

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Program  
Westchester Institute for Human Development  
University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
And  
New York Medical College  
*Team Project Abstract*  
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**Title:** Examining Kindergarten School Readiness Skills for Children with Special Needs

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**Proposal Description:** The Early Development Instrument (EDI) was administered in a suburban community to assess Kindergarten readiness across five developmental domains: emotional maturity, physical health and well-being, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge, social competence. Our study analyzes this data set for school readiness of children with special needs, that is, children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in comparison to children without special needs.

**Objectives and Problem Statement:** Our study seeks to examine the predictors of school readiness of Kindergarten students and determine what, if any, differences are there in school readiness for children with an IEP versus those without an IEP.

**Method:** The EDI, a population-based measure, was completed by teachers to determine student performance across the five developmental domains. 18 teachers in 18 Kindergarten classrooms completed the EDI on 357 students, of which 30 children had an IEP and 327 children did not have an IEP.

**Community Partners:** Karen Mendel from Open Door Family Medical Center and Dr. Zoila Tazi from the Mercy College Department of Early Childhood Education.

**Results:** Several factors were found to be linked to school readiness including English as a first language, gender, ethnicity, and, in particular, having a parent volunteer in school. Of these factors, having a parent volunteer in school was significantly related to higher scores on all 5 domains measuring school readiness. Surprisingly, poverty and having attended an early childhood program (ECP) were not linked to any of the developmental domains. It was found that the majority of children living in poverty attended an ECP suggesting that the ECP potentially mitigated the potential effects of poverty. This possibility is an area for future research. For children with IEPs, there was a significant and positive relationship with General Knowledge and Communication as well as Physical Health and Well Being. One possible explanation for this finding is that students with IEPs typically receive specialized services in speech and OT.

**Conclusion:** It should be noted that the EDI was not developed in the US and was not meant to be used for individual assessment but rather as a population-based measure. Furthermore, there is no universal measure of school readiness. Our research highlights the need to develop a more systematic approach to measuring Kindergarten readiness.