



# The Central Place of Language Development in Early Childhood Programs

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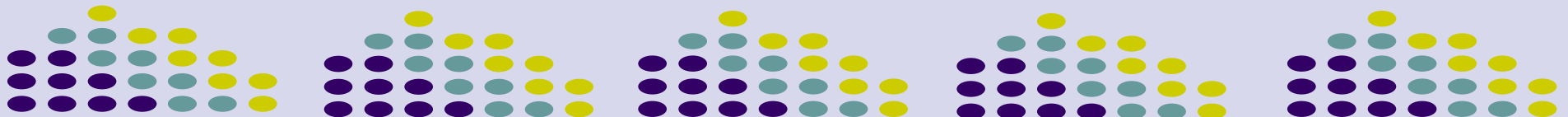
# Bivariate correlations between kindergarten PPVT standard score and later reading comprehension measures

<i>Reading Comprehension Measure</i>	<i>Correlation</i>
Grade 1 – Gray Oral	.45*
Grade 3 – Gray Oral	.47***
Grade 4 – CAT Standard Score	.62***
Grade 7 – CAT Standard Score	.69***




# The challenges of getting to fourth grade

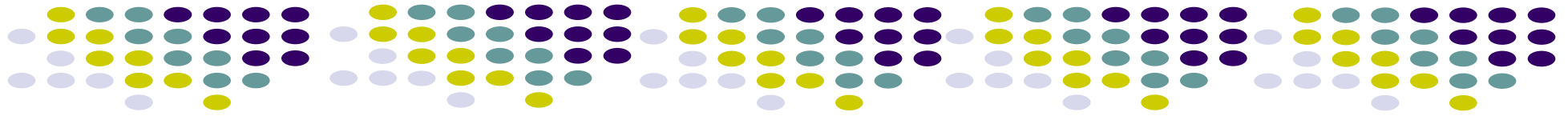
- Demands of learning new subject matter
- Demands of learning new, complex vocabulary
- Mastering “deep orthography” of English





# The challenges of getting to fourth grade

- Enormous variability of skills among children entering preschool and kindergarten
  - History of conflicts about reading instructional methods
  - Policymakers' interest in pedagogy
  - Teacher shortage and having well-trained teachers
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# Approaches to Solutions

- Focus on the biggest challenge:
  - ✓ 26 letters
  - ✓ 44 phonemes
  - ✓ 75,000 words
- Work on comprehension skills in oral mode while teaching print skills
- Think about what will be necessary for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade test, not just the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test





# A way to think about literacy development

*Preschool period*

*Primary grades*

*Later grades*

Oral language skills

Print skills

Reading simple texts  
Hearing complex oral discourse

Comprehending and learning from text





## Important themes from this Even Start Training:

- Language challenges for the Even Start population
- Crucial role of content in promoting language
- Crucial role of certain kinds of interaction and play in promoting language
- Crucial role of thoughtful assessment in guiding instruction



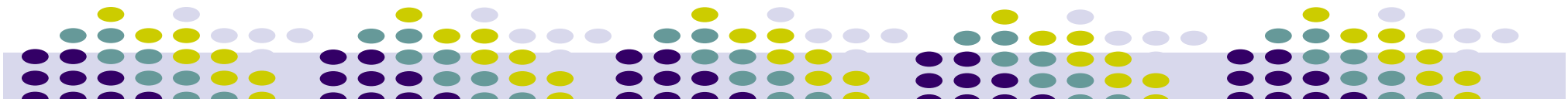
# The Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development

- Longitudinal research project conducted by David Dickinson and Patton Tabors
- Racially-diverse children from low-income homes, ages three through high school
- Intensive home and preschool visits
- Subsequent home and school visits, including assessments of language and literacy skills



# Comparison of kindergarten and 4th grade samples

	Kindergarten Sample	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Sample
Children	74	57
African-American	22%	21%
White	64%	65%
Latino	8%	7%
Biracial	7%	7%
Mothers' Education		
No high school degree	31%	32%
High school degree	41%	39%
Beyond high school	28%	30%
Family Income in 1987-88		
Under \$10,000	43%	39%

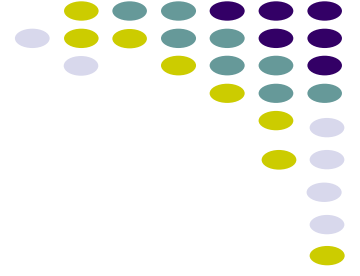


# Home Composites

(from Age 3, 4 and 5 Home Visits)

- ***Extended Discourse:*** Includes measures of mother's use of extended discourse from:
  - Book reading – non-immediate talk
  - Toy play – fantasy talk
  - Mealtimes – narratives and explanations
- ***Rare Word Density:*** The proportion of rare words used by the mothers during play and mealtimes.
- ***Home Support for Literacy:*** Mother's reported frequency and variety of literacy activities in the home.





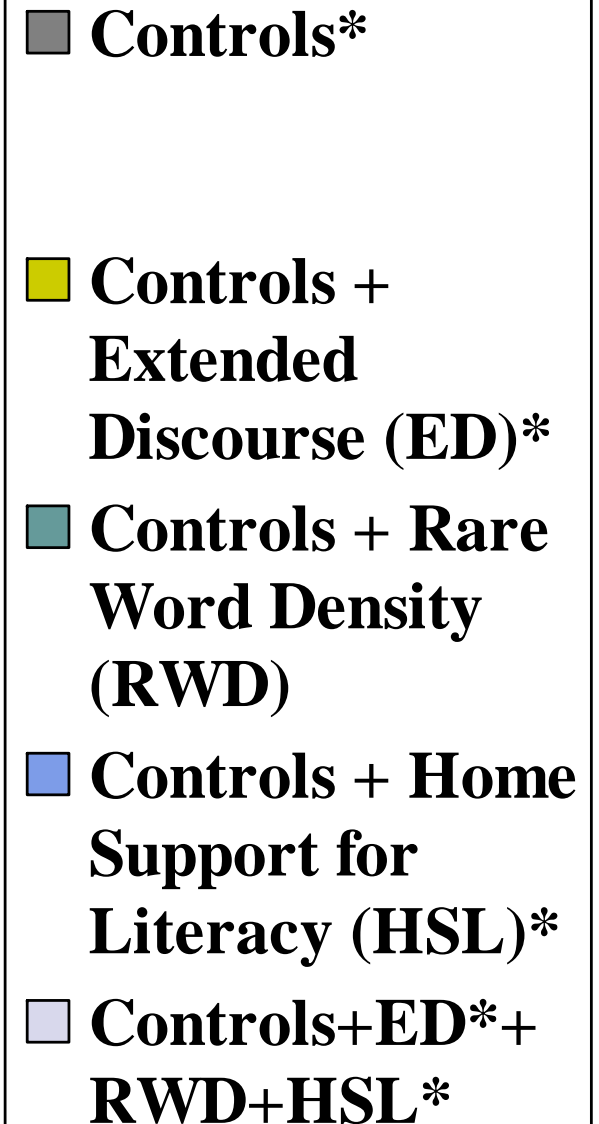
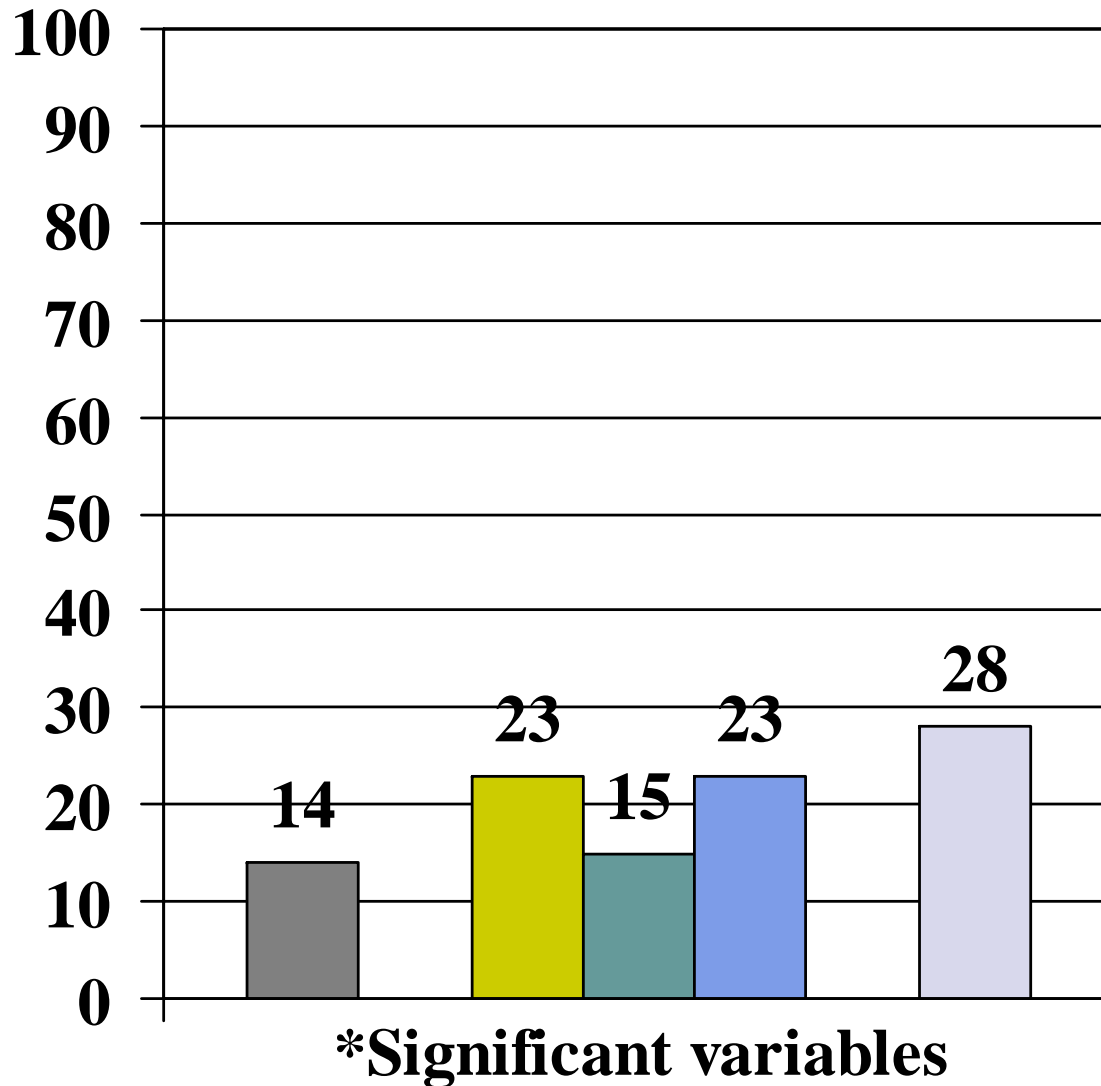
# Kindergarten Assessments

Variety of tasks to measure pre-literacy skills in kindergarten:

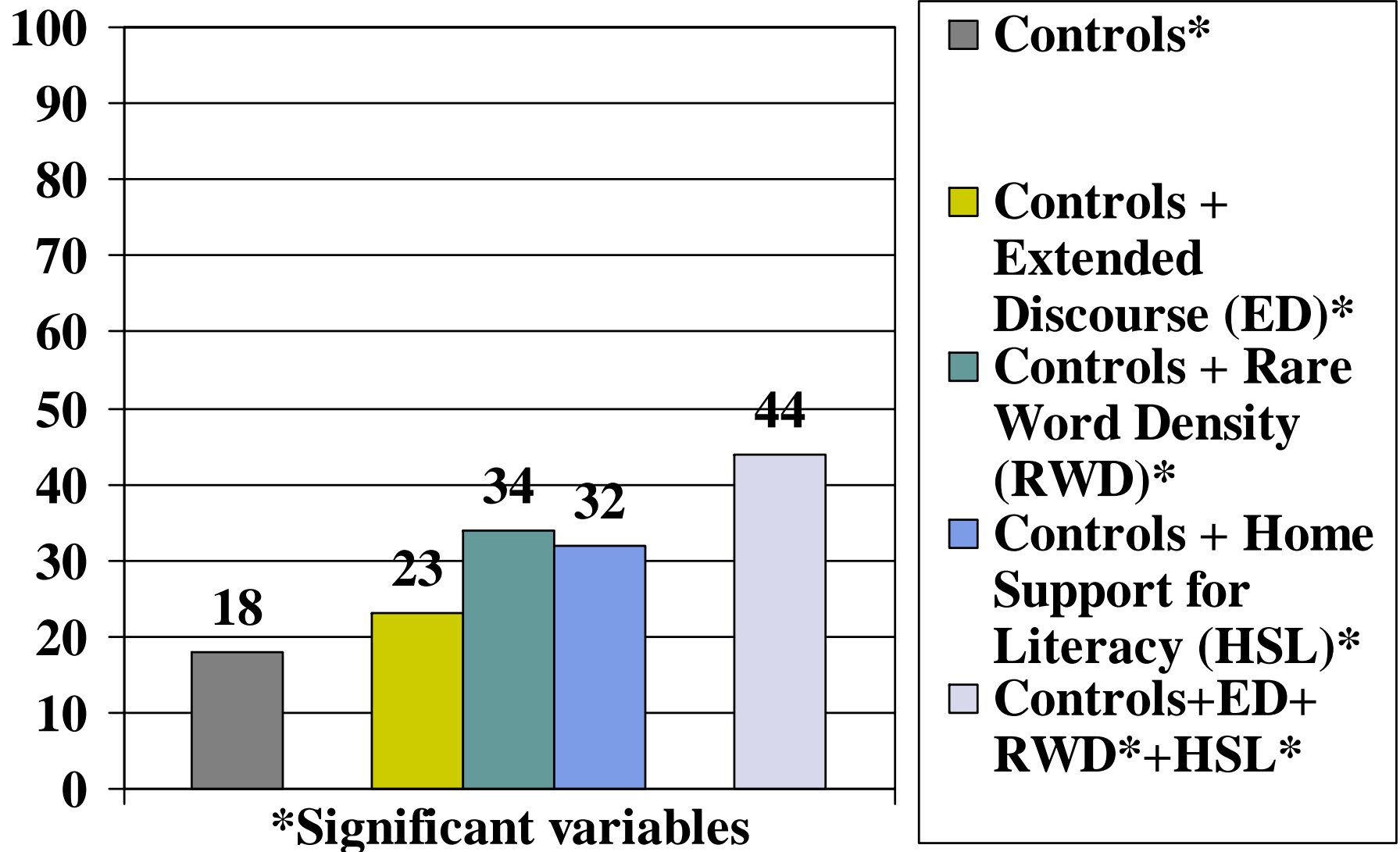
- Narrative production
- Vocabulary
- Emergent literacy



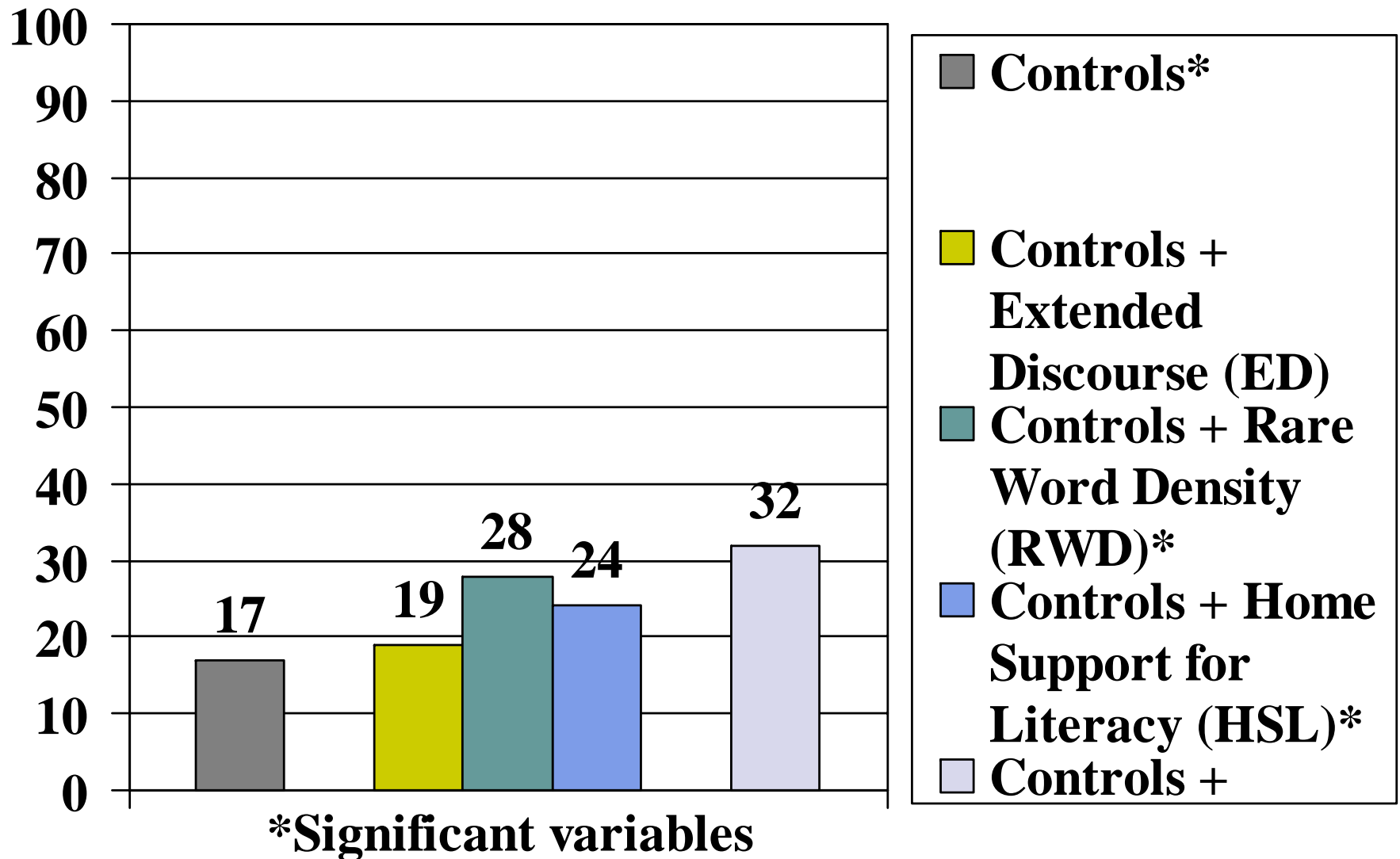
# Predicting Narrative Production: Home Environment Variables



# Predicting Vocabulary: Home Environment Variables

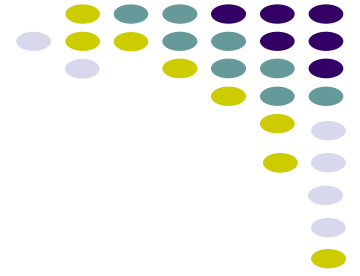


# Predicting Emergent Literacy: Home Environment Variables



# Preschool Composites

(from Age 4 Preschool Visit)



- ***Extended Teacher Discourse:*** Includes measures of teachers' use of cognitively challenging language.
- ***Classroom Curriculum:*** Whether the teacher reports that she includes writing, science and social studies in her preschool curriculum.
- ***Exposure to Rare Words:*** Includes measures of the teachers' and children's use of rare words.



# A Model for the Development of Preschool and Elementary School Language and Literacy Factors

## Home Predictors

Extended Discourse  
Rare Word Density  
Home Support for Literacy

## Preschool Predictors

Extended Teacher Discourse  
Classroom Curriculum  
Exposure to Rare Words

## Language and Literacy Development

Academic Language  
Vocabulary  
Word  
Recognition

Later  
Reading  
Comprehension



## Our findings:

- Preschool-age language and literacy experiences are strong predictors of early elementary language and literacy status, which in turn is a strong predictor of 4th grade reading comprehension.
- Both home and preschool factors are important. In particular, Rare Word Density and Home Support for Literacy, as well as Extended Teacher Discourse and a Classroom Curriculum at preschool show strong and consistent findings.





# Implications for Early Childhood Educators

- Focus on meaningful, “important” topics which lead to rich language and literacy experiences
  - Help teachers select meaningful topics and curricula
  - Instructional planning that enhances use of materials to explore chosen topics
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