



Research and Evaluation: How do Mother Goose Programs™ Meet Children's Early Learning Needs?



What do children need in their early learning lives? And do Mother Goose Programs meet those needs? National independent evaluators say YES! Here's how:

Children need to have conversations with adults in the home.

Catherine Snow of Harvard says in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children**, that “intentional, frequent, and sustained conversation among adults and children is a powerful predictor of language development and reading success.”

Mother Goose Programs for families promote frequent conversations about books and shared activities in the home.

In evaluating a national dissemination of these programs, researchers from WestEd in Stoneham, Mass. Found that over half the participants reported having “frequent” conversations about books, program activities or both.

Children need to be exposed to sophisticated vocabulary and quality conversation to build their vocabulary and thinking skills.

Catherine Snow says that the “amount of conversation children have with adults directly affect how well they develop thinking skills and build vocabulary.” (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*) And one problem is that “low income children are exposed to significantly less vocabulary than high income children.” (B. Hart and T.R. Risley in *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young Children*)

Mother Goose Programs for child care and community settings actively involve children in conversation, stories and activities that promote expanded vocabulary and complex thinking.

RMC Research Corp. of Denver assessed how Mother Goose Programs improve programming for children in community and school child care. They found: “MGP professional development materials and training approaches emphasize children’s increasing abilities to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems. There are activities with simple and multiple step directions. Increasingly complex and varied vocabulary is introduced through math and science activities.”

Children, from birth on, need to have picture books read to them regularly in order to develop strong vocabulary and a whole range of pre-literacy skills.

Picture book reading is important in the home and in child-care and community settings. J.C. Burgess and others have found it to be related to “language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement including knowledge about print, letters and the characteristics of written language.”

Children acquire specific new vocabulary. (Whitehurst, Grover, et. al.) They learn that text moves across a page from left to right and that pictures are connected to print. (Lesley Mandel Morrow et. al.)

Looking at four-year-olds, the quality of group book reading experiences correlated with kindergarten language and literacy measures. (Dickinson and Smith) And it is as important a predictor as phonemic awareness. (Bus and van Ijzendoorn)

Mother Goose Programs for families, and for child care and community help adults create reading experiences that give children all the reading building blocks.

Evaluations of family programs by WestEd show that the programs successfully promote book reading and that after the programs, 97% of participating parents or grandparents read books with their children. Programs for child-care and community settings gave adults a complex range of group reading skills. RMC Research found: “Child-care providers are given activities to help children develop increasing awareness of print and concepts of print, such as that reading in English moves from top to bottom and left to right, that speech can be written down, and that print conveys a message. Providers are encouraged to show children the relationship between spoken and written words by following print as it is read aloud, pointing to words, for example, as they are being read.”

Children need to have cognitively challenging experiences.

Many studies have established that high quality early care and education lay the foundation for children’s school success by enhancing cognitive and language development as well as social and emotional competence. (U.S. Department of Education: *Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader.*)

Mother Goose Programs promote active engagement between adults and children in literacy, math, science, and social and emotional development and make a difference in children’s performance.

Evaluation by WestEd. Shows that family programs encourage interactive activities in the home and that 97% of participants engaged in activities they learned in the program with their children. In child-care settings, RMC Research found that in programs focusing on literacy, math and science, “Participants...apply what they learned in the training and used nearly three times as many math and science investigations in their daily work with children than they had before they attended. In the programs focusing on literacy and social studies, RMS found that participants” also demonstrated statistically significant increases in their frequency of

implementing social studies standards. Their confidence in introducing social studies, social and emotional development, and literacy and language activities dramatically increased over time.”

The impact on children? “Children whose providers implemented the program with high frequency performed statistically significantly better than children of providers who did not participate in the training.”

Young children need to be exposed to mathematics and science.

Contemporary research shows that young children are capable of learning scientific skills at a very young age. (Jeannie Oakes et. al.) And David Geary says that young children are sophisticated mathematical thinkers.

Mother Goose Programs teach and encourage parents and providers engage their young children in math and science activities.

After engaging in Mother Goose Programs with math and/or science content, both WestEd. And RMC found increases in science and math interactions with young children, in the home and in the child-care setting. And children whose providers frequently implemented the *Mother Goose Cares About Math and Science* curriculum twice a week or more showed statistically significant differences from comparison groups on knowledge of science process and math skills. (RMC Research)

Children need stimulating and developmentally appropriate early childhood education settings that promote literacy.

Young children learn most effectively when they are engaged in interaction rather than in merely receptive or passive activities. (E. Wood and N. Bennett) And “direct instruction of emergent literacy skills and knowledge can be successfully incorporated into child-care settings. (Whitehurst, Grover et. al.)

Mother Goose Programs enrich the child-care literacy environment and practice.

RMC Research found a complex variety of literacy activities in the child-care setting resulting from provider participation in *Mother Goose Cares* courses. “Children are encouraged through the Mother Goose activities to represent stories and experience through pictures, dictation, and play, and to experiment with a variety of writing implements such as pencils, crayons, and computers. Further, “Mother Goose fosters the interest and involvement of children in listening to and discussing a variety of picture, fiction, and non-fiction books. There are multiple activities to help children develop a growing interest in reading-related activities based on stories, and promoting the engagement of pretend-reading to other children. Book handling activities, such as knowing to view one page at a time and in sequence from front to back, and understanding that a book has a title, author, and illustrator are consistently demonstrated and emphasized in the training.”

**Full citations are available from mothergooseprograms.org.*