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Training Phonological Awareness in Preschool Children

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Pre-school age children develop pre-reading skills to assist them in learning to read. Skills such as the ability to match sounds of the language with letters or knowing which words rhyme with others are believed to be helpful in learning to read. This study explored traditional and visual methods to see if either method to teach pre-reading skills was better to help young children develop or improve crucial phonological awareness skills of rhyming, syllable identification, number of sounds in words and initial consonant sounds.

Twelve children ages 4.5-5.5 years (six boys and six girls) enrolled in Head Start served as subjects. All but three children were in the poverty classification, two were in low income and one child had a medium income classification. Seven children were living with two parents, five with one parent, their mother. Two children were African-American, 7 were Caucasian, and 3 were Hispanic. Ten children scored as not needing services on the *DIAL*, two scored below average, eight scored in the average range on the *Pre-Kindergarten Screening Test*, four scored below average. Three children did not meet the cut-off score for their age on the *Phonological Awareness Screening Test*. Three children were receiving speech therapy.

Four children were matched by age, test scores and gender for three experimental groups: story (the control group), traditional teaching and visually highlighted teaching. The traditional and the visually highlighted groups engaged in seven sessions doing pre-reading tasks with the researcher. The visually highlighted group had word letters in colors to help the children see initial consonants, rhyme endings and different syllables within words. The traditional group had black letters for the words and relied more on the auditory presentation of the lessons. During the seven sessions, the third group (control) listened to appropriate stories with phonological experiences such as *Cat in the Hat*.

Pre-testing and post-testing of pre-reading skills will be compared to determine how much change and what specific changes were made from participating in the lessons. These findings and any clinical implications will be discussed during the presentation.