

Self-Efficacy in Parents and Graduate Clinicians in the Greeley Treasure Chest Program for Coaching Early Childhood Intervention Strategies

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Introduction

The first several years of life are critical for the social-emotional and communicative development of children. Children's interactions with caregivers and family members during daily activities and routines are central to this development (Moore, Barton, & Chironis, 2014; Woods, Kashinath, & Goldstein, 2004). Early intervention is grounded in the notion of providing direct and indirect support for young children in natural environments (Ross, 2018). Rarely do first-year graduate students in Speech-Language Pathology programs have the opportunity to learn clinical skills in environments more natural than the university clinic. Nor do they often have the opportunity to coach parents in expanding skills to support their child's early language and literacy development.

Due to the strong relationship between early language development and caregiver language input, teaching language support strategies to caregivers is an essential component of early language intervention. Parent education programs that focus on supporting child language development have been found to be highly effective (Roberts & Kaiser, 2011). Community-engaged early childhood intervention programs may provide a naturalistic setting for both families and speech-language pathology graduate clinicians to mutually benefit in gaining knowledge and confidence in their use of early language strategies. Caregivers may need additional coaching across different activities and over time in order to successfully incorporate language support strategies in their caregiver-child interactions at home (Roberts et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study was to determine whether self-efficacy for graduate clinicians and parents of children who were involved in the Greeley Treasure Chest Program would improve following a semester of parent coaching in early childhood intervention strategies.

Research Questions

The impact of the Greeley Treasure Chest Program is continually assessed and refined. The following research questions are posed:

1. What are graduate student perceptions of Greeley Treasure Chest Program related to their perspective on learning, view of service, career choice, and working with diverse communities?
2. What are parents' perceptions of the impact the Greeley Treasure Chest Program had on their knowledge and skills?

The Greeley Treasure Chest Project

The Greeley Treasure Chest Program was developed in the summer of 2017. A University faculty member collaborated with the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado and the SEVA Community, a non-profit whose mission is to support young parents and their families, to identify at-risk children who may benefit from coaching in routine-based caregiver-child interactions around emergent literacy and language development. Additionally, the program provides first-year graduate students in UNC's Speech-Language Pathology program with the opportunity to learn clinical skills in early language and literacy prevention and intervention through direct interaction with families while positively impacting the community.

Treasure chests are bins of age-appropriate toys and materials developed around a specific theme. Included in each treasure chest are books in the family's native language, educational toys, puzzles, and puppets. Graduate students are randomly assigned to families with children under the age of 6 who experienced participation in the program. Each graduate student met with a family member and their child for 30 minutes biweekly and coached them on early language strategies and routine-based play utilizing items within the Treasure Chest. After each session, the families would take home their treasure chest and attempt to incorporate learned early language strategies during play.

What's in a Treasure Chest?



Parent Coaching

Early interventionists have adopted more of a coaching role under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and school-based SLPs are increasingly encouraged to "think outside the pull-out box" (e.g., Murza, 2019) to provide services within an integrated service delivery model.

The clinical educator of the program taught the early language course in the first semester of the program. This allowed students to learn principles of coaching in the classroom while practicing their skills in the community.

Coaching strategies included creating opportunities for communication, recognition of communicative attempts, and education on child communication styles and parent roles.



Methods

Participants

- 33 parents
- 45 children
- 20 first-year graduate clinicians

Intervention

- 30 minutes biweekly parent-coaching sessions for an entire semester

Pre- & Post-intervention

- Self-Efficacy for Parenting Tasks Index-Toddler Scale (Coleman & Karraker, 2003) for parent outcomes
- Adapted Survey for graduate clinicians

Results

The results show that there was a significant improvement for clinician confidence in coaching parents of young children with early intervention activities ($p < .001$) and confidence in the knowledge of typical language/motor development of children birth-preschool ($p = 0.42$). The results show that parent self-efficacy significantly improved for the ability to establish a daily routine with their child ($p = 0.29$), ability to provide a comfortable amount of daily structure ($p = .009$), ability to establish a regular bedtime routine with their child ($p = .009$), and confidence utilizing play strategies to improve their child's language and behavior ($p = .015$). The results provide support for the use of the Treasure Chest program to improve parents' confidence in implementing play strategies with their child. Additionally, results indicate that the opportunity to work with families in an early childhood program may help to improve graduate clinician confidence in their knowledge of early intervention strategies and coaching parents in their use of them.

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