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**Enhancing Early Literacy in Head Start Classrooms:
Four Year Outcomes of Curriculum Research**

School readiness includes several domains of development. For children in low-income families, there is significant risk of failing to acquire the skills of school readiness, especially in the area of early literacy. This study was designed to identify curriculum approaches for Head Start that provide effective enhancement of emergent literacy, and to explore socioemotional and behavioral links to child literacy outcomes.

The study included random assignment of full-day classrooms in Head Start to either one of two emergent literacy intervention conditions or a comparison condition. The intervention curricula were *Let's Begin with The Letter People* (Abrams and Co., 2000), a full-spectrum, teacher-directed curriculum (17 classes), and *Waterford Early Reading Program Level 1* (Waterford Institute, 2001), a computer-based curriculum used as an add-on to classroom activities (17 classes). Comparison classes used the High/Scope Educational Approach (Epstein, Schweinhart, & McAdoo, 1996) otherwise in effect in the Head Start grantee classes (14 classrooms). Children attending Head Start were assessed in the fall and spring of their pre-K year (2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-2004 and 2004-05) on a variety of measures of language and literacy. Teachers completed selected subscales from the Behavioral Assessment System for Children (BASC), a measure of behavioral, attentional, social, and emotional skills. For the fourth cohort, parents also completed the BASC, to afford a fuller picture of correlates of child outcomes. Mixed model ANCOVAs were used to evaluate intervention (fixed) effects, yielding

significantly stronger results for classes incorporating the Let's Begin curriculum vs. the Comparison condition on the Get Ready to Read! Screen ($p = .00$, $d = .38$), McCarthy Drawing ($p = .03$, $d = .27$), Woodcock-Johnson Dictation ($p = .00$, $d = .46$), as well as on Book Knowledge ($p = .00$, $d = .40$), and Letters Known ($p = .01$, $d = .43$). Further, significantly stronger results were obtained for classes incorporating the Waterford intervention vs. the Comparison condition on the Get Ready to Read! Screen ($p = .00$, $d = .24$), McCarthy Drawing ($p = .02$, $d = .24$), Woodcock-Johnson Dictation ($p = .03$, $d = .30$), and Print Concepts ($p = 0.02$, $d = .40$). Teacher reported behavioral ratings demonstrated significant positive relationships between children's adaptability and social skills with their early literacy outcomes, and significant negative relationships between children's levels of aggression, hyperactivity, and attention problems with early literacy outcomes. In the fourth cohort, with the addition of parent report on the BASC, structural equation modeling revealed that teacher and parent ratings of social skills, attention problems and adaptability, and teacher report of withdrawal related significantly to early literacy skills. These relationships provide interesting theoretical links between early literacy learning and socioemotional and behavioral characteristics. These results provide evidence-based support for the inclusion of emergent literacy curricula in Head Start classrooms. Child socioemotional and behavioral characteristics also related to early literacy skill, contributing to the comprehensive picture of school readiness. The study has important implications for efforts to prepare low-income children for success in elementary school.