

## **Research Question:**

The focus of my research is to understand how students can benefit from collaborative learning and what it can do for academic achievement in early education. *What happens to students' use of language (expressive), reciprocal communication and conversation, when engaged in learning experiences that are cooperative and require team building?* In round two of my research project, I am seeking to understand and identify how the implementation of lesson plans surrounding reciprocal conversations and expressive communication can increase student's collaboration skills and academic achievement.

## **Intervention/Innovation:**

In round two, I began by developing lesson plans that required the students to express themselves by using complex words and phrases during small group settings and whole group. I developed a variety of lessons in which students had to share their thoughts, to encourage their speech and expand on their conversations with others. For several days I implemented lessons for the whole group that included: reading books mainly with no pictures, flannel stories, singing nursery rhymes, and naming activities. From the moment the children sat for whole group, my aide and I used self-talk and parallel talk with the children. We described all of what we were doing and what the children were doing to provide them with a new language. During each literacy activity, the children were asked open ended questions to encourage their own thinking, share their ideas, and succeed on their own. To ensure that all the children had the opportunity to share and elaborate on their thoughts they were all given a "talking turn" by using popsicle sticks with their names on them, which were chosen at random. The children's responses not only gave me an idea of their verbal abilities, but also their class performance. Students were given many opportunities to verbally express themselves and given the time to collaborate with one another.

After each whole group lesson, students were given directions on what the small group activity entailed for each day. All the small group activities required the children to work together and use language. While the students worked together, I was able to observe and take notes.

Every day the students were given the opportunity to extend their learning by providing them with materials that pertained to the lessons for that day, that they could use during their free time. This gave me the ability to gain an understanding of where the children were academically, but also to what extent their verbal abilities were. I was able to collect raw data as the children played freely after the instructional portion of the day.

At the end of each day, children were asked to review and share what they learned for the day. Giving me a better understanding of what lessons they were interested in, what information they were retaining, how much language they were acquiring, and to what extent the children were collaborating on their own.