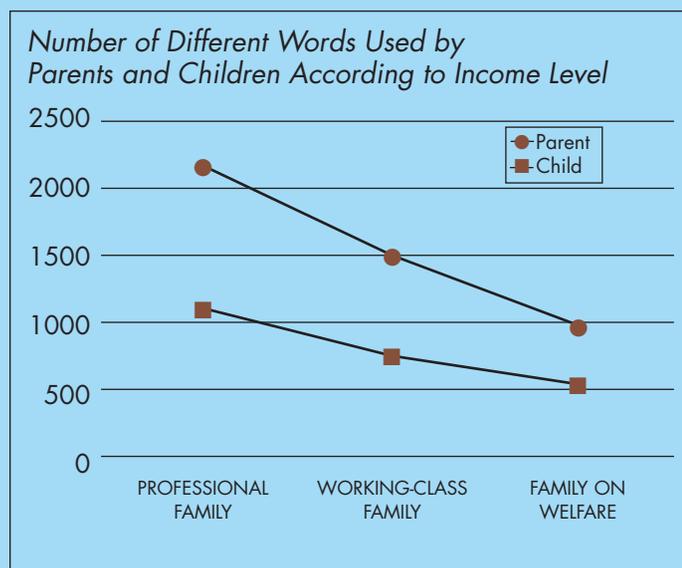


Why the Absence of a Content-Rich Curriculum Core Hurts Poor Children Most

High-level reading comprehension depends on a solid base of background knowledge and vocabulary. Without these building blocks, plus strong decoding skills, children cannot develop into strong comprehenders. They will be unable to comprehend secondary school texts, score well on SAT-like tests, or succeed in college or a career. Knowledge and vocabulary matter for all children's minds. But the evidence is clear: Children who are from less educated, less affluent homes are especially dependent on schools to impart this criti-

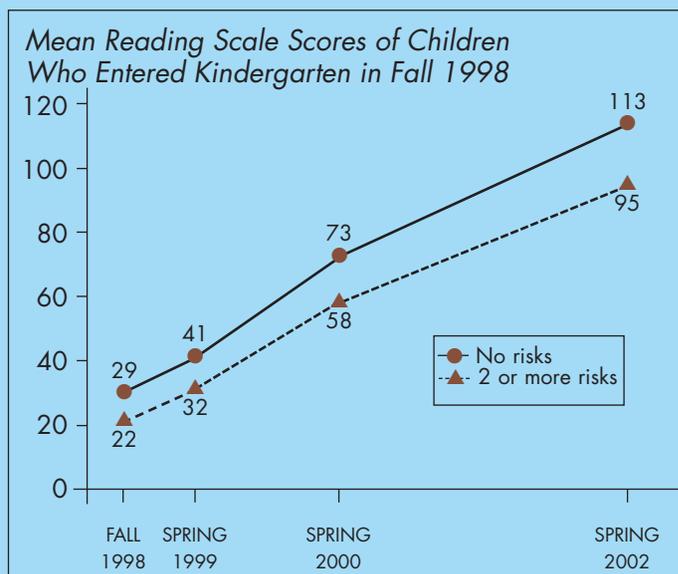
cal knowledge since they are unlikely to pick it up at home. If schools are able to impart this knowledge cumulatively through a rich, common grade-by-grade curriculum core—where each teacher can systematically build on the knowledge and skills taught by previous teachers—children from less language-rich homes will enjoy and benefit from the kind of curriculum often offered only to wealthier kids. And, when children move from school-to-school, they won't face a wholly new curriculum on top of all else that is new to them.

1. 3-year-olds from lower income homes hear—and use—less than half the words of more advantaged peers



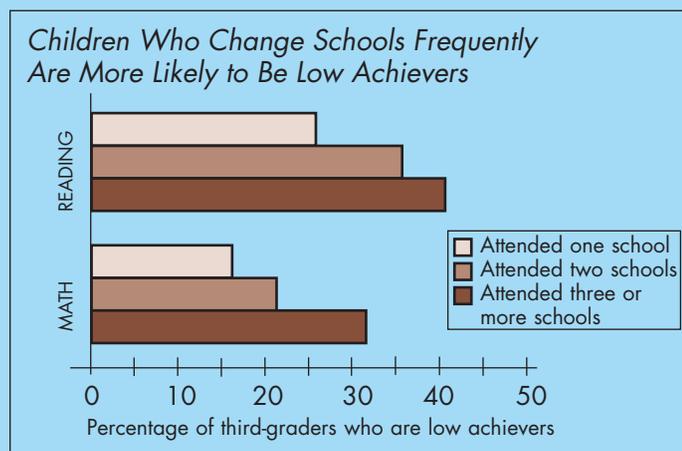
Note: Parents' different words were averaged over in-home observations when the children were 13-36 months old. Children's different words were averaged over the final four in-home observations when they were 33-36 months old. Source: Hart, B. and Risley, T. (2003). "The Early Catastrophe," *American Educator*, Spring.

2. Children from at-risk families enter kindergarten behind in reading, and then fall further behind



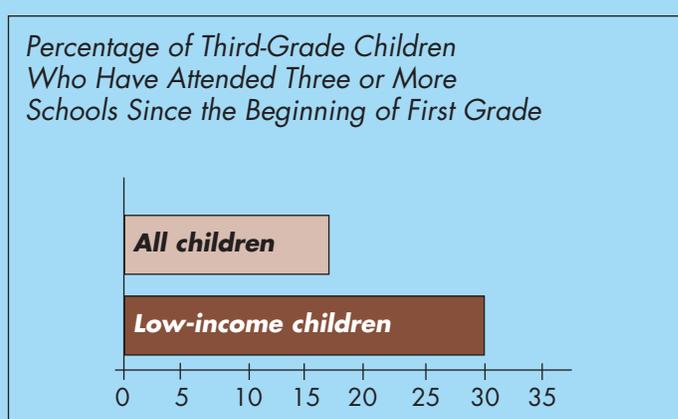
Note: Risk factors included poverty, home language, mother's highest education, and living in a single-parent household. The assessment was not administered in 2001. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2004). From Kindergarten Through Third Grade: Children's Beginning School Experiences. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

3. Changing schools hurts students' achievement



Source: General Accounting Office (1994). Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming Their Education. Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office.

4. Poor children change schools the most



Source: General Accounting Office (1994). Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming Their Education. Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office.