



FORUM



Classroom Experiences and Learning Opportunities

Virginia (Ginny) Vitiello
Team: University of Virginia

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Experiences and Learning Opportunities in Classrooms Matter

- Children's early school experiences are associated with positive development of academic, social, and self-regulation skills when they are:
 - Intentional (thoughtfully planned for specific effects)
 - Effective (aligned with evidence-based best practices)
- These experiences allow students to access and act on information, interact with instructional content, and interact with peers and teachers.
- Experiences and learning opportunities include:
 - Teacher-student interactions
 - Instructional practices and approaches
 - Peer interactions
 - Strategies used by teachers to support development



ELN's Contribution

- ELN research has added to the field's understanding of associations between experiences in classrooms and gains in children's early learning and development.
- Teams have examined associations between social and academic outcomes in the early years of schooling and:
 - Specific instructional practices
 - Teacher-student interactions
 - Curriculum content
 - Classroom environments and structures
 - Peer relationships



High-quality experiences and learning opportunities in classrooms matter.



What We Learned

- Several positive classroom experiences are associated with gains in students' skills. These experiences include:
 - One-on-one language exchanges
 - Teacher-student interactions
 - Student-student interactions
 - Exposure to content-rich instruction
 - Modeling/scaffolding
- Each of these predicts outcomes independently – they add unique value.
- Classroom learning opportunities, such as large-group activities, behavior management strategies, and routine cues, are not consistently positively associated with student outcomes.



Supporting Findings

- During pre-K, *teacher-child language interactions* and *teacher involvement in educational activities* are associated with gains in expressive language and literacy skills.
- More time spent in *large-group compared to small-group instruction* is negatively associated with students' gains in expressive language and literacy skills.
- *Content-rich instruction* predicts positive gains in math skills across the pre-K year regardless of students' income status, race/ethnicity, or dual language learner status.
- *Relational victimization* in classrooms, such as social exclusion or manipulation, is negatively associated with gains in children's literacy, math, and social skills development across kindergarten and first grade.



Supporting Findings Cont.

- Pre-K teachers use a variety of specific strategies that are differentially related to student outcomes.
 - *Modeling* an instructional activity appears positively related to children's math skills.
 - *Behavior management* organizational strategies and *routine cues* are not associated with gains in academic or executive function skills.
- Didactic instruction and scaffolding as instructional strategies appear to differentially relate to social-emotional outcomes among first grade students.
 - Higher occurrence of *scaffolding* is predictive of students' positive attitudes towards learning, greater social skills, and fewer problem behaviors.
 - With more *didactic (e.g., direct) instruction* than scaffolded experiences, students are more likely to show negative attitudes towards learning, lower attention/persistence, and fewer social skills.



Supplemental Findings

- Findings from UVA suggest that *combinations* of factors matter most for students.
 - Warm and supportive teacher-child interactions
 - Close relationships
 - Instruction
- Specifically, generally positive teacher-child interactions matter most when an individual child also has a close, low-conflict relationship with their teacher.
- Likewise, more time on literacy instruction is most effective when paired with positive teacher-child interactions.



Supplemental Findings Cont.

- Consistency also matters.
 - Findings suggest that exposure to higher quality across multiple years is associated with better outcomes.
- Similar effects across demographic groups:
 - DLL students and students from the lowest-income backgrounds may benefit most from pre-K.
 - Strong relationships, supportive and positive interactions are good for all.
- Emotionally exhausted pre-K teachers (pre-pandemic) tended to have lower quality teacher-child interactions.



Conclusion

- It is important to understand aspects of the classroom experience and learning opportunities that predict student performance to help narrow opportunity gaps and ensure learning success.
- Strong evidence outside of the network suggest that targeted professional development can improve the use of effective domain-specific teaching practices, teacher-child interactions, relationships, and student social-emotional development.
- Targeting one factor is not enough – we need to think about PD that addresses the classroom ecosystem – academic, social-emotional, teacher well-being.





Thank You

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