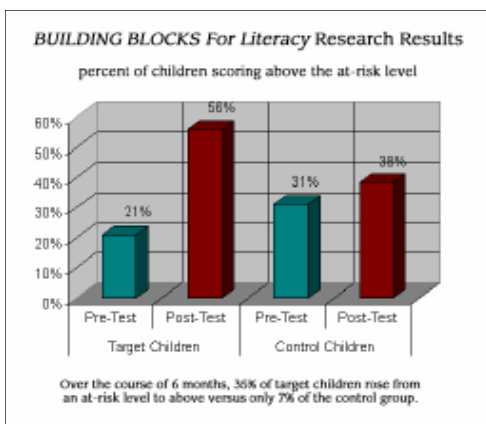


Increased Childcare Provider Knowledge Leads to Early Reading Success

Stern Center shows increasing the knowledge of early care and education providers can increase children's chances for reading success!

With more than 60 percent of mothers with children under five in the workforce, the majority of preschoolers now spend considerable time in childcare. Research published by Drs. Blanche Podhajski and Jane Nathan of the Stern Center for Language and Learning in Early Education and Development indicates that increased childcare provider knowledge increases children's opportunities for literacy success. These researchers showed that childcare providers are key to offering early language enrichment to children, particularly to those who might be at risk for reading failure.



Since 1997, the Stern Center for Language and Learning has offered BUILDING BLOCKS FOR LITERACY® to childcare providers at no cost through early literacy grants from the Turrell Fund and the A.D. Henderson Foundation. Training includes a two-day course and six-month onsite mentorship.

Based on recommendations from the National Research Council, the program targeted shared book reading, phonological awareness (the insight that words are made up of sound parts) and the relationships between speech and print.

Data collected over the third year of the project have been analyzed to assess the impact of this professional development program on children's readiness for reading. The pre-literacy skills of 88 youngsters from 67 childcare centers whose providers participated in BUILDING BLOCKS (target group) were compared to a control group of children whose providers did not participate in the program (control group).

Results of the study demonstrated that:

- Target children made significantly greater pre-literacy gains than children in the control group
- 35 percent of target children rose from an at-risk literacy level to above an at-risk literacy level, compared to only 7 percent in the control group

This study clearly demonstrates that training childcare providers in research-based language enrichment interventions not only helps to increase children's pre-literacy skills, but also may serve to decrease the number of children who will enter kindergarten in an at-risk category for reading failure. These Vermont findings have national implications. Currently, nearly 35 percent of children in the United States enter public school in an at-risk level for reading difficulties.

Literacy gaps between these at-risk children and the rest of their peers often widen over time. With repeated school challenges, the chance for future academic success diminishes. Given this negative spiral, it is not surprising that a staggering 35 percent of all children with reading problems eventually drop out of school.

Instead of waiting for children to fail, early language enrichment delivered by informed childcare providers during the pre-school years can help reduce later reading difficulties, low self-esteem, and special education costs.

Since 1997, more than 1,000 Vermont providers have participated in the BUILDING BLOCKS program, impacting over 20,000 children. For more information and a reprint of the article Promoting Early Literacy through Professional Development for Childcare Providers, please contact the Stern Center for Language and Learning at (802) 878-2332.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR LITERACY®

- Established in 1997 and supported by grants from the A.D. Henderson Foundation and the Turrell Fund
- In 2004, 48 childcare centers and 200 childcare providers participated in BUILDING BLOCKS
- BUILDING BLOCKS provides six months of training to childcare providers that includes a two-day workshop and on-site mentorship
- Since 1997, more than 1,000 Vermont childcare providers have completed BUILDING BLOCKS training, reaching more than 20,000 preschoolers



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