Bright Start
References, as of June 2011

A partial list of publications specifically about the Bright Start curriculum


The Bright Start curriculum is described in the context of its theoretical base, with description of the curriculum itself and its teaching methods. Evaluative research is organized by questions, such as effects on scholastic aptitude (intelligence), effects on cognitive development, effects on motivation to learn, effects on subsequent school achievement. An appendix contains practical information: how to purchase the curriculum, training of teachers, trainers, non-English editions.


The two Butera and Haywood papers are similar. Some observations on the development of children with autism are followed by a description of Bright Start and a discussion of its classroom application for the early education of children with autism. Butera's experience as a teacher of preschool and primary children with autism, using Bright Start, illustrates the principles.


This is the PhD dissertation of Cèbe, who is both a researcher and a teacher trainer. She reports a series of studies on the application of Bright Start, within the context of a neo-Piagetian conceptual framework, with immigrant children in the south of France, including follow-up from kindergarten to third grade. Excellent research. In French.

Available in an online journal, this research report is focused on the effects of Bright Start at kindergarten on reading up to grade 3. An interesting pair of comparison groups helps to gain insight into the ability of cognitive early education to compensate for social class differences in early school achievement.


*This chapter is a description of Bright Start written for francophone readers.*


This is a follow-up to the earlier Dale and Cole (1988) study of "academic" and "cognitive" early education programs at the University of Washington. The "cognitive" program was an early version of Bright Start, somewhat adapted by the researchers. Preschool and kindergarten classes are compared to get at interactions between developmental level and type of early education program.


An early and somewhat adapted version of Bright Start is compared to a "direct instruction" (DISTAR) curriculum, with preschool children with developmental disabilities. One excellent feature is systematically quantified observation of the two kinds of classes, showing how each is consistent with its conceptual model, and how they differ from each other. On a variety of criterion variables, the authors concluded that each approach succeeds in producing what its own model proposes to produce, with Bright Start leading to greater improvement in cognitive development and DISTAR frequently to higher scores on academic knowledge.


*Using a Spanish translation and adaptation of Bright Start, the author applied the program with primary school children, using development of basic mental abilities as the principal criterion. There was evidence of the program's effectiveness in enhancing cognitive development. In Spanish.*

Garrido, J.M. (1996). *Diseño e implementación del programa Bright Start en una muestra de niños con dificultades de aprendizaje del Primer Ciclo de Primaria*

Application of Bright Start for early education of children with learning difficulties. In Spanish.


This descriptive paper, published in Hungarian language, is a presentation of Bright Start, including theoretical base, goals, components, and evaluation of effectiveness. In this paper, the research is presented study-by-study, in contrast to the Brooks and Haywood (2003) chapter in which research is organized by specific questions. Except for the language difference, some differences in emphasis, and the organization of research results, this paper contains essentially the same information that is in Brooks and Haywood (2003).


This chapter is focused on the process of converting cognitive developmental and educational theory into an applied program of cognitive education. The development of Bright Start (then called Cognitive Curriculum for Young Children) is described. Some data are presented relating to the evaluation of teacher training workshops.


This is the first published report on Bright Start (then called Cognitive Curriculum for Young Children: CCYC). There is a discussion of the need for a cognitive approach in early education, a presentation of the conceptual base of CCYC/Bright Start, a description of the program as it was originally applied in preschool classes, and a report of an initial evaluation study with both mentally retarded and typically developing children, the latter group from a low-SES milieu. Significant gains (greater than in a low-SES comparison group) on the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities were associated with Bright Start in both experimental groups.

Curriculum for Young Children. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing. This is the commercially available, published curriculum, in English. Information is available on the Charlesbridge website: www.charlesbridge.com.

Mills, P.E., Dale, P.S., Cole, K.N., & Jenkins, J.R. (1995). Follow-up of children from academic and cognitive preschool curricula at age 9. Exceptional Children, 61, 378-391. A further follow-up of the original Dale and Cole study. A report on cognitive, academic and social outcomes at age nine years for a group of 141 children who participated in two highly contrasting early intervention programs, mediated learning (ML) and direct instruction (DI), is offered. Initially higher performing children at pretest gained more from DI, but initially lower performing children gained more from ML.


Nevalainen, V. (2002). Bright Start curriculum in the cognitive rehabilitation of dysphasic pupils during their first school year. (Abstract in English of a Finnish-language thesis) Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology (online), 2 (3), 314. (http://www.iacep.coged.org/) 12 first-grade pupils with dysphasic disorders were given Bright Start and their performance contrasted with that of 6 similar control children. "After Bright Start, the pupils were doing better in cognitive tasks. As compared with the control group, their planning skills improved significantly. .. Bright Start seems to help most those pupils who have problems with planning tasks and focusing concentration, pupils who have severe language disorders, and pupils with behavior problems (especially the cognitive units of Self Regulation and Role Taking)." (from author's abstract)

Paour, J.-L., Cèbe, S., Lagarrigue, P., & Luiu, D. (1992). A partial evaluation of Bright Start with pupils at risk of school failure. The Thinking Teacher, 8, 1-7. An early report on the French studies of Bright Start's effectiveness, the study shows powerful effects on cognitive development and early school achievement, as well as on some important metacognitive functions such as following instructions, and on early reading skills.

achievement in the primary grades. The effects are very strong. It is an especially interesting paper from the standpoint of the power of cognitive early education to overcome the negative effects of social class and transculturality.


Price, M. A. (1992). Early cognitive education—and then what? The Thinking Teacher, 7 (2), 8-11. Bright Start “graduates” were followed into the primary grades, showing percentages of each of several cohorts who wound up in regular versus special classes. The data on prevention of special class placement are impressive.

Samuels, M., Fagan, J., MacKenzie, H., & Killip, S. M. (1988). Cognitive education for preschool children with severe learning difficulties. Final report. The Learning Centre, 3930 20th St., S. W., Calgary, Alta, T2T 4Z9, Canada. This is a substantial study of the effectiveness of Bright Start, versus a good non-cognitive preschool education program, with children who have moderate-to-severe developmental disabilities.


Tzuriel, D., Haywood, H. C., & Mandel, R. (2005). Effects of the Sequence and Pattern unit of Bright Start on seriation and math problem solving among kindergarten children of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel. Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology [online], 5, 1, 72-88. www.iacep.coged.org Only the Sequence and Pattern unit of Bright Start was employed with kindergartners whose families had moved from Ethiopia to Israel. The children were pre- and post-tested on seriation problem solving and math problem solving. The results suggested that these immigrant children were characterized by cultural difference rather than cultural deprivation. They benefited significantly from the cognitive early education experience. This is probably the first study in which only a single Bright Start curriculum unit was used.

presented at the 3rd conference of the International Association for Cognitive Education, Riverside, CA.

This is the first report on the Israeli implementation of Bright Start, showing some promising early effects. More complete details are published in subsequent reports.

Tzuriel, D., Kaniel, S., Kanner, A., & Haywood, H. C. (1999). Effects of the Bright Start program in kindergarten on transfer and academic achievement. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 14, (1), 111-141. This is an important study from the standpoint of effects of cognitive early education on subsequent school achievement and on the ability to transfer cognitive and metacognitive concepts to new learning situations.


Warnez, J. (1991). Implementation of the CCYC in a therapeutic center. The Thinking Teacher, 6 (1), 7-9. Preschool children in a language disorders remediation center got Bright Start two times per week over several months, and showed significant increases in abstract reasoning in total score and two of the four subtest scores on the VLDP of Groenendaal. No control group.

Warnez, J. (1993). Bright Start: Cognitive Curriculum for Young Children: toepassen binnen een therapeutische setting. SIGnaal, 5, 22-29. This publication is about the same as the 1991 paper (thinking teacher) and has the same title. In Dutch.