Early Childhood Intervention and Early Education

Does Looping Make a Difference? The Impact of Preschool Looping on Child Outcomes

Sharon Lesar Judge, Marian B. Phillips

PRESENTERS: Sharon Lesar Judge

Looping, is a nontraditional classroom arrangement in which children have the same teacher for two successive years. While looping has been successfully implemented in many elementary schools, there is limited research supporting greater cognitive or affective growth in preschool children who have experienced it (Bellis, 1999; Chapman, 1999; Nichols & Nichols, 2002). The purpose of this study was to examine if children who had the same teacher for two years made greater gains in learning and development compared to children who had a different teacher during preschool.

Method
This study combined assessments from two cohorts of 226 children enrolled in the same preschool for two years. Of the sample, 167 (73.9%) children had a different teacher for each year of preschool whereas 59 (26.1%) had the same teacher for both years of preschool. The preschool is operated by a public school district located in a small town in a southeastern state. Funding resources include Head Start, federal special education funds, Title 1, and local support to provide full-day preschool for children ages 3 to 5 years free for 10 months of the year.

Children's cognitive development and early academic skills were measured through a direct child assessment administered individually to each of the sampled children by their classroom teachers. To assess progress during the year, assessments were administered three times: August, January, and May. The areas of the assessment battery included personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development.

Results
To detect if there were differences between children with the same teacher for 2 years and children with a different teacher each year, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with looping group status as the independent variable and the seven measures of children's developmental domains as dependent variables. The results of this analysis revealed a statistically significant multivariate effect for looping ($\lambda = .91$, $F(7, 217) = 3.05$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .09$). Tests of between-subjects effects revealed statistically significant looping-related differences in personal and social development ($F(1) = 11.03$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$). Results indicated that looping children exhibited higher scores compared to nonlooping children. There were no significant differences between the two groups of children on the other six domains.

Discussion

The results of this exploration of the impact of looping classrooms are encouraging. The most beneficial gain from multiyear work with a group of children is the knowledge that the teacher has of her students, the confidence the children have in their teacher, and the continuity in teacher-parent relationships. With the continuing high levels of economic hardship, serious family problems, and fragmented family structure among families with young children, the commitment that children, parents, and teachers make to one another should be sustained and treasured with foremost priority. In the future, looping may be one avenue to address this educational commitment in support of all children and particularly those who may be considered at risk.

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The Effects of a Creative Dance and Movement Program on the Social Competence of Children in a Head Start Program

Yovanka B. Lobo, Adam Winsler

PRESENTER: Yovanka B. Lobo

The preschool period is an important time for the development of social skills. Young children with poor social skills tend to be at considerable risk for experiencing a variety of problems throughout childhood, adolescence, and beyond, including rejection from peers, behavior problems, and school failure (Coie et al., 1990; Rubin et al., 1998; Parker & Asher, 1987). Children in poverty are especially at risk for poor social competence and the development of behavior problems (Ackerman, Kogos, Younstrom, Schoff, & Izard, 1999). Although early childhood dance educators and fine arts advocates have touted the social and behavioral benefits of music, movement, and dance programs for years (Chesebrough et al, 2004), and advocates of early childhood socio-emotional interventions and curricula have suggested that perhaps this is an area worth exploring (Denham & Burton, 2003; Hyson, 2004; Joseph & Strain, 2003), dance programs and interventions are not common in early childhood. This is partly because, until now, there have not been scientifically rigorous empirical investigations demonstrating the efficacy of such programs.

The present study testing the efficacy of an eight-week creative dance and movement intervention implemented in a large, urban Head Start center, using a scientifically rigorous design that included random assignment of 40 preschoolers to small group experimental dance and movement control groups, and the use of pre and post assessment of children's social competence and behavior problems by parents and teachers (both blind to group membership) in English or Spanish using a reliable measure (SCBE; LaFreniere & Dumas, 1995). Results were very positive showing that children who participated in the dance intervention out gained control children in social competence over time and also showed a significant decline in behavior problems over time as rated by both parents and teachers.

Small group creative dance instruction for at-risk, inner-city, Head Start preschoolers appears to be an excellent mechanism for enhancing children's social competence and improving behavior. The study suggests that programs in dance/creative movement and perhaps in the arts in general, should be supported and expanded to, at a minimum, similar Headstart programs, and likely to other settings as well. Head Start and other early childhood programs should seriously consider expanding the role of dance and movement in their curriculum. Current policy and intervention efforts aimed at increasing the emphasis upon socio-emotional learning in early childhood (Denham & Weissberg, 2004; Hyson, 2004; Joseph & Strain, 2003), may also benefit from further investigation of the role that dance and creative movement can play in early childhood curricula and interventions.

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Evaluation of a Curriculum that Teaches Emergent Literacy and Social-Emotional Skills in a Variety of Early Childhood Settings: Preliminary Results

Jill Novacek, Robert Raskin, Miriam Hirschstein, Doug Cooper

PRESENTERS: Jill Novacek, Robert Raskin

Most states have adopted or are developing school readiness standards for early learners that have both academic and behavioral learning components. Academic standards typically include approaches to learning, language and communication skills, emergent literacy skills, emergent mathematical/scientific thinking skills, knowledge about citizenship, human interdependence, and expression, understanding and appreciation of the arts. Behavioral standards usually include physical health, motor development, and development of social-emotional skills such as self confidence, self control, peer relationship skills, adult relationship skills, and social problem-solving.

To assist schools in achieving emerging school readiness standards, private sector education specialists are developing new curriculum and programs that teach early learners the academic and social-emotional skills necessary for achieving school readiness. One such curriculum that combines instruction for emergent literacy and social-emotional learning within the same lesson plans is currently being evaluated.

This report shares initial results from this evaluation that (1) address the relationship between emergent literacy skills and social-emotional skills in four and five year old children when they start preschool, and (2) compare children who attended Head Start with children who attended private, religious and state-subsidized preschools.

Participants in the baseline assessment included 161 preschoolers and kindergartners, 14 preschool and kindergarten teachers, and 114 family members. Measures of emergent literacy included the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), Preschool Language Scale (Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2002), Test of Early Reading Abilities (Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001), and Emergent Literacy Rating Scales (Novacek, 2005). Measures of social-emotional skills included the Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales (Merrell, 2002) and the Social-Emotional Skills Rating Scales (Novacek, 2005). Children's literacy activities in the home were measured with the At-Home Literacy Activities Survey (Novacek, 2005).

Baseline data were collected during the 4th and 5th week of the school year when children were tested with the 3 emergent literacy tests, teachers completed the emergent literacy and social-emotional skills rating scales, and family members completed the At-Home Literacy Activities Survey. Results are presented for the 126 preschool participants.

Results showed a substantial correlation between composite measures of emergent literacy and social-emotional skills ($r = .56$, $p<.001$). Neither gender, race, nor extent of behavior problems moderated the relationship between emergent literacy and social-emotional skills. Teacher ratings of children with poor emergent literacy skills showed social skills deficits characterized

by a lack of empathy, and self-regulatory problems characterized by hyperactivity and impulsivity. Amount of at-home literacy activity was positively related to children's emergent literacy test scores and teachers' ratings of children's social-emotional skills (r =.44, p<.001 and r = .28, p<.01, respectively). Comparisons of emergent literacy and social-emotional skills between Head Start and other preschool children showed that Head Start children had lower receptive vocabulary, auditory comprehension and expressive communication scores as well as lower scores on social skills. There were no differences between Head Start and other preschool children on problem behaviors or in the amount of at-home literacy activity they experienced. Finally, Head Start children scored significantly lower on a composite measure of overall "school readiness" (t=3.38, p<.001).

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Activities and Instruction in Early Education Programs for Low-Income Children: An Exploration of Public Centers, Private Centers, and Family Child Care

Allison Sidle Fuligni, Carollee Howes, Sharon Ritchie, Sandraluz Lara-Cinisomo, Lynn Karoly

PRESENTER: Allison Sidle Fuligni

The current educational policy focus on reducing the gap in school readiness for children from low-income families has led to increased attention to the settings in which children spend their pre-kindergarten years. In this study, we examine three different types of early education settings: publicly-funded center-based programs such as Head Start and state-funded preschool programs, private non-profit preschools or child care centers, and family child care programs supported by networks. Few studies have observed the variation in actual instructional practices in both center-based and home-based programs. In this poster, we present the first wave of program observation data from a 3-year longitudinal study of early learning settings for low-income children in Los Angeles County.

This presentation describes the variation in instructional practices and children's daily experiences in 55 different early learning settings (19 publicly-funded classrooms, 18 classrooms in private center-based child care programs, and 18 family child care homes). Each setting was observed 3 times during the 2004-2005 school year. The Snapshot observation, a child-focused time-sampling measure (Howes, & Matheson, 1992; Ritchie, Howes, Kraft-Sayre & Weiser 2001) provides information on the amount of time during a program morning that children spend in different activity settings, academic activities, and their levels of social interaction. The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Pre-K version; La Paro, Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2001) observation provides multiple assessments, over 30-minute periods, of the instructional and emotional climates of the setting. A modified environmental rating system was used, combining a subset of items from the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1988) and a subset of items from the Extended ECERS (ECERS-E; Sylva, Taggart, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2003).

In terms of time spent in activity settings, we found no differences across program types, with children spending an average of 38-49% of the time in free choice settings, where multiple activities are available and choice of activity is child-directed. Differences were found in the amount of time children spend on "Basics" or transitional activities. Children in publicly-funded centers spent on average over 20% of program time in this activity setting (lining up, cleaning up, using the bathroom, and the like), whereas children in family child care homes spent only 14% of their time in these types of activities ($F=3.35$, $p<.05$).
We observed that time spent in literacy activities is relatively low across the three types of programs, however a few differences stand out. Reading to children takes place significantly more often at publicly-funded centers than private centers (5% versus 2% of the time; $F=3.64$, $p<.05$), whereas oral language development activities are significantly more prevalent in family child care homes than in publicly-funded centers (15% versus 6% of the time; $F=4.45$, $p<.05$).

Virtually all programs (98%) reported using a formal curriculum, however there was no difference in the observed activities described above according to which curriculum was reported. Discussion addresses implications of curricular mandates and other policies for the implementation of programs and children's experiences in those programs.

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The Road to School Readiness: An Investigation of School Readiness Programs From Conceptualization to Implementation

Christine A. Ong

PRESENTER: Christine A. Ong

Young children do not start school on an equal footing (Lee & Burkham, 2002). High quality early childhood programs help to narrow these disparities and lay an important foundation for later achievement (e.g., Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). From California to Georgia, states have made substantial investments in early education and school readiness programs, albeit with mixed results (e.g., Gilliam & Zigler, 2001).   While much has been written about outcomes related to these initiatives, there is relatively little information regarding their beginnings.

This study examines how forty-one agencies (19 school districts and 22 community-based organizations respectively) within a large, demographically diverse county, developed school readiness programs as part of a statewide initiative. The initiative was broadly patterned after the *National Education Goals Panel's* (NEGP) definition for school readiness (e.g., Shore, 1998). Through an in-depth content analysis of awarded grant proposals and semi-structured interviews, this study explores how agencies conceptualized and implemented school readiness programs. This research is part of a larger, ongoing dissertation study.

An inductive coding schema was created to identify new and expanded services within proposals. This information, along with community and program demographics (e.g., requested funding, anticipated service estimates), was encapsulated within a checklist. Performance measures were also noted. Inter and intra-rater reliability for checklists was above 80% (Cohen's Kappa for coding particular services is underway).

Trends within and across programs were analyzed using statistical tools (e.g., crosstabs and correlations).   Each agency was then assigned a "coverage score" (i.e., high, medium low) for the proportion of services devoted to each NEGP component relative to their counterparts. A stratified random sub-sample of agencies (n=10) was selected for follow-up interviews based on these scores. Interviews served as a means to verify checklists and learn more about the implementation process. A small number of informants (i.e., initiative administrators, n=4) were also interviewed.

Preliminary results suggest that programs differed widely in terms of the number and type of services they proposed. Service intensity and duration varied considerably as well as the specificity of such information. In short, programs were highly heterogeneous. This may be due in part to the states' espousing such a broad definition of school readiness. Regardless, this diversity has stymied state and county evaluation efforts.

 Interestingly, only half of programs (n=21) proposed early education services such as preschool, infant/toddler care - a stark contrast to other early childhood initiatives. Interviews seem to confuse matters. Informants felt that the state had shifted their funding priorities to preschool

services towards the last funding cycle, when the majority of grants (n=24) were awarded. The data does not support this upwards trend.

There were both internal and external barriers to implementation, including staff turnover, bureaucracy, and difficulty establishing relationships with others. There were also unexpected yet important additions to programs, such as parents' efforts to beautify their community. In sum, the road to readiness was not necessarily smooth. Future analysis will more deeply investigate service and implementation patterns across programs.

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Academic Competence Outcomes of a Prevention/Readiness Curriculum: Children's School Success

Eva Horn, Gretchen Butera, Joan Lieber, Gretchen Goodman-Jansen, Carol Czaja

PRESENTERS: Eva Horn, Gretchen Butera, Joan Lieber, Carol Czaja, Susan B. Palmer

The authors have developed a preschool readiness curriculum designed to promote the social and academic competence of young children who experience environmental, social, or developmental risks that may make their early school years difficult. In this poster, presenters will focus on the academic component of this curriculum. A randomized cluster design was employed in this study. Teacher/classroom units were randomly assigned to control conditions across the implementation years with each control teacher/classroom entering the experimental condition the following year. Teacher/Classrooms, rather than children, were the unit of analysis. Classes were located in five regions: California, Kansas, Indiana, West Virginia, and Maryland. At each location six teachers/classrooms participated (three experimental, three contrast). Children in the study had to be four-years-old, to be living in poverty, and some also had an established disability, and/or English Language Learners.

The independent variable was the academic component of the curriculum. The academic component or "Discovery Days" was based upon the combined content from: (a) science curriculum (i.e., Science Start! – Conezio & French, 2002); (b) math content based on National Council of Teachers of Math standards (2004) with activities modified from Clements and Sarama (2002); and (c) literacy activities addressing oral language (integrated across science, math and social activities and specifically focused upon during daily story book reading), letter/print knowledge (specifically focused upon during daily letter knowledge activities), and phonological sensitivity addressed through daily phonemic awareness activities (based on Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998). Before the school year began, the experimental teachers were provided with initial training on curriculum implementation. Site supervisors visited the experimental teachers weekly to observe implementation, model techniques, and collaboratively plan the next week's activities. In the contrast classroom, teachers implemented their local program curriculum.

To assess curriculum implementation/fidelity occurring in the experimental classrooms, the site supervisors completed fidelity of treatment rating forms for each class 7 times across the year. Using these rating forms a mean item rating across observations for a given classroom was calculated to address quality of implementation, also using the rating forms a percentage of curriculum implemented was calculated and finally by multiplying ratings by the proportion of the curriculum completed a fidelity metric for each experimental class was obtained.

To assess children's gains in academic knowledge and skills for the current analysis, the following measures were completed at the beginning of the year and again at the end in both experimental and control classrooms: 1. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III; and 2. Quantitative Concepts subtests of Woodcock Johnson Scale of Academic Achievement.

Because teachers/classrooms are our unit of analysis and this is the first year, only 30 teachers/classrooms have participated in the study. This will allow for descriptive data, but not the detailed statistical analyses that we will conduct in subsequent years. The following descriptive data were obtained to address the question of implementation/fidelity on child academic outcomes.

- Grouped classrooms in high, average and low implementation quality
- Predicted child post test scores with pretest as covariate
- Found interaction effect for high/average/low pretest performance

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Young Adult Outcomes from Two Models of Early Childhood Intervention
Frances Campbell, Elizabeth Pungello, Barbara Wasik

PRESENTERS: Frances Campbell, Barbara Wasik

Content: Long-term outcomes were examined for two consecutive studies of early childhood educational intervention that differed in treatment delivery model. In the first, the Abecedarian Project (ABC), four cohorts of children from high-risk backgrounds experienced five years of center-based early child intervention delivered in a full-time child care setting. In the second, the Carolina Approach to Responsive Education (CARE); two smaller cohorts of similar children had essentially the same center-based early education with Family Education (FE) in the form of weekly home visiting added. In addition, CARE had a unique treatment component in which children and families experienced five years of FE alone. Both studies featured random assignment of children to treatment or untreated control groups.

Study participants were 165 individuals who were enrolled in the intervention studies as infants, 88 males and 77 females, 96% African American. All came from low-income families who qualified as being at risk for having a child who showed developmental delays in early childhood or academic problems later.

Outcomes included young adult educational and vocational status, parenthood, and social adjustment. The latter included self-reports of criminal activity, binge drinking, and use of illegal drugs.

ANOVAs or Chi Square tests were used to compare group outcomes for continuous or dichotomous variables, respectively. Models tested for differences as a function of five years of center-based child care intervention (ABC and CARE combined) compared with the ABC and CARE control groups combined, and for overall mean differences as a function of study, i.e., were higher scores earned in one study compared with the other? A third question tested a treatment by study interaction, (the effect was found in one study but not the other). Finally, outcomes for the FE alone and the CARE control group were compared to see if long-term effects were associated with FE as a unique treatment.

Young adult findings showed that those who had center-based early childhood education, irrespective of the added FE component, had acquired more years of total education, showed an increased likelihood of enrolling in some sort of post-secondary education, an increased likelihood of attending a four-year college or university, an increased likelihood of having skilled employment, and a decrease in self-reported recent marijuana use. No differences in self-reported criminal activity or binge drinking were found. There were not overall differences in the various outcomes as a function of being in ABC or CARE. A significant treatment by study interaction indicated that a reduction in teen parenthood found for the ABC study was not replicated in the CARE sample. It does not appear that adding the FE component to the center-based child care model made a significant difference in the outcomes. The caveat for this finding is that the child care plus FE group was too small to allow robust statistical analyses comparing outcomes for center-based treatment with and without the FE component added. As a

stand-alone service delivery model, the FE approach did not result in significant young adult treatment/control differences in any of the outcomes considered here.

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Music Therapy as a Parenting Intervention for Disadvantaged Families with Young Children

Vicky Abad, Kate Williams, Donna Berthelsen, Jan Nicholson

PRESENTER: Donna Berthelsen

This poster presents preliminary evidence on the evaluation of a parenting intervention using music therapy involving parents who are disadvantaged or marginalized and who have children aged less than 3 years. Such families are often difficult to engage in mainstream parenting interventions and, thus, effectiveness of intervention may be limited by poor reach and retention (Barlow et al., 2005; Ireys et al., 2001). *Sing and Grow* is currently being implemented nationally across Australia with 3000 families. The project is funded by the Australian Government under *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: Invest to Grow (2005-2008).* Findings from the first wave of the national roll-out are presented, focussing on change in self-reported parenting behaviours and program satisfaction.

This 10-week group intervention is delivered by registered music therapists. Families are referred by community agencies and intervention groups are constituted by referrals from a single agency. Thus, parents participate in groups in which families may face common challenges, providing opportunities for mutual support within the group. Specific parenting strategies that are modeled include: use of praise and positive reinforcement for children's behavior; smiling and physical affection in adult-child interactions; setting boundaries for children; and using music and songs for engaging children.

Program outcomes are assessed using parent reports and therapist observations, collected at the start of the program and 10 weeks later. Measures used are drawn from *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC), a national cohort study of 10,000 infants and preschool age children (Sanson et al., 2002, 2004). To-date, 51 parent groups have participated in the roll-out. Parents' circumstances include: general social and economic disadvantage (176); young parents (97); parents in prison with children (21); parents with alcohol and drug problems (8); parents with a child with a disability (97); indigenous families (21); foster families (13).

Assessment of change, using t-tests, from pre to post ratings (5-point rating scales), for parenting well-being and behaviour indicates: *Coercive parenting* (5 items - frequency of parental anger and irritability towards child) - significant reduction in coercion ($p = .019$); *Parenting self-efficacy* (4 items - confidence undertaking tasks associated with raising a young child) - significant improvement in self-efficacy ($p = .000$); *Parental mental health* symptoms (6 items - psychiatric screener) - significant reduction in reported symptoms ($p = .034$); *Parent-child activities* (5 items - use of music, one-to-one play and incidental teaching activities at home) - no significant change; *Parental responsiveness* (6 items - physical affection expressed and parental enjoyment of child) - no significant change.

Participants also rated their satisfaction with *Sing & Grow* and extent of perceived benefits to themselves and their child. On a 5-point satisfaction scale, 80% of parents reported that they were very satisfied. For extent of perceived benefits (3-point scale - not at all, a little, a lot), 60%

of parents reported that the program helped them a lot to understand child development; 75% reported that the program taught them a lot of new ways to play with their child; and 61% pf parents reported that the program enabled them a lot to meet other parents.

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Head Start: A Natural Bridge for Children in Foster Care During Transitions

Ann Gruenberg

PRESENTER: Ann Gruenberg

This poster presents research on specific benefits provided by Head Start, in collaboration with protective services when children in foster care or in crisis situations are in transition between homes, thus potentially reducing cycles of risk of maltreatment associated with poverty. The need for coordinated systems when children are at risk or have developmental challenges is well documented (Grace, Lederman, & Osofsky, 2002). It is required by Federal Law that birth to three services include coordinated systems. While gradual transitions, trust-building, and support of healthy attachment are developmental priorities (Goldstein & Brookes, 2002; Gil & Drewes, 2005; Powers, 2005), from legal perspectives there is concern about accountability, which is more effectively determined when there is a relatively definitive shift of responsibility from one caregiver to another. Through providing comprehensive family-centered services, Head Start has been a pioneer in addressing culturally diverse family priorities, as well as the risks associated with poverty (Zigler & Styfco, 2004). There is a well-documented increased risk of child abuse and neglect among families living in poverty (Silver, Amster, & Haecker, 1999; Silver, 2002).

The research was conducted in a highly economically and ethnically diverse community of about 20,000 residents, located in a primarily rural region in the Northeast U.S.A. The purpose was to document the observed positive effects of Head Start and Early Head Start for children in foster care, and the need for future study of this important topic.

Methods: Data were gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Four case stories provide perspectives from parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the documented and perceived benefits for children in transition, including, but not limited to, continuity, consistency, a wide range of specific family-centered services, and a context for the development and sustenance of healthy relationships. Quantitative data include responses to a brief survey using a Likert Scale. Staff and administrators from a comprehensive Head Start program and a regional office of the Department of Children and Families completed the survey, indicating whether or not they had worked with children in foster care who had been enrolled in Head Start, and if so, which specific services were used. Qualitative data has been analyzed by identifying underlying themes and variables, and discussing the significance of findings (Stake, 2000). Quantitative data has been analyzed based on frequency of responses, and percentage of staff from different organizations who indicated they had worked with children who were in foster care who were also enrolled in Head Start. Preliminary results include, but are not limited to, the identification of Head Start as valuable for children in foster care during transitions because of the context for forming and continuing healthy relationships, the continuity and consistency, specific comprehensive services such as mental and general health, father involvement, specific transition plans, and inter-agency coordination. Results suggest it is helpful when Social Workers employed by agencies providing protective services share information about Head Start with families.

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