BACKGROUND

Family literacy intervention has been advocated as a means of reducing inequalities in children’s literacy development at school entry. Peter Hannon and Cathy Nutbrown collaborated with teachers, schools and the Sheffield LEA in the Nuffield-funded Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) Project to devise and evaluate a family literacy intervention programme. Work was completed in collaboration with Anne Morgan and Kath Hirst.

Nature of intervention

The Programme was designed for families with children aged 3½ to 5 years and used the ORIM Framework to support parents’ capacity to provide Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Model for key strands of early literacy (Hannon, 1995). This included home visits by teachers, provision of literacy resources, postal communication with families, centre-based activities and special events. Family involvement was of low intensity (contact approximately monthly) and long duration (around eighteen months) (Nutbrown, Hannon & Morgan 2005).

The families

Eighty-eight families, from eleven schools in disadvantaged communities, were invited at random to participate. Nine percent were bilingual. There was 100% take-up and high levels of participation.

EVALUATION BY RCT

In addition to qualitative studies there was a randomised control trial evaluation. Literacy development was measured at three points: (1) Pre-programme, SELDP (Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile) (Nutbrown 1997); (2) End of programme (school entry), SELDP; (3) School follow-up, Key Stage One Standard Assessment (Literacy) Tasks.

Programme-control differences were analysed in terms of effect size (difference between programme and control group mean scores expressed as proportion of control group standard deviation). Effect size of 0.2 was regarded as ‘small’, 0.5 as ‘medium’; 0.8 as ‘large’ (Cohen, 1992).

REFERENCES


FINDINGS

Across the whole programme group there was an effect size of 0.4 at end of programme but the effects faded later in school.

Effect size for whole group

However, for some children, particularly those whose mothers had no educational qualifications, the effects were much stronger and more persistent.

Effect sizes for different groups

REAL PROJECT PUBLICATIONS


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