

A Randomized
Controlled Trial of The
Creative Curriculum®
Proficiency
From the National Institute
for Early Education
Research, based at
Rutgers University

Research Summary

This study examines the effectiveness of *The Creative Curriculum*® ecosystem—including both the curriculum and the aligned supports provided by Teaching Strategies—compared to practice-as-usual in two districts that currently implement *The Creative Curriculum*®.

The study has five primary objectives

- (1) Assess implementation fidelity and proficiency across classrooms in settings with relatively high structural quality (e.g., favorable student–teacher ratios, smaller class sizes, competitive wages, and robust resource allocation). Fidelity begins with usage, so analyzing the supports teachers use and how they use them is an essential part of the study.
- (2) Describe children’s learning experiences within the curriculum using structured observational tools that capture real-time instructional practices and classroom interactions.
- (3) Strengthen causal inference by using random assignment to vary the level of professional development support (e.g., additional training and coaching) and examine its impact on implementation quality.
- (4) Explore relationships between implementation supports and outcomes, investigating how differences in the level of curriculum support relate to variations in teaching practice and child development.
- (5) Broaden outcome measurement to include language, literacy, math, executive function, social-emotional, and creativity outcomes, ensuring the evaluation captures learning domains that reflect the full intent of *The Creative Curriculum*® and address gaps in prior research.

This study contributes to the evidence base by exploring how a comprehensive curriculum—when well-supported within an ecosystem—can influence both educator practice and child outcomes in early childhood settings.

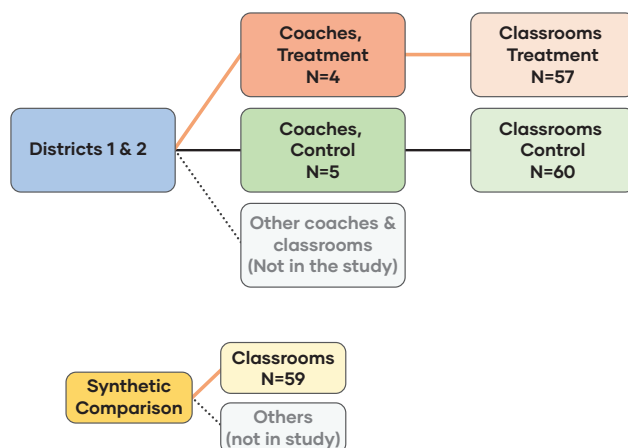
Study Design

This study implements a clustered Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) across two districts in New Jersey providing state-funded pre-K. This RCT had the following characteristics.

- The control group (n=60) included both non-*The Creative Curriculum*® users and users of *The Creative Curriculum*® in print, but no professional development.
- The treatment group (n=57) used *The Creative Curriculum*® with *The Creative Curriculum*® Cloud, plus ecosystem components: Professional Development Teacher Membership, Professional Development Coach Membership, and in-person professional development.
- Both treatment and control used *GOLD*® for assessment.
- The data collected included classroom observations, administrator and teacher surveys, and an array of child outcome measurements.
- Outcomes were also assessed in randomly selected preschool classrooms across districts in the state (n=59 teachers) as a synthetic comparison.

Clustering at the coach level is designed to account for shared professional development activities within each cluster.

The plan included providing teachers with professional development and helping coaches refine their coaching skills to support teachers with use of the *Teaching Strategies*® ecosystem, which includes whole-child curriculum, assessment that fosters individualized learning, engagement with families, and professional development.



As part of the study, teachers in the treatment group received access to a comprehensive suite of professional development offerings aligned with *The Creative Curriculum*® ecosystem. The professional development was designed to strengthen educators' understanding of curriculum and assessment foundations and to support the implementation of best practices across classroom settings. Topics included the following.

- Designing developmentally appropriate and meaningful learning experiences
- Responsive planning and instructional decision-making
- Integrating assessment and reflection into daily practice
- Meeting the diverse needs of children and families
- Using data to inform teaching
- Supporting continuous improvement through *Coaching to Fidelity*, a structured resource that enables programs to assess and strengthen teachers' fidelity of curriculum implementation

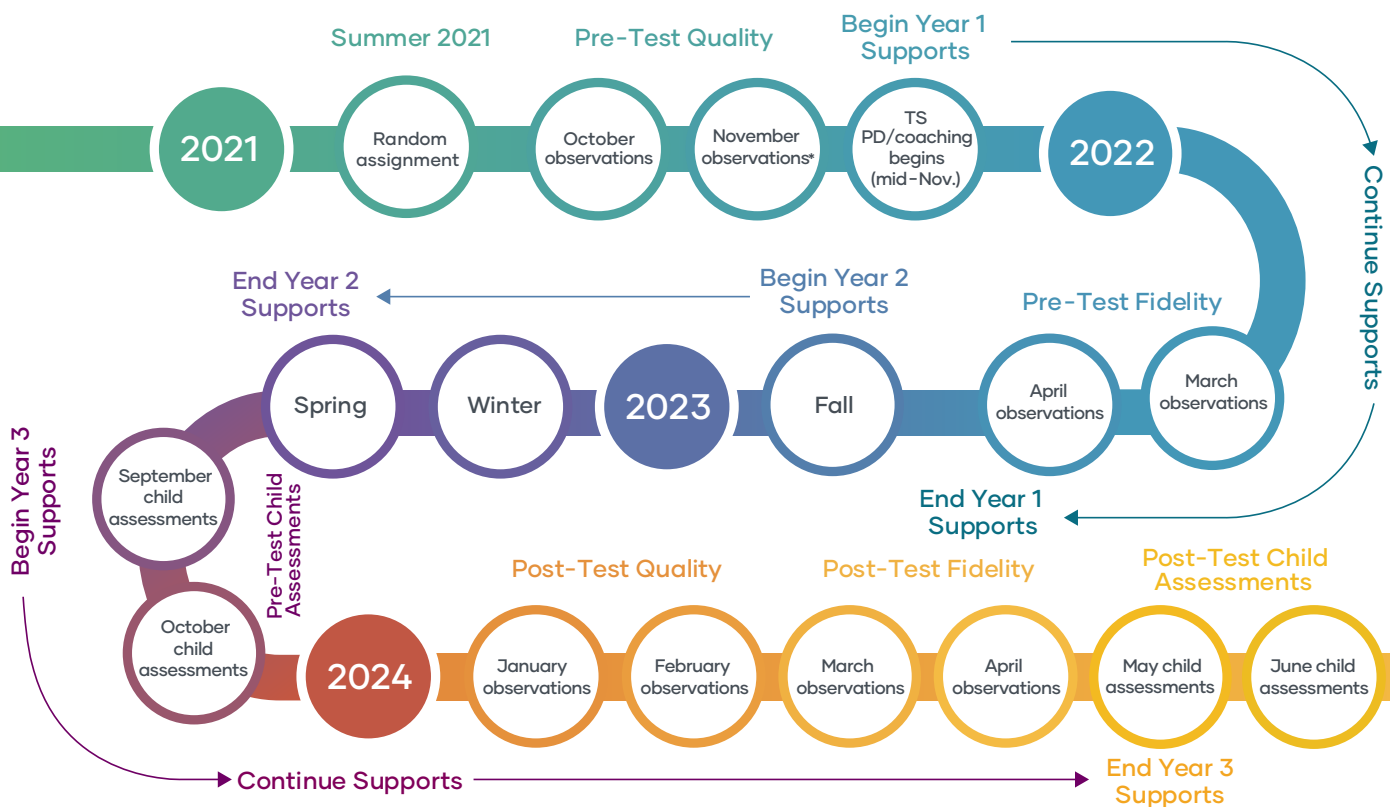
The professional development was delivered in multiple formats to maximize accessibility and flexibility, including synchronous live sessions, on-demand courses, microlearning videos, and access to an online community of tens of thousands of educators. This blended model provided educators with ongoing opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and growth, while allowing for differentiated learning experiences tailored to individual needs and schedules.

Timeline

Randomization was completed in the fall of 2021, before the commencement of study activities. Child assessments were conducted in the fall of 2022 and again in the spring of 2023 to assess children's growth over the school year.

Timeline 2021–2024 (3 Year Plan)

+ surveys layered in (teachers, coaches, & families) + coach focus groups spring 2024



Results

At the time of the publication of this abstract, the study has been completed, and preliminary findings are currently available. At this stage, the data focus on teacher retention, one of the study's primary areas of interest. Results indicate a significantly positive trend, with higher retention observed among teachers in the treatment group compared to those in the control group and over 3 years. Final analyses, including data on child outcomes, are still in progress and will be included in the forthcoming final report.

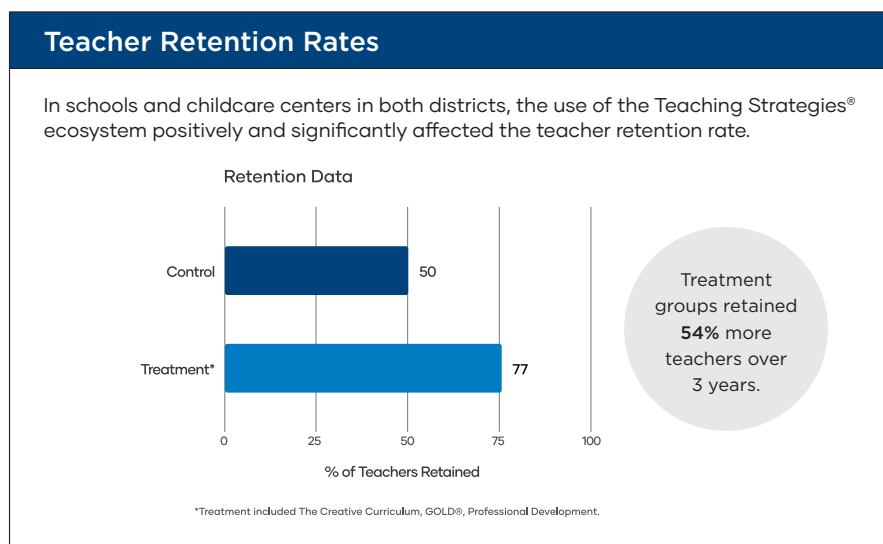
Teacher Retention

Retention rates differed significantly between treatment and control groups, with **higher retention in the treatment group** for both districts.

Table 1: Retention Rates by Control vs. Treatment Status

Variables	Control		Treatment		P-value (T-test % Retention)
	N	%	N	%	
Teachers					
Total	64	50.01	64	76.56	0.002***
District 1	30	60	30	70	0.425
District 2	34	44.12	34	82.35	0.001***
Teachers who retained their coach					
Total	63	44.44	62	53.22	0.330
District 1	29	55.17	28	39.28	0.237***
District 2	34	35.29	34	64.7	0.015**

Note: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1. When not counting the vacant classrooms that were filled and the classrooms that closed, the retention rate for control classrooms is 51% and the retention rate for treatment classrooms is 79%. The statistically significant difference remains.



Make an Impact on Your Program

The NIEER study reinforced that *The Creative Curriculum*®, when used in conjunction with our connected professional development and assessment solutions, helps programs reduce teacher turnover.

Classrooms in the treatment group of this study had access to

- *The Creative Curriculum*® for Preschool with *The Creative Curriculum*® Cloud,
- *GOLD*® assessment,
- in-person professional development,
- the Professional Development Teacher Membership, and
- the Professional Development Coach Membership.

Research Team & Authors

This Randomized Controlled Trial was conducted with support from Teaching Strategies by a team at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) consisting of: Milagros Nores, Ph.D., Erin Harmeyer, Ph.D., W. Steve Barnett, Ph.D., Julie Macleod, M.S.

About Teaching Strategies®

Teaching Strategies® is the leading provider of early childhood curriculum, assessment, professional development, and family engagement solutions. Its products, including the most widely used curriculum and assessment solutions, *The Creative Curriculum*® and *GOLD*®, are found in over 270,000 classrooms and more than 80 countries around the world and reach over 4 million children each year. A trusted partner and advocate for the early education community for 45 years, today Teaching Strategies connects teachers, children and families to inspired teaching and learning experiences, insightful data, stronger family partnerships, and robust professional learning through SmartTeach™, the leading early learning platform. Learn more at www.TeachingStrategies.com.

