

Enhanced Alphabet Knowledge in Preschool Children

Abstract

Providing a child the opportunity to succeed in school is a main worry of parents and teachers. When children are able to connect letters with their corresponding sounds allows for literacy to grow. Using Enhanced Alphabet Knowledge (EAK) instruction will allow children to evolve their literacy skills by connecting.

Statement of the Problem

Head Start gives resources and extra help to those families in need to allow them to succeed in their endeavors. One of the purposes of Head Start is to promote and build the social, emotional and cognitive abilities of the children involved in the program (Head Start Act, 2007). Within the Head Start program it is crucial for student to recognize letter names and their corresponding their sounds. The correlation between language and literacy can be seen more prominently throughout the years. It has been shown that preschoolers that have trouble identifying letter names will struggle to read and might develop language disabilities (Treiman, & Tincoff, 1998). In the standards of Head Start it is explained that preschool children should be able to identify at least 10 letters by the beginning of Kindergarten. Children who have difficulties connecting uppercase and lowercase letters with their corresponding sounds take a longer time to start reading.

Purpose and/or Research Question(s)

Connecting alphabet knowledge in four year old children can allow for pre-reading skills to emerge early. By focusing on daily enhanced alphabet knowledge lessons children will be able to connect upper case letters and lower case letters with their corresponding sounds. Children will also have the ability in identifying print-awareness.

Literature Review

Using enhanced alphabet knowledge will allow student to close the school readiness gap by providing simple everyday lessons. This will allow for a connection between letter names, corresponding sounds as well as environmental print. A study found an association between phonological awareness and the acquisition of literacy (Blaiklock, 2004). Blaiklock also found that letter knowledge has connections to phonological awareness in children. The average number of letters that children could name was 4.1 at first testing, growing to 13.8 at Time 2, eight weeks later (Blaiklock, 2004). Jones and Reutzel (2012) conducted a 2-year experimental study of alphabet knowledge instruction in 13 kindergarten classrooms in four at-risk urban schools. The study found that when the EAK was implemented with four year old children, they show improvement in identifying letters by the end of the year. Results of the study performed by Piasta, Purpura, and Wagner (2010). Suggested that student's benefit of combined letter name and sound instruction more than sound instruction alone De Jong and Olson (2004) conducted a study to determine the impact of phonological memory and rapid naming on the development of letter knowledge. They took 77 Dutch children who were followed from the beginning of Kindergarten to the end of First grade (two years; De Jong, & Olson, 2004). The findings of this study established the existence of a significant effect of phonological memory on the acquisition of letter knowledge, and a small effect of rapid naming of letter acquisition.

Research Methodology

The action research will take place in a Miami-Dade County public elementary school satellite site. There are twenty Pre-Kindergarten students in the classroom that participated, but only two will be observed for their improvement or lack of improvements. These students will be

chosen based on the lack of recognizing letters and their corresponding sounds. The necessary resources for conducting this action research include analyzing the EAK lesson plan and acquiring the proper materials for each session. The Pre-Kindergarten teacher in the classroom will instrument the EAK lesson three times a week for fifteen minutes. During these sessions children will be able to say the letter we are working on, they will practice writing it and they will also be able to find the letter in print. Data collection will happen through pre and posttest of Alphabet Knowledge Assessment and Alphabet frequency Chart. Children's work will also be collected throughout the action research to monitor improvement.

Results

At the end of the action research some results were shown such as improvements in identification of letters and writing of letters. The data collected was based on a three month period of two preschool students in the classroom. The graph shows the pre and post test scores of how many uppercase and lowercase letters the children were able to connect to its corresponding sound. After the three month period, Child one was able to identify 45 uppercase/lowercase letters based on their corresponding sounds while child two only identified 30 letters based on their sounds. Also a frequency chart to show how many letters a child can identify in 60 seconds. When the pretest was given child one froze and did not respond and child two was able to say five. This data collection showed that child one was able to say 22 out of 26 letters in 60 seconds. Child two was only able to identify 15 out of 26 letters in 60 seconds. Using actual student work had allowed seeing the progress in the students' fine motor skills as well to see improvement in their penmanship.

Implications for the Field

This research can help early childhood educators' research gaps in children's education. Giving extra resources to educators in the classrooms will allow enhancement student's school readiness. By enhancing this, children can build stronger literacy skills which will allow students to develop pre reading skills. It also can give administrators ideas that can be exchanged with other educational colleagues. In the classroom educators can implement this as an intervention to reinforce what is being learned in the classroom. Discussing with coworkers the results of the action research can motivate them to innately research in their classroom.

References

- Blaiklock, K. E. (2004). The importance of letter knowledge in the relationship between phonological awareness and reading. *Journal of Research in Reading, 27*(1), 36-57.
- Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 et seq (2007).
- Jones, C. D., & Reutzel, D. (2012). Enhanced alphabet knowledge Instruction: Exploring a change of frequency, focus, and distributed cycles of review. *Reading Psychology, 33*(5), 448-464
- Piasta, S. B., Purpura, D. J., & Wagner, R. K. (2010). Fostering alphabet knowledge development: a comparison of two instructional approaches. *Reading & Writing, 23*(6), 607-626
- Treiman, R., & Tincoff, R. (1998). The Foundations of literacy: learning the sounds of letters. *Child Development, 69*(6), 1524