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Project Abstract:

The University of Cincinnati is investigating data collection methods and teaching quality with regard to Head Start outcomes. The four specific goals of this project are to: (a) identify and configure a data management system for analysis of child outcome data, (b) evaluate teacher effectiveness with regard to the planned and active curriculum, (c) provide professional development to teachers and supervisory staff with regard to teacher effectiveness and collection of outcome data, and (d) provide continuous program improvement through the use of outcome data that ultimately improves early learning environments for Head Start children. Researchers will determine if the planned curriculum leads to expected child outcomes, if the active curriculum (e.g., what happens in the classroom) is effective in accelerating performance and scaffolding development, and how child outcome data is analyzed for decision-making with regard to continuous improvement in Head Start. Participants include approximately 1650 Head Start children and 100 Head Start teachers randomly assigned to either a control group, a component control group, or an experimental group. Control group teachers receive no services, component control group teachers participate in a workshop on effective teaching and management, and experimental group teachers participate in the workshop and also receive ongoing feedback and support. The researchers aim to provide Head Start and the early childhood community with a unique, reasonable, and "doable" model for managing data; observing teacher effectiveness; providing feedback to teachers, parents, and staff with regard to child outcomes; and approaching professional development as a continuous improvement process.

Sample:

N=1650 Head Start children, 100 Head Start teachers

University of Kentucky

Project Title:

Project LINK: A Partnership to Promote LINKages Among Assessment, Curriculum, and Outcomes in Order to Enhance School Success for Children in Head Start Programs

Principal Investigator:
Jennifer Grisham-Brown, Ed.D.

Project Funding Years:
2002-2007

Head Start Partners:
Community Action Council for Lexington-Fayette, Bourbon, Harrison, and Nicholas Counties (CAC)

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Project Abstract:
The Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Kentucky in collaboration with the Community Action Council for Lexington-Fayette, Bourbon, Harrison, and Nicholas Counties have developed an authentic assessment process aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, with an emphasis on the mandated child outcomes. This assessment system is based on authentic assessment processes, using a combination of the Assessment, Evaluation, and Planning System¹ in activity-based formats, coupled with ongoing portfolio development for Head Start children. Specifically, the Project LINK model uses these authentic assessment processes to develop and monitor individualized child plans that inform ongoing curriculum planning in Head Start preschool classrooms.

This assessment model for preschool children is currently being evaluated in the Head Start partnership site that operates 26 direct-managed Head Start classrooms. In this sample of 26 preschool classrooms across five counties, eight classrooms were selected as pilot classrooms and have been receiving the intervention for three years. Eighteen classrooms were originally stratified by urbanicity and randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. The intervention classrooms received the intervention for two academic years. Classrooms participating in the intervention receive a minimum of three days of teacher training on the assessment model and weekly technical assistance on the implementation of authentic assessment practices as well as using authentic assessment data to inform their curriculum planning. Teachers in intervention and pilot sites also use Project LINK implementation forms including individualized child plans and lesson plans.

Preliminary data analysis suggested that intervention and pilot classrooms were rated higher on their language and literacy environments as measured by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation.² Specifically, post scores on the ELLCO classroom observation scale were significantly higher for intervention and pilot classrooms ($F=4.581$, $p<.05$). Change scores for each of the three groups were also calculated to examine change in scores from pre to post data points. Comparisons of these scores yielded statistically significant differences on the two of the three ELLCO subscales, literacy environment ($F=4.823$, $p<.05$) and the classroom observation scale ($F=10.098$, $p<.01$). Differences on the overall ECERS-R scores were not significant, however, differences on specific subscales and indicators were found. Project LINK is currently in its fourth year of implementation. These measures were repeated in intervention and control classrooms during the third year and data are presently being analyzed to determine differences between the two groups. Pre and post data also were collected on child outcomes in intervention and control sites using a modified version of the FACES child battery. These data also are currently being analyzed. Fourth year pre test data are presently being collected on both classroom environments and child outcomes.

Sample:

(pilot)

N=8 Preschool Classrooms

Intervention: N=7 (2 classrooms dropped during fourth year)

Control: N=7 (2 classrooms dropped during fourth year)

Measures:

Classroom

Document Review

IEP Analysis Form - adapted

Kentucky Teacher Internship Lesson Planning Form - adapted

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R) – dropped during fourth year

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation

Child

Learning Accomplishment Profile – Diagnostic (LAP-D)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III)

Woodcock-Johnson, Revised (WJ-R) Letter-Word Identification

Woodcock-Johnson, Revised (WJ-R) Applied Problems Test

Woodcock-Johnson, Revised (WJ-R) Dictation Test