Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education Programs on the Literacy Learning of Children from Low Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds

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Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education Programs on the Literacy Learning of
Children from Low Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds

by

Alyssa Morris

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of
The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education
Abstract

Research studies have indicated that children’s introduction and engagement in culturally responsive, age appropriate and relevant literacy instruction within Early Childhood Education influences the literacy learning and development of young children in their early stages of life. This research is designed to develop a deeper understanding of how literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention influence the literacy learning of children ages 3-5 from underserved communities. The research supported the idea that utilizing effective student-centered early education and early intervention practices and approaches to impact the growth and development of children to promote improved future literacy learning outcomes.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout my experience working in the Rochester City School District, I have been interested in the effectiveness of early interventions. Early Intervention refers to a broad array of activities designed to enhance a young child’s development. Early intervention is essential to children with developmental delays, or a confirmed diagnosis of developmental disability. A variety of early intervention services are offered to eligible children and their families. The early intervention service that I focused my study on was the natural environments model, always keeping family priorities first. For my research, I expanded my knowledge and developed a deeper understanding of how literacy instructional practices and approaches used in Early Childhood Education programs influenced the literacy learning and development of young children ages 3-5 from underserved communities. Research studies have indicated that children’s introduction and engagement in culturally responsive, age appropriate and relevant literacy instruction within early childhood education influences the literacy learning and development of young children in their early stages of life and aids in their preparation and readiness for formal classroom instruction.

Problem Statement

My study explores the impact of early intervention programs on literacy learning and development of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds by asking the question: How do literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Intervention programs influence the literacy learning and development of young children from underserved communities?
Susan H. Landry et al. (2014) states, early childhood is a critical period for exposure to quality learning environments as environmental influences during this period impact brain development, learning, behavior, and physical and mental health throughout life.

Enhancing the quality of child care programs for disadvantaged toddlers is likely a good investment that prepares children to take optimal advantage of pre-K programs, thereby promoting school readiness (Landry, 2014). However, there is a lack of information on effective intervention models that target typical child care staff who have limited training, are working for low wages, and are employed in centers with high turnover. Landry et al. (2014) investigated the models needing to address common problems in child care centers serving low-income children, including low levels of teacher responsiveness to children’s signals, rich language input, cognitively stimulating activities, and predictable schedules. Landry et al. (2014) developed a professional development and curriculum intervention with the primary goal of enhancing center-based, child care teachers’ abilities to use responsive teacher-child interactions with 2- and 3-year-olds. The researchers defined responsive teacher behaviors as those promoting children’s development of both (a) social and emotional skills (e.g., supports to regulate behavior) and (b) linguistic and cognitive skills (e.g., rich language input or scaffold introduction to early math concepts. This responsive, intentional approach to caring for young children trained child care teachers to use strategies proven effective in a random assignment intervention with parents in home settings, called Play and Learning Strategies, which is grounded in the attachment and the sociocultural theories.
Significance of the Problem

Jody Clegg’s (2014) case study series indicated that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher SES groups. Landry et al. (2014) study makes an important contribution to the limited randomized control studies in classrooms serving low-income 2- and 3-year-olds by demonstrating that staff with limited education and training can be instructionally informed to improve their responsive behaviors with groups of young children that, in turn, promotes greater increases in children’s development.

The opportunity to successfully develop emergent literacy skills is vital for a young child’s future academic success. Emergent literacy skills include phonological awareness, vocabulary, letter naming, and word manipulation (Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008). Such skills provide a young child with a greater chance to successfully learn to read. However, Robyn Ziolkowski & Howard Goldstein’s (2008) examined the effects of an explicit, developing literacy intervention embedded within the framework of shared book reading for children. A local school district preschool program recruited children with language delays from low-income environments and with developmental disabilities. The participants included 13 children ranging in age from 4.2 years to 5.4 years. The racial makeup was: 10 children were African American, 2 children were European American, and 1 child was Hispanic; skilled in Spanish and English. All of the children lived in households that met federal guidelines that qualified the children for free or reduced lunch at school. The observations were conducted during a period of 3 days to determine the level of contact the children received related to phonological awareness, print awareness, and shared book reading. The intervention took place in a corner in the large group room. The area was designated as the “reading corner.” The results from this study indicates that
explicit instruction in letter sounds and rhyme can be embedded successfully within shared book reading to improve phonological awareness skills. Researchers have proven that shared storybook reading provides a good context for producing advances in phonological awareness skills with children with language impairments when children are given daily opportunities to practice.

My study is important because it may provide information to current and future teachers and educators on how best to provide literacy instructional practices to children of diverse backgrounds. It is imperative to identify effective literacy interventions, allowing all children the opportunity to become good readers. If further study of this subject is not conducted, teachers may not be aware of the importance of early intervention effects on children’s social, emotional, behavioral, early literacy, language, and math outcomes as well as teacher-child relationship.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of how literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention influence the literacy learning and development of children ages 3-5 from underserved communities. The goal is to use this information more effectively to facilitate and demonstrate higher outcomes of early intervention programs with children from underserved communities.

In order to explore the impact of early intervention programs, I selected a maximum of three children (boys and girls) ages 3-5, of low socioeconomic status (SES), and who attended an enrichment/early intervention program. I randomly selected the children by the use of popsicle sticks for participation in my study. The children were recruited by a recruitment letter written by me and distributed via director. The maximum number of participants I accepted is three.
At the first session I randomly selected three male/female students to participate in my study. I introduced myself to each child who was a part of my study, and observed them for an hour to begin my research notes. Following the first session there were 6 additional sessions that consisted of observing and taking anecdotal notes on three children for six hours in the child’s assigned classroom (1 day a week), for the duration of 6 weeks. I closely analyzed phonological awareness tasks as literacy skills are predictors of later decoding, spelling, and reading comprehension.

**Rationale**

As a substitute teacher in the Rochester City School District, I find it of critical importance to understand the impact of early education childhood programs on the literacy learning and development of children from low- socio economic backgrounds. I incorporated effective literacy strategies and techniques into specific interventions to promote higher outcomes in children’s’ early literacy development. The results of my study provided insight on the significance of early learning and the growth and development that can be facilitated effectively through literacy enrichment experiences and literacy support services provided by early childhood education programs. Clegg (2014) indicated there is a lack of language and communication intervention studies in this population, and it is argued that studies which include case study methodology are pertinent in further understanding if and how language learning interventions are effective.

**Definition of Terms**

*Early Intervention(EI)* is a voluntary developmental evaluation and services program offered by New York State and administered locally by Child and Family Health Services of the
Monroe County Department of Health. EI serves children from birth through 2 years of age and their families where there is a high risk of delay, a suspected delay in development, or a confirmed diagnosis of developmental disability.

*Early Childhood Education (ECE)* is a term that refers to educational programs and strategies geared toward children from birth to the age of eight. This time period is widely considered the most vulnerable and crucial stage of a person's life. Early childhood education often focuses on guiding children to learn through play. The term often refers to preschool or infant/child care programs.

*Emergent Literacy Skills:* the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for the development of reading and writing –are important for later reading success.

*Socioeconomic status (SES)* commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2014).

*Phonological awareness* refers to sensitivity to the sound units of oral language, including the awareness of words in sentences, of syllables in words, of the beginning and end parts of words, and of phonemes (Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008).

**Summary**

Early childhood education and early intervention are both necessary and important for the development and learning of young children. My research examines what can be done to improve early intervention programs and how children can benefit from the availability of such
programs and services. Incorporating various strategies and techniques is strongly suggested for the implementation of early learning and interventions. Early intervention research will continue to develop new strategies for teaching literacy.

More importantly, by conducting my research study, more insight will be provided on the significance of utilizing effective student-centered early education and early intervention practices and approaches which are culturally sensitive and responsive to impact the growth and development of children during early childhood to promote improved future literacy learning outcomes.

**Study Approach**

I completed a qualitative case study to examine the effectiveness of Early Childhood Education Programs on children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. The case study included three preschool children from a low-income background who participated in the early education program in one preschool classroom located within the city of Rochester. Case studies allow an initial examination of the effects of an intervention as well as a detailed examination of individual responses to the intervention and experiences in which participants are immersed, which is not always possible in large group studies (Clegg, 2014).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Since the adoption of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001, the prevention of reading disabilities in high-risk populations has become a top national research and educational priority. Numerous studies have shown that children with deficit language skills and those who come from low-socioeconomic (SES) environments are often among children identified as high risk for developing later reading disabilities (Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008). Given this evidence, it appears to be critically important for children with language deficits who come from low-income environments to receive intervention services that address the achievement of phonological awareness skills as early as preschool (Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008). Sociodemographic factors such as, parental educational level, family income level, and ethnic group, often have a compounding effect on children’s at-risk status (Brown, Garzarek, Donegan, 2014). Phonological awareness has been observed in children as young as 2 years of age and is critical in forming the foundation for understanding the alphabetic structure of words. Ziolkowski and Goldstein (2008) indicated that phonological awareness intervention should follow a “developmental course,” learning to manipulate larger elements before manipulating smaller units. Additional research has indicated that children with language impairments who come from low-SES households appear to be at even greater risk for beginning school with a lack of knowledge on language skills that affects reading development and future academic success.

This literature review discusses in detail the importance of early education and early intervention, the impacts on early intervention programs, and early literacy importance on such programs available for young children. This literature review also discusses various strategies
and techniques that may be considered for implementation to increase the success rate of young children’s acquisition of the fundamental critical literacy skills necessary for reading readiness and positive life outcomes with regard to children’s early literacy development.

The Importance of Early Childhood Education and Early Intervention

Early intervention can have a positive impact on a child’s overall literacy development. Mariana Souto-Manning’s (2010) research consisted of a two-year study that used cultural circles as an approach to in-service teacher education. Souto-Manning examined activities over one academic year designed by two Head Start teachers who were influenced by their experiences in the Freirean culture. As researchers, the Head Start teachers analyzed their observations and brought their learnings to life in their classes through redesigned curriculum and teaching practices. The children in the Head Start classes were mostly African American and Latinos/Latinas. The research was conducted in a preschool that housed three separate programs: Head Start (around 37 children enrolled in two half-day classes), privately funded early education (Birth-4; 55 children in full-day programs), and state-funded pre-kindergarten (20 children; 7:30am-2:30pm, with the option of paid aftercare). Souto-Manning determined that teachers do not need to conduct extensive studies of people and cultures in order to create educational spaces that honor children’s home practices and cultural legacies. Yet, documenting glimpses of home literacy practices within and across contexts, paying careful attention to the cultural nature of definitions of literacy, and engaging young children as curriculum designers were necessary as teachers sought to build on children’s language and literacy strengths. Overall,
the findings indicate that the action researchers’ process can inform teachers and teacher educators to better educate a new generation.

Stacey Bracken et al. (2008) investigated the importance of the home literacy environment of 233 preschool children from low-income backgrounds who attended full day, full week Head Start classes from September through June in centers located in southeastern New York. Prior research proves that library visits, print exposure, parents’ literacy beliefs and habits have been connected to children’s literacy outcomes. Studies have shown that poverty and socioeconomic status are significantly critical factors which impact early language skills, social capability, and academic achievement. The three measures of family reading behavior of this study include: Child Reading Interest, Parent Reading Interest, and Parent-Child Reading Interaction. It was found that Child Reading Interest and Parent-Child Reading Interaction were predictors of children’s performance within a variety of early literacy measures on the influence of family demographics. There were three noted limitations in this study. The first was concern to the variable selection, second, the use of a self-report measure of family reading behavior, and third, the lack of observation of family reading behavior. The results indicated that family reading behavior, specifically Child Reading Interest and Parent-Child Reading Interaction; play an important role in predicting children’s early literacy development above the influence of family demographics. Family reading behaviors and the various skills that children bring with them to preschool is critical for teachers to have knowledge on.

Landry et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative research study which consisted of examining the effectiveness of a professional development and curriculum intervention, called Responsive Early Childhood Curriculum (RECC), for improving a broad collection of child outcomes. A comprehensive curriculum was provided in this study for several reasons. First, this
facilitated instruction in early language, literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional skills that tend to be weak for low-income children. Second, to address the problem in many child care centers serving low-income children of unpredictable routines that support self-regulation, the curriculum put a schedule of daily activities in place that balanced adult-guided and child-centered learning activities (Vygotsky, 1978). Third, for integration and retention of this new information, curriculum units were designed to present repeated and varied experiences around a topic within close time proximity. The participants were recruited in child care centers across 3 years to participate in this multisite project. One classroom per child care center participated, resulting in a total of 65 classrooms. Child care teachers with toddlers (2- to 3-year-olds) in their classrooms were randomized to one of three conditions: a business-as-usual control, RECC, and RECC plus an explicit set of activities to build social-emotional skills. Classroom observations showed greater gains for RECC teachers’ practices that included helping children manage their behavior, establishing a predictable schedule, and the use of cognitively stimulating activities. The results of this study support the positive impact of responsive teachers and environments that provide appropriate support for toddlers’ social and emotional development.

Evaluating speech, language and communication interventions essentially involves measuring change in these behaviors and demonstrating whether the identified changes are a result of the intervention and no other factors (Clegg, 2014). Clegg (2014) conducted a case study that originated from collaboration between the department of Human Communication Sciences (HCS), University of Sheffield, and the Local Education Authority, specifically the Primary Inclusion Service. The aim of the research study was to conduct an experimental evaluation of interventions targeted at assisting curriculum vocabulary learning in primary school age children with significant Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Difficulties (SEBD). The participants included
of five primary school age children who attended a Pupil Inclusion Centre (PIC) in a large city in the north of England. The PIC provides placements for primary school age children who have reached School Action Plus of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for SEBD or who have a statement of Special Education Need for SEBD. The five participants were all male and aged between 6 years and 8 years and three months. The first intervention targeted their sounds in language awareness skills and the second intervention, targeted their learning of curriculum vocabulary knowledge and the combination of sound and meaning in language approaches to this vocabulary learning. A case study series involving a repeated measure within subjects design was used to evaluate the two interventions. This study confirmed that children with SEBD can participate in more structured vocabulary learning interventions and that these can be effective in enabling them to learn new curriculum vocabulary. Also, the ability to recognize sounds in new words was considered to be required for literacy development to occur. This study proves to be a significant focus area of intervention research.

The Impact of Early Intervention Programs

Language and literacy development are interdependent and develop as children engage in interactions with more skilled partners in various communities of practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Language plays an important role on children that develop knowledge of how to act and communicate from one activity to another. Souto-Manning (2014) described that early intervention is an opportunity to strengthen teachers’ and children’s perspectives of their cultural values, family experiences and individual contributions, and moves towards positioning children as multiliterate change agents who can guide their way through multiple reading areas while educating their peers and teachers in early childhood education settings.
Identifying interventions that are developmentally appropriate for young children, effective, and able to be implemented in typical early childhood classrooms by an early childhood teacher is important; additionally, it is vital that such interventions can be within reach of early childhood programs serving preschool children. Dana Hilbert and Sarah Eis’s (2013) study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design that included an experimental and a control group. The experimental group included preschool children from a low-income background, who participated in the intervention program that targeted print knowledge, vocabulary, narrative skills and phonological awareness. The control group included preschoolers who did not receive any specific intervention. Nine classrooms of children from a collaborative community-based preschool program participated in the study. The study contributed to the literature regarding the prevention of reading difficulties in pre-Kindergarten children by investigating the benefits of a regular education early literacy intervention program on the development of preschool children’s early literacy skills. The results of this study indicated that, at least in terms of emergent literacy skills, educators can close the gap prior to the beginning of formal reading instruction. The findings suggested the intervention is effective in facilitating the development of vocabulary and phonological awareness in young children identified as low-income and at-risk for delays in the development of literacy skills. However, the selection of assessment instruments could have impacted the ability of the study to determine the effectiveness of all components.

Mary Jalongo and Michelle Sobolak (2011) provided early childhood educators with the latest evidence on effective ways to build upon the vocabulary of young children. Receptive language is defined as interpreting language that is heard or read; expressive language refers to producing language through speech or writing. Evidence supports that home and school
environments have a strong influence on both the size and depth of children’s vocabulary. It is stated by researchers that, in order for children to become proficient readers, they need to learn five to six new words per day, 38 words per week, 2000 new words a year, and 10,000 by age 6. The results of the study research suggested that instruction should include questioning, clarifying, repeating, pointing to words, supplying examples, and providing understandable definitions for young children. Students need to have interactive lessons in which they are engaged in, to learn more vocabulary words. Furthermore the research indicated that when infants are read to, their literacy skills are developing which improves upon their vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It is important for educators and educators to know the types of vocabulary knowledge that students possess when beginning a program. It is also crucial that teacher and educators make an effort to build upon the vocabulary knowledge of a young child. Early Educators should consider the need to be aware and understanding of the challenges that students from diverse backgrounds bring with them into the classroom when facilitating literacy instruction to improve and expand their vocabulary development.

Early Literacy Practices and Approaches

Souto-Manning (2014), indicated that three levels of change must happen in the field of early literacy: first, acknowledging that every child comes with funds of knowledge and building upon previous knowledge as resources and not deficits; second, not relying on existing knowledge as a transition to further knowledge, but also embracing ways that broaden current definitions of the norm so teachers and children from dominant cultural groups broaden their
views of what counts as language and literacy; and third, while working with educators to develop such insights, it is imperative to help students of color succeed within the structure of learning the forms of language.

Jennifer Brown, Jessica Garzarek, and Katharine Donegan (2014) conducted a multiple baseline study which examined a narrative retell intervention with explicit guided self-monitoring on narrative macrostructure skills in at-risk African American young children. A combination of intervention elements from previous effective story grammar interventions were incorporated with technology-supported self-monitoring. The participants included a class of 4- and 5-year-old kindergarten students enrolled in a non-profit private school serving inner-city children in a Southeastern United States city. The study was completed over 4 consecutive weeks during the school year. Of the nine children, all were African American, and eight were boys. The intervention services took place during classroom small group instruction time and occurred in a room next to the classroom. Each session lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. The multi-component small group instruction includes an intervention that consisted of engaging stories, age-appropriate picture materials, multiple opportunities for active participation with structured support, and technology supported self-monitoring was effective for the participating children who were at risk for language and literacy disorders. Although the children demonstrated improvements in retelling narratives containing complete story grammar components, there was inconsistency across the learning process. The researchers also noticed an increase in the use of adverbs, elaborated noun phrases, and clearly connected experiences. These results support and extend findings of other similar narrative interventions.

Maribeth Gettinger and Karen Stoiber (2008) described the design, application, and initial evaluation of an early intervention model for encouraging the development of literacy
skills among low-income children in community-based Head Start settings. The early literacy program described is called the Exemplary Model of Early Reading Growth and Excellence (EMERGE). This program is an Early Reading First project funded through the U.S. Department of Education (2005-2008). The program includes 15 classrooms in five, early childhood programs that serve low-income families that live in diverse neighborhoods in Milwaukee. The majority of the children in EMERGE are African American that meet federal guidelines. There is 6% to 10% of Hispanic origin and less than 2% of White/Other. EMERGE is centered on the assumption that children require on-going exposure and interaction with print; oral and written language with adults; and explicit instruction to develop skills. This program relies on monthly progress-monitoring and observations by trained teachers to provide instruction, support, and tutoring for children to increase their early reading and language development. This article concludes that implementing a Response to Intervention model with young children will increase early intervention and literacy instruction.

Charles Greenwood et al. (2012) investigated the fit of an RTI (Response to Intervention) measurement approach to describing children’s performance in a range of Pre-K programs using curricular with language and early literacy goals over a year’s experience. The researchers identified children at three tiers of performance (Tiers 1, 2, and 3) in the fall, and followed their progress and the experiences they received over time in programs. Study results and implications were seen as an initial step toward informing further experimental evaluations of RTI approaches, including tiered interventions, and full models of tiered supports in future preschool research. Overall, findings supported the feasibility and validity of a preschool RTI measurement approach. Findings were also consistent with prior concerns reported in the preschool literature.
regarding the low quality of instruction and the lack of differentiated instruction for those children most at risk of language and early literacy delays.
Chapter 3: Study Design

Introduction

My study was designed to explore how literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention influenced the literacy learning and development of children ages 3-5 from underserved communities. In this chapter, I discussed the participants, procedures, and data collection methods I used. I also addressed the ways I analyzed my data and described the limitations my study had.

Research Question

I planned my methods and procedures in an effort to answer the following research question:

- How do literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention Programs influence the literacy learning of young children from underserved communities?

Participants and Context

I conducted this study in a preschool classroom within an early childhood education agency located in an urban area of western New York; and the class was comprised of students (boys and girls) ages 3-5, of low socioeconomic status (SES). The children were enrolled in an early childhood intervention program. The participants were notified through a recruitment letter written by me, distributed by the program director, and parents were presented with a consent form. My recruitment instrument indicated that: 1) three randomly selected, male/female children (ages 3 through 5) were needed to participate in a children's early intervention study conducted by a graduate student of the Department of Education and Human Development at
SUNY College at Brockport, 2) there was 6 weeks of observation starting in March of the 2015 school year, 3) the children were randomly chosen during the first session, 4) there was six hour sessions in which the four children were observed in their assigned preschool classroom, and 5) parents that were interested and agreed to having their child participate in my research study completed the consent form.

**My Positionality as the Researcher**

I am currently in the final semester of graduating with a Master’s Degree in Childhood Education at The College at Brockport, SUNY, which I intend to complete in May 2015. I received my Bachelor’s degree in Childhood Education, grades 1-6 and Special Education, grades 1-6.

At the time of my study, I had been employed through the Rochester City School District as a long-term substitute teacher. I was a 6th grade special education teacher facilitating learning in a self-contained classroom, from February to June, 2015. As an educator, preschool teachers play a critical role in promoting literacy, preventing reading complications, and preparing young children for kindergarten. Early childhood education approaches impact the growth and development of young children to promote improved future literacy outcomes. All of the domains of a child’s development (physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy) are all interrelated and crucial during the preschool stage.
Procedures of Study

I contacted an agency located within the city of Rochester, with an early childhood enrichment program/early intervention program, to gain permission from the Program Director to conduct my study and provided her with a written explanation and description of my study. Upon permission from the Program Director to conduct my study, a recruitment letter followed by a consent form was prepared by myself, and distributed to four families whom I randomly chose using popsicle sticks. The recruitment letter and consent forms to parents indicated their potential interest in having their child participate in my study. The participant’s parent’s consent was obtained through the submission of a consent form. At the first session I randomly selected three students (1 male, 2 female) to participate in my study. I introduced myself to each child who was a part of my study, and observed them for an hour to begin my research notes. Following the first session, there were 6 additional sessions that consisted of observing and taking anecdotal notes on three children for six hours in the child’s assigned classroom (1 day a week), for the duration of 6 weeks.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the course of my study, data was collected using two observation checklist forms that included the date and duration of the observation, the learning station in the classroom, teacher/child relationship, literacy and developmental learning, and reflection with anecdotal notes. These observations took place on average one time per week and lasted six hours per observation, during the participants’ early education program learning experience.
Observation Forms

The observation checklist for a Preschool Child form (Appendix A) included the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual/cognitive development domains. Each domain provided five questions with a rating scale of 1= lowest, 3= highest.

The Kindergarten Readiness checklist form (Appendix B) included the following topics: verbal and listening skills, gross motor and fine motor skills, social skills, the alphabet, reading readiness, math, writing, creative arts, music and movement, and creative drama. Each topic provided a few descriptions. After the conclusion of my study, I placed an “X” next to each observed behavior.

Lastly, I kept a journal where I recorded my weekly observations. This allowed me to write down the child’s direct quotes and behaviors I observed. It was crucial to listen to their thoughts and ideas related to their development and knowledge on literacy skills.

Data Analysis

My study involved collecting and analyzing qualitative data from three participants. First, I observed the classroom environment, staff, and children, as well as the extensive focus on my three participants. During my observations, I recorded anecdotal notes in a journal for each child. I reviewed and reflected this information to determine each child’s observed skills. At the end of my study, I gathered my data to complete the observation checklist forms. I circled the best corresponding number on the observation checklist for a preschool child that reflected my observations for each participant. I used the Kindergarten Readiness checklist forms to record my findings by placing a check mark if I observed a particular behavior. All of the data collected
was analyzed to determine how the participants’ early literacy learning and development are impacted by the services, programs, interventions, lessons and education enrichment activities provided by the early childhood education program in which the participants are enrolled.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

I conducted my study for 6 hours, one day a week for a duration of 6 weeks. My study consisted of prolonged engagement with persistent observation of the 3 child participants. To maintain trustworthiness, I collected and analyzed data through a variety of sources. I conducted observations and recorded anecdotal notes each time I observed the children in the preschool classroom. During the observations, each participant’s confidentiality was protected. The names of the children remained off all reports. Data, observation records, and consent forms were kept separately in a locked filing cabinet and were destroyed by shredding when the study was completed. I guarantee dependability by describing in detail each of the steps in my research process.
Limitations

Initial limitations to my study included student attendance and case study observations. My study was only six weeks long. The attendance for each child observed was as follows: Nick-5/7 sessions, Maci-7/7 sessions, and Kara 4/7 sessions. More data and observations could be gathered during a longer case study. The major weakness of my case study methodology is that it fails to be representative of the population of interest, so testing an intervention with one case study or a series of case studies fails to examine the potential effects of the intervention across that population (Clegg, 2014). Despite this and other limitations, case studies enable an initial examination of the effects of an intervention, particularly where this is a new intervention, or an established intervention implemented with a new population. Case studies also offer a detailed examination of individual responses to the intervention, which is not always feasible in large cohort studies. The populations of children with SEBD (social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties) often find it very challenging to participate in assessments and interventions, which require lengthy concentration and compliance.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings of my research in which I investigated how literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention programs influenced the literacy learning of young children from underserved communities. I collected and analyzed my data to illustrate each participant’s literacy learning and development through each domain of a child’s development during the preschool stage.

My study focused extensively on three particular children in an integrated preschool classroom. The location of the observations took place in a class setting which included a certified early childhood teacher, one assistant teacher and sixteen preschool children. The early education program ran Monday through Friday, 8:30 am - 2:30pm. The child centered environment serves as the foundation for each child’s success. The classrooms provided a social, play-based setting for children in both structured and unstructured learning activities. The classroom is divided into sections, which provides for a variety of centers. Centers are activities located in specific areas around the room. Some activities are done with the teachers, while some activities are completed with children. The general centers around the classroom include block area, which is a large spot set aside for building and creating. Building includes blocks, race tracks and cars, and other creative building supplies. There is also a kitchen/home area, which consists of kitchen appliances, make believe food, dress-up clothing, and dolls. The writing center includes a place where students can practice their writing skills. In addition, the reading center is a quiet and cozy spot in the room, with a variety of books and puppets available for the children to use. The arts center includes a variety of art materials which can be used by the students to paint self-portraits or create other personalized pictures. Finally, the music center includes simple instruments for the students to use and a variety of music and songs to listen to.
The staff also created a predictable routine for the children, and incorporated activities that fostered social-emotional, adaptive, motor and pre-academic skills. Therapists also participated in the classroom to provide treatment in the areas of fine motor, gross motor, sensory and speech and language skills.

The chart displayed as Figure 4.1, illustrates the children’s behaviors in accordance to the items indicated on the Kindergarten readiness checklist. I provided a list of observed skills in the corresponding developmental column, as I observed the skill demonstrated by the specific child. The following skills aid in the literacy learning and development of the preschool children. Along with the skills identified for each child, I also provided an example of the child’s success.

Figure 4.1: Preschool Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name &amp; Age:</th>
<th>Nick</th>
<th>Maci</th>
<th>Kara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: 4 years and 5 months</td>
<td>Age: 4 years and 5 months</td>
<td>Age: 4 years and 9 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of Development:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fine Motor:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continued on pg. 26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nick</th>
<th>Maci</th>
<th>Kara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- stacks blocks</td>
<td>- stacks blocks</td>
<td>- stacks blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- buttons, snaps, laces</td>
<td>- buttons, strings beads, snaps, laces, grasps pencil correctly</td>
<td>- buttons, strings beads, zips, snaps and laces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- grasps pencil correctly</td>
<td>- completes a simple puzzle</td>
<td>- grasps a pencil correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- completes a simple puzzle</td>
<td>- portrays good scissor skills, uses glue neatly</td>
<td>- completes a simple puzzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- uses tweezers</td>
<td>- uses tweezers.</td>
<td>- portrays good scissor skills, uses glue neatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- completes a pattern</td>
<td>- makes objects</td>
<td>- uses tweezers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- makes objects from play dough</td>
<td>- makes objects</td>
<td>-uses tweezers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Motor:</strong></td>
<td>out of play dough</td>
<td>out of play dough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- runs, skips, jumps</td>
<td>- runs, skips, jumps</td>
<td>- runs, skips, jumps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- climbs a ladder</td>
<td>- leaps, jumps</td>
<td>- pedals and steers a tricycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- throws a ball, catches a thrown ball, bounces a ball</td>
<td>- climbs a playground ladder</td>
<td>- throws a ball, catches a thrown ball, bounces a ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- throws a ball, catches a thrown ball, bounces a ball</td>
<td>- throws a ball, catches a thrown ball, bounces a ball</td>
<td>- throws a ball, catches a thrown ball, bounces a ball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Intellectual/Cognitive Development</strong></th>
<th>- participates in group movement experiences</th>
<th>- participates in group movement experiences</th>
<th>- participates in group movement experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- plays simple instruments</td>
<td>- plays simple instruments</td>
<td>- plays simple instruments</td>
<td>- plays simple instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sings</td>
<td>- sings, moves rhythmically</td>
<td>- sings, moves rhythmically</td>
<td>- sings, moves rhythmically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- moves rhythmically</td>
<td>- can identify 10 colors</td>
<td>- can identify 10 colors</td>
<td>- can identify 10 colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- explores with different art materials</td>
<td>- sorts by color, shape, and size</td>
<td>- unfolds with different art materials</td>
<td>- unfolds with different art materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continued on pg. 27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Language Development</strong></th>
<th>- speaks clearly, and in sentences,</th>
<th>- speaks clearly, and in sentences,</th>
<th>- speaks clearly, and in sentences,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- uses appropriate volume when speaking</td>
<td>- uses appropriate volume when speaking</td>
<td>- uses appropriate volume when speaking</td>
<td>- uses appropriate volume when speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- expresses and describes his feelings</td>
<td>- expresses and describes her feelings</td>
<td>- expresses and describes her feelings</td>
<td>- expresses and describes her feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- listens with understanding of directions and</td>
<td>- listens with understanding of directions and</td>
<td>- listens with understanding of directions and</td>
<td>- listens with understanding of directions and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on pg. 27)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social-Emotional Development</th>
<th>follows 1-step and 2-step directions</th>
<th>follows 1-step and 2-step directions</th>
<th>follows 1-step and 2-step directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - plays well with others, takes turns and shares  
- cleans up after playing  
- participates in group activities  
- interacts easily with familiar adults  
- listens when others speak  
- seeks adult help during conflicts and uses manners | - plays well with others, takes turns and shares  
- cleans up after playing  
- participates in group activities  
- interacts easily with familiar adults  
- listens when others speak  
- seeks adult help during conflicts and uses manners | - plays well with others, takes turns and shares  
- cleans up after playing  
- participates in group activities  
- interacts easily with familiar adults  
- listens when others speak  
- seeks adult help during conflicts and uses manners |
| Self-Concept & Self-Esteem | - correctly states gender and age  
- recites first and last name  
- identifies his birthday  
- knows his address and telephone number  
- recites the names of his parents | - correctly states gender and age  
- recites first and last name  
- able to identify birthday  
- recites the names of parents | - correctly states gender and age  
- recites first and last name  
- identifies birthday  
- recites the names of parents |
**General Observation Characteristics:**

The first preschool child I observed was Nick. Nick is a 4 year and 5 month old African American boy. Nick has short curly brown hair with brown eyes and light skin. He is smaller than most of his classmates and thin. Nick comes to school dressed in button-up shirts with jeans.

The second preschool child I observed was Maci. Maci is a 4 year and 5 month old African American girl. Maci has thick black hair with brown eyes and dark skin. She wears her hair up in a ponytail. She is about the same size as her classmates. Maci comes to school in sweat suits or jeans and a shirt.

The third preschool child I observed was Kara. Kara is a 4 year and 9 month old African American girl. Kara has black hair that is worn up and braided with clips and bows. She has brown eyes and wears earrings. She is the same size as her classmates and thin. Kara comes to school well dressed and in girly clothes.

**Physical/Motor Development:**

**Fine Motor:**

During planning time, Nick’s teacher asked, “What is your plan today?” Nick responded in kind by saying, “My plan is to go to the block area.” He proceeded to go to the block area, which has different sized wooden blocks, cars, trucks, and racing tracks. Nick and three other boys were building with the blocks and imagined that they were on a “spaceship.” There, I observed him connect two half circle wooden blocks, which he pretended was a, “trap for a mouse.” Nick’s ability to connect two half circle wooden blocks to create a “trap”, demonstrated his ability to use his imagination in the various activities he was involved in during the day.
During planning time, Maci’s teacher asks, “What is your plan today?” Maci responded, “My plan is to play in the water table with my friends today.” She proceeded to go to the water table, took her smock off the hanger, and put it on. Maci and two other children played with objects such as sponges, tweezers, measuring cups, beads and marbles. The week before Easter, I observed Maci creating a paper Mache bunny. Miss Melissa worked with 3-4 students at the table. Maci followed her teacher’s step-by-step directions. Maci glued the feet to the bottom of the balloon and then glued on the eyes, nose and ears. She then brought it over to the other table, and put it on the newspaper to dry. When the class prepared to go outside, Maci needed Miss Alicia’s assistance with zipping up her jacket. The various classroom activities she is involved in during the day such as small-group time and dressing one’s self to go outside, demonstrate the impact that these early childhood experiences have on her acquisition and development of her fine motor skills.

In preparation to go outside and play in the snow, the children needed to put on all necessary clothing that is worn in the winter. Kara waited on the rug for the direction to go to her cubby and get her clothing. She then walked over to the cubby area, took her belongings, and found a spot on the rug to dress. Kara was able to put on her snow pants by herself and then her boots. She put on her coat and zipped it up. During small-group time, Miss Melissa was making paper Mache bunnies with the children for Easter. I observed Kara glue on the eyes, nose and feet of the bunny. After she was finished, she brought the bunny to the newspaper table to dry. During afternoon work time, Kara played at the rice table with another classmate. The rice table is filled with different shaped rice, dried beans, and a variety of sand toys. Playing outside, at the rice table, and creating bunnies during arts and crafts, demonstrate the impact that these childhood experiences have on the development of her fine motor skills.
**Gross Motor:**

During outside time, Nick climbed around the playground and went down the slide with the other children. While Miss Melissa blew bubbles, Nick ran around popping them. He also threw a basketball, with two hands to another child. When it was time to go inside, Nick ran to the door and stood in line. He walked into the building, down the hall, and into the classroom. He took off his winter wear, put it in his cubby and skipped over to the rug. Observing Nick’s movement and behavior outside and inside the classroom, demonstrates his development of his gross motor skills.

During outside time, Maci ran and jumped into a pile of snow. She was playing well with the other children. While Miss Melissa was blowing bubbles, Maci and the others excitedly ran around popping them. Maci demonstrated leader skills, she suggested to her friend to go to the swing set. Maci and her friend walked over to the swing set and Maci pushed the other girl on the swing. They took turns pushing each other then decided to go over to the slide. They climbed up the ladder and went down the slide many times. The time spent outside to run around and climb on the playground, demonstrates Maci’s ability of her gross motor skills.

During the morning movement song, Kara’s classmates and teacher were in a circle on the rug. When the music was playing, Kara jumped up and down with her classmates. She also ran in place and turned around. Kara was able to identify her left and right hands as she followed the verbal directions from the song. While playing outside, I observed Kara running around and jumping in the piles of snow. On the playground, she climbed up the ladder and went down the slide and was swinging on the swings with her friends. Kara’s interaction with music, movement, and outside time, shows her ability of gross motor skills.
All three children were able to remain in activities that required moving around the room for 20-30 minutes, versus activities that required sitting still. Adequate space was provided both inside and out for physical activity. Each child’s behavior was influenced by the early education program in regards to the preschool schedule and routine that is reinforced daily (Appendix C). The daily schedule helped children know what to expect, but it was also flexible enough to adapt to special circumstances.

**Intellectual/Cognitive Development:**

During snack time, I observed Nick take on pretend roles and situations. He used 3 round crackers to make believe it was of “Mickey Mouse.” He continued with his imagination and arranged his carrots into a sailboat figure. Nick closely watched Miss Alicia cut an orange in half. When he received his slices of oranges, he said, “Oranges are orange, like my orange cup!” After he was finished eating, he made believe that his orange peels were of boats. While playing outside, Nick observed pinecones hanging on a tree. He noticed that there was peanut butter and bird seed on the pinecones. During work time, Nick was using the math manipulatives in the designated math bins on the shelves. Nick takes out the container containing plastic dinosaurs, and is able to count 20 dinosaurs on his own. Nick then identifies 4 tangible shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle. Nick demonstrated his understanding of directional concepts such as up/down, and left/right when he was moving on the scooters in the hallway. Nick’s ability to make believe with certain foods, and use a variety of math materials available in the classroom, demonstrates the impact that this early childhood education program has on his attainment of a preschooler’s cognitive development.
During work time, the class was participating in centers. Maci had to leave during centers, as she is involved in a dance class. The dance class is located in a music room at the early education program’s facility. Maci was not feeling good throughout her practice routine. Her dance group comprises of 8 girls, ages 3-5. Maci responded to the instructor’s directions and movements to the song of the routine. She proceeded to skip side to side, marched with her hands on her hips and pointed her toes. She was able to put on her Tap shoes by herself. She began tapping her toes on the ground, then jumped and clapped. When Maci returned to the classroom, she joined her classmates on the rug, which is in the music area. Maci tapped on the drums with her hands and was shaking a rattle. In the math center, Maci took out the wooden color shapes and sorted them by color, shape, and size. She counted 10 shapes as she put them back into the bucket. She was able to identify 2 shapes: circle, and triangle. Maci demonstrated her understanding of directional concepts and comparative concepts. She used the comparative words (big/little) when looking at the different size and color shapes. The various activities that Maci had available to her in the early education program demonstrated her cognitive developmental skills.

Every day, during morning meeting, the teachers created 4 sentences on the white board. It was the students’ job to locate the correct picture or word to fill in the blank to complete the written sentence. Kara closely identified the pictures before she chose the image that needed to be placed in the correct blank. She located the picture of water and continued, “Today is Wednesday, like water.” She then placed the image of water in the correct blank at the end of the sentence. During work time, I also observed Kara looking through an alphabet book. She interpreted what was going on in the picture that corresponded with the letter shown on that page. For example, “P” is for paint. The mouse was painting the letter “P” in the book. Kara’s
interest in reading-related activities in the classroom demonstrates the impact of the program in relation to Kara’s ability of her cognitive skills.

Kara’s math skills that I observed are sorting by color, shape, and size. She recognized a simple pattern on the board and was able to duplicate the pattern. Kara can count to 20 and counts objects with meaning to 10. Kara was able to match numerals and identified 4 shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle. Kara demonstrated her understanding of directional concepts such as, left/right when following movement commands from a song. She showed an understanding of comparative concepts (big/little, short/long, slow/fast) as well.

**Language Development:**

During greeting time, Miss Alicia instructed the children to sit on a letter which were located on the rug. Nick says to a friend, “I’m going to sit next to you on the “L”.” Nick spotted the letter “N” on the rug and said, “An “N” for Nick!” Every morning, the class moves and sings while following directions from a song that they are familiar with. After the song ended, Nick replied, “I really like that song!” At breakfast time, Nick ripped up his pancakes and counted the pieces. He turned to his friend and told him, “I have 9 pieces!” During morning meeting, Nick looked at the white board and said, “I see a flower on the board.” During work time, Miss Melissa planted seeds with a small group at the round table. Nick followed the directions of putting his name on the bottom of the milk cartoon, then filled the milk cartoon with spoonful’s of dirt and poked three holes in the dirt with his fingers. Lastly, he placed the seeds in the holes and covered them up with dirt. After watering the dirt, he exclaimed, “The flowers will be beautiful; I want to watch it grow!”
Nick’s reading readiness skills that I observed included listening well to read aloud stories, showing interest in reading-related activities, and retelling information from a story. During small group time, Miss Alicia was reading St. Patrick’s Day books. Nick observed the books and asked, “Are those Patrick books?” He pointed to the cover of the book and confirmed, “That is a clover.” At the library, Nick listened to Easter stories read by the librarian. The class discussed the book, and Nick shared that bunnies eat carrots, and a mouse eats cheese. According to the various activities during the day and verbal interaction with the teachers, Nick speaks clearly and in sentences, and uses appropriate volume when speaking.

During work time, Maci was playing in the dress-up area with a friend. Maci told her friend, “I need to take a break, I am tired.” She then went to the reading area and sat on a bean bag chair. During an observation, Maci came up and told me, “Fred is our class turtle; he especially likes the black food.” She was very eager to tell me all about his home and the food that he ate. During snack time, Maci asked Miss Melissa, “Can I have some water please?” Miss Melissa responded with yes. Maci then went to the sink, grabbed a cup and filled it with water. At the table, Maci turned to her friend and asked, “What is your favorite fruit?” Maci listened and then responded with, “mine is peaches and strawberries.” She also informed her friend that she does not like blueberries.

Maci’s reading skills that I observed included listening well to read aloud stories, showing interest in reading-related activities, retells information from a story, and using her imagination. During small group time, Miss Ashley read St. Patrick’s Day books to the children. After the book, they held a discussion and Maci shared her thoughts with the group. She spoke clearly as she explained that people wear green on this day. She also shared that she loved green
beans. In regards to Maci’s interactions with her classmates and adults, she exhibits enthusiasm and shows eagerness towards learning.

During snack time, Kara turned to the boy sitting next to her and grimaced, “I don’t like it when you touch me.” Miss Melissa corrected Kara, by explaining that she needs to tell her classmate politely to stop touching her. I watched Kara talk about how crackers make a louder crunch sound that apples do, as she bites into the cracker. When discussing the weather, Kara exclaimed, “I like to watch a movie in my PJ’s when it’s really cold outside!”

Kara’s reading skills that I observed included listening well to read aloud stories and showing interest in reading-related activities. She understands left to right movement of reading and can retell information from a story in sentences. After a read aloud about Easter, Kara spoke clearly when sharing her thoughts and ideas. She talked about her friends having a picnic and eating chocolate cake. She also shared that candy and toys were put into her Easter basket by the Easter bunny.

**Social-Emotional Development:**

During work time, Nick was playing at the block area with three classmates of his. I observed the group of boys making a spaceship out of wooden blocks together. They pretended to “blast off” as they screamed with excitement. After the boys cleaned up the blocks, Nick went to play trucks with another classmate. They used the green, yellow; red light signs on the rug to have their trucks stop and go. During recall time, Nick shared that he worked in the block area and played with cubes with his friends, JC and Zoe.
Nick’s emotional skills that were observed included his eagerness and curiosity as a learner. He was persistent in tasks and would seek help with problems. Nick was pleasant and cooperative. Nick followed rules and routines, and was able to move from one activity to the next without problems. He demonstrated a normal activity level and expressed himself with words, rather than acting out physically.

During work time, Maci was in the kitchen area playing with a classmate of hers. The two girls were pretending to have lunch with each other. Maci set up the table and served the other girl her lunch. When the class transitioned to the rug, Maci shouted, “Thomas is my friend, you’re not! I want Thomas to stand next to me!” Miss Ashley confronted Maci about how she spoke to her friend and that she needed to apologize. Maci went over to the classmate and apologized.

Maci’s emotional skills that were observed included her eagerness and curiosity as a learner, and was persistent in tasks and would seek help with problems. She was pleasant and cooperative. Maci follows rules and routines, is able to move from one activity to the next without problems. She demonstrated a normal activity level and expressed herself with words, rather than acting out physically.

When playing with play dough, Kara took a tool out of another friend’s hand. The friend went to Miss Melissa and told her what had happened. Her teacher told her to give back the toy and use another one until it was time to switch. Kara went up to her friend and gave her a hug and said “I’m sorry.”

Kara’s emotional skills that were observed include her eagerness and curiosity as a learner, and was persistent in tasks and would seek help with problems. She was pleasant and cooperative. Kara followed rules and routines, was able to move from one activity to the next
without problems. She demonstrated a normal activity level and expressed herself with words, rather than acting out physically.

_Self-Concept and Self-Esteem:_

The characteristics that I observed in self-concept of the participants includes: knows personal name and gender, identifies things he or she can do, smiles and laughs frequently. The children appeared to enjoy learning and showed confidence when learning and performing new skills. In regards to, health and wellness, Nick, Maci and Kara are proficient in the following skills. They know how to wash their hands, and can follow proper bathroom procedures. Each child can appropriately dress for the weather and is able to put their shoes and coat on. The children appeared to enjoy performing self-help skills.

**Chapter Summary**

My case study research was beneficial not only to the three participants, but also to me. As a teacher, constructing literacy instruction, it is necessary to promote critical literacy skills to maximize children’s potential literacy enrichment, learning and development.

The enrichment program helped children to learn by offering them a world of play. The time spent in the program was a period to extend and reinforce children’s learning on a daily basis. The program also offered learning opportunities in literacy, math, science, music and arts, and social and emotional development, and physical development. This program encouraged
children to experiment and solve problems individually and in small groups. Children of all races, backgrounds, religions, and abilities are included and encouraged to gain awareness of their bodies and develop their skills.

Furthermore, the behaviors exhibited by Nick, Maci, and Kara suggest their being proficient regarding the indicated signs of development for a preschooler. In Social-Emotional Development, the children were able to regulate their own emotions and behaviors. They participated cooperatively and constructively in group situations. In Physical Development, the children demonstrated traveling skills, gross-motor manipulative skills, and fine-motor strength and coordination. In Language Development, the children used language to express their thoughts and needs. They were able to listen to directions and use other communication skills. In Cognitive Development, each child demonstrated positive approaches to learning. The children remembered and connected experiences. The use of symbols and images to represent something not present was common among all three children. Mathematics development was progressing among each child through my observations. The children were at different levels in regards to the use of number concepts and operations. The participants were able to demonstrate knowledge of patterns, but had a difficult time creating them on their own. Each child explored spatial relationships and shapes. The children continuously compared and measured throughout the day.

The lessons I learned during the duration of my observation experiences illustrated the importance and impact of providing effective literacy practices and approaches within Early Childhood Education Intervention Programs to foster and promote the literacy learning and development of young children from underserved communities.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

My conclusion section will examine how three preschool children interacted within a child-centered environment in a nurturing Rochester facility. The activities provided in the program developed and expanded the children’s kindergarten readiness skills.

The sections discussing the implications of my research will examine how the literacy activities in early childhood education programs will educate teachers and parents of preschool children regarding the important roles they play in the literacy learning and development of young children.

Conclusion

Conducting my case study observation has aided in expanding my knowledge and deepening my understanding of the role that early childhood education programs play in emotional, social, psychological, physiological, education growth and development of preschool children.

The interventions and services of the program that the three preschool children participated in, contributed to the behaviors and interactions they demonstrated according to the checklist I used to record my observations. The skills listed on the checklist, illustrated the importance of creating responsive literacy instruction to address the literacy needs and development of the children. The early childhood enrichment program was available to children who turned 4 years old before or on December 1st. The program provided 6 hours of quality instruction, Monday through Friday. Children were provided with a nutritious and homemade breakfast, lunch, and morning snack. The program also provided a variety of literacy experiences that enriched and expanded upon the participant’s literacy development and learning. Such
experiences included: alphabet and color recognition, counting, table manners, name recognition and writing, role-playing and pretending, cutting, pasting, drawing, following directions, listening, taking turns and sharing, music, outdoor play, resting and relaxing, and water and sand play, and much more. Immersing young children in early literacy developmental activities in a preschool program, prior to kindergarten, provides a child with the essential preparation for reading readiness and for learning in the formal educational environment.

The three preschool participants in my study developed the building blocks for literacy development, which was demonstrated by the ability to speak, listen, understand, watch and draw. The children demonstrated phonological awareness by associating sounds with symbols. The children are aware of sounds in language, and have the ability to talk about, and manipulate sounds. They demonstrated knowledge of the alphabet by identifying uppercase and lowercase letters. The children were able to trace letters and also write a few letters without tracing. They also demonstrated knowledge of print and its uses. The children handle and care for books in a respectful manner. They explore and investigate books and other forms of print. Every day in class each child would sign-in to their classroom. Each child demonstrated emergent writing skills through their abilities to write their name on a sign-in sheet in the corresponding box that has their type-written name. The students are able to comprehend and respond to books and other texts. The participants’ demonstrated this by pointing to words books, and their participation in interactive read-alouds. Encouraging children to talk during read-alouds provides for gains in their literacy development.

Throughout my observations, the education staff members brought a wealth of knowledge and passion to the early childhood program. I observed daily praising and reinforcing of children’s behaviors. The teachers also redirected children to the next activity of the day.
There were times in the day where a teacher would discipline a child based on a negative behavior. The teachers would also comfort a child when he/she was upset or involved in a disagreement with another child. The preschool teachers were motivated and honest. It was obvious that there were trust and teacher-child relationships in the classroom.

**Implications for Preschool Teachers**

Preschool teachers at the preschool level play a pivotal role in ensuring grade level achievement of all children in the classroom. As teachers, it is imperative to be prepared to effectively educate students of varying academic abilities. Teachers should use their knowledge in order to assist children to use their strengths and interests to develop areas of need. Teachers should recognize effective literacy practices and approaches in early childhood education programs that will greatly benefit students’ individual literacy learning and development. Teachers should also consider reaching out to families to educate parents about the importance of early educational activities in the home environment and teach them how to be successful in incorporating early literacy experiences into their children’s lives. In addition, teachers should work toward building trusting relationships with parents and families in order to increase effective communication, strengthen the home-school connection and increase parent engagement and involvement in the students’ literacy learning and academic achievement.

**Implications for Parents of Preschool Children**

According to the early childhood enrichment program, it is beneficial for parents to be involved during their child’s learning and development. Parents are encouraged to attend parent conferences 2 times per year, attend parent workshops, and volunteer for special activity days.
and field trips. Parents of young children are encouraged to begin teaching their child by integrating literacy and developmental skills within the home. Parents can build upon their child's literacy skills by reading aloud to them and verbally and physically interacting with their child. Greater parental involvement in children’s school-based experiences and communication with teachers has been shown to improve academic outcomes for young children, including school readiness.
Appendix A

Observation Checklist for a Preschool Child

(1 = lowest, 3 = highest)

Name ___________________________ Hour ___________________________

Child ___________________________ Date ___________________________ Age ___________________________

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

1. Is the child walking and running in the age-appropriate manner? 1 2 3
2. Is the child able to do puzzles? 1 2 3
3. Is the child able to build a tower with five blocks? 1 2 3
4. Is the child’s appearance clean and neat? 1 2 3
5. Does the child eat the foods that are served? 1 2 3

Comments: ___________________________

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:

1. Does the child get along with his/her peers? 1 2 3
2. Does the child seem self-confident when relating to others? 1 2 3
3. Does the child follow daily routines with cooperation? 1 2 3
4. Does the child express ideas openly? 1 2 3
5. Does the child participate in group activities? 1 2 3

Comments: ___________________________
Appendix A continued

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
1. Does the child express his/her feelings? 1 2 3
2. Does the child recover quickly from disappointment? 1 2 3
3. Is the child’s self-esteem high? 1 2 3
4. Is the child concerned with the feelings of others? 1 2 3
5. Is the child aggressive? 1 2 3
Comments:

INTELLECTUAL OR COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT:
1. Is the child’s attention span appropriate for his/her age? 1 2 3
2. Is the child able to listen to stories? 1 2 3
3. Is the child able to recall events in the story? 1 2 3
4. Is the child able to concentrate on manipulatives? 1 2 3
5. Does the child finish what he/she starts? 1 2 3
Comments:
## Kindergarten Readiness Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten Readiness Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognizes simple patterns and can duplicate them</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counts objects with meaning to 10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identifies 4 shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates understanding of directional concepts (up/down, right/left, over/under)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shows comprehension and uses comparative words (big/little, short/long, fast/slow)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Draws lines and shapes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interprets pictures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Arts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifies 10 colors: red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, black, white, brown, pink</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Explores different art materials</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music and Movement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifies an instrument</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Drama</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masses believes with objects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Takes on pretend roles and situations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaks clearly, can be understood without context, can use complete sentences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses appropriate volume when speaking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can express and describe feelings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly states his/her gender and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recites first and last name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to identify birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows address and telephone number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recites names of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays well with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes turns and shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleans up after playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacts easily with familiar adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerate of other people's feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects items belonging to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens when others speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks adult help during conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses manners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Location of observation: Preschool Classroom- Dragonflies (4- 5 years old)

Duration: Monday through Friday, 8:30 am- 2:30pm

Preschool Schedule/Routine:

- Program begins at 8:30 am.
- Sign- in to classroom
- Breakfast Time: 8:45 am.
- Greeting Time
- Outside Time
- Snack Time: 10:15 am.
- Small-group Time
- Planning Time
- Work Time
- Clean-up Time
- Recall Time
- Large-group Time
- Lunch Time: 12:15 pm.
- Nap Time
- Planning Time
- Work Time
- Clean-up Time
- Recall Time
- Small-group Time
- Closure Time
- Program ends at 2:30 pm.


