

Outcome
Summary

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE
Gold Standard

The Creative Curriculum[®] *for* Kindergarten

Fall 2016 Trial Outcome Summary

Teaching Strategies
The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten
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Introduction

In the fall of 2016, Teaching Strategies introduced a new supplemental curriculum solution designed to expand play-based resources in kindergarten classrooms. The extensive research literature focusing on the importance of play led Teaching Strategies to develop *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten*. Prior to the official 2017 release date, Teaching Strategies launched a four-month pilot study promoting the use of play-based resources to enhance high-quality, developmentally appropriate experiences in kindergarten classrooms. Play should be viewed as a valuable classroom activity that enables children to develop a wide variety of social and academic skills (Copple & Bredekamp 2009; Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Singer, & Berk, 2011). *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* solution combines pedagogical theory on play-based learning with the latest child development research to teach academic content and improve student achievement in all areas of development. The goal of this pilot is to help kindergarten classrooms transition into intentional, play-based learning environments to enhance students' developmental and academic skills for later school success.

Background

Beginning in August 2016, Teaching Strategies recruited a diverse sample of elementary school teachers serving kindergarten students for the 2016–2017 academic year. A total of 32 (n=32) schools from four regionally diverse areas across the United States participated as trial classrooms for the 2016-2017 academic year. Of the 32 schools, 70 (n=70) kindergarten teachers were recruited to implement curriculum resources with their incoming kindergarten classes. After sites confirmed participation, Teaching Strategies staff scheduled on-boarding training sessions for the summer of 2016. All on-boarding training sessions were held between mid-August and early September prior to the 2016–2017 academic year. Teaching Strategies offered each teacher, administrator, and instructional coach face-to-face training to further explore *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten*. Teachers completed six hours of training to expand their knowledge on *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* and prepare for the academic year. Additionally, each classroom received the following materials to help integrate project-based investigations into their classroom: *Teaching Guides*, *Intentional Teaching Cards™*, *Mighty Minutes®*, children's books with *Book Discussion Cards™*, *Highlights High Five Bilingüe™*, *Book Conversation Cards™*, and a Resource Organizer.

Implementation Outcomes

For the 2016–2017 academic year, *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* pilot introduced play-based curriculum resources, training, and coaching resources to 70 kindergarten classrooms across the United States. Transitioning classrooms into a play-based model for the 2016–2017 academic year included several successes and challenges with implementation. To identify successes and challenges with implementation, Teaching Strategies collected feedback through 1) focus groups, 2) individual coaching sessions, and 3) online survey administrations through SurveyMonkey.

Post-training feedback results revealed teachers were eager and excited to use *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* components with their students. During monthly focus group sessions, teachers expressed positive feedback on using *Mighty Minutes®* for transition times in their daily schedule. With ongoing coaching, teachers also found the *Intentional Teaching Cards™* useful for differentiating instruction and providing each child in their class with appropriate, individualized curricular experiences. Incorporating *The Creative Curriculum®*, which supplemented the math and literacy curriculum the programs were already using, became easier for teachers with each study they completed. In addition, teachers reported positive feedback about the books from the *Teaching Strategies® Children's Book Collection* that accompanied each *Teaching Guide*. The children were engaged with the books and enjoyed finding characters that represented them. Lastly, teachers in programs with preschool 3 and pre-K 4 classes that use *The Creative Curriculum®* resources reported a higher level of comfort when implementing components of *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten*.

In regards to coaching resources, teachers reported that individual visits were very helpful and tailored to their implementation challenges. Teaching Strategies offered these individual coaching sessions on-site and virtually to address teachers' implementation questions. All coaching sessions were announced and scheduled accordingly with program administrators and teachers. The Teaching Strategies trial support team focused monthly coaching efforts on increasing teachers' proficiency with the *Daily Resources* from *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten*. The *Daily Resources* include the following items: 1) *Teaching Guides*, 2) *Intentional Teaching Cards™*, 3) *Mighty Minutes®*, 4) *Book Conversation Cards™*, 5) *Book Discussion Cards™*, and 6) *Highlights High Five Bilingüe™* issues. Teaching Strategies staff also shared bi-weekly communications to offer ongoing implementation guidance on classroom resources.

Future Recommendations

To support teachers in implementing a project-based approach using *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten*, the following recommendations are suggested. 1) Administrators should be aware that teachers may encounter challenges when establishing a class schedule that incorporates both preexisting and supplemental curriculum resources in their classroom. After an initial on-boarding training, offer time for teachers to work together and explore options for designing a schedule that supports the implementation of multiple curricular resources. This will encourage teachers to integrate components of multiple curriculum systems for optimal classroom use. 2) Administrators should explore coaching options to increase teachers' grade-level subject expertise and build program capacity. Coaching helps teachers become comfortable with *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* and provides an opportunity to share best practices for using the *Daily Resources*. One-on-one or group-setting coaching can serve as a catalyst to help teachers address challenges and share their successes with their grade-level team.

Conclusion

Initial outcomes from *The Creative Curriculum® for Kindergarten* 2016 trial are promising and yield guidance to support future implementation studies. The results are consistent with findings from current research literature on the importance of play in the kindergarten classroom and its impact on student development. For schools, districts, or states interested in a play-based approach to kindergarten, this trial highlights the impact of applying research to practice.

References

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

Fisher, K., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R.M., Singer, D.G., & Berk, L. (2011). Playing around in school: Implications for learning and educational policy. In A. Pelligrini (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the development of play* (pp. 341–360). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
