RESEARCH PROJECTS

ELICIT: Enhancing Literacy Instruction through Collaboration and Interactive Technology

This study is part of a collaborative relationship with teachers in two Boston Public Schools, faculty (Patrick Proctor) and graduate students at Boston College, and faculty (Jeanne Paratore) and graduate students at Boston University. Together we are examining the effects of a multi-modal professional development intervention on teachers’ attitudes toward and perceptions of an approach to classroom discussion (collaborative reasoning); on teachers’ ability to effectively implement the approach; and on the effects of the approach on student discourse, reading comprehension, and writing. The project expands traditional school-based PD by combining regular face-to-face meetings between teachers and instructional coaches with an online forum through which teachers upload recorded segments of their literacy instruction with diverse learners to be shared with peers and coaches. The model allows for real time and asynchronous interactions around reflective teaching and instructional coaching, maximizing the potential for a productive coaching role, as promoted in current federal and state initiatives. This study is funded through the Collaborative Fellows Grant (Boston College) and through the Boston StepUp Initiative, an inter-university collaboration to support 10 low-performing Boston Public Schools.

Examining and Explaining Effects of A Family Literacy Program on Children’s Language and Literacy Performance

Research demonstrates that children benefit from collaborative support from families and teachers, but not all parent-involvement programs yield positive learning outcomes for children. Most notably, the largest funded family literacy program in US history (EvenStart) was recently defunded because findings failed to prove its effectiveness. Some of the unevenness may be explained by the particular focus of various programs (e.g., literacy, parenting, behavior management). But even programs that focus intensely on literacy abilities sometimes yield substantially different outcomes. Our line of research is designed to better understand factors that contribute to positive outcomes of parent-child literacy interventions. We focus on these questions: (a) Do children whose parents participate in a family literacy intervention that focuses particularly on improving the parents’ English literacy and the parents’ support of children’s literacy and language development outperformed their peers on measures of literacy and language development? (b) Is there a relationship between children’s vocabulary knowledge on entry and the effects of the family literacy intervention? (c) Is there a relationship between children’s early language and literacy growth and the dispersion of particular types of family literacy events? (d) Is there a relationship between dispersion of
particular types of family literacy events, hours of participation in a family literacy program, and parent characteristics (i.e., education, years in the US, English proficiency)?

*Ready to Learn Educational Media and Children’s Learning: An online pathway to Improving Teachers’ and Their Students’ Opportunities to Learn from and about Educational Media*

Data indicate that when educational media are effectively integrated into early childhood settings (i.e., a sound curriculum, with well-developed programming and well-prepared teachers) children experience positive outcomes related to motivation, engagement, early literacy, early mathematics, and technology skills and knowledge. However, having access to technologies does not necessarily translate into quality programs. Evidence indicates that children’s use of computers in schools is both uneven and mediocre, and differs by school-poverty status: children in high poverty schools used computers for reading and mathematics skill and drill; children in low-poverty schools used computers to gather information and build knowledge. The lack of effective use and instructional integration of technology can be traced back to teacher knowledge: Many teachers are not sufficiently skillful in either using or teaching their students to use technology. This work is designed to provide formative data on teachers’ implementation of 7 professional development modules that are intended as a pathway toward teachers’ effective integration of educational media within teachers’ existing instructional practices in early math and early literacy and language. The context for the study is kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in two high-poverty, urban schools. The approach includes use of educational technology (ipads, interactive whiteboards, desktop and laptop computers), high quality educational media (PBS programming), and high quality curriculum support (*Teaching Tips* modules developed specifically to guide use of the PBS programs).

**Biographical Sketch**

Jeanne R. Paratore is Professor of Education and Coordinator of the Reading Education and Literacy and Language Education Programs at Boston University. She directs the university-based reading and writing clinic and she is research advisor to the Intergenerational Literacy Program, a family literacy program she founded in 1989 to support the English literacy learning of immigrant parents and their children. She is a former classroom teacher, reading specialist, and Title I director. She has conducted research and written widely on issues related to family literacy, classroom grouping practices, and interventions for struggling readers. She is also a co-author of one of the nation’s leading reading programs. Dr. Paratore served as co-curriculum director of the award-winning children’s television series, *Between the Lions*. She is a member of the Reading Hall of Fame and she is the recipient of the New England Reading Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award. She is a frequent speaker on literacy instruction and has presented at local, national, and international conferences as well as in school districts throughout the United States. Dr. Paratore can be reached at jparator@bu.edu or at 617-353-3285.