

selected from a home-based Head Start program. This project was an 18-month descriptive study of in-home literacy practices, defined as reading, writing, looking at printed matter or discussion of print such as books or magazines. Qualitative data was collected through naturalistic in-home observations and interviews in Portuguese. This data described how all of the family members used language and printed materials in the home.

Phase I of the study involved learning about the amount and type of literacy practices in the home through observations and interviews. Phase II used the data gained in the first phase to create and implement an eight-week Family Literacy Program that met the families' literacy needs and goals. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese, translated into English, and coded for themes relating to language experiences of the children, experiences of the family members in learning and speaking English, and the ways in which the challenges of immigration have affected the children's overall development. Observational data were coded for social domain, language (English, Portuguese, or both), participant structure, and literacy event type. Based on these findings a description of how schools may foster supportive learning environments for Brazilian children was developed.

Sample:

n=5 Brazilian families

Measures:

Observation

Interviews

Margery Szczepanski

Project Title:

Modification of Environmental Demands in the Classroom to Improve Coping Effectiveness and Social Skills in Preschool Children Attending Head Start

Grantee:

Margery Szczepanski

Project Funding Years:

1999-2001

University Affiliation:

New York University

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher modifications of environmental demands in the classroom to improve social

skills and the effectiveness of coping in preschool children attending Head Start. The intervention program was derived from the Coping Frame of Reference, a set of theoretically based practical guidelines for improving coping effectiveness in children. Coping was facilitated by creating a goodness of fit in the classroom between environmental demands and a child's ability to manage them. This was accomplished by grading and modifying physical, social, and activity demands so that they were congruent with the child's capabilities. The intervention program was ten weeks in duration, and included the following components: (1) teacher training in modifying demands in the classroom to promote goodness of fit; (2) teacher modifications of demands on a daily basis in the classroom; and (3) weekly consultation sessions with teachers to collaborate in selecting weekly classroom interventions.

The participants were 60 to 80 predominantly Latino children and their teachers from four classrooms in two Head Start sites. Two classrooms were assigned to receive the intervention program and two classrooms served as controls. A quasi-experimental, non-equivalent group design was used with pre-test and post-test comparisons made between the intervention and control groups on measures of coping effectiveness and social skills. Process evaluation included identification of environmental modifications used in the classroom, and their frequency of application by the teachers. The results of the study: (1) provided information about the coping behaviors of the child participants and their responsiveness to changes in environmental demands; and (2) contributed knowledge about specific methods and strategies that can be used preventively to promote coping with stress and demands in the classroom, and to improve coping in children whose behaviors are ineffective in managing demands of the environment.

Sample:

n=60-80 Head Start children and their teachers

Measures:

Child

Coping Inventory

Social Skills Rating System-Teacher-Preschool Form (SSRS)

Classroom

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)

Teacher

Daily Documentation of Classroom Interventions