Classroom Discussion Questions and Further Readings

Recommended use:

These discussion questions and additional readings offer resources useful for undergraduate or graduate classes covering development and evaluation of prekindergarten curricula. Materials are linked to Four Lessons Learned described in Chapter V of Monograph 86.1.

Recommended readings:

Nesbitt, K. T. & Farran, D. C. (2021). Effects of prekindergarten curricula: *Tools of the Mind* as a case study. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 86*(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12425

Videos, commentaries, teaching materials, and more are available at monographmatters.srcd.org

INTRODUCTION

Each topic below corresponds with a particular chapter of the Monograph, and within each topic, there are several discussion questions. After completing the readings from the *Monograph*, students may choose one of the prompts below to write a reflection paper or discuss these issues during class. For a shorter assignment, this could be a 2- to 3-page paper assignment based only on the reading within the monograph. Students could submit these short papers prior to classroom discussion, or they could bring a draft to class and later edit it to integrate the classroom discussion. For a longer research paper assignment for a more advanced class, students could also explore the readings suggested below each topic. Several topics below also have accompanying PowerPoint resources available at monographmatters.srcd.org

TOPICS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Curricula as a Tool for Improving Early Childhood Instruction: Literature Review

Chapter I (Nesbitt & Farran, 2021)

Would the adoption of a scripted, intentional curriculum focused on academic skills prevent later fade out of the effects of prekindergarten programs?

Chambers, B., Cheung, A., & Slavin, R. (2016). Literacy and language outcomes of comprehensive and developmental-constructivist approaches to early childhood education: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review, 18,* 88-111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2016.03.003

Halpern, R. (2013). Tying early childhood education more closely to schooling: Promise, perils and practical problems. *Teachers College Record, 115,* 1-28. https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16744

Jenkins, J., Duncan, G., Auger, A., Bitler, M., Domina, T., & Burchinal, M. (2018). Boosting school readiness: should preschool teachers target skills or the whole child? *Economics of Education Review, 65,* 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.05.001

Jenkins, J., Whitaker, A., Nguyen, T., & Yu, W. (2019). Distinctions without a difference? Preschool curricula and children's development. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 12,* 514-549. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2019.1631420

Wood, E., & Hedges, H. (2016). Curriculum in early childhood education: Critical questions about content, coherence, and control. *The Curriculum Journal, 27*(3)*,* 387-405. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2015.1129981

How do self-regulation and executive function skills relate to academic achievement?

Should the focus in prekindergarten be on the development of self-regulation and executive function skills?

Bierman, K.L., Nix, R.L., Greenberg, M.T., Blair, C., & Domitrovich, C.E. (2008) Executive functions and school readiness intervention: Impact, moderation, and mediation in the Head Start REDI Program. *Development and Psychopathology, 20,* 821-843. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579408000394

Fuhs, M., Nesbitt, K., Farran, D., & Dong, N. (2014). Longitudinal associations between executive functioning and academic skills across content areas. *Developmental Psychology, 50,* 1698-1709. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036633

Jacob, R., & Parkinson, J. (2015). The potential for school-based interventions that target executive function to improve academic achievement: A review. *Review of Educational Research*, *85*(4), 512-552. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314561338

McClelland, M. M., Tominey, S. L., Schmitt, S. A., Hatfield, B., Purpura, D., Gonzales, C., & Tracy, A. (2019). Red Light, Purple Light! Results of an intervention to promote school readiness for children from low-income backgrounds. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 2365. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02365

Nesbitt, K., Farran, D., & Fuhs, M. (2015). Executive function skills and academic achievement gains in prekindergarten: Contributions of learning-related behaviors. *Developmental Psychology, 51,* 865-878*.* https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000021

Schmitt, S. A., Geldhof, G. J., Purpura, D. J., Duncan, R., & McClelland, M. M. (2017). Examining the relations between executive function, math, and literacy during the transition to kindergarten: A multi-analytic approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 109*(8), 1120–1140. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000193

Experimental Research Designs to Evaluate Prekindergarten Curricula

Chapters II and III (Nesbitt & Farran, 2021)

How can researchers conduct randomized controlled trials in field-based settings?

Century, J., Rudnick, M., & Freeman, C. (2010). A framework for measuring fidelity of implementation: A foundation for shared language and accumulation of knowledge. *American Journal of Evaluation, 31*, 199-218. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214010366173

Graham, J. W., (2009). Missing data analysis: making it work in the real world. *Annual Review of Psychology, 60*, 549-576. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085530

PowerPoint presentation:
Nesbitt, K. T. & Farran, D. C. (2021). Randomized controlled trials in field-based settings [PowerPoint]. Available from Monograph Matters

Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford publications.

Hedges, L. and Rhoads, C. (2009). *Statistical power analysis in education research* (NCSER 2010-3006). Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20103006/pdf/20103006.pdf

Kraft, M. A. (2020). Interpreting effect sizes of education interventions. *Educational Researcher*, *49*, 241-253. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X20912798

National Research Council (2004). *Implementing randomized field trials in education: Report of a workshop*. The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/10943

How can the effectiveness of an early childhood curriculum be assessed?

Experimental evaluations mean teachers are always teaching something newly learned but non-experimental evaluation suffers from self-selection bias. How can researchers account for these issues?

Baker, C., Kupersmidt, J., Voegler-Lee, M., Arnold, D., & Willoughby, M. (2010). Predicting teacher participation in a classroom-based, integrated preventive intervention for preschoolers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25,* 270-283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.09.005

Lortie-Forgues, H. & Inglis, M. (2019). Rigorous large-scale educational RCTs are often uninformative: Should we be concerned? *Educational Researcher, 48*. http://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19832850

Weiland, C., McCormick, M., Mattera, S., Maier, M., & Morris, P. (2018). Preschool curricula and professional development features for getting to high quality implementation at scale: A comparative review across five trials. *AERA Open, 4,* 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858418757735

Wyse, D. and Torgerson, C. (2017). Experimental trials and `what works?' in education: the case of grammar for writing. *British Educational Research Journal., 43*. 1019-1047. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3315

Early Childhood Classroom Processes Associated with Children's Outcomes

Chapter IV (Nesbitt & Farran, 2021)

How do we design early childhood classroom practices that matter for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development?

Coelho, V., Aström, F., Nesbitt, K., Sjöman, M., Farran, D., Björck-Äkesson, E., Christopher, C., Granlund, M., Almqvist, L., Grande, C., & Pinto, A. (2021). Preschool practices in Sweden, Portugal, and the United States. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 55,* 79-96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.11.004

Christopher, C. & Farran, D.C. (2020). Academic gains in kindergarten related to eight classroom practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 53.* 638-649. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.07.001

Power point presentation:
Farran, D. C., Nesbitt, K. T., & Tunstel, A. (2021). Early childhood practices that matter [PowerPoint]. Available from Monograph Matters

Farran, D.C., Meador, D., Christopher, C., Nesbitt, K. & Bilbrey, L. (2017*).* Data-driven improvement in prekindergarten classrooms: Report from a partnership in an urban district. *Child Development, 88,* 1466-1479. http://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12906

Nesbitt, K., Farran, D., & Fuhs, M. (2015*).* Executive function skills and academic achievement gains in prekindergarten: Contributions of learning-related behaviors. *Developmental Psychology, 51,* 865-878*.* http://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000021

Parten, M.B. (1932). Social participation among pre-school children. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 27,* 243-269. https://doi.org/10.1037/*h0074524*

Why is the level of young children's involvement important for learning?

Fredrickson, B. (2013). Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist, 68*(9), 814-822. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033584

Robinson, K., & Mueller, A. S. (2014). Behavioral engagement in learning and math achievement over kindergarten: A contextual analysis. *American Journal of Education, 120(3*), 325–349. http://doi.org/10.1086/675530

Searle, A.K. , Miller-Lewis. L., Sawyer, M., & Baghurst, P. (2013). Predictors of children's kindergarten classroom engagement: Preschool adult–child relationships, self-concept, and hyperactivity/inattention. *Early Education & Development, 24*, 1112-1136, https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.764223

Williford, A., Whittaker, J., Vitiello, V., & Downer, J. (2013). Children's engagement within the preschool classroom and their development of self-regulation. *Early Education and Development, 24,* 162-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2011.628270

Vitiello, V., Booren, L., Downer, J., & Williford, A. (2012). Variation in children's classroom engagement throughout a day in preschool: Relations to classroom and child factors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(2), 210-220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.08.005

Improving Prekindergarten Quality with Curricula: Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter V (Nesbitt & Farran, 2021)

Does the United States have a national vision for early childhood development?

Should there be an early childhood national curriculum?

If so, who should be responsible for developing the vision and the curriculum?

Bennett, J. (2005) Curriculum issues in national policy-making, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *13*(2), 5-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930585209641

Brown, K. & Sumsion, J. (2016). Generating visionary policy for early childhood education and care: Politicians' and early childhood sector advocate/activists' perspectives. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17,*192-209. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116641511

Cochran, M. (2011). International perspectives on early childhood education. *Educational Policy, 25,* 65-91. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904810387789

Hebbeler, C., Spiker, D., & Kahn, L. (2012). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's early childhood programs: Powerful vision and pesky details. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 31,* 199-207, https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121411429077

Zigler, E., Marsland, K., & Lord, H. (2009). *The tragedy of child care in America.* Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300122336.001.0001