

SU Youth Initiative for Early Child Development and Kindergarten Readiness

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Early childhood development is an extremely important area of study and intervention for healthcare providers, as it forms the basis for how children understand themselves, others, and the world around them (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). Additionally, a child's earliest experiences dictate their readiness for learning in a school setting and managing and regulating their response to shifts in the environment (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). Several factors can put a child at risk for stunted development and decreased emotional wellness including but not limited to low socioeconomic status (SES), parental stress, maltreatment, and lack of public awareness about normal child health and development (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). Effective supports for healthy development in this age group implement protective factors that mediate these risks and include promotion, prevention, and intervention strategies (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005).

The following paper describes a collaborative effort between four students in Seattle University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and the Seattle University Youth Initiative (SUYI). The goal is to fill the gaps in existing support that SUYI and its partners provide to local children and families, specifically in the 0 to 5 year age range. This is part of an effort by Seattle University and its partnering organizations to create a "cradle to career" pipeline of support for low-income families in the area. In order to address the needs of this age group and their families, research focused on several aspects that would help us build a comprehensive plan for support. These areas include social emotional development, cognitive development and kindergarten readiness, language development, and cultural competency for the population served. Local organizations and resources were vetted and reviewed for their fit in all of these

areas, and our recommendations are based upon core requirements informed by the research findings.

Key Components of Early Childhood Learning

Social-Emotional Development

A child's ability to effectively regulate their emotions is one of the top indicators of how successful they will be in school and in their relationships (Lerner, 2015). According to a report by Zero to Three, the impact of parenting on children's ability to manage their emotions begins at birth (Zero to Three, 2016). A significant gauge of how well children will learn to manage their own emotions or self-regulate is how well parents do that for themselves (Lerner, 2016). Therefore, programs that adequately address social emotional development in children must take into consideration any unmet emotional needs of the caregivers.

Building up social-emotional competence in children can serve as a protective factor, moderating the effects of risk factors, e.g. poverty and family conflict, on healthy development (Thomson & Carlson, 2017). Left unchecked, risk factors such as the ones stated previously can have lifelong effects on mental and physical health (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015). Many risk factors are inherent in the population served by SUYI, including low SES and an often-changing neighborhood demographic (Seattle University Youth Initiative, n.d.). Children who are exposed to more risk factors especially benefit from interventions aimed at increasing social-emotional competence because they tend to experience higher rates of difficulties socially and emotionally (Thomson & Carlson, 2017). Approximately, between 30% and 41% of preschool children who are categorized as at-risk (i.e. Head Start population) experience social-emotional difficulties as compared to 20% in the general preschool population (Thomson & Carlson, 2017). Therefore, the importance of resources dedicated to healthy social-emotional development is two-fold:

Children experiencing several risk factors have a higher probability of social-emotional disturbance, and an increase in their social-emotional competence can offset the effects of risk factors already in place.

There are several skills associated with social-emotional learning, including problem-solving, listening, labeling emotions, and sharing (Thomson & Carlson, 2017). However, especially from ages 0 to 3, the most important indicator of healthy emotional development is the quality of attachment between caregiver and child (R. Rabin, personal communication, February 15, 2018). Through this attachment, the child learns what to expect from the world, what feels right, and begins to develop the skills necessary for social-emotional competence (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). This attachment is also the basis for healthy brain development in children (R. Rabin, personal communication, February 15, 2018). Many programs focus on a skills-based approach, which tends to overlook children in the 0 to 3 age range whose emotional development is based on this attachment quality rather than in a particular skill set. In order to effectively address the formation of secure attachment, caregivers must have their needs met involving possible unresolved trauma through a trauma-informed, culturally competent approach (R. Rabin, personal communication, February 15, 2018). Therefore, in researching resources in the community that would benefit this age range in healthy emotional development, it was necessary to look not only for skills-based programs but also programs that benefited the attachment quality between child and caregiver.

Early social-emotional development is multifaceted (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). It is affected by factors within the child, their parents, and their environment (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). It is therefore important that programs aimed at helping in this area of development employ a holistic, systemic approach (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). Additionally, effective

approaches to the formation of social emotional cognition include aspects of promotion, prevention, and intervention (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). Promotion could include increased parental awareness of the effects of attachment on healthy brain development (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). An example of prevention is the training of parents by professionals to recognize signs and symptoms of abnormal emotional development, and a possible intervention might be a home visit program (Baghdi & Vacca, 2005). This discussion of developmental needs and effective strategies for building social emotional competence formed the basis for the scores each program received in this area.

Cognitive Development and Kindergarten Readiness

Entering school is one of the most significant milestones for children because fundamental skills taught during this time will carry into adulthood (Mollborn, 2016). Before entering school, at age 4 for Pre-K or age 5 for Kindergarten, there is an immense amount of development that occurs that can impact a child's overall success (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, and Nelson, 2010). Some developmental ecologies that can impact a child's cognitive development and their likelihood to succeed in current and future academics include: socioeconomic status (SES), access to medical care, childcare settings, ethnicity, race, language barriers, and many others (Mollborn, 2016). With this in mind it is our goal to find evidence based practices, programs, and materials that will positively impact cognitive development and kindergarten readiness while addressing these known barriers.

The brain during early childhood development is starting to process words, images, and numbers, while slowly building memory (Broderick, 2010). Learning acquisition during this time is at one of its highest points due to neuron quantity and neural susceptibility to stimuli; meaning that the brain is sensitive to external stimuli whether it is through sight, sound, smell, taste, or

touch (Hunter, 2008). A mixed method approach that uses all of the five senses will help with learning retention and will provide variety to keep children's attention and interest (Hunter, 2008), especially when applied to domain specific skills like writing, reading, and simple mathematics in Pre-K (Welsh et al., 2010). The brain around ages four and five is starting to develop executive functioning skills like working memory, attention, and inhibitory control (Upshur, Heyman, Wenz-Gross, 2017; Welsh et al., 2010). However, childhood stressors like low SES and trauma that occur before the onset of executive functioning skills can have a developmental impact on the brain's ability to retain these skills (Upshur et al., 2017).

The current research on early cognitive development, kindergarten readiness and children from low SES backgrounds focuses on executive functioning skills (EF) and social emotional skills (SE) (Upshur et al., 2017). Both of these areas are important and should be fostered as part of the intervention process to address the multiple facets of cognitive development (Upshur et al., 2017; Welsh et al., 2010). One of the most crucial factors of child success in implemented programs is parent and/or caregiver involvement (Bernier, McMahon, & Perrier, 2017). One study showed that maternal emotional support during a problem solving task at age 3 predicted pre-academic skills at age 4, which demonstrates the importance of parental support when teaching children new skills (Leerkes, Blankson, Calkins, & Macroovich, 2011).

Recommendations from the cognitive development standpoint will consider important aspects such as using the five senses when learning new skills, executive functioning (EF), social emotional (SE) needs, and caregiver participation in lessons and teachings. In addition, making sure that recommendations are mindful of SES barriers is vital to meeting the need of our research population. Monitoring all of these aspects ensures that children will be receiving

developmentally appropriate resources to best serve their academic success in the present and future.

Language

The development of and exposure to language in early childhood is another vital determinant of kindergarten readiness. Early childhood is a critical time for gaining important language skills that are necessary for subsequent education experiences. Of great importance to kindergarten readiness is the development of emergent literacy skills, which aid in the process of acquiring reading-related and writing-related skills. This process begins as early as infancy when children gain awareness of the meaning of language and progress to include preschool aged pre-reading activities such as naming and sounding letters (Dexter & Stacks, 2014). Children who are unable to master these necessary language skills tend to fall behind their peers in terms of school success and struggle with catching up. According to Dexter and Stacks (2014), “a child who has low emergent literacy skills when he or she enters kindergarten has an 84% chance of being a poor reader with poor comprehension by 3rd grade. Children not reading well by the end of first grade have a 90% chance of remaining poor readers” (p. 395).

Although children tend to reach vocabulary milestones at similar ages regardless of their native language (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015), social influences are also capable of facilitating acquisition of language skills. One important influence on a child’s language development is the quality of their Home Literacy Environment (HLE). According to Dexter and Stacks (2015), a child’s HLE “Includes the experiences, attitudes, and materials related to literacy that a child experiences and interacts with at home... it is the primary learning environment for children prior to formal schooling” (p. 395). Large-scale studies have supported the importance of a child’s HLE with findings that suggest that family environment characteristics tend to be more

highly associated with children's reading outcomes than the genetic contribution from parent to child (Dexter & Stacks, 2015).

These findings are of importance when considering early learning programs for the SUYI population. Researchers have highlighted income-based discrepancies in children's HLE regarding parental involvement such as, "being less likely to engage their children in instructive behaviors during story time, produce meaningful language during parent-child interactions, have alphabet books in the home, and have one-on-one parent-child reading time" (Dexter & Stacks, 2015, p. 396). Due to these discrepancies, children living in lower-income environments are more likely to encounter reading difficulties in school and these gaps in skills are likely to widen over time (Dexter & Stacks, 2015).

Appropriate programs for this population will look to promote language development in early childhood by improving children's HLE. Evidence-supported methods include increases in early cognitive stimulation (Cates, Dreyer, Berkule, White, Arevalo, & Mendelsohn, 2012), regular shared reading (Raikes, Luze, Brooks-Gunn, Raikes, Pan, Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2006), and improved quality of shared book reading (Dexter & Stacks, 2015). Research suggests that infant cognitive stimulation specifically produced by parental interaction is associated with enhancements in children's language development (Cates et al., 2012). This interaction can take various forms and still produce language enhancements as long as the interaction involves some sort of verbal responsivity on part of the parent. (Cates et al., 2012).

Cultural Competency

Understanding the impact of early childhood development and learning is important, but consideration for the beliefs and traditions of the parents of those children is equally important. Any program that is to be implemented within a community must be culturally competent and

have methods of addressing the various extraneous factors that influence parenting styles, programming needs and opportunities available to a particular demographic. According to a study by Keels (2009), parenting behavior is affected by the safeness of the neighborhood, household conflicts, economic opportunity, social support, awareness of developmental milestones, parent's beliefs around their responsibility in their child's development as well as communication between parent and child, and knowledge of what it means for their child to be kindergarten ready.

Beginning with race, ethnicity and cultural identity, differentiations have been identified among races regarding child development knowledge, importance placed upon literacy, and involvement in shared book reading when parents with children participating in Early Head Start were asked questions regarding their parenting beliefs (Keels, 2009).

European-American mothers answered the most questions correctly on a questionnaire regarding knowledge of child development, 75% strongly agreed that literacy stimulation (talking and reading to young children) is important, and almost 70% of this group of mothers confirmed that they read to their child at least once a day. In comparison, Hispanic, English speaking mothers and African-American mothers scored 10 points lower than European-American mothers on the child development knowledge questionnaire, and less than 55% of Hispanic, English speaking mothers and African-American mothers believed literacy stimulation among young children is important. Only about 50% of the Hispanic, English speaking mothers and African-American mothers read to their child at least once per day. The lowest scoring group in all categories was the Hispanic, Spanish speaking mothers, with only about 30% agreeing talking and reading to young children is important and consistently reading to their children. This

was attributed to the parent observing the ineffectiveness of increasing literacy through shared book reading time with their young children (Keels, 2009).

Effective shared book reading is defined by opportunities for teaching activities and discussion with: the parent naming letters, making the sounds of the identified letters, spelling names and words for their child, and naming shapes and numbers, which are all criteria children should know to be considered kindergarten ready (Keels, 2009).

It is difficult for parents to read a book to a child in a language that is still foreign to them in a way that it going to develop the child's reading skills. To be culturally competent, the programs should focus on offering opportunities for parents to improve their schooling-relating parenting skills, including how to make shared book reading effective for their children, and maximizing their effort while minimizing the required time investment.

Although cultural and ethnic traditions can have a large impact on the way parents raise their children, a 2007 study found that socioeconomic status, rather than race, has more influence on parenting style (Foxy & Timmerman, 2007). While middle- and upper-class parents encourage self-direction, a more authoritative approach, and non-punitive responses to misbehavior, the parenting style of working-class and low SES parents is statistically more authoritarian, with emphasis placed upon conformity, obedience and respect for authority (Foxy & Timmerman, 2007). Rather than the emotional responsiveness and reasoning that occurs with children of higher income parents (Foxy & Timmerman, 2007). In addition, low-income, single parents are more likely to be under psychological distress that makes it difficult for them to continuously demonstrate positive regard and be responsive to their children (Foxy & Timmerman, 2007; Joseph & John, 2008).

Despite the negative undertones that are indicated around low SES parenting styles,

research shows that their parenting behaviors are actually beneficial to their children. Many parent education programs and initiatives push a "supportive parenting" approach, encouraging parents to be non-restrictive, child-oriented in regards to discipline, and authoritative rather than authoritarian (Keels, 2009). In direct contrast, this supportive parenting approach has shown to be less predictive of positive outcomes among minority children and the strict parenting practices frequently displayed among Hispanic and African-American parent result in constructive skill development, such as autonomy (Keels, 2009). Low SES parents focuses on instilling skills in their children required by the parent's current job and similar occupations (Joseph & John, 2008), as well as skills which will help them navigate the reality of their world (Keels, 2009).

Supportive parenting is only appropriate when a parent is preparing their child for a world that they can perceive as safe, accepting, and welcoming. Parents coming from less advantaged communities, specifically minority communities, are unlikely to see the world in this trusting way due to experiences of racism, inequality and living in an unsafe environment (Keels, 2009). Programming directed at supporting families in disadvantaged communities must adapt supportive parenting to be relevant to the experiences of the parents and likely future experiences of their children. Rather than placing emphasis on changing parenting behaviors, parent education should focus on providing the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge about child development and kindergarten readiness that the parent can adapt to their current parenting practices to meet the demands of the child in the environment in which they are being raised (Keels, 2009). The parent education and support offered by the following recommended programs provides the opportunity for input about, and acclimation to, the beliefs held by the parents of the target community.

Program and Material Evaluations

Table 1

Programs/Partnerships

	Social-Emotional Development	Cognitive Development	Language	Cultural Competency	Total Score
NYFS Healthy Start Program Partnership	3	3	3	2	11
Neighborhood House PCHP	1	3	3	2	9
Kaleidoscope Play & Learn	3	3	3	3	12

Note. Each program/partnership was evaluated based on its inclusion of the four major components of early childhood learning. The programs received a score on a scale ranging from 0-3, with 0 indicating no inclusion of the component and a score of 3 indicating that the program meets all of the needs of that component. Each program received a score in each developmental component as well as an overall score.

Table 2

Supplemental Program Evaluations

	Social-Emotional Development	Cognitive Development	Language	Cultural Competency	Total Score
Second Step	1	2	1	2	6
Love.Talk.Play.	2	2	3	3	10
Mind Yeti	1	2	0	1	4

Note. Supplemental materials were evaluated under the same criteria as program and partnership evaluations. It is important to note that only one program made full marks in 2 developmental areas. These materials are meant to fill the gaps missing in the discussed programs/partnerships, and are not meant to stand alone independently as a suggestion.

Program Descriptions and Explanation of Scores

Northshore Youth and Family Services (NYFS) Healthy Start Program Partnership

The Healthy Start program at Northshore Youth and Family Services aims to strengthen young families while promoting health and success for their children through a free and confidential home visiting service. The family support specialists work together with families on a basis of equality and respect, promoting positive parent-child relationships and healthy child development, including optimal brain development. In addition, the program permits families to re-enroll in the program for every new child they have.

All Healthy Start staff (family support specialists) are certified by Parents As Teachers® (PAT), an evidence-based program founded in 1981 that develops curriculum to help home visitors support a parent's role as their child's first teacher (Parents As Teachers, 2018). The program has four primary goals – to increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parent practices, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, prevent child abuse and neglect, and increase children's school readiness and success (Parents As Teachers, 2018). This certification prepares family support specialists to strengthen and empower parents as their child's most important educator.

The PAT® curriculum includes guided parent-child interaction activities, information regarding development centered parenting, and conversations around family well-being (Parents As Teachers, 2018). When planning a home visiting session, family support specialists seek to promote positive parenting behaviors and provide parents with resources and information, which will help them improve their child's developmental skills. Parent-child interaction activities seek to support at least one of the following parenting behaviors – nurturing, designing/guiding,

responding, communicating, or supporting learning. The chosen activity should also be relevant to at least one of the child development domains – language, intellectual/cognitive, social-emotional, or motor. Developmental topics are also discussed during the visit as part of development-centered parenting including but not limited to, promoting healthy births, attachment, discipline, health, nutrition, safety, sleep and transitions/routines. The final area addressed in a home visit is family well-being. The PAT® model focuses not only the child's development and parent behaviors, but also the ways in which the child is affected by their family system. Addressing family well-being also allows for early intervention on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) that could affect the child into adulthood. Home visitors support the families through discussion, family-centered assessment, goal setting and resource connections surrounding basic essentials, education and employment, physical health of the family, mental health and wellness, availability of reliable child care, relationships with their family and friends, and opportunities for recreation and enrichment.

Family support specialists are also trained to conduct child assessments for developmental milestones and identify early indicators of needs for intervention. The compilation of assessments completed span the requirements of the PAT® model, MIECHV, and the agency. The required assessments include Life Skills Progression (for parent and child), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire. These assessments are completed every 6 months until the child grows out of the program at age 3. Developmental milestones are also tracked in an online database, with dates recorded for the emergence of the skill and the mastery of the skill. In conjunction, domestic violence screening, depression screening, and the Home Observation Measurement of the Environment Survey are completed for the parent. The data collected by NYFS Healthy Start

would be available to the university for research purposes, as long as the participating parent has signed a release of information.

Although the university is unable to participate in the home visiting portion of the program, PAT® requires affiliate organizations using their curriculum to host monthly Group Connections for program participants. These groups are designed to follow the same guidelines required for home visits, adapted for multiple families with the additional bonus of socialization for both child and parent. The university would be able to have students participating in early childhood learning or human development to assist with these monthly events, using the recommendations of the participants to decide what parenting behaviors, child development domains, and developmental topics will be addressed. Northshore Youth and Family Services Executive Director, Debbie Farrar, and Healthy Start Supervisor, Amy Lunde have extended an invitation to partner with the Seattle University Youth Initiative in this endeavor. The agency would facilitate one group per month at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School or in a community room at Yesler Terrace in collaboration with students and interested staff at Seattle University.

The Healthy Start program through Northshore Youth and Family Services meets all requirements for social-emotional development. The program, in conjunction with the Parents as Teachers® model, addresses social-emotional needs from both an attachment and skill building standpoint, making it relevant for the entire age range of birth to 5. The program is centered around parent-child interaction, allowing ample opportunity for attachment building, as well as opportunities for children to practice generalizing social-emotional skills to their peers. The Parents as Teachers® model recognizes the importance of family well-being in a child's healthy brain development and consequently connects families to each other as support and to mental health care resources. In addition to recognizing a systemic influence on social-emotional well-

being in childhood, this model incorporates strategies aimed to promote healthy brain development, to prevent or address the harmful effects of ACEs, and allows for intervention by professionally trained staff wherever necessary.

The Healthy Start Program through NYFS meets most of the requirements for the area of cognitive development and kindergarten readiness. Areas that are important to consider for this area are activities that involve the five senses, teaching executive functioning (EF) and social emotional skills (SE), and caregiver participation. This program provides home visits, which allows for more personalized care in many areas, including brain development, EF and SE skills, and caregiver interaction. This program provides care either through home visits or a group visit, which could increase sensory interactions, both levels of functionings, and caregiver participation. The only aspect that was not directly indicated are activities using the five senses however, curriculum could include this based on recommendations at home visits if the child is having sensory related difficulties. Another strong aspect to this program is tracking developmental milestones. Tracking milestones could help detect if a child is falling behind in areas of cognitive development so interventions could be implemented sooner rather than later.

This program partnership also meets all of the needs for language development through the parent-child interaction activities. These activities can be geared towards the promotion of responding, communicating, and supporting learning specifically relevant to language development. As stated previously, cognitive stimulation in the context of parental interaction is associated with enhancements in children's language development (Cates et al., 2012). Teaching parents how to be more responsive to their children can generate more opportunities for parent-child interaction which, in turn, can promote improvements in children's HLEs. Additionally, the presence of staff trained to conduct assessments for developmental milestone provides a safety

net for children who experience difficulties in acquisition of language skills. Early detection of these difficulties provides children with access to the necessary interventions to better support their learning.

From the perspective of cultural competence, the NYFS Healthy Start program meets some of the needs of the target community with the adaptability of the PAT® curriculum and the awareness brought to home culture, human diversity, and multiculturalism incorporated into PAT® certification training. A limited amount of the parent handouts come in a variety of languages, including Chinese, Arabic, French, Burmese and Nepali, and the entire curriculum is available in Spanish. Despite these positive aspects, there are no resources in the PAT® curriculum directed towards the needs of the target demographic, specifically the acclimation of an immigrant parent raising their child in American culture. Two of the PAT® certified staff members currently work with immigrant families within the Latino community, so it would be the responsibility of the certified staff facilitating the program, alongside the students and parents participating, to adapt the program to be more culturally relevant to the needs of the community based on their current experience.

Neighborhood House Parent Child Home Program

The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) is an evidence-based early literacy, parenting, and school readiness program aimed towards closing the achievement gap by providing low-income families with the resources needed to prepare their children for school and life success (Parent-Child Home, 2014). The program serves families who face barriers due to poverty, isolation, limited education opportunities, language and literacy differences, and other obstacles to educational resources (Parent-Child Home Program, 2014). PCHP provides families with a two year service of 30-minute twice-weekly home visits. During each visit, a literacy specialist

gifts the family with a high-quality book or educational toy that is used to model reading, conversation, and play activities. These activities are designed to stimulate parent-child interaction, develop language and literacy skills, and enhance school readiness (Parent-Child Homee, 2014). In addition, each family's literacy specialist is bilingual in the family's native language and shares a cultural background with them (Parent-Child Home, 2014). PCHP is locally available through Neighborhood House, a social service agency located in the Puget Sound region that works to address the needs of entire families with a focus on low-income community members, public housing residents, immigrants, and refugees. (Neighborhood House, 2018). The Neighborhood House PCHP is available to low-income families with children ages 16 to 30 months (Neighborhood House, 2018). PCHP through Neighborhood House costs approximately \$4,300 to deliver per child, however, this cost is covered by the agency and offered to the families free of charge (R. John, personal communication, March, 2018). In addition, families are only allowed to participate in the program once, regardless of whether or not they have more children who could benefit from the program in the future.

A partnership between Neighborhood House and SUYI could take several potential forms including the involvement of students and staff to assist families in filling out application forms, housing graduation ceremonies for families upon completion of the program, or collection of data regarding the effects of a PCHP on the specific demographics of the SUYI population. The Neighborhood House PCHP Site Coordinator capable of serving the SUYI area has expressed interest in a possible partnership taking any of the previously mentioned forms with SUYI and additionally stated that this plan would be helpful to their team (R. John, personal communication, February 28, 2018). The contact information for this individual has been provided for further coordination.

The Parent-Child Home Program by Neighborhood House met few needs in the social-emotional category. While the Parent-Child Home Program model recognizes the importance of parent-child interaction in all domains of healthy development (Parent-Child Home, 2014), it does little to address underlying issues that may contribute to barriers in forming secure attachment. It seems to focus more on a cognitive or skills-based approach to forming these parent-child bonds, providing books and toys, and things brought into the home by staff (Parent-Child Home, 2014). It is of some concern that more emphasis is not placed on what is going on inside the home and the family system, as this will have already played a major role in forming the basis for healthy social-emotional development. If the Parent-Child Home Program were implemented for the population served by SUYI, it would need to be complemented with supplemental programming or materials that connect families with mental health resources or otherwise provide support to the family system. The Parent-Child Home Program website lists social-emotional development as a domain necessary for school readiness (Parent-Child Home, 2014), but in practice it appears to be far more focused on the cognitive and language aspects of school readiness and overlook basic needs in promoting a foundation for healthy social-emotional development.

The PCHP provides activities and teachings for children involving high quality books and toys to make a strong impact on cognitive development. The foundation for this program encourages play with toys and books, which helps with levels of executive functioning (EF) and using stimuli to engage the five senses. In addition, the engagement of parent-child interaction is fundamental when teaching children new skills. The efforts of the assigned literacy specialist, parent, and child triad working on literacy skills could inadvertently engage social emotional skills (SE) and parent child interaction. The program also includes two visits a week, which

helps with progression of learning and working memory. With these factors considered the PCHP received full marks for cognitive development practices.

The PCHP meets all of the needs for early language development. According to an ORS Impact study (2016) on the long-term academic outcomes of Washington PCHP participants, graduates of the program scored significantly higher on third grade reading achievement tests than comparison groups. The weekly activities of PCHP are specifically designed to nurture the development of language and literacy skills. PCHP promotes an increase in both parent-child verbal interactions and shared book-reading through its delivery of new books and educational toys. In addition to supporting parent-child interactions, the gifted books and toys also foster improvements in the child's HLE since the families get to keep the books and toys provided by the program, thus increasing the amount of educational materials available in the home.

The partnership between SUYI and Neighborhood House differs from the aforementioned partnership in terms of SUYI's direct involvement in child development for families, but the expectation for cultural competence still stands. Since SUYI would be helping families apply for the PCHP, that program is under scrutiny for cultural competence as part of the recommendation. The national website for the PCHP states that 40% of the families served through the program are non-english speaking (Parent-Child Home, 2014). When examining the program, it seemingly relies on home visitors to be sensitive to the needs of the population they are working with rather than providing curriculum that helps guide home visitors to being culturally competent, although credit is given for providing literacy specialists who are able to speak the home language of the client. In a recent report examining the long-term impact of the PCHP in King County, identifies a diverse and inclusive population of families served, with nearly 80% of participants speaking another language besides English in their home (Parent-

Child Home, 2016). Managing a diverse client base is not sufficient evidence to assure cultural competency. The national website has no indicators of how the model trains or prepares home visitors to be culturally aware when encountering a family, so assumptions cannot be made about the capabilities surrounding this need. Additional vetting of the cultural competence of home visitors would be required to increase the score. It is also important to not that cultural competence has no impact on the proposal of SUYI being involved with Neighborhood House by hosting graduation ceremonies on campus.

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn is an evidence-based program developed in King County for families with children ranging from ages birth to 5 (Child Care Resources, n.d.). Designed by Child Care Resources, this program aims to assist with school readiness and basic early living skills (Child Care Resources, n.d.). According to a 2016 annual report, its participants are mainly people of color living below the federal poverty line, which is defined as an income of approximately \$24,300 yearly for a family of four (ORS Impact, 2016). Additionally, the majority of participants in Kaleidoscope Play & Learn are from households where the primary language spoken is one other than English (ORS Impact, 2016).

Groups meet weekly for 90-minutes and includes structured and unstructured play as well as learning and connection opportunities for caregivers (Child Care Resources, 2010). Parallel to skill building through play for the children, Kaleidoscope aims to equip caregivers with resources to promote knowledge of healthy development in their children as well as connect caregivers with each other for support (Child Care Resources, 2010). The adults who bring their children to Kaleidoscope and participate in the program alongside them can be parents or anyone else who provides care for the child as a family member, friend, or neighbor (Child Care

Resources, 2010). Family, Friend, and Neighbor care (FFN) is the most common form of non-parental care provided to young children in the United States (Child Care Resources, 2010).

Currently, Child Care Resources is partnered with Chinese Information Services to deliver Kaleidoscope programming to the Beacon Hill and International District areas. There are, however, several gaps in services to the area served by SUYI, due to the population density in this area (L. Conley, personal communication, February 26, 2018). The population mainly includes families of color and immigrant/refugee families with low household income, the primary audience for Kaleidoscope, so they do not currently have the ability to cover this entire area (L. Conley, personal communication, February 26, 2018). Child Care Resources additionally wants to develop culturally relevant programming for this area including Somali and other East African cultures, African-American, homeless and transitional housing, Vietnamese, and Latinx (L. Conley, personal communication, February 26, 2018). In order to provide this programming and expand service delivery to this area, Lisa Conley, the Program Coordinator for Kaleidoscope, provided contacts for potential partners in this community including Seattle Public Library, Seattle Housing Authority, and Seattle Public Schools (L. Conley, personal communication, February 26, 2018). Lisa is also willing to meet directly with a contact person from SUYI to discuss partnerships and development of these programs for the SUYI population (L. Conley, personal communication, February 26, 2018).

Funding for Kaleidoscope is handled by Best Starts for Kids of King County. Best Starts for Kids posted a Request for Proposals (RFP) on February 27, 2018. This RFP allows non-profits, schools, or other organizations to request funding for Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups in their area, and Best Starts will invest a total of \$400,000 in Kaleidoscope groups in King County annually. All proposals are due April 10, 2018. The cost of running Kaleidoscope for 1

year is \$15,000, and contracts are renewable for up to two years. In order to fund a Kaleidoscope group in the SUYI neighborhoods, Seattle University could partner with a local nonprofit or organization to submit a proposal to Best Starts. Technical assistance on completing the proposal is also available through the Best Starts website. It is also important to consider that \$15,000 is the maximum yearly amount Best Starts will award to fund a group that meets weekly for a minimum of 48 weeks per calendar year, and it is possible to receive partial funding.

From the perspective of social emotional development, Kaleidoscope Play & Learn received the highest possible score. Kaleidoscope offers resources that assist parents and caregivers in their own social emotional well-being, including opportunities to connect with one another and information on access to mental health resources (Child Care Resources, 2010). The importance of a nurturing relationship is emphasized and built upon in addition to skills-based social-emotional learning opportunities for the children (Child Care Resources, 2010). Kaleidoscope additionally utilizes a combination of strategies that include promotion, prevention, and intervention efforts such as modeling, providing access to trustworthy developmental resources, and providing one-on-one support (Child Care Resources, 2010). Finally, the child's emotional wellness is recognized as a product of a multifaceted system, including the child him or herself, the caregiver, and the environment, and Kaleidoscope aims to provide programming that addresses all three (Child Care Resources, 2010).

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn curriculum has obtained full marks for teaching structured play, parent participation, and skill building that will all impact overall cognitive development. Structured play will especially help with engaging the five senses through singing, dancing, and using toys. In addition, the design of this curriculum also encourages connection with other children in the program. This will help foster social emotional (SE) skills that are integral for

overall cognitive development. Lastly, the group environments helps facilitate executive functioning (EF) skills like attention shifting, working memory, and inhibitory control (Upshur et al., 2017). In the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn curriculum, children will be able to learn and practice using these skills, which will help them best prepare for entering Kindergarten (Upshur et al., 2017; Diamond, et al., 2000).

The use of both structured and unstructured play as a learning tool in Kaleidoscope Play & Learn permitted the program to receive the highest score for language development requirements. As stated previously, parent-child interactions are associated with enhancements in language development so long as the interactions include parental verbal responsivity (Cates et al., 2012). Kaleidoscope's method of learning through play intrinsically promotes parent-child verbal interactions thus supporting language development of its participants.

Given that Kaleidoscope has proven success in working with diverse families with potential language barriers, the program received full marks for cultural competency. The program is adaptable and inclusive of others in the child's community who may have influence on their developmental process. This would benefit the target community as many parents use family, friends or neighbors as childcare when necessary. Kaleidoscope provides those other caregivers the opportunity to be just as aware of the ways in which they can positively impact the child's development as the parent. Although there may be room for growth in adapting Kaleidoscope specifically to the target demographic, so that groups have the maximum impact with minimum time investment, the program is fully capable of adjusting and conforming to the needs of the community being served.

Supplemental Materials

Second Step

The Second Step Early Learning curriculum (SSEL) is an evidence-based program that teaches children self-regulation and social emotional skills to help with Kindergarten readiness (Second Step, 2018). Created by The Committee for Children, the Second Step program teaches concepts such as learning, empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, problem solving, and transitioning to kindergarten (Second Step, 2018). The SSEL curriculum is only one component of the Second Step Suite Program, which has curriculums starting from early learning (Pre-K) all the way to Middle School (Grade 8), and has additional units for bullying prevention and child protection that can be implemented between Kindergarten and grade 5 (Second Step, 2018). The program creators recommend that the SSEL curriculum be taught over a 28 week period through activities, “brain builder” games, and small group work; this format allows for a slow progressive understanding where one section will help with the implementation of the next (Committee for Children, 2014; Diamond et al., 2000). Cultural competency, cost, and limitations are also important factors to consider when discussing this curriculum as a viable option for our target population.

It is imperative to examine the Second Step curriculum from a financial standpoint to best assist our targeted population over the long term. The standalone Second Step curriculum kit costs approximately \$450 however with the child protection unit included, the cost is approximately \$650. Also, if additional materials need to be purchased the costs range from \$17 to \$36 It is important to note that purchased material may be reused for other programs, or with training groups.

While the SSEL curriculum is primarily focused on social-emotional learning, it would be insufficient as a standalone resource to address the needs of the population served by SUYI for several reasons. This program has developed a well-researched curriculum that aims to teach its pre-kindergarten students strategies to build social-emotional competence (Second Step, 2018). The program is an excellent home or classroom resource for children who are developmentally able to attend to and internalize the material, but it does little to serve the more basic emotional needs of the younger children in the 0 to 3 year age range. Additionally, the program would need to be adapted to meet the needs of specific populations because social-emotional development is a systemic process that is affected by several factors outside of the child. If Seattle University were to decide to implement this curriculum with the population discussed in this paper, they would be encouraged to train parents in the community to teach the curriculum, who could more specifically address the environmental risk factors in this area that can impede social-emotional well-being. Finally, implementing this curriculum would do little, if anything, to address the emotional wellness of caregivers and families, an important piece of childhood social-emotional development.

The Second Step Early Learning Curriculum (SSEL) has a primary focus for teaching social emotional skills for pre-kindergarten students ages three and four. In relationship to cognitive development, we ranked SSEL for meeting some marks of the presented criteria. Activities through this curriculum do intend to challenge both executive functioning skills (EF) and social emotional skills (SE), and the SSEL program implements activities that use the five senses in order to engage children through different stimuli for optimal retention. However, our target population are children ages 0 to 5. This program only accommodates 40% of our intended age range, which is something to consider in terms of implementation gaps.

The SSEL curriculum is not formulated to promote any language or literacy skills in young children. However, due to the fact that the activities included in the curriculum may create possibilities for children to practice verbal interactions with other children, SSEL has the potential to meet a few of the needs of language development. Therefore, it is not recommended that SSEL be used as a standalone program for early childhood learning. Rather, it is recommended to act as a possible social-emotional supplement to programs already established to promote language development.

In terms of cultural competency, the SSEL curriculum materials are available in both English and Spanish, however our target population has greater language diversity than what is currently offered. However, The Committee for Children has adapted their Second Step program globally to accommodate cultural awareness and language. Currently, the Second Step curriculum has been implemented in Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Northern Iraq, Slovakia, Sweden, and Turkey. With this in mind, the Second Step curriculum could be adapted to best serve our target population (Second Step, 2018).

Love Talk Play

Love Talk Play is a campaign that helps parents understand the benefits of using love, talk, and play as a way to help children learn and develop. The Love Talk Play campaign is sponsored by Thrive by Five Washington, the Department of Early Learning, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instructions, and is supported by many other statewide and local organizations (Love Talk Play, 2018). In addition, University of Washington's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS) has teamed up with Love Talk Play to research the science behind why love, talk, and play are important for early cognitive development

(University Washington Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, 2012). The areas of love, talk, and play are critical for overall development through childhood and are the foundation for building connections, learning language, and hands on exploration. Parents may use the activities on the web page for inspiration on how to interact with their child while at the grocery store, riding in the car, and other every day outings.

Love Talk Play met most of the needs for social-emotional development, but not all. Love Talk Play provides opportunities for attachment building, using brain research done by University of Washington I-LABS to form the understanding for children's social-emotional needs (Love Talk Play, 2018). The activities under the category "Love" allow easy ways for caregivers to incorporate attachment-strengthening activities or techniques into everyday activities, such as diapering children or helping them brush their teeth (Love Talk Play, 2018). Additionally, the website for Love Talk Play provides several resources for parents, recognizing the importance of their well-being in creating a nurturing environment for their children (Love Talk Play, 2018). The aspect that is lacking from the perspective of social-emotional development is the opportunity for intervention. The format of Love Talk Play is entirely self-guided, so it would not suffice as a stand-alone support program. Rather, it would be recommended as supplemental to another program or programs, as an enrichment resource.

Love Talk Play only meets some criteria for cognitive development. Executive functioning (EF) and social-emotional (SE) skills could be met through each area of love, talk and play. One of the activities that supports using the five senses for teaching has a parent interact with their child at the grocery store by asking their child how an apple feels, such as whether it is smooth or rough (Love Talk Play, 2018). Ideas and resources also include parent interaction when teaching or providing emotional support. We ranked Love Talk Play as meeting

some marks, but not all because of the level to which resources were being implemented. The campaign will not be uploading any additional resources or activity ideas to the website, which could be unreliable in terms of implementation for parent. The lack of concrete instruction also could be a problem for parents who are worried about starting the process of developmental growth activities.

Love Talk Play meets all of the requirements for language development. The website includes an entire section dedicated to talking with one's child. The resources and tips provided teach parents various ways in which they can integrate verbal interactions with their child into everyday life. As mentioned previously, stimulation that includes verbal responsivity on part of the parent has been found to enhance language development in young children. In addition, Love Talk Play includes activities geared towards infants, which promotes an earlier focus on language skill development.

This resource fulfills all aspects of cultural competency and therefore received full marks. The activities and information provided comes in multiple languages, including Somalian which is one of the prevalent languages in the target demographic. Love Talk Play is also led by the parent, so the parent has the opportunity to adapt the materials to their parenting style and beliefs.

Mind Yeti

Mind Yeti is a cell phone application that “helps kids calm down, focus their attention, and get ready for whatever's next” (Mind Yeti, 2018). This application has 15 free guided sessions that use stories, meditations, and focusing techniques to help children connect better with themselves. Session areas include getting the mind ready to calm down, to focus, to get along, to reset, to create, and go to sleep. In addition, “power boost” sessions are available to

teach kindness and gratitude, deep breathing, how to re-center thoughts, and to notice feelings in the mind and body. Lastly, there is always a free featured session that delves a little deeper; the current featured session is called “The New Kid”, which states that “a small act of kindness can have big effects on your mood” (Mind Yeti, 2018). The Mind Yeti app is free however, for an additional cost, educators and parents can have access to the full library. Options are provided for \$10 per month, \$72 per year, or \$799 per year for schools (accommodates up to 40 users). When upgrading to the premium options the user will have full access to the entire Mind Yeti library, with lessons being added regularly.

From a social-emotional standpoint, Mind Yeti meets only scant needs for this age group. This curriculum is meant for children between Kindergarten through grade 5, so only a few lessons would be applicable and could be adapted for our target demographic. Some of the lesson could be adapted for toddlers three and four years old such as deep breathing, getting along with others, and going to sleep and could be helpful for mindfulness among the children we are serving. The need for adult assistance with the activities could provide opportunity for parent-child bonding. However, truly internalizing the lessons learned in Mind Yeti requires some developmental skills that are likely absent in this age group. Mind Yeti is recommended only as a supplemental support in this area and will be more useful when children are old enough to have more control over their emotions and a greater understanding of why this is an important skill. Techniques taught in this app will only become effective interventions if the child understands when and how to use them. Additionally, because it is an application developed for widespread usage, it would have to be used in tandem with a program that addresses the more specific needs of the population in order to moderate the effects of risk factors on social emotional development in that particular demographic.

Mind Yeti from a cognitive development standpoint meets only a few of the presented criteria. The app does use imagery through stories and lessons that could engage the five senses. The application also encourages the practice of executive functioning skills (EF) especially inhibitory control, and also touches on areas of social emotional (SE) skills both directly and indirectly. However, our target population age range is from birth to age 5. Mind Yeti may be too advanced for the younger end of our target population in relationship to cognitive development. As stated some lessons like deep breathing, getting along with others, and getting ready for bed could be suitable for children younger than 5 years old. Even though a few lessons are developmentally appropriate at this age, implementation could help children be comfortable with the application for future use. Mind Yeti (2018) also suggests that parents and families who want to start lessons with their toddlers should do the lessons together as a way to model for the child how activities like deep breathing can help the mind and body.

Mind Yeti did not meet any of the needs for early language development. The app is primarily focused on mindfulness practices for young children and does not include any language components. Mind Yeti could potentially be a supplement for programs that promote language development but lack social-emotional development components. However, this app would not be recommended for promoting language or literacy skills.

Regarding cultural competency, the Mind Yeti app doesn't offer any opportunity for adaptation to the cultural needs of the target demographics. In addition, considering the target demographic, the Mind Yeti app is currently offered in English, which could be a barrier for our population seeing that their fluency is in other languages. Despite that, parents could adjust the lessons when participating with their children to be more representative of their parenting style and beliefs.

Conclusion

Several factors went into the consideration of each of the programs and supplemental materials in determining their appropriateness for the specific population. The Kaleidoscope Play & Learn program earned the highest marks, with the highest possible score of 3 given across the board for all factors considered. More information is needed on cost of running the program and exactly how a partnership would look between Seattle University and Child Care Resources (CCR). Likely, Seattle University would be assisting in closing the gap in coverage to the neighborhoods in the SUYI area by reaching out to potential partners in that area and perhaps assisting with some of the funding to help CCR develop more specific programming for this population. Additionally, the Northshore Youth and Family Services (NYFS) Healthy Start Program received very high marks, and their director has indicated interest in a partnership with Seattle University. The program would need to be adapted to address the specific needs of immigrant families in the SUYI neighborhoods. Future directions in this partnership could include planning how to adapt this program to better suit these needs or identifying supplemental materials or programs that already do this. Neighborhood House has also indicated an interest in partnering with Seattle University to provide their Parent Child Home Program to residents in the SUYI neighborhoods. A home visiting program would be advantageous, but there is a need for supplemental materials or programming regarding social emotional development as well as increased training in cultural competency for the home visitors in order for the authors of this paper to feel confident that this program will have the desired effects on kindergarten readiness and development.

Any of the supplemental materials can be used in conjunction with the programs run by partnering organizations. Love Talk Play received the highest overall and has the added

advantage of being free of cost. The other two materials, Second Step and Mind Yeti, may be helpful in bridging the gap between the 0 to 5 year olds and the Kindergarten through fifth graders, as they use more skill-based learning curricula that require cognitive development at the higher end of the 0 to 5 year age range and beyond. It is encouraged that supplemental materials also be used to provide take-home items for parents in order to increase confidence and access to resources during the time in between contact with professionals. Additionally, wherever possible, it is encouraged to allow families in the community to have leadership roles in programs, whether by becoming trained to facilitate sessions or sitting on a board to help determine the direction of programming. This will inevitably help with cultural competency of the program as well as boost confidence in parents, as they are taking an active role in promoting their child's and other children's healthy development in their community.

In moving forward with these partnerships, the gaps, if any, in social-emotional development, cognitive development, language development, and cultural competency should be addressed. Seattle University can work with partnering organizations and consult supplemental materials to determine how best to do so. Additionally, the staff at SUYI and collaborators will need to figure out exactly what a partnership would look like for any organization with which they decide to partner. Families in the community should play an active role in the implementation of the programs provided by community partners to provide them with opportunities for leadership as well as ensure greater cultural competency.

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