

The Abecedarian Approach in Manitoba's Early Childhood Community

Melanie D'Souza

Research Faculty, School of Health Sciences and Community Services

Red River College, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Oise Summer Institute on Early Childhood Education

June 3, 2016

Growing ECE Access and Quality: Opportunities and Challenges



Intervention in early childhood

Intervention – becoming involved in an issue with the aim of changing the projected outcome

Abecedarian is an intervention that focuses on children with multiple risk factors in their lives, recognizing that these risk factors can be barriers to learning

Language focus – Abecedarian sees language as the core of early learning; strong language skills allow for greater cognitive and social/emotional development

Language grows best in respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships

Intervention in early childhood

What do we know about risk factors in early childhood?

[Harvard University, 5 Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood Development](#)

What is Abecedarian?

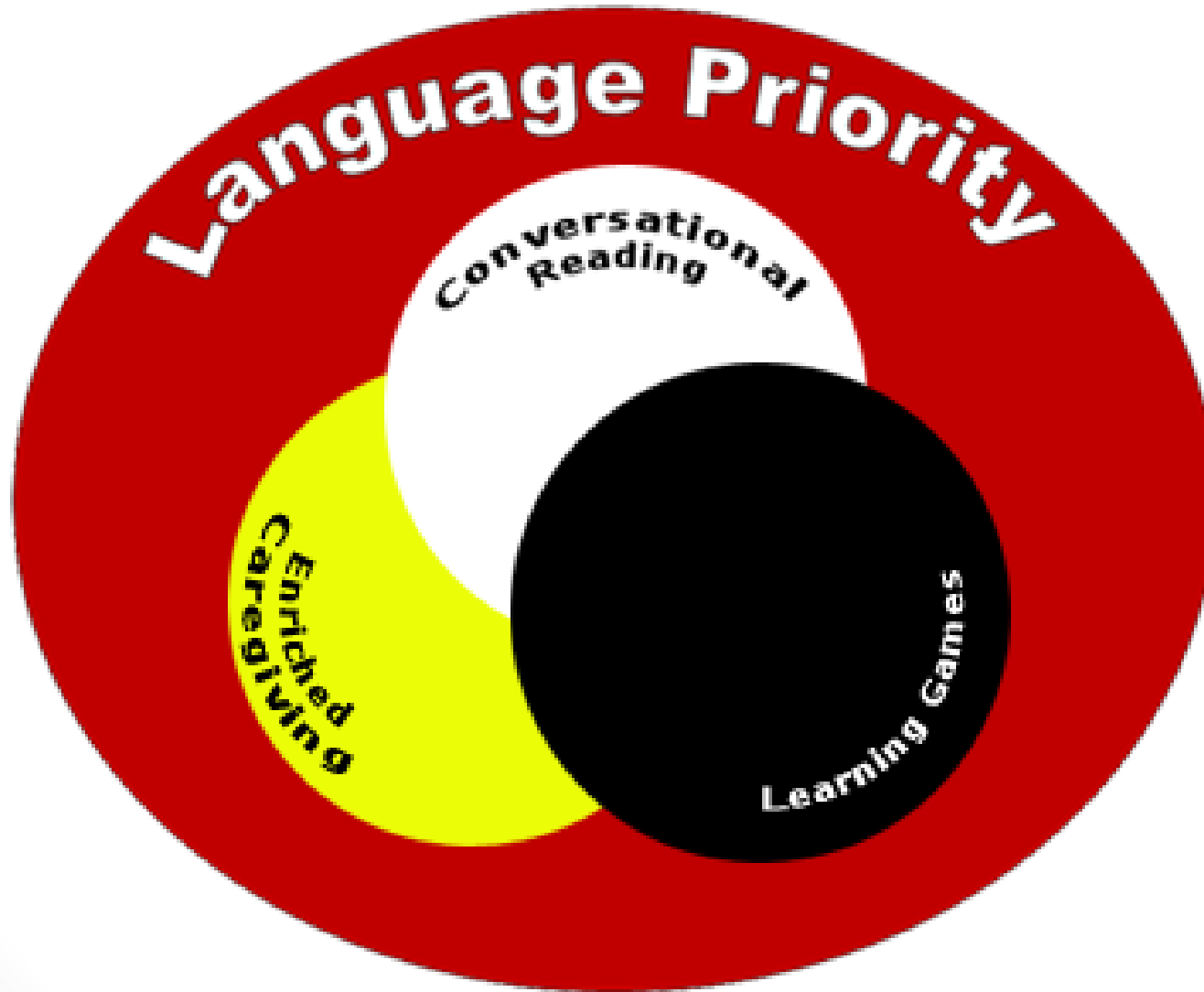


- High quality, individualized, relationship based care
- Playful interactions between adult and child
- Language focus
- Specific attention to individual children's development
- Strength based approach to families

Abecedarian at Lord Selkirk Park

- Lord Selkirk Park Child Care Centre opened in February 2012, and began implementing the Abecedarian Approach
- EDI results showed that a large number of children living in this area were not ready for school
- Can a high quality early childhood intervention reverse this trend?
- Government of Manitoba is conducting an evaluation of the program to assess child outcomes

Four elements of Abecedarian



Video example

- [Cutting the Bug](#)

Partnerships with families



Honouring Indigenous culture

- Manidoo Gi-Miini Gonaan
- Indigenous Program Coordinator on staff
- Smudging
- Drumming
- Artwork
- Seven Teachings
- Sharing circles



First year results

Figure 1: Average Percentage Point Change in Language Development Scores by Evaluation Group Status (N=49)

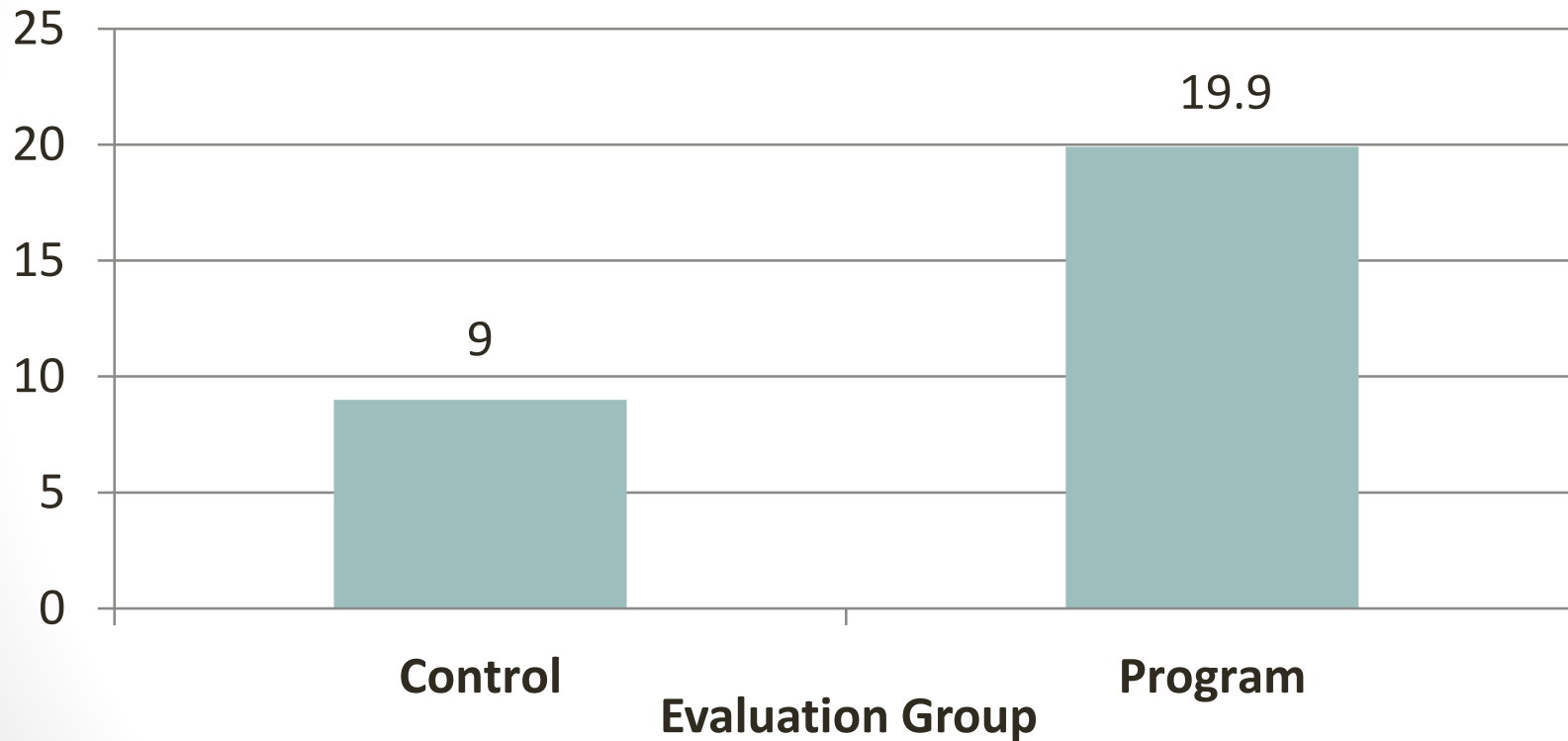


Figure 2: Average Percentage Point Change in Language Development Scores by Level of Attendance of Program Group Children (N=25)

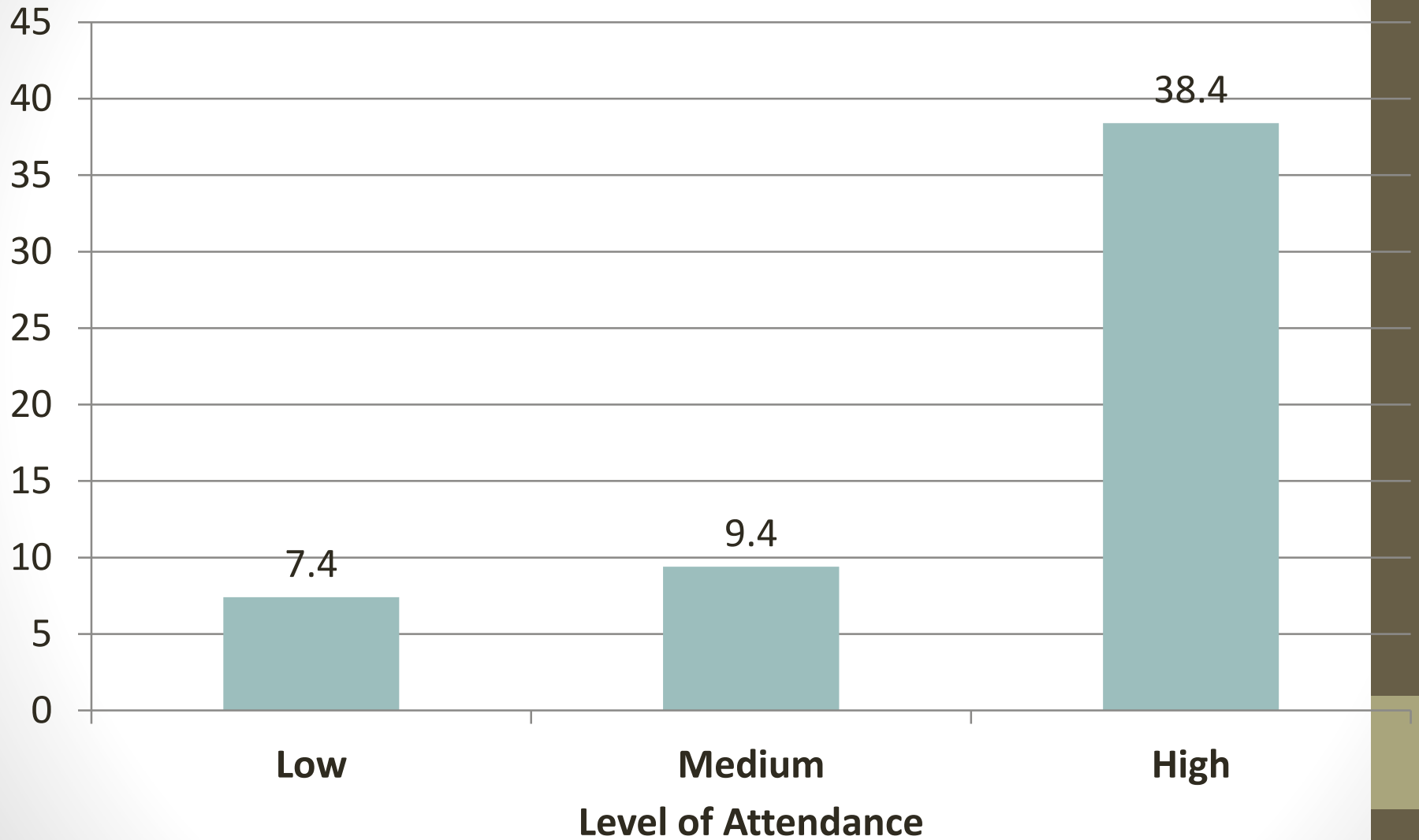
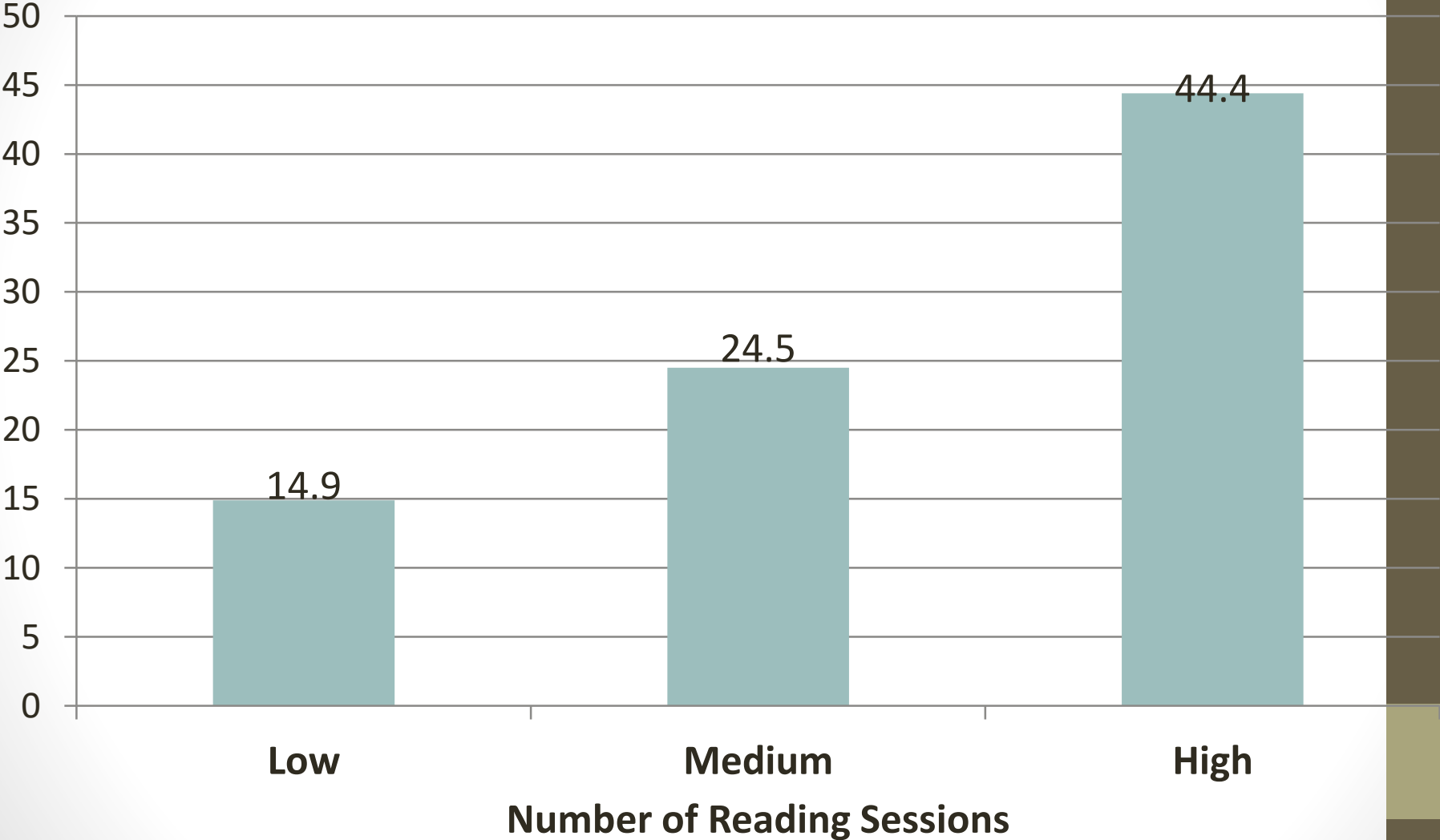


Figure 3: Average Percentage Point Change in Language Development Scores by Total Number of Reading Sessions with Program Group Children (N=25)



Year 2 and 3 Results

- Developmental assessments are conducted yearly on the children in the original Manitoba study in Lord Selkirk Park.
- Results continue to be remarkable; these results haven't yet been approved for release publicly, but the numbers have been very positive, showing significant growth in language development in the program group.
- As children enter the school system, EDI scores will be collected and analyzed.

Expanding Abecedarian activities

- Online course and resource developed by Red River College
- The staff of 7 additional child care centres have taken the course
- Course was offered through RRC C+DE in October 2015, with participants from across Manitoba, Alberta, BC, and Bangladesh
- Randomized Control Trial involving 6 additional child care centres (3 program, 3 control) started in October 2015
- Individualized mentoring provided as a follow up to the course

Online course and mentoring

- 30 hour course has been offered online, but can be adapted to be offered in person, or in a blended format
- 3 modules
- Rich in interactive activities, videos, examples, practical skills
- [Introduction to the Abecedarian Approach](#)
- Ongoing mentoring has consisted of regular visits from RRC faculty to coach centre staff in Abecedarian techniques.

Next steps...

- Several new branches of the Abecedarian project are in the works.
 - At least one new centre in Winnipeg will be fully trained for implementing Abecedarian this fall.
 - A new research study will look at adult outcomes of the Abecedarian Approach, focusing on the experiences of parents and caregivers.
 - We are exploring opportunities to partner with international organizations who are also using the Abecedarian Approach in their work.

Thoughts? Questions?

