Teacher librarians can offer professional development, services, and programming to instructional leaders and care providers of young children; however, to optimize instruction, they should understand the general knowledge base of early care professionals. This study examined the literacy beliefs of the instructional leaders of child care facilities. Instructional leaders self-reported their beliefs through response to a survey that contained the Teacher Beliefs Questionnaire (Seefeldt, 2004). Results suggest that instructional leaders’ beliefs are most consistent with research-based best literacy practice in the areas of book reading and writing and most contradictory in decoding knowledge. Additionally, care providers appear not to have a full understanding of the relationship between early vocabulary development and later reading ability. These findings point to areas which teacher librarians should target in offering professional development. Specifically, in read-aloud sessions librarians should model repeated readings, the use of expository text, facilitation of children’s vocabulary development and incorporation of developmentally appropriate code-focused instruction into fun-filled, child-friendly activities and conversations. In co-planning and delivery of professional development, librarians can underscore the importance of vocabulary-building experiences and interactions and promote the reciprocal benefits of reading and writing development.

**Introduction**

Though literacy has always been of great importance to teacher librarians, they have recently taken a collective interest in defining themselves as the literacy ‘go-to’ group. The American Association of Teacher librarians (AASL) (2009a), in addition to emphasizing the librarian’s literacy contributions through the teaching and instructional partnership roles, has called on librarians to take a proactive leadership role in literacy support and instruction. To further emphasize this role, AASL (2009b) issued a position statement supporting the full realization of teacher librarians’ contributions to students’ reading development. Numerous school library professionals have also issued their own calls to teacher librarians in the field to fulfill the literacy leadership role through a variety of means (Achertman, 2010; Asselin, 2003; Branch & Oberg, 2001; Braxton, 2008; Loertscher, 2006, 2010; Moreillon, 2009, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2007).

The AASL School Library Media Specialist (SLMS) Role in Reading Task Force posits that teacher librarians should partner with “classroom teachers at all grade levels and in every subject area” (2009c, slide 4). One way that teacher librarians can fulfill this call is by
reaching beyond school boundaries to serve as literacy leaders to early childhood professionals. Through such activity, teacher librarians not only support their own schools’ outcomes through instructional collaboration with caregivers at the preschool level, they also bolster their positions as literacy leaders (Arnold & Colburn, 2007, 2009; Braxton, 2004; Cahill, 2004).

Teacher librarians throughout the world recognize the importance of serving young children. Filipenko (2004) in Canada and MacDonnell (2006) in the U. S. suggest that teacher librarians research and integrate developmentally appropriate information literacy standards for young children. In Australia, Braxton (2004) stresses the importance of proactively encouraging library use for preschool populations and their caregivers. And in Finland, schools support literacy for all through invitations to family-focused literacy events (Halinen, Sinko, & Laukkanen, 2005).

A resounding call has also been issued in the United States for librarians to serve early childhood populations. Arnold and Colburn (2007) have advocated working closely with Head Start professionals; Cahill (2004) and Dengel (1994) support outreach to local child care providers; Keller (2005) proposes collaborative partnerships between school and public librarians, early childhood agencies, and early childhood care providers; Neuman, Celano, Greco, and Shue (2001) suggest offering book selection guidelines to early care providers; and Schwindt and Tegeler (2010) issue invitations to engage preschoolers through active storytimes in the school library.

**Rationale for the Study**

Librarians reaching out to young children and caregivers acknowledge the research in the fields of neuroscience and child development suggesting that much learning and structural brain development take place in the first years of life. They realize that early experiences and interactions can have profound effects on both physical and cognitive development and that experiences, opportunities, interactions, and nutrition in the early years are paramount for future success (Zero to Three, 2000). Teacher librarians understand that literacy learning that occurs in the early years will affect a child’s academic trajectory (Juel, 1988; Scarborough, 2001) and that those children with ample print and language opportunities and experiences during the early years are better positioned upon entering school than their peers who lack such events (Adams, 1990). Recognizing that nearly 70% of children between the ages of three and five in the United States attend a child care center (Pianta, 2007), both public library and school library practitioners have urged colleagues to offer further programming and services to young children and their caregivers, including services and programs aimed at providers offering home-based and center-based child care.

Though it seems only logical that the early literacy and language needs of young children should be met under the supervision of licensed child care providers, teacher librarians realize that this is not always the case. Librarians, policy makers, and educators have noted trends of increasing numbers of children entering kindergarten under-prepared for the learning and social demands of formal schooling (Broderick, 2003).

Studies suggest that better quality early childhood programs produce children better prepared for traditional learning (e.g., Barnett, 2003; Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Burchinal et. al., 2000), and educational research suggests that teacher quality clearly impacts student learning (Barnett, 2003; Burchinal et al., 2000; Dunn, 1993; Early et al., 2006; Helburn, et. al., 1995; NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 2002, 2003; Pianta, 2007; Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003). Further still, research (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006) points to the importance of quality teacher-child interactions that advance language development and the use of instructional strategies to promote literacy understandings that support later reading success. Hence, it is necessary that childcare facilities have teachers with informed pedagogical knowledge concerning best practices in terms of general cognitive and literacy development.

Though the message is clear that teacher librarians can and should be supporting young learners through services and programs, how can teacher librarians best affect the
quality of early childhood programs? Some libraries have developed services aimed at increasing book access and enhancing the literacy environment of early childcare facilities; however, researchers have found that book access is a “necessary but insufficient” means for improving literacy instruction in early childhood settings (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999). Hence, if librarians are to impact the school readiness outcomes of young children, they must address both the physical environment and teaching quality of early childhood classrooms.

The purpose of this study, part of a larger study that also examined the behaviors of early care leaders, was to explore the developmental literacy beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities. The primary goal of this portion of the study was to determine the pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing, and language development of instructional leaders of child care facilities and preschools. Due to the dearth of research in this area, the current study presents important findings as well as implications for both practice and research, and informs librarians interested in offering professional development to early childcare providers.

Methods

Population
The population for this study was delimited to all child care programs licensed to serve at least 13 children age 5 or under in eight counties of one southeastern state in the United States: the counties included both rural and urban areas of racially and ethnically diverse populations. The delimitation ensured that the sample would include all center-based facilities while excluding licensed in-home care providers. Child care programs included: Head Start programs; state department of education approved school pre-k programs; religious-affiliated and community agency non-profit child care programs; and for-profit programs, including corporate sponsored facilities, franchises, and independently owned and operated businesses.

Sample
All qualifying childcare programs in the population were invited to take part in the study; thereby reducing the margin of error in reporting findings (Baumann & Bason, 2004). A total of 106 individuals (98 females and 8 males), representing 168 of the 209 facilities eligible to participate, completed the entire survey. Table 1 illustrates the totals of participants by center type and reflects the number of facilities represented rather than number of individuals because many of the instructional leaders served multiple facilities. In addition to those whose data is reported in this study, three instructional leaders began the survey but did not complete it, and 15 others agreed to answer the survey but did not. Seven individuals refused to participate, and four could not be reached despite multiple attempts. Finally, two school systems with a total of nine preschool programs declined to participate.
Table 1. Participation by Facility Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Facility</th>
<th>Number of Facilities Represented</th>
<th>Number of Facilities Eligible</th>
<th>% of Facilities Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Elementary Preschool</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>81.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private/Parochial Elementary Preschool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Child Care</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church-affiliated Child Care</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>81.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Sponsored</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Non-Profit Organization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Campus Sponsored</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Elementary School-Head Start</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>80.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state childcare licensing agency facilitates a voluntary child care program quality rating system. Through this program, childcare facilities are rated on a scale of zero to three in seven areas (Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Services, n.d.). In terms of star quality rating, an independent samples T-test of respondents versus non-respondents revealed no significant differences.

Survey Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-developed survey instrument that contained the Preschool Teacher Literacy Beliefs Questionnaire (TBQ) (Seefeldt, 2004). The survey gathered demographic information about each facility, as well as information about the instructional leaders’ formal education, experience, pedagogical beliefs in the area of literacy, and leadership behaviors. For validation purposes, fourteen practitioners and researchers across the United States in the fields of child development and literacy evaluated the survey. Several experts suggested minor wording and formatting changes only. Additionally, instructional leaders at six facilities responded to the instrument and then completed the survey again one to two weeks later. Test-re-test data showed no significant differences.

The TBQ contains thirty questions designed to assess an individual’s knowledge of best practices in the area of literacy and language development. The measure contains four subscales: book reading; writing; oral language and vocabulary; and code-related skills. The book reading subscale consists of five items. Six items form the writing subscale. The remaining two subscales consist of nine items each. One statement in the TBQ concerns general practice and does not fall within any of the four subscales. Twelve items that do not reflect best practice based on research findings are reverse coded. Hindman and Wasik (2008) report a reliability alpha of .87 for the TBQ overall, with all four subscales meeting acceptable internal consistency and variability.

Procedures

The researcher attempted to contact each of the instructional leaders of the 209 facilities by telephone. The initial phone call informed the leader of the purpose of the study and requested participation. Additionally, the researcher offered participants the incentive of being included in two random drawings for a $25 gift certificate for the purchase of books.
Results
This study sought to determine instructional leaders’ pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing, and language development. The TBQ was used to measure instructional leaders’ beliefs about best practices in terms of literacy learning. Sum scores on the TBQ ranged from 91 to 139 points (with possible scores from 30 to 150 points) with an average score across the sample of 119.29 (SD=9.81). Additionally, for each individual, a total mean score and mean scores for each construct were calculated for the purpose of determining central tendency. Finally, the total mean score and each of the mean construct scores were averaged across instructional leaders to create grand mean scores. Scores above 4 indicate agreement or strong agreement with research-based best practice.

Instructional leaders’ mean scores are illustrated in Table 2 and indicate that, as a whole, their beliefs were consistent with best practice in terms of overall literacy development. Further examination of the four constructs within the TBQ, however, reveals those areas where instructional leaders are most knowledgeable, as well as the domains of literacy development where instructional leaders may not have the most accurate information in terms of best practice.

### Table 2. Mean (M), Standard Deviation, and Range of TBQ Construct Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TBQ Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Reading</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>2.20-5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>3.00-5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Language and Vocabulary</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>3.22-4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding Knowledge</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>2.78-4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Beliefs</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>3.03-4.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instructional leaders’ beliefs are most consistent with best practice and literacy development in the areas of book reading and writing. Five items on the TBQ assessed beliefs concerning book reading, and six items assessed writing beliefs. More than 80% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all items concerning best practice in the areas of reading and writing as shown in Table 3. Further, 90% or more, of the instructional leaders completing the survey indicated agreement or strong agreement with four of the eleven items. Only one item showed a lack of congruence between respondents’ beliefs and recent research.

Nine items comprised the oral language and vocabulary construct of the TBQ. Overall results show relatively close alignment between instructional leaders’ beliefs and research-based best practice and development in the area of oral language and vocabulary (M=4.18, SD=0.40); however, closer examination of individual items reveals areas where such agreement is weak. One-third of all respondents were in agreement with the reversely coded item, “Preschool children do not need to learn the meaning of a lot of words to become good readers.” Further, more than half of the instructional leaders disagreed with best practice on two additional items, “Preschool children need to learn a lot of words so they can learn to read,” and “Preschool children should be taught to speak in complete sentences.”
### Table 3. Percent of Instructional Leaders Agreement with TBQ Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TBQ Item</th>
<th>% Agreement^*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Construct</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should not ask questions or talk about stories when teachers read to them^*</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should look at books to help them learn to read</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children do not need to hear many stories in order to become good readers^*</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn new words as teachers define them when reading books to children</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need to hear the same story more than once or twice to learn new words</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Construct</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should not waste time scribbling and drawing when they can be learning to write^*</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children can be taught letter names as they write their names</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should not write until teachers show them how to form each letter^*</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should write without worrying about conventional spelling</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn to write in part by watching teachers write</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn to read before learning to write^*</td>
<td>39.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Language and Vocabulary Construct</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should not talk with each other during the day^*</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn new words by connecting them to real things, objects, or activities they are doing</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn language by talking about their ideas and expressing their feelings</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should not talk during meal times^*</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should learn new words by talking with teachers about what they are doing at the time</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need many experiences, such as going to the zoo and talking about it in order to learn new vocabulary</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children do not need to learn the meaning of a lot of words to become good readers^*</td>
<td>67.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need to learn a lot of words so they can learn to read</td>
<td>47.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should be taught to speak in complete sentences</td>
<td>44.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Construct</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should play with words, such as making up rhymes or jump rope chants, to learn to hear ending sounds in words</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children do not need to be taught the names of each letter because children can learn to read without knowing each letter and its name^*</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn ending sounds in words by listening to nursery rhymes</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn ending sounds by circling pictures of things that rhyme on worksheets^*</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words</td>
<td>59.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need plenty of drill and practice to learn the sounds of letters^*</td>
<td>49.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need to be taught the names of each letter so they will be good readers</td>
<td>46.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children should be taught to hear sounds in their environment before they are taught to hear sounds in words</td>
<td>46.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children learn letter names by singing the ABC song^*</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children need to learn to sit still and listen to teachers</td>
<td>33.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some items reverse-coded.

Instructional leaders’ beliefs showed the weakest agreement with best practice and development in the area of code knowledge. The mean construct score (M = 3.58, SD. = .38) reveals weak agreement overall, and closer examination of individual TBQ items is even more telling. Only two of the nine code-related items showed agreement for more than 80% of the respondents. Further, the majority of instructional leaders either had no opinion about or disagreed with best practice or development on four items. Hence, on seven items, a large
number of the respondents did not hold beliefs supported by recent research in the area of code-related literacy development.

Discussion

Developmental Literacy Beliefs of Instructional Leaders of Child Care Facilities

The results of this study provide several interesting points for discussion that will be presented here in the context of their TBQ item labels.

Book reading. Instructional leaders’ beliefs were most consistent with best practice in the area of book reading. Nearly all (95%) of the instructional leaders completing the survey recognized the importance of children’s exposure to books and reading, both independently and in read-aloud settings. Similarly, there was strong consensus concerning the importance of conversation and discussion surrounding the reading of books. Even in areas of book reading which research has shown to be less commonplace in early childhood settings, such as repeated readings of books and vocabulary development in conjunction with read-alouds (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005), over 75% of the respondents indicated agreement with these practices.

Given the tremendous emphasis placed on books and book reading, this finding should be expected. In taking a position on developmentally appropriate literacy practice for young children, the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children pointed to reading aloud as “the single most important activity” (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000, p. 3) for developing literacy skills. Additionally, information concerning the benefits of providing children access to both narrative and expository books (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Neuman, 1999; Neuman, Celano, Greco, & Shue, 2001; Pappas, 1991; Stone & Twardosz, 2001) and the importance of classroom environmental designs to promote reading (Morrow, 1990, 1992; Morrow & Weinstein, 1982, 1986) have proliferated over the course of the past two decades.

Despite the encouraging findings of this study, research suggests that practice does not always correlate with beliefs (McMullen, 1998). Thus, even though early care professionals might recognize benefits of repeated read-alouds and integration of expository text in the early childhood classroom, they do not readily integrate these practices in day-to-day instruction. Teacher librarians can enhance the early childhood environment by recommending and providing expository texts to support units of study. Because early childhood teachers infrequently read aloud expository text (Yopp & Yopp, 2006), they need models of this practice; teacher librarians are skilled in this area. Teacher librarians can also further enhance instructional processes by co-planning lessons which call for the repeated reading of books with varying activities and focused conversations to occur with each repetition.

Writing. Instructional leaders’ beliefs in the area of writing were also closely aligned with best practice. Nearly all of the respondents recognized the utility of using a child’s name in the service of writing instruction, as well as the importance of allowing children to write without worrying about conventional spelling or letter formation. Further, more than 80% of the instructional leaders acknowledged that watching teachers write contributes to children’s writing ability. However, responses indicate that the majority of instructional leaders do not recognize that reading ability and writing skills develop in tandem. This is an important insight if children’s literacy development is to be maximized in the preschool setting.

Most teacher librarians understand the importance of writing: that as children experiment with writing, they begin to grasp the connection between spoken word and written language. Teacher librarians realize that strengthening an individual’s ability in reading will affect writing and vice versa (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Equally important, however, teacher librarians realize the cognitive processes that reading and writing both provoke (Dyson, 2001) and that allowing children opportunities to write will bolster their
phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and word writing abilities (Aram & Biron, 2004).

One natural way for a teacher librarian to convey the benefits of writing in connection with reading is to integrate writing activities into the read-aloud framework as a model for teachers. For example, if reading *Brown bear, brown bear what do you see?* (Martin, 1992), the librarian can facilitate the writing of a class book modeled on the reading. Additionally, the teacher librarian can co-plan with the teacher to integrate writing throughout the day in regularly scheduled activities such as journal writing. Finally, the teacher librarian can promote writing activities through improvements to the classroom environment by assisting the teachers in developing print-rich learning centers (Pool & Carter, 2011) and creating a classroom writing table (Rowe & Neitzel, 2010).

**Oral language and vocabulary.** Instructional leaders’ beliefs in the area of oral language and vocabulary development showed relatively close alignment with research-based best practice. Responses from a vast majority of the participants of the study underscore practitioners’ understanding of the need for children to converse about their ideas and feelings over meals and throughout the day. Further, the instructional leaders seem to have an understanding of the contributions that such conversations will make to the vocabulary acquisition of the children. These findings are not surprising given their compatibility with traditionally held beliefs concerning developmentally appropriate practice (NAEYC, 2009; New, 2001).

Responses to the two statements concerning the connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability indicate that less than half of the respondents have an understanding of this relationship. Early oral language abilities “provide the foundation for development of the advanced oral language skills necessary for successful comprehension in more skilled readers” (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002, p. 944). Thus, in addition to contributing to a child’s phonological sensitivity (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001) and lexical restructuring abilities (Goswami, 2001), a well-developed vocabulary also contributes to later reading comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982). Additionally, a large vocabulary early in life has the prolific effect of facilitating the addition of new words (McKeown, 1985; Penno, Moore, & Wilkinson, 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Stanovich, 1986), thereby, further boosting reading abilities.

Teacher librarians can convey to early childhood educators the importance of rare word use in the preschool setting (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). One natural way for teacher librarians to model this practice for their early childhood colleagues is to incorporate vocabulary instruction in the read-aloud process (Biemiller, 2010) and facilitating analytic talk about words and story meanings (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

**Decoding knowledge.** Both the overall construct scores and responses to individual items in the area of decoding knowledge point to the gap between instructional leaders’ beliefs and research concerning best practice. On four of the nine code-related items, over one-half of the instructional leaders either had no opinion about or disagreed with best practice, an indication that more professional development is needed in this area.

Those items that dealt specifically with code-related skills that require direct instruction showed the greatest degree of disagreement between the professionals’ beliefs and research findings. Perhaps based in part upon the murky wording of the belief statements, instructional leaders had some inconsistencies in their beliefs concerning letter-name knowledge. However, results make it clear that the leaders either did not have an understanding of the relationship between letter-name knowledge and reading proficiency, or perhaps, they were not committed to advancing those insights during the preschool years. Findings were similar concerning leaders’ beliefs in the area of letter-sound knowledge. In addition, a large number of instructional leaders disagreed with the belief that children should be able to identify the beginning and ending sounds in words. Surprisingly, given the historical view of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987), over one-third of those surveyed thought children could learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words by circling pictures of things that rhyme on worksheets.
Schickedanz (2003) claims that many teachers lack information about the necessity for certain literacy understandings to be taught, rather than discovered, and suggests that preschool teachers’ reluctance to teach code-related skills is due to the fact that many teachers do not realize that direct instruction does not have to be formal instruction—that children can be given insights into letter-name knowledge, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound associations through playful, developmentally appropriate interactions.

Regardless of the ability to teach code-related skills in a developmentally appropriate fashion (Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000), preschool teachers are not likely to do so. Dickinson and Caswell (2007) reported the reluctance on the part of Head Start teachers to teach essential literacy skills, and other researchers (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005; Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk, & Gerde, 2008) have also found that preschool teachers are more likely to create an environment that promotes child interaction with literacy-related material rather than engage children in direct instruction. In fact, in her study of preschool teachers’ views of themselves as literacy educators, Shedd (2011) found that most teachers did not seem to believe that code-related skills need to be taught, but rather, they felt that children would simply acquire them.

Given early childhood educators’ reluctance to teach code-related skills, it is imperative that teacher librarians facilitate this process. Teacher librarians can model for teachers numerous ways to playfully integrate code-related understandings into teacher-child interactions. Alphabet books and related activities provide a natural way to focus children’s attention on letter-names and letter-sounds during the read-aloud process (Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996). And, librarians can emphasize playful activities such as emphasizing rhyme through movement and clapping syllables in names, with introduction of word games such as the “Name Game”, and “I’m thinking of something” in relation to letter-name and letter-sound learning (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998 as cited in Schwanenflugel, et al, 2010).

Conclusion

Implications for Practice

Results from this study are in line with those of other researchers investigating early childhood professionals’ literacy beliefs and practices (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd, & Pianta, 2001; Hindman & Wasik, 2008; Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk, & Gerde, 2008) and suggest the benefits of professional development in the area of literacy and language development. Further, this study points to those areas of language and literacy development about which the care providers have the least knowledge.

As collaborators with the best interests of children at heart, public and teacher librarians can position themselves to affect children’s school readiness by offering professional development to early care teachers and leaders. As referenced earlier, many school and public library professionals are already offering forms of professional development through outreach programs which model storytime programming in the childcare facilities and through more formal, structured professional development opportunities. With information about the existing literacy belief base of early care providers, librarians can further refine the professional development and services offered.

Librarians can and should tailor these professional development offerings to the needs of the care providers. Specifically, in the area of book reading, librarians should emphasize and model the value of repeated readings and promote children’s vocabulary development in conjunction with read-aloud experiences. Further, librarians need to emphasize to care providers the importance of vocabulary-building experiences and interactions for young children. Librarians can promote the reciprocal benefits of reading and writing development and integrate into storytime programming varied opportunities for children to write. Finally, librarians can model developmentally appropriate code-focused instruction into fun-filled, child-friendly activities and conversations.

The Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) recently released the second edition of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (PLA & ALSC, 2011). The training materials for this program provide guidance to librarians to help them inform the parents and caregivers of young children about the importance of early literacy development and activities that can promote and enhance such development. The training materials can also be used to promote these understandings with
early childcare providers, both center-based as well as those providing in-home care to young children.

Librarians providing storytime programming to groups of children in child care, either in their libraries or through outreach programs, can integrate comments intended to inform caregivers about literacy development processes and activities into their storytimes. Ghoting and Martin-Diaz (2006) provide suggested scripts to direct toward caregivers within storytime programs.

Implications for Research
Results from this study report the literacy beliefs of a group of instructional leaders of early childcare facilities; however, no studies could be found which measure the literacy beliefs of teacher librarians. It would be useful for teacher librarians to gain a greater understanding of their own beliefs and the alignment of those beliefs with research-supported best practices. Such knowledge would allow teacher librarians to fine-tune their own professional development and might be useful in terms of advocating for a greater role in schools’ literacy environments.

School and public librarians offering services and programs to early care providers and caregivers of young children need to systematically evaluate the outcomes of those efforts and report them in school library research outlets. Though the library literature is full of reports of outreach to young children and their caregivers, few evaluative studies have been reported.

Limitations
It is important to note several limitations of this study. First, the sample for this study was drawn from a limited geographic area; hence, caution should be used in extrapolating findings to other populations. Second, given the great variability of results within each of the constructs in the data for this study, Chronbach reliability alphas were run for the TBQ as a whole and for each of the four constructs, and results suggest problems with the instrument. Using the generally accepted alpha of 0.60, results suggest that the instrument may need some revisions. In all cases, the reliability alphas using data from this study were much lower than those obtained by Hindman and Wasik (2008) in their study of Head Start teachers (see Table 4). According to results from this study, only the Chronbach alphas for the instrument as a whole and the language construct meet the acceptable cutoff. In addition to the unstable Chronbach alphas, a number of the items on the TBQ require more sophisticated answers than the Likert-scale type response allows. For example, one item on the TBQ states, “Preschool children learn new words as teachers define them when reading books to children.” The expected answer is, “Strongly agree.” However, vocabulary acquisition is quite complicated and for a child to really “know” a word, he should be able to do more than provide a simple definition; hence the correct answer is much more nuanced than the corresponding answer choices. Unfortunately, the TBQ does not measure this more sophisticated knowledge.

Table 4. Chronbach Alpha Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TBQ Item</th>
<th>Hindman &amp; Wasik Study</th>
<th>Current Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Reading (5 items)</td>
<td>M=4.27, SD=.53</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=4.38, SD=.47</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (6 items)</td>
<td>M=3.98, SD=.58</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Language (9 items)</td>
<td>M=4.25, SD=.45</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding Knowledge (9 items)</td>
<td>M=3.61, SD=.49</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBQ Overall (30 items)</td>
<td>M=118.32, SD=12.48</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=119.29, SD=9.81</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One method to affect positive change in early care settings is to address the beliefs and practices of instructional leaders who, in turn, affect classroom quality (Helburn et. al., 1995; Howes, James, and Ritchie 2003; Jorde-Bloom and Sheerer, 1992; Phillips, Scarr, and McCartney, 1987; Rous, 2004). A viable way to accomplish this change is through professional development, modeling, and coaching (Neuman & Wright, 2010; Poglinco &
Bach, 2004); yet, for this practice to be effective, it must be targeted to the needs of the early care professionals. Thus, to optimize the instruction, teacher librarians should understand the general knowledge base of early care professionals. Knowing the existing beliefs of instructional leaders and care will allow teacher librarians to build upon the leaders’ strengths and tailor instruction, services, and programming to their needs.

**References**


Author Note

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