Harnessing the Power of Play with Intentional Teacher Support

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Playful Learning: The Role of Play in Early Childhood Educational Settings
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Poverty (and early adversity) is associated with lower neural resources for learning.

- Attention skills
- Language skills
- Memory skills
- Impulse control
- Emotion Regulation
- Problem-solving ability
Poverty Delays Pre-frontal Cortex Development

Executive Control:
- Working memory
- Inhibitory control
- Attention flexibility
- Language skills

Key Competencies
- Getting Along With Others
- Engaging in Learning Tasks
- Following Rules
- Anger Management
- Managing conflicts Problem-solving

Fundamental to cognitive and Behavioral school readiness
Developmental Roots of Executive Functioning are in Social Interaction

◆ With Parents…
  ◆ Attachment processes
  ◆ Joint attention & sensitive responding

◆ With peers..
  ◆ social imitation & reciprocity
  ◆ negotiation & collaboration
Challenge

- Integrate research-based models of social-emotional development and self-regulatory (executive control) with

- Research-based models of emergent literacy & math skill development with

- Comprehensive early education programming
Funded through the Interagency School Readiness Consortium

- Build upon the foundation of strong Head Start programming (High Scope/Creative Curriculum)

- Foster the diffusion of research-based practices in the two skill domains of: 1) social-emotional competencies, and 2) language & emergent literacy skills

- Provide a curriculum base and mentoring program to support teachers’ professional development and promote the quality of cross-domain instructional practice
Intervention Components: Language and Literacy Skills

**Target Skills**
- Vocabulary
- Syntax
- Phonological Sensitivity
- Print Awareness

**Curriculum Components**
- Interactive Reading
- Sound Games
- Print Center

**Teaching Strategies**
- Language Expansions
- Rich & Targeted Vocabulary
- Questions & Reflections
- Decontextualized Talk
Intervention Components:
Social-Emotional Competencies

**Target Skills**
- Prosocial Skills
- Emotional Competence
- Self Control
- Social Problem Solving

**Curriculum Components**
- PATHS Friendship Lessons
- PATHS Feeling Lessons
- PATHS Turtle Technique
- PATHS SPS Lessons

**Teaching Strategies**
- Positive Classroom Management
- Praise & Warm Involvement
- Emotion Coaching
- Induction Strategies
- Social Problem-Solving Dialogue
Preschool PATHS
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

Lessons & Activities:
1. Emotional understanding
2. Friendship skills
3. Intentional self-control
4. Social problem-solving
Play was the Primary Context for Social-Emotional Learning

- For prosocial reciprocity & exchange
- For emotion coaching & empathy building
- For practice in intentional self-control
- For practice in social problem-solving
Professional Development Support

- Initial 3-day training workshop
- Mid-year 1-day booster training workshop
- Weekly classroom visit from REDI trainer
- Weekly meeting with REDI trainer

Model of change: Promote positive classroom practice with curriculum-based activities & guide; support generalization with coach models and self-reflection
## Intervention Effects on Teaching Practices

### Teaching Quality

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teaching Quality</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
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### Teacher Language Use

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<th>Teacher Language Use</th>
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<td>Statements (CLEO)</td>
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<td>Questions (CLEO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rich-sensitive Talk (CLEO)</td>
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Significant Effects on Child Outcomes Across Domains

- **Language & Literacy**
  - Vocabulary growth
  - Phonological sensitivity
  - Print awareness

- **Social-Emotional Competencies**
  - Emotional understanding
  - Social problem-solving skills
  - Teacher-rated social competence & aggression
  - Observer-rated social competence & task orientation
  - Parent-rated attention and communication skills
Developmental Cross-over Facilitation: Content Learning and Approaches to Learning

REDI project data, in press
Developmental Cross-over Facilitation: Behavioral and Cognitive School Readiness

![Diagram showing the relationship between growth in vocabulary, emergent literacy, social competence, and learning engagement, and kindergarten letter-word identification.]
Impact on Kindergarten Adjustment

Social Competence  Class Participation

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Control</th>
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<td>Social Competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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High Quality Curriculum:  
Intentional vs. Incidental Instruction

Providing time to play is not enough.

Incidental & implicit learning is limited by the quality of models and neural capacity – it is not sufficient to “close the gap”

Intentional instruction, based on an organized curriculum that clarifies the scope and sequence of play skills & self-regulatory capacity is probably critical in Head Start.
Skill Acquisition Requires Repeated Practice

Incidental exposure is often insufficient to drive acquisition.

Repeated exposure with multiple, distributed practice opportunities are required.
Play Coaching for ADHD Prevention
(NIMH funded R34)

Figure 2: PIPS Coaching Intervention Processes

Targeted Social-Emotional Skills
Prosocial Orientation
Emotional Understanding
Inhibitory Control
Social Problem-Solving

Coaching Processes that “Scaffold” Self-regulation
Positive support & joint attention
Emotion coaching
Induction strategies
Problem-solving dialogue
Play review

Developmental Hierarchy of Play Forms & Activities
Parallel Play
Affiliation
Imitation
Cooperative Play
Reciprocal Exchange
Negotiation
Coordinated Play
Role Coordination
Intentional Play Plans
Sustained Dramatic Play
Take Home Points

- Dual domain focus is synergistic: **cognitive** & **behavioral readiness**

- Enriched curriculum guides and intentional instruction are of high value: **to promote emergent literacy and math skills** and **to foster self-regulation**

- Play is a critically important context for learning: **but intentional & strategic support is needed**

- **Strong professional development models & administrative support are critical**
Acknowledgments

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REDI References


For More Information

http://www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths-preschool/

http://headstartredi.ssri.psu.edu/