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Pianta, R. C., & Howes, C. (2009). *The Promise of Pre-K*.
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The Promise of Pre-K is a pivotal text for those in the field studying issues related to early childhood programs and policies. While many of the issues related to funding, curriculum, and program models have permeated the research literature, *The Promise of Pre-K* also contains individual profiles of state policies, procedures, finance issues, programmatic concerns, and future recommendations to improve early childhood experiences for all pre-K students. This text, which presents an edited book for advocates of early care for children, is a critical read for researchers and graduate students studying early childhood programs and policies as well as policymakers who are interested in improving early childhood curricula, policies, and programs to better serve children.

In chapter 1, the authors focus on many issues related to the early care of pre-K children such as accountability,

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student per pupil expenditures, serving English Language Learners, and students with special needs. There were four issues related to the overall operation and establishment of pre-K programs that are often overlooked in other texts or research related to pre-K programs. The first issue identified in this chapter focused on the growth of state-funded programs. Although many pre-K students attend private facilities, there has been an increase in state run programs for young children that come from low-income homes. The second issue is related to eligibility of students that attend these programs. Often the eligibility for these programs is determined by age and the income level of the families. The third issue centers on class sizes and implementing enrollment quotas in order to ensure that there is an appropriate staff-student ratio. The fourth issue was transportation for pre-K students. Many states only require transportation for students with exceptionalities or physical disabilities. So even though a large number of students qualify for pre-K programs, many may not be able to participate due to transportation issues.

Chapter 2 focuses on the assessment of centers, programs, and educational settings that serve pre-K children by state. There were eight states identified in this chapter, and each of the states were examined in a table that included factors such as funding/enrollment, program quality standards, assessments, and curriculum standards. Although there were some states that had clear plans for curriculum standards, funding plans, and enrollment procedures, there were far too many states that did not have established programs that provide high quality care.

In chapter 3, the authors discussed the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the key piece of federal legislation that give states the power to fund pre-K programs through Title I funds. Many states began funding pre-K programs from lottery proceeds, gambling proceeds, sales taxes, tobacco settlement funds, income taxes, federal, and local property taxes. These various forms of revenue increase the funding for pre-K programs. However, funding for these programs has a long way to go to ensuring equitable care for pre-K students.

Chapter 4 noted the widespread concern related to the school readiness of all children. Additionally, there has been an increased concern over children that come from

low-income homes. Many of the programs that serve low-income children are targeted programs that focus on nutrition, academic skills, and school readiness. Further, the comparable universal programs often have similar requirements or the students enter a lottery to gain admission into the program. In either case, it is clear that these programs center on a school readiness model for students rather than an emergent “child centered” focus.

Chapter 5 discussed findings from historical pre-K projects such as the Abecedarian project, The Perry School Project, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers. This chapter also includes the research evidence regarding the effectiveness of these programs and the similarities regarding the various programs. This chapter includes evidence or key findings centering on language development, mathematics, and reading skill development.

Chapter 6 focuses on Georgia’s Bright from the Start program which includes the implementation of the pre-K program around the state, the curriculum, environment, pre-K staff, assessment of students, and program evaluation. The Bright from the Start program seems to be one of the more recognized pre-K programs identified in this text, because of the established nature of the program. The program includes a funding structure, curriculum standards, and standards for early care.

Chapter 7 examines the More at Four pre-K program. This program was established in 1992. The program was established to focus on literacy, mathematical understanding, and social-emotional development. The guidelines of this program include: (a) maximum class size; (b) six hour school days; (c) certified personnel; (d) comparable salaries; (e) early learning standards; (f) assessment and screening of students; and (g) licensure of programs. This program appeared to be of great potential, but the weakness again appeared to be the lack of funding for the program.

Chapter 8 focuses on the different types of child care settings in which children reside. These decisions regarding care are often based on parents’ work schedules and income levels. There are many different types of programs identified in this chapter that include community based programs, child care centers, and family care homes.

Additionally, many of these settings do not adhere to health codes, and are often subsidized through government assistance programs. The weakness of these various settings was that they were not regulated, but were viewed as a viable option for parents that can not afford high quality care.

Chapter 9 discusses all of the previously mentioned pre-K programs to help states considering providing universal care for pre-K children. This chapter identifies both positive and negative aspects of the program for states. Additionally, this chapter includes factors in expanding these large scale programs. This text provides a good starting point for policy makers, early childhood advocates, community activists, and educators looking to start or expand their existing knowledge related to early childhood programs.

About the Reviewer

Tiffany A. Flowers is an On-line Instructor of Education at Georgia Perimeter College. Her research interests are divided into four interrelated areas that include African American Literacy Development, Emergent Literacy, Literature, and Diversity Issues in Education.

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