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An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Pretend Play on Children's Self-Regulation and Language Skills

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Abstract: Recently, there has been increased interest regarding how pretend play contributes to children's cognitive development. This study examines the efficacy of a pretend play intervention on self-regulation and language skills of 4- to 5-year-olds and explores parents' perceptions about children's engagement in pretend play. The small-scale intervention includes eight 30-minute sessions over 6 weeks, in groups of five children. Each session included: (1) shared storybook reading; (2) role-playing; and (3) review. During shared story-book reading the children were read two books with explicit phonological awareness and vocabulary instruction for 18 words in each book. Role-playing included providing the children with props, which allow for engagement in pretend play activities. Several measures were used pre- and post-intervention to evaluate children's self-regulation and language skills. The improvements that occurred in the intervention are considered alongside other cognitive and educational factors to better understand the role of pretend play in educational settings.