Early Intervention at Home and in the Classroom for At-Risk Pre-Kindergarteners: Outcomes from a Randomized Controlled Trial

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Introduction
Up to 40% of children enter Kindergarten without the foundational skills they need to become successful readers (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007). In response to this need, effective interventions designed to explicitly teach early literacy skills have been developed to help prevent reading difficulties in young children (Bailet et al., 2009; 2013; Zettler-Greeley, under review). Though child intervention outcomes are often encouraging, research suggests that early literacy interventions that incorporate parent involvement produce stronger outcomes than just child interventions alone (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998).

This study evaluated the impact of a parent-administered early literacy intervention delivered in conjunction with a Tier 2 intervention program to pre-Kindergarteners at-risk for reading failure. 318 children and their families were randomly assigned to one of the following groups: (1) screening only (no treatment control), (2) child intervention, (3) parent component, or (4) child intervention plus parent component (combined group). The content of the parent-administered intervention component aligned with the Tier 2 intervention program; both consisted of activities designed to develop and strengthen early literacy skills.

Method
Participants
- 318 4-year-old children in Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programs in northeast Florida at-risk for reading failure and their families randomized to receive:
  - Screening only (no treatment control) (n = 84)
  - Child intervention (n = 74)
  - Parent component (n = 77)
  - Child intervention & parent component (n = 83)

Mean qualifying fall pre-test GRTR-R = 81.19 (7.51)

Measures
- Get Ready to Read-Revised (GRTR-R) Screening
- Letter Names/Letter Sounds
- Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)
- Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL) – Print Knowledge & Phonological Awareness subtests
- Assessment of Literacy and Language – Rhyming subtest

Child Intervention
- Explicit, multisensory, research-based, early literacy intervention program designed to build skills in print awareness, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, oral language, and emergent writing
- Twenty, 30-min lessons delivered by early literacy specialists to small groups of children; twice a week for 10 weeks; lessons delivered in the fall of pre-K year

Parent Component
- Parent-administered early literacy activities aligned with the child intervention program
- Early literacy specialists met 3 times with parents assigned to these groups: (1) parent component only & (2) child intervention & parent component combined
- Parents given Guided Activity pages, essentially scripted lessons designed to build early literacy skills; specialists explained & demonstrated each activity to parents; tips, troubleshooting, rationales provided
- All materials to do activities, including children’s books & an alphabet song CD, given to parents; instructional DVD to help parents also provided

Results

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Conclusions
- Group differences found for letter names, letter sounds, and GRTR-R outcomes.
- Parents in combined group who completed more activities significantly impacted child outcomes.
- Relationship not significant for parent-only group, suggesting a synergistic effect of the parent component combined with the child intervention.

References

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