

Project Abstract

(1) Title: Project Words of Oral Reading and Language Development (WORLD)

(2) RFA Goal: Project WORLD addresses **Goal 2** of the IES Reading Comprehension and Reading Scale-up Research Grants (NCER-05-01) competition to provide support for the development of interventions that address specific sources of reading comprehension difficulties especially among at-risk populations from low-income backgrounds and/or are racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority groups that have underachieved academically. This proposal responds to two educational problems: (1) the causes and correlates of reading comprehension difficulties among disadvantaged children emerge long before their entry into school, and (2) children from low-income and linguistically diverse backgrounds will require preschool instructional programs that accelerate the rate and levels of word and world knowledge to effectively close the vocabulary and comprehension gap.

(3) Potential Contribution: We will develop and evaluate a preschool curricular program that builds on existing research evidence in shared book reading, vocabulary development, and instructional design to enhance preschool children's knowledge of words and concepts necessary for later reading comprehension. The program (a) integrates preschool and home learning, (b) narrative and informational text, and (c) word and world knowledge to bridge the vocabulary and comprehension gap that exists for many disadvantaged children. The major contributions of this project will be a validated prototype curriculum that has been developed and field tested by practitioners in the real-world contexts of preschools and homes. A primary contribution of this project is a preschool curriculum that optimizes the linkage of preschool and home learning among children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. To accomplish this goal, we will develop and evaluate the program in English and Spanish. Further contributions of this project include specification of the (a) design and delivery features that can be effectively implemented by preschool teachers, (b) the impact of the intervention on student language comprehension, and whether there a differential impact based on primary language, (c) determination of differential impact of intervention based on student status at entry to preschool, (d) student engagement and participation features during the intervention that predict learning outcomes, and (e) the impact of parent involvement on student oral language development in consort with teacher impact.

(3) Participants: Three essential groups will be involved in this project: teacher/researchers who will pilot, field test, and provide input on feasibility and effectiveness of the program, preschool children from low-income and diverse linguistic groups, and parents of participating children. We will work with a total of 20 preschool classrooms with 10 students per classroom for a total of 200 preschool students located in school- and center-based classrooms from Bryan Independent School District (BISD). These students are overwhelmingly considered economically disadvantaged (60%) with a large percentage being Hispanic (38%).

(4) Proposed Research Methods: In year 1 we used a *design experiment* to systematically develop and formatively refine the Preschool and Home English versions of the intervention through observations and analysis. In years 2 and 3 we will randomly assign preschool teachers (n=20) to experimental (n= 12) or control (n=8) conditions in field trials of the English and subsequently the Spanish interventions, respectively.

(5) Intervention: The WORLD intervention offers a carefully selected and sequenced series of thematic read-alouds that build from basic word and world knowledge to detailed discussions within the context of narrative and informational texts using conspicuous strategies, scaffolded curricular design, and strategic integration of vocabulary and cumulatively review.