

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Program Enrollment Options and Teacher Self-Efficacy for Promoting Partnerships with Parents in Preschool Programs

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Positive parent-teacher relationships are associated with positive child outcomes (Minke, 2010). Teacher characteristics such as self-efficacy and their work contexts, such as the number of children/families each teacher serves may influence teachers' abilities to build those relationships. Participants in this pilot study included families of children enrolled in publicly-funded preschool programs and their teachers. Teacher and family demographic information, class schedules, and enrollment numbers were collected through survey. To assess their perceptions of self-efficacy regarding parent-teacher relationships, preschool teachers completed the Teacher Efficacy for Promoting Partnerships Scale (Moen, Sheridan, & White, 2016). Findings suggest that early childhood programs using single session models with fewer children and families assigned per teacher, may permit teachers to more quickly establish partnerships with parents or at least establish a confidence in working with parents sooner in the relationship than teachers assigned to double sessions/day.

Keywords: teacher self-efficacy, parent engagement, preschool, early childhood, parent-teacher relationships, class size

Each year, approximately four million children enter kindergarten in the United States and many enter without the level of academic and social skills needed for success in school and social settings. High quality preschool programs demonstrate benefits for children, their families and communities. Program qualities that appear to make a difference include *well planned curriculum* (Division of Early Childhood [DEC], 2007; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2003), *teacher-child ratios and class size* (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001), *children's learning environment* (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2014), *teachers' work*

environment (Allen & Kelly, 2015b; Ryan & Whitebook, 2012), *teacher qualifications* (Allen & Kelly, 2015a; Bredekamp & Goffin, 2012; Hyson, Horm, & Winton, 2012) and *parent-teacher partnerships* (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry, 2004; Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014; Sheridan, Knoche, & Edwards, 2010; Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, & Marvin, 2011).

Consistently since 1964, federal dollars have been allocated for Head Start and Early Head Start programs and recently they have been expanded for Early Head Start family childcare programs in an effort to reduce achievement gaps (United States Department of Education, 2015). This trend has increased the need for early childhood teachers to partner with parents in order to provide needed continuity between home and “school” to positively influence young children’s development. Furthermore, Head Start Performance Standards (Administration of Children and Families [ACF], 2016) recently called for the increase of service duration for center-based Head Start preschool programs from 448 contact hours to 1020 contact hours with children per year. Prior to these revisions, a Head Start teacher could have two class sessions a day consisting of 17 children each, or a total of 34 children and families. The revised standards could result in a decrease in the number of children to no more than 20 children/families per day per teacher. Extended hours and the possible transition from double session to single session programs would result in fewer children and fewer families with whom each preschool teacher would be expected to build relationships, and could increase the likelihood of more productive partnerships with parents. This pilot study explores this possibility.

Family engagement in children’s care and education and positive parent-teacher relationships are associated with positive outcomes for children’s academic and social development (Minke, 2010). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) suggests that multiple influences and overlapping systems affect children’s development. The overlapping system comprised of a family-school partnership reflects a connection between children’s immediate learning environments and requires healthy relationships between teachers and parents. This meso-system of parent and teacher engagement in the care and education of young children is believed to result in positive child outcomes, but these parent-teacher relationships can be affected by a teacher’s ability to coordinate multiple parent engagement opportunities between the home and school environments (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Understanding the link between program scheduling and teachers’ ability to arrange for multiple parent-engagement opportunities could help clarify how best to ensure successful and effective partnerships between parents and teachers. A teacher’s reported self-efficacy for promoting such partnerships with parents in various program models could be one index of this linkage.

Parent Engagement in Early Childhood Education

Parent engagement in young children’s learning is not a new concept to the early childhood education community. Since the late 1960’s, the Federal Head Start Act has included parent engagement as an integral element in providing quality services to children and families. In 1996, Head Start reportedly expanded its working definition of parent engagement and strengthened its link to positive outcomes for children and families (ACF, 2015). More recently, it revisited the role of parent engagement with publication of the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE) (ACF, 2011). The framework identifies positive parent-teacher relationships as a key element in increasing parent engagement. Similarly, since

1985 the NAEYC program accreditation standards, a research and practice-based framework, stressed the importance of parent engagement and parent-teacher relationships in two of the ten competencies for program excellence. NAEYC also addresses these program qualities in their Professional Preparation Standards for Teachers (NAEYC, 2010). Specific elements for *Standard 2 Building Family and Community Relationships* highlight supporting and engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engaging families and communities in young children's development and learning. Finally, federal amendments for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1986 also addressed the importance of family-professional partnerships for family-centered services to families with infants and toddlers with disabilities. The law calls for development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) to focus practitioners' attention on family needs and the family as the focus for enhancing children's development and the family as a partner in early intervention programs (IDEA, 2004). Furthermore, it defines "parent" to assure surrogate, foster, or other legal guardians are involved in children's education planning when the biological parents are not available (Walsh & Taylor, 2010).

Parent-Teacher Relationships

Early childhood professionals often describe parents as young children's primary and most important teachers as a way to express the significant role parents' play in the growth, development and education of their children. Raffaele and Knoff (1999) found that parent engagement and qualities of the home environment could significantly impact children's social and cognitive development specifically in the infant, toddler and preschool years. In addition, during the early years of their children's lives parents begin to form their opinions and shape their behaviors related to the importance of their engagement with their children's teachers to positively impact children's development. Teachers and parents can vary however in their expectations for preschool-age children based on personal experiences, cultural beliefs, changing familial and societal values and other factors contributing to inconsistent experiences and expectations for children in the preschool setting, versus the home setting (Epstein, 1986; Chung, Marvin, & Churchill, 2005; Whitaker & Dempsey, 2013). Parent-teacher relationships that include joint goal setting and decision-making, as well as opportunities for frequent conversations between parents and teachers, can significantly increase interpersonal connections and communication between parents and teachers and positive outcomes for young children (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006). A teacher's confidence and ability to develop such relationships with parents provides a foundation for consistency between home and school settings and a bridge between home-school differences that can delay or challenge children's learning.

Teachers' Confidence to Partner with Parents

Research studies have identified a variety of key teacher characteristics associated with positive teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships. Teacher education, teaching experience and their knowledge of child development have proved to be consistent variables (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy has

also surfaced as an important possible factor. (Chung et al., 2005; Fantuzzo et al., 2012). Teacher self-efficacy has been defined as the “teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize, execute, and successfully accomplish a specific teaching task” (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 202). A teacher’s sensitivity to his or her own strengths and deficits related to their role as a teacher has been identified as an important variable in teacher effectiveness or efficacy (Ross & Bruce, 2007; Woolfork, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). How teachers feel, think, and motivate themselves on the job is influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs. Individuals with strong self-efficacy tend to set goals that challenge their current capabilities and tend to have a stronger commitment to the goals they set (Bandura, 1993). Therefore, a preschool teachers’ ability to view themselves as capable of developing partnerships with parents will likely advance or delay the possibility of positive benefits for young children.

Program Enrollment as a Factor

Class size and teacher-child ratio are two key program factors associated with quality early childhood care and education programs. A smaller class size is often associated with higher quality programs and better outcomes for young children (Reynolds et al., 2014; Sheridan, Williams, & Samuelsson, 2014; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). National organization standards such as the NAEYC Accreditation Standards for early childhood education programs (2017) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Head Start Performance Standards (2016) provide guidelines for early childhood programs on best practice related to teacher-child ratios for young children in group programs. Both ACF and NAEYC require preschool programs to meet a 1:10 teacher-child ratio with a maximum class size of 20 children. However, state childcare licensing regulations and public school guidelines addressing teacher-child ratio and class size may vary from state to state. For example, in Nebraska preschools, a 1:10 teacher-child ratio must be maintained, while Maine permits a 1:18 ratio and states like California, Georgia and Texas have no limits on teacher-child ratio (Barnett, Schulman, & Shore, 2004).

A study of childcare program quality and characteristics conducted by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) examined the relationship between children’s outcomes, program standards such as NAEYC recommended practices, and state licensing regulations. Children enrolled in classrooms with lower teacher-child ratios and smaller class sizes exhibited fewer behavior challenges and greater gains in language and cognitive outcomes. Smaller class sizes and lower teacher-child ratios allowed teachers the time needed to engage in supportive interactions and longer conversations with children (NICHD, 2000). Sheridan et al., (2014) reported that working conditions such as class size and teacher-child ratio impacted preschool teacher’s ability to engage in stimulating and collaborative interactions with children. Little can be found however, regarding the role the number of families served per teacher per day plays on teacher confidence and partnerships with parents. Teacher-child ratios often describe the number of adults and children per classroom. But what if the number of class sessions per teacher is doubled each day? Is it reasonable to suggest that enrollment numbers, including therefore attention to the number of class sessions and number of families served per day may be associated with the time teachers have to build relationships and partner with parents?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This pilot study explores the impact that the number of preschool class sessions, and therefore total number of children and families teachers serve per day, have on teacher self-efficacy in promoting partnerships with parents. This study explored two key questions. First, what role does the number of class sessions held per day and total number of families served per teacher have on teachers' confidence in promoting parents as partners? Second, how does a teacher's confidence in promoting partnerships with parents change over a year's time for teachers in single sessions compared to those with double sessions a day? Early childhood education program characteristics such as number of class sessions per day and teacher self-efficacy may play important roles in teachers' abilities to enhance needed parent engagement in children's learning and subsequent child outcomes.

METHODS

Participants

The sample for this current study consisted of 263 families of children enrolled in publicly-funded preschool programs in a mid-western state and their 110 preschool teachers. Program directors agreed to participate in a larger randomized control trial (RCT) study of effects of parent-teacher partnerships on preschool children's development outcomes. Directors invited teachers to participate. As part of the RCT, all enrolled children were screened for developmental delays. Parents with children enrolled in classrooms with consenting teachers, were invited to participate if their children were 3 to 4 years of age and would remain age eligible for program enrollment for two consecutive years and showed delays (1.5 *SD*) in communication, social or cognitive skills. Parents who consented to participate were primarily mothers (84%), unmarried (51%), white (75%), English-speaking (79%) with at least a high school diploma (71%).

The 110 participating teachers were mostly white (94%), English-speaking (97%), females (95%) between the ages of 22-63; 85% held a 4-year college degree or higher and 71% of these teachers reported having an early childhood teaching certificate. Teachers served children in either single or double session classrooms. More than half the teachers ($n = 60$) taught a single session a day serving 10-20 children and families ($M = 16.6$ children). Another 50 teachers taught two half-day classroom sessions enrolling 9-25 children per session, for a total 19-50 children/families across the double sessions ($M = 31.6$ children). No teacher had more than two parents/children enrolled in the study.

Measures

This study used three sources of information to explore the number of class sessions, the number of families served, and teachers' self-efficacy in promoting parents as partners. A parent demographic questionnaire provided information related to parents' gender, race, marital status, primary language, relationship to the enrolled child, and highest education level achieved. A teacher demographic questionnaire provided general information regarding a teacher's age, race,

gender, primary language, education level, teaching schedule (single or double session) and total number of children and families served.

The Teacher Efficacy for Promoting Partnerships Scale (TEPP) (Moen, Sheridan, & White, 2016) is a 20-item questionnaire designed to assess teacher self-perceptions of behaviors that promote positive parent-teacher relationships. The TEPP scale is scored on a 5-point Likert scale for teachers' perceived effectiveness in partnering with parents (1 = *Not Effective*, 5 = *Very Effective*). The scale is designed around seven active behaviors which include: focusing on strengths (e.g., *How effective are you at commenting to the parents about the strengths, accomplishments, or positive aspects of the family and child?*), promoting teaming and collaboration (e.g., *How effective are you at working together with parents to set mutual goals for their child's development and generate options for intervention strategies?*), encouraging (e.g., *How effective are you at asking parents about their efforts to meet child and family goals, including successes and difficulties?*), responding sensitively (e.g., *How effective are you at using activities that incorporate different types of families reflective of children in the classroom?*), communicating effectively (e.g., *How effective are you at engaging parents in frequent and open two-way information sharing?*), promoting skill development (e.g., *How effective are you at providing parents with opportunities to explore learning with their child in the school environment?*), and sharing resources/information (e.g., *How effective are you at providing information about the resources and options that are available to the family?*). Moen, Sheridan, and White (2016) surveyed sixty-seven public school preschool teachers ranging in age from 23-62 years ($M = 38.12$). Eighty-six percent of the teachers surveyed held a minimum of a 4-year degree and 12% held a two-year degree. Preliminary psychometric analyses confirm the TEPP scale as a promising measure of teacher self-efficacy for promoting partnership. The TEPP scale demonstrated positive and significant inter-item correlations ($r's > .300$) and high internal consistency within the 20-items, with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .95.

Procedures

Data collectors conducted face-to-face visits with parents and distributed paper copies of the parent demographic questionnaire in the fall and spring each of the two years the children were enrolled in the preschool program. A 100% response rate was achieved for the parent demographic questionnaire at all collection points. Parents' written responses were entered by hand into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data collection system. A random sample of 30% of the parent demographic questionnaire hand entries were checked for accuracy at each collection point and differences in recording discussed and changed as needed for the database. Teachers continued with the same children/families for two years. Teachers were emailed an invitation that included a password and a link to a website allowing them to complete the teacher demographic questionnaire in the fall of year 1 online. In the spring of year 1 and spring of year 2, the teacher demographic questionnaire and the TEPP scale were completed online. A 100% response rate was achieved at all collection points. Teacher online responses were exported into the SPSS data analysis system. Baseline TEPP scale scores were not collected in the fall of year 1 given the nature of the measure to have teachers reflect on past efforts with parents.

Data Analysis

Mean TEPP scores for spring of year 1 and spring of year 2 were reviewed for teachers in single session and double session classrooms. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict TEPP difference scores based on teachers' number of class sessions (single or double), and number of families served in spring year 1 to spring year 2. In addition, a multiple linear regression was calculated to predict TEPP scores in spring year 2 based on teachers' number of class sessions (single or double), and number of families served in autumn of year 1, and to examine how these variables changed teachers' self-efficacy for promoting parents as partners as the second preschool year came to an end.

RESULTS

The total scores from the TEPPs completed in the spring of each year were used to evaluate teachers' self-efficacy for promoting partnerships with parents for teachers with single session and double session classrooms. There was a slight but significant shift in the TEPP scores for all teachers from year 1 to year 2 ($t = 3.37, p = .001$). Table 1 provides the mean TEPP scores and standard deviations each year, as well as mean number of families served for teachers with single and double classroom sessions each day. Overall, teachers with higher confidence levels on the TEPP scale in spring of year 1 had a single session classroom with lower numbers of children and families to serve ($M = 16.62$). These teachers appeared to maintain their confidence into spring of year 2. Teachers who taught double sessions each day in year 1 and therefore served higher numbers of children and families ($M = 31.62$) had lower confidence scores than teachers with a single class session a day.

TABLE 1
Teacher TEPP Scores and Number of Families Served by Classroom Sessions Held per Day in Spring Year 1 and Spring Year 2

Class Sessions Per Day	Time Period	Teachers <i>N</i>	Mean Number of Families	Mean TEPP Score (<i>SD</i>)	TEPP Difference Scores
Single Session	Year 1	60	16.62	84.13 (10.06)	.50
	Year 2	60	15.78	84.63 (8.59)	
Double Session	Year 1	50	31.62	81.10 (12.92)	5.74
	Year 2	50	28.68	86.84 (10.33)	

However, teachers with double sessions increased their mean TEPP score in year 2 and surpassed the mean TEPP score for the single session teachers after a second year working with the same children and families. Table 2 provides the results of analyses using teachers TEPP difference scores. Teachers with double class sessions each day had significantly larger difference scores on the TEPP scale than the teachers with single sessions when comparing year 1 and year 2 scores. Given the relationship between the number of sessions a day and total number of families served, further analyses were pursued (Table 3).

TABLE 2
Coefficients for TEPP Difference Scores (Spring Year 1 to Spring Year 2) by Class Sessions when Families Served is Held Constant

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Class Sessions	4.79	2.59	0.28	1.85	0.07
Families Served	-0.06	0.61	-0.06	-0.09	0.93

Note. TEPP = Teacher Efficacy in Promoting Partnerships

TABLE 3
Coefficients for TEPP Scores by Class Sessions when Families Served is Held Constant

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Class Sessions	-5.77	2.93	-0.32	-1.98	0.05
Families Served	0.49	0.19	0.42	2.60	0.01

Note. TEPP = Teacher Efficacy in Promoting Partnerships

Teachers who taught double sessions each day had a 5.7 lower TEPP score when the number of families was held constant. In addition, teacher self-efficacy in promoting parents as partners decreased by nearly half a point (0.49) on the TEPP scale for each additional family served when the number of class sessions per day was held constant.

DISCUSSION

What role does the number of class sessions held per day have on teachers' confidence in promoting parents as partners? Early childhood programs that use single session models with lower numbers of families served per teacher may see benefits in the level of confidence and speed with which teachers establish quality parent-teacher relationships. Teachers with single class sessions per day in the current study reported class sizes of 10-20 preschool children and families in comparison to teachers with two half-day sessions whose daily enrollments and the

number of families served were nearly double that count (19-50). If parent-teacher relationships are affected by a teacher's ability to coordinate multiple parent engagement opportunities between the home and school environments (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and opportunities for frequent conversations between parents and teachers can significantly increase interpersonal connections, and teacher self-efficacy and positive outcomes for young children (Sheridan et al., 2006), then single preschool sessions, with fewer parents with whom to build relationships, could provide the answer to desired outcomes promoted in the Head Start Family-Community Engagement Framework. The teachers' high confidence levels after one year working with a fewer number of families suggests that single session classrooms provide teachers the time needed for possibly more frequent and/or longer interactions with parents at drop-off, pick up times or parent teacher conferences and home visits.

How does a preschool teacher's confidence in promoting partnerships with parents change over time for teachers in single session and double session programs? After one year of building relationships with children and families, teachers with just one preschool session a day reported higher confidence levels on the TEPP scale than did teachers with a double session each day, and maintained this level of confidence into the second year with the same families. However, teachers with two sessions a day and twice the number of families to serve showed growth in their confidence in building partnerships with the parents after two years with the same families. Time apparently does play a role in influencing how confident teachers feel about their ability to build partnerships with parents. The time needed to build partnerships with parents may come more quickly in single session programs with more frequent and/or longer interactions between parents and teachers being possible, or come more slowly with fewer opportunities and/or shorter interactions due to time constraints, as the data in this study suggest for teachers with double sessions and twice as many families to serve.

Current literature confirms that positive parent-teacher relationships and home-school connections positively impact child outcomes (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Sheridan et al., 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011). Both NAEYC and the Office of Head Start (OHS) currently provide guidelines to solidify the importance of and assist early childhood programs in implementing positive parent-teacher relationships. The Head Start PFCE Framework (ACF, 2011) promotes positive change for children and families through ongoing, reciprocal, and goal oriented parent-teacher and parent-community relationships. The PFCE framework states that these relationships are developed over time, and through a series of interactions between staff and families. It does not say however, the length of time needed/expected for healthy positive relationships to be established. Is two years acceptable? Too long? Is 6-months desired? Can we comfortably assume that one-year's efforts will result in positive relationships? Unfortunately, the current research is encouraging but limited in providing definitive direction for administrators and practitioners related to how program design and implementation can foster those relationships.

The NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards for Teachers (NAEYC, 2010) state that teachers should understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities, and use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and involve all families in their children's development and learning. However, these standards do not state how teachers are to build a confidence for carrying out these efforts. Are extended field experiences in preservice education the answer (Boyd, et al., 2009)? Role-playing practice with parents in preservice? Feedback from experienced supervisors on the job? Or would an increased number of home visits in the

early days of the school year make a difference? It is clear that both NAEYC and OHS value and stress the importance of teachers' abilities to partner with parents, however they provide limited information on how to successfully implement these important practices. The current study lends some support for the use of smaller caseloads for teachers to help them establish that teacher confidence in a one-year period.

The newly-released Head Start Performance Standards (ACF, 2016) calling for increased duration of services for center-based Head Start children will likely have both positive effects as well as challenges as most changes do for programs. The shift will result in fewer children and families per teacher per day/week/month/year, and may increase costs associated with operating additional classrooms needed to maintain current program enrollments. However, fewer class sessions per day and a fewer number of families served per teacher have the potential for increasing the likelihood of positive reciprocal parent-teacher relationships more quickly by possibly increasing the frequency of interactions between parents and teachers per week/month, the amount of time available per interaction at drop-off and pick-up times or during scheduled home visits, conferences or phone calls, and the time available for preparation and follow-up. Further research is needed to explore the effects of enrollment on teachers' use of time for building parent-teacher relationships. Time logs for all parent contacts completed by teachers in single and double session classrooms could explain whether available time is used for select parents, longer engagement with few or all parents, more frequent contacts for parents in one model or equally distributed for all families in any program.

Positive parent-teacher relationships are key to fostering a consistency between parent and teacher expectations for children's learning and supporting connections between the home and preschool learning environments. These home-school connections foster young children's development of key skills necessary for later school success (Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2000). Teachers' confidence in their ability to partner with parents and establish positive working relationships with them could result in effective parent-teacher relations and positive child outcomes. The present study suggests that enrollment numbers per teacher could be associated with the speed with which this confidence develops.

Further research is needed to determine what other variables play key roles in teachers' abilities to establish high confidence levels for promoting partnerships with parents. How much time in the work week/month is needed for teachers to interact with parents and what strategies are most efficient and effective to move the relationships and teacher confidence forward? Furthermore, research is needed to determine what teacher characteristics and skills are associated with these higher confidence levels. No efforts were made in the current study to explore the relationship between teacher confidence levels on the TEPP scale with teacher demographic information. Nor were teachers in single and double session classrooms established as having similar demographic profiles. As shown in the present study, teachers may be able to establish high levels of confidence in promoting partnerships with families in time, despite having larger caseloads. More experienced teachers may demonstrate the confidence faster than novice teachers regardless of number of families served. Furthermore, research is needed to determine at what point the higher number of families served diminishes any ability to establish teacher confidence and positive relationships. Finally, the consequence of a delayed sense of teacher efficacy requires further evaluation. Administrators are likely interested in knowing how delayed self-efficacy in teachers impacts program outcomes for children as well as for parent partnerships.

Limitations

Despite the encouraging findings from the present study, it did not include data on teachers' prior knowledge or experience related to parent engagement or building relationships with parents. A second limitation was that data for this study derived from an intervention focused on parent engagement. The association between variables and teachers' participation in the intervention could have contributed to the teacher's report of self-efficacy and perception of the parent-teacher relationship. A third limitation of this study was the lack of data related to teachers' devotion of time weekly/monthly to parent engagement activities such as ongoing communication, parent-teacher conferencing, home visits or program-sponsored family events. This lack of data limits generalization to all preschool programs and teachers but attention to these limitations in future studies may help define the relationship between key teacher characteristics and positive parent-teacher relationships.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study provides new insight on the value of teachers' self-efficacy in partnering with parents. In addition, the study suggests possible benefits of program design elements related to single session classrooms with fewer children and families served per teacher per day. The recent Head Start call for increased service duration could result in full-day, single session classrooms for center-based preschools. This new regulation ultimately focuses on the importance of extended time with children to achieve positive child outcomes, however the impact of this movement on parent-teacher relationships is hypothetically promising. Although strengthening parent-teacher relationships was not the explicit intent of the new Head Start standards, program administrators have an opportunity to positively influence child outcomes through enhanced parent engagement and partnerships with teachers, one of the foundational cornerstones of Head Start. Further research is needed to verify these preliminary impressions about class session, number of families served and parent-teacher relationships.

Head Start is not the only program however, that should be considering the significance of these findings. All early childhood programs regardless of their funding, standards or regulations have the opportunity to increase positive outcomes for children through positive parent-teacher relationships. Kostelnik and Grady (2009) suggest that the traditional model of family engagement in children's education was parent as helper for events such as fundraising, classroom parties and field trip chaperones; however, the new model of family engagement recognizes the importance for families and teachers to act as partners in the education of young children. Programmatic decisions related to enrollment and staffing provide a foundation for the supports that may be needed to effectively build these positive parent-teacher relationships.

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