Understanding how children’s engagement and teachers’ interactions combine to predict school readiness

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BACKGROUND

• Children develop more school readiness skills when teachers interact with them in ways that:
  • are responsive and sensitive (Connor et al., 2005; McCartney et al., 2007)
  • provide consistent behavioral expectations (Emmer & Stough, 2001)
  • provide cognitively-stimulating feedback (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003)
  • How an individual child engages with teachers, peers, and learning activities is also important for their achievement and adjustment (Fredricks et al., 2004)
  • Few studies have examined the quality of children’s teacher-child interactions in ways that:

METHOD

Data collected as part of the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education’s (NCRECE) Professional Development Study

Participants: 605 children from 309 Head-Start and community-based classrooms (306 girls, 299 boys; mean age = 50.18 months [SD = 5.44])

Teacher’s Interactions and Children’s Engagement: Observed teachers and children during one visit in the winter alternating between inCLASS and CLASS.

Results

- Patterns of children’s engagement
- Individual Child Engagement and Classroom-Level Interactions Predicting School Readiness

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Readiness Outcomes (Fall and Spring)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receptive Vocabulary (PPVT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressive Vocabulary (WJ-III Picture Vocabulary)</td>
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<td>Phonological Awareness (TOPEL)</td>
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<td>Print Knowledge (TOPEL)</td>
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<td>Inhibitory Control (Pencil Tap)</td>
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<td>Working Memory (Backward Digit Span)</td>
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- Children’s engagement and teacher classroom interactions uniquely predicted school readiness
- Children’s individual classroom engagement on gains in phonological awareness and expressive vocabulary was moderated by classroom level teacher-child interactions

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

• Findings emphasize importance of what the teacher brings to the classroom
• Children’s individual engagement appears to matter less in classrooms characterized by high quality teacher-child interactions
• Children classified as positively-engaged may show resilience to the negative impacts of lower quality classrooms
• Looking through both a teacher and child lens provides a better understanding of the transactional way children develop school readiness skills