

national center for research on early childhood education

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National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education Summary Summer 2009

The National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education (NCRECE) is conducting an experimental, random-assignment test of coursework and consultancy supports for early childhood teachers focused on effective instructional interactions and implementation of curricula in literacy and language development with expected effects on teachers' knowledge, instructional interactions and implementation, and assessments of child outcomes in language and literacy. Researchers at the University of Virginia, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of California-Los Angeles, and University of North Carolina-Greensboro lead the Center's work, in collaboration with state and local preschool programs throughout the country. There are two phases of the study and teachers are randomly selected for two possible supports. Phase one involves the NCRECE course, *Support of Language and Literacy Development in Preschool Classrooms through Effective Teacher-Child Interactions and Relationships*, and the second phase entails the MyTeachingPartner Consultancy. Teachers from the Chicago Public Schools Head Start, Preschool for All and Community Partnerships programs participated in the study during both phases of the project starting in the Spring 2008 and continuing through the 2008-09 school year. Due to attrition, additional teachers were added at the start of the 2008-09 school year. Thirty-nine teachers were enrolled from these programs at the conclusion of second phase of the study.

During both phases of the study, participating teachers completed surveys and videos of their classrooms, and received stipends for participation. Teachers also received video cameras, tripods and other materials in order to complete the videotaping activities. Teachers obtained parental consent for the classroom videotaping. Ownership of the cameras was determined by Chicago Public Schools.

In the spring 2008, two sections of the course were taught by NCRECE instructors, and teachers who completed the course received documentation for their course attendance for Certified Professional Development Units. During the 2008-09 school year, teachers were randomly assigned to the MyTeachingPartner Consultancy or control group. Teachers receiving consultancy support worked individually with their NCRECE consultant who provided ongoing non-evaluative support and feedback related to teachers' classroom interactions based on the teachers' videotapes. In addition, for phase 2, parent consent packets were distributed in participating classrooms during the 2008-09 school year, and 4 children were randomly selected for direct assessment in the fall and spring. Teachers completed surveys on the selected children, and classroom observations were completed during one day in their classrooms.

During the 2009-10 school year, in the third phase of the study, the selected children will be tracked the following school year into kindergarten by the NCRECE research team through the completion of teacher questionnaires, pending approval. In order to build capacity, teachers who participated in the course, consultancy and control conditions will have access to the MyTeachingPartner website at no cost during the 2009-10 school year. In addition, a CLASS training for up to 15 participants will be provided. Study results are in the process of being analyzed and will be shared once they become available.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary findings from our randomized-control trial (Cohort 1, Phase 1) show teachers who were randomly assigned to take the course, compared to those who did not, exhibited positive differences in beliefs and knowledge related to the type of interactions teachers can use to support children's

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development of literacy and language skills (Hamre, Pianta, & Dower, 2009). Most importantly, teachers who participated in the course were observed to use more effective teacher-child interactions than were teachers not in the course (effect sizes ranging from .4 to .8). These results suggest that coursework explicitly targeting improvements in teacher-child interactions is a viable alternative or supplement to more expensive coaching and mentoring interventions.

The current study now evaluates the efficacy of the MTP Consultancy when implemented by local consultants, in a larger and more diverse sample of teachers, and in combination with the NCRECE course on teacher-child interactions. The data from the Cohort 1 consultancy phase are still being processed and analyzed and preliminary results are not yet available. However, we have evidence from a recent controlled evaluation that this inservice professional development intervention produces gains in the quality of observed teacher-child interactions during instruction for BA-level, certified teachers in state-funded pre-K programs, with effect sizes ranging from $d = .77-.97$ on interactions such as teacher sensitivity and language modeling (Pianta et al., 2008). The MTP Consultancy intervention also showed a positive effect on children's task-oriented competence and assertiveness (Hamre et al., 2008), as well as on receptive language and emergent literacy skills when children's teachers received more than 20 hours of Consultancy support ($d = .29-.57$; Mashburn, Hamre, et al., 2008). Thus, there is evidence from prior controlled studies that the intervention being evaluated in Phase 2 of the NCRECE professional development study is effective for improving the quality of teacher-child interactions and child outcomes in the pre-k year. The present study now evaluates the efficacy of the MTP Consultancy when implemented by local consultants, in a larger and more diverse sample of teachers, and in combination with the NCRECE course on teacher-child interactions.

References

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