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Forest Kindergarten the Effects and the Perceptions of Parents

Forest Kindergarten and the Perception of Parents

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Departmental Honors Thesis
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
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Abstract

This study investigates one public school forest kindergarten in the southeastern U.S. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of parents of a kindergarten classroom context that is somewhat unique for U.S. public schools (forest kindergarten). The researcher believes that there is a unique perception that parents of forest kindergarten students have, and this study seeks to identify and describe them in order to inform 1) the participants and participating school system so that they can make informed decisions for this and future school-context reform models, and 2) the education research community at large so that U.S. public school efforts to enact forest kindergarten learning contexts can become part of the international conversation on early childhood learning contexts.

The researcher's questions were: What are the perceptions of parents that applied for their child to be in forest kindergarten compared to the parents that didn't apply for forest kindergarten?

The researcher is interested in the differences and similarities between parents of forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten students. The findings indicate that parents of forest kindergarten students believe that forest kindergarten will allow students a better transition to school while still achieving grade level academic performance.

Forest Kindergarten the Effects and the Perception of Parents

In the forest area several students worked together to create a house. The students used large sticks and branches to create the structure. As students worked to build the house, one student picked up several leaves and said, “let’s use these maple tree leaves”. Other students continued to pick up leaves and name them as they put them in the house. Earlier that day in class, the children learned about different types of leaves and trees in the area around the school.

This excerpt from an observation at Mountain View Elementary School (a pseudonym, all proper names are pseudonyms) suggests the play based learning aspect of forest school. Students are immersed in their natural surroundings and make connections to content being taught.

What Does Forest Kindergarten Look Like?

According to Larimore, forest kindergarten is an

educational program which provides daily outdoor experiences for children 3-6 year olds, with limited or no indoor facilities. Children in such programs tend to spend 70-100% of their time outdoors, in a nature immersion experience, in which the curriculum emerges from the daily activities” (p. 33).

This type of learning environment is very different from a traditional classroom. The daily tasks of a forest kindergarten are more interdisciplinary and play based than a traditional classroom.

A primary school in Kent, UK follows the forest classroom model and is an example of what a forest classroom can look like. The class convenes in a small wooded area that is surrounded by fields and green lands. Their only shelter is a large tent that has blankets and books. The kindergarten class runs from 9am-2pm three days a week and 9am-12pm two days a

week. The students attend school in all weather, so parents are given clear instructions as to what their child should wear. The class includes time to take breaks where the students gather around a fire where food and drinks are prepared. The activities done in class foster imagination through play based learning and nature exploration. The curriculum encourages students to make connections between the content and their surroundings. The teacher gathers records of the students' learning through photographs to show learning and meet government requirements (Knight, 2016).

A forest school in Denmark follows the forest school model, but with variations that make it unique. This particular school has a building that the forest class uses, but the majority of their time is spent in their outdoor classroom area. The route to the outdoor classroom area from the building is marked. In the area, there were miniature tight ropes for the students to climb on and the students are even encouraged to climb trees. Like the school in Kent, the teachers used photographs as a means to track their learning. The students are provided with magnifiers and digging tools to support them in their exploration. The environment was student-led, with the teachers as facilitators of their learning (Knight, 2013).

As seen through these examples, forest kindergarten is not the same everywhere, but rather it evolves and adjusts to its surroundings and circumstances. But, there are defining aspects about a forest school that point to it being a forest classroom.

First, children in forest kindergarten classes spend the majority of their time outside in the outdoor classroom and go out in all weather (Larimore, 2016). "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing" (Knight, 2013 p. 19). Forest programs make sure that students are appropriately dressed to be outside so that they can be safe in all weather. This requirement will

look different for each program based on the climate and their regulations for severe weather, but a defining characteristic of a forest class is that they spend most of their time in their outdoor classroom.

Another key characteristic of a forest kindergarten class is that it has an outdoor area where they spend their time outdoors, referred to as their outdoor “classroom”. Outdoor learning is not limited to only using forests as a classroom, but rather using any nature-rich outdoor space that may allow for outdoor-oriented learning experiences. Some schools may use a field or a nearby wooded area as their “classroom” where they will spend most of their time (Knight, 2013).

Instructional Activities - Content in Forest Kindergarten

Some may assume that a forest kindergarten class is mainly focused on science and science skills. However, a key aspect of forest kindergarten is that it works to integrate all disciplines as effectively as possible. A study on the seasons changing and why leaves fall may begin by gathering fallen leaves and discussing observations. A lesson on addition may begin by gathering items to count. It allows students to “make connections between subjects and contextualize learning experiences” (Knight, 2011 p. 36).

This style of learning is play based and “has a strong focus on personal inquiry, thinking skills, and developing independent learners” (Knight, 2011 p. 36). Students in a forest kindergarten classroom are allowed to wander within their designated area and explore their surroundings through play. Teachers provide “exciting, direct and relevant learning experiences...in a real-life context” (Knight, 2011 p. 36). The students become explorers with

their learning as they take the lead with their own learning experiences, given the freedom of an outdoor, hands on, experiential learning environment.

Outdoor learning experiences like forest kindergarten are not a traditional means of learning in kindergarten. So why do parents choose for their child's first major educational experience to be non-traditional? Why do parents choose forest kindergarten? This study focuses on the perceptions of parents that applied for their child to attend forest kindergarten and parents that didn't apply for forest kindergarten. Its goal is to find commonalities and differences between parents that applied for forest kindergarten and parents that did not apply.

The School of Study: Mountain View Elementary School

The school of study, Mountain View Elementary School, is a suburban school in the southeastern part of the United States. It is located roughly 5 miles outside of a downtown area with a population of about 180,000. The area is surrounded by mountains and valleys. Mountain View Elementary School has approximately 650 students. 40% of the student body are minority students (majority of which are African American), 10% are English learners, and 48% are economically disadvantaged. The building is a single story building with one main entrance and three main hallways that lead to all the classrooms. Nearby the school is a walking track that many people from the community use.

Forest Kindergarten at Mountain View Elementary School

Mountain View Elementary School's forest kindergarten class uses an undeveloped space between the school building and a nearby neighborhood. This space is used primarily for the forest kindergarten class. It includes a grassy area with a covered blackboard, small forested area with trails, and a creek (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein 2017).

Before the class begins to go outside for learning, the teacher spends time at the beginning of the school year teaching the students what their routines will be like in their outdoor classroom. This means showing students the boundaries of the space, how to interact with nature, how to interact with each other, etc. (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein 2017). It is very important for a class to learn routines about going outside in their outdoor classroom before they actually do, for the safety of the children, nature, and those around them (Knight, 2013).

The kindergarten students spend half a day outside (3 hours) and all day one day a week. The class goes outside in all weather, except during serious thunderstorms or other dangerous conditions. They adjust their schedule to go outside depending on the season. During the warmer months they go outside in the morning to avoid the heat and in the colder months they go outside in the afternoon to avoid the chilly mornings (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein 2017). Students are appropriately dressed and prepared for all weather. By going outside in all weather they are immersed in their surroundings and it connects them with the natural world around them and helps them better learn and understand what is around them (Knight, 2011). This forest kindergarten class contains all the defining characteristics of a forest kindergarten classroom, but should be considered a hybrid model because the students spend time inside a classroom and outside in the forest. On average, the class spends about half of their time inside the classroom and half their time outside in the forest.

The subject forest kindergarten class topics followed that of the state standards for the grade level, but their instruction was supported with play-based learning. Play-based learning is learning that happens with hands on activities or play (Knight, 2013). The curriculum that was being taught in the four other kindergarten classrooms was also being taught in the forest

kindergarten class, but by different means (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein 2017). For example, a math lesson on addition may be taught by gathering similar items and counting how many there are total. A literacy lesson may include writing a piece about the observations they make in nature.

Mountain View had the means for only one forest kindergarten class. During registration for the next year, parents could indicate whether or not they'd like their child to be considered for forest kindergarten. More families applied for the program than one class could accommodate, so administration chose to select students through a random lottery. The students that were not chosen for forest kindergarten were placed in one of the other traditional kindergarten classes (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein 2017).

Methods

At the beginning of the school year, the research team sent a survey to parents of each student in traditional kindergarten and forest kindergarten (refer to Appendix). The questions covered topics such as the child's activities and interests, sleep habits, fine and gross motor skills, expression of emotions, interactions with others, and the parents concerns and expectations for kindergarten. The goal of this survey was to gain a better understanding of the types of families that applied for forest kindergarten and the perception of parents who chose forest kindergarten.

This study uses the results from all parents who responded that they applied for forest kindergarten, regardless if they were randomly chosen for forest kindergarten or not. Because this study focuses on the perception of parents that want their children in forest kindergarten, their information is still considered useful.

Limitations

Some limitations should be noted. Mountain View Elementary had a late start to their forest kindergarten program this year and are still working on the process within the classroom. This limited what the researcher could see because the class was not functioning at what it normally would be at this time in the school year. Another limitation was time. This study was conducted in one semester which affected the number of observations and surveys. This study does not include interviews with teachers (both forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten). This would have helped the researcher to further understand the teacher's ideas about their class and how they work to integrate instruction with the outdoor environment. Lastly, the number of parent participants was a limitation. With greater participation, the researcher gains a better holistic view of both the traditional kindergarten parents and forest kindergarten parents.

Participation

The surveys were sent out to all kindergarten classes at Mountain View Elementary, including the forest class. The surveys were identical, so each family received the same survey. After we received the initial responses from the surveys, we sent out follow up surveys to get missing pieces from families (consent forms, particular questions in the survey, etc) and to resend a copy of the survey from families who didn't respond.

Not all teachers were equal participants. From one class in particular, we only received 12% participation. From two of the four traditional kindergarten classes, we received about 70% participation, the other traditional kindergarten class had about 27% participation. The forest kindergarten class had 70% participation. The total number of forest kindergarten parents that responded were 23 and the number of traditional kindergarten parents that responded were 23.

Survey Results - Qualitative

The survey results are organized by stating and defining the question asked to the participants, showing the results from both forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten and lastly followed by a discussion of what the results showed the research team.

Question: Why Did You Apply for Forest Kindergarten?

The researcher asked, “*Why did you apply for forest kindergarten?*” and “*Why did you choose to stay with traditional kindergarten?*” These questions were asked in an effort to determine motivation and perceptions of parents that applied for forest kindergarten and the parents that chose to stay with traditional kindergarten.

Results: forest kindergarten. Of the parents that applied for forest kindergarten, they all gave different answers as to why they applied. The most common reason among 83% of parents, was that they chose to apply because of the nature and outdoor aspect of forest kindergarten. These parents commented on how their children enjoy the outdoors. One parent said, “She loves being outside in nature. ” Another parent commented on the benefits he/she sees for his/her child being outside, “I want him to be able to move and be outside.”

Another lesser commonality between about 25% of parents was a hope that it would help their child transition to school better. A family that traveled extensively said, “Forest K seemed to offer an option for easier transitions from travel and adventure to the classroom.” Another parent said, “She is a young 5 year old and we thought it would be an easier transition into school.”

Results: traditional kindergarten. Of the parents that explained why they chose to stay with traditional kindergarten, 64% said that it was because they didn’t know about forest kindergarten. Many of them even commented on how they would like more information on it and

would apply now, even though applications for forest kindergarten have closed. One parent in particular said he/she missed the application deadline for forest kindergarten, but was intending to apply.

Two parents didn't apply for forest kindergarten because of health reasons for their child. One parent said, "She's prone to upper respiratory infections and did not want her stuck outside in the cold or rain." Another parent didn't apply because of the natural aspect of forest kindergarten explaining that, "He doesn't like too many bugs." Lastly, another parent didn't apply because of uncertainty, explaining that he/she "weren't sure how she would do with it."

Discussion. From the survey responses, it can be seen that parents chose to apply for forest kindergarten because their child enjoys the outdoors and others chose to apply because they want their children to be exposed to the outdoors more. Some of the parents chose forest kindergarten because it is an alternative option to the traditional classroom.

For the majority of parents that chose to stay with traditional kindergarten, it was an issue of lack of knowledge about the program, rather than purposefully deciding not to apply. This indicates that parents are open to the idea of non-traditional learning environments, but rather need the resources to be informed about the options around them.

However, there were parents that purposefully decided not to apply for forest kindergarten. This will be the case in any program, and it cannot be expected that everyone will want to try a new experience. Only one parent said they didn't apply because they were uncertain about their child in the program, the rest were for health reasons.

Question: Is This Your First Child to Attend Kindergarten?

The researcher asked, “*Is this your first child to attend kindergarten? If so, what kind of kindergarten have your other children attended?*” The researcher asked this question to better understand if parents who chose to apply for forest kindergarten were applying because of past experiences or if they were first time parents to this style of schooling.

Results: forest kindergarten. For 83% of parents that chose forest kindergarten, this was their first child to attend kindergarten. Of the parents that applied for forest kindergarten and have older children, only two mentioned that their other children have attended forest kindergarten.

Results: traditional kindergarten. For the parents that chose to stay in traditional kindergarten, for over half of them this was their first child to attend kindergarten. For about 45% of parents, this wasn’t their first child to attend kindergarten. For the majority of families, their other children had attended traditional kindergarten.

Discussion. Based on these results, it can be said that parents are willing to try forest kindergarten whether they’ve had another child attend traditional or forest kindergarten. With that being said, and the program being somewhat new at this school, most of the parents who are applying for forest kindergarten haven’t had experience with it before. With the amount of parents that this is their first child attending kindergarten, it does not seem significant enough to conclude that parents are not willing to try forest kindergarten.

Question: What Concerns do you Have for Kindergarten?

The researcher asked next, “*What concerns do you have for kindergarten?*” This question was asked to see if there was a difference in concerns between parents who applied for forest kindergarten and parents who didn’t.

Results: forest kindergarten. The concerns that the parents had for kindergarten in general were many. The most commonly seen concern that 25% of parents mentioned was their child's ability to function in school and transition to school. One parent responded that her concerns was, "My child not following directions well." Another parent indicated about her child, "That she transitions well". Other parents mentioned they have concerns about their child being able to pay attention and focus in this new environment. Parents were also concerned about their child's interactions with others, especially peers. Lastly, five parents mentioned a concern for their child and external influences - bullies, being negatively influenced by those around them, etc.

Results: traditional kindergarten. The concerns that parents had for kindergarten were widespread. The top concerns that parents have about kindergarten were their child's academic achievement and concerns about their child's social/peer interactions. In reference to academic concerns one parent said, "plan of studies" and another said, "not learning what she needs to know". About social/peer interactions a parent said, "worried about her not making friends and falling behind socially". One parent showed specific concern about their child "being labeled the bad kid" because of past experiences and not being able to sit still.

Discussion. The concerns that parents had for their children in kindergarten show that they are worried about their child's ability to function in school. Their responses indicate concern about their child's behavior and potentially having behavior issues. Parent's are also concerned about their child's interaction with others and influence that will have on their child.

Interestingly, parents who applied for forest kindergarten did not mention any concerns about academics, but parents who stayed with traditional kindergarten did. Parents who applied

for forest kindergarten had concerns that involved their child's ability to adjust to the new environment and how that environment affects their child.

Traditional kindergarten parents were most concerned about academic achievement and their child's interactions with others. Development during this time is largely based on students' relationships and experiences, so it's normal for parents to be concerned about their child's experiences (Broekhuizen 2016).

Question: What are your Expectations for Kindergarten?

The researcher asked, "*What are your expectations for kindergarten?*" The researcher asked about expectations and concerns, in order to inform the researcher about what parents want out of kindergarten but also what parents are worried about for kindergarten.

Results: forest kindergarten. 45% of parents included that their expectations for kindergarten were academic. Eleven of these parents were specific as about content - reading, math, writing, with reading being the most frequent response. The next most frequent response answers were for their child's social development and for their child to have fun. Parents showed their expectations for their children to grow, but also have fun while doing it.

Results: traditional kindergarten. Over half of the parents included that their expectations for kindergarten were academic. Most of the parents specifically mentioning reading/literacy. A parent said "that she will learn a lot, enjoy it, and love school." This parent specifically wanted his/her child to enjoy her schooling experience. Several other parents mentioned preparedness for 1st grade. The next highest expectation that parents had in common was for their child to develop their social and peer abilities. A parent mentioned his/her child's

interactions with others and said she wanted school to “help him adjust with other kids his age” and another hoped “that she will continue to grow socially.”

Discussion. Though parents of forest kindergarten students did not show concern about academics, their expectations included academic performance. Traditional kindergarten parents also expected academic achievement out of kindergarten. Parents that applied for forest kindergarten weren't worried about academics, but they believed academic achievement will result from kindergarten. Even with these concerns and expectations, parents still wanted their children to have fun.

Traditional kindergarten parents' expectations for kindergarten were academic achievement. They wanted their children to grow academically but also develop their social skills. Interestingly, a parent even mentioned that they wanted their child to enjoy school. The obvious purpose of school is for students to learn and grow, but parents are also expecting social and emotional growth from their child's experience.

Discussion

Transitioning from being at home or attending daycare or preschool to the structured setting of school can be very difficult for students. Kindergarten has become more and more focused on academic rigor and achievement, than a play based learning environment for students to grow. The pressures of academic achievement are felt by the student, teacher, and parents (Bassock, Lathom & Rorem, 2016). Survey results from both forest kindergarten parents and traditional kindergarten parents showed both commonalities and differences in how these two groups think about this transition.

The most significant difference between the two groups were their concerns for kindergarten. In comparison to parents of forest kindergarten children, traditional kindergarten parents were more concerned about academic achievement and forest kindergarten parents were more concerned about their child's ability to function in school and their child's interactions with others.

The parents that chose to stay with traditional kindergarten were most concerned about academics. The main purpose of school is to learn, so it's no surprise that when pursuing the traditional route parents were most concerned about academics.

A commonality between the two groups was the expectations for kindergarten from both forest kindergarten parents and traditional kindergarten parents were academic. Both groups of parents expected academic growth from kindergarten in both styles of classrooms. This shows that no matter their concerns or the means by which their children learn, parents expect their children to learn in school. This commonality between the two groups is a bridge to say that no matter the environment of the classroom, all parents want their children to learn, and forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten can both provide this academic environment (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein, 2017).

For 45% of parents of traditional kindergarten, this wasn't their first child to attend kindergarten. This could show a sense of uncertainty among parents about their child's first formal educational experience being non traditional. However, because most parents responded that they didn't apply for forest kindergarten because they weren't aware of the program, it does not seem likely that uncertainty is their reasoning behind not applying, but rather, a lack of knowledge was why they didn't respond. In fact, only one parent said that he/she didn't apply for

forest kindergarten because he/she was uncertain about it. This suggests that with more education about the program, more parents would be interested.

Forest kindergarten and outdoor learning are great opportunities for children to have non-traditional educational experiences. The learning in these environments is still rigorous, and for this school in particular it is the same as the other traditional classrooms (Bailey, Greganti, & Hein, 2017). The perception of parents of forest kindergarten students is that it allows for an easier transition to school, but they still expect academic achievement. Traditional kindergarten parents still want the same academic achievement. For parents to see the bridge between the two programs and that forest kindergarten is a great opportunity for students to learn, they need to be more educated about the program and what outdoor learning experiences are. It can be said based on these survey results that more parents would have applied to forest kindergarten had they known about the program or had more information about it. It's important for schools with outdoor learning experiences to educate their community so that parents are aware of the options available to them.

Survey Results: Activity & Outside Time - Quantitative

Results		
	Forest K	Traditional K
has/does your child participate in any sports?	Yes: 47% No: 53%	Yes: 26% No: 74%
What does your child prefer to do in their free time?*	Play outside: 95% Explore in nature: 82%	Play outside: 86% Explore in nature: 30%
About how much time does your child spend outside each day?	<1 hours: 13% 1-2: 39% 2-3: 26% 4+: 17%	<1 hours: 21% 1-2: 47% 2-3: 17% 4+: 4%

* refer to Appendix, question 3B for a full list of response options.

Discussion

Survey Questions

The participants were asked several questions that relate to their activity levels and preferred activities. These questions were included in particular to highlight significant differences and similarities between the two groups.

Sports Participation

Based on the results from the survey, forest kindergarten students participate in sports nearly double the amount of traditional kindergarten. This is an interesting connection between families that applied for forest kindergarten and their child's activity levels. It can be said that parents who want their children in forest kindergarten also involve their children in more sports and activities that require a lot of movement.

Free Time

When asked what their children prefer to do in their free time, forest kindergarten parents and traditional kindergarten parents had similar results in most areas but there were some areas of significant difference. Both groups seem to prefer being outside. One parent said, "my child loves the outdoors". This shows the researcher that the difference between parents of forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten may not be whether their child prefers being outdoors but rather if their child prefers to explore in nature. There was a significant difference between both groups in response to playing outside and exploring in nature. One parent of a forest kindergarten student said, "my child loves outdoors; exploring". This shows the researcher that

parents that applied for forest kindergarten have children who enjoy not only playing outside (playground, backyard, neighborhood, etc) but enjoy exploring nature (wooded areas, trees, fields, etc).

Time Outside

There was also a significant difference between forest kindergarten parents and traditional kindergarten parents and the amount of time their children spend outside. As the amount of time outside got greater, the greater the amount of forest kindergarten became. But, as the amount of time outside was greater for traditional kindergarten, the less amount of students were outside.

Discussion

The results from this portion of the survey show a greater overall activity participation from parents who applied for their child to attend forest kindergarten and more time outside and desire to be in nature than parents in traditional kindergarten.

This suggests the researcher that families of forest kindergarten students are outside and active more than parents of traditional kindergarten parents. This can perhaps be correlated to their application for forest kindergarten, because forest kindergarten is more active outside than traditional kindergarten.

Conclusion

Overall, there are some significant differences between families that apply for forest kindergarten and families that don't. It can be suggested that families who apply for forest kindergarten are more active and spend more time outside than families of traditional kindergarten. They're children are more involved in sports and prefer to spend most of their time

outside. Parents of forest kindergarten may be more concerned about their children transitioning to kindergarten than their child's academic achievement, even though they expect academic achievement from their child's kindergarten experience.

These key differences seen in the survey show the researcher that the lifestyle of families of forest kindergarten more closely resemble forest kindergarten - more time outside and enjoying exploring nature. Forest kindergarten parents commented about their children enjoying the outdoors, and one family schedules a hike at least once a week. These similarities between their lives and the program could be a major reason why the families applied for forest kindergarten.

The perception of parents who applied for forest kindergarten is that forest kindergarten offered their children a better transition to school. These parents were mainly concerned about their child's transition to a school environment, and as seen through the surveys, considered that forest kindergarten would be a good option.

Forest kindergarten and traditional kindergarten parents both expected academic achievement from their children in kindergarten. Their concerns were different, but both groups showed that they believed academics to be a key part of kindergarten.

The similarities and differences between both groups show the researcher that there are significant differences between families who apply for forest kindergarten and families that don't. But, there was a clear interest in the families who didn't apply for forest kindergarten. These results show the school and community that parents didn't apply for forest kindergarten not because they didn't want to, but because they didn't have enough information about the

program. Educating the community about forest kindergarten could increase interest in the program and expose the community alternative options to school.

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APPENDIX

Pre-Kindergarten Survey for Parents

To be given to participants before the school year begins.

1. General Information:
 - a. Parent's name
 - b. Child's name
 - c. Child's age
 - d. Child's Gender
2. Past Experiences/Activities
 - a. Did/Does your child attend a Pre-K program? (Yes/No)
 - i. If yes, then is the Pre-K program part of the Hamilton County School District? (Yes/No)
 - b. Did/Does your child attend a daycare? (Yes/No)
3. Child's Interests/Activities
 - a. Has/does your child participate in any sports? (Yes/No)
 - i. If yes, which one(s) and for how many months?
 - b. What does your child prefer to do in their free time? Choose all that apply (choices: watch TV, play with toys, play outside, play with friends, read, puzzles, art projects, imaginary play/pretend, explore in nature, play with a pet, relaxing, daydreaming, drawing/writing)
 - c. About how much time does your child stay interested in self-chosen activities? (<10, 10-15, 20-30, 40 or more minutes)
 - d. About how much time does your child spend outside each day? (<1, 1-2, 2-3, 4 or more hours)
4. Health
 - a. About how many times has your child been sick in the past 2 months? (open-ended response)
 - b. Around what time does your child generally go to bed? (open-ended response)
 - c. About how long does it take your child to fall asleep? (open-ended response)
 - d. Does your child nap? If so, when do they nap and for about how long? (open-ended response)
5. Fine/Gross Motor Skills
 - a. Can your child button their clothes independently? (Yes/No)
 - b. Can your child tie their shoes independently? (Yes/No)
 - c. Does your child like to skip, hop, and/or gallop? (Yes/No)
6. Communication
 - a. How does your child express their happiness? (open-ended response)
 - b. How does your child express anger? (open-ended response)
 - c. How does your child express disappointment? (open-ended response)
 - d. How does your child express frustration? (open-ended response)
 - e. How does your child express fear? (open-ended response)

- f. How does your child express confusion? (open-ended response)
 - g. How often does your child ask for help from an adult? (always, often, sometimes, never)
 - h. Does your child follow single direction or requests? (Like "Put your toy away.") (Yes/No)
 - i. Does your child follow a two-part direction or request? (Like "Put your toy away and then sit at the table.") (Yes/No)
 - j. Does your child follow a three-part direction or request? (Like "Put your toy away, then sit at the table, and then draw a picture.") (Yes/No)
 - k. How does your child feel about doing activities by themselves? (open-ended response)
 - l. In what ways does your child use his/her imagination? (open-ended response)
7. Interpersonal Skills
- a. How well does your child cooperate with peers during play? (open-ended response)
 - b. How well does your child share? (open-ended response)
 - c. Does your child enjoy playing alone? (always, often, sometimes, never)
8. Other/Academic
- a. Please list any fears your child may have (dogs, being alone, etc).(open-ended response)
 - b. How does your child solve problems? (open-ended response)
9. Forest Kindergarten Specific Questions - Parents
- a. Have you applied for your child to attend the Forest Kindergarten classroom? If yes, then:
 - i. Is this your first child to attend Kindergarten? (Yes/No)
 - 1. If no, then what kind of kindergarten have your other children attended? Choose all that apply (traditional, forest, other_____)
 - ii. Why do you want your child to attend Forest Kindergarten? (open-ended response)
 - iii. What are your expectations for Forest Kindergarten? (open-ended response)
 - iv. What are any concerns you have about Forest Kindergarten? (open-ended response)
 - b. If no, then:
 - i. What are your concerns about Kindergarten? (open-ended response)
 - ii. What are your expectations for Kindergarten? (open-ended response)
 - iii. Why did you not choose to enroll your child in Forest Kindergarten? (open-ended response)