

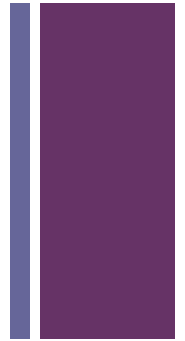
Supporting Evidence-Based Early Literacy Development Through Home-Based Projects: A Collaborative Research Study

DEC 2012

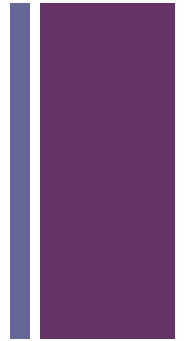


+ Children's School Success Plus (CSS+)

- A Goal 2 IES Development Grant (Horn, Palmer, Lieber, & Butera, 2010)
- Refining an integrated preschool curriculum (CSS) so that activities now meet principles of universal design for learning (UDL) and provides a framework of individualized supports for children at-risk or diagnosed with disabilities
- Curriculum integrates a variety of evidence-based strategies and individual curricula across different subjects including literacy, science, math, and social-emotional development

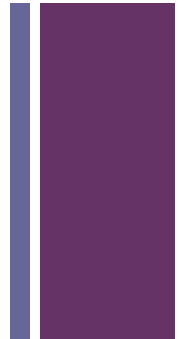


+ CSS+ Collaborators



- Eva Horn, Susan Palmer, Gretchen Jensen, Audra Classen, and Caryn Bulter, University of Kansas
- Joan Lieber and Debra Drang, University of Maryland
- Gretchen Butera, Alina Mihai, Jill Clay, and Potheini Vaiouli, Indiana University
- Jean Kang, University of North Carolina Greensboro
- Amber Friesen, San Francisco State University

+ Children's School Success Plus (CSS+)



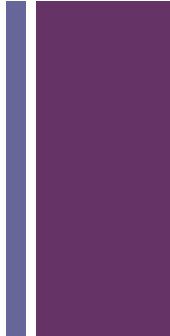
- Three early education sites (Maryland, Indiana, and Kansas) with four teachers at each (12 total)
- Over three years, the CSS+ project will:
 - Gather feedback from the teachers regarding the curriculum and improve/redesign components to address UDL, individualization, and usability (Year 1).
 - Observe and gather feedback from teachers as they try curriculum activities , and continue to refine the curriculum (Year 2).
 - Assess the impact of the curriculum specifically with children who have diagnosed disabilities (Year 3).
- **As part of this work, we also sought to find a way to meaningfully engage families in the curriculum and support early literacy development**

+ Early Literacy Development

- Early literacy skills acquired before the first grade remain highly predictive of later school achievement (Duncan et al., 2007, National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).
- Growing understanding of foundational early literacy skills (Goldstein, 2010; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). These skills include:
 - **Code-based skills** including alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness
 - **Meaning – focused skills** including a broad range of oral language skills (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, word knowledge)



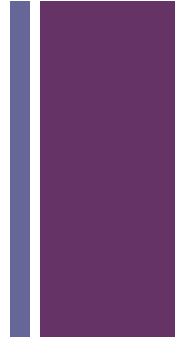
+ The Importance of the Family in Early Literacy Development



- Early literacy development can be viewed on a continuum that begins at a very young age (Teale & Sulzby, 1986)
- For many children, the family and home environment is a primary influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
- Children can enter early childhood setting with a diverse set of literacy skills, in part due to the type of literacy used in their home environment (e.g. Heath, 1982, Purcell-Gates, 1995)



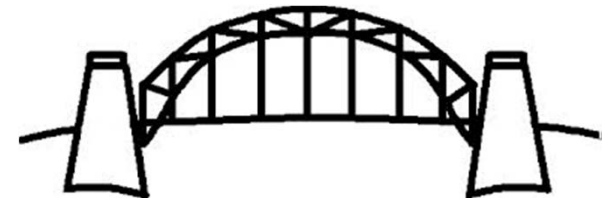
+ Children At-Risk for Early Literacy Development



- Some children are at higher risk for failure in acquiring important early literacy skills (e.g. Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; NELP, 2008). These children may:
 - Be diagnosed with developmental delays/disabilities
 - Live in low socio-economic situations
 - Be acquiring English skills
 - Have been exposed to different literacy practices in their home/community than those emphasized in the early education setting.

+ Engaging Families in Early Literacy Interventions

- Instead of simply training families to replicate school-like behaviors, effective and meaningful interventions need to understand how a family views and uses literacy within the home (e.g. Evans, Fox, Cremaso, & McKinnon, 2004; Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, & Shapiro, 2006)
- The information gathered from families can then used to inform classroom practices, and collaboration between home and school (e.g. Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999)



+ Understanding Families' Perspectives on Early Literacy

- We undertook a mixed method study to examine families' early literacy beliefs and practices within one of the CSS+ sites (Friesen, 2011).
- All families were given the opportunity to complete a Family Literacy Survey that collected both Likert scale and open-ended responses (89% response rate, 213 surveys collected)
- Case studies were completed with three families that included interviews and participant-produced photographs.



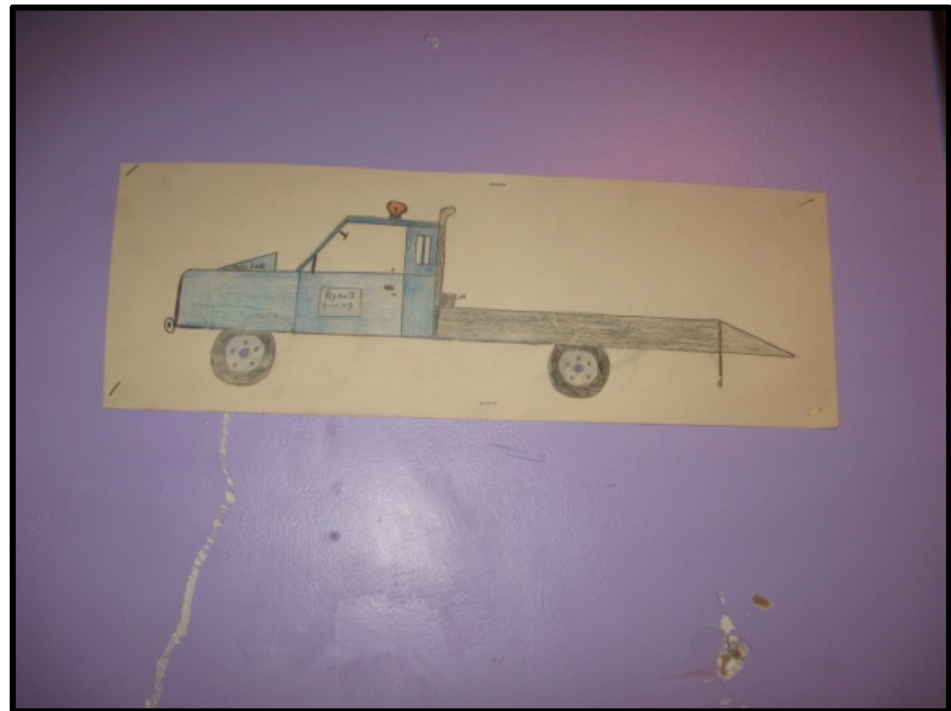
13. Develop confidence to guess words from pictures or topics

"I think this word says sunshine because of the picture!"



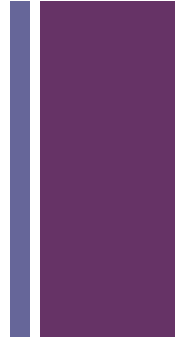
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
none little unsure some very

An example of a Likert Scale question on the Family Literacy Survey



An example of a photograph one of the case study family members took to illustrate literacy in their home.

+ Understanding Families' Perspectives on Early Literacy

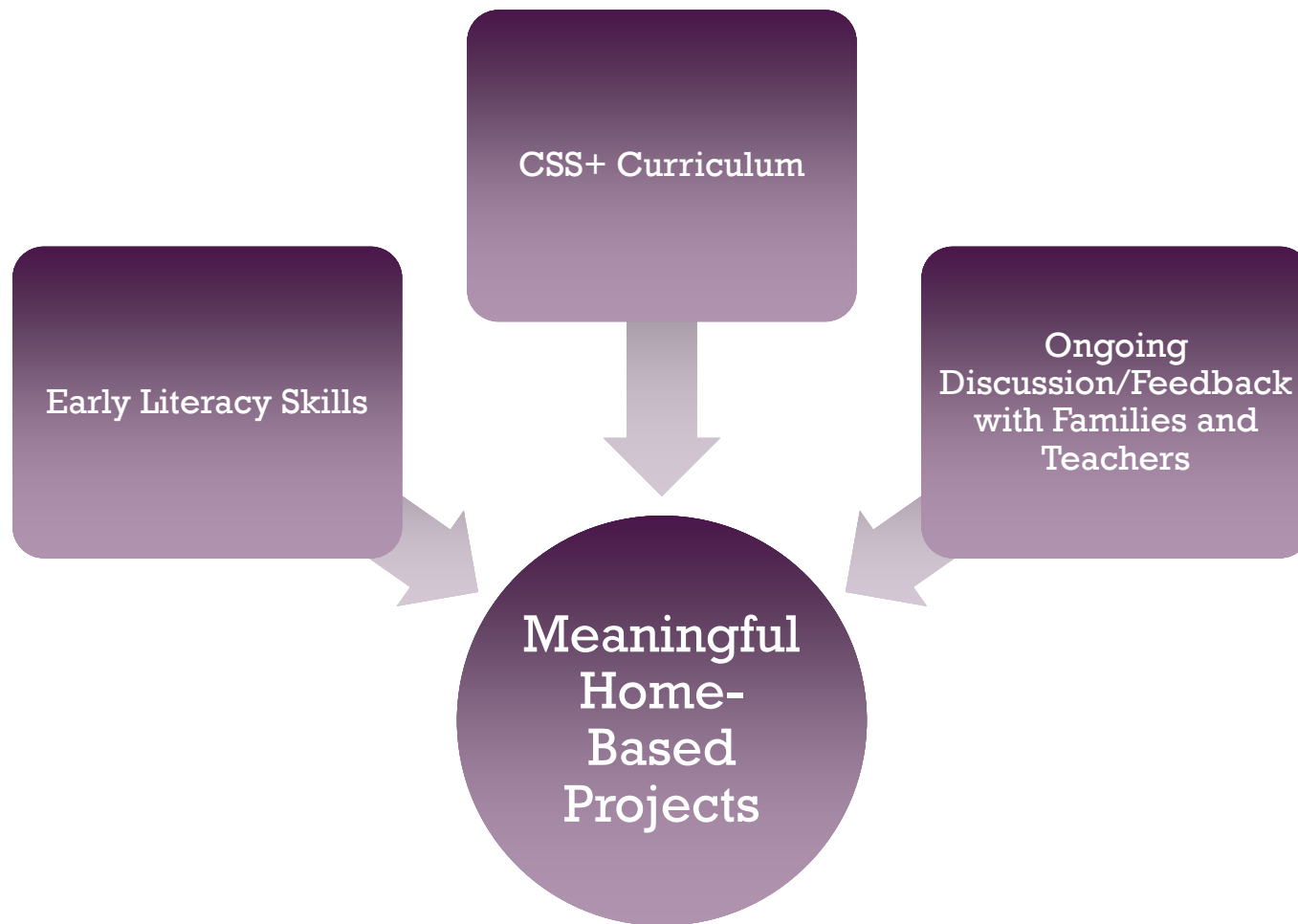


Key findings:

- Families wanted their children to learn everything they could but were unsure how they could specifically support early literacy development
- There was little recognition of their influence and/or potential of existing home practices
- Head Start was viewed as the setting where early literacy development would occur
- Families were dealing with real challenges within their homes that often associated with poverty and disability.

+ Goals of Home-Based Projects

- Using these findings as a foundation, we wanted the home-based literacy projects to include the following:



+ Ongoing Discussions With Teachers

- Four Head Start teachers participated in this project
- As a group, the teachers participated in a brainstorm about the projects at three different times throughout the year (August, February, and May)
- Teachers were formally interviewed individually at two different times of the year. Further, many informal discussions occurred and were summarized in field notes
- The teachers also discussed the projects with each of their families at two different times in the year (conferences) and shared what they found.
- Weekly observations in the class as part of the CSS+ project provided opportunities to see the projects coming back and displayed.

+ Ongoing Feedback from Families

- Approximately 135 families participated in the home-based projects at this CSS+ site
- For each project, families were asked to provide feedback using a simple feedback form
- Families had the opportunity to discuss the projects with the teachers during their conferences
- Six family members were interviewed at the end of the year to understand their experiences with the projects and how they would make them better.

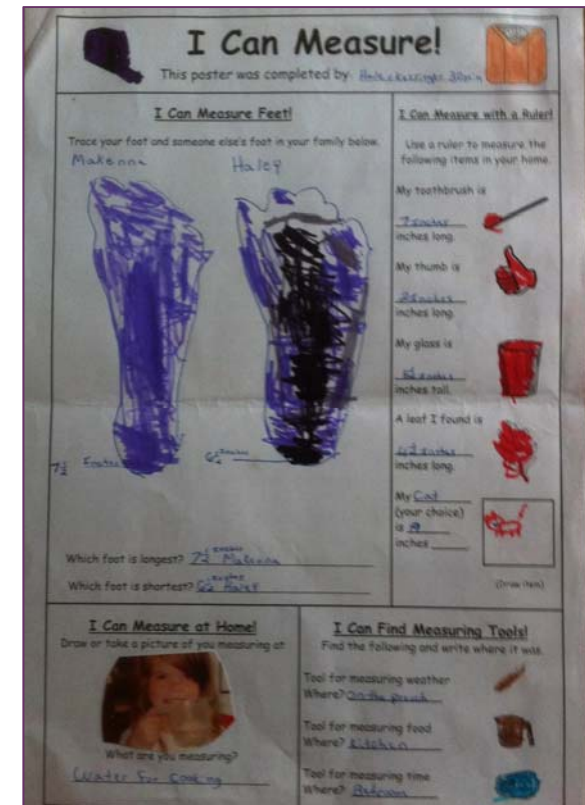


+ Overview of Home-Based Projects

- Eight home-based projects designed and used by families throughout the 2011-12 school year

- Projects included:

- I Can Measure!
- I Can Talk About Feelings!
- I Can Cook!
- I Can Make Oobleck!
- I Can Calm Down!
- I Can Make Snow!
- I Can Go on a Listening Walk
- I Can Tell You What I Have Learned!

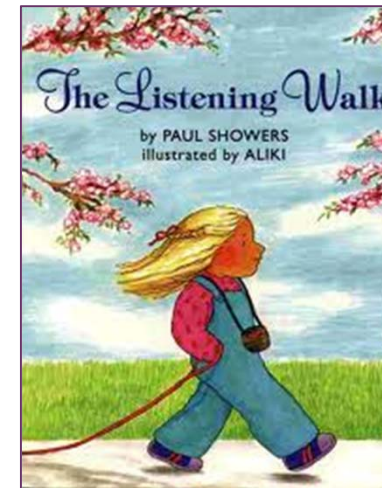


+ A Closer Look at the Projects...

I Can Go On A Listening Walk! Project



In the classroom, children were learning about neighborhood habitats and had read a book called, *The Listening Walk*.



As one of the project options, families were encouraged to go on a walk and listen to the sounds they hear.



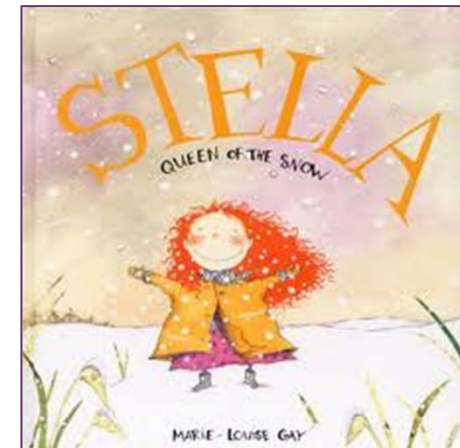
The project also emphasized listening to sounds during their walk.

+ A Closer Look at the Projects...

I Can Make Snow! Project



In the classroom, children were learning about weather and had read a book called, *Stella, Queen of the Snow*.



As one of the project options, families were encouraged to “make snow” using the insta-snow that was provided.



The project emphasized listening to different compound words that begin with snow (e.g. snowball, snowflake)

+ A Closer Look at the Projects...

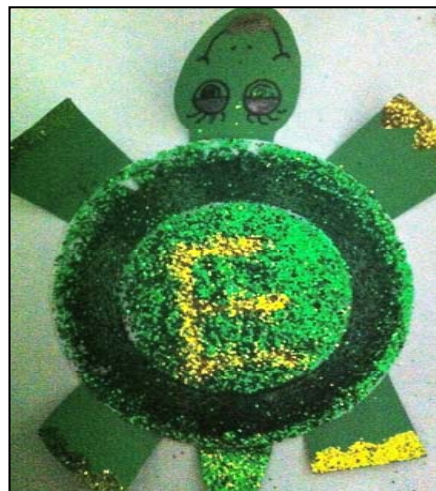
I Can Calm Down! Project



In the classroom, children were learning about ways to calm down when they are angry. They had read the book *Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think*.



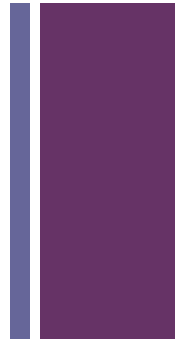
As one of the project options, families were encouraged to practice calming down by tucking into their shells and to create their own turtle.



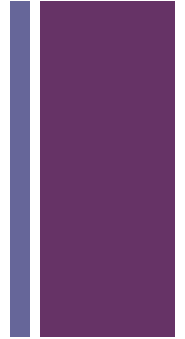
The project also emphasized listening to feeling sounds (e.g. laughing, crying, stomping) and rhyming words (e.g. glad, sad, mad)

+ Lessons Learned

- Families appreciated the opportunity to spend time with their child and see what they were learning about at school.
- The projects that were best received by the families and teachers were hands-on projects.
- While we included early literacy skills in each project, we know we can be more sequential and clear in how we do this.
- We can continue to think of ways to meaningful engage families' in the classroom and acknowledge their expertise.



+ What We Are Doing Now...



- Revised projects to ensure that they are all:
 - Hand-on projects
 - More comprehensive of our curriculum themes (added two more projects)
 - Emphasize early literacy skills in a sequential manner and specifically focus on phonological awareness
- Revised the feedback form for families
- Focus on meaningfully using families' expertise in the classroom (information for teachers)



Revised Family Feedback Form

Family Project #3

What Did You Think About This Family Project?



Your Name: _____

Head Start Center: _____

Who Completed This Project With Your Child?

- 1) What was your favorite part about this project?

- 2) What was the hardest/ most challenging part of the project?

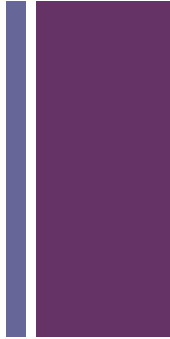
- 3) What other projects would you like to do in the future?

- 4) What is something exciting that your child is learning or doing at home right now?

Your Signature:

In the next family project, we will focus on construction! Would you be interested in coming into the classroom to help us construct and talk about construction in your home or work?

Yes No





Information Sheet for Families and Teachers

Teachers

Family Project #3: I Can Measure!



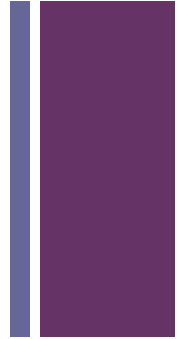
In Activity Sets 28-37 in the CSS+ curriculum, we are focusing on being a scientist and **how to measure!** There is also an emphasis on the name, shape, and sound of the **letters P, T, and K**, and thinking about words and their different letters, lengths, and sounds (**word awareness**).

For **Family Project #3**, families will be encouraged to measure with their child, either following activities on a poster or creating their own measuring tool. As these projects are sent back, consider doing the following:

- During a circle time, have the child show their measurement poster or tool to everyone, and talk about how they made it and who helped them with it.
- As you continue to talk about measurement in the classroom, continue to ask children about how they measure at home, reminding them of the project.
- Set up a measurement center and demonstrate how the children can measure items in different ways. Encourage children who made their own measurement tools to include these in the center.
- Write a short note to families who participated to thank them for taking the time to work on this together.
- Consider displaying/ showing the different poster and tools to families at your next family meeting/conference

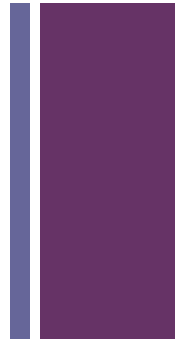
Consider how you could acknowledge families' expertise and meaningfully engage them in the classroom during this time. This may include:

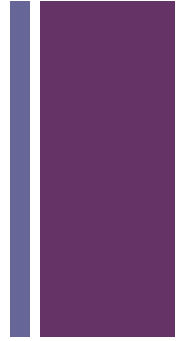
- **Inviting family members** to come and talk about how they measure in their home or work. For example, invite someone in who loves to cook or bake and encourage them to bring their favorite recipes to show. Or invite a family member who is handy or mechanical to talk about how they need to measure where to hammer nails or the amount of oil to put into a car.
- Asking family members about what their **child is learning at home** and thinking of ways to highlight this in the classroom.



+ Future Considerations

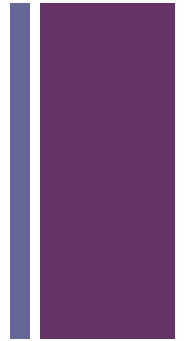
- How do we continue to develop home-school collaborations that find a balance between providing information and acknowledging families' expertise?
- How do we support teachers in learning about their families' expertise and incorporating them into the classroom in meaningful ways?
- How do we best measure the effects of home-based projects?





Questions/Comments/ Ideas

+ For More Information



- Powerpoint will be uploaded in pdf format on the CSS+ Project website

<http://www2.ku.edu/~cssplus/index.shtml>

- Handout provided to DEC electronically
- For more information, please contact
 - Amber Friesen (afriesen@sfsu.edu)
 - Alina Mihai (amachei@imail.iu.edu)