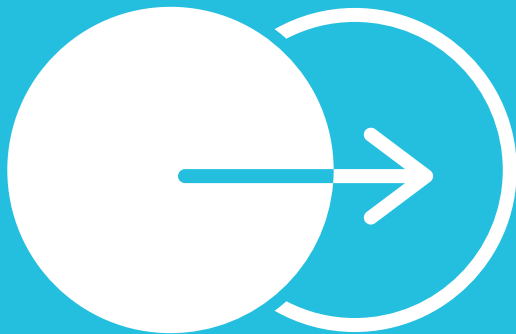




FARUM



Sustained High-Quality
Experiences

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The Early Learning Network is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences.

Why Do Sustained High-Quality Experiences Matter?

- Research and theory suggest that children perform best when there is consistency and continuity across educational experiences — in other words, when high-quality educational experiences are aligned.
- Education programs are aligned when structures, policies, practices, curricula and assessments work together seamlessly within and across ages and grade levels to support children's development.
- Research suggests that transitions are most effective when they allow for easy navigation across grades and between learning environments.



Sustained high-quality experiences matter.



ELN's Contribution

- ELN researchers explored whether and how alignment and transition practices supported the development of math, language, literacy and social-behavioral skills, and identified current practices that create barriers to continuity in learning experiences.
- Instructional alignment and transition practices are open to change or improvement through early learning practice and policy decisions.



What We Learned

- Intentional efforts to support high-quality experiences across pre-K and the early grades may benefit all children, and especially those from marginalized backgrounds.
- Aligned high-quality experiences alone do not consistently predict better outcomes; experiences must be high quality *and* aligned.
- Aligned practices between pre-K and kindergarten are positively associated with some academic skill domains.
- Lack of continuity between pre-K and kindergarten environments, including varying amounts of transition practices, may create challenges for children's kindergarten adjustment, particularly for students from marginalized groups.



Supporting Findings

Alignment

- *Alignment of structures, curricula and instructional content* is associated with sustained benefits of one public pre-K model.
- Children's *cumulative early grade experiences* predict later social-behavioral outcomes for those from English- and Spanish-speaking families.
- Differences between pre-K to kindergarten may be difficult for children from marginalized groups to navigate.
- From pre-K to kindergarten:
 - *Alignment* includes progression toward advanced content.
 - *Misalignment* includes redundancies in foundational content, cultural mismatch, more teacher-structured activities in kindergarten than pre-K, and less effective teacher-child interactions across grades.



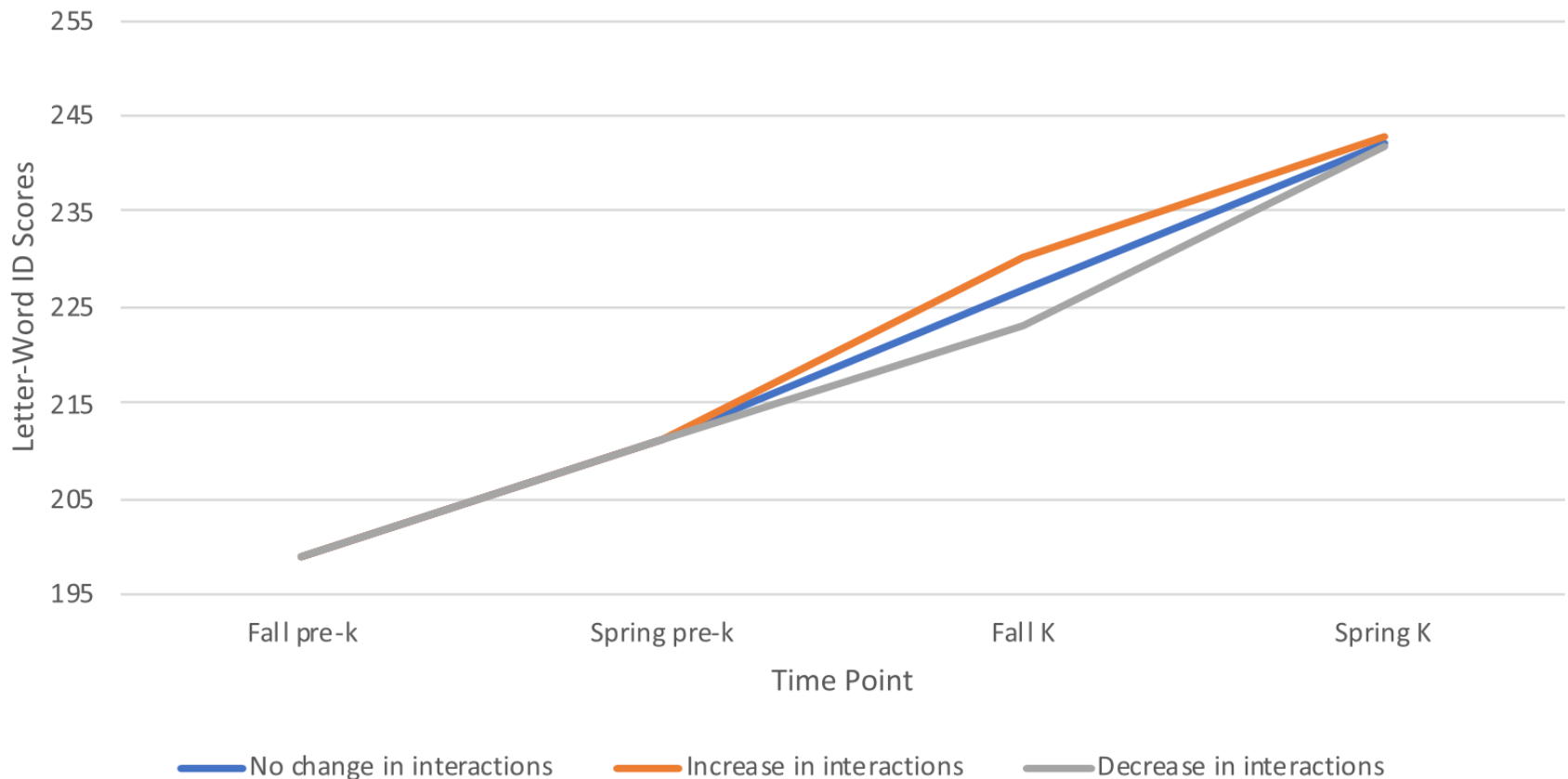
Supporting Findings Cont.

Transition Practices

- At least half of students, and especially boys and students with IEPs, experience transition difficulties in academic and social-behavioral areas when moving from pre-K across the early elementary school grades.
- *Sustained positive student-teacher relationships* from pre-K to first grade are associated with stronger social skills.
- *Data sharing* on individual children is associated with higher literacy skills in kindergarten.
- Lack of *communication* and inability to *bring together pre-K and elementary personnel* prevent effective transitions from pre-K to kindergarten.



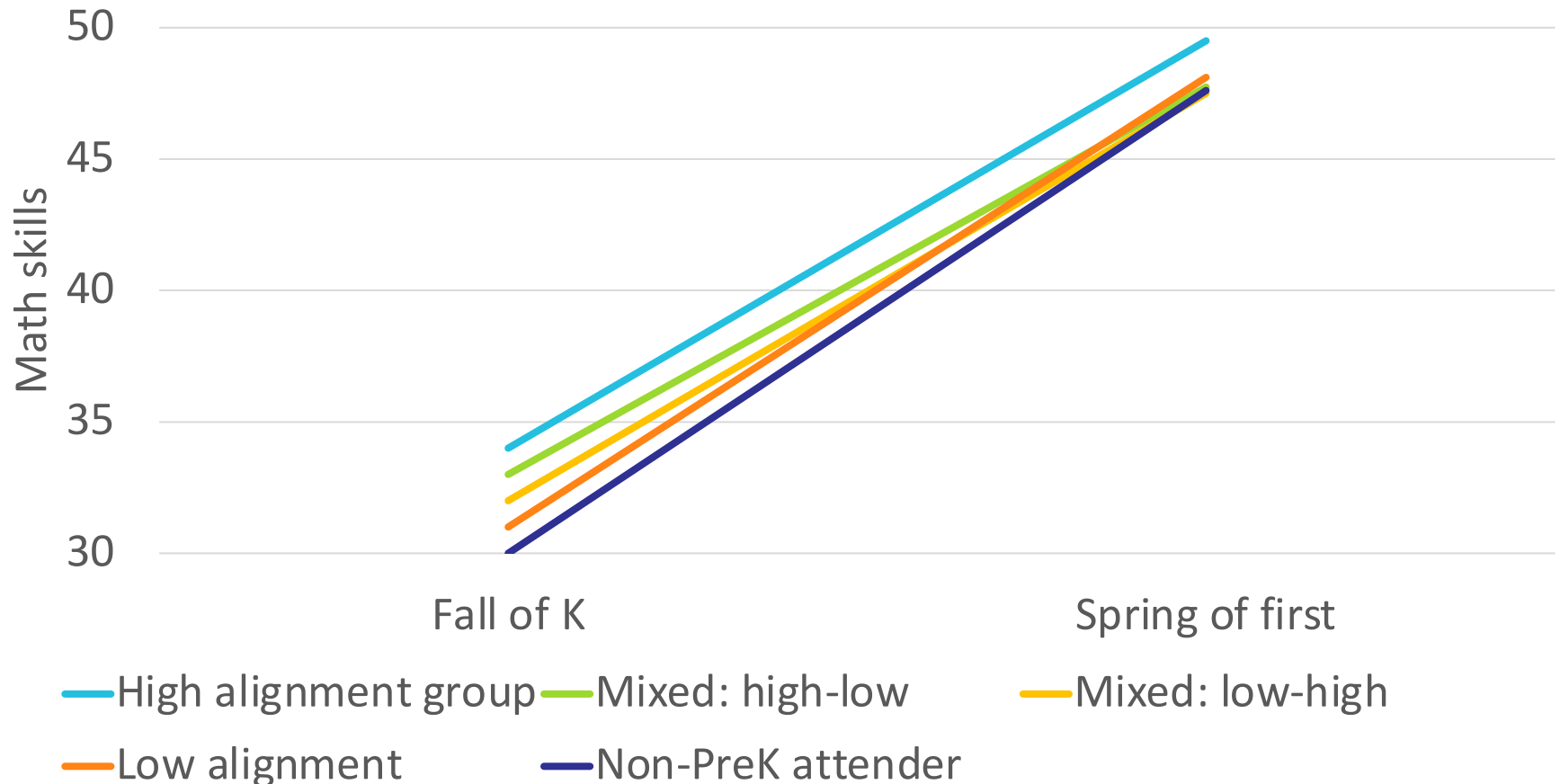
Effective Transitions & Literacy Skills



Higher-quality teacher-child interactions, measured with CLASS, during the transition to kindergarten predicted stronger literacy skills during that time. (Evidence from UVA team)



Alignment and Math Skills



Stronger instructional alignment is associated with a sustained pre-K boost for some learning domains. (Evidence from MDRC/Boston P-3)



Conclusions

- Intentional alignment and transition practices may support the development of academic and social-behavioral skills (though more research is needed).
- Achieving sustained, high-quality experiences across pre-K to elementary school transition may require attention to both high-quality instructional alignment and processes that facilitate smooth student transitions.
- Identifying barriers to effective transitions and strong alignment may be starting points for determining appropriate modifications to existing policies and practices.





Thank You

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