

Supporting English-Language Learners to Socially Adapt and Transition Into a Classroom Setting

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Background

Introduction

This study examined how Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) change and adapt their curriculum and program plans to meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) who have difficulty socially adapting and transitioning into a classroom setting.

Literature Review

- ELLs often feel lost, unsafe, alienated and depressed because of their cultural and linguistic differences from other children in the classroom. They often struggle to adapt and adjust to differences in language, knowledge, expectations, traditions, attitudes, and values that exist between their home and classroom setting (Lee, Butler & Tippins, 2007).
- The child's first home language is important and forms the foundation for all later language development..

Research Question

Are RECEs changing and adapting their curriculum and program plans to meet the needs of ELLs to adapt socially and transition into a classroom setting?

Methodology

Design

Qualitative semi-structured interview design.

Instrument

Eight interview questions exploring experiences with working with ELLs and adapting programs & curriculum.

Procedure

Child care centers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) were contacted, managers asked permission to recruit staff.

Participants

Four RECEs actively working in sector for minimum of three years were participants.

Results

The findings indicate that the support and knowledge of RECEs is beneficial and needed for ELLs. The study showed that RECEs physically, emotionally and socially support the ELLs as they adapt and transition into a new classroom setting.



The findings also indicate that the RECEs are adding diverse materials that represent the ELLs' culture and placing items such as labels around the classroom in different languages. The RECEs are therefore supporting and helping ELLs adapt and transition.

"I add materials that are diverse such as books, and I usually add a few of my Portuguese household books into my classroom".

This study also shows that RECEs are using their personal pedagogical philosophy to make these changes and are always open to professional development opportunities.

"I do it because of my own philosophy. I feel like my program should cater to all the children in my classroom and I like to diversify and make it equal for everybody."

"Professional development opportunities are always important and I think all RECEs can benefit from it."

Conclusion

The RECEs show that even though they do not always physically change or adapt the curriculum or program plan on paper, they are aware of the ELLs' feelings and know when they need to intervene. The RECEs make the changes necessary in the classroom and in their activities by adding diverse materials and labels to represent the ELLs' culture in the environment. The RECEs are helping ELLs to socially adapt and transition into a classroom setting but engaging all the children in the activities and representing all the children in the environment.

"On the program plan itself, I don't really change anything on there. I just add my activities ... I try to always make them diverse for that child as well as everyone else's culture."

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Participants only from one specific demographic area

Recommendations

- Pre-service training on how to better support ELLs.
- An increase in documenting the changes RECEs are making to their program plans to support the ELLs.
- More professional development opportunities for RECEs to enhance their knowledge regarding ELLs adapting and transitioning.

References

- Clarke, P. M., & OAM, E. C. C. (2009). *Supporting children learning English as a second language in the early years (birth to six years)*. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.
- Lee, S., Butler, M. B., & Tippins, D. J. (2007). A case study of an early childhood teacher's perspective on working with English language learners. *Multicultural Education*, 15(1), 43.