Project Title: Center for Response to Intervention (RtI) in Early Childhood
Principal Investigator: Greenwood, C
Co-Principal Investigator(s): Carta, J
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Brief Description of Project:
Purpose: Reading development depends on language development and pre-literacy experiences prior to formal schooling. Children who have not had many language or early literacy experiences prior to kindergarten face significant challenges learning to read. These children often continue to experience poor reading skills throughout school. With continued failure, many of them may become eligible for special education which may involve services that are "too little too late" and are often very costly for children, their families, and education systems. Given the importance of reading, systems of prevention and intervention in early education settings are needed. The growing use of Response to Intervention (RtI) models in elementary schools has attracted attention among early childhood educators and researchers. RtI is a systematic problem-solving process designed to recognize students' difficulties early, provide students with a level of instructional intensity matched to their level of need, and then provide a data-based method for measuring their progress. While the use of RtI in preschool settings holds great promise, a numbers of questions exist about how these models will be translated from elementary school settings. The Center's primary objectives are (1) to conduct focused research to develop and rigorously evaluate and replicate intensive interventions for preschool language and early literacy skills and (2) to develop and validate an assessment system linked to these interventions. In addition, the research team will provide national leadership on development and implementation of RtI models for young children and conduct supplementary studies related to RtI and assessment issues. The Center's long-term goal is to prevent disabilities in reading by increasing the number of young children who enter school with knowledge and skill in early literacy and language.

Focused program of research: Two interventions will be developed and evaluated. These interventions will be used as supplementary (i.e., Tier II) and tertiary (i.e., Tier III) interventions in an RtI model. The interventions will consist of intensified instruction in oral language, vocabulary, phonological and phonemic awareness, print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and comprehension. Researchers will evaluate the efficacy of these interventions during the final two project years. In addition, a series of language and early literacy measures to be used for screening and progress monitoring will be developed. These will include measures of phonological awareness, comprehension, and language skills. A focused series of validation studies will be conducted to produce a preschool assessment system for identifying students who need intensive intervention and for measuring their progress. The research sites include Kansas, Ohio, Oregon, and Minnesota.