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Are public libraries in New Jersey providing early literacy programs for children age birth to 23 months based on the PLA "Every Child Ready to Read @ your library" program?

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ARE PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NEW JERSEY PROVIDING EARLY LITERACY
PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AGE BIRTH TO 23 MONTHS BASED ON THE PLA
"EVERY CHILD READY TO READ@YOUR LIBRARY" PROGRAM?

by
Beverly C. Jacob

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ABSTRACT

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"EVERY CHILD READY TO READ @ YOUR LIBRARY" PROGRAM?

2008/09

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The purpose of this study was to determine if public libraries in New Jersey provide early literacy programs for children age birth to 23 months based on PLA "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" program. Questionnaires were provided electronically to a sample of 52 public children's librarians in New Jersey.

A total of 15 responses were received. When asked if the respondents used the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read birth to 23 months program materials sent to them by the State Library in 2005, 33% used some of the aspects of the workshop outline and 33% created their own version incorporating some of the elements. Thirteen percent used the materials in a program following the workshop outline. Twenty percent tried using the materials but for extraneous reasons were not successful, and 13% had not used the materials at all. Judging from the results, this indicates that the respondents found the materials in the kit to be worthwhile to use, and that the "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" program was a successful program for these respondents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to dedicate this project to the memory of my parents who struggled in their own lives to make it possible for their children to attend college. It was because of them that I am the person I am today. I'd also like to thank my son Daniel, from the bottom of my heart, for being so proud of me throughout this endeavor. And finally, my deep felt gratitude for all of the help, guidance, and encouragement that was given to me by my Thesis advisor, Dr. Marilyn Shontz.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Importance

Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) discussed Early Literacy on the Reading

Rockets Web site. They stated that early childhood professionals have long recognized

the importance of language and literacy in preparing children to succeed in school. Also,

that early literacy plays a key role in enabling the kind of early learning experiences that

research shows are linked with: academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher

graduation rates, and reduced incidences of juvenile delinquency; and that these

outcomes are all factors associated with later adult productivity.

They also summarized what is known from research. Literacy development starts

early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement. All of the domains of a

child's development –physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy-are

interrelated and interdependent. The more limited a child's experiences with language

and literacy the more likely it is that he or she will have difficulty learning to read. Key

early literacy predictors of reading and school success include oral language, Alphabetic

Code, and print knowledge (Strickland and Riley-Ayers, 2006).

Knowing the importance of providing early literacy experiences to children at an

early age, the Public Library Association (PLA) asked three experts to develop

workshops in emergent literacy. The "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library"

program is based on research from the National Research Council that identifies six skills that children should know before entering kindergarten. They are: print awareness, print motivation, vocabulary, letter knowledge, narrative skills, and phonological awareness (Arnold and Colburn, 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if public libraries in New Jersey provide early literacy programs for children age birth to 23 months based on the PLA "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" program. Questionnaires were provided electronically to a sample of public children's librarians in New Jersey. The results of the study were used to determine if New Jersey public libraries were indeed providing early literacy opportunities for children birth to 23 months old as well as the quality levels of those programs.

Research Questions:

1. What elements of recommended practice from the New Jersey Every Child Ready To Read packet were used during some or all of the birth – 23 month programs?

Elements:

Number and types of books read

Number and types of songs used

Number and types of finger plays or movements used

Number and types of musical instruments used

Music used, CD or tape

Number and types of visual aids used

Amount and types of socialization time provided

Themes used, such as Mother Goose on the Loose

Six skills taught with activities for each

2. For those birth to 23- month programs that were offered: when do they occur

(frequency), for what durations (time), and into what major teaching-learning segments

are they typically divided?

Structure:

Frequency of offerings

Total length of program

How total program time is divided (segments)

Time for refreshments

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

For purposes of this study, focus was placed on the description of the babies or

"early talkers" program.

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC).

A division of the American Library Association since 1900, ALSC has a

membership of librarians and persons interested in improving the quality of

services for children in all types of libraries. ALSC publishes the journal *Children

and Libraries* (Reitz, 2004-7).

American Library Association (ALA).

The leading professional association of public and academic libraries and

librarians in the United States, the ALA was founded in Philadelphia in October

1876 by a group of library leaders (90 men and 13 women) that included Melvil

<div align="center">3</div>

Dewey. An "association of associations," the ALA is organized in divisions, each

with its own officers, budget, and programs, and is closely tied to over 50 state

and regional chapters. The Association also sponsors round tables on specific

issues and topics and is affiliated with other independent library-related

organizations. Its imprint is ALA Editions. The most widely read periodicals

published by the ALA are the professional journal *American Libraries* and the

review publication *Booklist* (Reitz, 2004-7).

Emergent literacy.

Assumes that the child acquires some knowledge about language, reading, and

writing before formally entering school (Teale and Sulzby 1986). The term

expanded to include reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking

(Cooper, 1997).

Librarian.

A person responsible for the administration of a library (Young 1983).

Public library.

A library or library system that provides unrestricted access to library resources

and services free of charge to *all* the residents of a given community, district, or

geographic region, supported wholly or in part by public funds (Reitz, 2004-7).

Public Library Association (PLA).

A division of the American Library Association (ALA) since 1944, PLA has a

membership of librarians, library trustees, and friends interested in the general

improvement and expansion of public library services for readers of all ages. PLA

publishes the bimonthly magazine *Public Libraries* (Reitz, 2004-7).

Reader.

A person who reads silently to himself (or herself) or aloud to others, from a book other written or printed source, or an electronic medium displaying text. One of the primary goals of libraries is to encourage reading and literacy (Reitz, 2004-7).

Assumptions and Limitations

In 2005, the New Jersey State Library mailed out EVERY CHILD READY TO READ KITS to 52 public libraries in New Jersey. The assumption was that each of the libraries received the kit, and that they presented the suggested early literacy program at least once. A limitation of this study was that results were based only on public libraries in New Jersey and that the programs pertained only to early literacy for children age birth to 23 months.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For more than three decades, researchers in early childhood education have

recognized and have shown that children begin the literacy process as early as birth. It

was a common conception among educators and parents that children were only capable

of learning to read and write when they entered kindergarten. Dr. Zygouris-Coe said that

from birth through preschool young children begin to acquire basic understandings about

reading and writing and its functions through home experiences with print. Children do

not become competent readers automatically. In order for children to read well by the end

of third grade, their progress needs to be closely monitored by teachers and parents

during the preceding years, as pointed out by Hiebert, Pierson, Taylor, Richardson, &

Paris (1998), (as cited in Zygouris, 2001).

National Research Council

Suggested by the 1999 report by the National Research Council (NRC), *Starting

Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*, the more children know

about literacy before they enter school, the better equipped they are to succeed in reading.

The main accomplishments include oral language skills and phonological awareness,

motivation to learn and appreciation for literate forms, print awareness and letter

knowledge. The best way to meet these goals is through activities that are integrated

across cognitive, social, motor, emotional, and language development (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

In the same report by the NRC, certain circumstances were listed as promoting reading, such as: children's early experiences with language and literacy, sharing books with children, being read to often, development of language skills, vocabulary, basic knowledge about the world around them, owning books, having access to books at home, and phonological awareness. In addition to home support, having excellent reading instruction once children begin school is a necessity (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* recommended that our society needs to play a key role in the prevention of reading difficulties among children. Children need opportunities to understand, learn, and use the relationships between the spellings of words and the sounds of speech to recognize and spell written words, practice and enhance vocabulary, language, comprehension skills, have adults read to them and discuss and react to the literature, experience enthusiasm, joy, and success in learning to read and write (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Also in 1998, Snow, et al., Scarborough, stated that children who are not prepared for school, who have had limited experiences with language, text, and limited verbal interactions and reading with parents and caregivers, are more likely to develop reading problems when they enter school (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Defining Emergent Literacy

The term emergent literacy was introduced in 1986 in Teale and Sulby's *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. Emergent literacy assumes that the child

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acquires some knowledge about language, reading and writing before formally entering

school. In 1997, Cooper expanded the term to include reading, writing, speaking,

listening, viewing, and thinking (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

According to Morrow, (1997), literacy development does not begin when the

child enters school, rather it is a gradual process that is ongoing through experiences in

the home, and community. Children's social interactions involve adults and other

children through sharing, collaboration, and mentoring (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

In 1991, Sulzby and Teale explained in their volume *Emergent Literacy: Writing

and Reading*, that when discussing emergent literacy, educators are usually referring to

children from birth to kindergarten. The expansion of the age range includes children as

young as one or two who listen to stories being read aloud, focus on objects, recognize

sounds, notice labels and environmental print in the world around them, and experiment

with crayons, markers, and pencils (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Children's Literacy Learning Characteristics

In 1989, Teale & Sulzby described the following learning characteristics: children

begin to learn and read very early in life; young children learn the functions of literacy

through observing and participating in real-life settings in which reading and writing are

used; their reading and writing abilities develop concurrently and are interrelated through

experiences in reading and writing, and through active involvement with various literacy

materials, construct their understanding of reading and writing; and learning to read and

write is a developmental process for young children (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

In 1996, Teale & Sulzby added important information about children's literacy

learning characteristics. Among them are: almost all children in our society begin to

exhibit understanding and learning about reading and writing early in their lives, and most children by the age of 2 or 3, can identify signs (e.g., McDonald's, Wal-Mart, Wendy's), labels (e.g., Life Cereal, Cocoa Puffs), and logos (e.g., Nike, Disney). Literacy development occurs through direct experiences that demonstrate to children that reading and writing have a communicative purpose (e.g., reading a recipe, reading directions and signs, writing "thank you notes" or invitations to a birthday party). Children who are read to and given opportunities to experiment with writing grow in their understanding of how print functions. They have an increased vocabulary, a better understanding of story structure, and can recognize the difference between written and oral language. A language-and print-rich environment provides many opportunities for children to develop their early literacy experiences (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

According to Adams (1990), before children enter kindergarten, many children have devoted countless hours to storybook reading, programs like Sesame Street, and other language-related activities. Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon (1995) went on to state that from these experiences, especially those with storybooks, these children have gained an interest in books, the capacity to understand and talk about stories, and to connect the information in stories to their background knowledge (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Phonological Awareness

With these rich literacy experiences, children get the connection that it is the print on the pages that is read in the stories. With this comes the identification of many alphabet letters and children also gain the beginnings of phonemic awareness (Chard & Dickson, 1999; as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

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As defined by Chard & Dickson (1999), phonological awareness is an important element of emergent literacy. It refers to an awareness of the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning. When that consciousness includes an understanding that words can be divided into a sequence of phonemes, this is called phonemic awareness (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

As stated by Torgesen (1998), rhyming and rhyming games help young children to develop an awareness of the phonological structure of words. Acquiring phonological awareness involves two tasks: learning that words can be divided into segments of sound smaller than a syllable, and learning about individual phonemes themselves (as cited in Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

In addition, Beck & Juel, 1995 and Share & Stanovich, 1995, explained that phonological awareness helps children's reading and construction of meaning. Research has shown that children who understand the relationships between letters and phonemes and who learn to use this knowledge for word identification, become better readers than children who have difficulty acquiring these skills (as cited in Zygouris-Coe 2001).

The *Handbook on Early Literacy Research* (2001) reiterates the findings that a key factor in a child's early literacy experiences is exposure to a rich oral language environment. Rita Watson in "Literacy and Oral Language: Implications for Early Literacy Acquisition" included in the handbook, presented a new argument for its importance by stating that the relationship between oral language and literacy is bidirectional. As children are exposed to different text in shared readings, read alouds or show and tell, they develop an understanding for different forms of discourse. These new conceptualizations of text become the foundation for metalanguage and critical thinking.

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Watson concludes that participating in communicative events facilitates the acquisition of competence to succeed in literacy in school. Development of this communicative competence through immersion in oral language becomes an important building block for early success in literacy (as cited in O'Callaghan, 2001).

Development of Every Child Ready To Read @ your library

According to Meyers & Henderson, the Public Library Association's Early Literacy Project began in 2000 with a partnership with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), a division of the National Institutes of Health. NICHD had just released the National Reading Panel's report, providing research-based findings concerning reading development in America's children (as cited in Meyers & Henderson, 2007).

The NICHD report contained information that was useful to parents, child care providers and public librarians. The Public Library Association (PLA) contacted well-known researchers in emergent literacy, Dr. Grover C. Whitehurst and Dr. Christopher Lonigan, to develop model public library programs for parents and caregivers. The intent was to enlist parents and caregivers as partners in preparing their children for learning to read and to provide the most effective methods to achieve this goal (as cited in Meyers & Henderson, 2007).

According to Arnold & Colburn, 2004, Whitehurst and Lonigan developed workshops focusing on the development of the skills that are appropriate for children at three stages: babies or "early talkers," toddlers or "talkers," and older preschoolers or "pre-readers." The programs were based on six essential skills that children need before

they enter kindergarten: print awareness, print motivation, vocabulary, letter knowledge, narrative skills, and phonological awareness.

A partnership was then formed between the PLA and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) to pilot the model programs in public libraries across America (as cited in Meyers& Henderson, 2007). The logo "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" was established.

In 2001, twenty demonstration sites were chosen, and in 2002, a second year of pilot testing was conducted with fourteen sites participating. An evaluation method was created by Dr. Virginia Walter, past president of ALSC and professor at UCLA. The evaluation included standard output measures and pioneered an interview method for assessing the outcomes achieved in using the materials and methods. Evaluations were designed to show whether parents incorporated needed skill-building activities into their time with their preschool children (as cited in Meyers & Henderson, (2007).

A refined outcome evaluation was developed by Sara Laughlin and Associates in the second year implementation of the workshops with the same objectives. The results of the evaluation showed that the information contained in the programs was incorporated into the behaviors of the parents by helping them to be more effective "first teachers" with their children, and increased the public library's impact in early literacy development with children (as cited in Meyers & Henderson, 2007).

"Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" Online Resource

Recognizing the important role that libraries can play in providing early literacy information to parents and caregivers, the PLA and the ALSC in cooperation with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the National Institutes of

Health partnered to provide libraries tools to present the program "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library." An online Web site was created for librarians, as well as other educators, providing a program outline, script, scripts with additional, supplemental information to incorporate into the presentation, instructions for the presenters, and activities to do in the workshop. Brochures and posters could be downloaded or ordered, and a training DVD could also be purchased (ALA, 2007).

For purposes of this study, focus was placed on the description of the babies or "early talkers" program.

Workshop Outline

Goals of Early Literacy for Newborn to Two-Year Olds

According to the outline, when presenting the newborn to two-year olds program, the goals of early literacy are: to introduce book sharing between parents and caregivers at an earlier age than what might otherwise occur, offer ideas to make book sharing an enjoyable experience so that parent and child read together more often, suggest books, rhymes, and other resources that are age appropriate (ALA, 2007).

Welcome and Introduction

"Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" programs involve both the caregivers and the babies. After welcoming parents and caregivers to the program, the purpose of the workshop is defined as what can be done to help young children become aware of and comfortable with books and language. To demonstrate this, a familiar song is sung, or a rhyme may be recited (ALA, 2007).

Background Information

Background information is provided: learning to read and write is essential to school success and children who are good readers are usually the most successful learners. Children get ready to read and write long before they start school. Babies or toddlers can learn important pre-reading skills which will make it easier for them to learn to read when beginning school. Research shows that children who are read to from an early age have a larger vocabulary and better language skills when they start school. They also have a greater interest in books. Children who want to have books read to them are more likely to want to learn to read, and a child's interest in reading is an important predictor of later reading achievement (Payne, Whitehurst & Angell, 1994) (as cited in ALA, 2007).

Explanation of What Parents and Caregivers Learn

An explanation is given as to what the caregivers learn; such as, talking to the baby or toddler to help him or her enjoy language, books and reading, and why it is important to start reading to children from the time they are babies. Six very important skills that can be taught right now so that children will be ready to learn to read when he or she begins school are described. Also, suggestions are made about selecting books, nursery rhymes, and songs that can be used to help children learn the six pre-reading skills (ALA, 2007).

Importance of Parent/Caregiver

It is pointed out in the script that parents and caregivers are in the best position to help children get ready to read. Because young children have short attention spans, the

adults can do activities for short amounts of time throughout the day. Also, parents and caregivers serve as role models. (ALA, 2007).

Defining Early Literacy

"Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" script provides the definition of early literacy as what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write. Parents can help develop early literacy skills by reading and talking about books and by telling stories to children beginning at birth (ALA, 2007). Additional information provided by Catherine Snow in "The Contacts of Literacy: What Children Learn from Learning to Read Books" in Teale's *"Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading"* is that the development of early literacy skills through early experiences with books and stories is critically linked to a child's success in learning to read. The earlier parents begin to read to children, the better language and reading skills they will develop (as cited in ALA, 2007).

Introduction of the Six Skills to Get Ready to Read

The six skills that reading research has determined that children must know before they can learn to read are: print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness, and letter knowledge (ALA, 2007).

Print Motivation

Simply stated, print motivation is a child's interest in and enjoyment of books. Children who enjoy books and reading will be curious about how to read and they will read more (ALA, 2007).

According to Bus, Belsky, van ljzendoorn, & Crnic, 1997, studies show that when the interaction around a book is negative (sit still; listen; harsh language) then the young

child likes reading and books less. He associates the negative interaction with the book and reading. When the experience of sharing a book is pleasurable for both the parent and the child, the child will be more attentive and responsive. The more pleasurable book sharing is, the more regular and frequent an activity will become (as cited in ALA, 2007).

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Babies and toddlers are much better at hearing different sounds or phonemes than adults. This is why children are wired for learning multiple languages in the early years. Being able to hear the beginning and ending sounds that make up words will help children sound out words when they begin to read. A suggestion is to say nursery rhymes and sing songs. Hearing words that rhyme helps children learn that words are made up of smaller parts, and songs have a different note for each syllable thus helping children break down words. Sing throughout the day; make up songs. Repetition is also very important in choosing versions of music or rhymes (ALA, 2007).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined as knowing the names of things. Children need to know the meaning of words to understand what they are reading. Research findings by Dr. Janellen Huttenlocher of the University of Chicago show that the growth in vocabulary in children under two years of age is clearly linked to the extent that the parents talk with them. The more parents talked with the babies and toddlers, the more vocabulary the children had. By the time they were two years old, the children whose parents had a high

level of speech with their children had a vocabulary five times as high as those children whose parents had a low level of speech (as cited in ALA, 2007).

Narrative Skills

The definition of narrative skills is the ability to describe things and events and tell stories. Being able to talk about and explain what happens in a story helps a child understand the meaning of what he or she is reading. Good narrative skills lead to good reading comprehension. Several suggestions in helping babies and toddlers develop narrative skills are cited, such as: be sure to give the child opportunities to talk; talk in ways that encourage interaction and a response; relate stories of life. As parents go through the day, talk about some of the things you are doing. Explain them in simple terms: "first we'll buy pancake mix, then we'll go home, and then we'll make pancakes." This helps children understand that stories have a beginning, middle and end (ALA, 2007).

Print Awareness

The script defines print awareness as noticing print everywhere; knowing how to handle a book; knowing how we follow the words on a page. Before children learn to read, they must be familiar with how books work: books have a cover, begin to read at the top of the page and from left to right (in English and in many languages), books have words and pictures to tell the story. When children feel comfortable with books, they can concentrate on reading (ALA, 2007).

Tips are provided to help parents and caregivers help their children to notice print and understand how a book works. Examples are: point to signs and other words around

and read what they say; turn the pages while reading a book; use the index finger to follow the words as you read (ALA, 2007).

Letter Knowledge

As stated in the script, letter knowledge is knowing that letters are different from each other, and that they have different names and sounds. The importance is that to read written words, children must understand that they are made up of individual letters and that each letter has its own name and sound. Learning to distinguish one letter from another involves being able to see the differences in letter shapes. It is recommended that caregivers encourage this by: hanging mobiles with different shapes in a baby's crib, read books that have geometric shapes, read alphabet books and sing alphabet songs to introduce letters, point out shapes of toys, and use simple puzzles to help children see the different shapes (ALA, 2007).

Conclusion of the Workshop

After the six early literacy skills are defined and recommendations are made, tips are listed, such as: tips for sharing books with babies/toddlers, types of books that are good for this age group, demonstrate reading a book to the child, hand out suggestions for appropriate materials for babies and toddlers, talk about library programs and collections for this age group and parenting materials, answer any questions, and give a tour of the library for those who would like one (ALA, 2007).

Summary

This chapter summarized the importance of early literacy and defined what early literacy is. It also outlined the "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" program workshop relating to Newborn to Two-Year Olds. The six skills that reading research has determined that children must know before they can learn to read was explained.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The research method used was applied research since it provided

information that could be used immediately. A survey was used to gather information due

to the large number of public librarians to be questioned, and who were geographically

dispersed throughout the counties of New Jersey. Personal input information was also

needed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if public libraries in New Jersey provide

early literacy programs for children age birth to 23 months based on the PLA "Every

Child Ready To Read @ your library" program. Questionnaires will be provided

electronically to a sample of public children's librarians in New Jersey. The results of the

study will determine if New Jersey public libraries are indeed providing early literacy

opportunities for children birth to 23 months old as well as the quality levels of those

programs. For those birth to 23- month programs that are offered: when do they occur

(frequency), for what durations (time), and into what major teaching-learning segments

are they typically divided?

Research Questions

1. What elements of recommended practice from the New Jersey Every Child Ready to Ready packet are used during some or all of the birth – 23 month programs?

2. For those birth to 23- month programs that are offered: when do they occur (frequency), for what durations (time), and into what major teaching-learning

Data Collection

Data for this thesis was collected by a questionnaire that was electronically sent to 52 public librarians throughout the counties of New Jersey.
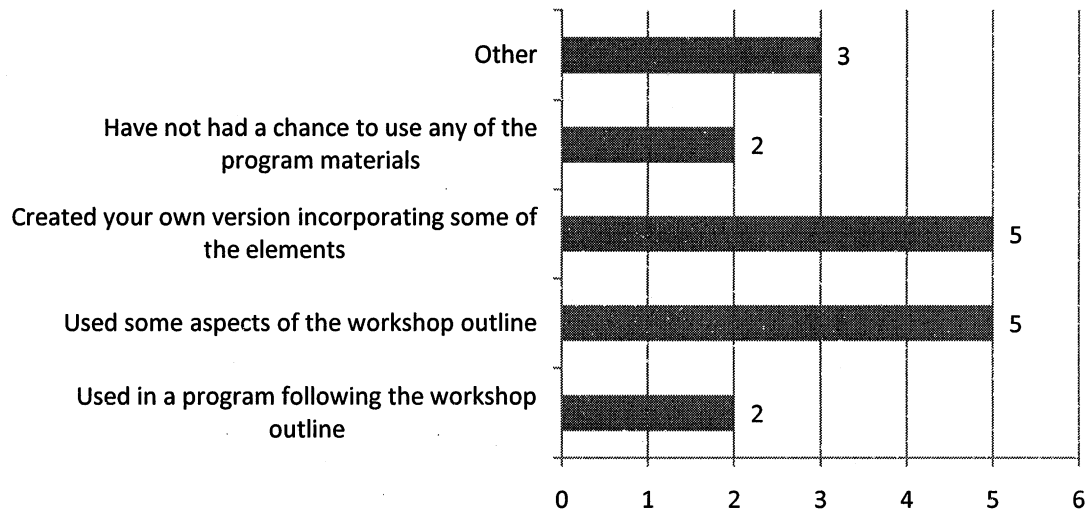
Sample and Population

A sample of 52 public librarians throughout the state of New Jersey was surveyed. In 2005, The New Jersey State Library sent out "Every Child Ready To Read" kits to 52 public librarians throughout the State of New Jersey. The kits provided information on presenting the program "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library".

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A survey designed on SurveyMonkey.com was electronically mailed to 52

librarians in New Jersey on March 23, 2009. Since the State Library sent out the Early

Literacy Every Child Read To Read Kits in 2005, 20 of the e-mail addresses were

invalid. Either the person was no longer working at that particular location any longer, or

the e-mail address was incorrect. The researcher called those libraries, tried to get in

touch with the person, or try to get their new e-mail address. A second e-mail was sent

March 27, 2009 and a total of 11 responses from the 52 librarians were received. On

March 24, 2009 an e-mail was received from a respondent stating that on two of the

questions the answers were "other," and he/she was specific. However, the survey would

only process it and move on if he/she actually "checked" one of the answers given. The

respondent explained that both answers would probably be recorded, but it was the one

written in the other category that was the actual answer. Other respondents described

another problem with the survey. the survey. I revised the survey and sent it out again on

April 6, 2009. A final total of 15 responses were received.

Figure 1 - Have you used the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read Kit birth to 23 months program materials that were sent to you from the State Library in 2005?

| Category	Value
Other	3
Have not had a chance to use any of the program materials	2
Created your own version incorporating some of the elements	5
Used some aspects of the workshop outline	5
Used in a program following the workshop outline	2

In the first question of the survey, respondents were asked if they used the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read Kit birth to 23 months program materials that were sent to them from the State Library in 2005 (see Figure 1) . Two respondents used it in a program following the workshop outline. Five respondents used some aspects of the workshop outline. Five respondents created their own version incorporating some of the elements. Two respondents had not had the chance to use any of the program materials. One respondent commented that he/she did not use this program. One respondent stated that he/she gave an abbreviated program and turned materials over to the public library. One respondent wrote a comment that he/she tried, but it was unsuccessful because the audience consisted of Spanish speakers/readers.

Figure 2 - Which of the six skills have you presented?
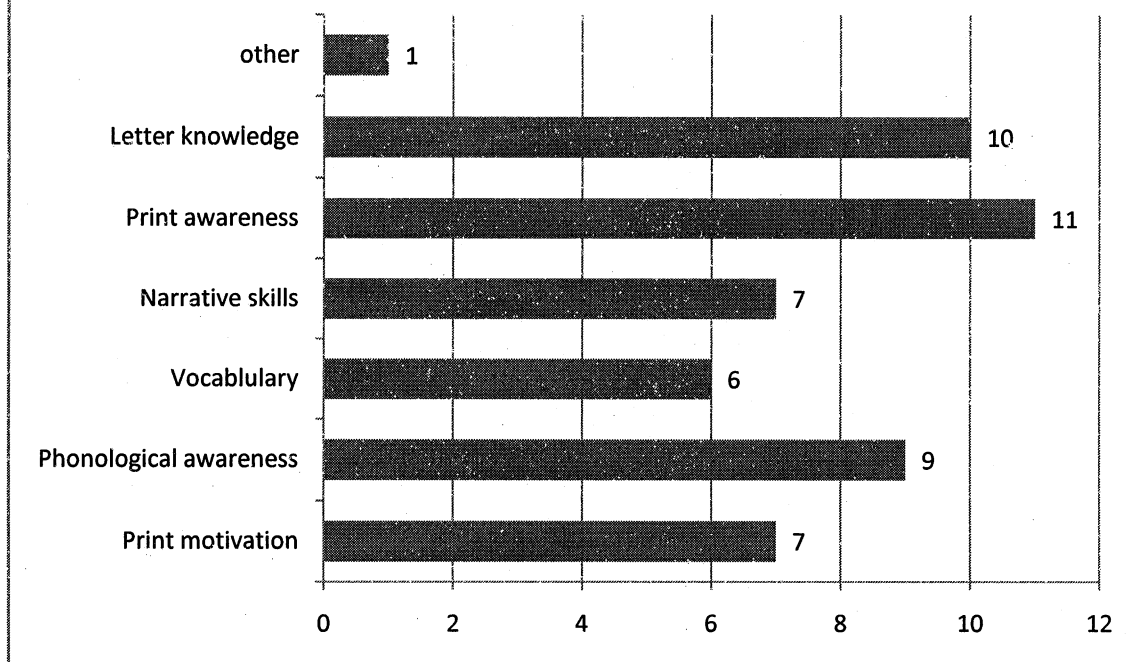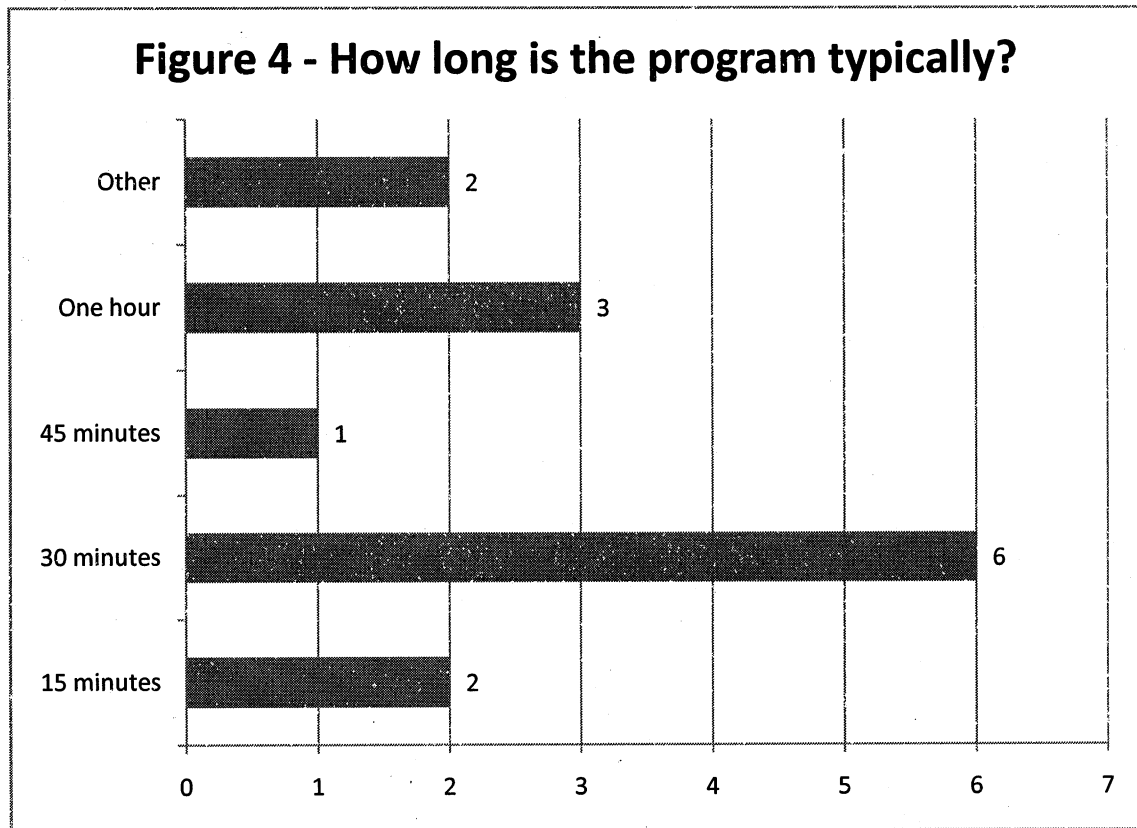
The second question asked about which of the six skills respondents presented. Seven respondents presented print motivation. Nine respondents presented phonological awareness. Six respondents presented vocabulary. Seven respondents presented narrative skills. Eleven respondents presented print awareness. Ten respondents presented letter knowledge. One respondent stated not applicable.

Figure 3 - How often did you present the programs?

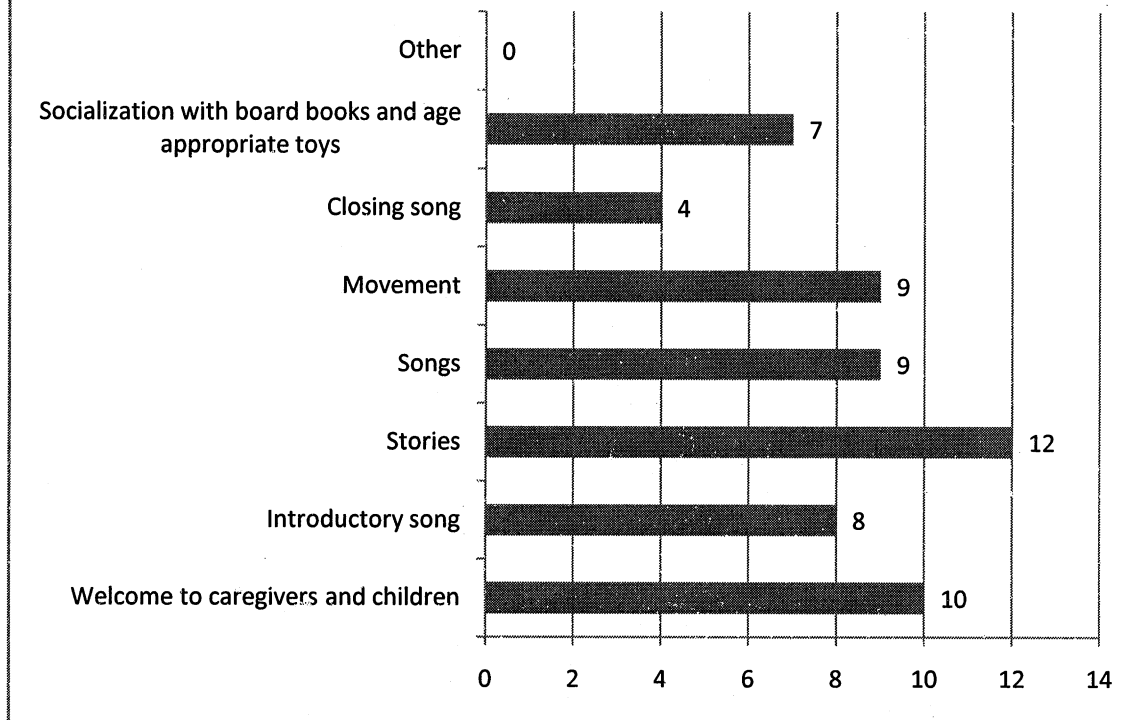| Category	Value
Other	6
Quarterly	8
Once a month	0
Bi-weekly	2
Weekly	2
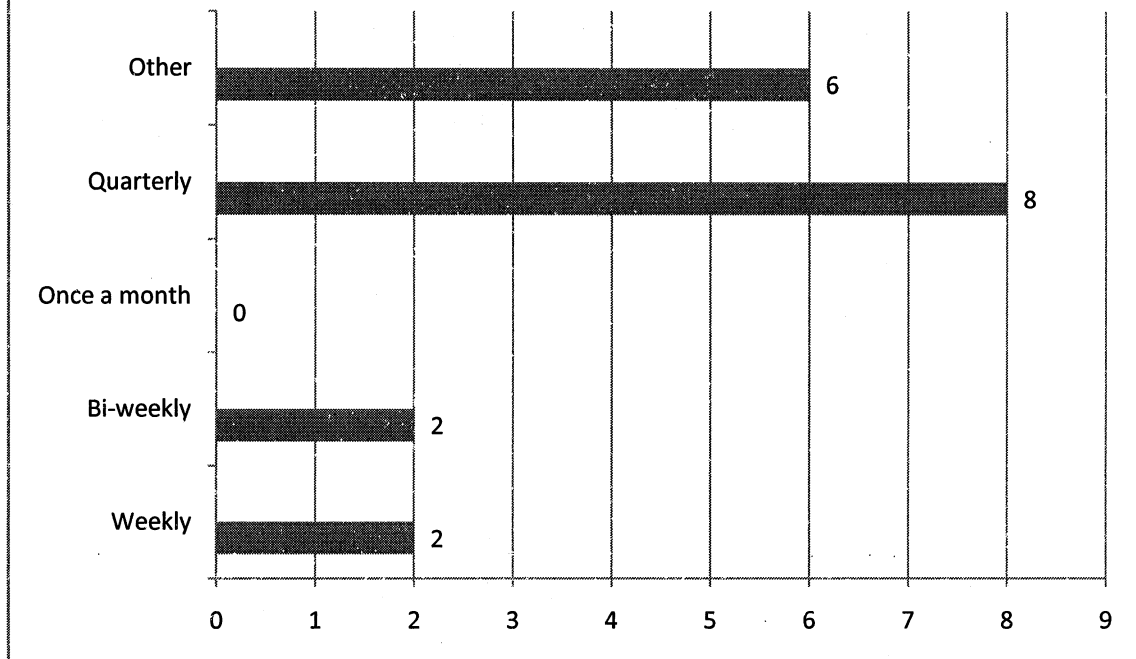
In the third question of the survey, the respondents were asked how often they presented the programs. Two respondents stated weekly. Two respondents stated bi-weekly. Eight respondents stated quarterly. A total of six respondents made comments. One respondent stated that he/she presented the program one time. One respondent stated that he/she presented the program two times. One respondent stated that he/she presented about six sessions to date from September 2006. One respondent stated that he/she also scheduled literacy workshops with local child care centers but the programs were presented randomly throughout the year. One respondent estimated that he/she presented the program quarterly; that he/she was without a children's librarian for many months and all programs ground to a halt. One respondent stated quarterly and also responded did not present.

Figure 4 - How long is the program typically?

Category	Count
Other	2
One hour	3
45 minutes	1
30 minutes	6
15 minutes	2

The fourth question asked of the respondents was how much time was used in the typical program. Two respondents stated 15 minutes. Six respondents stated 30 minutes. One respondent stated 45 minutes. Three respondents stated one hour. In the other category, a respondent stated that the program presented was 15 minutes and did not present the program. Another respondent stated the program presented was one hour, and also 1 ½ hours.

Figure 5 - Do you include these segments?

Segment	Value
Other	0
Socialization with board books and age appropriate toys	7
Closing song	4
Movement	9
Songs	9
Stories	12
Introductory song	8
Welcome to caregivers and children	10

In question 5 of the survey, respondents were asked if they included these specific

segments. Ten respondents welcome caregivers and children. Eight respondents had an

introductory song. Twelve respondents read stories. Nine respondents had movement.

Four respondents had a closing song. Seven respondents had socialization with board

books and age appropriate toys. There were no comments in the other category.

Figure 6 - Do you provide refreshments?

Category	Value
Sometimes	5
No	7
Yes	0
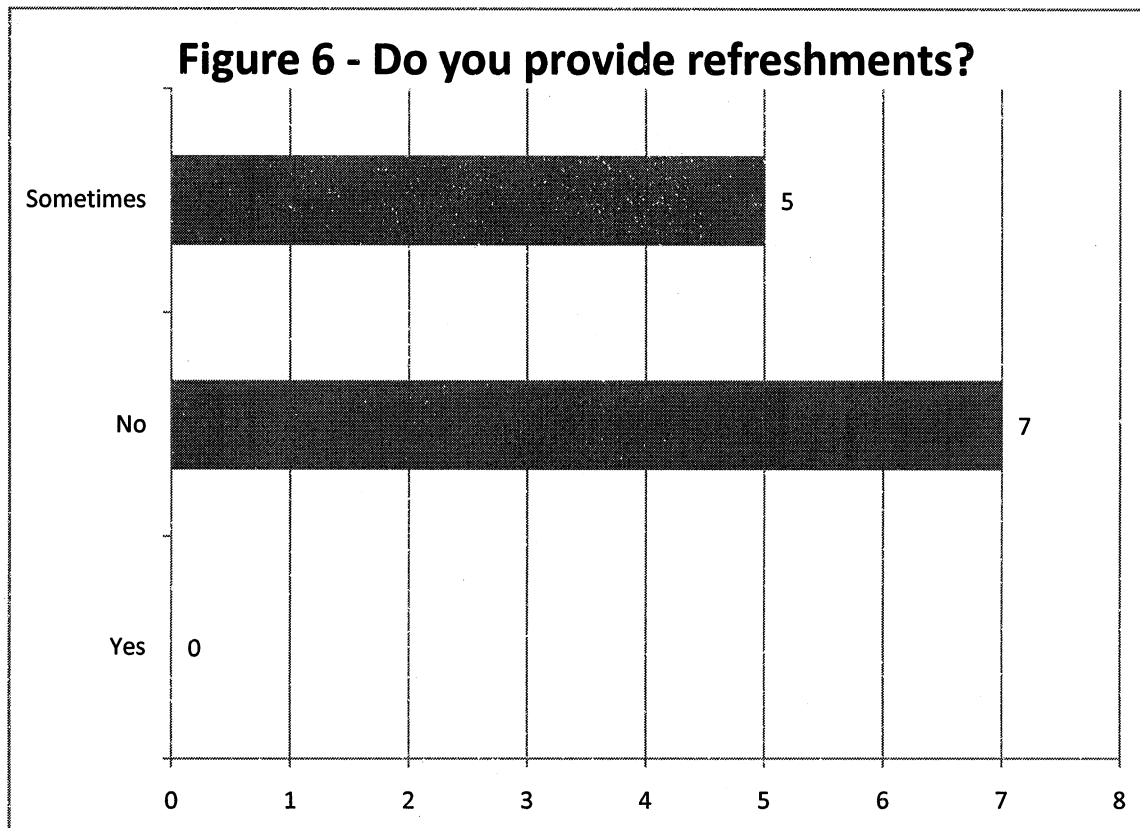
In question six of the survey, respondents were asked if they provided refreshments.

Seven respondents stated no. Five respondents stated sometimes.

Figure 7 - Which of the following do you typically use?

Category	Value
Repetition	10
Colors	5
Shapes	7
Posters	0
Pictures	4
Musical instruments	2
Music, CDs	7
Sing songs	3
Songs	12
Finger plays	12
Nursery rhymes	9
Big books	5
Pop-up books	6
Board books	10
Picture books	12
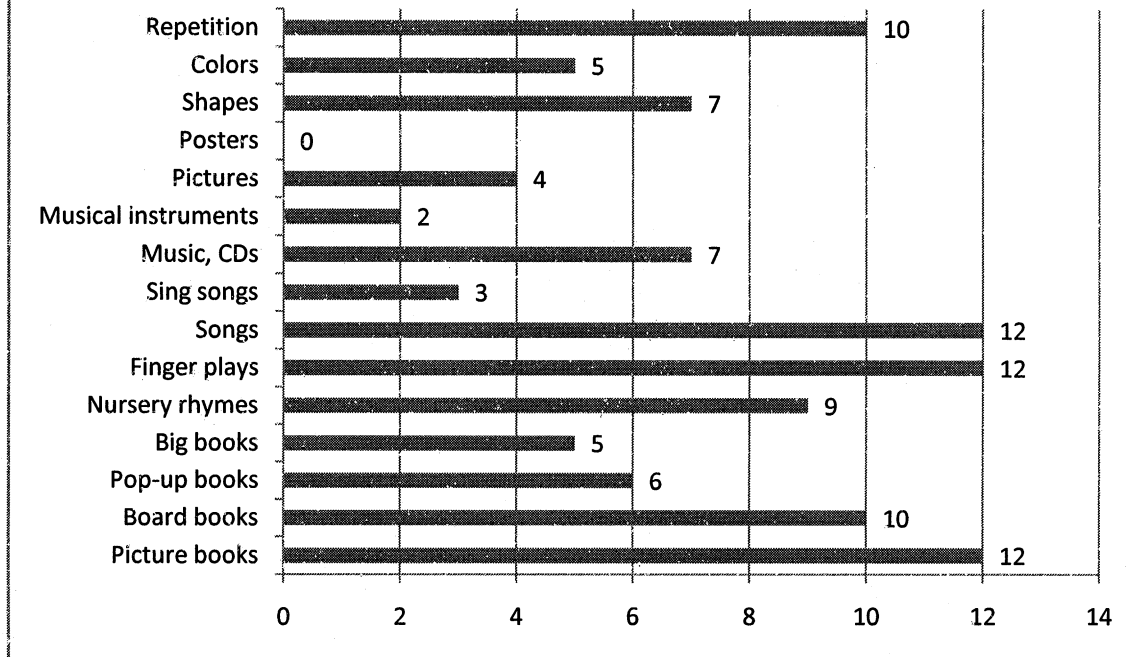
In the last question of the survey, respondents were asked what resources and activities they typically used. Twelve respondents used picture books. Ten respondents used board books. Six respondents used pop-up books. Five respondents used big books. Nine respondents used nursery rhymes. Twelve respondents used finger plays. Twelve respondents used songs. Three respondents sang songs. Seven respondents used music and CDs. Two respondents used musical instruments. Four respondents used pictures. Seven respondents used shapes. Five respondents used colors. Ten respondents used repetition.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn by the researcher were a result of data collected and

presented in Chapter IV. A total of 15 responses were received. When asked if the

respondents used the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read birth to 23 months

program materials sent to them by the State Library in 2005, 33% used some of the

aspects of the workshop outline and 33% created their own version incorporating some of

the elements. Thirteen percent used the materials in a program following the workshop

outline. Twenty percent tried using the materials but for extraneous reasons were not

successful, and 13% had not used the materials at all. Judging from the results, this

indicates that the respondents found the materials in the kit to be worthwhile to use, and

that the "Every Child Ready To Read @your library" program was a successful program

for these respondents.

When asked which of the six skills were presented in a program, 73% presented

print awareness, 66% presented letter knowledge, 60% presented phonological

awareness, 46% presented narrative skills, 46% presented print motivation, 40%

presented vocabulary, and 6% did not use any of the skills. It appears that the highest

percentage of respondents presented print awareness in the programs. This indicates that

the respondents found it valuable to present this skill to the caregivers. This skill involves noticing print everywhere; knowing how to handle a book; knowing how to follow words on a page. Children should be familiar with handling books and knowing how books work, that they have a cover, and where to begin to reading at the top of the page, and in the English language from left to right. Children should also know that books have words and pictures to tell a story. Once children are comfortable with this knowledge they can then concentrate on reading (ALA, 2007).

The next highest percentage of respondents presented letter knowledge in the programs. Letter knowledge is knowing that letters are different from each other, and that they have different names and sounds. The importance is that to read written words, children must understand that they are made up of individual letters and that each letter has its own name and sound. Learning to distinguish one letter from another involves being able to see the differences in letter shapes (ALA, 2007). This skill is not only an important one, but also one that is simple to present to caregivers. A large percentage of caregivers are conditioned by their own childhood to sing the alphabet song to children, and use puzzles with children. They may not realize how meaningful these activities are in preparing a child to read and write. Singing the song helps the child hear the different sounds of the letters, by using puzzles the child can see and feel the different shapes, and this in turn translates into recognition of the shapes of letters. By explaining to the caregivers the importance of having the child hear the different sounds of the letters of the alphabet when they sing the alphabet song, and by using puzzles with the child to distinguish the different shapes, they are in fact reinforcing the letter knowledge skill.

The researcher was very pleased that the respondents presented this extremely important skill.

Almost the same percentage of respondents presented the phonological skill, which goes hand in hand with letter knowledge. Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Being able to hear the beginning and ending sounds that make up words help children sound out words when they begin to read. It was suggested to both say nursery rhymes and sing songs (ALA, 2007). Again, caregivers may be already reciting and/or singing favorite traditional nursery rhymes to their children. But by pointing out the significance of this, the caregiver goes away from the program with a positive feeling that he or she is again, in fact, contributing to the child's preparedness for reading and writing. This was a skill that impressed the researcher, that the respondents were presenting .

Almost half of the respondents presented narrative skills in their programs. Narrative skills is the ability to describe things and events and tell stories. Being able to talk about and explain what happens in a story helps a child understand the meaning of what he or she is reading. This skill helps children understand that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Good narrative skills lead to good reading comprehension. Again the researcher was delighted to see this skill presented. It represents that the respondents recognized the value of passing this information on to the caregivers. Reading a story to a child is important but in addition the story should be discussed, questions should be posed, comments welcomed. Engaging the child in conversation also involves building vocabulary.

The same percentage of respondents who presented narrative skills in their

programs presented print motivation. Simply stated, print motivation is a child's interest

in and enjoyment of books. Children who enjoy books and reading will be curious about

how to read and they will read more (ALA, 2007). This was another skill the researcher

was happy to see presented. It is a skill that should be obvious, but apparently is not. It

only makes sense that if a child shows an interest in books, that he or she would have a

desire to want to learn to read. By presenting this skill it can encourage caregivers to

provide reading time as a positive experience.

Only 40% of the respondents presented vocabulary skill. Vocabulary is defined as

knowing the names of things. Children need to know the meaning of words to understand

what they are reading. Research findings by Dr. Janellen Huttenlocker of the University

of Chicago show that the growth in vocabulary in children under two years of age is

clearly linked to the extent that the parents talk with them. The more parents talk to their

babies and toddlers, the more vocabulary the children had. By the time they were two

years old, the children whose parents had a high level of speech with their children had a

vocabulary five times as high as those children whose parents had a low level of speech

(as cited in ALA, 2007). This was one result that was disappointing that less than half of

the respondents presented this skill in the programs. Having this information presented to

the caregivers could have been extremely beneficial to their children.

In Figure 3, respondents were asked how often the programs were presented.

Sixty-six of the respondents presented them quarterly, 16% weekly, and 16% bi-weekly.

The high percentage presenting the programs on a quarterly basis was favorable. The

researcher was impressed that 16% of the respondents presented them weekly, and that

16% of the respondents presented them bi-weekly. It appears that of the number of respondents who answered the question are in fact presenting the program regularly. This is encouraging.

In Figure 4, respondents were asked about the length of the program. Fifty percent of the respondents answered 30 minutes, 25% one hour, 16% 15 minutes, and 8% 45 minutes. It may be assumed in the 30 and 15 minute programs, socialization is not included in the program socialization is included in the program and that socialization time is included in the one hour programs as well as the 45 minute programs. The researcher was pleased to see that within the amount of time that the programs were presented, there was time to at least present the skills. A preference would be to have seen more programs averaging 45 minutes to one hour to allow time for socialization for both the caregivers and the children.

In Figure 5, respondents were asked what segments were included in the programs. All of the respondents answered stories, 83% welcomed caregivers and the children, 75% sang songs, 75% had movement, 66% sang an introductory song, 58% had socialization time with board books and age-appropriate toys, and 33% sang a closing song. It was satisfying to see stories being read. Although the percentage was high for welcoming the participants to the program, the researcher expected 100% to do so. In addition, although ¾ of the respondents sang songs and had movement activities in the programs, the researcher expected 100% to do so. It was encouraging to see that over half of the respondents had socialization time with board books and age-appropriate toys. Again, the researcher would have liked to see 100% of the respondents doing the same. It

was interesting to see that 66% sang an introductory song but only 33% sang a closing

song. Perhaps time running out kept the others from singing a closing song.

In Figure 6, when asked if refreshments were provided, 58% of the respondents

answered no and 41% answered sometimes. These results were consistent as it was not

absolutely essential to serve refreshments. The benefit of serving refreshments is that it

may attract more caregivers to come to the program if it is advertised as such. Also,

whenever refreshments are served at a program, usually at the conclusion of the

presentation, and during the socialization time, this may create an atmosphere that is

conducive to caregivers asking questions of the presenter.

In Figure 7, respondents were asked about the materials that they used in a

program. Of the respondents who replied, 100% used picture books, 100% used songs,

100% performed finger plays, 83% used board books, 83% used repetition, 75% used

nursery rhymes, 58% used music CD's, 58% used shapes, 50% used pop-up books, 41%

used big books, 41% used colors, 33% used pictures, 25 % sang songs, and 16% used

musical instruments. The researcher was thrilled to see that 100% of the respondents used

picture books, used songs, and performed finger plays. This indicates that in a typical

program, caregivers are being taught skills, and the children are being involved in the

process by the presenter using picture books, songs, and performing finger plays. The

early literacy skills can be easily translated into materials that can entertain children as

well as instruct them. The researcher was extremely pleased to see that 83% of

respondents used board books in their programs, as board books are perfect for this age

group. The pages are sturdy and cannot be ripped out of the book. Babies find it both

enjoyable and soothing to chew on board pages, this in turn then translates to a positive

experience of books. Repetition too is very important in preparation for reading. The researcher was glad to see that a high percentage of respondents are using it. Nursery rhymes provide repetition, 75% of respondents used them. More than half of the respondents used music CDs. The researcher was glad to see 100% of the respondents using music. Another 58% of respondents used shapes or used pop-up books. The researcher would have liked to see 100% of respondents using both of them in the programs. The researcher was very surprised to see that 41% of respondents used big books. Big books for this age group are not easy to find. Big books are an effective way of letting the audience see the pictures clearer than a picture book and they are easier to present. When used on an easel, they allow the presenter to be able to be animated as his or her hands are free to be used expressively in between turning the pages. Although a high percentage used big books, more respondents using them would be preferred. Colors are important in drawing in the attention of a baby or toddler. A high percentage, 41%, used colors in the programs. Thirty-three percent of the respondents used pictures. The researcher would have liked to have seen a much higher percentage. The researcher was extremely disappointed to see only 25% of the respondents singing songs. Perhaps they thought the survey meant singing a song without music accompaniment. Because 100% of the respondents used songs, as stated earlier, this question may have been confusing to the respondent. The researcher would hope that a presenter would use songs on CD as background music when the audience entered the program area, have the words on an easel for the caregivers to sing along with the presenter during the program, and have music playing softly during socialization time. The researcher was extremely surprised to see that 16% of the respondents used musical instruments. At first the results seemed to

indicate that the presenter actually musical instruments in the program, such as a guitar or a piano. However, it may have been a question of providing the children with musical instruments or a question of the presenter performing with a musical instrument. The question needed clarification.

Summary

Initially, the researcher was disappointed with the small percentage of respondents who replied to the survey. Much effort was made in trying to contact the 52 librarians who were sent the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read Kit birth to 23 months program materials that were sent from the State Library in 2005. However, time was a factor. It was four years ago that the librarians were sent the kits. Within the years 2005 and 2009, many of the librarians were no longer able to be reached due to job changes, e-mail addresses were no longer valid, and the online survey had several problems that had to be worked out, revised, and sent out again. A combination of all of the above interfered with receiving more responses.

Overall the researcher was impressed with the results of the survey by the 15 respondents. In question 1, everyone tried using the program in one way or another. In question 2, everyone who presented the program utilized some of the six skills. In question 3, of those who continued to present the program, the majority presented the program quarterly.

In question 4, no one presented the program in less than 15 minutes. Without socialization time, it is possible to present the program in 15 minutes however that is not recommended. I wouldn't recommend it though. In question 5, of those who continued to present the program, everyone used some or all of the segments. In question 6, less than

half of the respondents served refreshments sometimes. In question 7, of those who continued to present the program, high percentages of respondents used the essential elements of the program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made regarding the presentation of the early literacy program "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" for age birth to 23 months. The recommendations are based on the review of the literature, and the data presented in this survey.

The researcher's opinion is that this is a valuable program that was based on sound research in the early literacy field. Numerous children could benefit from having this program presented in not only New Jersey public libraries, but also every other state in America.

Regarding New Jersey, the State Library should present the early literacy program more often at ALA Conferences, NJLA Conferences, NJALA Conferences, and other conferences for librarians such as staff in-service workshops.

It is recommended that the New Jersey State Library offer more training for individual public libraries in the counties of New Jersey. If public librarians are exposed to this program workshop, chances are they will understand the impact the program will have on the children and the caregivers if they present it at their library.

The instructors of the program should stress the importance of presenting all of the six skills when presenting this program; encourage the librarians to offer the programs on a regular basis, either quarterly or monthly; the presentation of the program should run approximately 15-20 minutes with socialization time an additional 15-30

minutes; most of the elements of the program described in Chapter V should be included in the presentation; refreshments can be optional, however, when initiating the program it is recommended that refreshments be included in the advertisement to attract more caregivers; and lastly, materials supplementing the instructional part of the program should be discussed and emphasized.

This study was an attempt to see how many public libraries in New Jersey were presenting the program. The results were disappointing. Perhaps by advertising it in publications such as *Library Journal*, the library public will become aware of it, and spark an interest in presenting the program.

Mentoring is another means of multiplying the amount of programs presented at various public libraries and their branches. I learned about "Every Child Ready To Read @ your library" at a Youth Services Forum and became instantly attracted to the program. The researcher's experience includes: attending a workshop on the program and receiving the kit free of charge by promising to present the program; presenting the program at a Burlington County Library System Youth Services Meeting for branch librarians in 2006; and in 2009, mentoring children's librarians from their branches.

Another recommendation is to ask the New Jersey State Library to study what other states are doing in respect to presenting early literacy programs in public libraries and also how they are promoting the programs. In the preliminary research, it was observed that other states were proactive in their attempts at presenting early literacy programs in their public libraries.

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APPENDIX

EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM SURVEY

Early Literacy Program Survey

1. Have you used the Early Literacy Every Child Ready To Read Kit birth to 23 months program materials that were sent to you from the State Library in 2005?
(you may choose more than one answer)

Used in a program following the workshop outline

Used some aspects of the workshop outline

Created your own version incorporating some of the elements

Have not had the chance to use any of the program materials

Other (please specify)

2. Which of the six skills have you presented? (check all that apply)

Print Motivation

Phonological Awareness

Vocabulary

Narrative Skills

Print Awareness

Letter Knowledge

3. How often did you present the programs?

Weekly?

Bi-weekly?

Once a month?

Quarterly?

Other (please specify)

4. How long is the program, typically?

15 minutes

30 minutes

45 minutes

One hour

Other (please specify)

5. Do you include these segments? (check all that apply)

Welcome to caregivers and children?

Introductory song?

Stories?

Songs?

Movement?

Closing song?

Socialization time with board books and age appropriate toys?

Other (please specify)

6. Do you provide refreshments?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Other (please specify)

7. Which of the following do you typically use: (check all that apply)

Picture books?

Board books?

Pop-up books?

Big Books?

Nursery rhymes?

Finger plays?

Songs?

Sing songs?

Music CDs?

Musical instruments?

Pictures?

Posters?

Shapes?

Colors?

Repetition?

Other (please specify)