What is this research about?
This study examined whether there were differences in kindergarten teachers' beliefs about students' print literacy knowledge and about parental involvement in children's literacy events based on the socio-economic status (SES) of children's families.

Specifically, this study was guided by two research questions:

1. Are there differences in teachers' beliefs about children’s print knowledge in kindergarten based on the SES of children’s families? If so, what are they?

2. Do teachers vary in their beliefs about parental involvement in children’s print literacy development based on the families’ SES? If so, how?

Print literacy in this study is defined as “interactions involving some form of written text for communication purposes, generally involving the reading and writing process” (p. 157). Print literacy activities include such things as reading
storybooks, learning the alphabet, and writing and reading messages and labels.

**What did the researcher do?**
The researcher developed a teacher *questionnaire* based on three resources:

1. Clay’s (2002) *Concepts about Print* which examines behaviors that support children’s reading development;

2. the Ministry of Education’s *The Kindergarten Program—Revised* (2006) which contains student achievement outcomes for print literacy; and

3. previously conducted interviews with low-income parents on print literacy activities.

This research article reports findings from two sections of the questionnaire, including 19 statements about teachers’ beliefs about students’ print literacy knowledge and 13 statements that focused on teachers’ beliefs about parent involvement in the print literacy development of their children. For example, teachers were presented with statements such as: “Children know the sound of most alphabetic letters”; “Children can write simple words such as cat”; “Parents have engaged in writing activities regularly with their child;” and “Parents talk about books with their children”. Teachers were then asked to choose from possible responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” or “do not know”.

Schools selected for the study were organized according to their Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) score. The LOI measures 10 indicators of socioeconomic status, such as the number of students in a school that have single parents and the average income level of the families of students enrolled at a school.

The researcher considered the school as having a high SES student population if the school had a high LOI score and a low SES student population if the school had a low LOI score. In total, 45 kindergarten teachers, from a combination of high and low SES schools, participated in this study.

**What did the researcher find?**
Overall, teachers from schools where families had higher SES were more likely to report that their students had higher
print literacy knowledge. More specifically, they reported higher levels of student knowledge in the following areas: sounds of the alphabet, identifying capital letters, and reading from top to bottom.

While there were no overall significant differences in teachers’ beliefs about parent involvement based on SES, further examination of specific statements revealed significant differences in the beliefs of teachers from low and high LOI schools. For instance, teachers of students from higher SES families (high LOI schools) were more likely to believe that their students’ parents had more knowledge of literacy activities and were more interested in their child’s literacy development.

The researcher concluded that kindergarten teachers’ beliefs about students’ print knowledge varied according to socio-economic status both at the beginning and at the end of kindergarten. The researcher cautioned that differences in beliefs based on SES may result in different expectations for students.

How can you use this research?
Educators may want to consider their beliefs about children’s literacy and whether or not they might vary for children, based on SES. School administrators and teachers may wish to use this research as a starting point for staff discussions about expectations for students and, specifically, whether teacher expectations for low SES students are remaining at a high level. Administrators and teachers will also want to consider the wider body of research on student achievement and SES.

Original article:
To learn more about this research study, we invite you to read the original research article:

Other references:


About the researcher:
Jacqueline Lynch is an Associate Professor with York University’s Faculty of Education. Her research focuses on early and family literacy. jlynch@edu.yorku.ca

Keywords:
kindergarten, teacher beliefs, socio-economic status, print literacy

About this summary
The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the *Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research*, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE’s clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the *ResearchSnapshot* series developed by *York University* and *ResearchImpact* and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

This summary reflects findings from this study *only* and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.