



Teacher Intervention Supporting Children's Talk and Writing Through Play

❖ What you need to know

Young children's early writing takes the form of scribbles, marks, drawings, letter-like forms and conventional letters and words. It is important for children to see that writing is a meaningful part of everyday life. Teacher participation in play contexts can support children's oral language and literacy.

❖ Why this research is important

In an era of large-scale literacy tests, there is pressure on teachers at all levels to limit the teaching of writing to developing measurable literacy skills, rather than exploring literacy practices within a wide range of social contexts. Additionally, teachers often report feeling uncertain about how to encourage and scaffold children's talk in classrooms. This research offers specific, classroom-based ways to address these concerns.

❖ How this research was conducted

Teachers video-recorded their interactions with children in play contexts involving some form of writing. Teachers and university researchers analyzed ways in which teachers supported children's language and learning, and considered possible alternatives.

❖ What the researcher found

Dramatic play centers (e.g., dress-up center and mailbox center) provided motivational and authentic contexts for children to explore what they could do with talk and writing in everyday social contexts. Teachers supported students' language learning by posing interesting problems, encouraging children to consider possible solutions, modeling the use of more complex language, and introducing vocabulary in context. Teachers also modeled ways in which writing could be used in everyday life and provided materials and contexts for children to recognize and try out authentic writing practices.

❖ How this research can be used

Teachers can participate in children's dramatic play to support children's language and writing. They can show how language and print can be used in the wide range of social contexts that are part of everyday life. Teachers can model vocabulary, sentence structure, and ways to create written texts for a range of purposes. They can build on children's cultural knowledge from their lives outside of school to support children's conceptual learning, as well.

Keywords: play, oral language, early writing, vocabulary development, teacher intervention

Publications based on the research

- Peterson, S.S. (2015). Dramatic play supports children's writing in kindergarten and grade one. *Michigan Reading Journal*, 48(1), 44-48.
- Peterson, S.S., & Greenberg, J. (2017). Teacher intervention to support oral language and literacy in dramatic play contexts. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*, 5(1), 10-23.
- Peterson, S.S., & Portier, C. (2016). Teaching vocabulary and writing in kindergarten through dramatic play centers. *Colorado Reading Journal*, 27, 25-32.