



Child Development in an International Context

Dale C. Farran

Vanderbilt University


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Countries have different goals for their young children before formal schooling*

- ❑ In Sweden, the goal is “participation” – children should learn to be cooperating members of a group.
- ❑ In Switzerland the goal is developing social skills
- ❑ In France it is learning to eat properly
- ❑ In Australia it is learning appropriate behaviors that the “Queen” would approve
- ❑ In Spain Basque region – becoming trilingual
- ❑ In the US, it is developing individual academic skills, preferably ahead of the other children

**Completely non-scientific survey*



U.S. parents -- and increasingly parents from other developed countries -- are besieged with pressure to start teaching their children young.







Expectations of U.S. teachers are changing

Most U.S. kindergarten teachers (children age 5-6) now think children should be able to read before they leave kindergarten, well before many other countries start formal education.

Didactic instruction



Sight Word and Nursery Rhyme Schedule

Letters	Unit	Sight Words	Nursery Rhyme
M / O	My Family	have, I	Little Miss Muffet
B / E	My Family	and, green	Baa Baa Black Sheep
T / A	My Family	like, see	Happy and You Know It
S / I	My Family	said, can	Jack and Jill
P / J	Community	blue, you	Muffin Man
D / K	Community	go, look	Three Little Kittens
C / F	Community	do, purple	Who Took The Cookies?
N / X	Community	me, they	There Was An Old Woman
G / L	Farm	there, pink	Farmer In The Dell
R / W	Farm	made, are	Hey Diddle Diddle
H / U	Farm	orange, play	Little Boy Blue
Z / Q	Farm	review	To Market To Market
V / Y	Jungle / Desert	at, from, black	Yankee Doodle

Didactic Instruction



Research on Learning in Young Children

- Direct instruction can actually *limit* young children's learning
- Teaching is a very effective way to get children to learn something *specific*
- But direct instruction also makes children less likely to discover unexpected information and to draw unexpected conclusions

“It's more important than ever to give children's remarkable, spontaneous learning abilities free rein. That means a rich, stable, and safe world, with affectionate and supportive grown-ups, and lots of opportunities for exploration and play. Not school for babies.”

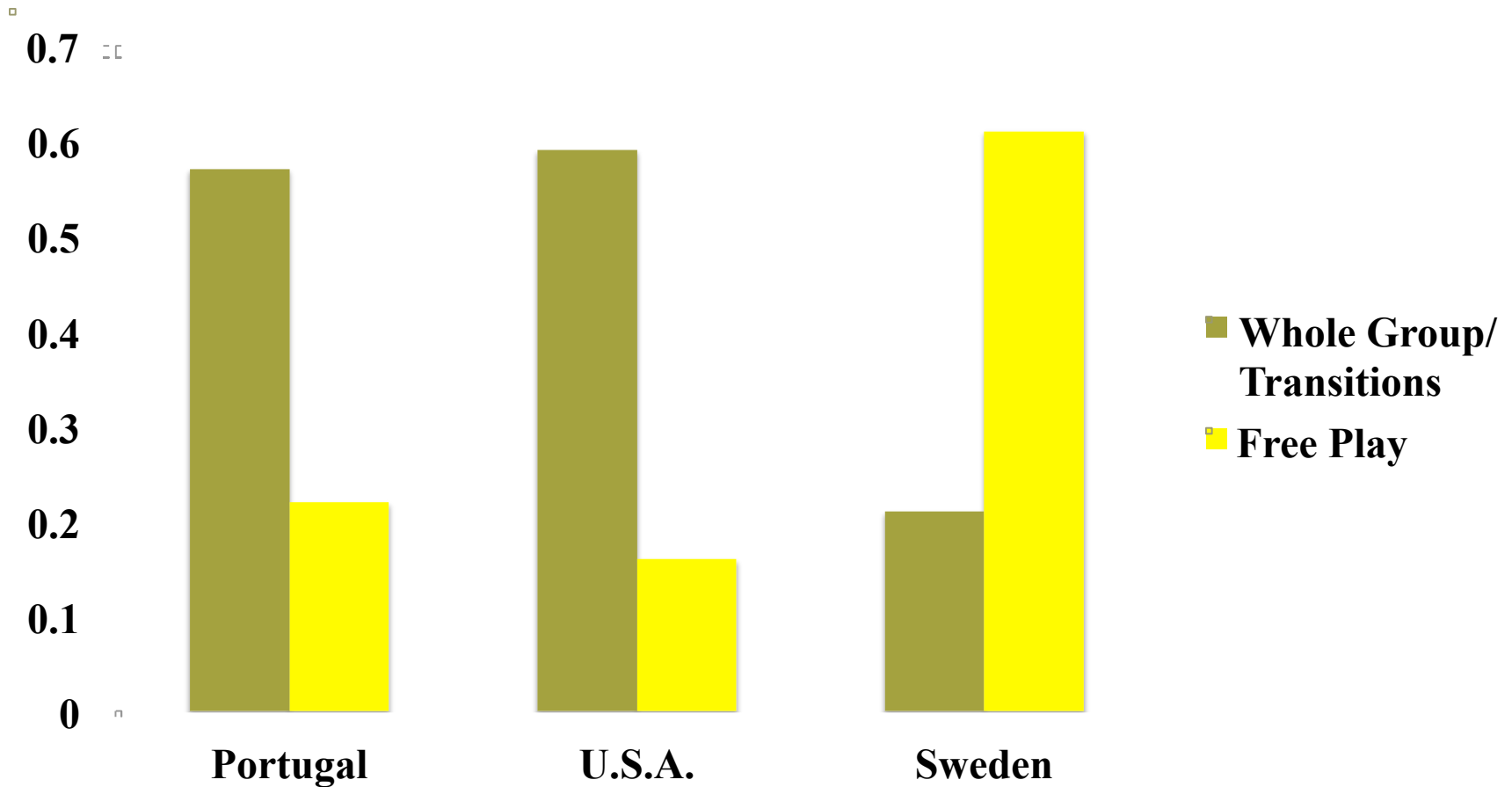


The U.S. approach is spreading to other countries

Especially taken up by countries with greater wealth disparities and no universal child care support for parents.

Funding goes to “targeted” programs for children of the poor and the focus is remedial.

International Comparisons of Time Spent in Preschool Classrooms



Stress in US children starts early and is now a great and increasing problem.



Pre-kindergarten programs are expected to prevent school failure for children from low income families – pressure to “get children ready for kindergarten”





‘I had seven brothers and sisters, and not one of them became the person they should have been — because of poverty, because of racism, because of poor diet and drugs, because of the war.’

ALICE WALKER

Alice Walker wrote “The Color Purple,” which won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.



Quote from Swedish Graduate Student

Why does the U.S. spend so much money trying to fix the problem instead of fixing the source?

Consequences of an Early Academic Focus

- Much less outdoor time in early childhood classrooms
 - Classrooms lasted 7 hours
 - Of 160 classrooms for four year olds, 45% had no outdoor nor indoor play time during the day.
- Whole group instruction could last 40-50 minutes at a time
- Keeping young children still and inactive requires a lot of behavioral control
- Associative interactions, linked long term to both social and cognitive outcomes, are infrequent

Associative Play Outside





U.S. Teachers Explain That It Is Too Hot ... Or Too Cold To Go Outside

*However, there is no such thing as bad
weather, only bad clothes!*

Cold, maybe snowing...




Raining



Hot: 35° Celsius





**Lessons From 40+ Years Observing
and Researching Classrooms for
Children, Preschool through
Secondary School**



The importance of a positive tone in the classroom – More smiling



Vibrant!



**More behavior approving, less
behavior disapproving**

Behavior Approving and Disapproving and Child Developmental Gains

- ❑ **Less** behavior disapproving linked to gains in **achievement**.
- ❑ **More** behavior approving linked to gains in **self regulation**
- ❑ **Fewer** behavior reminders linked to gains in **self regulation**.





Make More Math Happen

Experiences with Math and Child Gains

- The more children are engaged with math, the greater the gain in self regulation
- Children must have opportunities to be engaged with math materials in addition to adult-led instruction
 - Math included in everyday activities
 - Math talk in interactions with parents and/or teachers





**Child environments must be places
where interesting things happen and
children are engaged**

Teachers must be engaged with children in the process of discovery



Interesting activities must be organized for children to capture their attention



This includes math activities!



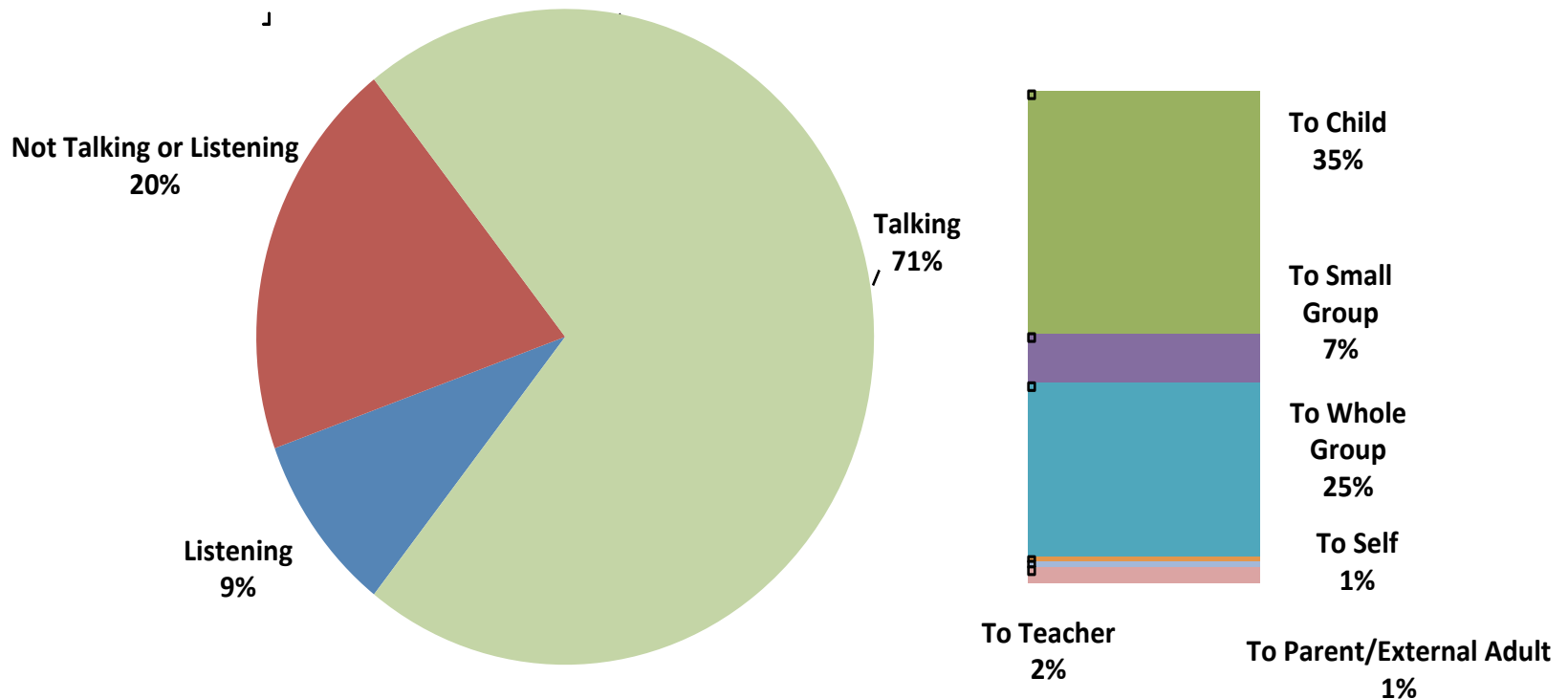


Teachers should listen more to children

Preschool Teacher Verbal Behavior

(Talk by teacher during morning learning opportunity)

Teacher Talking and To Whom





***All* adults need to talk less and
listen more...to children**



The dangers of new media

Middle and higher income parents are actually listening *less* to their children



“mom, could you push us, please?”

“one second.”

The new dinner time interactions



Characteristics Of An Effective Adult With Children

What all these insights mean simply:

- Be “in the moment” with children
- Show respect for children
- Take joy in children’s behavior
- Treat children’s learning as an intellectual puzzle

In conclusion

We're all just Seeds in God's hands

We start the same but where we land

Is sometimes fertile soil

It's sometimes sand

Around the world, we must take care to keep the soil
“fertile” so that children can flourish.

Developmental evidence helps...but so do values.



E-mail: dale.farran@vanderbilt.edu

Peabody Research Institute

Vanderbilt University

Box 0181 GPC

230 Appleton Place

Nashville, TN 37203-5721