

# Literacy and Language Development/Delay

## Children's Contributions to Early Literacy Supports in Head Start Families

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Research suggests that parents' behaviors and expectations account for the variation in children's early literacy development; however, little is known about the child's role in the early literacy development process.

This study examined relations between children's early literacy competencies and parents' reported early literacy expectations and supports across literacy activities. We hypothesized that children's early literacy competencies predict parents' expectations of and reported supports for their children's early literacy development.

A total of 123 parent-child pairs, representing 62 girls and 61 boys in Head Start programs in urban and rural counties in the Midwest, participated in the study.

At the beginning and end of the school year, parents completed an adaptation of the home literacy questionnaire (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996) and children were evaluated across a battery of early literacy measures: (1) Alphabet subtest of the Test of Early Reading Ability, Third Edition (TERA-3; Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001); (2) Clay's (1985) Concepts about Print Scale (CAP); (3) Emergent Writing task (Sulzby, Barnhart, & Hieshiman, 1989); (4) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997); and (5) the Minnesota Picture Naming (McConnell, Priest, Davis & McEvoy, 2000).

We found partial support for the hypothesis. Regression analyses indicated that children's expressive vocabulary skills,  $R^2 = .61$ ,  $F(3, 113) = 58.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , and receptive vocabulary skills,  $R^2 = .65$ ,  $F(3, 70) = 43.66$ ,  $p < .001$ , significantly accounted for the variation in parents' reported early literacy supports. Parents' reported early literacy supports in the fall,  $\beta = .76$ ,  $t(116) = 12.70$ ,  $p < .001$  and children's expressive vocabulary,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t(116) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ , significantly accounted for the variation in parents' reported supports in the spring. While there was a trend for children's receptive vocabulary abilities to predict parents' reported early literacy supports,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t(73) = 1.95$ ,  $p < .06$ , parents' reported early literacy supports in the fall accounted for variation in parents' reported supports in the spring,  $\beta = .79$ ,  $t(73) = 11.05$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Children's other early literacy competencies did not predict parents' reported supports. Parents' reported supports for early literacy in the fall accounted for the variation in parents' supports in the spring.

The significant role of the children's vocabulary development may be related to parents' opportunities to informally assess their children's skills. Parents may have been more likely to notice a change in their children's vocabulary than other early literacy competencies because

they were more likely to engage in informal conversations with their children than participate in other early literacy activities.

Our findings suggest that more attention needs to be given to the child's role in research on correlates of early literacy development. The direction of effects of children's literacy competencies in relation to home literacy environments is better understood when longitudinal research is conducted.

Future research should determine the extent to which children's literacy competencies are of concern to Head Start parents and, if so, identify the indicators parents use to assess their children's literacy progress.

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# **Reading With Babies Under 24 Months Facilitates Development in Both Mother and Child and Enriches the Emotional Connection Between Them**

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## Objectives:

Describe the capacities of babies from birth to 24 months to engage with parent reader and a book.

A demonstration of babies using books according to developmental stages that reveals what actually happens when reading with a young baby.

Discuss how this reality influences both the parent and the baby in ongoing experiences of shared delight and discovery through reading and how we can promote these interactions most positively.

The poster will offer a description of the types of abilities babies possess from birth that enable them to begin the process of learning about the world. Based on the research, we describe a developmental model that demonstrates joint exploration of experience through the delight and discovery of books.

Next, we will examine what babies can do between birth and 24 months. To provide the clearest evidence, we will screen a brief videotape showing babies under 2 reading with their parents. The video is based on fifteen years experience of working with teen mothers and their babies and other populations of parents with limited English language, formal education and/or awareness of the value of reading to pre-verbal babies. The families on the videotape are from various backgrounds, languages and ethnicities; and shown in a variety of environments (private homes, public schools and daycare centers, and transitional housing for homeless people.)

Finally, based on the blend of theory, research and observation, we will consider the developmental implications of this activity for both mothers and their babies. We will also discuss practical aspects of fostering this activity, such as identifying appropriate environments and adult activities that optimize the experience of reading with babies.

## Additional resources

Screening of DVD: Reading With Babies (Leyendo Con Bebés)

Handouts to guide observation of the video and to prompt discussion following its screening.

Some examples of discussion questions:

1. Reading to babies is a shared, interactive, potentially pleasurable experience. Because it involves two people, it can be a challenge to both the babies and the parents. Discuss.
2. What non-verbal dialogue between parent and child is evident during these shared reading experiences?
2. How do parents validate and expand upon their babies' responses?

Additional handout materials connecting developmental stages and appropriate books for children and/or reading related activities.

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# Characteristics and Effects of Teachers' Book Reading Behaviors in Head Start Classrooms

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The quality of book reading varies greatly among preschool teachers (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2002). To investigate variation in book reading behavior, teachers' utterances were separated into two categories: utterances related to the story (engagement) and utterances not related to the story (management; Gianvecchio & French, 2002). Engagement utterances such as asking open-ended questions and using new vocabulary are related to growth in children's receptive vocabulary (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Wasik & Bond, 2001). Teachers' educational background was investigated in relation to utterances during group book reading.

Trained researchers conducted structured observations (including audio-taping) of large-group book readings at the beginning and end of the school year in 34 Head Start classrooms in rural and urban communities in the Midwest. Researchers transcribed the audiotapes and coded each teacher utterance (i.e., a word or stream of words that conveys a single unit of thought). Teacher education was: high school diploma ( $n = 3$ ), two-year associate's degree ( $n = 24$ ), bachelor's degree ( $n = 7$ ). Nine of the teachers had completed a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Children (96 girls, 88 boys) were assessed individually for receptive vocabulary using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) at the beginning and end of the school year. The child sample was 50% European American, 34% African American, and 16% Latino.

Teachers differed in their use of engagement and management utterances across Head Start classrooms (engagement:  $M = 32.66$ ,  $SD = 13.36$ ; management:  $M = 7.46$ ,  $SD = 7.40$ ). Correlational analysis identified a non-significant relation between teachers' use of engagement utterances during large-group book reading and children's mean receptive vocabulary growth across the year. A significant negative relationship existed between teachers' use of management utterances and children's receptive vocabulary growth for children. Generally, children were redirected to "listen to the story." Thus, teachers who use numerous management utterances are likely to have children in their classrooms with low levels of receptive vocabulary growth.

Paired-sample  $t$  tests indicated that teachers' utterances changed over the year (engagement:  $t = -2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ; questions asked by teacher:  $t = -2.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, teachers did not differ in the number of management utterances they used across the year ( $t = -1.21$ ,  $p = .27$ ). Regression analysis was used to predict the frequency of engagement utterances using teachers' level of general education, including receipt of a CDA. Results indicated that both teachers' level of education and CDA were positively related to teachers' use of engagement utterances ( $R^2 = .27$ ). On average, high level of general education and obtaining a CDA was related to high use of engagement utterances during book reading. These findings highlight the value of education for supporting teachers' use of engagement utterances during large-group book reading.

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## **Low-Income Mothers and Fathers Reading to Their Children: Differences and Similarities in Style of Reading**

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Parent-child bookreading can be an effective strategy in helping children develop the necessary language and literacy skills required for school and lower children's risks of literacy failure (DeBaryshe, 1993; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). In particular dialogic reading is known to accelerate children's language development (Whitehurst et al., 1988). During dialogic reading the parent assumes the role of active listener, asking questions, adding information and prompting the child to respond (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

This study examined how low-income fathers and mothers participating in the national evaluation of Early Head Start (EHS) differed in style of reading when interacting with their 2, 3, and 5-year-olds. Videotaped interactions of 30 parent-child interactions around a book were transcribed and parental talk other than verbatim reading was coded along several dimensions, including immediate and non-immediate talk. Immediate talk can be described as talk that relates directly to the text, such as labeling, while non-immediate talk goes beyond the text and can include predictions or analyses of the text. Non-immediate talk is known to be related to children's vocabulary (De Temple & Snow, 2003).

Analyses showed that fathers used more non-immediate talk than mothers at all 3 child ages. Children interacting with their father around a book also produced more non-immediate talk than when interacting with their mother. Although as expected immediate talk occurred more frequently than non-immediate talk, parents increased their use of non-immediate talk with child age.

There were few differences between fathers and mothers in the amount of talk about the book itself (concepts of print etc.). However, fathers were more likely to direct the child's attention to the book, to ask the child to turn the page or otherwise encourage the child to interact with the book at all three child ages.

No associations were found between mother's immediate talk and father's immediate talk and mother's non-immediate and father's non-immediate talk. There was also no relationship between immediate and non-immediate talk and paternal education, father's biological and residential status, father's reported frequency of reading to the child.

Mothers initiated bookreading more frequently than fathers, however, fathers spent slightly more time with their children interacting around the book than mothers did.

This study provides more detailed and descriptive information on how low-income fathers and mothers interact with their children during bookreading. This type of information might prove

useful for intervention programs to make parents aware of different ways to interact around a book with their children.

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## **Measuring the Vocabulary Growth of Low Socioeconomic, Spanish-English Bilingual Children**

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Vocabulary development is a major focus of intervention for EHS/HS. Parent report measures such as the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory (CDI; Fenson et al., 1993) and the MacArthur Inventarios del Desarrollo de Habilidades Comunicativas (Jackson-Maldonado et al., 2003) have demonstrated validity for children acquiring either English or Spanish. However, measures of bilingual children's vocabulary development are lacking even though the number of children who speak a language other than English at home continues to increase. Research suggests that Spanish-English bilingual preschoolers' vocabulary size varies depending on how their vocabulary development is measured (see Pearson, et al., 1993, 1994), which necessitates appropriate tools to assess and monitor bilingual children's vocabulary development. Expanding on previous work, we examine the vocabulary growth of younger Spanish-English bilingual children (ages 24-36 months) from low-SES homes.

This project is being conducted in partnership with three EHS/HS programs in eastern Massachusetts. The data presented here are part of a larger study of children between the ages of 24-36 months from monolingual Spanish, bilingual Spanish-English, or monolingual English families. In this poster, prototypical trajectories of 9 Spanish-English bilingual children from a total sample of 22 for whom parent reports for Spanish and English vocabularies are available at two or more ages (24, 27, 30, 33, 36 months) are discussed. Specifically, it addresses the following questions about young Spanish-English bilingual children's vocabulary development: 1) How should bilingual children's vocabulary growth be measured (e.g. using single language measures, summing the single language measures, and/or deriving a total conceptual vocabulary score)? and 2) What are the patterns of vocabulary growth in Spanish and English for bilingual children (e.g. parallel growth or growth plateauing in Spanish or English)?

Preliminary results confirm and complement Pearson's (1994) findings based on bilingual children from more affluent homes. Specifically, total vocabulary scores (summing the single language scores) and conceptual vocabulary scores (mapping equivalent items from each single-language measure and crediting the unique words in each language) provide a more comprehensive picture of bilingual children's vocabulary development. Preliminary findings suggest that some children identified by parents and programs as coming from bilingual- or Spanish-language homes are lexically virtual monolinguals, showing little growth in Spanish vocabulary over time. Others, despite being in English language classroom environments, show little growth in English vocabulary, but continued growth in Spanish. For children with larger vocabularies in one or the other language, conceptual vocabulary growth tends to parallel vocabulary growth in the 'dominant' (i.e., stronger) language; for these children, conceptual vocabulary provides an important metric for vocabulary growth and provides a basis for comparison with monolingual vocabulary norms. Not unexpectedly, like many of their monolingual peers from similar backgrounds, children in this study show somewhat depressed vocabularies relative to the general population. If EHS/HS classrooms are sites of cognitive and

linguistic enrichment, over time we expect children who are ‘Spanish-dominant’ or more ‘balanced’ bilinguals to show conceptual vocabularies that are significantly boosted by the English vocabulary they are acquiring at school.

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## **Vocabulary Exposure of Young Children from Spanish-Speaking Low-Income Families: Words Count!**

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Early language development is crucial for young children. Language development prepares young children to succeed in school because early vocabulary size predicts later reading comprehension, which predicts school achievement (National Research Council, 1998; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Young children learn language primarily from their interactions with parents. Quality and quantity of language exposure explain a significant portion of the vocabulary children produce (Weizman & Snow, 2001). Maternal lexical knowledge as well as maternal language and literacy skills are related to children vocabulary production (Pan, Rowe, Singer, and Snow, 2005). Educated adult native English speakers use around 20,000 word families (from more than 54,000 English word families) (Nation and Waring, 1997). However a much smaller number of vocabularies (2-5,000 word families) are needed to provide a basis for comprehension, productive use in speaking and writing, and efficient learning from context (Liu and Nation 1985; Nation and Waring, 1997).

Children's vocabulary growth varies dramatically considering social class, parent education, cultural background, and children's skills. Weizman and Snow (2001) found that 99% of maternal lexical input consisted of 3,000 words used in five different interaction settings of mothers with young children from 53 English-speaking low-income families. The purpose of the present work is to systematically replicate parts of the Weizman and Snow (2001) study examining the frequency of language use with children from Spanish-speaking, low income families. This study will allow us to begin to understand the language context, both in types of words heard and produced and in what languages, for these children and to help in the design of intervention.

Mother-child dyads were assessed at 18 months, 24 months, 36 months, and 48 months. In this study, we focused in a subsample of low income Hispanic/Latino mostly Spanish-speaking families from the Bilingual Early Language and Literacy (BELLS) project. We examined 342 videotapes transcriptions of book-reading and playing interactions between mothers and their young children. A Computerized Language Analysis program (CLAN) was used to construct and to analyze maternal-child word interactions. This program provides specific type and number of utterances and standard language measures (e.g., Type/Token Ratio (TTR), Mean Length of Utterance (MLU)). Also, we used standardized receptive and expressive language tests in both Spanish and English for further comparative purposes.

Mother-child transcribed interactions contain over 50,000 words. Analysis considering both English and Spanish input, combining, adding, and separating the vocabularies of these two linguistic sources as well as sub-grouping by participant (mother or children), children ages (24, 36, and 48 months), setting of the activities (playing and reading), gender (boys and girls),

location (intervention and control groups) and other demographic variables such as, family size, SES, generation status, and parents education is included. The implications of early parent-child interactions for Spanish speaking children's English language development will be discussed.

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## **Teacher-Child Narratives in Pre-Kindergarten Head Start Classrooms**

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Classrooms are forums for children's learning and social exchanges. Like parents, teachers are also important models for children's discourse (e.g., Cazden, 1988). Since research indicates that language development occurs in interactive contexts, it is necessary to consider how teachers specifically encourage children's emergent literacy in Pre-Kindergarten classrooms. Sharing personal narratives, or stories about the past, is one way for preschoolers to reflect on their experiences (e.g., Reese & Fivush, 1993). Narratives allow children to make meaning of their past within a larger social-cultural context (e.g., Brockmeier, 2001; Bruner, 2002; Lemmon & Moore, 2001; Melzi, 2000).

This project, supported by a Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant from the Administration for Children and Families, examined Head Start teachers' role in promoting Pre-Kindergarteners' narratives. The objectives were to describe: (1) teachers' traditional Labovian narrative elements; (2) children's narrative elements; and (3) relations between teachers' and children's narrative elements.

Community partnerships were established with 3 Head Start programs (10 Pre-Kindergarten classrooms) in Manhattan. Forty-six ethnically diverse teacher-child dyads were videotaped sharing 3 narratives. Dyads talked about 1 shared past experience, 1 unshared experience, and a third experience of their choice. Narratives were transcribed verbatim using the standardized format – Codes for the Analysis of Human Language (CHAT), available through the Child Language Exchange System (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 2000). Traditional narrative elements were coded line by line at the utterance level for 6 Labovian elements expressed by both partners: setting, event, participant, description, evaluation, and appendage (e.g., Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Reese & Fivush, 1993). Teachers' language was further classified as requests or statements, and children's language as independent or elicited.

Findings thus far suggest that teachers expressed great variation in the extent that they requested (e.g., What is your favorite kind of cake?) or stated (e.g., We went to the zoo last week) narrative elements. Teachers also varied in the number of narrative elements. For instance, while some teachers expressed 1 element, others expressed all 6. About 80% of teachers predominantly used descriptions or events most frequently.

Children expressed similar patterns. While some children expressed 0 narrative elements, others expressed 4 or 5. Children most commonly used descriptions (e.g., A big house) or events (e.g., And I played outside), either as independent or elicited elements.

Preliminary results indicate that teachers' support related to children's narratives. As expected, teachers who expressed more elements had children with more elements. Teachers' requests were strongly associated with children's elicited statements. Ongoing analyses explore narratives in terms of shared and unshared experiences (e.g., a classroom birthday party or a weekend trip,

respectively). Narratives reveal themes of relatedness and agency (e.g., Eli, Melzi, Hadge, & McCabe, 1998). Some narratives refer to feelings shared by the child and friends (relatedness), whereas others refer to the child's own actions (agency).

Therefore, this study demonstrates that as individual classrooms vary within Head Start programs, children experience diverse environments. Teachers play essential roles in shaping children's narratives, particularly as children prepare for Kindergarten. This research aims to shed light on teachers' support of children's narratives.

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# **The Effects of Perceived Social Support on Internalizing Problems: A Study of Children in Divorced and Non-divorced Families**

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Divorce has been identified by both parents and children as one of the most stressful events in a child's life (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Divorce and single-parent family life are often accompanied by stressful life events and disruptions in family functioning that put children at risk of developing a host of psychological adjustment problems, including depression, anxiety, and withdrawal (Amato, 2001).

This study investigates what the differences are in children's perceived social support and internalizing problems (withdrawal, depression/anxiety), depending on parental divorce and the children's age. Further, this study examines the effects of perceived social support on the children's internalizing problems.

The participants of this study were 91 children in divorced families, of whom 31 were preschoolers, 30 third-graders, and 30 sixth-graders; and 87 children in non-divorced families, of whom 28 were preschoolers, 29 third-graders, and 30 sixth-graders. These participants completed questionnaires assessing the amount of social support they perceived. The type of social support comprised four sub-spheres - emotional, evaluative, informative, and instrumental support - with three questions for each sub-sphere. Children were asked to write down the names of all people relevant to each question, and the total number of people for each type was regarded as representing the degree of social support. In addition, their teachers rated them for K-CBCL (withdrawal, depression/anxiety).

The data were analyzed by ANOVA, scheffe', t-test, and stepwise regression.

The results of this study are as follows. First, depending on the children's age, there were significant differences in the amounts of perceived social support. Sixth-graders perceived themselves as having more social support than third-graders, and third-graders perceived themselves as having more social support than preschoolers. Second, children, both in divorced families and non-divorced families, perceived themselves as having more emotional than evaluative, informative, and instrumental support. Third, sixth-graders in non-divorced families perceived themselves as having more evaluative support than sixth-graders in divorced families. Fourth, third-graders were rated by their teachers as having more internalizing problems than preschoolers and sixth-graders. Plus, children in divorced families were rated by their teachers as having more internalizing problems than children in non-divorced families. Finally, the analysis of children in divorced families shows that the amount of perceived emotional support was a significant predictor of internalizing problems. Namely, children in divorced families who perceived themselves as having less emotional support, experienced more withdrawal and depression/anxiety. On the other hand, no significant effect of the perceived social support was found on the internalizing problems with children in non-divorced families.

The result showed that the availability of social support had an important influence on the adaptation of children in divorced families, the children, in particular, who experienced their parents' divorce needed emotional support more than any period, and emotional support played an important role in the adaptation of children in divorced families. Therefore, various types of social support should be provided with the program for children in divorced families, centering on the emotional mediation of love and attention.

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## **Building Social Communication Skills in Head Start Children Using Storybooks: The Effects of Prompting on Social Interactions**

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The success of peer-to-peer social interaction is influenced by children's ability to engage verbally. Verbal engagement provides a structure to support the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and experiences (Ostrosky, Kaiser, & Odom, 1993). When children do not develop age-appropriate skills, early intervention might be needed to improve social communication skills during the preschool years and to insure long-term social competence (Kamps & Tankersley, 1996; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992). Interventions to promote children's social communication skills in the context of peer interaction have been conducted with children who are at risk. Results of these interventions suggest that prompting specific verbal interactions in a play context appears to support social engagement. None of these interventions systematically examined whether the children would socially engage without any adult prompting after the intervention package was introduced. In general, adults provided prompts from the start of the intervention and then faded them out once the intervention was coming to a close. Prompting was not faded completely in any of the studies, and when the prompts were faded, social interaction decreased between the children. Thus, independent contribution of prompting and reinforcement on peer-to-peer interactions in a social context is unknown.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of a prompt versus no prompt condition in combination with a peer-directed intervention package that targeted children with low language or behavior problems. The study tested two conditions of a multi-component intervention package to increase social interaction between peers and evaluated which condition of the intervention increased the use of positive verbalizations, social pragmatic strategies, and vocabulary in study participants. Four children attending a Head Start program in central Tennessee between the ages of 4 years 0 months and 4 years 11 months participated in the study. All of the participants met the criteria for a language delay using the *Preschool Language Scale-Revised* (Zimmerman & Pond, 1992). Storybooks were developed in each of the following themes: doctor, animal doctor, hairdresser/barbershop, and construction. The books told a story that illustrated dramatic play, included models for verbalization during role playing, included specific theme vocabulary, and emphasized five social pragmatic strategies (initiating a conversation or play, responding to a peer's initiation for talk or play, turn-taking in play and conversation, obtaining a peer's attention, and using eye contact during social interactions). All teaching and play sessions were videotaped and transcribed using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT; Miller and Chapman, 1985) and coded using the Peer Language and Behavior Code (Stanton-Chapman, Kaiser, Vijay, & Craig-Unkefer, 2003). An alternating treatments design (Barlow & Hayes, 1979; Barlow & Hersen, 1984) was used to compare the two variations of the intervention. Results of the study indicated no differential effects between the prompt and no prompt conditions. While the study does not add to the literature supporting the use of prompts in social interaction, results comparing baseline to intervention performance show promise for improving preschoolers' social communication skills.

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## **Evidence-based Linkages Between Observed and Reported Classroom Practices and Emergent Literacy Growth in Preschool**

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This study examined preschool teachers' reported and observed practices in a random sample of publicly funded preschool classrooms. Two questions guided this research: (1) to what extent are preschool teachers' self-reported practices related to gains in emergent literacy, and (2) to what extent is the quality of children's observed preschool experiences related to gains in phonological and print-related skills fundamental to literacy development.

Participants included 37 preschool teachers and 479 preschool children ranging in age from three years, nine months, to five years, 11 months (fall to spring). Teachers were randomly selected from among 387 respondents to a survey mailed to 951 preschool teachers. Independent measures include the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Scale (ELLCO) and an author-made Preschool Survey of Literacy Practices (SLP). The dependent measure consisted of gain scores (fall-to-spring) from the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschool (PALS-PreK). Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was used to specify multi-level models where children were nested within classrooms. An alpha of .10 was used, based on reduced power related to the small sample size and the one-tailed nature of the model.

Intraclass correlations showed that a significant proportion of children's gains on PALS-PreK were attributable to the classroom they attended. For each of the subtasks on PALS-PreK, the proportion of between-classroom variability explained was significantly different from zero and ranged from .09 (Rhyme Awareness) to .39 (Nursery Rhyme Awareness). Four dimensions from the ELLCO observation tool were entered as predictors: (a) the General Classroom Environment (GCE), (b) the Literacy Environment Checklist (LEC), (c) Language, Literacy, and Curriculum, (LLC) and (d) the Literacy Activities Rating Scale (LARS). Only the LLC dimension was significantly correlated with gains on the phonological awareness composite of PALS-PreK. Finer grained analyses were conducted within each ELLCO dimension. Within the LEC dimension, between-class differences in phonological awareness gains were associated with Writing Materials. Within the GCE, class differences in phonological awareness gains on PALS-PreK were associated with opportunities for child choice and initiative and classroom climate. LLC yielded the most subscore correlations including approaches to book reading, curriculum integration, facilitating home support for literacy, and approaches to assessment.

From the survey, six theoretical constructs related to evidence-based practices were entered as predictors: (a) instructional grouping formats, (b) oral language and vocabulary practices, (c) attention to print functions, (d) phonological awareness activities, (e) writing, and (f) alphabet instruction. Teacher reported practices in the domain of oral language and vocabulary development were associated with between class differences in phonological awareness gains on PALS-PreK, as were teacher-reported phonological awareness activities, writing, and alphabet

activities. In total, between-class variance in phonological awareness gains on PALS-PreK was significantly attributable to all six reported practices combined.

Analyses of literacy practices (self-reported and observed) provide preliminary evidence that between 1/10<sup>th</sup> to 2/5<sup>ths</sup> of the variance in children's emergent literacy growth, especially in phonological awareness skills such as awareness of rhyme and beginning sounds, is attributable to the classroom. Classroom characteristics and teacher practices are related to children's emergent literacy growth in preschool.

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