

Teaching Young Children Social and Emotional Learning through Shared Book Reading: Project GROW

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Abstract : Background and Significance Globally far too many students read below grade level; thus improving literacy outcomes is vital. Research suggests that non-cognitive factors, including Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) are linked to success in literacy outcomes. Converging evidence exists that early interventions are more effective than later remediation; therefore teachers need strategies to support early literacy while developing students' SEL and their vocabulary, or language, for learning. This presentation describe findings from a US federally-funded project that trained teachers to provide an evidence-based read-aloud program for young children, using commercially available books with multicultural characters and themes to help their students "GROW". The five GROW SEL themes include: "I can name my feelings", "I can learn from my mistakes", "I can persist", "I can be kind to myself and others", and "I can work toward and achieve goals". Examples of GROW vocabulary (from over 100 words taught across the 5 units) include: emotions, improve, resilient, cooperate, accomplish, responsible, compassion, adapt, achieve, analyze. Methodology This study used a mixed methods research design, with qualitative methods to describe data from teacher feedback surveys (regarding satisfaction, feasibility), observations of fidelity of implementation, and with quantitative methods to assess the effect sizes for student vocabulary growth. GROW Intervention and Teacher Training Procedures Researchers trained classroom teachers to implement GROW. Each thematic unit included four books, vocabulary cards with images of the vocabulary words, and scripted lessons. Teacher training included online and in-person training; researchers incorporated virtual reality videos of instructors with child avatars to model lessons. Classroom teachers provided 2-3 20 min lessons per week ranging from short-term (8 weeks) to longer-term trials for up to 16 weeks. Setting and Participants The setting for the study included two large urban charter schools in the South. Data was collected across two years; during the first year, participants included 7 kindergarten teachers and 108 and the second year involved an additional set of 5 kindergarten and first grade teachers and 65 students. Initial Findings The initial qualitative findings indicate teachers reported the lessons to be feasible to implement and they reported that students enjoyed the books. Teachers found the vocabulary words to be challenging and important. They were able to implement lessons with fidelity. Quantitative analyses of growth for each taught word suggest that students' growth on taught words ranged from large ($ES = .75$) to small ($<.20$). Researchers will contrast the effects for more and less successful books within the GROW units. Discussion and Conclusion It is feasible for teachers of young students to effectively teach SEL vocabulary and themes during shared book reading. Teachers and students enjoyed the books and students demonstrated growth on taught vocabulary. Researchers will discuss implications of the study and about the GROW program for researchers in learning sciences, will describe some limitations about research designs that are inherent in school-based research partnerships, and will provide some suggested directions for future research and practice.

Keywords : early literacy, learning science, language and vocabulary, social and emotional learning, multi-cultural

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