Educare Schools as a Platform for Bridging the Word Gap

Acceleration Project Partnership

Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, Educare Kansas City, Educare West DuPage and Educare Tulsa Kendall-Whittier

Project Overview

This project brings together three Educare Schools to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing an evidence-based language intervention, the Promoting Communication Strategies PC TALK. The PC TALK intervention is designed to build the capacity of educators and parents to increase and enhance the language learning opportunities of young children. The intervention is embedded into randomly selected Educare classrooms in Kansas City KS (KC) and West DuPage IL (WDP) and at Educare Tulsa, Kendall-Whittier, the intervention is delivered during parent meetings to extend Talking is Teaching, Too Small to Fail initiative.

The Word Gap

Compelling evidence exists that before children start preschool, their early language experiences can shape their future in ways that can have a profound impact. Disparities observed in the quality and quantity of talk that children from different socioeconomic backgrounds hear before age 4 represent an estimated gap of over 30 million words in experience with language (Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003).

Studies, including the EHS National evaluation study, have shown that differences in children’s earliest language experience impact school readiness and early literacy (ACF, 2010; Love, 2005; Pan, Rowe et al. 2005; Walker, Greenwood, Hart & Carta, 1994).

Growing recognition of the importance of early language development for later social behavior, school readiness, and literacy has resulted in increased attention toward maximizing the language learning opportunities that children growing up in low SES environments experience.

Promoting Communication Strategies

- Arranging the Environment: Designing areas to promote interaction and communication
- Following a Child’s Lead: Noticing and talking about the child’s interests, activities, or materials
- Commenting/Labeling: Describing child/adult actions
- Imitating and Expanding: Repeating child’s vocalizations and/or adding new information
- Time Delay/Fill in the Blank: Giving the child a chance to fill in content after pausing during familiar phrase, book or song
- Positive Attention/Praise: Providing feedback for child communication
- Providing Choices: Giving the child a chance to say what he or she wants

Expected Outcomes

- Test a model for how Educare can serve as a platform for bridging the word gap.
- Provide information and lessons learned as to how teachers in Educare schools can embed PC TALK into their ongoing curriculum and activities to increase instructional support for language learning.
- Document continuity between classroom to home support for language learning and teachers’/parents’ intervention use.
- Document intervention implementation with parents attending community initiatives.
- Share this information across the ELN and with community organizations to ensure findings inform efforts to bridge the word gap nationwide.

Participants and Methods

- KC Educare: 8 participating classrooms and 32 intervention children.
- Tulsa Educare 1: 40 to 60 families will receive the intervention during monthly group parent meetings.

Intervention Description

- Professional development and coaching—coach teachers, staff, and evaluators about the PC TALK intervention. Coaches and Master Teachers support implementation of the intervention throughout the duration of the study.
- Implement the PC TALK strategies in WDP and KC Educare teachers embed intervention strategies into daily classroom routines and curriculum and also share the intervention with parents. In Tulsa, PC TALK is shared with parents during monthly parent meetings by Community Engagement Staff.
- Document fidelity of intervention delivery and child communication—Use of an observation tool to measure fidelity implementation and child communication (PCObs app). Coaches, teachers and parents complete checklists documenting their use of the intervention (weekly). Graphs and reports are generated and shared to provide teachers and parents with feedback about intervention use.
- Child outcomes—Progress monitoring using the ECI IGDI measure. Educare evaluates measures of language and classroom quality (PLS, PPVT, CLASS, ITERS and ECERS, and demographics).

Project Staff and Acknowledgements

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Educate KC: Heather Schrotberger, Jessica Haremza, Kell Roehr, & Kate Wilkendt.
Educate West DuPage, IL: Eugenie Matula, Susan Kuehl, Karen Arreola, Marcia Sweeten, & Mark Nagasawa
Educate Tulsa Kendall-Whittier, OK: Caren Calhoun, Nicole Kirkland, Amy Emerson, Diane Horn, Shannon Guzz, Blanca Gonzalez, Lash Miranda, Imelda Galvez, Abby Lehman, Andrea Amaya, Lucy Guezman with the George Kaiser Family Foundation and The Opportunity Institute, Too Small to Fail

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