A parent weekly newsletter and its effect on student achievement

Brigid Alise McGuigan

Rowan University

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A PARENT WEEKLY NEWSLETTER AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

By
Brigid Alise McGuigan

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Science Degree in the Graduate Division Of Rowan University 2000

Approved by
Professor

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Abstract

Brigid A. McGuigan, A Parent Weekly Newsletter and its Effect on Student Achievement, 2000, Dr. Randall S. Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

The purpose of this study was to determine if students whose parents receive a parent weekly newsletter would perform better on a unit test than those students whose parents did not receive a parent weekly newsletter.

The sample in this study consisted of 48 students from a public third grade in southern New Jersey. The experimental group consisted of 22 students whose parents received a weekly newsletter for four weeks, from the teacher, about the current social studies unit being taught. The control group consisted of 26 students who were taught the same social studies unit by the same teacher as the experimental group, but whose parents did not receive the weekly newsletter.

A pretest and posttest was used to determine if the weekly newsletter improved the scores on the social studies unit test. In order to determine the amount of learning that occurred in each group, the raw pretest and posttest scores were calculated and the mean was derived for each group. A t-test was used to analyze the results and a two-tail test with a probability level of 0.05 was applied.

There was a significance difference between the experimental group who received the weekly newsletter and the control group, which did not receive the weekly newsletter. Therefore, the results of this study supported the hypothesis.
Brigid A. McGuigan, A Parent Weekly Newsletter and its Effect on Student Achievement, 2000, Dr. Randall Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University

The researcher was concerned that not enough parent/teacher communication occurs in schools. This researcher felt that teachers should initiate communication with parents through the use of a weekly or monthly teacher written newsletter. The researcher believed that the newsletter would spark parent interest and involvement in what their child was learning in school. As a result of parental involvement, this researcher felt that student achievement would positively be effected. This study investigated the effect of parental involvement on student achievement, through the use of a weekly newsletter from the teacher to the parents.

The results of this study found that the parents of third grade students who received a weekly newsletter from the teacher scored significantly higher on a unit social studies test than those parents of third grade students who did not receive a weekly newsletter.
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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For there never ending support, love, and encouragement, a special thanks to my parents, Alice and James McGuigan, to my brother, Jimmy McGuigan, and to my grandparents.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES.</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. SCOPE OF THE STUDY.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Characteristics.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of the Teachers and Parents.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Effective Communication.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Benefits of Newsletters.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Means of Effective Communication.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111. METHODS.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Procedures.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Instrument.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Data.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Problem.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Hypothesis.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Procedure.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pretest and Posttest Raw Scores, Mean, and Standard Deviation&lt;br&gt;Control Group.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pretest and Posttest Raw Scores, Mean, and Standard Deviation&lt;br&gt;Experimental Group.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

SCOPE OF STUDY

Introduction

Many educators and parents agree that cooperation between the home and school is very important. Warner and Curry (1997) concluded, forty percent of parents from various parts of the United States do not think they are devoting enough time and attention to their children's education. Eighty-nine percent of company executives feel the biggest obstacle to school reform is a lack of parental involvement. A 1996 poll of 802 elementary and middle school principals conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals revealed that out of their top five priorities for school reform, the priority of involving parents in their children's schoolwork (94%), ranked second (Warner & Curry, 1997).

Parents and educators should know what research has demonstrated; that parent involvement benefits children, parents, teachers, and schools. However, knowing and acting on it depend on certain factors. Some of those factors include, committed leadership, training for teachers and parents, and a variety of involvement options for parents (Burns, 1993).

The topic of parental involvement is becoming precedence in many schools. The success of good communication between parents and teachers is based on cooperation and continuous two-way communication between both parties. However, the
responsibility for creating and maintaining continued two-way communication belongs to the schools. This is mainly true because parents or guardians are usually hesitant to make contact without first being invited to do so or without some form of communication first from the teacher (Dietz, 1997).

Few American families fit the late 1950’s popular television show, Leave it to Beaver family mold, with two parents in one household, a successfully employed father and stay-at-home mother. Now, it is more common for children to come from single families or households where both parents work full-time. Due to the changing dynamics of families teachers must work harder than before to accommodate working parents so they can still play a major role in their children’s education (Dietz, 1997).

Increased parental involvement in schools is also goal number eight of the National Education Goals 2000. Goal 8 states by the year 2000, “every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children.”

A main component of reaching this goal is helping families to meet basic obligations such as, providing a nurturing safe environment, and to support their children’s educational endeavors. Schools and teachers need to work with parents to meet these goals. In turn, they will be able to effectively communicate with parents. Children will also become more attentive, interested, and higher-achieving students because they are better prepared to learn and their parents will be interested in what they are learning (Dietz, 1997).

According to a survey sponsored by the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, seventy-nine percent of parents report that they want to learn more about how
to be involved in their children's learning. While seventy-seven percent of parents also think that their children's teachers could learn more about involving parents in their children's learning. The survey also reported that students in first through twelfth grade are more likely to get good grades, enjoy school, and not fail or drop out, if their parents are involved in their school (U.S. Department of Education).

Statement of the Problem

Is there enough parent/teacher communication occurring in schools? Should teachers initiate communication with parents a weekly or monthly teacher written newsletter? As a result of parental involvement, will student achievement be positively effected?

The purpose of this study was to research and test the effect of parental involvement on student achievement. If parents receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher, that informs them what the children are learning about in class and ways parents can reinforce it at home. Will the children score significantly higher on subject related tests?

Statement of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in this study stated that during a period of four weeks, children whose parents received the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher, will score significantly higher on a social studies unit test than those children whose parents did not receive the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher.
Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations that may have influenced the results of the study.

1) Some parents may have signed and returned the newsletter without actually reading it, even though they claimed that they did.

2) The number of children in the two classes varied. One class had twenty-two children, while the other class had twenty-six children.

3) Full time working parents may not have had as much time to spend with their child on follow-up activities at home as those parents who worked part time or not at all.

4) The teacher may not have taught the two classes same exact way, during the four-week study.

5) Both classes did not receive an equal amount of time spent on the unit review. One class needed more time on the review because they had a harder time understanding some material.

6) When compared to each other the two classes did not have an equal amount of basic skill students, or classified students. Some classified students received extra assistance on the pretest and posttest, such as reading questions to them by aides.

Definitions of Terms

The following are terms and definitions of words in this study, which need clarification.

Achievement – the degree to which a child performs on homework, assignments, and tests that are related to the unit.

Weekly Newsletter – a letter addressed to the students parents or guardians of the students informing them of class activities, lessons, and follow-up enrichment activities for home practice.
**Teacher Directed Instruction** - one teacher teaches the lessons from the four-week unit to two different third grade classes, five days a week for thirty minutes each day.

**Communication** - the ability to understand what is being said and the act of effectively expressing one's thoughts, ideas, and feelings to another either verbally or written.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Schools and parents cannot stand on their own and expect great results from students. It is necessary for them to unite in order to educate students. Evidence indicates that parent involvement, whether it is checking their child’s homework, quizzing them for a test, or setting guidelines each night for study time, will boost student success in both achievement and social behavior. The search for excellence in education should reach beyond the four walls of the classroom and extend into the home where parents and guardians can also play a vital part in educating their children (Fabros, 1999).

Teachers entering the field of education have a lot to consider these days. Not only do they need to plan instruction, and set up classrooms, but also they need to think about how they are going to form meaningful relationships with parents. Teachers should not view working with parents as a pleasant added touch. It should be an expected responsibility as an educator (Phelps, 1999).

Some parents may need more encouragement from teachers to get involved and contribute than other parents do. Once the initial contact is made and parents feel as if they are welcome then they will begin to show their support and encouragement. Parents
will begin to build a trust with their child's teacher and school once they see that both are making an initiative to include them (Burns, 1993).

Chapter II reviews the related literature relevant to this research study and is divided into, Developmental Characteristics, Role of Parent and Teacher, Barriers to Effective Communication, The Benefits of Newsletters, Other Means of Communication, and Summary.

**Developmental Characteristics**

The teacher should research the developmental characteristics of children's age and grade level before communicating on a regular basis with parents. The developmental characteristics of 8-10 year olds can be broken down into four stages. Those stages are cognitive, social, physical, and moral (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

**Cognitive**

As identified by Piaget, children by this age have entered the Concrete Operational stage of development. They still need experiences with concrete content, and are most benefited by "hands on" learning opportunities, and clear, precise instructions from the teacher. Some students at this age are still very impulsive, have short attention spans, and static thinking. As a result, some classrooms might require a balance of teaching methods and activities to match different learning styles, and abilities (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

**Social**
At this age, social interaction with their peers is very important. However, it has not surpassed their need to build a relationship with their teacher. Some students may take cues from their peers on how to behave and the teacher may not be the primary role model to students at this age. Children at this age enjoy socializing, and they can benefit from opportunities to work in groups or collaboratively. However, the teacher must pay close attention to these students while working in groups and emphasize cooperation and not competition (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

**Physical**

Students at this age still find it difficult to sit still for any length of time, especially for those students who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit characteristics. Short activities, broken up with opportunities to get up and move around are important. Self-care at this age is much easier to manage at this age than at younger ages. Some students might start to grow bigger and taller while others will not grow as much as their peers (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

**Moral**

According to Kohlberg’s theory of Moral development, children at this age have entered into a stage called “Exchange of Favors.” Therefore, students can be given incentive to behave through contracts, mutual agreement, classroom rules, and awards. Many of the students are still in the stage of moral development where decisions about how to act or behave or based on what the consequences will be if they misbehave. Having clear and concise rules is still very important at this age (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

**Roles of the Parents and Teachers**
While teachers may seem unsure about ways to implement parental involvement, parents are also uncertain about their role. Many report that they would appreciate guidance from the teacher to help them work with their children on homework, activities, and other related tasks. But, without any guidelines teachers or parents do not know where to begin and to what point they should be involved (Pape, 1999).

While there are no magical guidelines to ensure parent participation, it was suggested by Pape that teachers who want to achieve maximum parental involvement use four strategies. She suggests that teachers meet parents on their own turf, make schools parent friendly, cover all languages that apply, and involve parents in the decision-making process (Pape, 1999).

When parents were interviewed they stated that they sought clarification about their roles in the education process. Parents also stated that they wanted to develop trusting relationships with teachers and have a more defined role. Parents who feel that they do not have a role in their children's school careers will usually avoid involvement. Teachers should look to parents as resources and teachers. Parents can serve as experts on specific topics, hobbies, or occupations (Anderson & Smith, 1999).

Phelps (1999) observed six effective ways that teachers can incorporate parents into the educational process: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Phelps also points out that misunderstandings will arise and therefore teachers need to clarify, have patience, and not be afraid of critical interaction with parents, if it is needed (Phelps, 1999).

At the same time, teachers must understand that each parent or guardian is an expert on his or her child. The most productive way for teachers to gain an
understanding of parent-child relationships is to listen and observe parents interacting with their children in different settings. Phelps also points out that there are various web sites like, the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, and various books and articles that provide extensive information on parental involvement, that can help the teacher (Phelps, 1999).

What type of interaction is needed in schools? The 1995 Goals 2000: Educate America Act, has placed much emphasis on increasing parental involvement in education. However, Fabros (1999) said, “The value of such involvement, must be recognized only when appropriate and directly correlated to student success.” Fabros (1999) also mentions that some teachers, who work in community settings where academics are highly emphasized, face very eager parents who sometimes wind up doing their children’s assignment. Examples such as this one make it clear why teachers need to design parental involvement in education (Fabros, 1999).

At what age or grade level should parental involvement begin? According to Anderson and Smith (1999), early childhood educators should begin two-way communication with parents at the very start. However, teachers must do more then just communicate with parents.

They need to be able to communicate effectively, plan for special needs, make parents feel welcome, acknowledge their contributions, and develop trusting relationships to the best of their ability. At times communicating with parents may not always be desirable, but the results will be. Anderson and Smith concluded (1999), "Teachers who take steps to communicate with parents effectively will see higher grades, better test scores, and more positive attitudes from students." Unfortunately, Anderson points out
that despite such evidence, parental involvement during the first few years of school still remains minimal (Anderson & Smith, 1999).

**Barriers to Effective Communication**

The benefits of good communication are apparent to most teachers. Yet parental involvement in schools remains low. Few teachers have set programs in place to communicate effectively with parents. Parents claim they want to know what is going on at school and how they can contribute to their child’s education process. If parents and teachers both agree that effective two-way communication is important, why aren’t they communicating more (Burns 1993)?

According to Burns (1993), studies have identified some barriers that may exist between parents and teachers that don’t allow for effective communication. The first barrier according to Burns (1993) is, teachers feel they are wasting time communicating when it seems to them that parents do not have enough time to interact or respond to them.

Secondly, she states that teachers who work in low socioeconomic school districts believe that parents have little input to offer or don’t care because they may have dropped out of school or never pursued higher education. Parents in the same study felt that regardless of their own educational background, their child’s education was very important to them, and they felt that they were not hard to reach (Burns, 19993).
Other barriers to effective communication include, teacher attitudes, parent attitudes, inadequate training or knowledge on how to communicate, disparities between home and school cultures, and full-time working parents (Burns, 1993).

Burns does not offer many ways to overcome these barriers, but offers some guidelines for teachers to follow for effective communication (Burns, 1993).

1) Develop and publicize a regular, reliable communication process
2) Increase the potential for two-way communication
3) Employ a variety of communication strategies
4) Make full use of options to enhance individual and personal communication

The Benefits of Newsletters

Creating quality newsletters are a way that teachers can formulate a bond with parents. Newsletters are one of the most common and efficient ways that schools communicate with parents. Many educators and teachers also consider them one of the most reliable ways to communicate with parents. Parents will come to rely on the newsletter as a key component to keeping in touch with what is going on their children's classroom (Dietz, 1997).

Dietz claims that while content of the newsletter is important, so is appearance. Teachers should also follow general publication rules and make sure the newsletter is tailored to the audience and not too flashy or difficult to understand. However, at the same time the teacher should be weary of talking down to parents in the newsletter.
Teachers should also be aware of the different languages some of the parents might speak and offer a copy of the newsletter to them in both English and their language. Teachers should always proofread their newsletters and make sure the principal gets a copy before it is sent out (Dietz, 1997).

Teachers can use and manipulate the newsletter through many uses. They can include lessons, from the week, selected readings, possible discussion questions, and keep parents informed about any activities happening in the classroom. Newsletters can be sent to parents, politicians, newspapers and other appropriate resources in the community. Through effective newsletters, teachers, educators, parents, and the community can find ways to work together and help ensure success for all (Dietz, 1997).

Burns (1993) also states that newsletters are a very beneficial way of communicating with the community and parents. They directly reinforce school learning and encourage parents to follow-up with their children at home. They can also be utilized as a way of letting the community know what students are doing in class. Burns (1993), suggests that communicating through the means of a newsletter is often the biggest payoff for student and parent learning (Burns, 1993).

**Other Means of Effective Communicating**

Children increasingly live in households where divorce is prevalent. One in four has a stepparent and it is common for them to live with foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, relatives, or guardians. Teachers must take into account all these variables and involve them all in the communication process. This will improve students’ attitudes
about school, learning, achievement, and self-esteem. Jonson (1999), states, "All children, especially those from low-income and ethnically diverse families, experience greater accomplishment when teachers consistently involve their parents (Jonson, 1999)."

Most teachers are expected to effectively communicate with parents, but receive little training and few resources on how to do it. Jonson (1999), lists these following ideas as ways to effectively communicate with parents (Jonson, 1999).

1) Telephone: The telephone allows teachers to call parents at the beginning of the school year and develop a relationship. In turn, this establishes positive interactions for the upcoming school year and the parents will know they can contact the teacher in the future if needed (Jonson, 1999).

2) Parent Volunteers: Parents can be valuable in assisting in the classroom grading papers, reading stories, and organizing. Teachers should not be afraid of losing the privacy of the their own classroom by inviting parents to volunteer as classroom assistants. Teachers should check their school's policy on volunteering before implementing classroom assistants.

3) Conferences: Teachers do not have to wait for the mandatory fall and spring conferences to speak with parents. They can schedule conferences with parents at any time during they year to talk about discipline problems, accomplishments, and successes.

4) Home Visits: Home visits can be utilized when a child has a prolonged illness, or parents do not have accessible transportation to and from
school. Jonson states that home visits can be an excellent way to strengthen the home-school connection and that home visits were more common years ago.

5) Written Communication: Jonson points out that students remember to give letters to parents when their signature is required. According to Jonson, letters from the teacher to home should be typed out and carefully proofread, and parents with limited English proficiency should receive information in their primary language.

With the growing rate of technology, a lot of teachers have access to the World Wide Web. The Web allows schools to maintain their own homepages, post information, calendars, and pictures. It also allows teachers to have access to e-mail. Dietz claims that these and other technologies should also be a part of the school’s and teacher’s communication processes (Dietz, 1997).

As parents become more sophisticated with home computers and software, they will look to things like e-mail, as an effective way of communicating with schools. However, Dietz states that e-mail works best with smaller groups and the use of the school home page is more effective to reach parents.

When implementing any of these methods to communicate with parents, teachers should be aware of how to handle difficult parents. Poor attitudes can reflect poor communication. A parent’s initial anger or aggressiveness should not intimidate teachers. Teachers need to do their best to remain polite and calm. They need to listen carefully and try to avoid defensiveness. Jonson suggests that teachers view troublesome
parents as frightened individuals because negativity and aggressiveness are usually a result of fear (Jonson, 1999).

Teachers should not give up or get discouraged if they are unable to reach parents, or parents do not respond back to them. Teachers might be tempted to end all forms of communications with that particular parent, but they must maintain contact through newsletters, telephone calls, or memos. The teacher should also let the principal know of their failed efforts to communicate with that particular parent (Jonson, 1999).

Summary

It seems evident that the effect of parental involvement on student achievement has been recognized as an asset that positively affects student achievement over the years. Although, research has been done in the past on the effects of parental involvement and effective teacher-parent communication, the subject needs to be further explored (Morello, 1977).

Similar studies have been done on parental involvement and student achievement through out the years, including a similar study to this one that was done in 1977. The need to continue to study and promote effective parent-teacher communication still exists today (Morello, 1977).

Many teachers and educators have not realized the importance of good two-way communication, between parents and teachers. Unfortunately, they do not realize the importance and positive benefits that come from effective communication. The aide of a weekly letter of communication will allow parents to connect with the teacher and the
subjects being taught. In turn, these parents will be able to better guide their child with their studies (Pape, 1999).

It is evident to this researcher that parents need to feel included in their child’s education and the aide of a newsletter will allow them that opportunity. Hopefully through this study and other related literature on the subject, parents and educators will begin to realize the impact they can have on students’ education when they work together.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

This study measured the achievement of students whose parents received a weekly newsletter from the teacher for four weeks, and the achievement of students whose parents did not receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher for four weeks.

Some problems the researcher encountered were the availability of the newsletter reaching home and being read by parents, the size and ability level of the two groups of children varied, and duplicating teacher directed instruction.

Chapter III describes the sample, and procedure used to conduct the study and explains the instrument used.

Subjects

The subject for this study was selected from two self-contained third grade classrooms from an urban school district in southern New Jersey. The subjects ranged in age from eight years old to ten years old. The subjects consisted of thirty-five Caucasians, five African-Americans and seven Hispanic descent students. The subjects
of this study consisted of forty-seven pupils in the third grade that attended the same school, but were divided up into two separate self-contained classrooms.

The experimental group consisted of twenty-two pupils, ten girls and twelve boys. The experimental group also consisted of one handicapped student who had a full time aide, six basic skill students, two classified students, and one bilingual student. The control group consisted of twenty-five pupils, 12 girls and 13 boys. The control group also consisted of five basic skill students, three classified students, and one bilingual student.

**Research Procedures**

With permission from the principal of the school, two separate self-contained third grade classes participated in the study. The researcher identified the two classes, as the control group and the experimental group.

Prior to the start of any instruction, the researcher administered a pretest on April 3, 2000 to both groups. The pretest was used to measure how much prior knowledge the students had of the information in the unit.

Starting April 4, 2000 both the control group and the experimental group received teacher directed instruction, for four weeks, on a social studies unit titled, "Our Nation's Capital." Both groups received separate but equal amount of instruction time for 5 days a week, 30 minutes each day.

During this four-week period, both groups were assigned readings, homework, and extra credit. Class discussions followed each day. Along with the daily planned lessons and activities, a weekly newsletter was sent home to the parents of the
experimental group (see appendix A). The parents of the control group did not receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher, during this four-week period.

The newsletter informed the parents of the experimental group of daily lessons, vocabulary words, homework, extra credit, test dates, and ways they could reinforce the social studies unit at home. The teacher attached a separate piece of paper to each of the weekly newsletters, that asked the parents of the experimental group to sign and return it, if they had read the weekly newsletter.

Prior to the posttest both groups received the same teacher directed instruction for the same amount of time, each week. After the four-week period of instruction, the same posttest was administered to the control group and experimental group (see appendix B). The pretest and posttest were also identical and were taken from the teacher’s edition social studies book.

The researcher also conducted an informal survey with the parents of the experimental group after the four-week period was over. The researcher sent home an informal survey to the parents which asked them if they found the weekly newsletter helpful and worthwhile, for suggestions or comments about the newsletter, and if they read all four weekly newsletters (see appendix C).

Nineteen out of twenty-two surveys were returned to the researcher. Sixteen of the nineteen surveys stated that parents had read all four weekly newsletters and thought that they were very helpful and worthwhile. Three of the nineteen surveys stated that parents did not have time to read all of the four weekly newsletters, but thought the weekly newsletters were a good idea. Five of the nineteen surveys offered comments or suggestions about the weekly newsletter.
Description of the Instrument

The design used in this study was the pretest-posttest control group design. The instrument used was a unit test from the social studies teacher's manual (see appendix D). The unit test was based on social studies lessons about Washington D.C. and government. The testing instrument consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions and three short answers. Getting expert approval from two third grade teachers checked the content validity of the test.

After the pretest was given to both classes the means of the scores were compared to see if they were significantly different to the posttest. After the posttest was given to both classes the means of those scores were compared to see if they were significantly different using a t-test. This test was chosen in order to determine whether or not the two means were significantly different and to determine if the observed difference was sufficiently larger. A two-tail test with a probability level of 0.05 was applied.
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Research has found that the students whose parents receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher will score significantly higher on a social studies unit test than those students whose parents did not receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference between students whose parents received a weekly newsletter, for a period of four weeks, from the teacher, than students whose parents did not receive a weekly newsletter, for a period of four weeks, from the teacher.

Chapter IV states the results of the study by calculating the raw pretest and posttest scores and deriving the mean for each group and using a t-test to analyze the results.

Analysis of Data

The experimental group and control group each took the same pretest and posttest. The highest possible raw score on the pretest and posttest was a 35. The experimental group consisted of twenty-two students, while the control group consisted of twenty-five students.
Table 1 presents the pretest-posttest raw scores, means, and standard deviations, for the experimental group. The scores of the pretest experimental group range from 24 to 12 with a mean of 18.45 and a standard deviation of 3.31.

Table 1

Pretest-Posttest Raw Scores, Mean, and Standard Deviation

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<thead>
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<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
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<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
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Mean: 18.45, Standard Deviation: 3.31

Mean: 31.4, Standard Deviation: 2.67
Table 2 presents the pretest-posttest raw scores, means, and standard deviations, for the control group. The scores of the pretest control group range from 23 to 13 with a mean of 18.88 and a standard deviation of 2.67.

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Mean: 18.88  
Standard Deviation: 3.19

Mean: 27.88  
Standard Deviation: 3.64
A t-test with was calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between the pretest raw scores of the experimental and control groups. Using a t-Value of 0.45 with a probability of .05 and 45 degrees of freedom, the result was 2.021. Therefore, since a t-Value of 0.45 is less than 2.021, there was not a significant difference between the pretest scores of the experimental and control group.

A t-test was then calculated to test the hypothesis to determine if there was a significant difference between students whose parents receive a teacher weekly newsletter and students whose parents do not receive a teacher weekly newsletter. Using a t-Value of 3.79 with a .05 probability level, and 45 degrees of freedom, the result was 2.021. Therefore, since a t-Value of 3.79 was significantly higher than 2.021, the hypothesis was supported. Therefore, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between students whose parents receive a weekly newsletter and students whose parents do not receive a weekly newsletter.
Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

There are many different ways to get parents involved in their child’s education. Parental involvement plays an important part in student achievement. Teachers should do their best to facilitate it in their classrooms. The changing structure of the family has been a factor that teachers have to deal with. However, teachers should not be discouraged by this factor, and should do their best to initiate and continue communication with parents. Parents must also understand and respect the role of their child’s teacher and work with them.

Chapter V summarizes the study, formulates conclusions, and proposes recommendations for further research on this topic.

Summary of the Problem

Due to effect of parental involvement on student achievement, the researcher questioned the effect of a parent weekly newsletter, on student achievement. This study investigated if there was a significant difference between students whose parents received a teacher weekly newsletter and students whose parents did not receive a teacher weekly newsletter.
Summary of the Hypothesis

The research hypothesis stated that during a period of four weeks, children whose parents received the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher, would score significantly higher on a social studies unit test than those children whose parents did not receive the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher.

Summary of the Procedure

Forty-seven third grade children participated in this study. The public elementary school was located in a suburban school district in southern New Jersey. The researcher identified a control group and an experimental group.

A pretest was used to measure how much prior knowledge the students had of the material. The control group and the experimental group received teacher directed instruction, for four weeks, on a social studies unit.

A weekly newsletter was sent home to the parents of the experimental group during the four-week unit. The parents of the control group did not receive a weekly newsletter from the teacher, during the four-week period.

After the four-week period of instruction, the same posttest was administered to the control group and experimental group.

To find if there was a significant difference between students whose parents receive a teacher weekly newsletter and students, whose parents do not receive a teacher weekly newsletter, a t-test with a probability level of .05 was used.
Summary of the Findings

The result of the t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between students whose parents received a teacher weekly newsletter and students whose parents did not receive a teacher weekly newsletter. The t= 3.79 is significantly higher than the result, 2.021. Therefore the hypothesis was supported.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that during a period of four weeks, children whose parents received the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher, will score significantly higher on a social studies unit test than those children whose parents did not receive the aide of a weekly written newsletter from the teacher, was supported by the data. It would be concluded that students whose parents receive a teacher weekly newsletter would score higher on a unit test than those students whose parents did not receive a teacher weekly newsletter. It would also be concluded that a teacher weekly newsletter had a significant affect on the achievement level in this sample of children.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study concur with many of the authors cited in the review of related literature. This study did find that students, whose parents received the aid of a
teacher weekly newsletter, scored higher than those students whose parents did not receive the aid of a teacher weekly newsletter.

Based on this study, the following recommendations for further study are suggested:

1. A larger sample should be used to better represent the results.
2. The study should be conducted over a longer period of time to show more achievement levels.
3. The study should be conducted in various schools and grades in and out of New Jersey to represent a larger population.
4. The study should consider the socio-economic status of the school to see if there is a relationship between socio-economic status and parental involvement.
Bibliography


Unpublished Works


APPENDIX A

WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS
PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Each day your child comes home from school please take the opportunity to talk to them about what they learned in SOCIAL STUDIES. Your help with homework assignments, readings, and studying will be very helpful to your child.

NEEDED

If you have pictures from Washington D.C., books, maps, videos, or anything that might be useful to our unit please send it in with your child. Perhaps you know someone involved in local or state government who would be willing to come in and talk to our class about their job duties. Please contact Mrs. Terway or myself if you have any questions.

Once you have read the newsletter please sign and send back pg. 2 only with your signature. Your child should return pg. 2 to either me or Mrs. Terway. Be on the look out for Issue 2 of the CHRONICLE..... COMING SOON!

Sincerely,

Ms. McGuigan / Student teacher / Mrs. Terway's classroom

For the next few weeks in SOCIAL STUDIES your child will be studying an exciting unit entitled, "Our Country's Capital." Here are some of the exciting topics we will be learning about:

*WASHINGTON D.C.
*AMERICAN REVOLUTION
*CONSTITUTION
*DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
*GOVERNMENT
*BEING A GOOD CITIZEN

The unit begins Monday April 3rd and will run about two weeks. I am looking forward to working with your child on this unit and hope you will too.
Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?

1776

4) Who met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in

Independence Hall?

What kinds of things did England tax the

Americans?

2) What passed by Congress?

(1) Why fought in the American Revolution?

To answer and track how you scored on

Test your child's knowledge of how their country,

Social Studies

THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE DECLARATION OF

INDEPENDENCE

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

THE THIRTEEN COLONIES

Some events are related to our country,

This week we started unit 5 in Social

STUDIES TAKES

April 7, 2000

CHRONICLE

THE THIRD GRADE
MONUMENTS MOVE THIRD GRADERS.............

What another exciting week in Social Studies. The students have really been getting into learning about WASHINGTON D.C., WHITE HOUSE, CAPITOL BUILDING, SUPREME COURT, CONGRESS, PRESIDENT, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., BENJAMIN BANNEKER, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, JOHN ADAMS, AND especially the MONUMENTS. whew! They have been working hard! We have talked about some great things this week and some of the students have brought in wonderful books and pictures about the topics we are discussing. We have covered pgs. 278-291 in the book and pgs. 81,82,83,84 in the work book--plus some worksheets. Take the time to talk to your child about what they learned this week and check out the attached papers, and the optional extra credit that your child can do.

Please sign, and return the last page. Be sure to check out the attachments and talk to your child about how much they learned this week.
More About Monuments

The Monument in History
Since ancient times people have built monuments to honor leaders, heroes and historical events. The Egyptians built the Great Pyramids. These were used as royal burial places and also served as monuments to their kings. The 984-foot-high Eiffel Tower in Paris was built to remember and honor the French Revolution. This wrought-iron structure has become one of the world’s most popular monuments and a symbol for the city.

What is the Washington Monument?
- A 555-foot marble and granite obelisk which honors the achievements of George Washington as the first president of the United States.
- A place where people come together. Every Fourth of July, a half-million people come to the monument to celebrate Independence Day.
- A place to appreciate history. The 2,500 people who visit the monument each day can view Washington, DC, from 500 feet above the city. Looking out toward the capitol, they can contemplate the accomplishments of our first president.
- A place where history occurs. Over the years, people have made the monument America’s meeting place. It has been the site of rallies, protests, speeches and celebrations. From here, 200,000 people gathered and marched to the Lincoln Memorial to hear Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

Mystified by Monuments?
Check Out These Q’s and A’s

Q Does a monument have to be built for only one famous person, such as George Washington?
A Not at all. Monuments can honor a group of people. The Women’s Vietnam Memorial, for example, helps us remember those women who served their country during the Vietnam War.

Q What’s the difference between a monument and a statue?
A Statues are monuments if they are built specifically to commemorate a person, a group of people or a historical event. Monuments can also be structures such as buildings or historical sites.

Q Are all monuments built to be monuments?
A No, some sites only become monuments after an important event happens there. For instance, the site of George Washington’s birth is now a national monument. But in 1732, it was just the site of a house. No one knew that the baby born there would be our first president.
Facts About Congress

Some facts about Congress are amazing. As you read this list, notice the underlined words.

Within the Capitol, two sergeants at arms may “arrest” members of Congress to bring them to a vote.

The first mother and son to serve in Congress at the same time were Oliver Payne Bolton, 35, and Frances Payne Bolton, 67, of Ohio. They represented two different Congressional Districts. They both took office on January 3, 1953.

Congress has its own subway. This subway connects the Capitol to the House and Senate office buildings nearby.

The Capitol Dome is made of cast iron. It weighs 8,900,000 pounds—more than 4,500 large cars. The Statue of Freedom at its top stands almost 300 feet above the ground.

Each member of the House receives an average of 988 letters a day.

To help with all the work, each Senator and Representative has a staff of 20 or more people. Some are paid. Others volunteer.

The 52nd Congress was the first Congress to spend a billion dollars ($1,000,000,000). It met from 1891 to 1893.

The longest speech given in Congress lasted 24 hours and 18 minutes. It was made by Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

Every word of every speech and bill in Congress is printed in the Congressional Record—the very next day.

On rare occasions, meetings of Congress last so long that cots must be brought in. That way, Members of Congress don’t miss a vote.

Almost 80 high school students work at the Capitol. These students are called pages. They go to school from about 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Then they go to work.

Fill in the Facts

1.) Today, the House of Representatives has ________________ members.
2.) In its 200 years, the U.S. Congress has met in three cities: New York, NY, Washington D.C., and ________________.
3.) The ________________ of the United States is the President of the U.S. Senate.
Dear Parents/Guardians:

This week brings an end to our Social Studies unit, chapter 13. "Our Country's Capital." As a culminating activity your child will pick a place, building, or monument in Washington D.C. and pretend that they are a tour guide in D.C. and write a Tour Guide's speech about what they chose. They will then present it to our class orally, taking us along on their tour.

We will be having our TEST on-

Please note that our unit test will cover pgs. 271-293. We will do an extensive review in class but I also encourage you to review with your child at home and talk to them about what they have learned. This will help your child to be better prepared. ALSO- be on the look out for a list I will send home with your child that will list the key places, people, and vocabulary that will be on the TEST.

I would like to thank Mr. Trout who came into our class Friday to talk about local government. I would also like to thank those who sent in pictures or books with their child that dealt with our unit.

PLEASE, take a moment to read the next page, fill it out, and send it back with your child. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me through Mrs. Terway. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ms. McGuigan
APPENDIX B

PRETEST AND POSTTEST
Fill in the circle before the correct answer.

1. A building or statue made to honor a person or an event is called a ____.
   (a) museum (b) factory (c) monument

2. The place where Congress works is called the ____.
   (a) White House (b) Constitution (c) Capitol

3. The American Revolution was fought to make the colonies ____.
   (a) free (b) weak (c) rich

4. The United States government is divided into ____ parts.
   (a) two (b) three (c) four

5. The part of our government that makes the laws for our country is called the ____.
   (a) President (b) Congress (c) Supreme Court

6. The President lives and works in the ____.
   (a) White House (b) Capitol Building (c) Jefferson Memorial

7. The Constitution contains our country’s most important ____.
   (a) speeches (b) jobs (c) laws

8. The first President to live in Washington, D.C., was ____.
   (a) John Adams (b) Thomas Jefferson (c) George Washington

9. The American colonists felt that the English made them ____.
   (a) work too hard (b) obey unfair laws (c) buy too much tea

10. Why was the Declaration of Independence written?
    (a) It served as the plan for our new government.
    (b) It explained why the colonists wanted to be free.
    (c) It helped workers design our nation’s capital.
11. The job of carrying out our country's laws is held by _____.
   (a) the Congress  (b) the President  (c) the Supreme Court

12. A special way of writing that blind people can read with their hands is called _____.
   (a) braille  (b) letters  (c) plans

13. Our nation's capital is located in _____.
   (a) Philadelphia  (b) Washington, D.C.  (c) Lexington

14. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
   (a) John Adams  (b) Thomas Jefferson  (c) George Washington

15. Abigail Adams found early life in our nation's capital _____.
   (a) comfortable  (b) difficult  (c) scary

16. The colonists felt that the taxes they had to pay were _____.
   (a) fair  (b) low  (c) unfair

17. We celebrate the Fourth of July to remember our country's _____.
   (a) flag  (b) birthday  (c) workers

18. Whom did the colonists fight against in the American Revolution?
   (a) the Spanish  (b) the French  (c) the English

19. What did George Washington do before he became President?
   (a) He wrote the Constitution.
   (b) He designed the plans for our nation's new capital.
   (c) He led the American colonists in the American Revolution.

20. What is the job of the Supreme Court?
   (a) to judge the fairness of our country's laws
   (b) to see that laws are passed in other countries
   (c) to examine how much money is spent by the government
SKILLS

Name ____________________________ Date ____________

Fill in the circle before the correct answer. Use the map to answer questions 1 through 3.

1. In what square is a pond located?
   a) A-4   b) B-1   c) C-4

2. What is located in square C-1?
   a) a school   b) a zoo   c) a playground

3. How many houses are located in square A-1?
   a) two   b) three   c) four

4. A grid map uses sets of squares to locate _____.
   a) products   b) places   c) landforms

5. A grid map is most helpful when you are _____.
   a) planning a special dinner for your family
   b) trying to find a store in a strange town
   c) putting a brand new toy together

Communities, Chapter 13, Building Geography Skills
Fill in the circle before the correct answer. Use the map to answer the questions.

6. The National Gallery of Art is on ____ Avenue.
   (a) Independence    (b) Pennsylvania    (c) Constitution

7. Which building is north of the Library of Congress?
   (a) White House    (b) Capitol    (c) Supreme Court

8. The Washington Monument is ____ of the White House.
   (a) north    (b) south    (c) east

9. The Library of Congress is made up of ____ buildings.
   (a) one    (b) two    (c) three

10. If you walk down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol, in what direction are you traveling?
    (a) northeast    (b) southeast    (c) northwest
Use complete sentences to answer the questions.

1. What are the events that led up to the American Revolution?

2. What is the Constitution and what does it do?
Use complete sentences to answer the question.

3. How does looking at two different sides of something help in making decisions?
APPENDIX C

PARENT SURVEY
Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may know, I am a graduate student at Rowan University pursuing my Masters of Science in Teaching and Elementary Education. I have been doing research and would appreciate it if you would take a moment to answer the following questions, which would aide me in writing my thesis. Again, thank you for your time.

Brigid A. McGuigan

PLEASE CIRCLE YES or NO

1. I feel that teachers effectively communicate with parents on a regular basis?
   YES or NO

2. I feel that parents should spend extra time at home with their child by doing follow-up activities with them, about what they are learning in school?
   YES or NO

3. I feel that parents have an effect on their child’s achievement in school?
   YES or NO

4. I found the SOCIAL STUDIES newsletter that I received each week for the past 4 weeks helpful?
   YES or NO

5. I read the Social Studies newsletter and attachments each week.
   YES or NO

6. After reading the Social Studies newsletter, I talked to my child about what they learned that week in Social Studies.
   YES or NO

7. I would like to see more newsletters sent home about different subjects?
   YES or NO

8. I thought the Social Studies newsletter was a waste of time and not very informative?
   YES or NO

9. I would like to see more teacher suggestions and ideas in the newsletter, about ways I can work with my child at home.
   YES or NO

10. I feel that parental-teacher communication is important?
    YES or NO
My comments or suggestions about the newsletter are:

Signature (optional):
APPENDIX D

TESTING INSTRUMENT
Fill in the circle before the correct answer.

1. A building or statue made to honor a person or an event is called a ____.
   a) museum    b) factory    c) monument

2. The place where Congress works is called the ____.
   a) White House    b) Constitution    c) Capitol

3. The American Revolution was fought to make the colonies ____.
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10. Why was the Declaration of Independence written?
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CONTENT

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11. The job of carrying out our country's laws is held by _____.
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12. A special way of writing that blind people can read with their hands is called _____.
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   - (b) B-1
   - (c) C-4

2. What is located in square C-1?
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   - (b) a zoo
   - (c) a playground

3. How many houses are located in square A-1?
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4. A grid map uses sets of squares to locate ____.
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5. A grid map is most helpful when you are ____.
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1. What are the events that led up to the American Revolution?

2. What is the Constitution and what does it do?
Use complete sentences to answer the question.

3. How does looking at two different sides of something help in making decisions?
**VITA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Brigid Alise McGuigan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Date and Place of Birth: | December 22, 1973  
|                     | Buffalo, New York                          |
| Elementary School:  | Emma C. Attales                            |
|                     | Absecon, New Jersey                        |
| High School:        | Holy Spirit                                |
|                     | Absecon, New Jersey                        |
| College:            | The College of New Jersey                  |
|                     | (formerly Trenton State College)           |
|                     | Ewing, New Jersey                          |
|                     | B.A. English / Journalism, 1997             |
| Graduate:           | Rowan University                            |
|                     | Glassboro, New Jersey                      |
|                     | M.S.T Elementary Education, 2000           |