Co-Constructing Language and Literacy: Lessons from the Speech, Literacy, Play Collaboration Project

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Learning Objectives

Describe the role of interdisciplinary collaboration between SLPs and educators in supporting emergent literacy within early childhood classrooms.

Identify play-based strategies and professional development practices that foster language-rich learning environments.

Apply implementation strategies to support SLP-educator collaboration in their own school settings.

Purpose of the Project

The goal of this project was to emphasize how all children can benefit from a collaborative approach between Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and educators as we work toward a common goal of improved emergent literacy outcomes for children in West Virginia.

Prevention

Identification

Speech-Language Pathologists and Educators

Assessment

Collaboration

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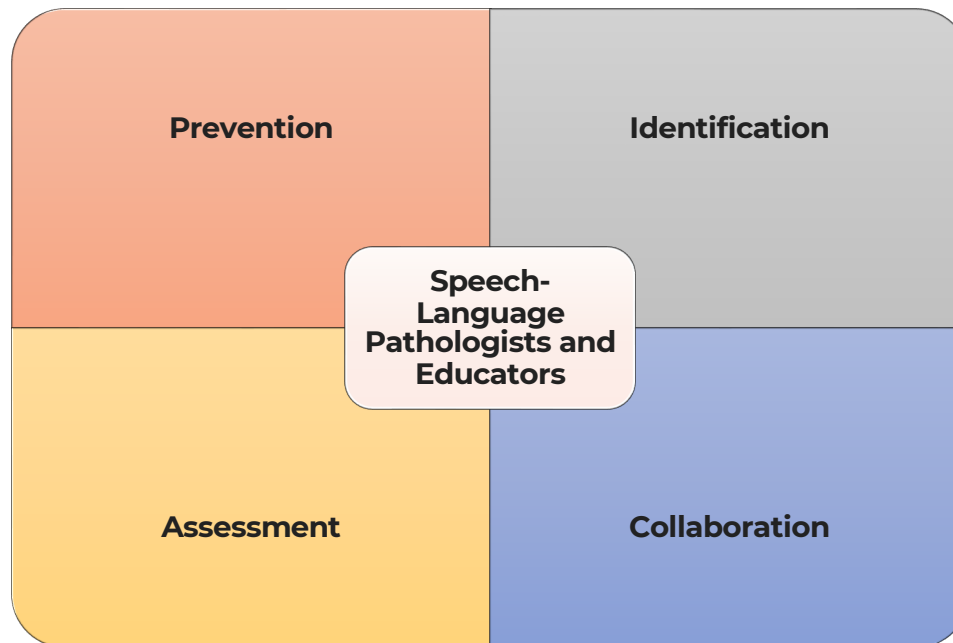
Promoting Early Literacy

- Early language & literacy experiences are predictors of long-term reading success (-).

- Traditional pull-out models of therapy may limit generalization (-).

- Embedded collaboration maximizes natural learning opportunities to expose children to literacy.

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Our Collaborative Model

Weekly in-class sessions included licensed SLPs, graduate students, and undergraduate students with a major in Communication Disorders (CD).

Joint planning workshops with educators, SLPs, and CD students.

Embedded strategies aligned with classroom routines & interests.

Regular weekly collaboration fostered trust and shared skills.

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The Context

Classrooms inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach.

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Open exploration activities (e.g., pretend play, building structures, sensory experiences)

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Early literacy strategies, such as those of Greenberg & Weitzman (2014h

| Point-Out-Print (POP) : A print knowledge strategy that calls attention to print in the child's environment to facilitate learning how print works. It emphasizes that print is a form of functional communication, and print directionality (e.g., left to right, top to bottom). | Characters, Setting, Problem, Actions, Resolutions (CSPAR): A story comprehension story that helps children understand the basic elements of a story to better make sense of it. | Stress, Show/Tell, and Relate, Say (SSTaRS): A vocabulary strategy that highlights new vocabulary words by drawing attention to them. It allows a child to develop a dynamic understanding of the word to use the word on their own. |

Project Outcomes

Project Outcomes

Outcome 1: Students will show growth in important literacy fundamentals as measured by the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS). The assessment will be given at the beginning and end of the project to all students (PREK and KG).

Outcome 2: Educators (SLPs and classroom teachers) will collaborate to create, test, and revise developmentally appropriate play-based language experiences and share the successes and challenges of implementation.

Outcome 3: Families will share their understanding of the importance of early language and literacy development for children and how to support them at home.

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Student Growth in Literacy

2 Schools
- MUEE STEAM Center
- MUEE STEAM Center at Explorer Academy (EA)

3 Classrooms
- MUEE STEAM Center PreK Classroom
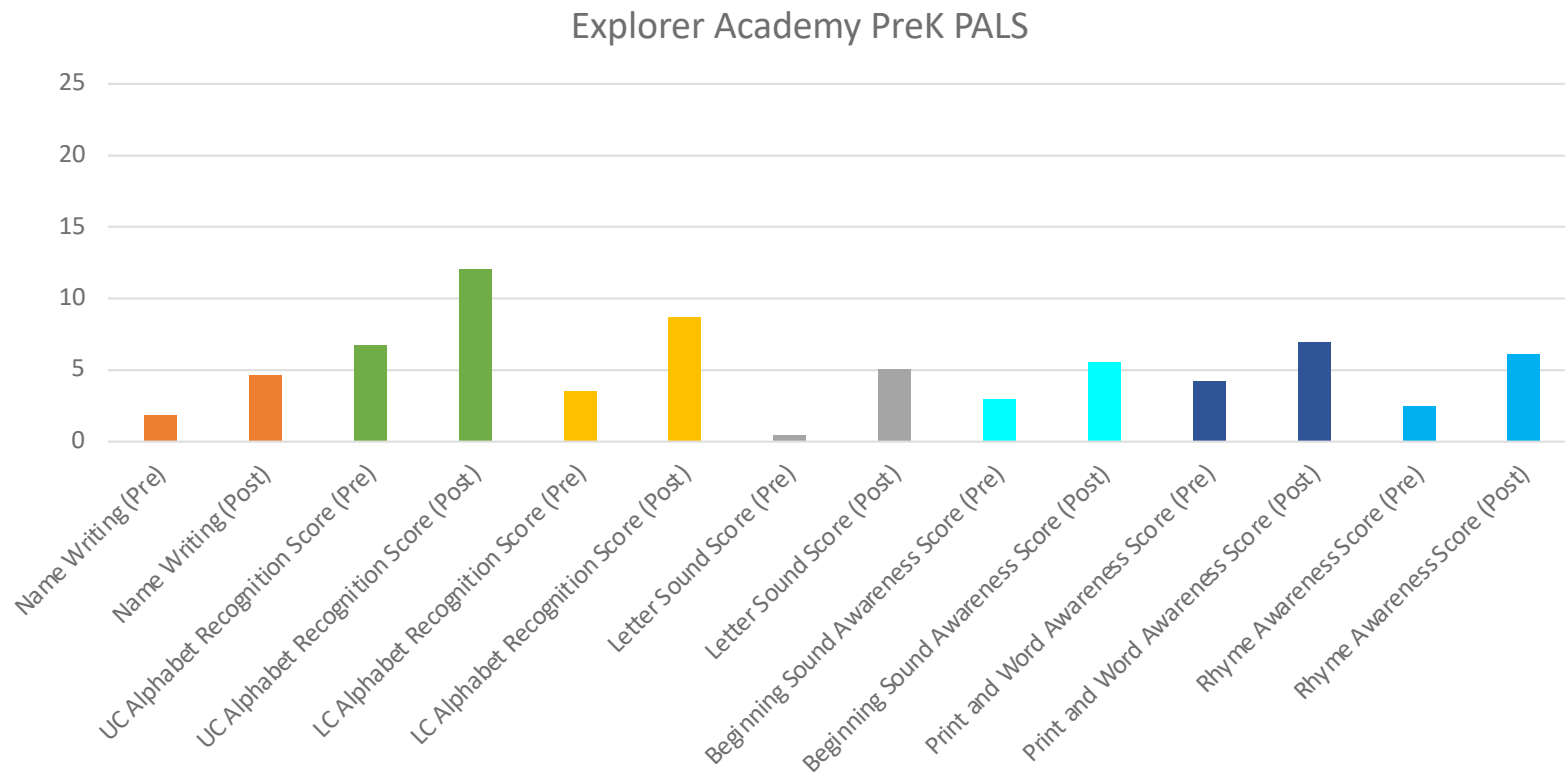- MUEE STEAM Center EA PreK
- EA Kindergarten

PALS PreK Subtests
- Name Writing
- Upper Case Alphabet Recognition
- Lower Case Alphabet Recognition
- Letter Sounds
- Beginning Sound Awareness
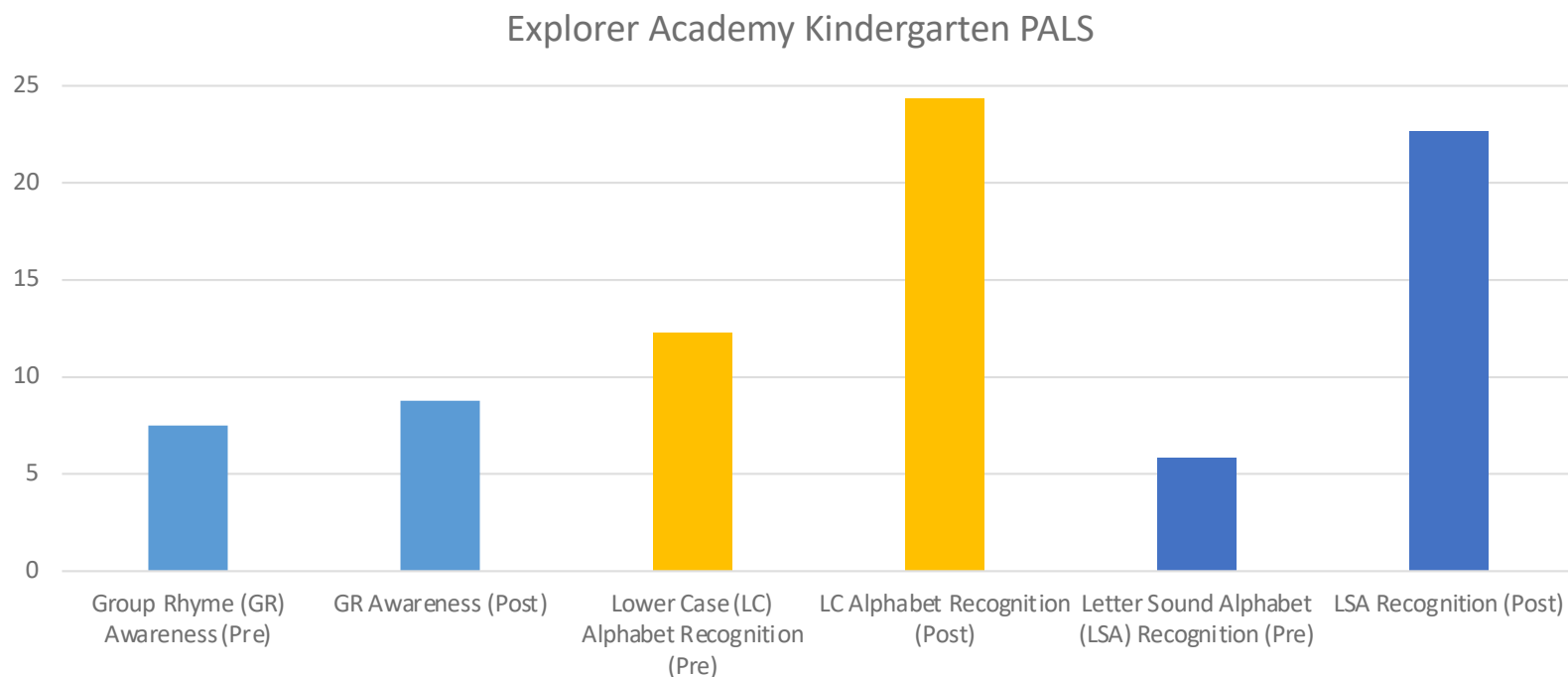- Print and Word Awareness
- Rhyme Awareness

PALS Kindergarten Subtests
- Group Rhyme Awareness
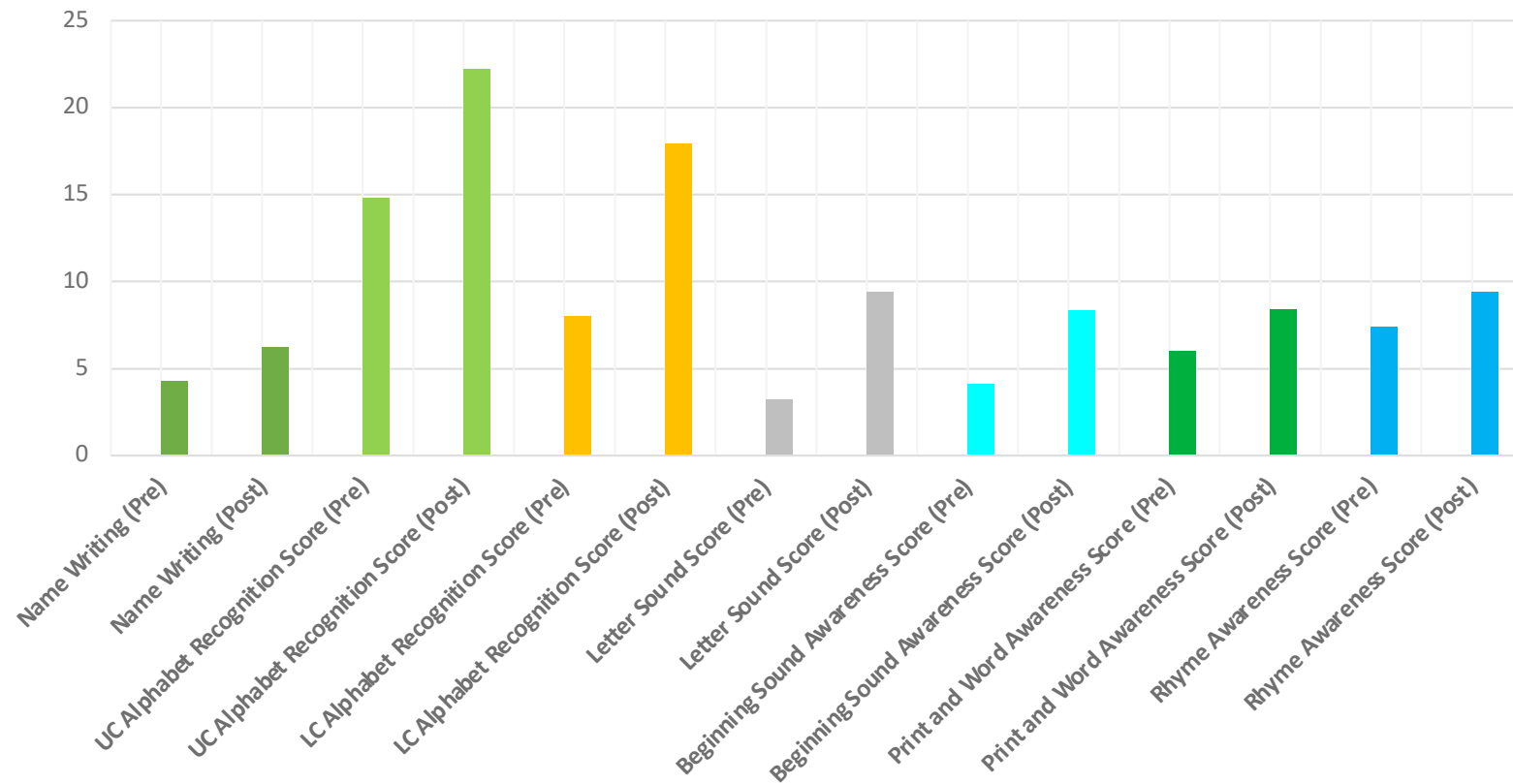- Lower Case Alphabet Recognition
- Letter Sound Score Analysis

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Student Growth—Explorer Academy: PreK

Explorer Academy PreK PALS

Student Growth—Explorer Academy: Kindergarten

Explorer Academy Kindergarten PALS

Student Growth—MUEE STEAM Center: PreK

Educators Perspectives

Outcome 2: Educators (SLPs and classroom teachers) will collaborate to create, test, and revise developmentally appropriate play-based language experiences and share the successes and challenges of implementation.

SLP-Teacher Collaboration and Roles: This project shifted the participating teachers' understanding of the SLP's role in the classroom and literacy development.

Impact on Student Literacy Engagement

Facilitation and Model Strategies

Sustainability

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Family Involvement

Outcome 3: Families will share their understanding of the importance of early language and literacy development for children and how to support them at home.

Value of Literacy at Home: Families expressed a strong awareness of the importance of early language and literacy development. This reflects a growing recognition among families that early literacy requires collaboration between school and home.

Engagement from Dads: Several families, particularly fathers, expressed interest in learning how to support their children better, focusing on areas such as sustaining attention during reading, developing speech sounds, and enhancing reading comprehension.

Willingness to Participate: All parents who participated expressed interest in learning more literacy strategies. These conversations affirmed families' readiness to collaborate and extend literacy learning into the home, highlighting the potential for future family-focused sessions to meet expressed needs.

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Lessons Learned

From educators, SLPs, and Families

Educators	SLPs	Families
• Deeper understanding of SLP's role and new strategies for literacy integration. • Children received one-on-one support, which provided opportunities for teachers to support other students.	• Broadened understanding of classroom management and curriculum, children's individual learning profiles and needs, and relationship-building with educators and families.	• Stronger awareness of literacy importance & home strategies. • While classroom collaboration flourished, parent engagement emerged as an area for further development.

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Development of Resources

- Guidance document

- Tool Kit

- Print and video resources on early literacy strategies

- This Summit!

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Additional Implications

- Additional support for the identification of at-risk students.

- Early exposure to clinical and educational experiences for undergraduate students.

- Interprofessional collaboration between the June Harless Center and the CD Department at Marshall University to inform higher education practices.

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