

# Paraprofessionals Supporting Early Literacy

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## INTRODUCTION

- Literacy skills (oral language, vocabulary, print awareness) develop during preschool and can predict later reading success. (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2009)
- Despite their central role in providing instructional and individualized support, many paraprofessionals receive limited training, experience unclear role expectations, and report concerns about their self-efficacy in implementing instructional supports, including early literacy interventions (e.g., Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2021; Stewart, 2019)
- Research indicates that when paraprofessionals receive explicit training, coaching, and clear role expectations, they can successfully implement early literacy interventions and support improved student outcomes (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2013; Jones et al., 2021)
- In center-based early childhood programs, the number of assistant teachers increased by 51% between 2012 and 2019, compared with a 27% increase in teachers (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2024, using NSECE data).

## METHODS

**Research Design** - This is a qualitative study exploring paraprofessionals' perceptions/experiences, confidence levels, challenges, & training needs.

**Participants** - Paraprofessionals working in preschool classrooms in Tallahassee with varying levels of training & experience levels.

**Data Collection** – Through interviews with paraprofessionals, where they are asked about: their role in literacy instruction, challenges in supporting literacy, training and preparation experiences, etc.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed

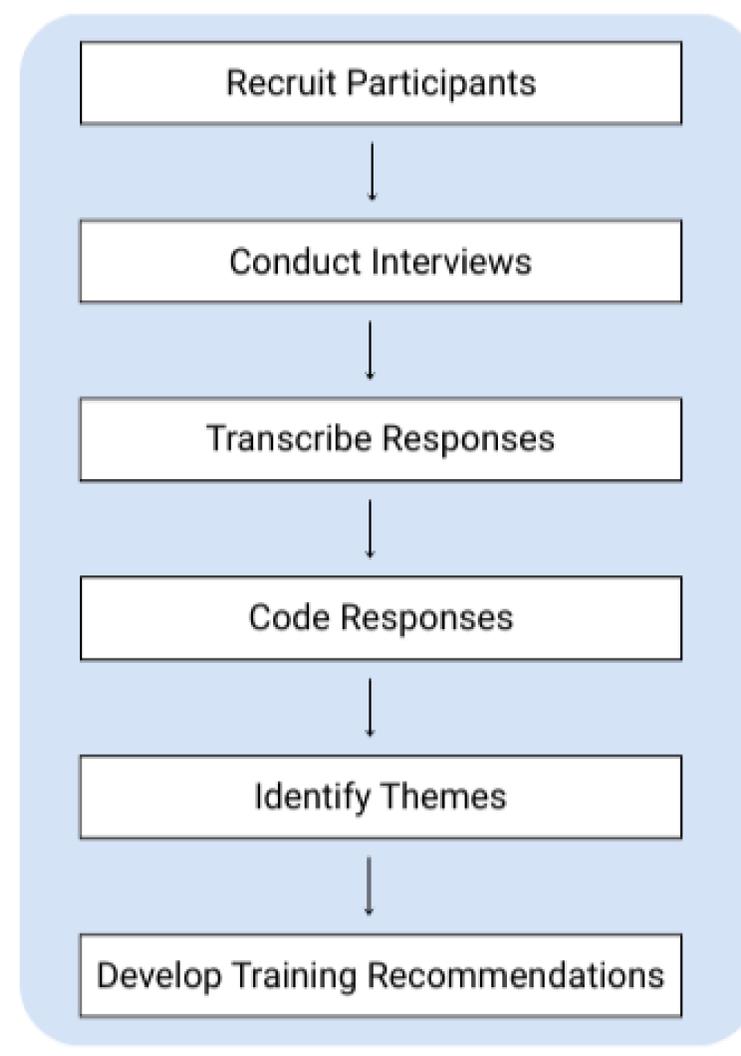
**Data Analysis** - Coding will identify patterns and common themes related to:

- Perception of role in classrooms
- Confidence levels
- Training needs/gaps
- Classroom challenges

**Current Project Status** - Data collection has not yet started but will start in the coming months. Findings will be analyzed in later stages of the project.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

**What are paraprofessionals' role in early literacy and what current perceived gaps exist in training and support for people in this role?**



## CONCLUSION

- Paraprofessionals play a key role in supporting early literacy in preschool classrooms.
- Many have limited formal training in literacy instruction.
- Stronger training and clearer role expectations could improve classroom support and student outcomes.
- Findings will help identify common training needs/deficits and strategies.
- It is important to note that qualitative research study excel in their ability to provide in-depth understanding but can be held back in its ability to be replicated and the effect that a researcher's bias can have on the study.

## FUTURE APPLICATION

- The value and importance of paraprofessionals is often underscored.
- Many report being underpaid and overworked.
- Their roles are especially important because they primarily work with students with physical or cognitive disabilities who already face educational challenges.
- When paraprofessionals are not provided with adequate training or resources, the gap for special needs children increases.
- Identifying deficits in confidence, training, or resources would allow these problems to be addressed and help close the gap for special needs students.

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## REFERENCES

