



Project EASE Study

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Annotation:

This is a study of a year-long project, Early Access to Success in Education (EASE) in Minnesota, to help parents develop their young children's literacy skills. This project offers parent education sessions, parent-child activities at school, and book-centered activities at home. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the parent training and assesses the project's effect on children's language and literacy abilities over a one-year period. In White Bear Lake School District, 248 kindergarten students and their families from four schools took part in the study - 177 children in eight classes participated in Project EASE and 71 students in three classes formed a control group. The district is a middle-income, mostly European American suburb. The schools in the study, however, have the highest percentages of low-income families in the district (about 20%). Parent training is organized into five one-month units each with a different theme. A trained educator leads a coaching session with parents. Then teachers send home a set of structured activities for parents to do with their children. Children whose families engaged in both at-school and at-home activities of Project EASE made significantly greater gains in language scores than comparison group children. Data about literacy support at home were collected from parents of both Project EASE and the control group students. A battery of language and literacy pre- and post-tests was administered to 177 Project EASE students and to 71 students in the control group at four schools. Researchers examined progress in three skill areas: vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in storytelling. They controlled for variation in literacy skills at the start of the project, and then examined the influence of the at-home activities on student gains. Finally, they used regression analysis to examine the impact of attendance and at-home book activities on the results for the EASE group. The solid methodology used in this study provides strong evidence that efforts by schools to provide early academic support to students and parents may improve literacy skills and achievement. The students in this study were attending generally good schools and were not particularly at risk, which may limit the applicability of these findings in other settings. Nonetheless, the authors state that replication studies underway in urban, high poverty centers show early promise.

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