

Supporting Young Emergent Multilingual Learners in Prekindergarten Classrooms: Policy Implications

Authors : Tiedan Huang, Chun Zhang, Caitlin Coe

Abstract : This study investigated the quality of instructional support for young Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs) in 50 Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) classroom in New York City (NYC). This is one of the first empirical studies examining the instructional support for this student population. We collected data using a mixed method of structured observations of teacher-child interactions in 50 classrooms, and surveys and interviews with program leaders and the teaching teams. We found that NYC's UPK classrooms offered warm and supportive environments for EMLs. Nevertheless, in general, instructional support was relatively low. This study identified large mindset, knowledge, and practice gaps—and a real opportunity—among NYC early childhood professionals, specifically in the areas of providing adequate instructional and linguistic support for EMLs as well as partnering with families in capturing their cultural and home literacy assets. Consistent, rigorous, and meaningful use of data is necessary to support both EMLs' language and literacy development and teachers'/leaders' professional development.

Keywords : high quality instruction, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, professional development, workforce development

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