

THE READING CLINIC

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I-PLAY Programme



2016 – 2017 EVALUATION REPORT

August 2017

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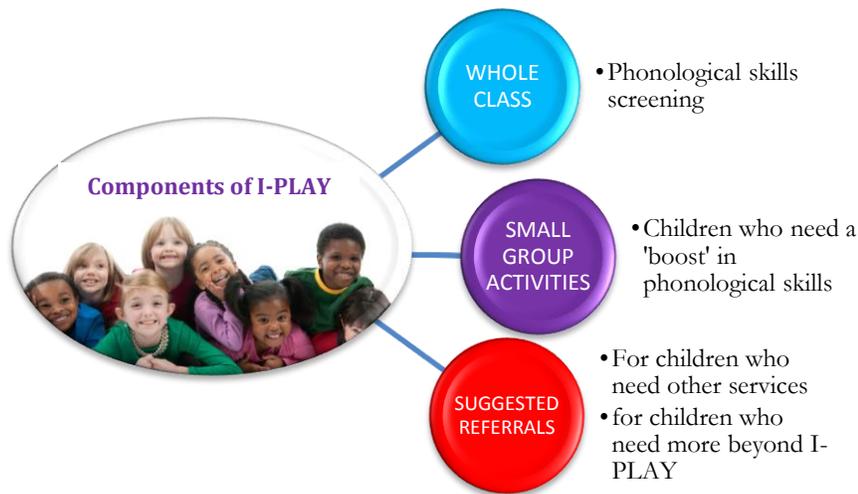
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What is I-PLAY?

I-PLAY is an innovative, collaborative effort aimed at improving the emerging literacy skills of preschool children. It has been explicitly designed to promote preschoolers' phonological skills such as rhyming and breaking down the sounds in words. These skills are key predictors of later reading success. In addition, specific phonological processing weaknesses can signal possible future reading difficulties such as dyslexia. All of the activities are interactive and game-like, using toys and pictures, with no print involved. The project was named to reflect this developmentally appropriate approach, with I-PLAY standing for Interactive Phonological Literacy Activities for Youngsters.

There are 3 levels of intervention for I-PLAY:



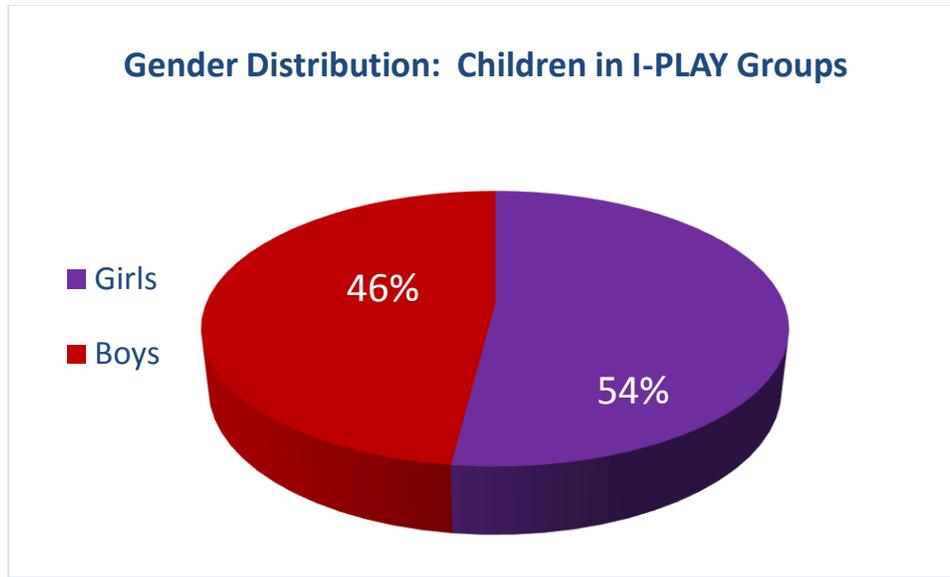
Our Students

There were a total of **120 children** (**65** girls and **55** boys) who received screenings through I-PLAY during the 2016-2017 school year.

- Of those students, **30** were enrolled at Southampton Preschool, **20** were students at St. Paul's Preschool, **30** attended Lyceum Preschool and **40** attended Victor Scott Preschool. All services took place at the schools.
- In September 2016, the average age of the students was **4 years, 2 months old**.

Based on results from the screening, there were **91** children (**76%**) who received small group instruction.

- Of these children, **49** were girls and **42** were boys.



Outputs

Screenings

In terms of formal, summative evaluation of the I-PLAY project, we used the Preschool and Primary Inventory of Phonological Awareness (PIPA) to assess the students' progress. This is a UK norm-based, standardized test that was designed to identify children ages 3-7 who have poor phonological awareness. The PIPA can also be used as a means of measuring changes in phonological awareness. There are 6 sound awareness skills evaluated by the PIPA, 3 of which were selected for the I-PLAY screenings. The subtests selected were Syllable Segmentation, Rhyme Awareness and Phoneme Isolation. In addition to the PIPA, the Print Knowledge Test from the Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL) was administered to provide an indication of the students' early knowledge about written language conventions and form as well as alphabet knowledge. The Expressive Vocabulary subtest from the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) Preschool 2 was also administered to provide an indication of the students' expressive language skills. Although not used to evaluate the programme, the CELF Preschool 2 was helpful in identifying children whose needs were beyond the scope of the I-PLAY programme and for setting up the groups of children who were to receive the I-PLAY small group intervention.

119 of the 120 students at Southampton, St. Paul's, Victor Scott and Lyceum preschools received at least 1 screening in September 2016 (1 student with special needs was unable to participate). These results determined which children would participate in the I-PLAY small group activities during the school year. While some children transferred from their respective preschools after the initial screening, 99% of the children received a second screening in May 2017. 5 children were removed from the statistics as 2 were working with para-educators, 2 left their school and 1 child came after the first screening had been performed.

- total hours of screening (Sept & May) = approximately 120 hours

In addition to small group activities, there were regular teacher consultations with the I-PLAY instructors throughout the year. I-PLAY instructors were available to answer any queries the teachers may have had regarding any of the students and their progress with their I-PLAY lessons.

Small Group Level

Based on the results from the initial screenings as well as observations from the teachers, a number of students required small group instruction in phonological awareness beyond the general instruction offered in the classroom. These students were divided into small groups, each with 3-4 children. Small group activities focused on key phonological skills such as identifying words that rhyme, recognizing initial sounds in words, and blending sounds together to make words. Listening skills played an important role in all of the game-like activities and students gained a heightened awareness of sounds and words. During the first two terms, the group sessions occurred twice weekly for several weeks. As children made progress or additional students were identified, the composition of the groups was adapted to meet the changing needs. During Term 3, the small group focus was on the few children who still required assistance and newer students whose needs had been more recently identified. In addition, some children received one-on-one sessions as needed.

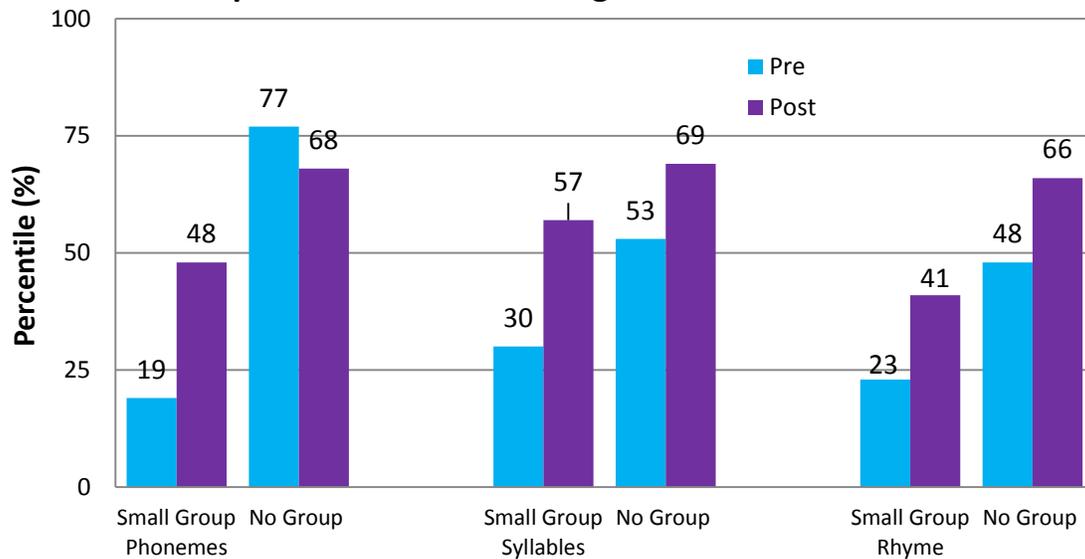
- ⇒ A total of **91** children benefitted from the small group intervention (full programme).
- ⇒ For those children who received small group intervention, the average number of sessions was **12** per child.
- ⇒ The total number of hours delivered in the small group or one-on-one setting was **236 hours**.
 - There were a total of **710** 'sessions' held across the 4 preschools.

Our Successes

Comparisons were made between students' results on the PIPA subtests in the fall 2016 and summer term of 2017. As previously mentioned, a few students transferred out of their schools prior to the end-of-year screening. The I-PLAY Coordinator and Instructors were in frequent communication with the teachers at their respective preschools. Consultations on screening results, discussion about the progress of students and feedback from teachers all assisted in ensuring that the programme was on track.

The graph on the following page shows the results for the preschoolers as assessed by the Preschool and Primary Inventory of Phonological Awareness (PIPA). The students who required the small group intervention (small group) were compared to those students who did not receive intervention (no group).

Improvements in Phonological Skills After 9 Months



On average, those students who did not require small group instruction initially performed at a level that was consistent with or above UK norms (48th to 77th percentile). Towards the end of this school year, these students were again performing at a level consistent with or above expectations for children in their age group. In other words, they had made steady progress throughout the year, based on their experiences in preschool and other environments.

The students who required small group intervention had initial scores that were below the performance of students that did not require intervention. The students assigned to the intervention cohort ('group') had pre-test scores between the 19th – 30th percentile in all areas. Following their experiences in the I-PLAY programme, the intervention group demonstrated increases of: 18 percentile points in rhyme awareness; 27 percentile points in syllable segmentation; and 29 percentile points in phoneme isolation.

Overall, students in the 4 public preschools made gains in their phonological skills as a result of exposure to the curriculum and instruction offered in the general classroom. In Rhyme Awareness, children in the small group cohort made gains consistent with their peers who received whole classroom instruction. However, the small group cohort are now much more adept at recognizing rhyme after this instruction as their performance now falls in the average range. Additionally, I-PLAY keeps the gap between the two groups from widening any further. In Phoneme Isolation, children in the small group cohort made greater gains than their peers who received whole classroom instruction. Their remarkable gains and their post-testing scores demonstrated that they had greatly narrowed the gap between themselves and their peers in this area. The 9 point drop for the control group cohort is not statistically significant and does not suggest that their skills have weakened; they remain well above the 50th %ile. In Syllable Segmentation, instruction in this area was again included during the rhyme or sound lessons in order to strengthen their post screening scores for the group. By doing so, we found once again that the post screening results are much more favourable. The gains in the small group cohort, when compared with their peers, were impressive, making the disparity between them and

their peers that much smaller. The extra instruction the children received provided enough of a boost to close the gap, more so than in past years.

Overall, those students who participated in the I-PLAY small group intervention made greater gains in their phonological awareness and were able to close the gap between their performance and that of their peers. It is also important to realise that the children in the small group cohort were seen to have increased their skills in all areas and are now, on average, performing close to the expected mean for children of their age, a marked improvement from pretest results which showed that they were performing significantly below the UK mean. Through interactive play and instruction, I-PLAY is providing the tools necessary for future reading success.

Recommendations

Reports were produced for all students regardless of whether they participated in I-PLAY small group activities. Each report included a graph which showed the student's pre- and post- performance on the PIPA, TOPEL and CELF-2 assessments. A short explanation of the results was given along with recommendations as the student enters Primary 1. Individual teacher and administrator meetings were held to discuss the results and recommendations for each student.

A total of 11 children were recommended for additional services as they were considered to have needs beyond the scope of the I-PLAY programme. In addition, 27 students were recommended to be monitored as they move in to Primary 1, given the weaknesses/concerns noted on their final I-PLAY testing results as well as behavioural observations during group work or screenings.

I-PLAY has proven to be a much needed programme for many preschoolers. This school year, 76% of those children tested scored such that they were placed in the intervention cohort. The results demonstrate that the gap in skills can be closed for most children. There will always be a few that will require additional instruction or services but with I-PLAY, those numbers can be reduced before a child enters formal education.

As We Look to the Future

Since its inception as a pilot project, I-PLAY has demonstrated definite successes in its first 7 years. Having successfully expanded to 2 additional preschools in our second year, I-PLAY continues to play an important role in improving the emerging literacy skills of preschool children. Our key goals for the upcoming year include:

- 1.** We plan to continue to provide I-PLAY screenings and small group interventions at Southampton, St. Paul, Lyceum and Victor Scott Preschools.
- 2.** We will continue to evaluate the programme and make adaptations as indicated.

3. We will continue to increase awareness of this programme amongst educators, public and private sectors, donors and our community at large. We will continue to institute workshops on reading to preschoolers in order to re-engage our volunteer and donor bases to improve the scope of the programming by introducing this important early literacy tool as an integral part of I-PLAY.
4. Increased Professional Development for educators and educational sessions for parents
5. A longitudinal research/evaluation of this project has been implemented, which will extend beyond the results of our pre and post intervention testing, but will also evaluate the long term outcome of the children in the I-PLAY programme. This is in conjunction with research, development and implementation of a unique executive function curriculum for students in this age group, a project on which The Reading Clinic is partnering.

Our Supporters

We are truly grateful for the support of everyone who contributes to the success of the I-PLAY programme. The Reading Clinic team is committed to improving the emerging literacy skills of preschoolers in Bermuda; however, this would not be possible without the key partnerships we have been fortunate to gain.

A special thank you goes out to the following:

Mr. Ian Truran and Mr. Michael DeCouto of Clarien Bank	Lead Sponsor
Mr. David Lang, Ms. Kim Pratt & the Members of The Bank of Bermuda Foundation	Founding Sponsor
Ms. Pamela Carr	I-PLAY Coordinator
Ms. Carolyn Brown	I-PLAY Instructor
Ms. Penny Saltus	I-PLAY Instructor
Ms. Julie Brewer	Psychologist
Ms. Nancy Manuel	Administrator, St. Paul's Preschool
Ms. Kristina Paynter	Teacher, St. Paul's Preschool
Ms. Carla Mendes	Teacher, St. Paul's Preschool
Ms. Karen Joyiens	Administrator, Southampton Preschool
Ms. Karen Bramlett	Teacher, Southampton Preschool
Ms. Kim DeSilva	Teacher, Southampton Preschool
Ms. Lugenia Payne	Teacher, Southampton Preschool
Ms. Sarah DeSilva	Administrator, Lyceum Preschool
Ms. Susan Robinson	Teacher, Lyceum Preschool
Ms. Carol Trott	Teacher, Lyceum Preschool
Ms. Patreec Simons	Teacher, Lyceum Preschool
Ms. Gladnora Ming	Administrator, Victor Scott Preschool
Ms. Karla Binns	Teacher, Victor Scott Preschool
Ms. Ethel Harvey	Teacher, Victor Scott Preschool
Ms. Corene McNorton	Teacher, Victor Scott Preschool
Ms. Khayriyyah Daniels	Teacher, Victor Scott Preschool
	Clarien Volunteers

