

Characteristics of Literacy Coaching With Head Start Teachers



Elizabeth A. Benedict, Douglas R. Powell, & Karen E. Diamond
Purdue University

Introduction

- This poster describes characteristics of expert coaching in a professional development intervention (Project Literacy) aimed at improving Head Start classroom and teacher supports for literacy and language development and children's language and literacy skills
- Coaching is an increasingly common approach to professional development
- Minimal research on effectiveness and characteristics of coaching in early childhood classrooms has been conducted

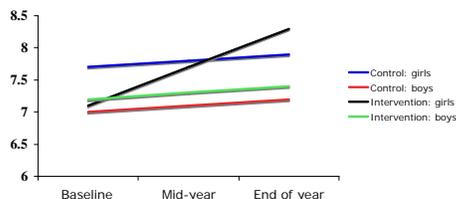
Intervention

- Intervention:** In classrooms, coaching ($M=1.45$ sessions per month) was an extension of a 3-cr. University course on promoting early language and literacy development
- Research Design:** Teachers assigned within geographic region to intervention or a wait-list control group (with intervention in second year)
- Sample:**
 - Children: 306 intervention, 157 control; mean age=50 months at baseline
 - Teachers: 48 lead and 44 assistant teachers across intervention and control conditions

Teacher & Child Outcomes

- Teachers:** Intervention groups showed significant increases on overall teaching strategies (ELLCO)
- Children:**
 - Significant difference between groups in gains on Concepts About Print
 - Girls in intervention group with significant gains in Letter Knowledge compared to control group girls

Changes in children's letter knowledge



Analysis of Coaching Session Data

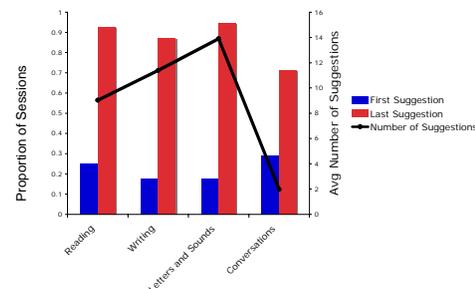
- Analyzed **280 coaching sessions** across **31 classrooms**
- Identified suggestions for classroom improvements on coaching records and coded each suggestion for:
 - Content:** Literacy (e.g., reading, letters and sounds) and Non-Literacy (e.g., academic, social)
 - Focus:** Materials or activities
 - Process** (e.g., individualization, environment/organization, and teacher planning)
 - Type:** New, repeated, or expanded
- Preliminary analyses indicated no significant differences in coaching variables across coaches or agencies when baseline quality (measured by ELLCO) taken into account

Content

- Suggestions pertained to an average of 12 different content clusters (e.g., word walls) across all sessions
- Teachers received an average of 6 suggestions per coaching session ($SD=2.0$)
- 90.31% of suggestions pertained to **literacy**
- Within literacy suggestions, most for **letters and sounds** (typically related to word walls and alphabet)
- High number of suggestions for **reading and writing**
- Fewer suggestions for **conversations**

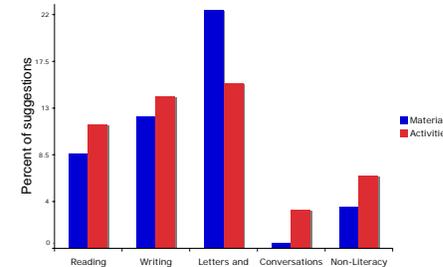
SEQUENCE

- Began **letters and sounds, writing, and reading** earlier (.18, .18, and .25 of sessions, respectively) and stopped later (.94, .87, and .93 of sessions)
- Started **conversations** later (.29 of sessions) and stopped earlier (.71 of sessions)



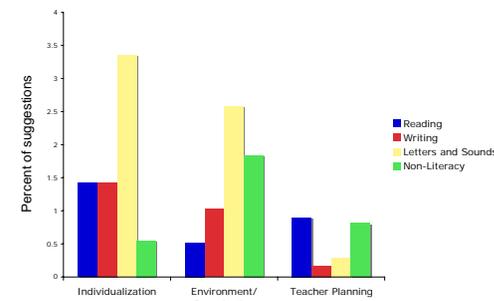
Focus on Materials or Activities

- Materials > activities for letters and sounds
- Activities > materials for all other content areas



Process

- Most individualization and environment/organization suggestions pertained to letters and sounds
- Most teacher planning suggestions pertained to reading and non-literacy



Type: New, Repeats & Expansions

- More new suggestions than repeated or expanded suggestions across all content areas
- More repeated and expanded suggestions in reading, writing, and letters and sounds than non-literacy content areas

Classroom Quality & Coaching

- Baseline classroom quality was related to:
 - Sessions:** more sessions conducted in lower ($M=1.56$) compared to higher ($M=1.33$) quality classrooms ($p = .0003$)
 - Minutes:** more time spent in lower ($M=336$) compared to higher ($M=269$) quality classrooms ($p = .02$)
 - Teacher planning:** more suggestions related to teacher planning in lower ($M=4.63$) compared to higher ($M=2.13$) quality classrooms ($p = .059$)

Conclusions

- Most suggestions focused on **letters and sounds** and these suggestions were introduced first and continued longer than suggestions in other content areas
 - May explain children's improvements in letter knowledge
- Baseline classroom quality** may be related to how coaching is conducted
 - Number of coaching sessions
 - Amount of time coach spends in the classroom
 - Content (e.g., focus on teacher planning in lower quality classrooms)
- In addition to the content of suggestions, analyses of coaching interventions may benefit from attention to the focus, process, and type of suggestions

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by grant award #S349A010162 from the U.S. Department of Education and grant award #R305B050030 from the Institute of Education Science to Purdue University