

Title: 2023 Literacy Outcomes Study

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References:

1. Imac M. Zambrana, Eric Dearing, Ane Nærde & Henrik D. Zachrisson (2015): Time in Early Childhood Education and Care and language competence in Norwegian four-year-old girls and boys, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, DOI:10.1080/1350293X.2015.1035538

Summary

The pivotal role of early literacy and language acquisition in the early years has been extensively documented and supported by a large body of research and data. This crucial period, spanning from birth to three years old, is when children's literacy and language skills rapidly develop. Positive early language experiences can have a beneficial impact on other areas of development, strengthening cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, these experiences aid children socially and emotionally as they learn to communicate and express themselves with both adults and peers. From birth, children quickly grasp the concept that they can communicate with adults through sounds like crying or laughing, as well as through simple gestures and expressions. They also begin to develop an awareness of prints and writing, understanding the connection between printed words and spoken language.

As more children spend the majority of their time in preschool settings, educators play a crucial role in developing programs that not only establish a strong foundation for core skills but also foster a love for language, and equip children with necessary communicative skills to navigate the world around them. Preschools recognise that foundational skills should focus on developing children's understanding and working knowledge of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency.

In 2023, it was found that children who enrolled with MFS in infant care performed significantly better on these foundational skills than those who joined later. These children were assessed by their teachers for grapheme-phoneme correspondence, reading, and writing. Those who joined the infant or toddler program were observed to have higher grapheme-phoneme correspondence scores, and had a greater proportion of children reading and writing at higher levels. Additionally, a significant relationship was found between literacy outcomes and attendance rate, with children who attended school regularly receiving higher grapheme-phoneme scores than those who did not attend regularly.

Similarly, a study conducted in Norway found that children who spent more time in early childhood settings had better language skills at four years old. These findings support the results of the literacy outcomes and provide evidence that early enrollment may benefit children's literacy and language

development. Spending more time in high-quality early childhood settings may lead to better language competence.

Early enrollment in preschools provides benefits through a nurturing environment and rich language interactions with peers and teachers. Preschools dedicate time to literacy activities such as storytime, letter recognition, and phonics practice. Teachers also curate engaging activities that make learning enjoyable and foster a positive association with literacy. Additionally, children are constantly surrounded by peers and educators engaged in conversation, storytelling, and songs, exposing them to diverse language patterns and vocabulary, which stimulates early language acquisition and comprehension.

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