

# Play - Literacy in Kindergarten



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## Introduction

The increasing accountability framework in Kindergarten education has put pressure on teachers to ensure that students reach certain literacy milestones before proceeding to the subsequent grade. One result of this shift is a tension between an emphasis on academic learning and the use of developmentally appropriate practices, such as play. This project investigated the enacted **integration of literacy learning within play-based pedagogies** in kindergarten classrooms.



## Methods



12 FDK classrooms



1 hr semi-structured interviews with teachers



10 hr+ of classroom observations



1755 minutes of recorded observations

## Results

### Play & Developmental Group



Teachers:

- Described a **misalignment** between play and literacy development

Students:

- Limited engagement in literacy behaviours during play
- Engaged in free play with little educator involvement

### Integrated Play & Learning Group



Teachers:

- Described a **connection** between play and literacy development

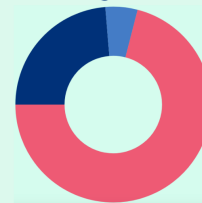
Students:

- Participated in play centres designed to promote literacy
- Engaged in more diverse play types with educators who promoted opportunities for literacy development

### Challenges found by all teachers:

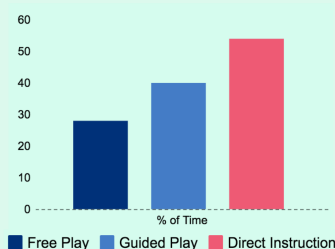
- 1 Direct Instruction plays a key role in literacy learning
  - Observed the most often - 71% of observations
- 2 Free Play is less structured and difficult to plan
  - Observed in 23.7% of observations
- 3 Teachers feel uncertain how to implement guided play
  - Observed the least often - 5.3% of observations

Learning Context



■ Free Play ■ Guided Play ■ Direct Instruction

Time spent on Literacy Skills



- 1 Literacy behaviours were observed the most often in direct instruction (54%)
- 2 Literacy behaviours were observed the least often in free play (28%)
- 3 Literacy behaviours were observed more often in guided play (40%) than in free play

## Conclusion

The classroom observations of children's play showed evidence of more literacy-play integration by students in the integrated play and learning group. However, all teachers expressed challenges associated with implementing a play-based learning program. These results point to the need for additional research and teacher training with respect to implementing guided play for literacy learning and negotiating the balance between direct instruction and play-based approaches.



Pyle, A., Poliszczuk, D., & Danniels, E. (2018). The challenges of promoting literacy integration within a play-based learning kindergarten program: Teacher perspectives and implementation. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*.

Pyle, A., Prioletta, J., & Poliszczuk, D. (2018). The play-literacy interface in full-day kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46(1), 117-127. DOI: 10.1007/s10643-017-0852-z