculum, and domains. Comments from each participant are:

*Pam said:* “I am here to learn as much as I can on early childhood education. I am clueless and I like the concept of play. I would like to know how our child is learning. I also wanted to see if she could socialize”

*Jim said:* “I agree with my wife, This is the second school we’ve placed our child in and play was a topic and I was ok with that but I wanted my baby to learn and I didn't see what our child was learning until we moved her to Cross City Learning Center”

*Brooke said:* “I would attend conferences, but I was lost and I thought the way the classroom was set up the children played all day long”

*Alex said:* “I am here because I never had the chance to attend conferences with my wife and curious to know how the classroom and activities could help my child when it comes to learning”

*Eliza said:* “I loved Cross City Learning Center when I did my tour, I like how the pre-k classroom was set up. I was excited to see my child come home speaking spanish and how fast his teacher had taught him his alphabet and numbers”

*Timothy said:*”I never had the patience to sit down with my son because as soon as he did not give me the right answer I would get upset, my wife had the patience”

*Veronica said:*”Being a counselor I worked well with children and I would often criticise my daughters teacher because I did not understand pre-k concepts”

*Kelvin said:* “My reason for being here is to understand the curriculum, because I feel without any knowledge of curriculum, I can’t help my child”

*John said:*”I agree with Kelvin, I also would like to know more about the curriculum”

*Heather said:* "I would like to get help with more at home activities"

*Robby said:* "I need to know what activities we could do at home with our child"

*Angie said:* "I would like to know how to get my step daughter to socialize more and how schools know what is the right way to teach our child"

Parents' perceptions change over time. Educators must educate them on the early childhood aspect of education. The researcher wanted the participants to understand that children may not reflect their learning experience, and they may not comprehend the knowledge they will obtain, but they will understand what they were taught before leaving pre-kindergarten. The workshop was given because of the concerns the participants had on play, Creative Curriculum, and domains. Gonzalez & Beck, (2020) stated that parents will most likely create strategies according to their own perceptions of their child's learning abilities and needs. During the workshop all of the participants said how they had chosen the school because of its reputation and location. The husbands said they allowed their wives to handle the well-being of their child, by choosing the school that was best for the child. Overall, the participants wanted the child to be prepared for kindergarten. All of the participants were great and loving parents, so the researcher was not surprised that they wanted their children to have the best educational experiences possible.

In conclusion, the purpose of this section was to present interview question results from the 12 participants whose child attended Cross City Learning Center. The researcher wanted to point out the main reasons for the participants preparing for their child's future and to use

observations from the interactions with their child. The participants' answers were true and some answers were true and some answers were out of fear that their child was not learning because of the learning environment, the fact that they did not understand early childhood education, and their fear of their child not learning before they transitioned.

### **Data Analysis**

During this action research plan, there are several sources of data that were collected to measure how the participants would understand why the researcher was gathering data. The researcher wanted the participants to understand play-based learning, Creative Curriculum, and the domains. Data collection instruments included surveys, interviews, and observations during the 6 weeks workshops given to the parents of the children who attended Cross City Learning Center.

Surveys- Surveys were conducted by the researcher and given to the participants at the end of the workshops. The survey included one Likert scale item (using the dichotomous questions) and several closed-ended questions, that focused on the feedback from the training. The data collection was a typed survey for the participants to circle the answer of “satisfaction” and was given to the parents and not the children because they were too young to complete them.

Observations- During the observations, the researcher focused on the interactions between the parents and their child. The participants were given the right to include or exclude the researcher during the activity presentations. The participants' observations helped the

researcher examine the participants, and the results showed whether the participants understood the activities and being able to work alone with their children. The observations help the researcher use the interview question responses as part of the data for the workshops. The observations took place during each session over a course of 6 weeks.

Interviews- the interviews took place face-to-face. The interview questions were given at the beginning of the workshop session to gather data from the participants on their knowledge of the topics at hand. The interview questions were part of the demographic question responses. The interviews were not recorded during any time. The researcher reviewed the notes to develop any future questions the participants may have, just in case there was a need for any follow-up questions. The participants answered the questions with all honesty. After the interviews, the researcher encouraged the participants to communicate face-to-face or via email if they had any questions about the research.

Questionnaires will be used in this segment to collect feedback and impressions from the parents. The questionnaires were answered at the end of the final workshop from the participants feedback.

Data collection for this action research plan occurred over a 6 week period at Cross City Learning Center. The researcher had been given approval to work with the participants at Cross City Learning Center for one hour in the pre-kindergarten school where the researcher was employed. The researcher placed a flyer at the school when recruitment had taken place. The plan met all requirements by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the committee that is

designed to approve, monitor, and review the research because of human involvement to protect their rights as participants.

## **SECTION 3: EVALUATION**

**Findings**

**Reflections and Critique**

**Implications for Professional Practice**

**Recommendations**

**Conclusions**

## REFERENCES

## APPENDICES