READ RIGHT FROM THE START:
GEORGIA PRE-K PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
YEAR 1 EVALUATION
(2009-2010)

Report submitted to:
The Rollins Center for Language & Learning
The Atlanta Speech School

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Executive Summary

The Rollins Center for Language & Learning at The Atlanta Speech School has been a leader in providing support to schools, teachers, children and families to foster language and literacy achievement for all children, especially children who are at-risk for or are currently experiencing difficulty in school. Beginning in 2009, Rollins partnered with the Hanson Initiative for Language & Literacy at Massachusetts General Hospital, the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, and Bright from the Start to implement *Read Right from the Start: Georgia Pre-K Professional Development Project*—a professional development initiative focused on strengthening and enriching the language and literacy development of young children by professional development, coaching, and mentoring to pre-k teachers and teacher assistants (hereafter referred to as Read Right). In order to evaluate the teacher, classroom, and child outcomes from the project, a group of research faculty at Georgia State University conducted an independent evaluation.

Children and teachers from 21 Georgia pre-K classrooms throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area participated in the evaluation. Teachers were observed providing instruction in their classrooms at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, and participated in focus groups to share their impressions of the program at the end of the year. Children completed several language and literacy tasks at the beginning and end the school year. Classrooms were located in public elementary schools and private childcare sites and included:

- DeKalb County: Childcare Network 50, LaPetite Academy
- Fulton County: Lake Forest Elementary School (Fulton County Schools), Conley Hill Elementary School (Fulton County Schools), L. O. Kimberly Elementary School (Atlanta Public Schools)
- Gwinnett County: Sunshine Houses 76 and 77
- Rockdale County: J.H. House Elementary School, Peeks Chapel Elementary School, Hightower Elementary School

Consent was obtained for 43 teachers and parent permission was obtained for 326 children to participate in the evaluation protocol in Fall 2009. Of these children (mean age = 56.1 months, SD = 3.4 months), 49% were boys, 50% were African American (34% were Hispanic/Latino), and 29% were English Language Learners (ELL) whose primary home language was Spanish (as reported by teachers based on parent responses on enrollment forms and/or student’s primary language use in the classroom). Individual student’s socio-economic status was not available. Surveys were completed by 101 of the children’s primary caregivers, and indicated that 45% of the respondents had attended at least some college or obtained an associate’s degree (22% had obtained at least a college degree).

Analyses were carried out to determine the participant’s performance and compare their progress over the academic year. Overall, the results indicated that both children and teachers exhibited significant growth in the targeted outcome areas. Specifically, at the end of the pre-K year for children whose primary language was English:
• 72% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of oral receptive vocabulary (as compared to 62% at the beginning of the year);
• 78% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of oral expressive vocabulary (as compared to 74% at the beginning of the year);
• 88% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of print and alphabet knowledge (as compared to 77% at the beginning of the year);
• 60% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of phonological awareness (as compared to 56% at the beginning of the year);
• 83% were able to name at least 12 uppercase letters correctly (as compared to 66% at the beginning of the year);
• 76% were able to write their names with many correct letters (as compared to 57% at the beginning of the year).

Children who were ELL also exhibited growth in the targeted outcome areas over the school year, although their means were lower than the children who were not ELL. This result is similar to those reported in the literature for ELL who receive language and literacy instruction in English-only classrooms. In addition, at the time of this report, teachers had not yet had professional development support focused on providing high quality instruction for ELL in pre-K.

Significant progress was observed for children who began pre-K with very low oral language skills. These findings are particularly important because the professional development program focused on helping teachers to improve children’s oral language knowledge and use. Examining progress among children who have very low language skills thus becomes a relative means of examining the program. Among these children,

• 37% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of oral receptive vocabulary (as compared to 0% at the beginning of the year);
• 43% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of oral expressive vocabulary (as compared to 29% at the beginning of the year);
• 72% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of print and alphabet knowledge (as compared to 51% at the beginning of the year);
• 35% performed at or above average on norm-referenced measures of phonological awareness (as compared to 22% at the beginning of the year);
• 65% were able to name at least 12 uppercase letters correctly (as compared to 50% at the beginning of the year);
• 56% were able to write their names with many correct letters (as compared to 27% at the beginning of the year).

Teachers also showed growth over the school year. Specifically, classroom observation indicated that teachers:

• improved their oral language and book reading interactions, and increased opportunities for emergent reading and writing activities;
• improved their ability to implement interactive repeated story book reading activities during large group activities;
• improved the frequency and quality of their interactions with children around letters and print knowledge during free choice (center) activities.

The findings also indicated areas for improvement as Read Right moves into its second year of implementation:

• both student performance data and classroom observation data indicated that teachers need additional support implementing phonological awareness instruction during both large group and small group activities;
• classroom observation data indicated that teachers are aware of multiple “lift the language” and print and letter knowledge instructional strategies, but need support to implement them consistently during both large and small group activities;
• student performance data indicated that teachers continue to need support in responding to the unique needs of ELL and children who enter pre-K with very low oral language skills;
• teachers reported needing additional support aligning the instructional strategies they learned through Read Right within the planning and assessment framework they’re required to use for the Department of Early Care and Learning.

Finally, the evaluation team acknowledges that the results and their interpretation are limited by the experimental design. A quasi-experimental design with a comparison group of children and teachers is necessary to examine the causal relationships between the Read Right intervention and outcomes for teachers, classrooms, and students. In addition, it is important to continue to monitor children’s progress through the primary grades, not only to better understand the benefits of the gains they exhibited during their pre-K year but also to support them (and their teachers) as they begin formal literacy instruction so that the gains are not lost. This kind of support would seem particularly important for children who, like many of those in the ELL and low oral language groups in this report, made significant progress during pre-K but still enter kindergarten lacking proficiency in critical early literacy skills.

In sum, the results of the first year of Read Right were generally positive, especially considering that one year of implementation only represents one half of the intervention (a full course of Read Right professional development workshops and on-site coaching is 2 years). Thus, these results can be viewed as a mid-point evaluation of the program. More comprehensive results would be expected after full implementation (Year 2) and one year after full implementation (Year 3, once professional development workshops and on-site support has been removed) to truly examine whether or not these experiences had a lasting impact on the teachers, their classrooms, and their students.
Ample empirical evidence indicates not only that school readiness is fundamental for later academic achievement, but also that many children enter school lacking the skills they need to succeed in school. Much of the research has focused on the early language and literacy skills (e.g., phonological awareness, oral vocabulary, alphabet and print knowledge, emergent writing) that are associated with and predictive of conventional literacy skills (e.g., word reading, reading comprehension, spelling) that lead to school success (see for example, the report of the National Early Literacy Panel (2009), the report of the National Reading Panel (2000), and Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) for research synthesis). In response to growing linguistic diversity in schools, researchers have also begun to investigate how language and literacy skills develop among children for whom English is not their primary or first language (see for example, the report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth—August & Shanahan, 2006). As researchers, educators, families, policymakers, and other key stakeholders have increased their awareness of the importance of early intervention and prevention of later reading failure, so too has pre-kindergarten become the focus of research investigations, professional education movements, and community engagement campaigns (see Barnett (2008) for research synthesis of positive effects of preschool education).

As one of only a few states that offer universal pre-K programs, the state of Georgia is poised to take a leadership role in efforts to offer high quality early language and literacy instruction to all children prior to formal school entry in kindergarten. The state has benefited from numerous local and statewide initiatives and programs that are all aimed at reaching this achievable goal. However, scalability is not without its challenges, as maintaining quality while expanding access requires programs to continuously adapt to meet the needs of children and families (see Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007), as well as recent reports on Georgia’s Pre-K Program (Maxwell et al., 2009)). One often identified area of need is support to improve classroom teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge on providing developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, and assessment-informed, high quality early language and literacy instruction.

Answering this challenge, the Rollins Center for Language & Learning at the Atlanta Speech School partnered with the Hanson Initiative for Language & Literacy at Massachusetts General Hospital, the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, and Bright from the Start to implement *Read Right from the Start: Georgia Pre-K Professional Development Project*—a professional development initiative focused on strengthening and enriching the language and literacy development of young children by providing training sessions, seminars, coaching, and mentoring to pre-k teachers and teacher assistants. The project, hereafter referred to as Read Right, is expected to improve outcomes for students and early childhood educators through intensive and extensive on-going professional development that emphasizes the special importance of a language-rich curriculum and classroom, as well as instructional strategies that reach all students.

The following report details findings from the evaluation of teacher, classroom, and student outcomes during the first year of Read Right, conducted independently by researchers from...
Georgia State University. First, student outcomes are summarized, focusing on findings from the entire participant sample, as well two groups of children who were especially at-risk for experiencing reading difficulty later in school: children with very low oral vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of pre-K and children who were English Language Learners (ELL).

The teacher and classroom outcomes are summarized, focusing on results from classroom observations and focus group responses.

Summary of the Evaluation Design, Procedures, and Analytical Approach

The research design for this study was initially conceived as a Pre-test/Post-test control group design. However, it was not possible to obtain a sample of early childhood classrooms to serve as a control for this study. Consequently, the researchers utilized a pre-test/post-test design with norm-referenced assessments whenever possible. Norm-referenced assessments are standardized on a large sample of children across various demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, race), and responses can be transformed into a standard score. Standard scores can be used to compare one student's performance on the test to other students in his/her age group. However, for this same reason, standard scores are not always the best indicators of growth in skill over time. Conversely, a scaled score (e.g., raw score) allows one to compare an individual child's performance at different times (e.g., beginning and end of pre-K).

In order to provide the most accurate representation of the participants’ performance and progress throughout the academic year, we report both standard scores and scaled (raw) scores. Thus, comparisons of standard scores reported here should be interpreted as the group’s mean performance compared to the expected performance of children of the same peer (age) group from the assessment’s norm reference group (see test manuals for characteristics of the norm groups for each assessment). Alternatively, comparisons of raw scores reported here should be interpreted as the group’s mean performance at the beginning of the academic year compared to the end of the academic year. The student, teacher, and classroom outcomes measured in the evaluation, as well as their scoring characteristics, are provided in Table 1.

All student and teacher assessments used in the evaluation were administered between October-early December 2009 (pre-tests) and late March-May 2010 (post-tests). The average time between pre- and post-test administration was 5.41 months. All quantitative analyses detailed in this report involve examination of differences in scores gathered on assessments in the Fall and Spring of the academic school year. In addition, teachers participated in focus groups in Spring 2010, discussing observed changes in classroom climate, effects on teacher-student relationships, reactions to Read Right professional development and coaching, and the perceived impact on student instruction.

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary. Parent permission was obtained for all children and consent was obtained for all teachers prior to the administration of any assessments, consistent with standard protocols for conducting research at Georgia State University. In addition, results from the assessments are reported in group form (as opposed to individual student, teacher, or school) in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.
Table 1. *Student, teacher, and classroom outcomes and measures.*

<table>
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<th><strong>Assessment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scoring</strong></th>
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<td>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4th Edition (PPVT-4)</td>
<td>Standardized measure, Mean=100, SD=15</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELL only: Test de Vocabulário en Imágenes Peabody (TVIP)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Expressive Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL): Definitional Vocabulary</td>
<td>Standardized measure, Mean=100, SD=15</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Phonological Awareness</strong></td>
<td>TOPEL: Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>TOPEL: Standardized measure, Mean=100, SD=15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening-PreK (PALS-PK): Rhyme Awareness</td>
<td>PALS-PK: Raw score range 0-10; end of year benchmarks=5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELL only: Rhyme Awareness Task-Spanish</td>
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<td><strong>Storytelling</strong> (narrative skills)</td>
<td>Narrative Assessment Protocol (NAP)</td>
<td>NAP and NAP Spanish: Raw score range=0-7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ELL only: NAP Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Listening Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>NAP: Raw score range=0-7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ELL only: NAP Spanish</td>
<td>NAP Spanish: Raw score range=0-10</td>
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<td><strong>Print and Alphabet Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>TOPEL: Print Knowledge</td>
<td>TOPEL: Standardized measure, Mean=100, SD=15</td>
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<td>PALS-PK: Uppercase Letters, Lowercase Letters, and Letter Sounds</td>
<td>PALS-PK: Raw score range 0-26; end of year benchmarks for Uppercase=12-21</td>
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<td><strong>Emergent Writing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>General Early Literacy Achievement</strong></td>
<td>Get Ready to Read!</td>
<td>Raw score range 0-20; end of year benchmark: 16=ready to benefit from formal reading instruction in kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELL only: Get Ready to Read!-Spanish</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher and Classroom Effects</strong></th>
<th><strong>Assessment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scoring</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Practices</strong></td>
<td>Classroom Fidelity Observations</td>
<td>Raw scores range=0-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom Quality</strong></td>
<td>Early Language &amp; Literacy Classroom Observation-2 (ELLCO)</td>
<td>ELLCO: Raw score range=0-5</td>
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<td>Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)</td>
<td>CLASS: Raw score range=0-7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Perceptions</strong></td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Student Outcomes

During the first year of Read Right, 326 children across 10 sites (21 classrooms) participated in the evaluation (see Table 2). For the primary analyses reported here, students were combined into two groups: children who were not English Language Learners (Non-ELL group) and children who were ELL (ELL group). In addition, outcomes were also examined for a subsample of children in the Non-ELL group who began pre-K with very low oral language skills (Low Oral Language group), as indicated by standard scores below 80 on the PPVT-4.

Importantly, many of the ELL children had very minimal English language skills at the beginning of the school year. Thus, assessments in Spanish were necessary to truly understand the children’s language and literacy skills at school entry. However, as is often the case with ELL learners, many of the children either could not or did not want to be assessed in Spanish at the end of the year, either because their responses were primarily in English or because they requested to not be tested in Spanish. Because the number of children who received assessments in Spanish in the Spring was much smaller than in the Fall, we only report Fall scores on these assessments.

Additional student performance data are available in the Appendix.

Table 2. Student participants by school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number (N)</th>
<th>N with Fall and Spring scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Network 50 (1 classroom)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conley Hills Elementary (3 classroom)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hightower Elementary (1 classroom)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. H. House Elementary (1 classroom)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. O. Kimberly Elementary (3 classroom)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Petite Academy (3 classroom)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Forest Elementary (2 classroom)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peek’s Chapel Elementary (1 classroom)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunshine House #76 (3 classroom)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunshine House #77 (3 classroom)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong></td>
<td><strong>247</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oral Receptive Vocabulary

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 4th Edition (PPVT-4)

Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody (TVIP)

Both the PPVT-4 (Dunn & Dunn, 2007) and the TVIP (Dunn, Padilla, Lugo, & Dunn, 1986) are nationally standardized assessments of oral receptive vocabulary skills. The PPVT-4 was given to all children. The TVIP was also administered to children who were ELL and the primary language spoken at home was Spanish. On both tasks, children are presented with an array of pictures of common objects or actions and asked to point to the target picture (e.g., Point to the ball).

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3:

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their standard scores on the PPVT-4 from fall to spring.
- Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on the PPVT-4 from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in receptive vocabulary skills.
- Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in each group performed at or above average (i.e., at or above expectations for most 4-5 year olds) on the PPVT-4 at the end of the year:
  - Non-ELL group: increased from 62% in fall to 72% in spring
  - ELL group: increased from 8% in fall to 19% in spring
  - Low Oral Language group: increased from 0% in fall to 37% in spring
- Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on the PPVT-4 (raw and standard scores) than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.
- Children in the ELL group entered pre-K with low-average receptive vocabulary scores in Spanish (as indicated by the TVIP). This finding suggests that the ELL’s oral language skills in Spanish were greater than their English-speaking peers who entered pre-K with very low oral language skills. Thus, it is possible that a lack of English language proficiency was a greater hurdle for many of these children than low oral language abilities.
Figure 1: Mean fall and spring standard scores on the PPVT-4 and TVIP by language group.

Figure 2: Mean growth in PPVT-4 raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 3: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on PPVT-4 (standard score = 85 or greater).
Oral Expressive Vocabulary

Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL): Definitional Vocabulary subtest

The TOPEL (Lonigan, Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 2007) is a nationally standardized, norm-referenced assessment of children’s emergent literacy skills. The TOPEL contains 3 subtests. The Definitional Vocabulary subtest is a measure of expressive oral vocabulary. Children are presented with pictures of common objects or actions and asked to name the target and describe its salient features (e.g., What is this? (child responds) What does it do? (child responds)). In this manner, this subtest assesses children’s surface and deep vocabulary knowledge.

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 4, 5, and 6:

• Only children in the ELL group significantly increased their standard scores on the Definitional Vocabulary subtest from fall to spring.

• Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on the Definitional Vocabulary subtest from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in expressive vocabulary skills.

• Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed at or above average (i.e., at or above expectations for most 4-5 year olds) on the Definitional Vocabulary subtest at the end of the year:
  – Non-ELL group: increased from 74% in fall to 78% in spring
  – ELL group: increased from 11% in fall to 18% in spring
  – Low Oral Language group: increased from 29% in fall to 43% in spring

• Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on the Definitional Vocabulary subtest (raw and standard scores) than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.
Figure 4: Mean fall and spring standard scores on the TOPEL Definitional Vocabulary by language group.

Figure 5: Mean growth in TOPEL Definitional Vocabulary raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 6: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on TOPEL Definitional Vocabulary (standard score = 85 or greater).
Phonological Awareness

TOPEL: Phonological Awareness subtest

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening–PreK (PALS-PK): Rhyme Awareness subtest

Rhyme Awareness Task—Spanish

The Phonological Awareness subtest of the TOPEL measures children’s developing phonological awareness skills, focusing on segmenting and blending. Designed like a word game, children are presented with words and sounds in words (some with pictures) and asked to manipulate them (e.g., Say “playground” without “ground”; What word do these make: air—plane). In this manner, this subtest assesses children’s blending and segmenting abilities.

The Rhyme Awareness subtest of the PALS-PK (Invernizzi, Justice, Landum, & Booker, 2004) focuses on another phonological awareness skill: rhyming. Similar to the TOPEL, children are presented with a series of pictures and asked to match a target word (e.g., cat) with one of three options that rhyme (e.g., hat, whale, ring). However, unlike the TOPEL, the PALS-PK is not a nationally norm-referenced assessment. Thus, raw scores are used to measure performance, and spring benchmarks have been established from large samples of children who have been given the subtest.

Finally, in order to better evaluate the Spanish-speaking children’s phonological awareness skills at the beginning of pre-K, a Rhyme Awareness Task was also given to children who were ELL. This task was designed specifically for this project to mirror the Rhyme Awareness subtest on the PALS-PK. Like the PALS-PK, the task had 10 items, and children were presented with pictures and matched a target word (e.g., foto) with one of three choice items (e.g., finca, roto, luna). Raw scores are used to measure performance.

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 7-11:

• Only children in the Non-ELL group significantly increased their standard scores on the Phonological Awareness subtest of the TOPEL from fall to spring.

• Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on the Phonological Awareness subtest of the TOPEL from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in blending and segmenting skills.

• Children in the Non-ELL and ELL group significantly increased their raw scores on the Rhyme Awareness subtest of the PALS-PK from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in rhyming skills.

• Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed at or above average (i.e., at or above expectations
for most 4-5 year olds) on the Phonological Awareness subtest of the TOPEL at the end of the year:
  - Non-ELL group: increased from 56% in fall to 60% in spring
  - ELL group: increased from 13% in fall to 23% in spring
  - Low Oral Language group: increased from 22% in fall to 35% in spring

- Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on the Phonological Awareness subtest of the TOPEL (raw and standard scores) than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.

- Children in the ELL group entered pre-K with commensurate rhyming skills in English and Spanish (as indicated by the Rhyme Awareness subtest of the PALS-PK and the Rhyme Awareness Task—Spanish). This finding suggests that the ELL’s phonological awareness skills are not language specific, and may provide a scaffold for gaining English language proficiency.
Figure 7: Mean fall and spring standard scores on the TOPEL Phonological Awareness by language group.

Figure 8: Mean growth in TOPEL Phonological Awareness raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 9: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on TOPEL Phonological Awareness (standard score = 85 or greater).

Figure 10: Mean fall and spring raw scores on the PALS-PK Rhyme Awareness by language group.
Figure 11: Mean growth in PALS-PK rhyme awareness raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
**Listening Comprehension and Storytelling Ability**

*Narrative Assessment Protocol (NAP)*

As a final measure of oral language abilities in context, we examined children’s story telling and listening comprehension skills using the Narrative Assessment Protocol (NAP; Pence, Justice, & Gosse, 2007). The NAP is designed to measure complex oral syntax production in preschool-aged children, focusing on the grammatical structures that children produce during a story retell. However, because the majority of the children in the sample were not native American English speakers, we did not use it to assess children’s oral syntax. Instead, we used the protocol to measure two indicators of oral language use in context: listening comprehension (receptive) and story retelling (expressive).

On this task, children are read a scripted story from a wordless storybook, *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer, 1969), and then asked to retell the story. Then, they are asked a series of comprehension questions about the story, producing a raw score to measure performance. In addition, the quality of their stories (e.g., inclusion of characters, multiple episodes, conflicts, etc.) was assessed using High Point Analysis (McCabe & Rollins, 1994), also producing a raw score to measure performance. Currently, there are no benchmarks by which to compare children’s performance on this task.

Children who were ELL were also given a Spanish version of this task using another wordless storybook from the Mercer series, *A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog* (Mayer, 1967). The Spanish version was designed for this evaluation. Like the NAP, children were read a scripted story in Spanish and then asked to retell it and answer comprehension questions. Raw scores for comprehension were also used to measure performance.

The figures below provide the mean raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 12-15:

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores for Listening Comprehension from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in listening comprehension skills.

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores for Narrative Quality from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in storytelling skills.

- Children in the ELL group entered pre-K understanding stories in Spanish better than English (as indicated by their listening comprehension scores in the NAP in Spanish and English). This finding suggests that the ELL’s Spanish narrative comprehension skills may provide a scaffold for gaining English language proficiency.
Figure 12: Mean fall and spring raw scores on the NAP Listening Comprehension by language group.

Figure 13: Mean growth in NAP Listening Comprehension raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 14: Mean fall and spring raw scores on the NAP Narrative Quality by language group.

![Bar chart showing mean fall and spring raw scores on the NAP Narrative Quality by language group.]

Figure 15: Mean growth in NAP Narrative Quality from fall to spring by language group.

![Line graph showing mean growth in NAP Narrative Quality from fall to spring by language group.]

Print and Alphabet Knowledge

**TOPEL: Print Knowledge subtest**

**PALS-PK: Uppercase, Lowercase, and Sounds subtests**

The Print Knowledge subtest of the TOPEL measures children’s developing alphabet and print conventions knowledge. Children are asked to identify letters, letter sounds, and written words. Similarly, alphabet knowledge is assessed on the PALS-PK by asking children to identify uppercase letters, lowercase letters, and letter sounds. Children must identify at least 16 uppercase letters correctly to move on to the lowercase letters task. Then, children must identify at least 9 lowercase letters correctly to move on to the letter sounds task. These ceilings mean that all children do not go on to attempt the lowercase letters and letter sounds task. Therefore, only children’s performance on the uppercase letters task is presented. Raw scores are used to measure performance.

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 16-21:

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their standard scores on the Print Knowledge subtest of the TOPEL from fall to spring.

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on the Print Knowledge subtest of the TOPEL and the Uppercase Letters subtest of the PALS-PK from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in alphabet knowledge and print conventions.

- Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in each group performed at or above average (i.e., at or above expectations for most 4-5 year olds) on the Print Knowledge subtest of the TOPEL at the end of the year:
  - Non-ELL group: increased from 77% in fall to 88% in spring
  - ELL group: increased from 35% in fall to 53% in spring
  - Low Oral Language group: increased from 51% in fall to 72% in spring

- Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in each group performed at or above benchmark (i.e., knew 12 or more letters) on the Uppercase Letters subtest of the PALS-PK at the end of the year:
  - Non-ELL group: increased from 66% in fall to 83% in spring
  - ELL group: increased from 29% in fall to 50% in spring
  - Low Oral Language group: increased from 50% in fall to 65% in spring

- Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on the Print Knowledge subtest of the TOPEL (raw and standard scores) and the Uppercase Letters subtest on the PALS-PK than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.
Figure 16: Mean fall and spring standard scores on the TOPEL Print Knowledge by language group.

![Bar chart showing mean fall and spring standard scores on TOPEL Print Knowledge by language group.]

Figure 17: Mean growth in TOPEL Print Knowledge raw scores from fall to spring by language group.

![Line chart showing mean growth in TOPEL Print Knowledge raw scores from fall to spring by language group.]

Standard Score

Raw Score

Fall 2009 | Spring 2010

ELL | Low Oral Lang | Non-ELL

8.3 | 11.9 | 19.4

8.3 | 22.7 | 27.2

85.5 | 89.1 | 100

89 | 96.4 | 105.3

0 | 10 | 20 | 30

0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30
Figure 18: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on TOPEL Print Knowledge (standard score = 85 or greater).

Figure 19: Mean fall and spring raw scores on PALS-PK Uppercase Letters by language group.
Figure 20: Mean growth in PALS-PK Uppercase letters raw scores from fall to spring by language group.

![Graph showing mean growth in PALS-PK Uppercase letters raw scores from fall to spring by language group.]

Figure 21: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on PALS-PK Uppercase letters (raw score = 12 or above according to benchmarks).

![Bar chart showing mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on PALS-PK Uppercase letters by language group and time of year.]
Emergent Writing

*PALS-PK: Name Writing subtest*

As a final measure of children’s orthographic skill, we examined children’s name writing ability with the Name Writing subtest on the PALS-PK. On this task, children are asked to write their name and draw a picture of themselves. Raw scores are used to measure performance.

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 22-24:

- Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on the Name Writing subtest of the PALS-PK from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in name writing ability.

- Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in each group performed at or above benchmark (i.e., wrote their name with many correct letters and no filler letters or symbols) on the Name Writing subtest of the PALS-PK at the end of the year:
  - Non-ELL group: increased from 57% in fall to 76% in spring
  - ELL group: increased from 22% in fall to 50% in spring
  - Low Oral Language group: increased from 27% in fall to 56% in spring

- Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on the Name Writing subtest of the PALS-PK than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.
Figure 22: Mean fall and spring raw scores on the PALS-PK Name Writing subtest by language group.

Figure 23: Mean growth in PALS-PK Name Writing raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 24: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on PALS-PK Name Writing (raw score = 5 according to benchmarks).
General Early Literacy Achievement

Get Ready to Read!

Get Ready to Read! (GRTR; Whitehurst, 2001) is an early literacy screening tool designed to briefly gauge children’s phonological awareness, print concepts, and emergent writing skills. On each item, children are orally presented with a question (e.g., Point to the letter that makes the /m/ sound) and a picture page with four choices, including the correct response and three foils (e.g., M, L, B, S). Children who were ELL were also given the Spanish version of GRTR!. Both the English and Spanish versions demonstrate strong utility in their ability to distinguish between children at risk for poor early literacy outcomes and those with stronger skills.

The figures below provide the mean standard and raw score performances of children in the Non-ELL, ELL, and Low Oral Language groups at the beginning and end of pre-K. As shown in Figures 25-27:

• Children in all three groups significantly increased their raw scores on GRTR!—English subtest from fall to spring, indicating significant growth in general early literacy achievement.

• Compared to the beginning of the year, a significantly greater number of children in each group performed at or above benchmark (i.e., 16 or greater) on GRTR!—English at the end of the year:
  – Non-ELL group: increased from 29% in fall to 58% in spring
  – ELL group: increased from 9% in fall to 17% in spring
  – Low Oral Language group: increased from 0% in fall to 25% in spring

• Children who were in the ELL and Low Oral Language groups performed significantly more poorly on GRTR!—English than children in the Non-ELL group in fall and spring.

• Children in the ELL group entered pre-K with greater general early literacy achievement in Spanish than in English (as indicated by their scores on the Spanish and English versions of GRTR!). This finding suggests that the ELL’s Spanish emergent literacy skills may provide a scaffold for gaining English language proficiency.
Figure 25: Mean fall and spring raw scores on the Get Ready to Read! by language group.

Figure 26: Mean growth in Get Ready to Read!—English raw scores from fall to spring by language group.
Figure 27: Mean percentage of children who scored at or above average on Get Ready to Ready—English (raw score = 16 according to benchmarks).
During the first year of Read Right, 43 teachers (22 lead teachers, 21 teaching assistants) across 10 sites (21 classrooms) participated in the evaluation. However, due to sample attrition (i.e., some teachers did not stay with the project the entire school year), data is only reported on 17 classrooms.

To evaluate teachers’ participation in this project, two early childhood observational measures were used. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) is an observational measure that allows researchers to evaluate the social-emotional, managerial and organizational, and instructional nature of daily interactions between teachers and students. As such, the CLASS presents a broad indication of global quality. The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO-2nd Edition; Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulous, 2008) was also used to evaluate the quality of instruction that occurred in Read Right classrooms at the beginning and end of the year. The ELLCO was chosen to compliment the CLASS as a means of documenting teacher practice in relation to the quality of the early language and literacy instruction that was occurring in classrooms. As such, the ELLCO allowed us to evaluate the quality of the language and literacy environment in each classroom, something not evaluated by the CLASS. In addition, the ELLCO also allowed us to assess children’s opportunities to interact with print and writing in their classrooms.

In addition to the CLASS and ELLCO, observations were also conducted to explore the extent to which the teachers were actually implementing the strategies they learned during the Read Right professional development workshops and were emphasized on-site by their coaches. Observation instruments were created specifically for this project and targeted the following intervention foci: Interactive Repeated Story Reads, Lifting the Language (building vocabulary and syntax through conversations), Phonological Awareness (blending, segmenting, rhyming, letter sounds associations), Alphabet Knowledge and Concepts of Print.

It should be noted that three different observational measures were utilized to provide a comprehensive and detailed picture about what types of literacy and language interactions occurred throughout the school year. In general, most of these instruments tap into similar constructs (i.e., language and literacy interactions). However, each instrument codes language and literacy constructs differently. Hence, because each instrument codes interactions in a different manner (i.e., some utilize time sampling while others utilize a rating scale approach), it is possible that the instruments may produce different results.

Additional teacher and classroom data are available in the Appendix.
Classroom Quality

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO-2nd Ed.)

Observations of the quality of early literacy environments were assessed with the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO; Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulous, 2008). The ELLCO is widely used to assess the quality of literacy environments in early childhood environments as well as the quality of language and literacy interactions that children experience within these environments. This 19-item instrument allows researchers to evaluate classrooms on the following domains: classroom structure, curriculum, language environment, books and book reading, and print and early writing. Research on the ELLCO suggests that it has a one-factor structure (i.e., all scores should be summed for a total score). However, because this evaluation of Read Right was designed to assess teachers’ implementation of specific language and literacy activities (i.e., those introduced explicitly through professional development activities and supported through coaching), some key components have been examined individually here. First, the results of the ELLCO are reported from 3 of the ELLCO subscales, namely: Language Environment, Books and Book Reading, and Print and Early Writing. Then, within each of these subscales, specific intervention-related items are discussed. However, because the number of classrooms was small, fall to spring changes are not reported for the individual items.

As shown in Figure 28, significant positive changes were observed in teachers’ language and literacy interactions and environments as rated by the ELLCO. Specifically, according to classifications provided by the ELLCO, teachers improved from providing children with “Inadequate” (a score of a 2) language interactions to “Basic” (score of a 3). An examination of individual items (see Appendix D) reveals where the largest improvements in teachers’ language practices occurred. Teachers improved in the quality of the Discourse Climate they offered children, as well as their Efforts to Build Vocabulary, participation in Extended Conversations with children, and Phonological Awareness activities.

An examination of teachers’ performance on the Books and Book Reading subscale did not reveal significant differences between fall and spring scores. However, teachers were already performing at a “Basic” level on this scale at the beginning of the year. In addition, although it is clear from an examination of teachers’ scores on individual items that they made gains in Approaches to Book Learning and Quality of Book Reading, less change is evident on the three items that focused on how the classroom literacy environment was constructed (i.e., Organization of the Book Area, Characteristics of Books, and Books for Learning), which were also at or near “Basic” level at the beginning of the year. These items may be driving the overall results of the Books and Book Reading subscale.

An examination of classroom scores for the quality of Print and Early Writing environments shows statistically significant changes from fall to spring time points. Spring scores were just shy of a “Basic” classification. One indicator, Environmental Print, showed no change from fall to spring, suggesting that teachers did not change their approaches to how they used print around their classrooms. In contrast, clear improvement was evidenced in the manner in which teachers’ approached their early writing environment and how they supported children’s writing activities.
However, at the time of this report, teachers had not yet received professional development support focused specifically on Print and Early Writing, which may explain some inconsistency in the scores.
Figure 28. Mean fall and spring scores on the ELLCO.

Note: ELLCO scores range from a 1 to 5. 1 = “Deficient”, 2 = “Inadequate”, 3 = “Basic”, 4 = “Strong”, 5 = “Exemplary”.

+p < .01, *p < .05, ** p < .01
Classroom Quality

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The instructional quality of each early childhood setting was evaluated through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). The CLASS is a global observational measure that allows researchers to evaluate the social-emotional, managerial and organizational, and instructional nature of daily interactions between teachers and students. The four following dimensions are included in the emotional support domain of the CLASS: Positive Climate, Negative Climate (reverse coded), Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspectives. The Classroom Organization domain contains the following three dimensions: Behavior Management, Productivity, and Instructional Learning Formats. The Instructional Support domain contains the following four dimensions: Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, Language Modeling, and Literacy Focus (See Appendix B). Teachers were observed twice during the school year (i.e., once in the fall and once in the spring). Using the CLASS protocol, the instructional, emotional, and managerial nature of teacher-child interactions are evaluated at 20-minute intervals. Each teacher was observed for a total of 2 hours; hence, the quality of instruction was evaluated during 4 to 5 instructional cycles that are then averaged. Classroom observations took place during the morning pre-k sessions and were conducted using the guidelines set out by the CLASS training modules (i.e., a 2 hour observation session). Two independent observers coded the quality of each classroom. Inter-rater agreement between coders was high ($r = .96$).

As shown in Figure 29, teachers and children had generally warm and supportive interactions with each other in both the fall and spring of the school year, as evidenced by their scores on the Emotional Support subscale on the CLASS. Teachers’ interactions with children became significantly more positive during the course of the intervention. Teachers were also fairly well organized with regards to how they ran their classrooms. Similarly to emotional support, teachers’ organizational strategies (i.e., the way they ran their classrooms) became significantly more positive during the course of the year. Unfortunately, teachers’ scores on Instructional Support dimensions of the CLASS were relatively low in both fall and spring. Although there was some improvement on this variable during the course of the intervention (particularly for Concept Development and Quality of Feedback), this effect did not reach significance.

It should be noted that the findings of this study are consistent with existing research on the quality of pre-k experiences in Georgia and in the United States. Namely, research studies universally find that although early education settings tend to be generally warm and responsive places for young children, teachers often struggle to provide language and literacy support to children (Georgia Study of Early Care and Education, 2009; Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008; Mashburn et al., 2008). That said, as illustrated in Figure 29, classrooms in the Read Right project scored, on average, slightly above those in other research studies—an indication that the professional development and on-site support may be helping the teachers in this area.
Figure 29. Mean fall and spring scores on the CLASS.

Note: Lines on each bar graph represent comparison of prekindergarten sites in the current study with a large scale study undertaken by the University of Virginia. The means for each of these is: Positive Climate = 4.72; Classroom Organization = 4.00; Instructional Support = 1.99.
Instructional Practices

Classroom Fidelity Observations

Classroom Observations occurred twice during the year and were targeted toward evaluating teachers’ fidelity to intervention principles. Observers spent a morning watching teachers implement their large group, small group (although most classrooms did not participate in small group instructional interactions during observation cycles, hence, they are not included in these analyses) and free play routines. Observations occurred right after the third (Phonological Awareness) and fourth (Informational Texts) module units were delivered to teachers. Mid-year observations occurred during February while late spring observations occurred at the end of April and the beginning of May. Teachers’ practices were evaluated with regard to the following intervention foci:

1. Repeated Interactive Story Book Reading
2. Lifting the Language (building vocabulary and syntax through conversations)
3. Print and Letter Awareness (letter knowledge and concepts of print)
4. Phonological Awareness (blending, segmenting, rhyming, letter sounds associations)

It should be noted that observers generally only observed for one 30 minute cycle during free choice (centers) in each classroom and for one large group time only. Hence, if teachers split up their instruction significantly, it is possible that some of their activities may not have been captured by this observation schedule. Although most teachers tended to lump their repeated interactive story book reading routines with their phonological, alphabet knowledge, and concepts of print time (i.e., PAC time), others did these activities at different times. As a result of the way these interactions were coded, it is possible that some teachers’ implementation of PAC time was not captured during fidelity observations.

Although teachers had been trained on the last module (Real Time), which focused on using informational texts, implementation by teachers the last few weeks of school did not occur on a daily basis. Hence, it was determined that teachers implementation of Real Time strategies would be evaluated in year 2 of the intervention.

Scores for the four subscales highlighted previously are presented in the figures below regarding teachers’ use of language, print and letter awareness and phonological awareness activities in both free play and large group contexts (a complete list of variables that were scored during both large group and free choice classroom routines are presented in Appendix F and Appendix G). Observations were scored according to the following scale:

- 3 (Established): teacher clearly and consistently demonstrates indicator (i.e., it is clearly within her skill set)
- 2 (Developing): teacher implements indicator, but does so inconsistently (i.e., about ½ the time, does not appear teacher has a complete ownership of skill)
- 1 (Emerging): teacher attempts to use targeted strategies, but implementation is rather fleeting (i.e., occurs once within observation cycle)
- 0 (No Evidence): skill or strategy does not occur during observation period.
**Large Group.** Teachers were observed reading storybooks during each observation cycle. Teachers showed significant improvement from the mid-point observation to the end of year observation on their ability to effectively implement Interactive Repeated Book Reading routines. An examination of means on individual items on this domain suggest that teachers improved their ability to introduce the book or use problem statements and improved the quality of their 1st, 2nd and 3rd readings. No change was evident in teachers’ use of pointing and commenting on the pictures from midyear and endyear time points. In addition, teachers did not show improvement in their use of expressive voice and facial expressions during this time period.

It should be noted that teachers scored relatively high on this indicator at both time points. Although we do not have information from the beginning of the year about teachers interactive story book reads, these data appear to suggest that teachers became more competent in their implementation of this portion of the intervention as the year progressed. In addition, the majority of large group observations during both observation cycles occurred during the 1st and 2nd book readings (see Appendix F). This may explain the relatively low ratings that teachers received on Lifting the Language (large group), Print and Letter Awareness (large group), and Phonological Awareness Activities (large group). First and second readings encourage teachers to push in vocabulary and feelings, but do not ask teachers to engage in open-ended questions or have extended conversations with children. In addition, because Interactive Repeated Story Book Readings were a priority, observations at this time may have missed teachers’ engagement in phonological awareness activities that happened during PAC time. As evidenced the ratings, however, some teachers did participate in PAC time at the end of their storybook time. In contrast, other teachers may have saved the activity for another portion of the day that was not observed (See Figure 30). Finally, with regard to PAC time, these observations generally focused on one dimension of phonological awareness, letter knowledge, or concepts of print, and were not sustained for a significant amount of time. Thus, the observation schedule may have limited the outcomes reported here.

**Free Choice (Centers).** Teachers were also observed for 30 minutes during centers and were evaluated on their implementation of “Lifting the Language” interactions with children, as well as their promotion of children’s Phonological Awareness, Letter Knowledge and Concepts of Print skills. As evidenced by Figure 31, teachers were not consistent with the quality of their language interactions with children over the course of both observation cycles. Although some high quality language interactions were clearly evident (e.g., using open ended questions and tuning in and commenting on children’s point of interest), teachers were less likely to demonstrate other high quality language interaction characteristics (e.g., modeling the use of target vocabulary across learning contexts, introducing and defining vocabulary). Although these language interactions are just a snapshot of what was happening in classrooms at one point in time, they do suggest that teachers were inconsistent in their use of “Lifting the Language” techniques. In addition to language interactions, teachers shared very few interactions with children around phonological awareness and print awareness skills during center time. However, teachers did display significant improvement in the frequency and quality of their interactions with children around letters and print knowledge during the mid-point and end point observations.
Figure 30. Mean teachers’ implementation of characteristics of the professional development intervention in large group contexts

Note: Significant differences in teachers’ practices were only evident between mid and end year observations in Interactive Repeated Storybook Reads.
Figure 31. Mean teachers’ Implementation of characteristics of the professional development intervention during free choice (centers) interactions

Note: Significant differences in teachers’ practices were only evident between mid and end year observations in teachers’ talk about print and letters during free choice time.
Teacher Perceptions

Focus Groups

Teachers’ experiences with the professional development aspects of Read Right were also examined in focus groups. Focus groups were convened at the end of the school year to determine teachers’ experiences with the project. Each focus group consisted of 6 teachers (lead and assistant teachers were interviewed at different times) who were randomly assigned to each group. Teachers were asked questions about their experiences with the professional development components of Read Right, as well as their perceptions of how the project impacted their classroom practices and children’s development. A semi-structured format for interviews was used, in that teachers were also asked the same prompting questions so that responses would remain on topic across the focus groups. Teachers’ responses to questions were audio-taped and transcribed for coding.

During the focus groups and interviews, teachers frequently referenced two elements of their professional development experience: (1) changing the way they communicate with the children and the way they “lift the language” from stories and conversations with children and (2) reinforcement and support provided by the facilitators (coaches) for incorporating what was learned during professional development workshops.

Language and Communication

Almost every teacher noted that the most beneficial aspect of the training was learning to “lift the language,” and focus on their communication with children in the classroom. Several teachers across all the classrooms noted how surprised they were with the children’s ability to pick up new language skills. Teachers with a large number of children who were ELL were also quite surprised that their students quickly picked up on and tried to use new vocabulary in their conversations. In these instances, teachers usually spoke about book reading, communication, and center time with students. One teacher summarized the entire experience by saying:

“For me it’s been a very positive effect. I plan differently when I read stories. We have three or four reads with the stories; I find that to be effective. To have introduction to centers, we have things in the centers, and children see them and think what do we do with them. So we have learned to introduce and familiarize them. Their vocabulary has increased, talking about timing, asking about compound words. They are lifting their language and expressing themselves. Before it was pointing to, but now they are expressing themselves.”

Book Reads. Teachers frequently noted the difference the training made on their philosophy about book reads. Across all classrooms, teachers spoke about being “intentional” in identifying language in book reads, reading stories multiple times so students could “go deeper” in understanding elements of stories such as main idea, characters, plot, etc.:

Teacher 1: “I like this experience too, because reading the stories last year, I used to just open the book and read the stories, but now it’s really I am reading sophisticated books. I
know what I am trying to push in them and pull out from them. I have a clear picture of that in my mind. And introducing centers is a great experience because before that every center is there, but now I am introducing everyday new things and they know where it is and they know how to work with that. I think this book is really good, I really like it.”

Teacher 2: “Mine is from the story aspect.... I haven’t looked at this sophisticated way of getting them to really think about the story and read it several times and that way they take ownership of the story because our kids have gone the Ezra Jack Keets way. I mean they know Peter back and forth, and we’ve actually done an author study, and they wanted to know more books about Ezra Jack Keets. So it’s really beneficial to them. ...On the side we think, ‘oh it’s a good book they’ll learn a lot,’ but then when you actually apply it to the children, and they respond back, you can see that they’re learning. And, they also have a better understanding on the parts of the book. I mean, they know the title and are able to retell you the title and they also know the characters of the stories and they also can tell you more what the character is doing and main ideas and they are very expressional in their stories and I come up, for my kids, with a lot of new vocabulary words. The language is being lifted.”

Teacher 3: “I have also had, with the repeated read alouds, my kids have fallen in love with certain authors because we have read those books so many times and I can read a book from that same author that, for example the Peters Chair and then we read the Snowy Day and we actually did an author's study and we had three or four authors we focused on. Ezra Jack Keets and look it’s another Peter book. Peter is in this book too, or Peter is not but his friend Roberto is and they just loved it. Watching them then retell the story to themselves and watching them 'bring out the cake, bring out the cake' repeating it the same way I did, even when they are laying down on their mats trying to get their rest chanting the way I did. Watching their interaction with the books in classroom, that I hadn’t seen last year.

**Communication.** Another common theme that surfaced related to changes in how teachers’ communicate with their students, especially as it relates to how they raised their expectations of what PreK children can do. A number of teachers expressed a change in how they communicate with students:

Teacher 1: “The conversations, I have learned to ask more open ended prompts. And, of course, working with a high Hispanic population, in the beginning they hardly speak any English. I learned different strategies to use to maybe get them to spit out what they can say. Also, looking at the sophisticated story book, warm up before you start reading, going through and picking out the vocabulary that needs to be defined and linking the events and those type of things. It’s been rewarding and definitely very beneficial.”

Teacher 2: “I think when I started with this program I would have never thought to do “lift the language” with the four year olds, especially with the Hispanic children. It’s helping me to raise my expectations of what they’re expected to do and realize that, yes they can do it. I just need to put it out there for them. Last year, I almost simplified the
language for them, because I didn’t think they would understand. So, if I had something, I would simplify what it was instead of calling it ‘an owl’ [I’d say] ‘oh it’s a bird’ or calling it an ‘owl baby.’ But now I know they can use those sophisticated words, tier 3, tier 4 words. [I did this] for everybody, most specifically for the English Language Learners, yes all of [my students]. I think that we need to start with this now so they won’t be behind when they go to third grade. Bringing that chart has been a big help, too. I just wish that we could get it out there to the kindergarten and first grade teachers, also. I think it needs to continue on up not just stay with us. This would have been helpful when I taught first grade.”

Teacher 3: “I think we underestimate four year olds because they are like sponges. They take it all in. Even when we started doing the compound words. I said ‘let’s delete words’, and they say ‘we have nothing’. And they went around and wanted to come up with compound words. So it’s amazing how much information they have learned. I’d never doubt their ability to do. They are quite capable.

Center Time. Finally, teachers discussed how incorporating “lifting the language” expanded how they used centers and center time instruction in the classroom:

Teacher 1: “It’s made me more conscious of what I am doing in the classroom, how I am speaking to the children. During centers I am not just watching and observing, but actually interacting with the children more than I was before. And adding if they don’t understand what I am saying the first time, using several different words that mean the same thing to lift that language. If they don’t understand what something is, use five or six synonyms for it until they find something they can relate to and understand.”

Teacher 2: “I did introduce centers before, but not with this much detail. And to give them naming words and describing and action words. I am more excited about the language that comes out of it now. Because, before, I showed them and I gave them an idea of what I wanted to do. But because of all the details that I now put into introducing the center, they fulfill my goals. I really like that. Reading...I did some of the things they have shown us, but it makes me think I have proof behind it. ...[Last year] I didn’t do it every time, but I feel much more confident. I can say why I am doing that. I can see the children’s language increase. Because I was more interested in padding the vocabulary or pulling the information from them. Much more detail. I am a comfortable and confident teacher because of the experience. I can see them talking. I understand to wait for them now, not to just give them my ideas when I am tuning in to the conversation. This has been a blessing to me and my students.”

Facilitators (Coaches)

Teachers also cited the facilitators as a major benefit of Read Right. Teachers compared the benefits of this training experience to past experiences, where implementing what they learned in training sessions into the classroom was difficult. The on-site support from the facilitators was mentioned numerous times:
Teacher 1: “Applying it. I think that’s what helps cause most of the trainings I’ve been to in the past they do not have someone that comes behind you and reinforces it. Because you go to a training, you’re all pumped, and you want to do it. You go back to class and it falls apart. But here, they give you tools, they tell what you need to do, and there is someone there to help you in case you do have a question. I’d say I’ve taken more time and actually considered more things, a different way to teach the children I guess. The implementation. That’s change cause you have that support. It’s a lot more work, but I’ve seen the benefit.”

Teacher 2: “I agree too because it seems like the facilitators are the ones who take you by the hand and walk you through what was said at the workshops. And it’s been wonderful to have them come in and model with our children with a true full class. You know the kids that we work with every day versus [what] we’ve seen modeling with kids. They’re not necessarily the same as our school. So where our children are at, we can see them and how they’re going to receive what we’re going to be doing. That is great to be able to sit there and watch. If there’s something I’m not understanding, she’ll just say, ‘you know let me do it today, you watch’ and it’s just been wonderful.”

Teachers also discussed the challenges of transferring lessons or activities learned while participating in professional development workshops into their own classroom environments with their specific students. One teacher noted how the coaching model helped her bring what she had learned to her classroom:

“To piggy back on what you said about working with our children, it is a different setting totally different. When you think about children in poverty or how [our students] are not getting everything that they need, it is very hard for them to just sit still. We have a lot to deal with, and we have children who may not be able to just sit. But just to see it brought back to our own centers and schools where it’s brought to their level and it’s implemented in a way that they can understand. They [the facilitators] can get through it, ...and it is geared around the differences that we actually encounter.”

Challenges

When asked about challenges implementing aspects of the Read Right professional development modules in the classroom, teachers referenced several areas where they needed, and in many cases received, additional support. One central theme that teachers continued to struggle with was the planning process, including administrative duties (e.g., the paperwork associated with planning) and the alignment between the curriculum and the strategies learned in professional development. Teachers noted how difficult it was to be more engaged with the students while also collecting data for work sampling portfolios:

Teacher 1: “To me planning is the hardest thing. We have to plan the lesson plan, sophisticated, so much writing, this is the hardest part. I like the program, but so much planning. This program has clear the concepts. We learned to do it step by step. It’s
more clear. The other plan, we have to use the information book for math and science concepts. After I learn it, it’s more easier. But to write, it’s hard. But this program makes my lesson plan clearer. The individual things and everything I have learned here, it’s easy to follow, cut and dry. I know what I am supposed to do. It’s when I sit down with the Bright From the Start template and try to plug it all in, the way they want it to be, and that’s when I run into the problem.”

Teacher 2. “Well, I think before, I would spend a lot of my time and energy during center time taking notes and not really observing. So I have been more engaged with children now. Because I know I still have to do the other stuff, but I think this is so important. So that has been a bit of a challenge, to balance that out. Getting enough notes. When she [a reviewer] came in January, she said ‘you don’t have any more pictures’, and I said ‘no because I am spending more time talking with them’. So honestly, I don’t have as many pictures as I did this time last year. But I’m okay with that. And she didn’t have a problem with that. It’s been a bit of challenge to balance it all, but it’s been fine and I think this much more important, to engage with them.”
References


Appendix

Appendix A. *Student participant characteristics.*

Appendix B. *Teacher participant characteristics.*

Appendix C. *Mean student performance by language group.*

Appendix D. *Mean classroom quality as indicated by ELLCO.*

Appendix E. *Mean classroom quality as indicated by CLASS.*

Appendix F. *Mean classroom quality as indicated by Fidelity Observations—Large Group.*

Appendix G. *Mean classroom quality as indicated by Fidelity Observations—Centers.*
### Appendix A

*Student participant characteristics.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Education—Highest degree obtained</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from parent survey, 101 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College or AA/AS</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS or Graduate Degree</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identified Disability—Child has IEP</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from parent survey, 101 respondents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Language Services</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited English Proficiency</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary language spoken at home is not English (teacher report)</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix B

Teacher participant characteristics (self-reported).

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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Lead Teacher (n=21)</th>
<th>Assistant Teacher (n=19)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education—Highest degree obtained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA/AS Degree</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS Degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Teaching in PreK</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
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