

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 1999 Research Scholars

Dana H. Abbott

Project Title:

Practical Application of Functional Assessment in a Preschool Setting

Grantee:

Dana H. Abbott

Project Funding Years:

1999-2001

University Affiliation :

SUNY Stony Brook

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to develop an assessment and intervention tool to measure and target children's emergent literacy skills. This project evaluated the use of a dynamic assessment system that Head Start teachers used to assess individual preschoolers' emergent literacy skills. Twenty classroom teaching situations were constructed that allowed teachers to emphasize emergent literacy skills while assessing individual children's performance. The dynamic assessment was designed to give Head Start teachers an understanding of which of their students have mastery of the materials and which need more work in that particular area while exposing children to literacy materials. In this way, teachers could target areas in which students need the most growth and could tailor experiences to individual students' needs and abilities.

Three major domains of emergent literacy skills were targeted: print awareness, emergent writing, and linguistic awareness. The goals of this study were to: (1) develop a measure of individual children's emergent literacy skills that will be used by Head Start teachers to track children's literacy development; (2) implement the use of the measure in Head Start classrooms; and (3) validate the new measure using standardized assessment instruments.

Children enrolled in Head Start programs for two years in Suffolk County, NY participated in this project. During the first year of the study, the emergent literacy measure was developed and pilot tested. During the second year of the study, ten Head Start classrooms participated in the evaluation and

validation of the Dynamic Assessment program. Classrooms were randomly assigned to assessment and control conditions (five in each group). Teachers in the assessment classrooms used the Dynamic Assessment program throughout the year. In order to validate the emergent literacy measure, 130 children from the 10 classrooms completed standardized assessment instruments measuring language and emergent literacy skills in the fall and spring of the second year. A Literacy Activities Checklist was also developed in order to assess teachers' use of literacy activities. Children's growth scores were analyzed in order to evaluate the extent to which project participation had an impact on teachers' use of emergent literacy activities in the classroom and on children's emergent literacy skills.

Sample:

n=130 children from low-income families in Suffolk County, NY

Measures:

Child

Developing Skills Checklist

NCLD Get Ready To Read Screen

Teacher

Literacy Activities Checklist

Teacher Background Survey

Jennifer E. Burke

Project Title:

The Prediction of Head Start Participation and Its Effect on the Outcomes of the Children of Adolescent Mothers

Grantee:

Jennifer E. Burke

Project Funding Years:

1999-2001

University Affiliation :

University of Notre Dame

Project Abstract:

This project used data from an ongoing longitudinal study that followed pregnant teen mothers from their third trimester and their children from birth to 10 years old. This project identified the factors that predict participation in Head Start for children of adolescent mothers, and identified the role of Head Start intervention on children's development. Researchers