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IMPROVING CHILDREN'S READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

By
Aughtney D. Khan

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
May 1, 2003

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved 5/7/03

ABSTRACT

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IMPROVING CHILDREN'S READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2003/03

Dr. Joy Xin

Masters of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of parental involvement upon children's reading achievement. The study investigated whether children with learning difficulty would improve reading comprehension when parents became actively involved in their child's reading activities. Five 3rd and 4th grade students attending a small private school in southern New Jersey, together with their parents participated in this family reading program. They were identified as average readers who were having difficulty in comprehension. Prior to the start of the family reading program, students were individually administered a pre-reading inventory. Each student read 3 selected books and answered 6 written questions about the story without parental support. Scores were recorded and presented as baseline data in phase "A". All participating children's parents received training on the importance of their involvement in their child's reading activities. Parents learned how to effectively provide reading support for their children in questioning techniques, how to sit holding the book with their child and how to guide an interactive discussion with their child. A single subject design using AB phases was utilized. The outcome of this study shows student's reading comprehension scores increased as a result of parental involvement in their child's reading activities. Meanwhile, the participating children have also experienced a heightened enjoyment of reading and the parents have become more confident in providing reading support to their children due to the parent training and involvement in their child's reading activities at home.

MINI ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of parental involvement upon children's reading achievement. Five 3rd and 4th grade students who were experiencing difficulty in reading comprehension were selected to participate in the family reading program. Their parents were trained to read together with their child at home. The 5 participating children read and discussed books once a week with their parents at home and answered 6 written comprehension questions about the story. A single subject design with AB phases was utilized. The intervention lasted for 8 weeks. The outcomes of this study show student's reading comprehension scores increased as a result of parental involvement in their child's reading activities. The children have also experienced a heightened enjoyment of reading and the parents have become more confident in providing reading support to their children.

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to the parents and children who participated in this study. Your hard work and dedication was phenomenal.

Sincere gratitude to my parents, William J. Davis and Rev. Dr. Marguerite Davis for their constant prayers and support in this endeavor and my entire life.

Thank you to my children, Micah, Amir and Shera to whom I dedicate this project. May you continue to reach for the stars and achieve your greatest potential and purpose in life.

Thank you to my family, friends and church family for their continual encouragement and help in proofreading for errors and storing extra copies of this report on their hard drive when I accidentally deleted the entire paper.

Thank you to Dr. Joy Xin for her expert advice and professional support throughout this research.

Finally, I thank my dear husband, Amir M. Khan for his strong faith and constant strength that saw me through many obstacles and challenges along the way.

Thank you.

To God be the Glory for the things He has done.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of The Problem

Reading, a complex process involving many skills, is the most important academic subject in the elementary school curriculum, and most subjects require well-developed reading skills in the higher grades (Venn, 2000).

Many experts found that reading difficulties are the most common academic learning problem for students, especially students at risk and those with learning difficulties. It has been found that students with reading deficits experience difficulty during the early grades because most of the curriculum focuses on emerging literacy and other language based skills.

Although there are many factors that contribute to poor reading skills, experts agree that parents play a critical role in helping their children become successful readers. Parental involvement in schools, according to Ediger (2001), has generated great concern at the national level. Extensive research over the past 30 years has shown that parental involvement is instrumental in the success of a child's education (e.g. Jeffreys & Spang, 2001). It has demonstrated consistently that parental involvement is one of the keys to succeed in children's learning. Parents who become actively involved in their child's reading instruction have resulted in improved student achievement, attendance, motivation and self-esteem, especially for students at risk and those experiencing reading difficulty (Ediger, 2001). It is evidenced that when parents become actively involved in

building their child's literacy skills, greater success can be expected in their child's reading ability (Cline, 2001).

Learning to read is a critical achievement and is to be a responsibility shared by teachers and parents alike. It has been found however, that parents have had very limited involvement in their child's reading development (Fuller, 1994). Several causes exist for the lack of parental involvement. For example, the parent's lack of time, and lack of understanding of how to involve themselves in their child's educational experiences contribute to the limitation of the parent's participation in their child's reading activities (Clark & Pillion, 2002). Even when parents do become involved, concerns are raised when parents place unrealistic pressure upon their child. Often times, parents expect more than the child is able to do, exhibiting indifferent behavior without caring whether their child reads or not, and even placing all the responsibility for learning to read on the child. These attitudes displayed by a parent will not help children, but discourage a child from learning and further hinder his/her potential to make progress (Fuller, 1994).

According to Meek (1999), it is needed for schools to find ways to build connections between the school and home. Schools must also recognize and offer a range of strategies and approaches parents may incorporate in helping their child become better readers. Furthermore, there is a need for planned programs provided by schools to offer workshops and seminars instructing parents how to assist in helping improve their child's reading skills in school and at home (Fuller, 1994). Parents and teachers are a vital asset in improving children's reading ability. The more informed a parent becomes about their child's reading instruction, the greater the opportunity for children to achieve more optimally in reading (Ediger, 2001). Parents can be a great influence for their child, but

unfortunately, not all parents understand the importance nor the significance of their involvement in their child's reading development. There are parents who believe that it's the responsibility of the teacher and the school to teach their child to read, while other parents will do whatever is necessary to assist their child who is struggling in reading to provide the much needed support at home. Parental involvement in their child's learning, especially in reading activities has been evidenced to support children's academic achievement (Ediger, 2001). Parental participation in their child's reading significantly increases reading achievement and parents need support and guidance in how to best involve themselves in their child's reading development (Meehan, 1998).

Background

Studies over the past 30 years showed parental participation in a child's learning further increased the likelihood of his/her success (Meehan, 1998). A large part of the educational research and practice of the last 20 years confirmed conclusively that the best way to raise a reader was to read to children in school and at home (Wilczynski, 1994).

Educators and teachers have welcomed the opportunity to actively involve parents in the learning process of their children. Experts have long agreed that children at risk with and without learning difficulties can profit from a learning environment where their parent are involved (Saint-Lauren, Giasson, & Couture 1987).

Unfortunately, prior studies have found that students with reading difficulty were rarely found reading at home (e.g. Come & Fredericks, 1995). They did not have a chance to observe other members of the family reading, and very seldom, or never were read to at home (Wilczynski, 1994).

There are several factors contributing to this dilemma. It is the fact that often families today have both parents working which leaves little time to read to their children at home or time to participate in school literacy activities. The single parent households also have a similar problem finding time to actively involve themselves in their child's reading. In addition, some families may live on a limited budget and are not able to buy books for their children or even lack information on how to have access to free or affordable reading resources such as the library or bookstore. Finally, many parents themselves have felt inadequate reading to their children due to their own limited literacy skills.

Coleman and associates (1966) recognized the importance of parents and the vital role they play in their child's reading development. Haussler and Goodman (1984) reported that early reading interest was only increased when parents assisted in their child's literacy development, and recommended parental participation in at-home reading activities, literacy clubs, and after school programs. It is found that a common characteristic of parents of good readers is that the parents would read, read, and reread to their children and most importantly, these parents place great value on reading themselves. Parents who are well informed and trained in how to assist their child in reading instruction are more effective in providing quality support for their struggling reader (Fuller, 1994). The more knowledgeable and skilled a parent becomes in implementing effective reading strategies, the greater opportunity the child will have in experiencing success in reading.

Significance Of The Study

Children with difficulties in reading and comprehension encounter a variety of experiences that curtail progress. Working parents, day care services, insufficient time, economic difficulties and a lack of books can all be factors that may place constraints on a child's reading development. Children learn the value of reading by watching adult role models whether they are parents, teachers or volunteers (Wright, 1994). For students with learning difficulties, the more support received from a parent or teacher, the greater the potential for improvement (Lin, 2001).

Morris (1995) found that the attitude of a parent toward reading literacy would build the standard for imitation by the child and greatly influence the student's literacy development. How much does the parent read? Does the child ever see their parents reading? Does the parent visit the library with their child? Are books prominent in the home? These are all questions raised for discussion on children's successful achievement in reading. It is suggested that parents become role models for their children as active readers themselves (Strang, 1966).

There exists a need for training parents to provide effective strategies and methods in working with their child to increase reading skills. There is also a need for schools and parents to work together to promote a positive partnership between the school and home.

The present study will provide parent training on strategies to assist their child's reading instruction at home. It intends to examine the impact of the parent's role in

reading achievement on their children. During the study, children's reading comprehension skills will be measured to examine the effect of the parental involvement in reading and to explore the effect of child-parent reading together at home.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether children with learning difficulty will improve reading comprehension when their parents become actively involved in reading instruction at home and at school.

Research Questions

1. Will children's reading comprehension skills improve with parental involvement at home?
2. Will the parents and children participating in the reading program receive fulfillment and satisfaction as a result of their time spent reading together?

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Reading education, particularly in elementary school, and students with reading difficulty, have been the object of a host of studies to search for theoretical accounts and professional recommendations (Coleman, 1991). It continues to be a hot topic with different ideas and debates (Freebody & Freiburg, 2001), on effective reading instructional strategies, due to an increased literacy focused curriculum and involvement of the government and communities at large (Dever, 2001).

Several solutions are presented in current professional literature, primary and secondary, which offer strategies for actively involving parents in their children's reading development. A comprehensive literature review has been conducted in this chapter which include books, published journal articles, conference papers, unpublished thesis and doctoral dissertations containing studies on how parents can play a more intricate role in developing their child's reading potential.

This chapter will review current trends and strategies implemented by teachers and schools to help increase parental participation in their children's literacy programs.

Elementary Students with Reading Difficulty in Comprehension

Over the years, reading comprehension has been regarded as important skills in reading achievement. With "high stakes" state-mandated testing, reading comprehension skills have become even more important for students and for the school's curriculum to promote literacy (deJong & Leseman, 2001). Although educators and professionals have

focused attention upon improving literacy instruction for children, society is still faced with the dilemma of rising illiteracy due to the many distractions children encounter daily and the lack of parental involvement (Calkins, 1997).

Unfortunately, the culture in which we live today doesn't seem to support reading for our children. According to Loenhardt (1993), children today are greatly engaged in numerous events and activities that tend to draw them away from reading. In a bid for the child's attention are video games, TV programs, computer games and after school sports events. In addition, parent's lack of time to be involved in their child's literacy instruction might create a non-reader friendly environment (Jeffreys & Spang, 2001).

Although the previous mentioned activities are not the sole reason why a student experiences difficulty in reading, these distractions can contribute to a child's poor reading development because of the limited amount of time children spend on reading. More time is being spent in other activities and reading has not been a priority in many homes. Thus, children with reading difficulties have fewer experiences of literacy than others, because other activities occupy a majority of their time (Saint-Laurent, Giasson & Couture, 1997).

Children with reading difficulty require much more intensive support with as minimal interruptions as possible (Morris, 1995). Evidence shows children, especially young children with reading difficulty, require many opportunities for one on one interaction with caring adults to support their literacy development (Lin, 2001).

Many young parents are unaware that their role is of prime importance in enforcing the skills of their child's comprehension, vocabulary and language development (Hall, 1999). One of the most important steps for developing the knowledge

necessary for reading achievement is for parents to realize the vital role they play in their child's literacy development.

A child's vocabulary skills develop naturally through inquiries when driving in the car with their parents, reading road signs, watching television commercials, shopping at the grocery store, reading books, magazines or anything else that displays printed words. Literacy and comprehension skills develop during the time when parent and child interact naturally in their daily lives (Wilczynski, 1994). Parents should make it a habit to take children's books with them everywhere, to the doctor's office, the beach, to grandparents and on vacations. Parents may also take trips to the library and bookstore. When children watch a movie that originated as a book, research suggests checking the book out of the library. Children will be impressed to know a video they love began as a book (Curtis, 1998).

Research by Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) states:

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading, is reading aloud to children. The benefits are greatest when the child is an active participant, engaging in discussion about stories and talking about the meaning of words (page 23).

According to Morrow (1989), there are four objectives that are necessary in effective reading development:

1. Positive attitudes toward reading.
2. Concepts about books.
3. Comprehension of story.
4. Concepts about print.

Children with reading difficulties may lack of these objectives, therefore, they should be given daily opportunities to listen, read and think about the stories they have read (Morris, 1995).

Fuller (1984) indicates the fact that many parents become bewildered by their child's poor reading performance and lack knowledge of how to nurture their child's reading skills. It is indicated that children are individuals and learn differently from one another. The strategies for helping children discover their individual learning style, whether they're auditory, visual, kinesthetic learners, or a combination of modalities. When a child's learning style is discovered, teachers and parents can then best determine the most effective teaching approach to optimize their reading comprehension skills. An intervention should be geared toward using the best sensory modality to compensate for weakness in another modality. As research has indicated, the more modalities in which reading instruction is presented, the better the child will learn (Fuller, 1994). Knowing a child's strengths and needs can be very beneficial in planning the best reading program (Fuller, 1994). It is shown that if students are introduced to letters, words and reading through their strongest sense, they achieve much higher reading competency. They learn best when propelled by something they want and enjoy doing (Miller, 1995). The ultimate goal is always to help children understand stories they have read, and can enjoy, and learn from them (Curtis, 1998).

Effective Instruction in Reading Comprehension for Students with Reading Difficulties.

Many studies have provided effective reading instruction for children with reading difficulties (e.g. Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein & Serpell, 2001). The best way in learning reading is associative.i.e., reading materials are linked with a child's familiar

information and background knowledge (Dever, 2001). When the reading material is relevant to the child's personal life and experiences, or at least relevant to the material of which the child has demonstrated mastery, learning increases. Formulation of linkages allows the teacher or parent to provide the child with cues that can increase recall to facilitate a richer and deeper understanding of the reading material. Dever (2001) suggests choosing material analogous to the child's life, or something the child can relate to that will improve comprehension. Students will not fully appreciate reading unless it touches their lives. It is recommended that open-ended questions be used, for example, "What does the story remind you of?" "What do you think this story is about?" Ask questions about the main idea, the order of sequence, the setting and important details of the story. The child may look through the pages before reading to preview the story. Building on the child's background knowledge prior to reading is a great strategy for building comprehension skills because it builds on what information the child already has acquired prior to reading the story. A child may also make predictions about how they think the story will end. Who are the main characters in the story? Where does the story take place? If a child's answers were too brief, a parent may ask, "Would you please tell me more?" After reading "Whistle For Willie, by Ezra Jack Keats (1964), have the child describe how Willie felt at the end of the story and ask them about a time when they may have been proud themselves (Dever, 2001).

Simply asking "why" questions can increase comprehension as well. In Pressley and Percalle's study (1994), a group of students were given a passage about animals to study. A second group was given the same passage but was instructed to ask "why" after each piece of information was read. The group that asked "why" remembered

significantly more. These questioning strategies challenge the child's thinking skills and promote comprehension (Langley, Brady, & Sartisky, 2001).

Asking questions can be a powerful tool to increase comprehension skills (Gunning, 1996). Questions play a central role in facilitating comprehension. They can be used to develop concepts, build background, clarify reasoning and lead students to higher levels of thinking (Gunning, 1996). Children will become more adept at comprehension simply by being questioned. When questions are asked about information they've read, that information is remembered longer (Gunning, 1996).

As Wixson (1983) indicated, "What you ask about is what children learn (page 287)" Questions may shape comprehension and lead to deeper understanding of the reading material (Gunning, 1996).

Other ideas to improve reading comprehension include extended reading activities to engage children in stimulating discussion about the material they're reading (Hall, 1999). The idea is not to rush through the reading, but have the children experience the story by actually becoming a part of the story. A dialogue or conversation that goes beyond the immediate context of the story is thought to be particularly valuable, in that it encourages children to make inferences, predictions and makes them relate their relevant knowledge (Baker, Makler, Sonnenschen, & Serpell, 2001). Gunning(1990) suggests three step to improve comprehension:

1. Build background knowledge.
2. Provide reading materials appropriate to children's reading level.

3. Generate questions that will help children make connections between the familiar and unfamiliar (Page 34).

According to Gunning (1996) there is no reading without comprehension.

Comprehension is the main purpose for reading because reading is the process of constructing meaning or reading for meaning. Comprehension is a constructive, interactive process and when children build connections between what's already known and what's not known, they are better able to construct meaning in a story (Gunning, 1996). Therefore in order to be able to draw meaning from a story, children must first be skilled in reading fluency and phonemic awareness. Research has shown that explicit phonemic instruction increases reading achievement among students with reading difficulties (Ball & Blachman, 1991).

An essential ingredient for developing comprehension skills requires that a child learn to read with accuracy and fluency (Blevins, 1998). Reading fluency improves reading comprehension. When children no longer struggle with decoding words, they can then devote their attention to acquiring meaning from text (Gunning, 1996). If children have to devote too much time to decoding words, their reading will be slow and labored, resulting in comprehension difficulties. Thus, readers who are skilled at decoding usually comprehend text better than those who are poor decoders. As decoding skills improve and more words are recognized by sight, less mental energy is required to decode words and more energy can be given to retrieve meaning from the text (Blevins, 1998).

To train skilled and fluent readers, a variety of strategies to improve reading fluency can be utilized. These strategies include using their knowledge of word decoding skills, context clues and structural clues (Blevins, 1998). Children with reading difficulty

tend to over rely on one reading strategy to the exclusion of other strategies that might be more helpful. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers provide instructional strategies to improve these concepts for children's reading development. Strong decoding skills are necessary for reading comprehension and this component should be an intricate part of the child's literacy program (Blevins, 1998).

Research also recommends for parents and educators to capitalize on their child's reading strengths as a technique to improve reading comprehension (Baker & Mackler, 2001). According to Baker and Mackler (2001), parents should not expect their child to learn the way they have been accustomed to learning. For example, if a parent greatly excelled in reading, he/she should not automatically expect for the child to do the same, although it is the parent's desire to see their child do well. On the other hand, if a parent was a poor reader, a parent should not expect that their child would also read poorly. A parent should nurture their child's individual reading strengths and maximize his/her potential.

It is also revealed that the environment and reading experiences of a child can facilitate literacy development. The parent's perception of their child's literacy development will contribute greatly to improving their child's reading ability (Kirshbaum, 1998). A parent's attitude toward reading can have an effect on whether their child will be a good reader (Kirshbaum, 1998). A child can sense the parent's level of interest in their reading based on whether they spend time reading to them or listening to their reading. It is important for the child to see his/ her parents choose to read as a priority activity in their life. Parental actions would demonstrate a model or example to children that may be stronger than verbal demands. Therefore, choosing to watch TV

each night after dinner rather than reading sends a strong message to the children about which activities are more valued by the parent (Coleman, 1991).

Enjoyable reading experiences may motivate children, especially those with reading difficulties (Coleman, 1991). During parent-child reading activities, the child should not be obliged to read or listen to a story, rather, parents should find ways to make the activity interesting so that the child would be willing to participate (Saint-Laurent & Giassant, 1997). Choosing a variety of genre's such as visiting the library often, buying affordable books, playing games with stories and making up silly stories, are all fun activities that can be incorporated into a child's reading program to foster a love of reading for a lifetime.

There are many different factors that impact children with reading difficulties, and it is the responsibility of the entire learning community including home and school to analyze the problems, and implement effective strategies to increase those children's reading proficiency.

Parental Involvement in Reading Activities at Home

Awareness about the powerful influence of parents on children's literacy development has gained national prominence in recent years (deJong & Leseman, 2001).

Experts agree that parents are their child's first teacher and parents play an integral part in their child's literacy development (Meehan, 1998). Research indicated that children who frequently listen to their parent's reading, experience higher achievement in reading than those who do not have such a chance (Leonhardt, 1993).

Children who have opportunities to interact directly with their parents about printed books, and are surrounded by a home environment with rich literature, are more likely to achieve greater success in reading (Curtis, 1998).

Baker, Mackler, and Sonnenschen (2001) discuss the importance of parents today to read with their child. They claim that parental interaction with their child at home has been recognized as a positive influence on a child's reading development. According to their study, it is believed that parent-child reading experiences are beneficial because the conversation that accompanies the reading, would promote vocabulary and reading comprehension (Hall & Moats, 1999). The authors suggest for parents to saturate their home with enjoyable fun books, magazines and other printed interesting reading materials to their child. It is recommended that parents find the topic or subject that most interests their child, and provide reading materials on that specific topic. For example, if a child is passionate about sports, the parents would locate reading materials about sports. If a child enjoys reading about various types of animals, a parent would search and expose various books, magazines, other related printed materials to their child. A parent may also search the Internet and locate numerous sites geared specifically toward children's literacy. The idea again is for parents to provide every opportunity to expose their child to a print rich environment at home. It is believed that access to books and interactive reading activities with parents, children's literacy will develop (Dever, 2001). The single most important activity to build the knowledge and skills required for reading among poor readers is reading aloud to children regularly and interactively (Dever, 2001). Vocabulary interaction between an adult and child enhances children's language development and increases comprehension (Jongsma, 2001).

Research has revealed a relationship between the amount of literacy interactions at home and the development of vocabulary, conceptual knowledge and language comprehension (Gill, Sukdeep & Reynolds, 1999). This opportunity would be important to develop reading comprehension skills for children with reading difficulties (deJong & Leseman, 2001). In Meehan's (1998) study, parents of successful readers were examined to see the effect of parental influence upon their child's reading achievement. It was found that of all participants, especially the mothers were avid readers themselves. The children's desire to read was prompted by the parent modeling at home. It is indicated that the effect was not only because the parents read to their children, but also because the parents involved their children in activities such as reading and discussing stories to improve comprehension skills. According to Hall and Moats, (1999), parental involvement in a child's reading can include several facets. Involvement can range from giving the teacher valuable information about the child that can assist the teacher in planning his individualized learning activity. This involvement may include volunteering weekly in the classroom during reading time. A parent may read a favorite book or help the teacher with various reading activities. Involvement may also mean taking their child to the library, the bookstore, or finding a tutor outside of school to assist their child in reading (Hall & Moats, 1999).

Stroup (2001) provides guidelines for parents to create a home environment that will support their child's literacy development. These are:

“Encourage children to use literacy in meaningful and purposeful ways, such as helping to make shopping lists, drawing and writing thank you notes to family and friends, clipping coupons and reading road maps to plan family trips.

Visit libraries and bookstores frequently and encourage children to check out materials, such as toys, tapes, CD Roms and books from libraries. Children can also participate in the many activities held by libraries and bookstores, such as story-times, writing contests and summer reading programs.

Set aside time for reading alone and together as a family everyday. Read stories the children enjoy, as well as provide a wide variety of materials, such as books, magazines, signs, and also food labels on cereal boxes and grocery items.

Keep reading and writing materials readily available such as books, magazines, newspapers, paper, pencils, markers and crayons (Page 4)."

In addition to the above suggestions, Stroup (2001) also encourages parents to be readers themselves, continually modeling reading for their children. Parents should exercise patience and become good listeners as their child reads books, and often affirm their child for their progress. These shared reading experiences are quite beneficial because of the talk and conversation that accompany the activities. These reading activities promote vocabulary, comprehension and word recognition, which contribute directly to the child's reading achievement. Meanwhile, parents must interact with their children, asking questions, answering questions, and providing explanations. The active participation of parents is essential for effective reading development, especially for children with reading difficulty (Leondardt, 1993). It is found that the simple fact of having books and reading materials available is not sufficient for children to acquire knowledge. Children must be given the opportunity to respond to the stories they've read. Active interaction between parent and child is an integral element for a child's reading improvement. It is vital for parents to implement specific learning techniques that will increase reading achievement (Curtis, 1998). For example, when reading a story, verify that the child has understood the story, ask the child if he/she liked the book, ask the child to tell the story in his/her own words, allow the child to refer to the illustrations and ask

questions, and tell the favorite part of the story and re-read previous stories. All of these strategies help improve reading comprehension (Kirshbaum, 1998).

There are many programs for parent-child activities at home. The Prime Time Reading Program (Langly, Brady & Sartisky, 2001) was developed in 1991. It is designed as a means to encourage a love of reading and discussion of stories. The Prime Time Family Reading Program is a library-based program that incorporates an outreach to families that may not have been previously involved in literacy programs. The program format consists of 6-8 week activities for children and parents to read together, with award winning stories presented by trained staff members. Following the story, parents and children participate in a question and answer session to discuss the stories. A major goal of the program is to demonstrate family fun reading activities where parents and their children can engage in reading with fun. It is also a viable alternative to watching TV at home.

Another reading program that encourages literacy while involving parents is The Family Literacy Bags (Dever, 2001). Organized at Utah State University, The Family Literacy Bags are designed to engage parents and children in reading, discussing and participating in reading activities together. This program also emphasizes parent education by providing explicit instructions on effective ways to read and interact with children to support their literacy development. The Family Literacy Bags contain several materials, such as reading books, paper, pencils, crayons and markers. A child can take a bag home for several days and return when completed. This program has been especially helpful for parents due to the guidelines and instructional procedures included in the bags with helpful tips and suggestions the parent may follow to increase the child's reading

development. Other literacy programs are also available for the parent's resource. There are many places where a parent can obtain materials related to help their child become good readers, such as libraries, bookstores, and the Internet for child literacy. Most importantly, the child's school and teacher should be the parent's most valuable resource, because they daily provide instruction so that they can best define the individual child's learning needs (Meek, 1999).

Parental Involvement in Reading Activities in School

The relationship between school and home reading experiences is an important and enabling condition for children's success in literacy learning (Peabody & Feilburg, 2001). Both teachers and administrators welcome parents to be actively involved in their child's learning at school. It is found that children with reading difficulty actually increase their reading potential when their parent becomes an active participant in their child's learning (Jeffreys & Spang, 2001).

There are some misunderstanding between parents and school personnel. For example, parents always assume that teachers are well trained to teach reading and schools are equipped with the materials, and their child can be instructed in a systematic and sequential manner in school. To this extent, parents may feel less inclined to participate in school reading activities because of their feeling of inadequacy (Hall & Moats, 1999).

Many parents believe that it is the school's responsibility to teach their children proper reading skills, thus they become less inclined to involve themselves in any school related reading activities. Parents have volunteered to serve as room mothers, attend class

trips, and participate in school related functions but have tended to steer away from involvement in classroom instruction (Jongsma, 2001).

To involve parents in their child's learning, many schools want parents to become a part of the school learning community (Blevins, 1998). To establish this school-family relationship, schools may need to make the initial step in a variety of communications to make parents feel welcomed and an integral part within the school environment. There must be positive and frequent communication with parents by teachers to enhance increased involvement in their child's education. There is a need for schools to focus on ways to draw parents in to schools and work toward strengthening the partnership of teachers and parents on behalf of their child (Meek, 1999). When schools initiate a genuine desire to involve parents by considering their needs, and capabilities, parental involvement will increase (Clark & Pillion, 2002)

It is also suggested for teachers to send home letters to parents explaining what their child is doing in reading, including stories being read and activities in which their child is involved (Gunning, 1996), and a list of activities the family may help their child with. Teachers may consider to send reading materials for the child to practice, especially if the parent's resources are limited. Teachers can also encourage good book selection by sending home appropriate reading materials. Newsletters, open houses and parent teacher conferences are all wonderful opportunities for parent-teacher interactions. Many schools have organized parent training in how to tutor children, training in computer and library skills, and organized support groups for parents of children struggling in reading (Jeffreys & Spang, 2001).

To keep a strong and positive relationship with families, teachers have also found that beyond conducting regular quarterly conferences with parents, it has been important to use follow-up notes and phone calls in order to keep communication lines open between home and school. Frequent communication has been an effective element for improving parent involvement in their child's reading instruction (Gunning, 1996).

According to Kirshbaum (1998), parents should be invited to serve as volunteers in the classroom. A parent may provide extra help and support in a reading group or work one on one with a child in the classroom (Kirshbaum, 1998). Being a part of the classroom will increase the parent's knowledge of the materials and resources available for their child, and become more familiar with their child's reading program. A parent may also be an intricate resource for the teacher, providing helpful tips on how to best provide quality reading instruction, and any modifications that would be beneficial for the child to succeed.

There remains a distinct relationship between successful readers and parental involvement. When homes and schools successfully work as a team to develop a reading program, the child's chance of becoming a successful reader is greatly increased. Schools must continue to create opportunities for parents to see themselves as a vital, continuing part of their child's education.

Effect of Parental Involvement in Helping Children with Reading Disabilities

Studies have shown that no matter the cultural or socioeconomic level of a family, most parents have high aspirations for their children (Saint-Laurent, Giasson, & Couture, 1997). Every parent expects their child to succeed in school, and with reading as the single most important academic instruction necessary for a child's school success, many

parents are seeking solutions to help their child improve reading skills. Research has indicated that parents are their children's first and most influential teacher (Holloway, 1997). What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well off a family may be (U.S. Department of Education, 1986). Previous research on parental involvement in helping children become better readers indicate that when parents become actively involved in their child's learning, reading skills significantly improve (Jeffreys & Spang, 2001).

The effect of parental involvement in helping children improve reading skills has shown to increase the child's reading ability, as well as promote positive interaction between parent and child (Fuller, 1998). Evidence supports, that a parent reading with his/her child produces positive results in emergent reading behaviors of young children (Holloway, 1997). In addition, parents as literacy role models have improved children's reading skills due to follow through of skills learned in school and continued reinforcement of skills at home. An increase in student reading achievement is noted due to parental involvement (Clark & Pinnion, 2001).

Children with reading difficulties have fewer experiences of literacy than others (Lin, 2001). They need positive and nurturing relationships with teachers and parents who continually model reading behaviors, engage in conversations about stories and foster the child's interest in learning to read (Lin, 2001). A practicum designed to encourage at-risk students in a Chapter 1 reading program indicated students reading increased due to parents reading with their children (Wilczynski, 1994). Teachers stated that the children who were read to exhibited an attitude of confidence and further expanded literacy development (Wilczynski, 1994). It is also affirmed that when parents

read to their children, the child's self esteem would be enhanced, as well enhanced language development and reading comprehension skills.

An additional school outreach literacy program called Families That Read, Succeed, was developed to involve parents in their child's reading program (Come & Fredericks, 1995). The program was established to provide special help in language and literacy development while increasing parental involvement. The program involved parent volunteers coming to school to read or tell stories to children. Children would also read and write their own original stories with their parents and complete various literacy activities together at school and home. Results of the program indicated that before the program began, children were not particularly enthusiastic about reading and were struggling in their reading skills. The collaborative partnership between home and school revealed an increase in student reading achievement, improvement in both parent and child's attitude toward reading and a significant increase in families to spend time reading together with their children (Come & Fredericks, 1995). Comments from parents included child's improvement of reading skills, exhibiting understanding of story sequence, and skills for storytelling, prediction and comprehension (Come & Fredericks, 1995).

Educators have embraced the fact that the more parents become involved in their child's reading at home and at school, the greater the potential for the child to become a successful reader. Also, the collaborative partnership necessary between home and school is essential if children are to reap the benefits of literacy training (Leonhardt, 1993).

Research has shown that while educators are offering parents opportunities to become actively involved in their child's literacy program, particularly those in urban

environments and poor families tend to shy away from becoming involved due to lack of time or having feelings of inadequacy in meeting their child's reading demands (Morris, 1995).

In order for effective parental involvement to occur, parents must begin to realize the significant role they play in their child's learning. Prior research has shown that parental beliefs, aspirations, and actions play a critical role in reading achievement for children (Meehan, 1998). Children who are frequently read to, experience higher achievement than children who are not read to (Meehan, 1998). There is a distinct relationship between successful readers and parental involvement (Jeffreys & Spang, 2001).

A reading program that encourages parental involvement and offers appropriate activities that foster literacy skills, will assure successful achievement for students who experience reading difficulties. Children's reading skills improve significantly when parents become active participants in their child's reading program. Parent involvement remains an essential key to helping a child achieve optimum success in his/her reading skills.

Summary

In review of the research, findings indicate that children's reading skills improve significantly when parents become active participants in their child's reading program. Parental involvement presents an essential key to helping a child achieve optimum success in his/her reading achievement. Educators are realizing the important role parents play in the reading development of their children and are now welcoming their involvement.

This present study will offer parent training to discuss various strategies in their child's reading program. A family reading program will be developed to include parent-child interaction activities to improve child's reading comprehension skills. It also will examine how parents can become more involved and how they can play a more active role in their child's literacy program, while increasing children's reading achievement.

Chapter III

Methodology

Sample

Students. Five 3rd and 4th grade students attending a small private non-public school in a suburban area of southern New Jersey participated in the study. These students have been identified as average readers experiencing difficulty in reading comprehension. They receive instruction in a regular education classroom and are recommended by their teacher for remedial reading at home and school. The school provides an inclusive education environment where all students including those with disabilities are placed in the same classroom. Thus, the participating students are all instructed in regular education classrooms. The general information about the students is presented in Table 1.

Student 1- Student 1, a 3rd grade female student was referred by her teacher for this study. According to her teacher, she is a struggling reader who has difficulty in reading comprehension. She exhibits weak decoding skills, which has hindered her reading comprehension. She requires rereading of a story to gain clarity and understanding of the story. In addition, upon retelling a story, she is not able to remember important details, or explain main ideas.

Table 1

General Information of the Participating Students

	Age	Gender	Grade	Reading Grade Level
Student 1	9	Female	3rd	2.9
Student 2	9	Male	3rd	3.0
Student 3	10	Male	4th	4.0
Student 4	9	Female	4th	4.0
Student 5	9	Female	4th	4.1

***Note: The reading level is based upon the
Standard Diagnostic Reading Tests, 9th Edition (1995)

Student 2- Student 2, a 3rd grade male student was referred by his teacher for this study to help improve reading comprehension skills. He has problems making predictions and summarizing main ideas that are comprehension skills in reading. He also needs teacher prompting or guided questions to help focus his attention on certain points or ideas in a story reading.

Student 3- Student 3, a 4th grade male student referred for this study by his teacher has difficulty in retelling specific details of a story. According to his teacher, the student

leaves out significant details of a story he has just read. When asked to retell a story, he would miss lots of information, and only retrieve few details.

Student 4- Student 4, a 4th grade female student referred by her teacher for this study experiences difficulty in recalling specific details of a story. She needs lots of prompts when retrieving information from a story just read. Rereading for clarity is a common occurrence for this student.

Student 5- Student 5, a 4th grade student referred by her teacher for this study has experienced difficulty in the reading comprehension skills of summarizing, inferring, and making predictions. She is struggling in remembering details of a story, answering questions about the story and making inferences.

Parents. A total of 5 parents/guardians participated in the study together with their participating children. All of the participating parents in this study were female.

A letter was mailed out to those parents requesting their permission for participation together with their child(See Appendix A). After the parents returned the letter with their signature to grant thier permission for their child's participation in the Family Reading Program, a survey with 10 questions was sent home for the parents to complete and return. The questions include the time parents presently spend reading with their children and other information about parents such as, age range, education, number of children, employment and marital status. Parents were encouraged to complete the survey and to participate with their child in the reading incentive program. The general information of parents/guardians is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

General Information of the Participating Parents

	Age/Range	Education	Children	Employment	Marital Status
Parent of student 1	30's	College Graduates	4	Employed	Married
Parent of student 2	30-35	Some College Courses	2	Employed	Married
Parent of student 3	55-60	College Graduate	2	Retired Nurse	Grandmother (Widow)
Parent of student 4	35-40	College Graduates	1	Employed	Married
Parent of student 5	40-45	Some College Courses	4	Employed	Single Mother

Training Materials.

Prior to the training, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather information on the amount of time parents presently spend reading with their child (See Appendix B). Then, a teacher made handout was provided for the parents as a guide to effectively direct ways of reading together with their child in the reading program (See Appendix C). Training materials consist of supplemental teacher made reading materials, children's reading books, and other teacher developed activities to reinforce reading comprehension skills.

Reading Materials

The five books selected for the student's to read in the study are *Martin Luther King Day*(Linda Lowery,1987), *Grandpa's Face*(Eloise Greenfield, 1989), *My Big Lie* (Bill Cosby,1989), *Arthur's Eye's*(Marc Brown,1979), and *Martin and The Teacher's Pet*(Bernice Chardiet and Grace Maccarone,1991). The reading books were selected based upon student reading levels and interest.

Procedures

Training Procedures. The participating parents were requested to attend 2 parent-training sessions. The first session was conducted prior to the start of the family reading program. The session lasted for a period of 2 hours and was conducted in a conference room of the children's school. Parents learned the importance of reading with their child and reviewed strategies of effective parenting practices when working with their child. These strategies include how to sit closely to their child when reading with them, how to select a book for reading, how to hold a book, and questioning techniques to encourage discussion with their child. Parents also participated in role-play activities, learning

strategies and techniques to improve children's reading skills. In addition, parents participated in group discussions to share their ideas and exchange learning experiences to reinforce the practice of these strategies.

The second session lasted for 2 hours as parents shared their experiences with one another. They were also given ideas and suggestions for future reading opportunities with their child such as participating in a summer reading group with other interested parents and children, visiting library sponsored reading events, and participating in school reading activities. The researcher also met for follow-up sessions with each parent individually, once a week for 10-15 minutes to discuss progress and answer questions(See Table 3).

Reading Procedures. On each Friday, for 5 consecutive weeks, the participating students received an individual reading packet to take home. The reading packet included one children's reading book, one comprehension worksheet and a pencil. The children would take the reading packet home and read the story to their parents at the designated quiet time already prearranged by the parents where there were no distractions. Upon completion of reading the story, the parents directed their child to retell the story and discuss the main idea. Each parent was trained to encourage his/her child to talk about the characters in the story, the setting, and the child's favorite part of the story.

When the parent and child completed their discussion of the story, the child then worked independently on his/her comprehension worksheet. All participating children were required to answer 6 written questions about the story and returned the reading packet to school on or before the following Friday (See Appendix D).

Table 3

Parent Training Procedures

<u>Parent Training Workshop</u>	<u>Training session 1</u> <u>Topic: Parents and Children Reading Together.</u>	<u>Training session 2</u> <u>Topic: Managing Quality Parent/Child Reading Time.</u>
5 Participating parents in attendance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask parents, "How involved are you presently in your child's reading?" - Ask parents, "How often do you read with your child?" - Discuss and share the important role parent's play in their child's reading development. - Pass out handout to group on the role parent's play in helping their child in reading. - Model ways to begin discussion on the story, e.g. characters, setting, favorite part of story. - Do a role play exercise on how to assist children in reading using various questioning techniques. - Show examples of recommended reading books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss outcome of the reading program; pro's, con's etc. - - Brainstorm ideas for future parent workshops/train-ing. - - Discuss ideas to involve parents in school reading activities. - Parents give input on how to continue reading with child. - - Share with parents educational materials, resources, and activities related to reading (library visit, museum, bookstores, (Games), Scrabble, Boggle Jr. etc.

The time allotted for this activity varied between each parent and child. However, parent/child interaction should continue for as long as the child's interest remains. The idea is for parent and child to enjoy their reading time together as well as improve comprehension skills. Parents were reminded during parent training not to drill their child with questions, but rather focus on keeping the activity fun and enjoyable as they interact together.

Research Design

A multiple baseline design was used in this study. The 5 participating children were individually administered a pre-reading inventory. Each student was required to read 3 appropriately selected books at their reading level without parental support. After the child reads the selected story, he/she were required to answer 6 written questions designed to assess their reading comprehension skills. The child's responses were collected each time as reading scores. Baseline data was collected for 3 consecutive weeks in Phase A.

Upon gathering the baseline data, children began the family reading program. Each Friday, for 5 consecutive weeks, the children took home a reading packet consisting of a reading book selected by the teacher, along with 6 written reading comprehension questions to complete. The children returned the completed assignment on or before the following Friday. The scores of the assignment were collected as data in Phase B for a period of five weeks to determine if any significant improvement was shown as a result of parental involvement during his/her child's reading instruction.

Chapter IV

Results

The objective of this study was to increase the reading comprehension skills of 5 third and fourth grade students who were struggling in reading. Another objective of this study was to involve the parents in their child's reading activities at home. It was hypothesized that as parents become more actively involved, their children's reading comprehension skills would improve.

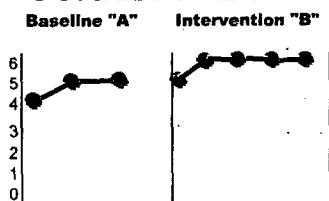
To accomplish this objective, a family reading program was implemented where the 5 participating students and their parents were provided with a series of 5 books for the child to read to their parent at home, along with 6 written comprehension questions for the child to answer independently.

Student Reading Achievement

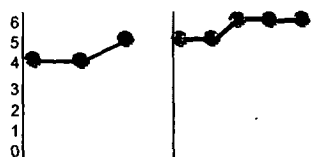
A single subject design using AB phases indicates student's performance during baseline "A" phase, prior to the intervention. The numbers of correct responses are recorded and presented (See Table 4). Upon initiation of the family reading program, the number of correct responses were recorded. During the intervention, the number of correct responses by all 5 children has increased and the trend is accelerating. The children's correct responses are presented in phase "B" in Table 4.

Table 4
Children's Reading Comprehension Scores

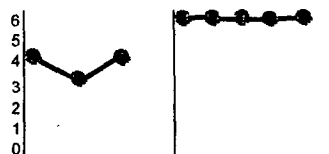
CORRECT RESPONSES



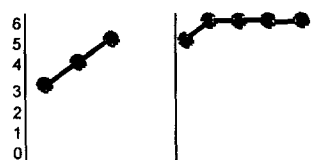
Student 1



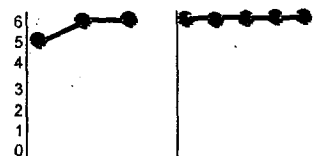
Student 2



Student 3



Student 4



Student 5

WEEKS

By reviewing the questions answered by each child, it is found that during the family reading activities, the children would give more detailed responses to the questions. For example, during the baseline “A” phase prior to the intervention, each student would respond to the question with a one-word response or a short one-sentence answer. During the reading program, children would respond with more details by writing 2 and 3 sentences for their responses.

Student Satisfaction

A questionnaire was given to the children and parents as an opportunity to give their input about the family reading program(See Appendix E). Table 5 presents the children’s responses and Table 6 shows the parent’s responses.

Table 5

Children’s Reading Satisfaction

	Yes	NO
1 Enjoyed reading with parents.	5	0
2 Plan to continue reading w/parents.	5	0
3 Reading helped to improve comprehension.	5	0
4 Increased desire to read more.	5	0
5 It’s good to read with family.	5	0

All 5 children marked “yes” in their survey to indicate their satisfaction of the family reading program.

Table 6

Parent's Reading Satisfaction

	Yes	NO
1 The Reading program helped increase my child's comprehension skills.	5	0
2 Helped to better understand my child's reading strengths and weaknesses.	5	0
3 Plan to continue reading regularly with my child.	5	0
4 It is important to spend time reading with my child.	5	0
5 My child feels more confident in reading.	5	0

All 5 parents marked "yes" in their survey to show their satisfaction of the reading program with their children.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of parental involvement in the children's family reading program. Parents were trained to actively engage in weekly reading and discussing stories when reading together with their child at home. Children's reading comprehension skills were assessed to see the difference with or without the parental involvement. When comparing each child's baseline and intervention data in Phase A and Phase B, an accelerated trend is found when parents are involved in reading with their children at home. It appears that when children are engaged in reading with their parents, the number of correct responses of each child is increased. This may be because of the parent prompts during the parent/child discussion during the story reading that helped. This can be found in the children's responses on the written comprehension worksheets. The children gave more ideas and added greater details about what they had read about in the story as a result of the parents asking questions.

From the survey results, it is found that parents are satisfied with the overall activities of the study. They commented in the final training session how they had noticed their child displaying a heightened interest in reading. Children would be eager to read the stories with their parents and became thoroughly engaged in discussion about each story, elaborating about the characters, setting and particular interesting events that took place in the story. This can also be found in the parent's satisfactory survey as they self-reported that they acknowledged their increased desire to spend time with their child in reading due to an increased awareness and knowledge of reading techniques learned

during the parent training sessions. In addition, parents expressed their feeling of being comfortable with the reading process and recognized their involvement in their child's reading activities to be crucial.

Another finding is that responses in the children's questionnaire indicate their enjoyment of the time spent in reading with their parents. Usually parents spend time together with their children only for overseeing homework, participating in non-academic activities, or simply watching TV together (Wilczynski, 1994). This family reading program reinforced the parent/child relationship by participating in reading activities together that is regarded as the most important support for children's academic achievement. It appears that when children have parental support and encouragement, their academic performance is enhanced, especially a rich reading experience at home.

The implication of this study may be that parents play a key role in helping their child to succeed in their academic achievement. Prior research emphasizes the value of parental involvement in children's reading, proving that adult/child spending time together in reading is a major factor to promote children's literacy development. (Wilczynski, 1994). The previous study has shown a strong correlation between student achievement and parent participation. Parental involvement in children's reading activities in this present study supports the previous findings that children develop into stronger successful readers when parents work with their children at home.

There are some limitations in this study. Foremost, the size of participants in the study may impact the validity of the research. An accurate assessment of this research cannot be fully validated due to only 5 participating children and 5 parents. Although the results show an increase trend in reading comprehension scores, a larger population of

participating students may be needed to validate the findings. Second, this study was conducted over a period of only 8 weeks. This short time period of intervention may impact the findings. In addition, there were certain variables such as the amount of time parents actually spent with their child in reading and the specific questions asked at home could have varied among parents. These variables cannot be controlled because there is no third person serving as an observer, to keep the procedures consistent. Finally, the teacher-made worksheets as the measurement used in the study to assess student progress is not standardized and the instrument reliability has not been conducted yet. Therefore, a total of 6 questions on the comprehension skills worksheet could have a ceiling effect that could limit children's potential to achieve at a higher level of reading achievement.

For further research, it would be helpful to examine parent/child reading activities and investigate the long-term effectiveness of parental involvement in children's reading. Future research may need to study parents and children reading together through the periods of Junior High and High School to determine the parent's impact of reading over an extended period of time. These findings will be instrumental in determining if children, who participated in reading activities with their parents as a child, continued the same reading tradition when they became parents themselves.

Recommendations

Based upon this study, there are several recommendations. First, it is important that schools develop more parent training programs to provide instruction on how to help children improve reading skills. The parents who participated in this study expressed their desire to participate in school/sponsored events that support parent involvement in their child's academic activities at school. In addition, schools may encourage parents to

coordinate weekly reading clubs and summer reading groups with other parents and children who share the same love for reading as themselves. Second, schools may also consider inviting guest authors of children's books to visit the school to share stories and discuss the importance of being good readers. To establish a positive reading environment, parents should subscribe to literacy magazines, children's magazines and a variety of other related reading materials at home. Making frequent trips to the library and visiting local bookstores and flea markets for bargains, are other suggested ideas that would aide parents in promoting literacy for their child. A final and most important recommendation would be for parents to become role models as avid readers themselves. It is highly recommended that parents should at all times set a good example for their child by reading books, magazines, newspapers and other printed materials in front of their child. When children witness their parents reading, a clear positive message is sent to the child, that his/her parents value reading. Parents as positive role models of reading will strongly impact student academic achievement for the present and future.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Parent/Guardian:

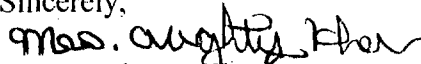
I am a graduate student at Rowan University and as part of my requirements for obtaining my Masters Degree, I will be conducting a research project. Under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Xin, I will be conducting research on how parent participation in their child's reading instruction improves student achievement. The goal of the study is to improve students reading ability and comprehension through parental participation.

I am writing to request permission for your child to participate in the family reading program. Five students in the 3rd and 4th grade have been randomly selected to participate in this study. Beginning in January, your child will take a book home every Friday, read and discuss the book with you, answer a few comprehension questions about the story and return the assignment on or before the following Friday. The study will last for a period of 5 weeks, with your child reading a series of 5 books; one book a week.

This research project is being conducted to promote a love and enjoyment of reading, improve comprehension skills, and encourage parent participation in their child's reading development.

Thanks in advance for your help and I encourage you to have fun with this project.

Sincerely,


Mrs. Aughtney Khan

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by Dec 2nd.

_____ I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Please note- Names and identities of students and families participating in this study will remain confidential. Students will be referred to as student #1, student #2 etc.

Parent Reading Survey

Dear Parents/Guardian,

Below are additional questions for you to complete for my research project. It is important to answer as accurately as possible as to the events that occur in your home. Again, all information will remain confidential and no individual names will be exposed. Thank you again for your continued support.

1. Do you read to your child? often sometimes very little never
2. Does your child ask to be read to? often sometimes very little never
3. Does your child read to you? often sometimes very little never
4. Do you visit the library with your child? often sometimes very little never
5. Do you read books, magazines,
newspapers at home? often sometimes very little never
6. Does your child have his/her own books? many some few none
7. Does your child ask for help
to write words? often sometimes very little never
8. Do you and your child discuss
books you've read together? often sometimes very little never
9. How many times per week do you
and your child read together? 1x 2x 3x 4 or more

10. If you are unable to read with your child as much as you like, please indicate why?

_____ work schedule.

_____ other children to care for.

_____ I'm not a great reader myself, so I'm not comfortable.

_____ other (please explain)

APPENDIX B



PARTNERSHIP FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION



Read With Children - It Makes A Difference! Simple Strategies for Creating Strong Readers

Without doubt, reading with children spells success for early literacy. Putting a few simple strategies into action will make a significant difference in helping children develop into good readers and writers.

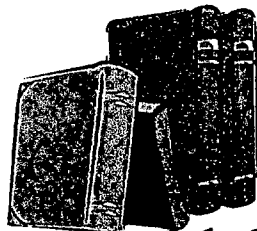
Through reading aloud, providing print materials, and promoting positive attitudes about reading and writing, you can have a powerful impact on children's literacy and learning.

Tips For Success

1. Invite a child to read with you every day.
2. When reading a book where the print is large, point word by word as you read. This will help the child learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the word he or she says is the word he or she sees.
3. Read a child's favorite book over and over again.
4. Read many stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite the child to join in on these parts. Point, word by word, as he or she reads along with you.
5. Discuss new words. For example, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?"
6. Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.
7. Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

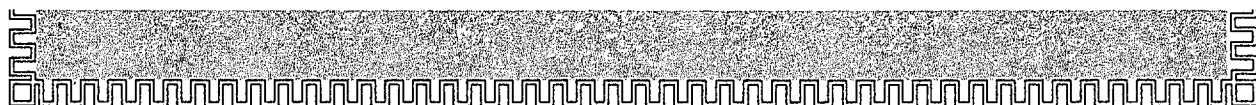
Reading well is at the heart of all learning. Children who can't read well, can't learn. Help make a difference for a child.

APPENDIX C



Tips to Prepare your Child for Reading Success

1. Read with your child on a regular basis. This reading can be done by a parent, brother or sister, grandparent, and any other family member, a day care provider, or any interested adult. Read from a variety of books, books of poetry, or any kind of appropriate children's materials.
2. Help your child predict the book content from the book title. Stop at various spots in the reading to have your child make predictions such as: What do you think will happen next in this story? What do you think this story is about?
3. Ask important questions when you are finished reading a book such as: Who were the characters in the story? What was the plot of the story? How did the story end?
4. Take your child to the library and help him/her choose books.
5. Listen to your child. As much as possible answer the child's questions- satisfy his or her curiosity.
6. Provide good nutrition.
7. Provide a good reading model--let the child know that his or her family members value reading too.
8. Encourage the child to be independent, responsible readers.
9. Don't let your child watch too much television or play too many computers games.



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

How Can I Help My Child

Be Ready to Read and Ready to Learn?

"As parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often.

Reading is the path to success in school and life.

When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning."

(First Lady Laura Bush)

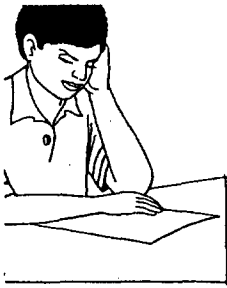
Talk with infants and young children before they learn to read. Talk with and listen to your child as you play and do daily activities together.

- Set aside a reading time every day (30 minutes is ideal) and read to your child no matter what the age of your child. Help your child to learn new words and their meaning.
- Take your child to the library, get your child a library card, and let him or her choose books to read at home.
- Create a special place in your home for your child to draw, read, and write. Keep books and other reading materials where your child can reach them.
- Take books and writing materials for your child with you whenever you leave home, so he or she can read or write at the doctor's office, on the bus, and in the car.
- Point out to your child the printed words in your home and in the community.
- Help your child see that reading is important. Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Set a good example for your child by reading newspapers, magazines, and books frequently and in front of your child.
- Restrict the amount and kind of TV your child watches.

Reach out to libraries and community and faith-based organizations. These organizations can:

- Help you find books and other reading materials to use at home.
- Supply you with information on how you can help your child read and learn.
- Help you find a volunteer reading tutor to work with your child.
- Provide free summer programs for your child that emphasize reading and writing.
- Offer a safe, educational, and supervised place for your child to read and learn.

APPENDIX D



Dear Parents,



This is the story for your child

to read in our reading program. Please have your child read the story to you and discuss together. After reading and discussing the story, your child will complete the comprehension questions independently. Please return book and answered questions by or before the following Friday. Thank you again for participating and happy reading!

Name _____



Arthurs Eyes

Please answer questions in complete sentences. You may print or write in cursive. Your choice.

1 Why didn't Arthur want to wear his glasses? _____

2. How did Arthur's parents know he needed glasses? _____

3. Why did the principal take Arthur to the office? _____

4. What made Arthur feel better about wearing his glasses?

5. What would you say to Arthur about wearing glasses? _____

6. How did the story end? _____

Name _____



Martin and the Teacher's Pet

Please answer questions in complete sentences. You may print or write in cursive. Your choice.

1 What did Martin ask his parents permission to do? _____

2. Who is Speckles? _____

3. Where did Martin take Speckles? _____

4. Why did Martin go to the pet store? _____

5. Where did Martin's sister put Speckles? _____

6. How did the story end? _____

Name _____



My Big Lie

Please answer questions in complete sentences. You may print or write in cursive. Your choice.

1 Where did Little Bill tell his parents he was going? _____

2. Where did he go instead? _____

3. Why did Little Bill make up a story to tell his parents? _____

4. How did Little Bill's parent's punish him? _____

5. What would you have done if you were late coming home? _____

6. How did the story end? _____

Name _____



Martin Luther King Day

Please answer questions in complete sentences. You may print or write in cursive. Your choice.

1. What was one rule Martin Luther King's family had when he was a child? _____

2. Why was M.L. not allowed to play with his best friend when he was young? _____

3. How old was Martin when he went to college? _____

4. What did Martin become when he grew up? _____

5. Why was Rosa Parks arrested? _____

6. Why do we celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday? What was his dream for people? _____

Name _____



Grandpa's Face

Please answer questions in complete sentences. You may print or write in cursive. Your choice.

1 How does Tamika feel about her Grandpa? _____

2. What did Grandpa and Tamika do together? _____

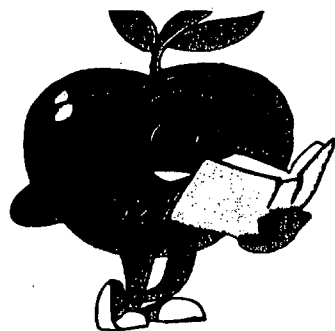
3. What made Tamika afraid? _____

4. What did Grandpa do in the summer?

5. What do you do when you're afraid? _____

6. How did the story end? _____

APPENDIX E



Dear Family, Thank you for your participation in the Family Reading Program. I hope you will continue to experience many hours of enjoyment reading together as a family. Please answer the questions below specified Question For Parents and Questions For Children and return to me when completed. A surprise awaits you when this form is returned.

Questions for Children

1. What did you enjoy most about the family reading program? _____

2. Do you plan to continue reading with your parent? _____

3. Do you think it is a good idea to read with your family? Why? _____

4. Has the reading program helped to improve your reading comprehension? _____

5. Has the reading program increased your desire to do more reading? _____



Questions For Parents

1. Do you think it is important to spend time reading together with your child? Why? _____

Has the reading program helped to improve your child's reading comprehension? _____

3. Do you plan to continue spending time reading with your child? How often? _____

4. Has the reading program helped you to better understand your child's strengths and weaknesses in reading? _____

5. Complete the sentence. I believe that reading to children _____
