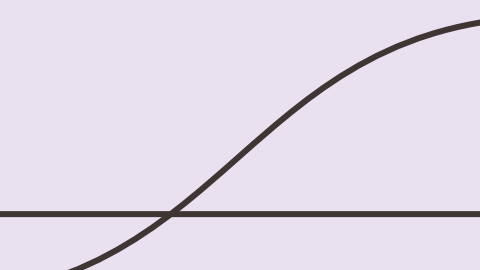





Equitable Literacy Play


Play-Based Practices to Bridge Socioeconomic
Opportunity Gaps in First to Third-Grade Literacy
Development

Sarina Shah





**Research question: How can
play-based practices bridge
socioeconomic opportunity gaps
in literacy development for first
to third graders?**





Introduction

Early Elementary Inequities

- Elementary school structures often disadvantage students from various demographics, leading to opportunity gaps, especially in literacy development (Debs, 2017).
- These gaps must be addressed because reading is foundational to a child's educational opportunities (Debs, 2017).

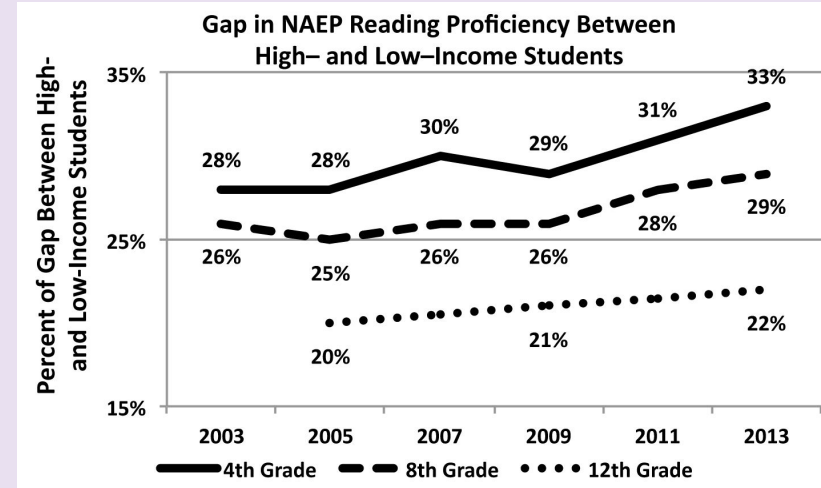


Figure 1:

Depicts how literacy gaps are most present during elementary school, and how gaps have increased from 2003 to 2013.

Source: How does reading proficiency correlate with a student's socioeconomic status? | The Wing Institute at Morningside Academy

Play-Based Learning

- Play-based learning (PBL) is most commonly used in early childhood education settings (Celano, 2018),
- If applied to elementary learning standards (Grammar, phonics, and literature comprehension) children may find more engaging and motivating ways to learn literacy.



Figure 2:
Second grade students engaging in PBL
Source: Sarina Shah

Types of PBL

Sociodramatic Play

→ Also known as pretend play

Object Play

- Using tactile items to play
 - Letter blocks, magnets, etc.

Language Play

→ Word games, puns, riddles, jokes, etc.

Other kinds of play
(Not focused on in
this study):

- **Outdoor play**
- **Rough-and-tumble play**
- **Sensory play**



Methods

Study Purpose

- Investigate socioeconomic opportunity gaps in literacy education
- Find solutions for such issues by:
 - Surveying and interviewing first to third grade teachers on their use of PBL and observations of inequities to explore patterns of PBL and solutions to existing opportunity gaps using PBL.
- While research exists on PBL in Early Childhood Education Settings, research regarding it in elementary school is highly limited.

Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys were sent to educators across California, 24 responded.



Three interviews were conducted to investigate patterns from previous literature and survey responses.



Specific play-based literacy practices were coded based on various themes and factors.



Notable quotes from interviews, graphs and charts with statistics on SES and play-based practices.

Practices were analyzed with a miniature literature review on its use.



The slide features a light purple background with two horizontal lines. The top line starts with a curve on the left, and the bottom line ends with a curve on the right.

Findings

General Statistics

Average Amounts of Time Spent Per Week on Play Based Learning
(21 responses)

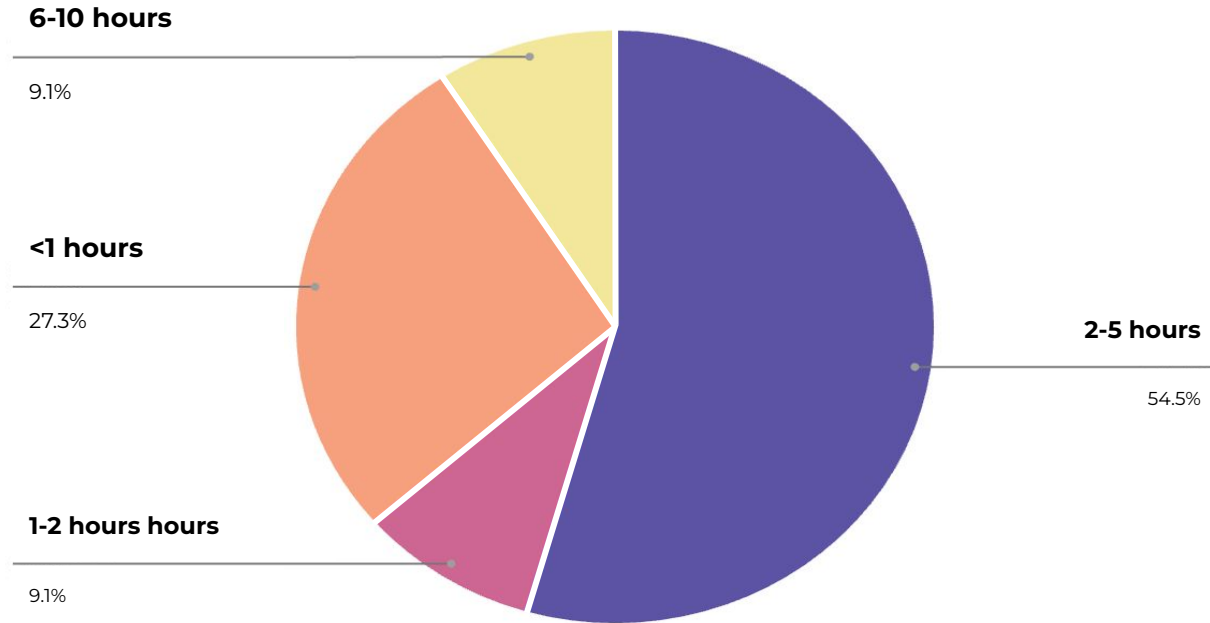


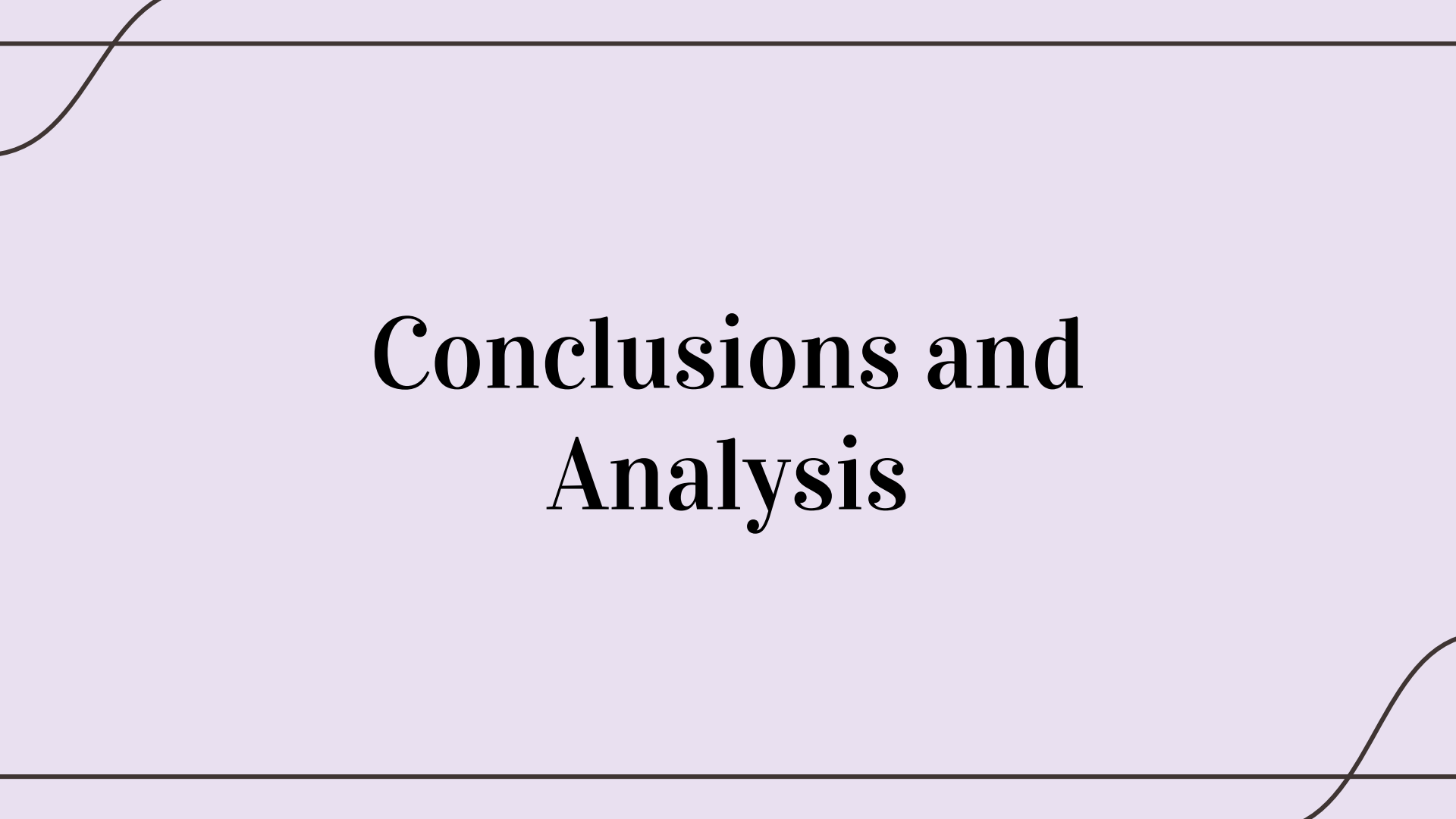
Figure 4:
Amount of time
spent on play
reported by
educators.

Interview Findings

- On the importance of PBL in middle childhood:
 - PBL can assist in **removing stress** of learning concepts is more engaging for students and helps them feel safe and connected in their learning environment.
 - PBL is useful for **vocabulary development**, especially for struggling readers.
 - **Playful art** is a useful strategy for literacy development.
- On a lack of PBL in middle childhood:
 - There is a push for classroom standards to become **more advanced** which **pushes play out** of the classroom.
- On the impact of socioeconomic status on literacy development:
 - Socioeconomically disadvantaged students often don't attend **early childhood education** programs while their classmates have, and are given extra **external support**, increasing gaps.
 - A correlation can be made between **non-English speaking** families and **socioeconomically disadvantaged** families.

Key Play Practices

- “Students **act out a familiar narrative** we’ve read aloud 2-3 times.”
- Literacy toys (letter blocks, letter magnets, phonics toys) available **during free time** (12 / 22 surveyed teachers report using this)
- “[Students **write**] **their own plays** and [act] them out”
- **Sociodramatic props** available during **free time** (10 / 22 surveyed teachers report using this)
- Literacy **board games**



Conclusions and Analysis

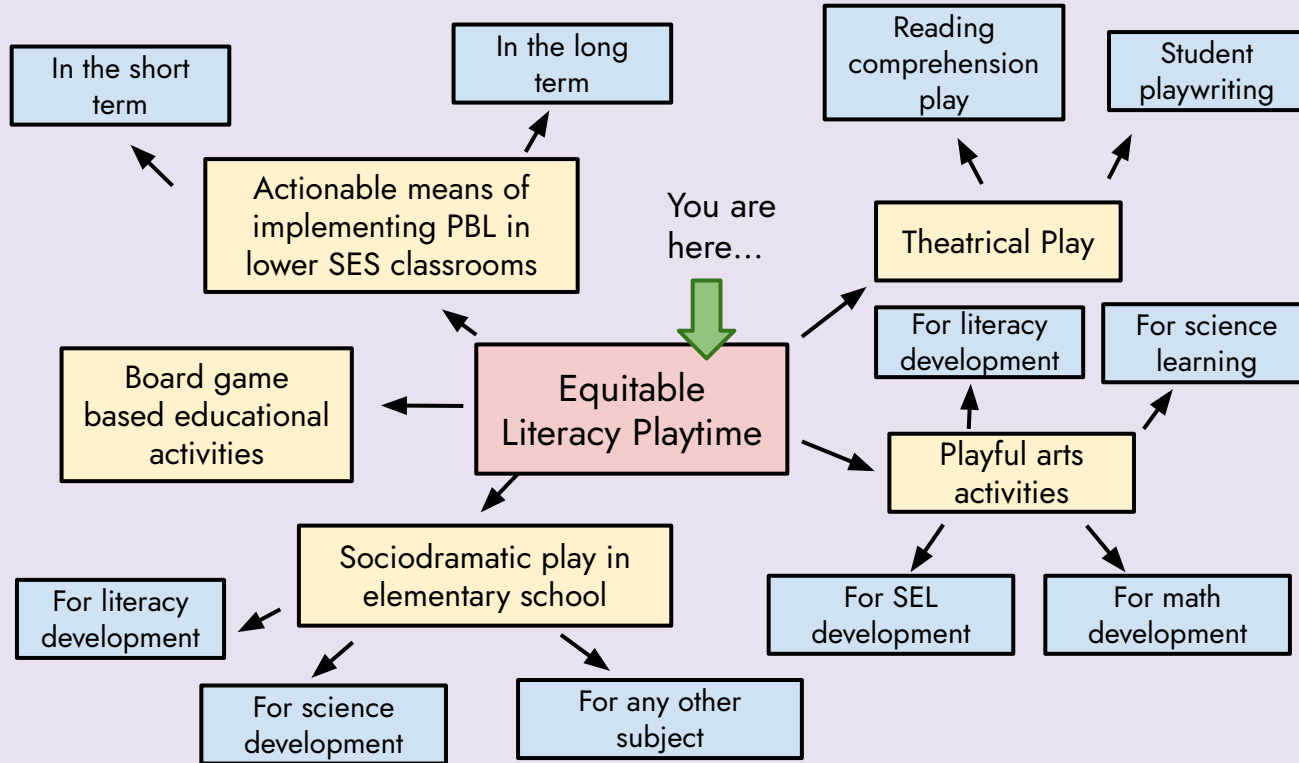
Disparities in PBL

- This study found that opportunity gaps in the use of PBL are not only based on socioeconomic status but also on other aspects of identity (Dornfeld, 2019).
 - Students within marginalized groups have been found to have less play embedded in their school lives.
- Bringing play into lower SES classrooms can help students develop skills currently more available to students in higher SES classrooms, helping bridge such gaps.

PBL Implementation Steps

- Play-based practices such as theatrical play, playful art, sensory play and board game-based play can and should be implemented in lower SES classrooms to bridge socio economic opportunity gaps.
- Further research is necessary to recognize exactly how to do so.

Next Steps in Research





Thank You!

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