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The Influence of Pretend Play on Children's and Language and Pre-Literacy Skills

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Abstract

The role of pretend play on children's cognitive development has garnered interest recently. This study examines the efficacy of a pretend play intervention on the self-regulation and language skills of four- to five-year-olds. Pretend play includes a pretender projecting a mental representation onto reality. The sample consisted of 60 children who were randomized into two groups: (a) Pretend play; and (b) Art activities. The intervention included sixteen 30-minute sessions over 13 weeks, in groups of six children. Each session included: (1) storybook reading; (2) role-playing; and (3) review. During storybook reading explicit phonological awareness and vocabulary instruction were provided for 18 words in each book. Role-playing involved giving children props to partake in pretend play. Review consisted of revising the PA and vocabulary of the target words. The improvements that occurred in the children's self-regulation and language skills contribute to a better understanding of pretend play in educational settings.