A Comparison of Early Childhood Education in Powell/Dublin, Ohio: Pedagogical and literacy Practices

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Introduction/Abstract

The research project examined exemplary preschool literacy practices in the United States. Governmental policy now prioritizes the accessibility of preschool education more than ever before. This investment influences teachers, teaching strategies, and classroom environment so more can provide high quality education. The United States preschool education system has many standards and expectations for how the classroom should look and function for literacy development. The Ohio Content Standards of Early Learning and Development gives guidelines outlining what is to be taught in a preschool classroom. The standards are research-based and provide clarity on how the strategies analyzed enhance student’s literacy skills.

The research investigation included on site observations of preschools organized around various philosophical perspectives, research articles’ conclusions to compare, interviews with preschool teachers to gauge opinions of the current literacy curriculums, and introspective, detailed reports of the findings.

Objectives/Standards

School Observations:
- Smoky Row Preschool
- Dublin Montessori Academy
- Meadows Academy

Phonemic Awareness and Literacy Development

L.20 With modeling and support, students phonologically, intonation and expression in shared reading of familiar books, poems, chants, songs, nursery rhymes or other repetitions or predictable texts.

L.23 Demonstrate an understanding of basic conventions of print in English and other languages.

L.22 With modeling and support, recognize and produce rhyming words.

L.32 With modeling and support, follow typical patterns when communicating with others (e.g., listen to others, take turns talking and speaking about the topic or text being discussed).

Dramatic Play and Literacy Development

L. 16 Retell or re-enact familiar stories.

Environmental Print and Literacy Development/Writing and Literacy Development

L. 31 With modeling and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating and emergent writing.

Read Alouds and Literacy Development

L.17 Ask and answer questions, and comment about characters and major events in familiar stories.

L.4 Demonstrate understanding of increasingly complex concepts and longer sentences.

Example of Two Exemplary Literacy Practices

Oral Language and Literacy Development

Pretend talk allows a student to enunciate and engage orally with words and helps a student practice language in their own form. A great example of pretend talk between a mother and her 4-year-old playing with cars is below:

Child: You better watch out from that guy.
Mother: I know, he’s gonna pass him.
Oh, he’s gonna pass on the side. [Makes engine sounds.]
Wahoo!
Now he has to go slow.
He’s in a back of a car.
[Makes more engine sounds.]
Child: How did he come back over that side?
Mother: I don’t know, he’s just driving around.
He likes to drive.
Child: You’ve has to drive. He’s the teacher, right? He’s the...

The dialogue between this mother and child displays how a child’s imagination is capable of creating story lines, plots, and adding sound effects to enhance the play. The child is willing to take risks and guide the mother through how he/she wants to play with the cars. Pretend play encourages a child to be curious, control the play, and invite others into their scenario. All of these oral dialogues cultivate and develop a child’s literacy language.

Writing and Literacy Development

Results: Comparison of Observed Schools Literacy Practices

Conclusions of Exemplary Literacy Practices to Preschool Programs

The research concluded the three schools each integrate exemplary literacy practices and reiterate the importance of the strategies, yet each apply them in different ways. The content standards for Ohio outline the importance to teach students skills to read and write. Then each school’s philosophy guides the strategies chosen and how to implement them. Each observed preschool validated the significance and influence the developmental strategies for phonemic awareness, oral language, read alouds, dramatic play, environmental print, and writing have on a student’s education.

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Excerpt from Research Paper: Observations on Phonemic Awareness and Literacy Development Compared

Sounding out is an exemplary practice for developing phonemic awareness (Bennett-Armistead, Duke, Moses, 2005). At Smoky Row Preschool program, the teachers focused on teaching students the skills to phonetically sound out letters and words. The students had phonemic awareness and the practice of saying the phoneme of the letter helped them make more connections between letters and sounds. At Dublin Montessori preschool, the teachers phonetically stretched the individual sounds in words. The teacher stressed and emphasized the individual phoneme for each word to the student. First the teacher would sound each vowel, and then she would combine the stressed letters to help students see their connections to this blending of letters. At Meadows Academy, the teachers worked with students phonetically repeating alphabetically. The students would recall and repeat the letter and sound associated with it. For example, a student would say the letter “d” and then the sound “/d/”. All programs observed reiterated the importance of developing phonemic awareness and teachers used strategies to support student learning. Although every school did not apply nor introduce the skill in the same way, each student observed demonstrated phonemic awareness and teachers used strategies to continue developing student knowledge in ways deemed effective in the research literature.