



The Effects of Practice-Based Coaching on the Implementation of Print Referencing for Paraeducators Working with Children with Speech and Language Delays

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Background

Although there is technically no "right" or "wrong" way to read a book to a child, there are strategies that can make reading to students more effective. More specifically, research has demonstrated a link between print referencing and improved research skills. **Print referencing is the concept of highlighting features of text such as form, features, and function during read-alouds (Zucker et al., 2009).**

Not only does print referencing help to children learn letter-sound correspondence, but using print referencing (both verbal and non-verbal) during adult-child reading encourages attention to and interaction with the text which increases the child's metalinguistic focus on the text (Dicataldo & Roch 2022).

Further, research has proven a relationship between children with speech and language delays and a higher risk for reading disorders (Hayiou-Thomas et al., 2016). Therefore, this study aims to train paraeducators to increase print referencing when reading to children with speech and language delays in hopes of lessening reading risk in delayed students.

Methods

This study **includes four dyads of a paraeducators (either a teaching assistant or speech-language pathology assistant) and a child with a speech and language delay** who is between the ages of 3-5, have a current Individualized Education Plan that includes a speech and/ or language goal, and have consistent attendance.

Because all interactions between researchers and participants are remote, the setting of the study is preschools anywhere in the county. First, we recruited the paraeducators. They were instructed to complete an initial survey and both the paraeducator and the child's guardian filled out a consent form. **They enter the first of three phases (baseline, intervention, and maintenance).** In the baseline phase, they record three videos reading a book without any training and the PWPA is administered. **They record a minimum of three videos and then meet with a coach to review data of implementation. When data in the first behavior meet criterion and data in other behaviors are stable, intervention in the second behavior (i.e., print meaning) begins,** while monitoring other behaviors under the pre-intervention condition (i.e., print meaning, letter, and word knowledge). This repeats until all behaviors are completed.

The print knowledge measure (PWPA) probes are administered individually immediately preceding the first day of intervention and immediately after 3 days of intervention.

A social validity survey will be completed as a follow up to understand continued implementation and skills learned. Because this is a single case research design that establishes a baseline across multiple behaviors, researchers can investigate the relationship between our independent and dependent variables which are the practice-based training provided to paraeducators (independent) and the paraeducators demonstrated usage of the strategies provided in the provided training (dependent).

Preliminary Results

Since data is still being collected, we only have preliminary quantitative data.

Our preliminary results reflect that so far there is a significant, positive association between the provided training and an increase in the use of print referencing strategies.

The goal of this study is to increase print referencing, and thus far the training has been successful in doing so in the first behavior (print concepts).

We anticipate that these results will be consistent as the study moves through each behavior. Once this study is completed, we intend to conduct future studies that will incorporate larger group settings which will allow for replication and generalization.

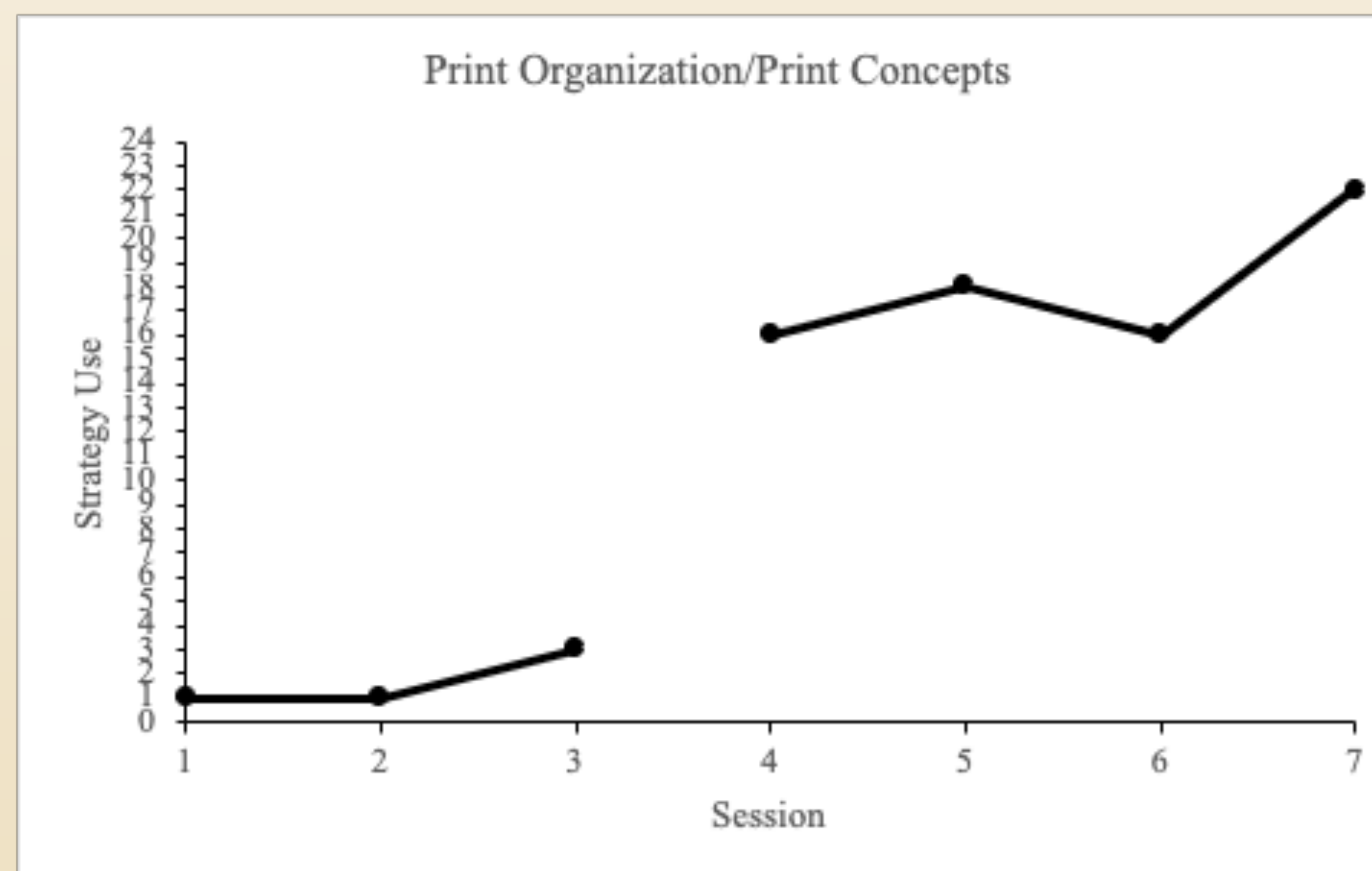


Figure 1: A single participant's use of print organization/print concepts strategies is recorded over the course of the training sessions. As the sessions progress, there is a notable increase in strategy use.

Preliminary Conclusions

Because our data so far has showcased the effectiveness of practice-based coaching for helping paraeducators implement shared-book reading strategies, **it can be concluded at this time that our practice-based coaching is effective in increasing the implementation of print referencing in paraeducators working with children with speech and language delays.**

Discussion

- Paraeducators are often overlooked in terms of professional development even though they typically spend the most one-on-one time with children. This is why they were the target population of this study.
- Our desired change in behavior is in the paraeducator and has so far been demonstrated in the positive correlation between practice-based training and increased paraeducator print referencing. Our secondary desired change in behavior as a result of this correlation is wanted in the student, which we hope to see evidenced by an increase in PWPA scores.
- Small and incremental changes in how paraeducators read to children can make substantial and long-lasting improvements in children's language and literacy skills.

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