



Validity of the Book for Learning Everyday Together (Book-LET) Scale

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ABSTRACT

The construct validity of a tool used to determine the extent to which parent usage of the *Book for Learning Everyday Together (Book-LET)* reflects parents' understanding and application of parent-mediated child learning during parent-child early learning group activities was assessed in a pilot study. The tool additionally includes ratings of parent self-efficacy associated with using the *Book-LET* to promote child learning. Parent-mediated child learning promotes parent understanding of child interests as the basis for enhancing child participation and learning in the natural occurring opportunities found in everyday family and community activities. This pilot study involved 39 parents and their children, recruited from families who attended 4 different Family, Infant and Preschool (FIPP) Family Resource Centers. Results indicated the *Book-LET Scale* is a valid tool for obtaining information regarding the different components of parents' use of the *Book-LET* during parent-child interaction activities at FIPP Family Resource Centers. Implications for use are described.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *CASEinPoint* is to describe the process used to conduct analyses of the construct validity of the *Book for Learning Everyday Together (Book-LET) Scale*. The *Book-LET Scale* is a 28-item instrument developed to determine the extent to which parents found a documentation tool, the *Book-LET*, useful to support parent-child interaction activities that enhance child learning during parent-child early learning group activities.

The Family, Infant and Preschool Program (FIPP) Family Resource Centers employ a family-centered model based on an integrated framework definition of early childhood intervention and family support that assumes that families are "fully capable of making informed choices and acting on their choices" (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette, & Hamby, 2002) and primarily focuses on strengthening and enhancing parent capacity to support child learning (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004; Dunst, et al.). Pragmatically, FIPP Family Resource Centers provide opportunities for parents to identify, develop, and access informal parent-to-parent supports and formal community resources for everyday living and opportunities for parents and children to engage in interest-based learning activities while at the centers and when they return home. Since the context of everyday family

activity settings affords children and parents meaningful and functional learning experiences that strengthen existing and promote the acquisition of new competencies (Dunst, 2005; Dunst, et al.). Family Resource Center parent-child early learning groups are planned to promote parent and child participation around numerous and varied everyday family activity settings that include child interests and play (Sexton, 2007).

The integrated framework has both process and outcome characteristics, which can be operationalized and investigated to determine those processes that produce the most optimal outcomes and/or benefits (Dunst, 2005). In the case of the Family Resource Centers, process characteristics include the necessary resources, experiences and opportunities provided to parents that enhance their capacity to support child interest-based learning. The primary experience and opportunity provided at the Family Resource Centers is parent-mediated child learning (Dunst, 2006; Raab, 2005a). Parent-mediated child learning uses child interest to determine the natural occurring daily activities that afford the most effective learning opportunities and promote parents' and caregivers' use of responsive teaching strategies to maximize child participation and learning (Dunst; Dunst et al. 2001; Raab). Parent-mediated child learning specifies the following process characteristics: (1) recognizing child interests within activity settings, (2) identifying everyday activity settings that support child engagement in interests, (3) identifying opportunities within interest-based activities for parents to employ responsive teaching strategies, and (4) employing responsive teaching strategies to support existing and promote new child competencies (Dunst; Dunst et al.).

FIPP Family Resource Center practitioners engage parents in specific activities and opportunities associated with an evidenced-based parent capacity building model for promoting parent understanding, active participation, and confidence related to parent efficacy in promoting child learning (Wilson, Holbert & Sexton, 2006). Parent capacity-building specifies the following process characteristics: (1) identifying parent interests and competencies for acting on opportunities to promote child learning, (2) strengthening parenting confidence and competence by providing opportunities for parents to use existing competencies and practice new abilities promoting child learning, (3) supporting active participation by the parent to plan and engage in activities to promote child learning, and (4) facilitating opportunities for parents to reflect on and attribute their successes for achieving desired child learning outcomes to their own efforts and abilities. (Bandura, 1986; Dempsey & Dunst, 2004; Dunst, 2005; Dunst, 2006; Wilson et al.). Studies have demonstrated a bi-directional relationship between parenting behavior or competence and parent self-efficacy (Alant, & Uys, 2006; Desjardin, 2005; Hess, Teti, & Hussey-Gardner, 2004; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Leerkes & Burney, 2007; Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

According to Bandura self-attributions and/or self-efficacy beliefs of competence are motivating, resulting in a self-perpetuating cycle of confidence further influencing competence.

The *Book-LET* is a documentation tool designed to track parent participation, reflection and planning as he/she engages in specific parent-mediated child learning practices (Raab 2005b; Dunst, 2006a). The *Book-LET* is used by parents with the assistance of an early childhood practitioner to document parent active participation in promoting child development, through experiences in identifying child interests and competencies, planning for new learning opportunities, and practicing and reflecting upon responsive-teaching strategies within the context of parent-child early learning group activities. The *Book-LET* contains four sections that correspond directly to parent/caregiver identification of: (1) child interests, (2) learning opportunities, (3) parent/caregiver responsiveness, and (4) planning. Parents complete Section 1: *Identifying Child Interests*, at the beginning of a parent-child early learning group by checking and/or listing his/her child's interests and interest-engaging activities. In Section 2: *Participation in Learning Opportunities* parents choose from a provided list and document child participation in interest-based learning opportunities that typically occur during parent-child early learning group activities. Section 3: *Parent/Caregiver Responsiveness* asks parents to document the strategies they use to support, sustain, and elaborate on child participation in an interest-based activity during a parent-child early learning group by placing a check next to the strategies in the appropriate column. Section 4: *Planning* prompts parents to develop a plan to increase child participation in interest-based activities at home and in the community.

Intended outcomes of the *Book-LET* include: (a) increasing the likelihood that parents will reflect on and initiate activities that engage their children and promote learning, (b) providing parents information necessary to plan future activities that emphasize their children's interests and provide learning opportunities in a multitude of settings, and (c) parents' documentation of their children's expanding interests and competencies in a variety of everyday activities that parents can review for evidence of developmental progress (Sexton, 2007). The purpose of the *Book-LET Scale* is to quantify parents' experiences related to the intended outcomes of their use of the *Book-LET*.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were parents and their children recruited from families who attended parent-child early learning groups at four FIPP Family Resource Centers located in three rural counties in western North Carolina. The FIPP Family Resource Centers pro-

vide voluntary access to a wide variety of parent-child early learning activities to parents and their children between one to five days a week. Participating parents ranged in age from under 18 years to over 40 years with 47% of participants having some community college or less education and 53% of participants having community college graduation or more. Neither the number of visits to the Family Resource Centers parents and their children made during the *Book-LET* trial nor the length of time parents and children had been attending the Family Resource Center were control factors for participation or analysis.

Implementation

The *Book-LETs* were introduced through discussion and demonstration to parents during parent-child early learning groups and individually by Family Resource Center staff members. Parents were asked to complete a *Book-LET* following each visit to the Family Resource Center where their children engaged in learning activities over a period of 12 weeks. At the end of 12 weeks parents were asked to complete the *Book-LET Scale* and were given envelopes in which to seal their completed scale. No information identifying the parent or child was included on the scale.

Source of Data

Thirty-nine parents recruited from families who attended parent-child early learning groups at four rural FIPP Family Resource Centers completed the *Book-LET Scale* at the end of the 12-week trial of using the *Book-LET* at every visit to the Family Resource Center. All items of the scale are worded to reflect parents' active participation, parents' attainment of information relative to the specific context of parent-mediated child learning, and the parents' belief's about their ability to promote their child's learning in a meaningful way using the *Book-LET*. The behavioral science approach taken in the development of the *Book-LET Scale* includes defining the constructs and the operationalization of the indicators for measuring the presence or absence of those constructs (Babbie, 2004). Two constructs, parent-mediated child learning and parent capacity building are operationalized in the *Book-LET Scale*. Each of the constructs are represented by three categories of indicator items reflecting characteristics of parent-mediated child learning and the parent capacity building model as they related to parent usage of the *Book-LET* during parent-child early learning. For the purpose of scale validation, a third control category of child-parent indicators hypothesized to be unrelated to the *Book-LET's* purpose and usage was included as a foil. Each of the seven categories contain four operationalized indicators for a total of 28 scale items and employ a response-ordered response scale where 1 = Not at all true, 4 = Somewhat true, and 7 = Very true. The concepts and indicator categories of the *Book-LET Scale* items are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories and Subcategories of Scale Items

| Constructs | Indicator Categories |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Parent-Mediated Child Learning (PM) | 1. Parent identification of child interests, competencies, and opportunities for learning |
| | 2. Parent identification of responsive teaching strategies used to promote child learning |
| | 3. Parent documented record of changes in child learning and use of parent responsive teaching strategies |
| Parent Capacity Building (PC) | 1. Parent use of information gathered regarding child interests, competencies, and activities to plan for and increase child participation in interest-based learning activities during playgroups |
| | 2. Parent reflection regarding the child outcomes of parent promotion in child interests, activity settings, and learning opportunities |
| | 3. Parent reported competence and confidence in promoting child learning while using the <i>Book-LET</i> |
| Control Foils | 1. Child developmental level, eligibility for programs, diagnosis and parent concerns |

Data Analysis

Construct validation of the *Book-LET Scale* was accomplished by examining the pattern of actual responses. If the scale tool is valid, then the test items should measure the proposed construct. Evidence for this can be found in an appropriate pattern of observed responses. The multi-stage validation process made use of the scale development guidelines and factor analytic strategies put forth by DeVellis (1991). First, the means and standard deviations of individual item responses were examined. For the purposes of scale validation, it is desirable that the means be close to the center of the range of scores and the variability be high. Second, the correlations between individual items and the total score were computed in order to determine which items should be part of subsequent analyses and to examine how the 'foils' distinguish themselves. For similar reasons, the effect that the removal of individual items has on the scale-wise Cronbach's Alpha is computed. Once the subset of items to be retained is determined, an ex-

ploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis with varimax rotation to discern scale structure was conducted. Lastly, Cronbach's Alpha was computed to determine the internal consistency of the scale.

RESULTS

Construct Validity

Scale validation was begun by observing the descriptive statistics of responses to each item to see if the responses were appropriate for analysis. Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations for the 28 scale items where 25 of 28 items (89%) had score means between 4 and 6 with standard deviations for all items between 1 and 2. Using a correlation analysis was appropriate because sufficient variance was present in the distribution of parent responses and the distribution was not strongly skewed toward either 1 or 7. The three items with score means below 4 were all foil items. A correlation matrix was computed displaying the Spearman correlation for pairs of questions, and generally, the correlation coeffi-

cients for the foil/non-foil pairs were lower than for the non-foil/non-foil pairs providing evidence that the foils were not measuring the same underlying construct as the non-foils. The foils were removed in subsequent analyses. Multiple correlation (R^2) and Cronbach's Alpha (with item removed) were computed for each of the remaining 24 items associated with the constructs of parent mediated child learning and parent capacity building. The multiple correlation associated with each item was uniformly high and the Cronbach's Alpha was relatively unchanged by the removal of individual items. This provides strong evidence that all the remaining questions were addressing the defined constructs.

Overall Usefulness

Since both factors were related to the defined constructs each respondent's average score for the initial 24 non-foil items was computed to yield a new variable, the Average Parent Response, with a mean of 5.068 and a standard deviation of 1.486. Additionally, the parent scale contained a separate item regarding the overall usefulness

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Multiple Correlations (R^2), of Each Item with All Other Items, and the Coefficient Alphas with Each Item Removed from the Item Pool.

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Communalities (R^2) | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|--|------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| The Activity Booklets helped me respond to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | 4.84 | 1.762 | .957 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets increased my child's involvement in play group activities important to my family | 4.59 | 1.864 | .979 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me talk with FIPP staff about how to promote my child's learning | 5.22 | 1.845 | .971 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped FIPP staff plan play groups and other activities based on my child's interests and strengths | 5.47 | 1.436 | .863 | .989 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my child's progress during play groups | 5.19 | 1.639 | .969 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me identify everyday learning opportunities that matched my child's interests and strengths | 5.34 | 1.677 | .979 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me choose ways to involve my child in play group activities | 5.13 | 1.699 | .982 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets made me more aware of the importance of responding to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | 5.38 | 1.809 | .946 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me recognize and identify my child's strengths | 5.50 | 1.704 | .965 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets increased my child's involvement in play group activities | 4.78 | 1.979 | .988 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me promote my child's development in play groups | 5.09 | 1.785 | .977 | .987 |

Table 2 continued

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Communalities (R ²) | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|--|------|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| The Activity Booklets increased the learning opportunities available to my child during play groups | 5.00 | 1.685 | .964 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my efforts to support my child's learning in play groups | 5.19 | 1.712 | .974 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me plan ways to increase my child's play group activities | 5.03 | 1.769 | .976 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me recognize and identify my child's interests | 5.56 | 1.523 | .952 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me plan ways for my child to participate in play group activities | 4.72 | 1.836 | .969 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my role in supporting my child's learning during play groups | 5.06 | 1.664 | .981 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of everyday learning opportunities for my child | 5.31 | 1.615 | .986 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me understand that my child's participation in everyday learning opportunities promotes his/her development | 5.44 | 1.813 | .959 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets supported my ability to respond to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | 5.19 | 1.712 | .986 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets strengthened my confidence and ability to help my child learn during play groups | 5.16 | 1.609 | .979 | .987 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me identify family and community activities that help my child learn | 4.66 | 1.945 | .978 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets increased my child's learning during play groups | 4.94 | 1.865 | .987 | .988 |
| The Activity Booklets helped me pay attention to my child's learning | 5.38 | 1.737 | .964 | .988 |

of the Book-LET with an ordered response where 1 = Not at all useful, 2 = A little useful, 3 = Somewhat useful, 4 = Very useful, and 5 = Extremely useful. The distribution of parent responses regarding the overall usefulness item is depicted in Figure 2.

To see how the calculated Average Parent Response variable was related to the overall usefulness item the two variables were compared on a scatter plot (Figure 3). The scatter plot shows that a distinct linear trend exists between the two. A formal correlation calculation confirmed the Pearson's correlation coefficient (*r*) of .801 which is significant at the .05 alpha level.

Factor Analysis

A principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation (under criteria to extract factors with eigenvalues larger than 1) was conducted and the data resulted in a two-factor solution depicted below in Table 3. Thirteen of the 24 non-control items loaded heavily on a main factor which accounted for 44% of the variance while 11 of the

24 items loaded heavily on a second factor and accounted for 38% of the variance.

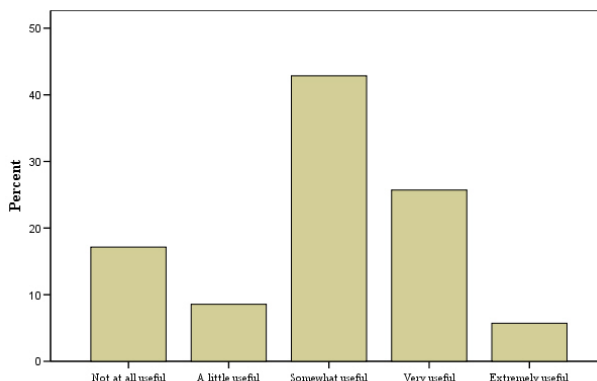


Figure 2. Percent Response to Item, “Overall, how useful do you find the Activity Booklets to be in promoting your child(ren)’s development?”

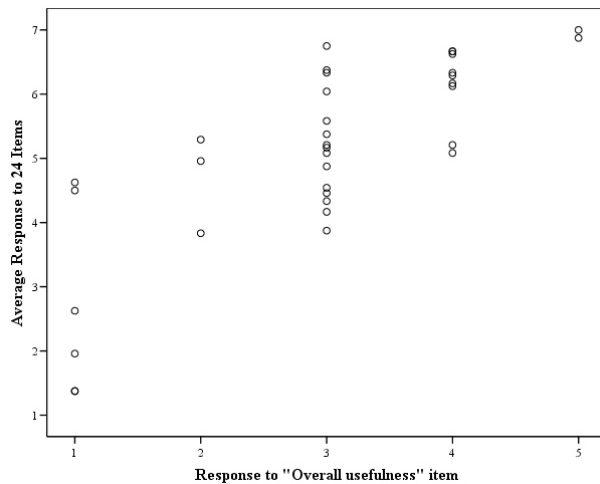


Figure 3. Scatter plot showing the relationship between how respondents rated the overall usefulness of the Book-LETs and the average response across the initial 24 items.

DISCUSSION

The three stages in establishing construct validity and the significant correlation between the similar average parent response and Usefulness response provide evidence that the items on the *Book-LET Scale* reflect the characteristics of parent-mediated child learning and parent capacity building as intended. Additional support that both constructs are equally represented in the *Book-LET Scale* is provided with 10 of the 13 items (77%) associated with the key characteristics of parent mediated child learning loading heavily on the main factor and 9 of the 11 scale items (81%) associated with parent-capacity building characteristics loading heavily on the second factor. The lesser contribution of overall variance from the second factor is likely due to the fact that all 24 of the scale items contain a referent to child learning and/or development while only half of the scale items are specific to parent self-efficacy. Since all 24 scale items associated with the parent-mediated child learning and parent-capacity building constructs are captured in the two factor

solution the likelihood exists that those items are equally represented on the *Book-Let Scale* and the scale is a valid tool for obtaining information regarding parent use of the *Book-LET* during group parent-child learning activities.

The current data set, although demonstrating the validity of the *Book-LET Scale*, cannot be used to evaluate the intended outcomes for parents using the *Book-LET* during parent-child interaction play groups. Possible mediating variables related to the length of parent and child experience attending Family Resource Centers, the number of times a parent used the *Book-LET* during the 12 week trial, and practitioner differences in experience and training were not controlled for and could have influenced outcomes. Exploring differences in practitioner experience and training provides valuable information to early intervention and child learning programs where practitioners are engaged in promoting parents as the primary mediator for children. For instance all FIPP staff receive training and ongoing support mediating parent promotion of child learning specifically through the use of coaching strategies. Further investigations of outcomes using the *Book-LET* will include controls for these possible mediators. Additionally, the *Book-LET Scale* could be used to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of those practice characteristics not only in parent-child early learning group settings but also in home-based intervention settings or with parents and children of specific cultural groups.

Parent mediated child learning and parent efficacy outcomes and curricula are of equal interest to parents, teachers, or caregivers. The two-factor result suggests the *Book-LET Scale* could be used to explore differences in uses of the *Book-LET* across various preschool, child-care and home visiting settings and situations. For instance, the information documented by parents on the *Book-LET* regarding child interests, opportunities for learning and participation in various activities could be used for program planning. Documentation on the *Book-LET* of the different responsive strategies parents used to support child learning could provide information to guide practitioners' promotion of parent capabilities and confidence. An additional possibility might be evaluating the use of the *Book-LET* as a compliment and/or measure of comparison to more traditional child development functional-assessment tools and parent-efficacy measures (Sexton, 2007).

Table 3
Varimax Factor Analysis Loadings of the Book-LET Scale
 Rotated Factor Matrix(a)

| <i>Factor</i> | | <i>Factor Scale Items</i> | <i>Factor Loading</i> | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------|
| Parent Mediated Child Learning | Parent Capacity Building Model | | 1 | 2 |
| PM1 | | The Activity Booklets helped me identify everyday learning opportunities that matched my child's interests and strengths | .852 | .334 |
| PM2 | | The Activity Booklets made more aware of the importance of responding to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | .817 | .442 |
| PM2 | | The Activity Booklets helped me talk with FIPP staff about how to promote my child's learning | .807 | .364 |
| PM3 | | The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my efforts to support my child's learning in play groups | .779 | .504 |
| PM3 | | The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my child's progress during play groups | .772 | .467 |
| | PC3 | The Activity Booklets helped me promote my child's development in play groups | .764 | .571 |
| | PC3 | The Activity Booklets helped me pay attention to my child's learning | .750 | .450 |
| PM2 | | The Activity Booklets helped me respond to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | .727 | .518 |
| PM3 | | The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of everyday learning opportunities for my child | .726 | .562 |
| PM1 | | The Activity Booklets helped me recognize and identify my child's strengths | .703 | .627 |
| PM1 | | The Activity Booklets helped me recognize and identify my child's interests | .702 | .509 |
| PM1 | | The Activity Booklets helped me keep track of my role in supporting my child's learning during play groups | .614 | .560 |
| | PC1 | The Activity Booklets helped FIPP staff plan play groups and other activities based on my child's interests and strengths | .545 | .386 |
| | PC2 | The Activity Booklets increased my child's learning during play groups | .428 | .851 |
| PM1 | | The Activity Booklets helped me identify family and community activities that help my child learn | .272 | .833 |
| | PC2 | The Activity Booklets increased my child's involvement in play group activities | .496 | .796 |
| | PC3 | The Activity Booklets strengthened my confidence and ability to help my child learn during play groups | .510 | .771 |
| | PC1 | The Activity Booklets helped me choose ways to involve my child in play group activities | .590 | .753 |
| | PC1 | The Activity Booklets helped me plan ways to increase my child's play group activities | .606 | .727 |
| PM2 | | The Activity Booklets supported my ability to respond to my child in ways that promote his/her learning | .661 | .702 |
| | PC3 | The Activity Booklets helped me understand that my child's participation in everyday learning opportunities promotes his/her development | .630 | .690 |
| | PC1 | The Activity Booklets helped me plan ways for my child to participate in play group activities | .593 | .684 |
| | PC2 | The Activity Booklets increased the learning opportunities available to my child during play groups | .582 | .680 |
| | PC2 | The Activity Booklets increased my child's involvement in play group activities important to my family | .607 | .619 |

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