

APPENDIX O

Evaluation Description

The Effectiveness of a Program to Accelerate Vocabulary Development in Kindergarten (Vocab)**Overview**

This study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, will evaluate *PAVED for Success (PAVE)*, an early literacy program designed to enhance vocabulary development among kindergarteners in high-poverty schools. Vocabulary skills are critical for learning to read, as they provide an essential foundation for decoding, fluency, and reading comprehension. Children who live in poverty are more likely to enter school with more poorly developed language skills, including vocabulary, and continue to fall further behind through elementary school. The PAVE intervention, which improved the children's standardized test scores in a previous study, provides teachers with professional development through which they learn research-based strategies for enhancing children's vocabulary development during interactive book reading; cognitively challenging conversations; and direct vocabulary instruction. The overall goal of the intervention is to enhance children's vocabulary knowledge as a foundation for literacy development. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, data will be collected both on teachers' instructional practices and students' vocabulary and broader literacy development. Data on teachers' backgrounds and student characteristics will also be gathered to examine whether the PAVE intervention is more effective for some groups of teachers or students than for others.

Study Methods and Timeframe

This study employs a random-assignment design, with a sample of about 140 kindergarten teachers and 1,400 students in 60 to 80 schools in the Mississippi Delta region, half assigned to Treatment and half assigned to Control groups. Treatment teachers will receive one-day summer training in the summer of 2008, then a classroom visit from a trainer; formative assessment and retraining; and peer discussions with other PAVE teachers during the 2008-2009 school year. Control teachers will receive the district's usual professional development provided during the intervention year and will receive PAVE training prior to the start of the following year, school year 2009-2010.

Impacts on teachers' instructional practices are measured through classroom observation and lexical diversity in teachers' talk during an audio-taped segment of a literacy lesson. Impacts on students' vocabulary development are measured in kindergarten and first grade by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4; the Expressive Vocabulary Test-2; and lexical diversity in a storytelling task. A measure of a broader range of literacy skills will be assessed at the end of first grade, using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test. A teacher survey will provide information on demographics and training. School records provide data on student demographics, eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, special education status, and English language learner status. Data will be collected during the spring and fall of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years.

Uses of the Results

The results will be used to determine if the PAVE intervention shows promise for use in Mississippi kindergarten classrooms, and, in particular in areas with high poverty and low levels of reading achievement. Children in these areas are well behind the national averages in vocabulary skills, and vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of literacy development that has generally been more difficult to impact than other emergent skills. If PAVE is successful at improving teacher instructional practices and students vocabulary skills, then it will be an important tool in helping to boost literacy skills among these emergent readers.

How You Can Help

Study staff may be contacting you in the coming months about participation in this study. Your support of this effort will ensure that we obtain the most accurate and comprehensive information on PAVE, and its usefulness in improving the literacy skills of Mississippi kindergarten students.

Contact for More Information

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