

Research Supports Effectiveness of Sweet Dreamzzz's Early Childhood Sleep Education Program™

Evaluation of a Sleep Education Program for Low-Income Preschool Children and their Families

Study Objectives: To evaluate a novel sleep education program, entitled “Sweet Dreamzzz Early Childhood Sleep Education Program™” for low-income preschool children and their families.

Design: Randomized trial of an educational intervention.

Setting: Community-based.

Participants: Head Start preschool families (n = 152) in greater Lansing and Detroit, Michigan.

Interventions: Classrooms or Head Start sites were randomized to an intervention group (prompt intervention) vs. a control group (delayed intervention). Parents attended a one-time, 45-min sleep education program and preschoolers received 2 w (320 total min) of classroom sleep curriculum (aligned to HighScope KDIs) from MI based non-profit, Sweet Dreamzzz, Inc.

Measurements: Parent knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and beliefs were assessed as the primary outcomes just before the 45-min sleep intervention, immediately postintervention, and approximately 1-mo postintervention. Parents reported their child's bedtimes and wake times on 7-day sleep diaries at baseline and at 1-mo follow-up. Average weeknight sleep durations and bedtimes served as secondary outcomes.

Results: Children in the intervention group improved their weeknight sleep duration at 1-mo follow-up by 30 min (11.0 ± 0.9 h vs. 10.5 ± 1.0 hours at baseline) compared to controls (10.4 ± 0.9 h versus 10.5 ± 0.9 h at baseline) ($P = 0.04$ for difference between groups). Children did not show statistically significant improvements in bedtime. Linear mixed models showed a time \times treatment effect for parents' knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy (each $P < 0.05$) but not beliefs. These improvements were found immediately postintervention but were not retained at 1-mo follow-up.

Conclusions: Educational interventions in early childhood can have an effect on children's sleep behavior, and on parents' sleep knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy. However, repeated exposure to the new information may be important for parents as well as their children.

Citation: Wilson KE, Miller AL, Bonuck K, Lumeng JC, Chervin RD. Evaluation of a sleep education program for low-income preschool children and their families. *SLEEP* 2014;37(6):1117-1125.

SLEEP 2014;37(6) Editorial: Sleep Education and the Importance of Starting Early

Terry Katz, PhD; Beth Ann Malow, MD, MS (excerpt)

In this issue of *SLEEP*, Wilson and her colleagues have made an important contribution toward advancing our knowledge of the efficacy of sleep education programs... addressed the sleep needs of two critical populations: preschool age children and low-income families. Research has demonstrated that both groups have significant difficulties with sleep, but to date there have not been randomized control studies that examine the efficacy of a sleep education program for young children of low-income families.

The authors implemented an innovative and creative (Sweet Dreamzzz) 2-week sleep curriculum that was incorporated into the children's preschool experience. Parents were given direct information during a one-time group presentation... The authors demonstrate a significant parent-reported increase in sleep duration one month after the preschool intervention. Thus, they provide **compelling evidence that direct teaching about sleep to very young children and their parents in low-income families is an effective means of improving their sleep. The implications of this research are important and wide reaching, and offer promising evidence that teaching preschoolers about sleep and providing some group instruction to their parents is an efficient model of promoting good sleep habits.**

Citation: Katz T, Malow BA. Sleep education and the importance of starting early. *SLEEP* 2014;37(6):1033-1034.