

BRIGHT FUTURES

Early Reading First Year Three Summary Evaluation Report

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Introduction

During the third year of implementation, the Bright Futures Early Reading First project continued to provide resources to children, parents and teachers to enhance early literacy and language development. The Bright Futures project is a partnership between the Madison Parish School District and the Delta Community Action Agency Head Start in Tallulah LA. During the third year, the project spanned across 15 classrooms in two Parish schools and one Head Start center. As with the first and second years of implementation, Bright Futures employed ERF coaches, an ERF coordinator, and the project director. In addition to the core staff, the project also received support from SEDL's reading and parent involvement consultants, and SEDL evaluation staff. The ERF coaches provided one-on-one modeling and support for the 15 ERF teachers and their paraprofessionals implementing the ERF curricula, while the ERF Coordinator supported the coaches and assisted in leading professional development opportunities (e.g., study groups, book studies, and data workshops) for the teachers and paraprofessionals. The project director provided oversight for the grant's implementation (i.e., number of professional development hours scheduled, leadership team meetings, and budget); and provided professional development to the ERF coordinator and coaches, as well as teachers.

The Bright Futures project supports children's language and literacy development by implementing the DLM Early Learning Express and Language for Learning (LfL) curricula in six classrooms with 3-year-olds and SRA/McGraw-Hill's Imagine It! and Breakthrough to Literacy (BtL) in 9 classrooms with 4-year-olds. Each of these programs has a strong focus on language and literacy and provide a prescribed format for teachers. The ERF coaches and coordinator aligned their professional development with the implemented curricula, and findings from the year 1 and year 2 evaluation reports.

In addition to attending the trainings offered to teachers, the ERF coaches receive support through SEDL. A SEDL consultant aimed at enhancing coaches' ability to work with teachers and strengthen knowledge of scientifically based reading research and the core curricula performed monthly site visits. The consultant also worked with the Coordinator to identify professional development topics and resources to assist teachers.

The Bright Futures project includes a parent involvement component to increase parent involvement in children's literacy and language development. The ERF parent liaison worked with the teachers and parents to increase communication and involvement at the classroom and school level through organized activities and trainings.

The evaluation of Bright Futures was led by SEDL with oversight provided by the ERF project director. SEDL evaluators collaborated with the ERF staff to collect child outcome data, measure the quality of professional development opportunities, and evaluate parent involvement activities. The evaluators also conducted data collection efforts related to capturing teacher/classroom practices through classroom observations and teacher interviews twice a year in the fall and spring.

Methods

The evaluation of the Bright Futures project is designed to provide ongoing formative and summative information that can be used for program improvement and to assess the overall program impact. The evaluation covers four overarching questions:

1. Does the program provide high quality professional development leading to high quality education services?
2. Does the program enhance children's literacy outcomes? Do the outcomes vary by program implementation, teacher characteristics, classroom quality, and student characteristics?
3. Does the program strengthen families as the primary educational resource and nurturer of their children?
4. Does the program enhance teachers and program resources to utilize data to drive decision-making?

The design of the evaluation is focused on documenting participant outcomes over the course of the school year with assessments providing pre- and post-test outcome data¹. Outcome measures were identified based upon the above research questions with data collection occurring during the fall and spring of each project year.

Sample

Students. The Bright Futures project had 244 children enrolled during the third year of implementation across 15 classrooms. Two hundred fifty-eight children were assessed on at least one outcome measure across the fall and spring time points. Out of the 258 children, 55% were kinderbound (attending kindergarten the following year) and enrolled across nine 4-year-old classrooms in comparison to the remaining 45% enrolled in six 3-year-old Head Start classrooms. The vast majority (98%) of ERF children with valid data were African American. However, race/ethnicity data was missing for 5 percent of the children in the full sample. All but one ERF child's primary home language was English.

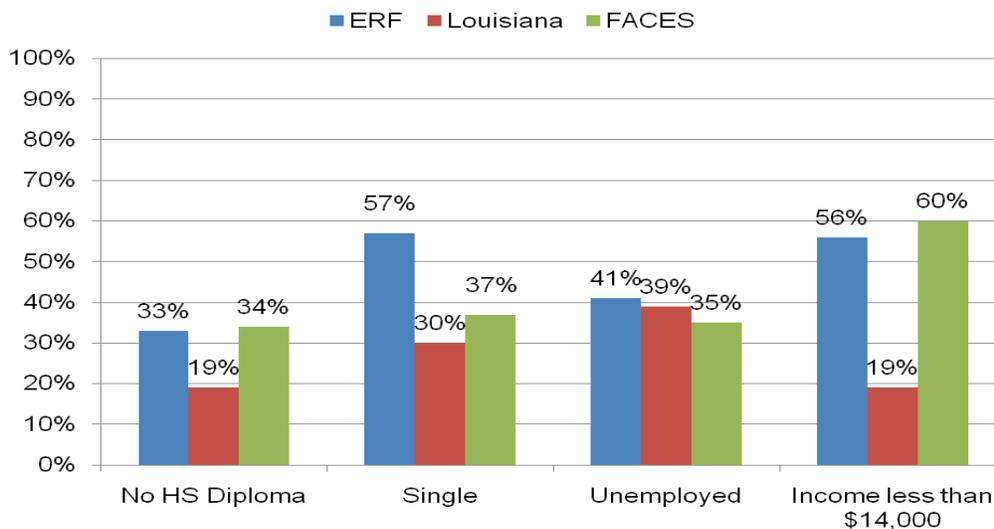
Less than 5 percent of the children had been diagnosed with a disability. However, a disability was suspected for additional 5 additional children. Of the children with diagnosed disabilities, their diagnoses ranged from Autism, speech impairments, learning disabilities, deafness, to developmental delays.

Families. The average annual family income was approximately \$15,396 and ranged from \$1,200 to \$23,000. The National Poverty Threshold for a family of three, for 2009, was \$22,050 annually (Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Additionally,

¹ The original design had planned to also include a quasi-experimental design component, if possible, utilizing a matched comparison sample of ERF children with similar children from the FACES Head Start Study to allow for comparison of gains on critical outcomes across the two groups (ERF and comparison). However, due to the limited demographic information available, we were unable to conduct these analyses with a large enough sample to provide sufficient power to detect program differences.

41 percent of the parents reported not being employed and 51% were employed full-time. Fifty-seven percent of the parents were single, never married. In comparison to the 2007 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008) data for the state of Louisiana, a higher proportion of Bright Futures parents are single, have an annual income less than \$14,000, and have not received a High School diploma. Figure 1 also demonstrates that compared to nationally representative data from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2000), a higher proportion of Bright Future parents are single, unemployed, and have an annual income less than \$14,000.

Figure 1. Comparison of Bright Futures: ERF Parents



Teachers. The 15 ERF teachers varied in background and education attainment. During the first year of implementation 16 teachers were involved in the ERF project; however, due to district needs, an additional classroom was added to a Parish school leading to 17 ERF classrooms in year two. Based on the student population, each of the public schools reduced the number of preschool classrooms by one in the third year of the project to 15 classrooms total. All of the teachers in year 3 had several years of teaching experience (average = 12.2 years) and all 15 teachers had been teaching pre-K for at least one year. Five of the teachers had taken graduate level coursework, and three had a graduate degree (i.e. M.A. or Ed.D.) related to education. Two teachers had a Bachelor's degree and five had an Associate's degree. During the third year of implementation, three of the teachers indicated they were taking coursework towards a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education.

ERF Coaches. During the third year of implementation, the project provided individual classroom support through three ERF coaches. Two of the coaches had previous interventionist experience through the Madison Parish Reading First grant, in addition to several years teaching a variety of grade levels, including Kindergarten and Pre-K. Additionally, one coach supported implementation across all three years of the grant, while another supported ERF teachers during the second and third year. The most recently hired coach who joined the project in year three also had previous teaching

experience. All three had Bachelor's degrees in education and one had a Master's of Arts in education.

Measures

Child Outcomes

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – III (PPVT-III) The PPVT-III was developed by Dunn & Dunn (1989) and has been used in several large-scale national studies (i.e., The Head Start Family And Child Experiences Survey FACES; The Head Start Impact Study; Study of Classroom Literacy Interventions and Outcomes in Even Start). The instrument is designed to assess a child's receptive vocabulary. During the assessment children are shown 4 pictures and asked to point to the one that best represents a word provided by the assessor. As the child moves through the assessment, the items become more difficult. The PPVT-III was standardized nationally on a sample of 2,725 persons, 2000 children and adolescents and 725 persons over the age of 19. The PPVT-III allows assessors to determine the child's raw score, and then through standardization identify a standard score to represent how the child performed compared to peers at the same age. The PPVT-III was administered pre- and post for each year of the study.

Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) The EOWPVT (2000) was developed to assess a child's vocabulary by asking him/her to name objects, actions, and concepts pictured in illustrations. In administration the examiner shows the child pictures and the child provides names for those pictures. The items become more difficult as the child moves through the assessment. It usually takes about 10 to 15 minutes to administer. The EOWPVT was standardized on a representative sample of individuals in the U.S. and is viewed as a reliable and valid assessment of children's expressive vocabulary skills. This assessment has also been used in national studies, such as the study of Classroom Literacy Interventions and Outcomes in Even Start (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The EOWPVT was administered during the fall and spring of each study year with all children.

Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL) The TOPEL (Lonigan, Wagner & Torgesen, 2007) has three subtests (Print Knowledge, Definitional Vocabulary and Phonological Awareness). For ERF we are using two of the three subtests – Print Knowledge and Phonological Awareness. The Print Knowledge subtest contains several items to measure alphabet knowledge, knowledge of written language conventions and form. The child is asked to identify letters and written words, point to specific letters, names of specific letters, identify letters associated with specific sounds, and say the sounds associated with specific letters. For the phonological awareness subtest, children are asked to say a word, then say what is left when part of the word is taken away (elision) or they are asked to listen to separate sounds and combine them to make a word (blending). The TOPEL was normed on a large representative sample of children between the ages of 3 to 6 years. Portions of the TOPEL have been used in national studies (i.e. FACES and CLIO). The TOPEL was administered during the fall and spring in 4-year-old classrooms only.

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Pre-K (PALS) The PALS was developed at the University of Virginia and is one of the mandated APR measures for the ERF grant for Upper-case Alphabet Knowledge. Our ERF project is using not only the Upper-case Alphabet Knowledge subtest, but also the Print Awareness subtest. During the Upper-case subtest, children are asked to identify the 26 letters of the alphabet. The Print and Word Awareness subtest includes print related skills such as children's ability to (a) recognize print in the local environment (i.e. in a book), (b) know that it is the print that is read in stories, and (c) understand that different text forms are used for different functions. During this subtest the assessor shares a book with the child and asks key questions to provide opportunities for children to demonstrate knowledge of the skills previously mentioned. This subtest has 10 items. The PALS Upper Case Letter Recognition and Print Awareness subtests were administered in the fall and spring of each year.

Classroom Observations

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) The ELLCO measures five key literacy elements; classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book reading opportunities, and print and early writing supports. During the second year of implementation, the evaluation utilized the ELLCO Checklist from the 2nd edition of the measures (as required by the U.S. Department of Education) and the rating system from the most recent version, which no longer includes the checklist.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) The CLASS measures three key domains of classroom interactions between teachers and students; emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Observational coding was completed in four 30-minute cycles (20 minute observation, 10-minute coding). The CLASS is comprised of 10 subscales, which are organized in 3 domains. The CLASS was utilized during the third year of the project to increase the focus on the importance of classroom interactions between teachers and children, moving beyond a language and literacy enriched environment.

Teacher Outcomes

Teacher Knowledge Survey The knowledge survey contains 25 items focused on key concepts related to oral language development, literacy development, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and concepts of print. The measure was originally developed based upon several measures in the field of early literacy at Georgia State University and modified to fit the professional development objectives of the Bright Futures project.

Teacher Interview The teacher knowledge survey was developed by SEDL's R&E staff to gather information on professional development, implementation of the curriculum and determine teacher knowledge. The teacher survey also gathered information on teachers' previous experience and qualifications. The length of the interview is approximately 25 minutes and it was completed in the spring and fall each year of the study by teachers and paraprofessionals.

Coach Outcomes

Coach Interview The coach interview was developed by SEDL's R&E staff and gathers information on how coaches work with teachers in the classroom, as well as one-on-one. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was completed in the fall and spring each year of the study.

Coach Performance Survey The coach performance survey was completed by lead teachers during the spring of each program year. Teachers rated their coach's knowledge and skills related to scientifically based reading research. Teachers also provided information on the types of activities and resources his/her coach has provided across the year and his/her overall satisfaction with the assigned coach.

Parent Involvement

Parent Survey The ERF parent survey was designed by SEDL's R&E staff and was based on the FACES (2000) Parent Interview. Questions were added to reflect the parent involvement plan developed by the ERF parent liaison. Parents completed the questionnaire in both the fall and spring of each year.

Professional Development

Professional Development Evaluations After each training, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form to determine the quality, usefulness and relevance of the information presented. Participants rated responses on a 5-point Likert scale based on strength of agreement with statements. The training evaluations also included two open-ended questions.

Results

During the third year of implementation, the Bright Futures ERF project focused on continuing to maintain language and literacy rich classroom environments, increasing teacher and paraprofessional knowledge related to scientifically based reading research, creating a parent center to increase parents' participation in the program, and increasing the role of coaches in implementation tracking and modeling. The following section presents findings related to each of these areas based on the four primary research questions.

Professional Development

The first research question focused on the quality of professional development opportunities (e.g., data workshops, study groups, and book studies) and can be broken down into two questions; 1) What is the quality of professional development opportunities, including the summer institute, in-class coaching, and study groups? and 2) To what degree has the professional development and in-class coaching resulted in increased knowledge and use of scientifically based reading research? This section presents data related to each of these questions.

Quality of Professional Development Opportunities

Over the course of the third year approximately 22 professional development opportunities were offered to ERF teachers and paraprofessionals. There were five trainings focusing on key early literacy and language topics via books, and eight study groups (i.e., using ELLCO data to inform differentiated instruction). SEDL's program consultant provided a two-day summer institute. This section presents the findings related to the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the professional development offered during the third year of implementation.

In addition to the trainings, coaches also worked one-on-one with teachers to build classroom instructional capacity and knowledge related to scientifically based reading research.

Book Studies Trainings focused on book studies presented key topics related to phonological awareness, meaningful differences, classroom management, and early literacy development. Across the book studies, the number of participants ranged between 9 and 20. The average response rate for surveys was 86 percent. Participants at the curriculum-based trainings were typically teachers (range of 55 to 80%) and paraprofessionals (range of 13 to 50%). Other attendees included principals, supervisors, coaches, and the superintendent and/or assistant superintendent.

Based on responses, the majority of respondents (range of 96 to 98 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that the book studies were helpful, relevant and useful. They also agreed or strongly agreed that they were engaged in the session (97%) and their ideas and comments were valued during the training (98%). In addition, 100% of the respondents indicated the book studies were high to very high quality.

The goals across the book studies were similar in scope, to build skills and knowledge, create a "world class education" for all MPSD students, allow participants to share what they learned, and meet participant expectations. Based on the ratings received, these goals were met across the trainings (range from 97 to 98 percent). During the lead teacher interviews, all of the teachers indicated the trainings were helpful to very helpful.

Study Groups Study groups focus on key topics related to children's early literacy and language development (i.e., vocabulary, comprehension, and phonological awareness). The groups are co-led by the ERF coordinator and coaches. During the third year of implementation, eight study groups were held. During the third year of implementation, the primary goal of the study groups was to build teacher capacity in order to continue grant related activities into the following school year.

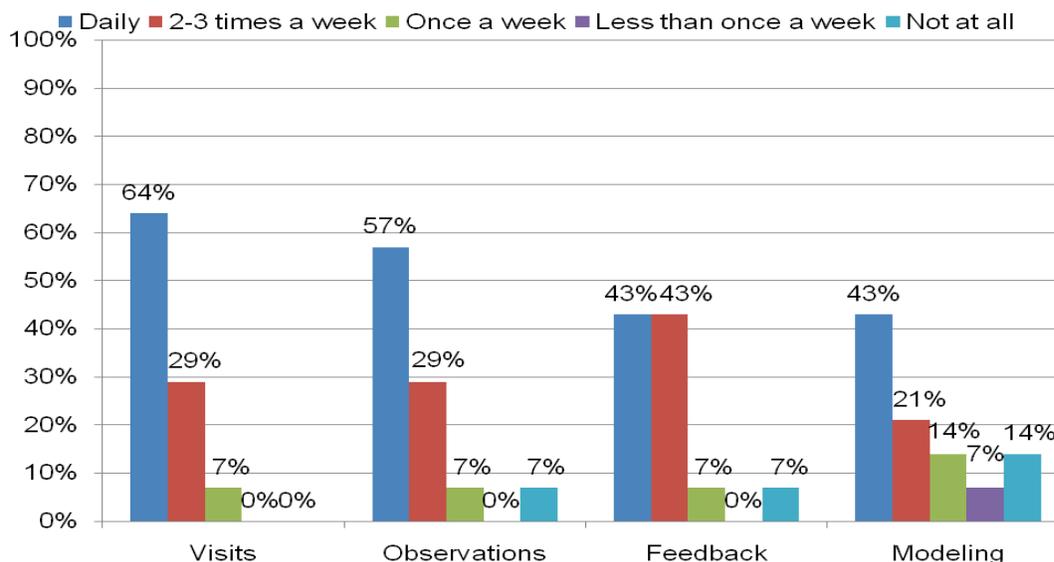
Teachers reported that the study groups were helpful and relevant to capacity building. However, six of the teachers indicated they would prefer scheduling the professional development after school so they were not out of the classroom so often.

Coaching Activities As described in the original ERF grant, it was expected that the level of coaching intensity would build from level 1 (informal; helps to develop relationships) to at least level two (more formal; somewhat more intense; begins to look at areas of need and focus). During the third year of implementation, all coaches

described formal and informal visits to their teachers. For example, all indicated they checked in daily to ensure teachers had the appropriate resources and materials. In addition, one coach reported modeling lessons for all of her teachers at least once a month. Based on information gathered during the teacher interview, four of the teachers reported their coach modeling only one lesson across the year, eight reported approximately three to four modeling opportunities and three teachers reported no modeling across the year. However, all teachers confirmed that their coach or the ERF coordinator stopped in daily, unless assessments were ongoing. Some instances of level three coaching (more formal, more intense) were mentioned by both coaches and teachers; providing feedback to teachers, and conducting lesson studies. However, these events were rare and lesson studies typically occurred during study groups, which were co-led by the ERF coordinator and coaches. Paraprofessionals described the coaches as primarily working with the lead teachers. In addition to the above activities, coaches also reported conducting ELLCO Environmental checklist walk-thrus to ensure teachers were ready for the spring site visit by evaluators.

The Coach survey also provided information on the frequency of coaching activities. Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency (daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, less than once a week or not at all) of visits to classrooms, planning/conference meetings, observation, feedback and support that was provided by coaches. The most common activity was visits to classroom, which occurred daily in 64% of the classrooms. All teachers indicated they were visited at least once a week by their coach. For the majority of activities, teachers reported the coaches engaged in them daily or 2-3 times a week. Figure 2 provides the frequency for each activity.

Figure 2. Frequency of Coaching Activities



Based on data from the teacher and coach interviews and the coach survey, it appears that coaches, in year 3, were engaging in more level 2 coaching by conducting classroom observations, providing implementation support and having data discussions with teachers on a consistent basis. As indicated by the figure above, it appears that

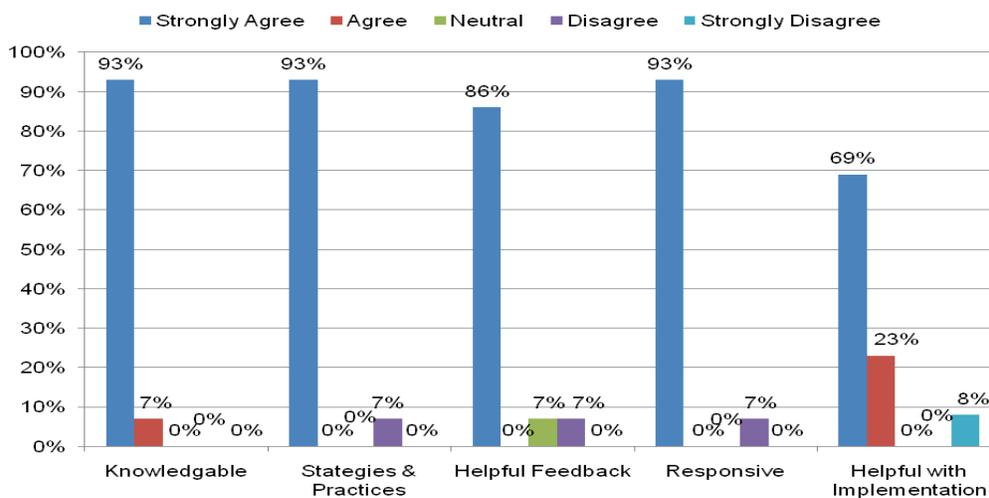
one of the ERF classrooms did not receive the same level of support as the others. It is unclear if this was due to the teacher or the coach. Further data would be needed to determine the cause for this difference in frequency of visits and types of support offered to this particular classroom.

In addition to interviews, teachers completed a Coach Survey. At the end of year three, all 15 lead teachers completed the survey and were asked to respond with their coach in mind. One coach was assigned six of the Head Start teachers, one to three teachers at a public school, and the other to four classes at a public school and two additional classrooms at Head Start. Fourteen of the teachers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their coach during spring interviews. The remaining teacher reported being very dissatisfied with her coach. Many teachers provided comments to explain their level of satisfaction with their coach and of the 15 responses, 13 identified help provided by the coach as the main reason (i.e., helped us learn the programs, helpful and easy to communicate with, helpful in arranging our room and ordering materials). Based on the Coach Survey, 92 percent of the teachers (14 out of 15) were satisfied or very satisfied with their coach during the third year of implementation.

The majority of teachers indicated their coach knows language and literacy development and classroom strategies and practices for their age group(s) (100 percent and 93 percent respectively). Eleven out of the 15 teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their coach was in the class daily working with the teacher or with children.

In regards to the helpfulness of coaches, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their coaches gave regular feedback, were responsive to questions and concerns, helped with ideas for curriculum and classroom centers, and were helpful with implementing the curriculum. Figure 3 presents the percent of responses for each of the items discussed above.

Figure 3. Teacher Perception of Coach Supports



Multiple data sources suggest the coaching support provided during the second year was helpful to teachers in implementing the curriculum and gaining knowledge/skills related to early literacy and language development.

Increased Knowledge and Use of Scientifically Based Reading

The Teacher Knowledge Survey was administered to teachers and paraprofessionals at the beginning and end of the year to assess the impact of professional development and coaching. In addition to the knowledge survey, the Coach Survey asked teachers to rate how the coach impacted scientifically based reading research knowledge and use.

In regards to the coach's impact on knowledge, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their coach had increased their knowledge of research-based literacy strategies, as well as use (93% and 93% respectively). Additionally, 93 percent of teachers agree or strongly agreed that their coach had increased their ability to assist students in literacy activities.

While the coach survey is based on teacher perception, the knowledge survey provides a more objective measure of the impact of professional development and coaching. As mentioned previously, the knowledge survey is comprised of 25 items and generates both an overall score and 5 subscale scores.

In the fall of year 3, 12 teachers and 14 paraprofessionals completed the survey (N = 26) and 13 teachers and 12 paraprofessionals completed it in the spring (N = 25). It is not known if all 12 teachers from the spring also completed the survey in the fall. Table 1 presents the combined means for teachers and paraprofessionals for the third year.

Table 1. Average Scores (Percent Correct) on the Teacher Knowledge Survey Year 3

Subscale	Teachers			Paraprofessionals			Overall		
	Fall	Spring	Change	Fall	Spring	Change	Fall	Spring	Change
Oral Language/Vocabulary	.46	.66	+.20*	.39	.57	+18*	.42	.62	+.20*
Literacy Development	.58	.87	+.29*	.43	.69	+.26*	.50	.78	+.28*
Phonological Awareness	.57	.76	+.19*	.43	.75	+.32*	.49	.75	+.26*
Print & Letter Knowledge	.31	.54	+.23*	.29	.54	+.25*	.30	.54	+.24*
Comprehension	.17	.67	+.50*	.14	.72	+.58*	.15	.69	+.54*
Total	.44	.70	+.26*	.36	.64	+.28*	.40	.67	+.27*

NOTE: * = $p < .05$

Significant increases were found across all of the five subscales on the knowledge survey, as well as on the overall total. Overall, teachers and paraprofessional scores differed significantly on only one of the subscales, Literacy Development. Teachers scored significantly higher than paraprofessionals on this dimension; however, not on their total scores. On the remaining subscales, teacher and paraprofessionals earned similar scores and demonstrated similar increases in scores across the year.

The significant increases, for both teachers and paraprofessionals, demonstrate the positive impact of professional development and coaching activities on early literacy and language knowledge. The scores earned during the final year of implementation are higher than those of previous years. For instance, the average score received during the first year of implementation was 45 percent, in the spring, and 49 percent in the spring of year 2. While the average score for year 3 is significantly higher, it is still lower than expected. This suggests that teachers and paraprofessionals would benefit from continued support and professional development targeting children's early literacy and language development.

The professional development being offered is relevant and useful to teachers and perceived to have a positive impact. Teachers and paraprofessionals also demonstrated significant increases from fall to spring on early literacy and reading knowledge scores. However, overall scores are relatively low (i.e., total score in spring indicates 67% correct) which suggests more intense professional development may be needed focusing on the five core areas of early literacy and language development. In order to continue building capacity, professional development targeting early literacy and language development should be continued and be embedded within the classroom framework (i.e., lesson plans, differentiated instruction).

Classroom Environment

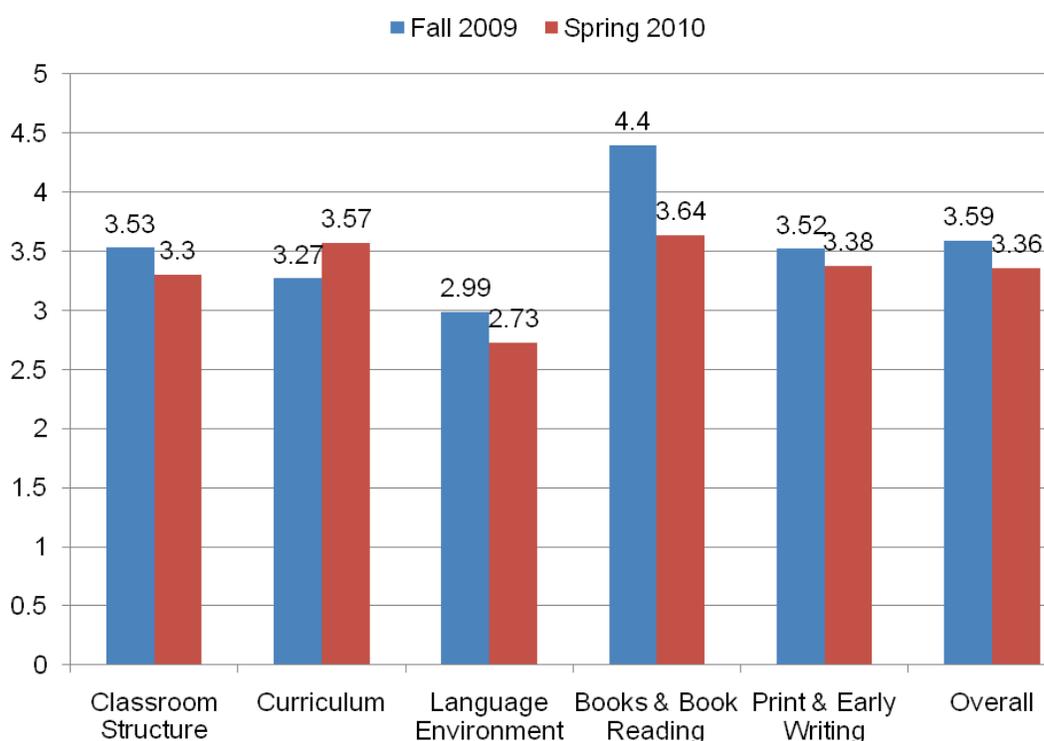
One goal of the Bright Futures project was to create and maintain a language and literacy-enriched environment for the children. Therefore, a necessary question is to what degree do the participating classrooms provide high-quality oral language and print-rich environments? For year three, two measures were used to assess the environment of the Bright Futures project's classrooms: the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

ELLCO

The ELLCO contains two components, the Classroom Environment Checklist and the classroom observation measure. The checklist is used to identify the types and uses of materials related to early literacy and language development available within the classroom. Across the 15 classrooms visited, the average ELLCO checklist score was 40.9 for both fall and spring. Since the highest score that can be obtained is 41, this score indicates that the participating teachers and paraprofessionals have provided materials and resources for a strong and enriched literacy and language classroom environment. The scores for year three are slightly higher than the second year of implementation (40.8).

The second component of the ELLCO is the classroom observation measure, which provides information on the classroom interaction and structure supporting children's early literacy and language development. For example, instead of identifying key materials, the observation tool focuses on the use of the key materials by both teachers and children throughout the classroom. Observation items are rated from 1 (Deficient) to 5 (Exemplary). The average rating received by classrooms in the spring of year three across all subscales was 3.36, which suggests the typical classroom was just above basic. This average is slightly lower, but not significantly different, than the fall overall rating (3.59). Figure 4 provides a comparison of the ratings earned by the classrooms on each subscale.

Figure 4. Average ELLCO Classroom Ratings for Year 3



Out of the five subscales, two of the scales differed significantly from the fall to the spring: the average Curriculum score increased significantly ($F = 7.104$, $p < .01$), and the average Books and Book Reading score decreased significantly ($F = 13.072$, $p < .001$). The average overall rating and the other subscale ratings were not significantly different from fall to spring.

The ELLCO findings, taken together suggest that the participating classrooms have the materials and resources available to create enriched language and literacy environments; however, a stronger emphasis should be placed on engaging children in the use of these materials and improving literacy and language instruction.

CLASS

The CLASS is a system for observing and assessing the quality of interactions between students and teachers in preschool classrooms (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). The CLASS measures social-emotional and instructional interactions related to students' social competence and academic achievement. Observational coding was completed in four 30-minute cycles (20-minute observation, 10-minute coding), and observers assigned scores based on interactions in the classroom, with a particular emphasis on the teachers. There are 10 subscales organized into 3 domains: (1) Emotional Support, (2) Classroom Organization, and (3) Instructional Support.

The Emotional Support domain consists of Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspectives. A high level of Positive Climate refers to positive relationships between students and teachers, enthusiasm for learning, and respectful interactions. Alternatively, a high level of Negative Climate not only includes frequent irritation, mean-spirited teasing, and anger in the classroom, but also the inability to diffuse these negative situations. Teacher Sensitivity refers to the level of consistency of teachers responding to students, anticipating areas of difficulty and providing support. Lastly, a high Regard for Student Perspectives involves teachers encouraging students to share ideas and emphasizing student's interests, autonomy, and points of view.

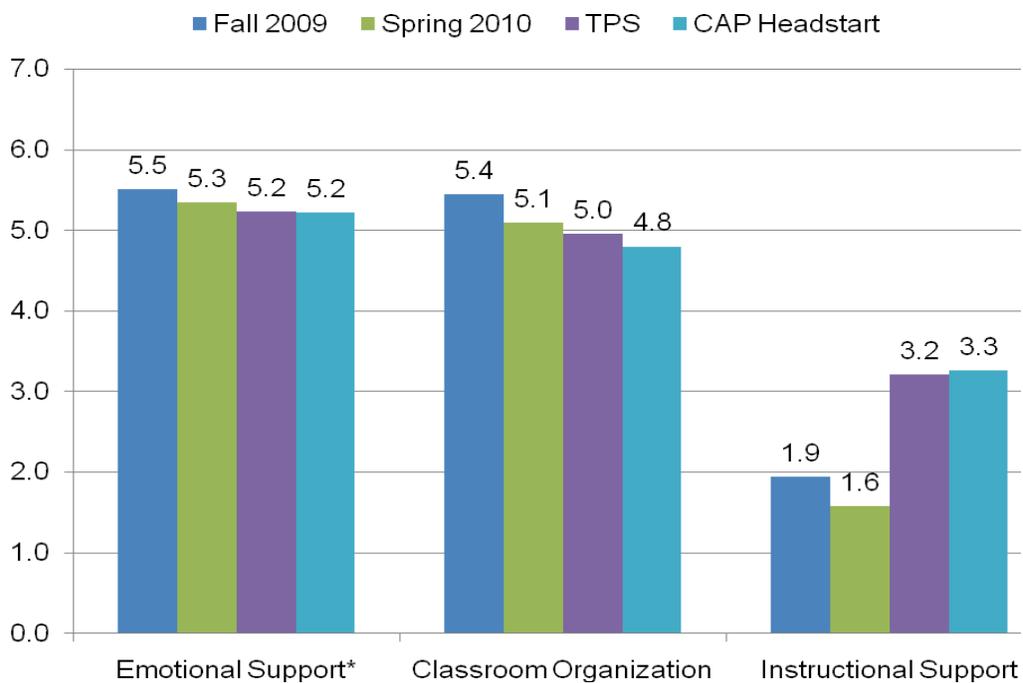
The second domain is Classroom Organization, which includes Behavior Management, Productivity, and Instructional Learning Formats. Behavior Management measures how rules, expectations, and praise for meeting expectations are communicated as well as how students are behaving appropriately. A high level of Productivity indicates clearly defined learning activities and expectations and quick and efficient transitions between activities. Lastly, Instructional Learning Formats refers to teachers providing interesting materials, presented in a variety of modalities that engage students.

The third domain is Instructional Support, which consists of Concept Development, Language Modeling, and Quality of Feedback. Concept Development refers to teachers providing opportunities to use analysis and reasoning in approaching their problems and to apply concepts to the everyday world. Language Modeling refers to exposing students to a variety of language forms, engaging conversations, and encouraging and expanding student talk. A high level of Quality of Feedback indicates specific information about their work and a focus on deep understanding and learning instead of getting the right answer.

Items are rated from 1-7, with a score of 1 and 2 considered to be in the low range; 3, 4, and 5 are in the mid range; and 6 and 7 are in the high range. The spring overall rating for the CLASS was a 4.1, which suggests the typical classroom was in the mid range. The spring average ratings for the Emotional Support domain and Classroom Organization domain are 5.3 and 5.1, respectively, which suggests that the typical classroom was in the mid-range in these two areas. However, the spring average rating for the Instructional Support domain is 1.6, which suggests that the typical classroom was in the low range in this area. Out of the 10 subscales and 3 domains, the average ratings were not significantly different from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010 (alpha level = .05).

In order to place the descriptive CLASS data of the Bright Futures project in a broader context, results from a study on pre-K classrooms in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Phillips, Gormley, & Lowenstein, 2009) are provided. Given that Phillips et al. observed 106 state-funded public school-based pre-K and Head Start classrooms with similar demographics, teacher qualifications, and student-teacher ratios, the Tulsa sample and the Madison Parish sample are fairly comparable. Figure 5 provides a comparison of ratings earned by the classrooms on each subscale and domain from Year 3 of the Bright Futures project and the Phillips et al. study.

Figure 5. Average CLASS Classroom Ratings² for Year 3 with Comparisons of Tulsa Public Schools and CAP Head Start Programs (Phillips, et al., 2009)³



With regard to Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, average ratings from Madison Parish were slightly higher than those from the Tulsa sample, but overall, the scores were comparable in these two domains. However, the Instructional Support domain exhibited much lower scores in Madison Parish than in the Tulsa sample. Although the literature has shown that the Instructional Support domain tends to be much lower compared to the other domains (Phillips, et al., 2009), it is striking that the

² Note: *When calculating the average overall score for the Emotional Support domain, the score on Negative Climate was reverse-coded, since a lower score on Negative Climate indicates a lower level of negative interactions in the classroom.

³ TSP = Tulsa Public Schools, CAP = Community Action Project of Tulsa County

quality of teacher's language-based interactions are notably lower than the quality of Emotional Support in Madison Parish.

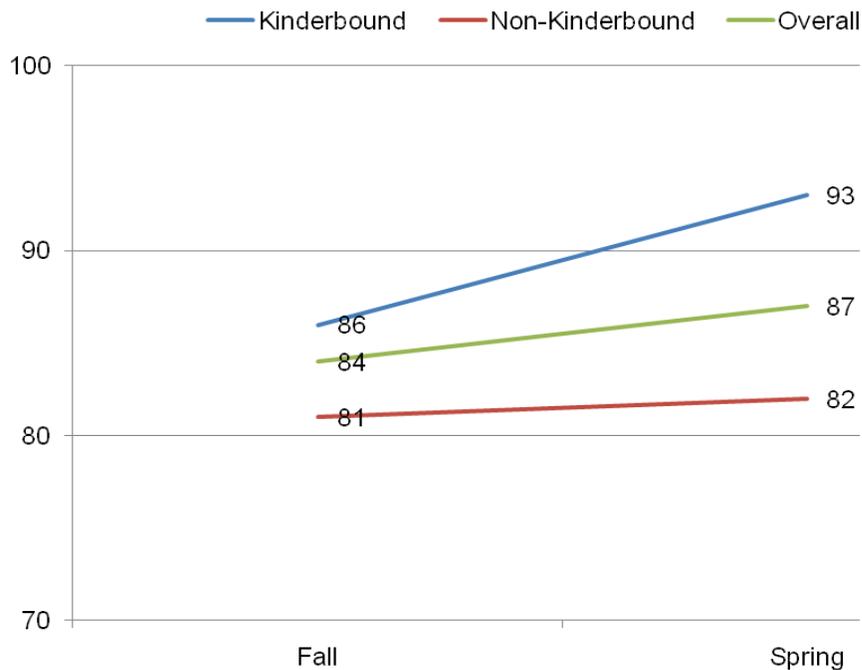
The CLASS findings, taken together, suggest that the Bright Futures classrooms have a high level of emotional support and classroom organization; however, a stronger emphasis should be placed on instructional support and how teachers provide opportunities for students to understand, apply, and analyze the content material.

Child Outcomes

The primary focus of the Bright Futures grant is the impact of the project on children's language and literacy development. As required by the U.S. Department of Education, receptive vocabulary was measured using the PPVT-III, and PALS Uppercase Letter Recognition subtest was administered. Additional measures were selected to measure children's progress in phonological awareness (TOPEL Elision and Blending), expressive vocabulary (EOWPVT) and print awareness (TOPEL and PALS). The TOPEL was only used with kinderbound children. As mentioned earlier, children were grouped as kinderbound versus non-kinderbound. The analyses for each child outcomes allowed for the comparison of children's scores across time (fall and spring), and age (kinderbound vs. non-kinderbound). Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed to determine if the group (i.e. time and age) means differed significantly. The ANOVA also allowed the identification of interactions between time and age. For instance, if the means significantly increased more for kinderbound in comparison to non-kinderbound children) over the two time points.

In order to test the presence of a significant change in standard scores from fall to spring, Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed using children's standard score as the dependent variable and time of test (i.e. fall or spring) x Kinderbound (i.e. kinderbound vs. non-kinderbound). On the PPVT-III, there were significant main effects for time ($F = 818, p < .00$) and kindergarten attendance ($F = 18.36, p < .000$); however, there was not a significant interaction ($F = 1.84, p = .175$). The average standard scores for the PPVT-III are presented in figure 6.

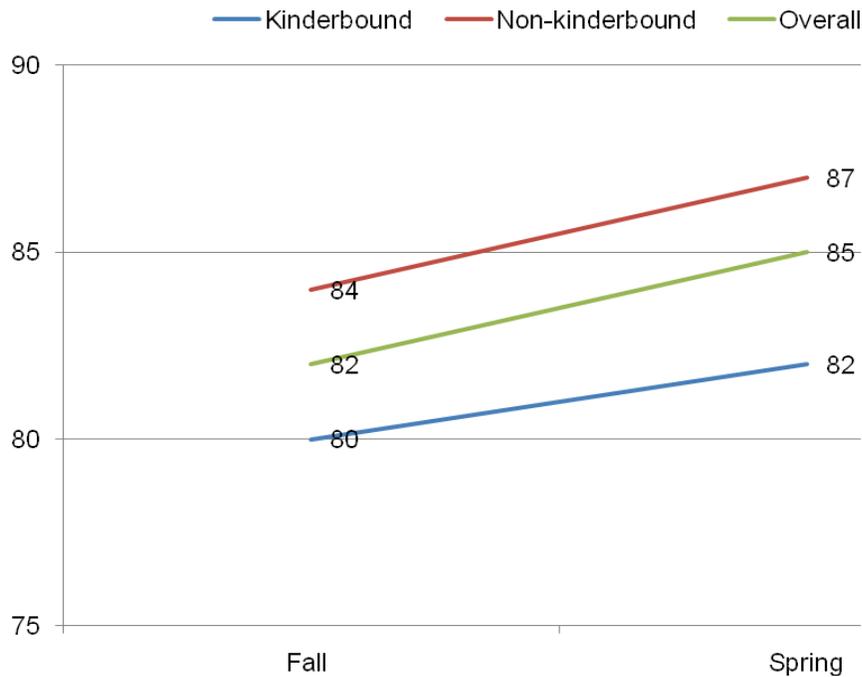
Figure 6 PPVT-III Average Standard Scores for Year 3



As demonstrated by the graph, children's scores increased significantly across the school year for all children. Kinderbound children scored higher in the fall, in comparison to non-kinderbound children; however, both groups significantly increased their scores across the year. This finding is similar to the pattern found for years 1 and 2, main effects were found for age and time; however, a significant interaction was not found.

The pattern found for EOWPVT differed from the PPVT-III. A 2 x 2 ANOVA was performed and a significant main effect was found for kinderbound status ($F = 13.02$, $p < .00$) only. The main effect for time of assessment was also significant ($F = 4.67$, $p < .05$). However, the interaction between time and kinderbound status was not significant ($F = 59.98$, $p = 5.65$). The average scores for the EOWPVT in year 3 are presented in figure 7. This indicates that while the scores differed based on children's age, they did not significantly increase across the year. Additionally, this suggests the curricula did not have a significant effect on children's expressive vocabulary skills in year 3.

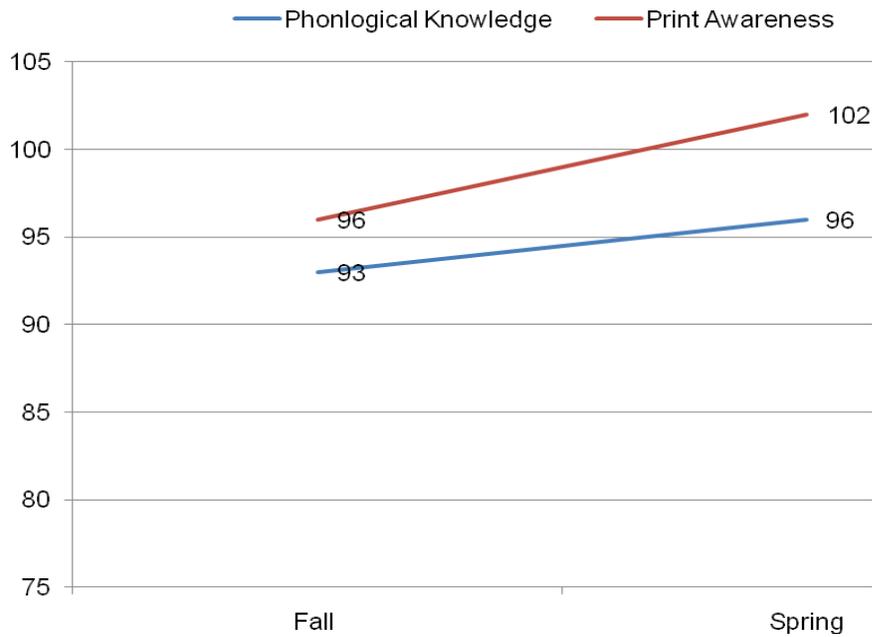
Figure 7. EOWPVT Average Standard Scores for Year 3



The graph depicts the significant upward trend in scores, as well as the significantly different starting and ending points in the kinderbound and non-kinderbound children's scores. This demonstrates that children's expressive vocabulary skills were increasing across the year; however at different rates for each of the groups (i.e., kinderbound and non-kinderbound). Non-kinderbound children started and ended the year with a significantly lower average standard score in comparison to kinderbound children. These findings vary from year 2, in which there was a significant main effect for kinderbound status, but not for time of assessment. However, during the first year of implementation, a significant interaction was found between age and time as well as main effects.

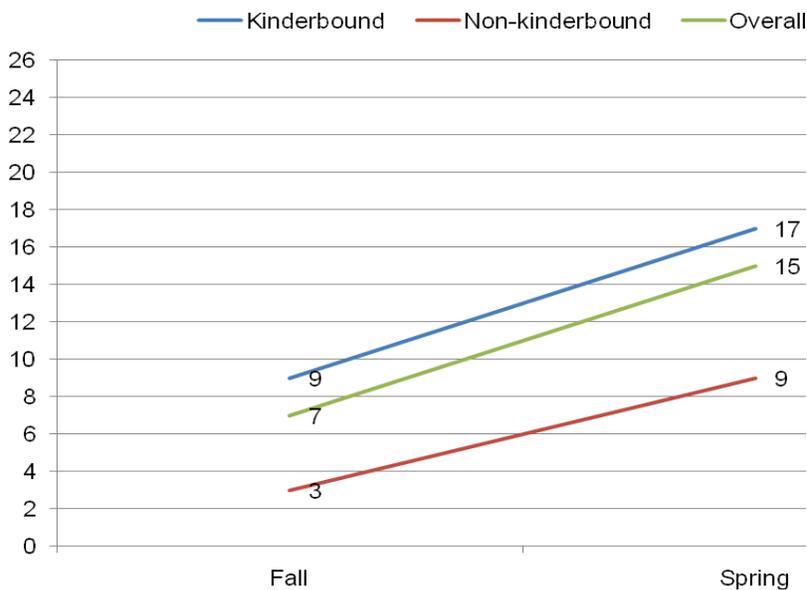
On the TOPEL, there was a significant increase only on the print awareness scores from the fall to spring ($F = 17.12, p < .00$); however, there was not a significant increase in children's phonological awareness scores from fall to spring ($F = 2.70, p = .102$). The TOPEL was only administered to children who were able to attend kindergarten the following year. This finding varies from the second year findings, in which significant increases were found for both phonological awareness and print knowledge on the TOPEL.

Figure 8. TOPEL Average Standard Scores for Year 3



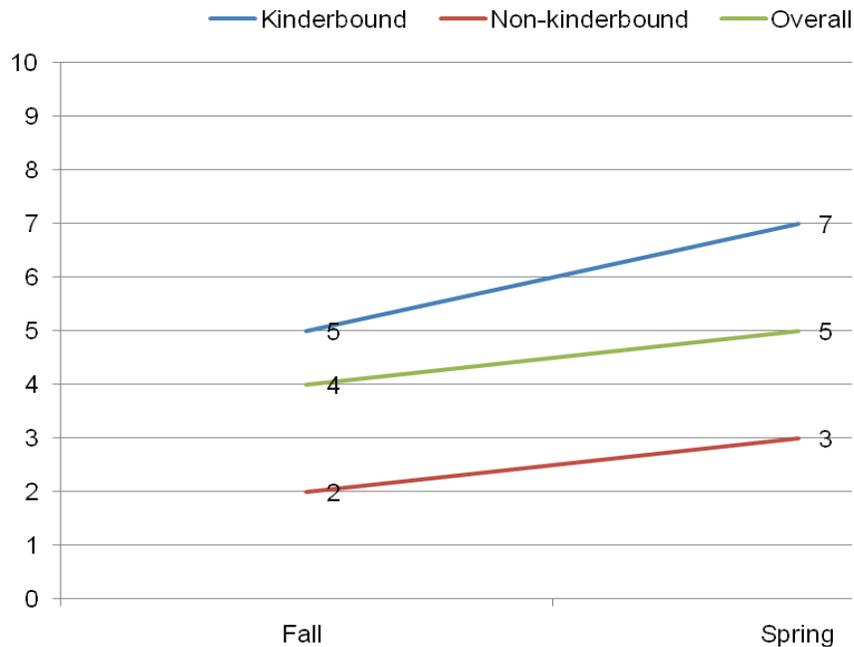
For the PALS Uppercase Letter Recognition, significant main effects were found for time ($F = 74.44, p < .00$) and kindergarten eligibility ($F = 76.29, p < .00$); however, a significant interaction was not found for time and kindergarten eligibility ($F = 2.61, p = .107$). This finding varies from year 2, since a significant interaction was present. It appears that the kinderbound increased at a higher rate in comparison to the non-kinderbound across the school year, as reflected in figure 9.

Figure 9. PALS Uppercase Letter Recognition Average Scores for Year 3



On the PALS print awareness, significant interaction, between time and kindergarten eligibility was found ($F = 4.03, p < .05$). The main effects were also significant. This finding is consistent with year 2 in which there was a significant interaction. Children in both age groups increased their print awareness skills across the year with significantly higher gains for kinderbound children.

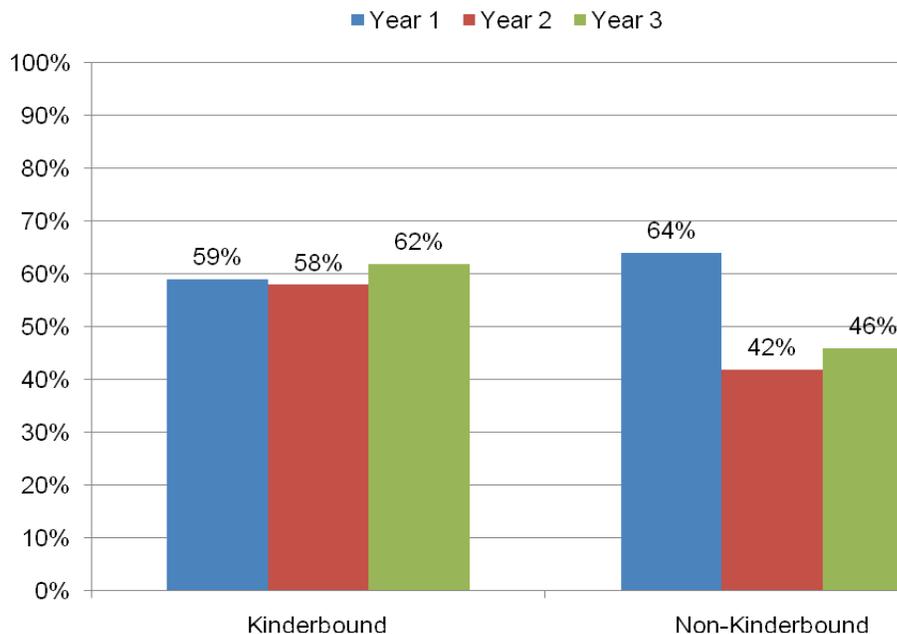
Figure 10. PALS Print Awareness Average Scores for Year 3



In addition to the ANOVAs, the U.S. Department of Education established the requirement to track the number of ERF children whose standard scores increased by at least 4 standard points⁴. This requirement was specific to the PPVT-III; however, the Bright Futures project considers this 4 standard point increase across the PPVT-III, EOWPVT, and TOPEL scores to demonstrate the potential program impact across the key areas of language and literacy development. Figure 11 presents the proportion of children whose standard score increased by at least 4 points across the study on the PPVT-III.

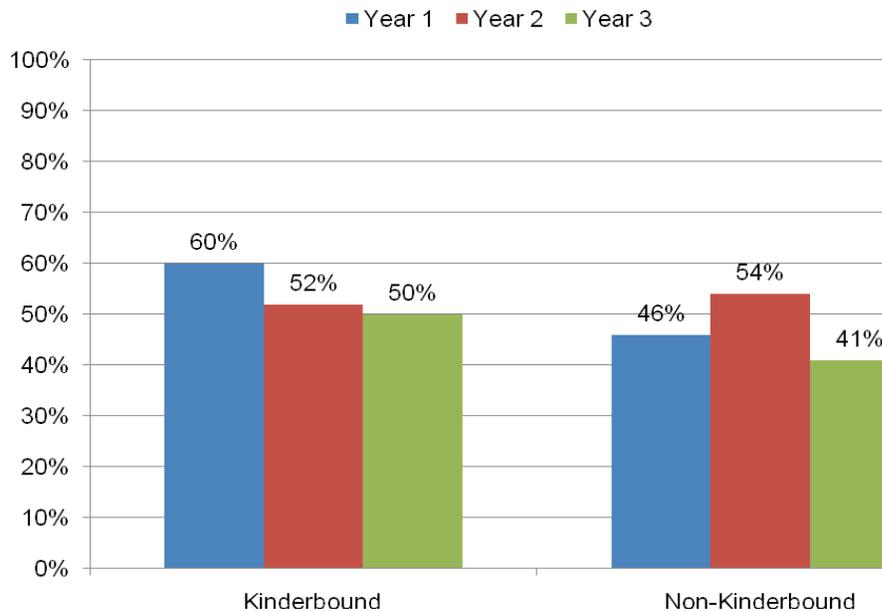
⁴ An increase of 4 standard points would reflect an effect size of approximately .25 with standard scores (assuming a standard deviation of 15).

Figure 11. Proportion of Children whose Standard Score increased by 4 or more points on the PPVT-III



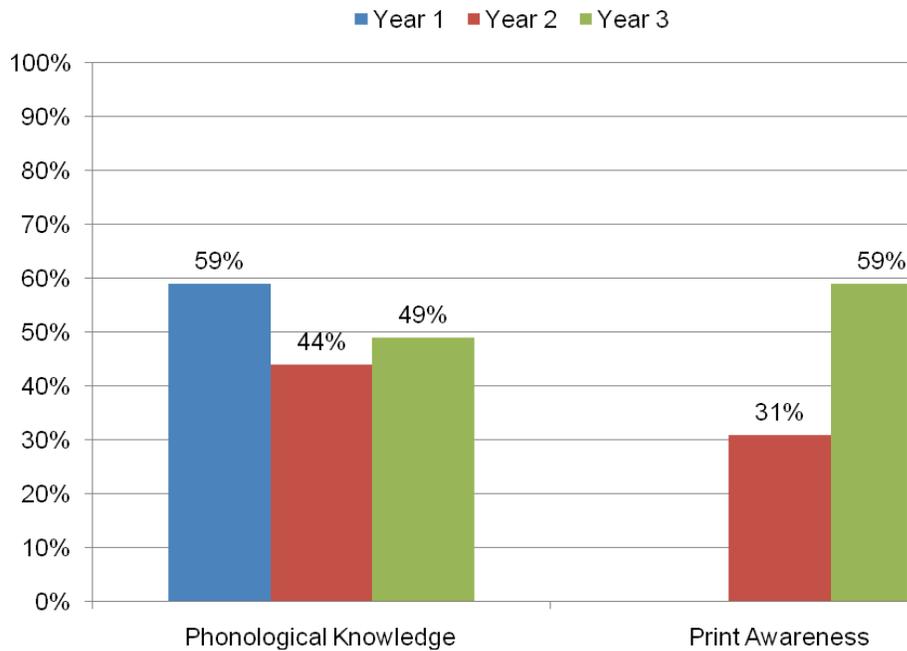
On the EOWPVT, 46 percent of ERF children increased their score by 4 standard points from fall to spring. Forty-one percent of the non-kinderbound children and 50 percent of kinderbound children advanced 4 standard points on their EOWPVT score in the spring. During the first year of implementation, 46 percent of the kinderbound children achieved this goal and 69 percent of non-kinderbound children. During the second year, a higher proportion of kinderbond children gained at least 4 standard points in EOWPVT scores in comparison to year 1; however, this was similar to the improvement found for kinderbound children in year 3. It appears that the proportion of non-kinderbound children was slightly higher for year 3, in comparison to year 2, but still lower than that observed in year 1. Figure 12 presents the proportions across the project years.

Figure 12. Proportion of Children whose Standard Score increased by 4 or more points on the EWOPVT



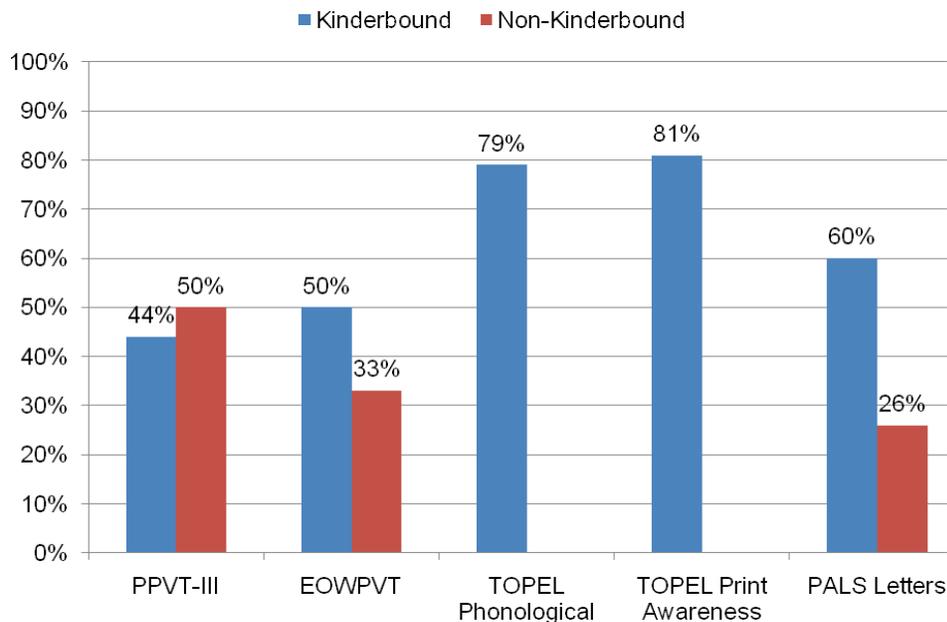
For the TOPEL phonological knowledge subtest, 49 percent of kinderbound children increased their scores by 4 standard points. Additionally, on the print awareness subtest, 59 percent of kinderbound children raised their score 4 standard points from fall to spring. During the first year of implementation, a higher proportion of children demonstrated significant gains on the phonological awareness subtest (59%) in comparison to the second year of implementation, while the proportion dipped in year 2 (44%). Additionally, the proportion of students increasing their Print Knowledge score by four points increased from year 2 (31%) to year 3 (59%).

Figure 13. Proportion of Children Whose Standard Score increased by 4 or more points on the TOPEL subtests



One of the goals established by the US Department of Education was having children earn a standard score of 85 or higher and being able to identify 19 or more uppercase letters during the spring, especially for kinderbound children. Figure 14 provides the percentage of kinderbound and non-kinderbound children who achieved the goal in the spring of year 3.

Figure 14. Proportion of Children Achieving U.S. Department of Education Standard Score Goal (85 or higher) in Year 3



As demonstrated in figure 14, non-kinderbound children were less likely to achieve the goal of a standardized score of 85 or higher or identify 19 or more letters correctly. While this group contains younger children, the standard score is based on the performance of children with the same chronological age. This indicates the ERF non-kinderbound children are tracking behind their same-age peers.

The proportion of kinderbound children who received standard scores of 85 or higher is lower, in comparison to the first two year of implementation, for both the PPVT-III. Forty-four percent for year 3 and 74 to 75 percent for years 1 and 2 had standard scores of 85 or higher. This suggests fewer kinderbound children were able to met age level expectations during the final year of the grant.

For the EOWPVT, the proportion of children achieving a standard score of 85 or higher was comparable to the other years of implementation (range of 47 to 52%). This suggests that approximately half of the Bright Futures children demonstrated an age appropriate ability on the measure of expressive language before moving into kindergarten.

Kinderbound children preformed slightly better on both subtests of the TOPEL, in comparison to the PPVT-III and EOWPVT. . During the first year 80 percent of children had a standard score of 85 or higher on both the Phonological Awareness and Print Knowledge; however, in Year 2, 65 percent achieved the goal on the Phonological Knowledge subtest and 76 percent on Print Awareness. In the third year of the project, 79 percent of the children earned an 85 or higher on phonological knowledge and 81 percent on the Print Awareness subtest.

In regards to letter recognition, 45 percent of the kinderbound children identified 19 or more letters on the spring assessment. Based on developmental expectations established by the PALS, all children should demonstrate the ability to identify at least 19 letters before entering kindergarten. Less than half of the Bright Futures children met this developmental expectation.

The Bright Futures program had significant impacts on children's receptive and expressive vocabulary, letter recognition, print awareness, and phonological skills during the third year of implementation. This demonstrates the positive impact of a literacy and language enriched environment, as well as a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum. While the results are significant, it is important to note that, based on proportions, the majority of children were not able to obtain standard scores within one standard deviation of the mean on the PPVT-III and EOWPVT, suggesting that children are still behind same-age peers, as they enter kindergarten and/or their second year of the ERF program. This is especially true to non-kinderbound children.

Parent Involvement

The Bright Futures continued supporting parent programs and involvement during the second year of implementation. An ERF parent liaison was hired between year one and year two with the responsibility of strengthening families as the primary educational resource and nurturer of their children's early language and literacy development. To facilitate this process, a SEDL consultant met with the parent liaison and developed a work plan highlighting key activities. These activities included: establishing a parent center at Wright Elementary School, sponsoring two family literacy nights, engaging community members in school activities, encouraging parents to attend school functions and observe classrooms, and educating parents on topics related to early language and literacy development.

Prior to the implementation of the parent involvement plan, the fall parent survey was sent to all ERF parents. Seventy-five percent of parents returned the survey. During the spring collection, 152 parents completed and returned the parent survey (62% response rate). The survey identified activities parents were already utilizing to encourage their child's development, as well as barriers to parent involvement at the schools. The main purpose of the survey was to describe parents' literacy activities with their children.

In the fall, the majority of parent had not participated in school activities such as volunteering, observing, helping with special events, and attending parent conferences (84%, 60%, 93%, and 77%, respectively). By spring, more parents reported participating in the previously mentioned activities; however, some activities had low levels of parent participation. For example, 47 percent of parents indicated they had not yet volunteered to help in their child's classroom, and 77 percent had not helped with field trips or other special events. In addition to the low level of participation in the classroom, 56 percent of parents indicated they had not visited the ERF parent center, 75 percent had not checked out a book from the ERF parent center, and 66 percent had not yet watched a video about the importance of sharing books with their child(ren).

In comparison to the fall, a higher proportion of parents were very satisfied with how well their child’s school was helping their child grow and develop, supporting their family, sharing books to read at home, and helping their child learn to read. Table 2 provides the frequency of responses for the fall and spring.

Table 2. Frequency of Parent Satisfaction with Their Child’s School

	Very Dissatisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Very Satisfied	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Helping child grow & develop	2%	2%	0%	0%	9%	9%	89%	89%
Being open to ideas and participation	1%	2%	1%	0%	14%	19%	84%	79%
Supporting & respecting family culture	1%	2%	1%	2%	9%	4%	89%	92%
Preparing child for kindergarten	1%	2%	0%	0%	10%	7%	89%	92%
Sharing information about child’s behavior at school	1%	2%	0%	0%	10%	5%	89%	93%
Helping child to read	1%	2%	0%	0%	13%	119%	86%	79%

The majority of parents in the spring were also very satisfied with the reading resources the school was providing and encouraging them to use the ERF parent center (70 and 75%, respectively).

In the fall, 39 percent of parents indicated they or someone in their family had read to their child every day at least once in the past week. However, in the spring 24 percent of parents reported reading to their child three or more times a week and 21 percent read to their child every day. In the fall, the majority of families (51%) had 1 to 10 children’s books at home and five percent had more than 50 books. By the spring, 12 percent of families had more than 50 children’s books at home and 42 percent had 1 to 10 books.

Based on parent report, in both the fall and spring, the most common forms of communication from teachers are letters sent home and informal discussion when they drop off or pick up their child from school. In addition, parents reported they found out about parent involvement activities through notes sent home with the child (71% fall and 79% spring).

The parent survey results were based on parent perception. In the fall, 60 percent of parents reported they were involved or very involved in their child's school and 92 percent wanted to be more involved. However, in the spring, 95 percent reported they were involved or very involved. Parents reported a higher level of involvement in their child's school in the spring, which is also reflected by the increase in participation by attending parent-teacher conferences, and observing classes. However, as mentioned previously, parents were still demonstrating low levels of involvement in other areas (i.e., volunteering to help in their child's classroom, and visiting the ERF parent center).

Parents were asked to identify barriers for their involvement in school activities. The most common barrier, for both fall and spring, was work/school/training schedule conflicts (62% and 69% respectively). Lack of transportation and lack of childcare were the other top reasons identified (26% and 22% respectively). Teachers were also asked to identify potential barriers to parent involvement during their interview. The most common reasons teachers identified were; schedule conflicts, lack of knowledge (both of activities and understanding the importance of involvement), and transportation.

Based on comparisons between the fall and spring surveys, parents were slightly more engaged in school activities (i.e., conferences, volunteering, and attending social events), as well as increasing literacy activities at home (i.e., number of children's books at home and frequency of reading to children) and more satisfied with their child's school. While these findings are encouraging, the increases are small and are not statistically significant.

Data-driven decision-making

A priority for the Bright Futures ERF project was to increase teachers' knowledge and use of data to drive classroom decision-making. However, during the third year of implementation, a stronger focus was placed on facilitating capacity building as the project neared the end of its final year. During the third year of the program, five data workshops were held to train teachers and paraprofessionals.

Data Workshops

In order to facilitate capacity building of teachers and paraprofessionals, data workshops focused on administration of the child assessments and other outcome measures. The data workshops were led by the ERF coordinator and/or the SEDL evaluator. Teachers were trained to TOPEL print knowledge subtest. In addition, information on the CLASS was presented to teachers to develop a clearer understanding of the measure and its use within the Bright Futures project. The number of participants ranged between 17 and 24 and the average response rate was 99 percent. The majority of participants at the data workshops were lead teachers (43 – 55%), as well as paraprofessionals (33 – 40%). In addition, principals, the superintendent, and ERF coaches also attended.

Almost all of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed the data workshops were useful and relevant (range of 92 to 96%). Ninety five percent agreed or strongly agreed the data workshops were a good use of their time. Additionally, almost all participants (99%) felt their comments and ideas were valued during the data workshops, and 96 percent agreed they were engaged during the session. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents rated the data workshops as being high to very high quality.

The goals across the data workshop trainings were similar in scope, to build skills and knowledge, create a “world class education” for all MPSD students, allow participants to share what they learned and meet participant expectations. Based on the ratings received, these goals were met across the trainings almost completely to a great deal (range from 94 to 99 %).

Based on teacher interview information, all of the teachers indicated they had attended at least one of the data workshops. While all of the teachers described the information gained from data as “helpful,” nine of them provided specific examples of applying the data to make planning and instructional decisions. For instance one teacher indicated she “...used the data to form small groups and identify children who needed more individualized assistance.” Another used the data to “...rearrange my room provide more materials based on the data.”

Summary

The Bright Futures project continued to provide enriched literacy and language environments for their children by providing teachers with the resources, materials, and high quality professional development opportunities. Consistent support was provided to teachers through the ERF coaches, ERF coordinator, and the SEDL program consultants. Children, on average, have demonstrated the benefits of participating in the program through significant gains from fall to spring in their PPVT-III, PALS, and TOPEL scores.

Children enrolled in the ERF program demonstrated statistically significant gains, across the year, in their receptive vocabulary skills on PPVT-III, and letter recognition and print awareness on the PALS. Children who were eligible for kindergarten the following year also demonstrated significant improvements in their print knowledge scores on the TOPEL. Across all children, there was not a significant impact on expressive vocabulary scores from fall to spring. Another trend in the findings on child outcomes was strong gains in these outcomes generally, particularly for kinder bound children, but increasingly less so for non-kinderbound children in later years of the project.

The focus of the project, as it entered the final year of funding, broadened during the third year of implementation to include capacity building. Teachers were trained to administer child assessments and plans were put into place to ensure coaching support continued for Parish teachers. Teachers and paraprofessionals consistently rated the training and support provided during the third year of implementation as high quality. In addition, the trainings were viewed as useful and relevant to their positions and classroom instruction. In comparison to the first and second year, coaches have moved beyond building relationships with their teachers and into the next level of coaching by providing modeling opportunities, engaging in feedback sessions with teachers, and scheduling meetings/conferences with teachers and paraprofessionals.

The ELLCO checklist demonstrated that teachers had created a language and literacy enriched environment for their children. Materials were provided to children to encourage their interest in writing and early literacy development. The instructional portion of the ELLCO suggests the ERF teaching teams are providing a basic environment for children. In other words, while they are engaging children opportunities are being missed or not maximized to encourage children's literacy and language skills. For instance, not engaging children in meaningful conversations during center time or meal times. CLASS findings demonstrated that teachers were similar to the typical preschool teachers on the emotional support and classroom organization. However, the Bright Futures teachers were rated much lower than expected on the instructional support domain, which focuses on using language enriched discussions to enhance children's cognitive development. This suggests that a stronger focus needs to be placed on engaging children in cognitively meaningful activities and moving beyond casual conversations during play.

In regards to parent involvement, the ERF parent liaison maintained the parent center and encouraged parents to engage their children through a reading program (Read Together, Talk Together). Based on the parent survey, more parents reported they

utilized the ERF parent resource center in the spring and enjoyed checking out books and videos. Parents also reported higher participation levels with school and classroom activities (i.e., observing classes, helping with special events, and attending parent-teacher conferences). Additionally, parents reported higher levels of satisfaction with how well their child's school was supporting their child's language and literacy skills during their preschool experience. At the end of year 3, parents reported reading to their child more frequently and there were more children's books in their home.

Recommendations for maintaining support for teachers and sustaining the program include:

- Continue to provide focused, high quality professional development opportunities highlighting the five key areas of early literacy and language development.
- Begin to determine level of fidelity of implementation for instruction within each classroom, perhaps with the help of the IC developed during this project.
- Provide instructional support by engaging coaches and/or lead teachers to observe teachers and provide feedback on level of implementation and instructional quality.
- Move focus of teachers beyond resources and materials to instructional quality and fidelity.
- Maintain the enriched literacy and language environment throughout the school year. Potentially have district or school staff perform the ELLCO Checklist at random during each month to ensure teacher maintain their classroom environment.
- Continue to encourage parents to utilize the ERF parent center and participate in school activities.
- Track children's progress on key outcomes (i.e., receptive vocabulary, letter recognition and print awareness) across the year to determine impact on children's language and literacy development.
- Focus on providing data to teachers and administrators to inform and use to shape classroom practices, instructional strategies, and program decision-making.

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