

ALL PROPOSALS MUST BE READ AND APPROVED BY THE FACULTY ADVISOR

Please complete the following

NAME Elaine Reese ADVISOR _____ (signature)

DEPT/BOX ADDRESS Psychology

TITLE OF PROJECT/RESEARCH OR COURSE

Enhancing Children's Language and Literacy

GRANT AGENCY (IF APPLICABLE) NICHD

Please return (7) copies of the completed form (as your front page) and your answers to the questions, with attachments, to: RESEARCH OFFICE, RM. 209A, Geography Building (ex. 7765). Please number your proposal pages.

NOTE: The Committee meets at least once a month during the academic year. If expedited review is needed for your proposal prior to the next Committee meeting, please include justification of why this is necessary.

Application to Institutional Review Board for Approval of Research on Human Subjects

Elaine Reese
Psychology Department
May 30, 2002

1. The participants for the proposed study are 3-4 year old children and their parents. The children in the study will not be capable of giving informed consent, but we will explain fully the proposed study to parents and gain their informed consent on behalf of their children. Children will be asked for their verbal assent before administering the assessments.
2. We will recruit participants through daycares and preschools serving low-income families in Worcester, MA. First, we will approach the daycare or preschool director and describe the study (see attached verbal/written description). We will then leave fliers stating the same information for directors to distribute to parents. Any interested parents will be able to contact the researcher by phone or by filling out an information form and leaving it with the daycare director. We will stress to the directors that the parents are under no obligation to participate and that even if parents agree to participate, they are free to withdraw their participation from the study at any point. After parents have indicated their interest, a researcher will schedule a home visit to obtain written consent from the families (see attached sample consent form) after answering any other questions parents might have about the study.
3. **Testing procedures:**

The proposed study is a longitudinal literacy intervention with 3-4 year old children. Children will be pretested and post-tested on their language and literacy skills in a 1-hour session in the preschool or daycare using the following measures:

- a. Vocabulary assessment—The researcher will administer the third version of the Test of Early Language Development (TELD; Hresko, Reid, & Hammill, 1981), which has receptive and expressive language subscales. The test consists of showing children colored picture plates and asking them to point to pictures, name pictured objects, or describe pictured objects.
- b. Print understanding—Children's concepts about books and about print will be measured with a modified version of Clay's Concepts About Print test (CAP; Clay, 1979). This test consists of showing children a book and asking them questions about concepts such as front/back/beginning/ending; whether the story is contained in words or in pictures; what is a letter/word/period/question mark.

- c. **Narrative skill**—Children’s narratives will be assessed in three ways: story retelling, story production, and a personal narrative. First, the researcher will engage the child in a story retelling task in which the researcher reads a story to the child and then asks the child to tell or pretend to read the story back to them or to a puppet, while looking at the book (Sulzby, 1985). Second, in a story production measure, the researcher will show the children a series of three pictures of a bear family losing a kite and having the baby bear fall from a tree, and ask the children to tell a story about the three pictures (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Finally, to elicit a personal narrative, the researcher will insert into the assessment a brief personal narrative about an injury and then ask the child if anything like that has happened to him/her (Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1999).
- d. **Letter identification**—The researcher will administer the letter identification portion of the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R; Jastak & Jastak, 1978). Children are shown twelve upper-case letters and asked to name them.
- e. **Phonological sensitivity**—Two measures of phonological sensitivity, syllable blending and elision, will be administered (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000). In the syllable blending task, the researcher tells the child two one-syllable words and asks the child to combine the words into one compound word (“cow” + “boy”) or to combine two syllables into a single word (“din” + “ner”). In the elision task, the researcher asks children to say a word minus one word or sound. For instance, children are asked to take away one single-syllable word from a compound word (take “bat” away from “batman”) and say the resulting word, or to take away a phoneme from a word (take “b” away from “bat”) and say the resulting sound or word. The syllable blending test consists of 14 test trials, and the elision test consists of 17 test trials. For each test, practice trials are conducted first using pictures of the elements of compound words. Test trials are conducted without pictures. Each test is discontinued after 5 consecutive test trials are missed.

Baseline measures of the children’s home literacy environment will also be completed through a 1-hour home visit. In the home visit, a researcher will ask parents to complete a questionnaire about books in the home and about their literacy practices with their children (see attached questionnaire). Parents will also be audiotaped and videotaped while reading an unfamiliar storybook with their children and while discussing recent past events (e.g., going to a movie or playing at a friend’s house). These interactions will later be coded for the degree to which parents elaborate on the text or the memory, practices which have been linked to children’s language and literacy skills in past research with low-income families (e.g., Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Reese, 2002).

After pretesting and home baseline assessments, families will be randomly assigned to one of the following experimental conditions: 1) shared book reading; 2) elaborative conversation; 3) book reading + conversation; or 4) no-treatment control. Families in each of the intervention conditions will be asked to attend a 1-hour group meeting at the daycare or preschool in which a parent trainer introduces a new way of reading or conversing with their children. The researcher will introduce the techniques through videotaped examples and will ask parents to practice and discuss the techniques. The techniques are simple and easy for parents to use; in fact, parents will already be using some of the conversational techniques but we will encourage them to use them to a greater extent (e.g., “wh-“ questions during reading or conversation; praising their children’s utterances and expanding on them; using rare vocabulary words with children and explaining those words). A researcher will also make two 30-minute home visits and two 15-minute phone calls during the next 6 months to clarify any questions parents have about the reading or conversational technique. At the end of the 6-month intervention, children will be post-tested on their language and literacy skills in the preschool and post-test assessments of parents’ reading and conversational strategies with their children will be measured through audiotaped and videotaped sessions in the home (1 hour for each post-test session). Children will be post-tested again using the same measures at the end of their kindergarten year.

4. Safeguarding participants’ rights: There are no known physical or psychological risks for participants in this research. Because the families are being audiotaped and videotaped, the primary ethical issue is preserving families’ confidentiality. We will safeguard confidentiality through the following procedures:

Each family will be assigned a code number at the start of the study. All information collected from families, including questionnaires and conversations, will be marked with this code number and not with the families’ names. All information collected will be kept in a locked office of the Child Study Center in Jonas Clark Hall. Only the principal investigator and graduate student researchers will have access to the information and to the identity of the families. Undergraduate students may assist in the coding phase of the research but will not have access to the families’ names or personal information. Individuals will not be identified in any publication resulting from this research.

The goal of this study is to improve parents’ interactions with their children. All techniques used in this study have been demonstrated in past research to benefit children’s language and literacy. The aim of this study is to compare directly these different intervention techniques to determine the specific nature of the benefits and to assess their relative effectiveness. Parents will be informed at the beginning of the intervention portion of the study that these techniques have known benefits for children’s language and literacy. Once we have completed analyses and know the answers to these questions, we will present our results to parents and preschool

teachers so that they too can know the relative benefits of these various conversational techniques.

5. See attached consent form. We will read the consent form if necessary to parents to make sure that they understand their part in the research, any expected benefits, our commitment to protecting their confidentiality, and that they may withdraw their participation at any point during the study.
6. Informed consent from parents will be obtained. No deception is involved.
7. There are no known risks to participants in this research.

Enhancing Children's Language and Literacy

This study is designed to help children's language and literacy development. Children who have larger vocabularies when they enter kindergarten experience more success when learning to read. If you decide to participate in this study with your child, we would assess your child's language development in the preschool in September or October. This assessment takes about 30 minutes to 1 hour. We would also visit your family at home and ask you some questions about your child's experience with books. At this time, we would also videotape and audiotape your child talking to you about a book or about something that happened recently. This visit will take about an hour. During the school year, you may be selected to learn a new way of talking to your child that has been shown to boost children's vocabulary. **The process of which families will be chosen to learn the new way of talking will be random, and it is possible that your participation may be restricted to simply receiving the assessment for your child and receiving a home visit at the beginning and end of the study.** If you are selected to participate further, you would be asked to attend a 1-hour meeting at your child's preschool in November and again in March, scheduled at convenient times for families, to learn the new way of talking. Babysitting will be provided during these meetings. We would also make a brief 30 minute visit to your home in December and April, and make a brief 10 minute phone call or visit in January and May to remind you of the new way of talking. For all families, in May and June your child's language will be assessed again in the preschool, and we would make one final visit to your home to record your child talking to you. Finally, we will ask to assess your child's language again at the end of kindergarten. Each of these sessions lasts about an hour. **Your child will receive a small gift, such as a book, at each of the three assessment sessions.**

CONSENT FORM

The signing of this form constitutes consent to participate in the Early Literacy study being conducted by Professor Elaine Reese at Clark University.

I understand that:

1. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I am free to stop my involvement in this study at any time, or to refuse to answer any questions.
2. All information collected will be coded with an identification number and stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room at Clark University. Only the researchers will have access to this information.
3. My child and I will be audiotaped and videotaped as part of our participation.

(Signature)

(Date)

Appendix A

Verbal/Written Information to Parents

Children's language skills are a strong predictor of their success in school. We have discovered some ways of reading books and talking to children that help their language skills. If children have a large vocabulary, they are likely to do better once they start learning to read in school. We would like to compare these different ways of reading and talking to children to see which ones are best, or if instead all of them are equally good at helping children's language develop. We would like to invite your family to be a part of our study.

If you decide to take part, a graduate student at Clark University would test your child's language development at the preschool. The tests take about 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete. Mostly they involve showing pictures to the children and asking them to talk about the pictures. Most children find the tests fun. Children will receive a small present at the end of the testing, such as a box of crayons or a book. We would also visit your home to ask you some questions about the way you talk to your child. During this visit, with your permission we would make a videotape and an audiotape of your child talking to you.

Then, starting in November of this year, some families will be asked to learn new ways of talking to their children, or to talk even more to their children in ways they are already talking. We will show you videotapes to help you learn the new ways. We will visit you in your home or call you on the phone once a month, whatever is easiest for you, to remind you of the new ways of talking. They are ways of talking to your child that have been shown to help your child's language and are easy to learn.

At the end of the year, in May and June, all children will be tested again in the preschool, and we will visit you in your home again to tape your child talking to you. This year will be the end of your involvement in the study, but we will ask to test your child again at the end of kindergarten to see whether the ways of talking are still working.

Parental Beliefs Questionnaire

Instructions

We're trying to get a better idea of pre-school children's abilities, about the different ways that parents read and talk with their children, and what parents see as important goals for their children. We would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire, with your answers made *in relation to your child who is involved in the research*, even if you have other children. Note that there are no right or wrong answers.

Section 1: Books, Reading, and Other Activities

(1) How frequently do you or other family members read stories/books aloud to your child? Please check one.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Daily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times each week | |

(2) How frequently does your child "read" or look at books by themselves at home? Please check one.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Daily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times each week | |

(3) When you or someone else at home reads a book with your child, what do you usually do? Please check all that apply.

- Read the title page/cover
- Tell the story in your own words
- Read the words in the book
- Point to page numbers and name them
- Point to the pictures and label them
- Point to the words in the book
- Point to letters and name them
- Ask your child to turn the page

- Ask your child to point to a word
- Ask your child to label the pictures (e.g., what's this?)
- Ask your child to point to the pictures (where is the ___?)
- Ask your child to read a word
- Ask your child what happened in the story
- Ask your child what will happen next in the story
- Ask your child to explain why something happened
- Relate events and characters in the story to child's own life

(4) When you read a book with your child, what do they usually do? Please check all that apply.

- Chooses the book to read
- Reads the title or cover
- Reads the page number
- Points to pictures
- Turns pages
- Tells the story in their own words or pretends to read
- Reads the text in the book
- Points to the pictures and labels them
- Points to the words in the book
- Chooses books to be read aloud
- Looks at books or reads independently
- Listens to taped stories
- Listens quietly as someone else reads
- Pretends to read the book
- Asks questions or makes comments about books during reading
- Asks, "What does this say?"
- Answers your questions during or after reading
- Tries to guess what will happen next
- Retells the story while turning pages
- Says "The end" when the story is finished
- Other _____

(5) What printed material does your child see or use in the home at least weekly?
Check all that apply.

<u>Sees adults use weekly</u>		<u>Child looks at with interest</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Novels / adult books	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dictionary / encyclopaedia	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Catalogues / flyers	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone book	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	TV / movie guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Children's picture books	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Children's story books	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birthday cards	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) Please estimate the number of children's books that you own.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 books | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 books | <input type="checkbox"/> 101-200 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 books | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 200 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-50 books | |

(7) Please estimate the number of adult books that you own.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 books | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 books | <input type="checkbox"/> 101-200 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 books | <input type="checkbox"/> 200-350 books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-50 books | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 350 books |

*Remainder of questionnaire
not provided*

(2) How interested is your child in talking about past experiences?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
not at all moderately very
interested interested interested

(2) How well does your child concentrate when talking about past experiences?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
concentrates concentrates concentrates
poorly moderately well

(3) Broadly speaking, what do you think is the **most** important reason to talk about the past with your child? Please tick **one** of the following options.

- To teach my child skills
- For social bonding and enjoyment
- Other _____

Section 3: Parental Goals for their Children

(1) Please indicate the most important goals that you have for your **child at this time**. Number from 1 (the least important) to 7 (the most important).

- _____ Learning self help skills (e.g., feeding, toileting, dressing self, moving independently)
- _____ Communicating effectively
- _____ Learning to read
- _____ Learning to write
- _____ Making friends
- _____ Developing recreational interests and skills
- _____ Developing knowledge about the world

(2) Please indicate how important different skills are for **when your child starts school**. Number from 1 (least important) to 7 (most important).

- _____ Having self help skills (e.g., feeding, toileting, dressing self, moving independently)
- _____ Being able to communicate effectively
- _____ Being able to read basic words
- _____ Being able to write in a basic form
- _____ Having social skills
- _____ Having recreational interests and skills
- _____ Having knowledge about the world

(3) What level of education would you like your child to obtain? Please check one.

- High school degree
- Technical college / apprenticeship
- Undergraduate university degree
- Postgraduate university degree

Thank-you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.