Role Home Visits Play in Creating Positive Attitudes and Increased Literacy Skills in Young Readers

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The Role Home Visits Play in Creating Positive Attitudes and Increased Literacy Skills in Young Readers

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Abstract

This study explored the effectiveness that positive home-school relationships had on increasing first graders’ reading attitudes and literacy achievement in the classroom. This research intended to refute the popular belief that low income minority students did not receive academic support at home, nor did these households provide resources helpful to classroom instruction. Home visits were made in order to foster positive relationships between the teacher and student families. Five first graders participated in a four week thematic unit intervention, which was designed from the information collected from the home visits with the intent to increase reading attitudes and literacy achievement for the participants. Data were collected from student and parent surveys, literacy assessments, anecdotal notes, and communication journals. Findings indicated parents were willing to participate in activities in the home and share feedback which could be used in the classroom. Findings also confirmed students experienced positive attitudes towards reading and made literacy progress after participating in the thematic units.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Children who leave first grade as poor readers are 88% more likely to remain poor readers at the end of fourth grade (Juel, 1988). Young children from minority and non-English speaking households are at an even greater risk of low academic achievement than their middle class white peers (Johnson, 2002). Teachers need to be informed of current best practices that support the literacy skills for students from these demographics in order for them to be successful in school. As concern increases about poor academic performance among minority students and English language learners (ELLs), administrators and district leaders often turn to professional development to help solve the problem. Teachers attend workshops, seminars, and training focused on best practices for addressing students’ literacy weaknesses in order to develop their instructional tools. While it has been found that having competent instructors is one factor in improving student academic performance (Araujo, 2009), an important area that is often unattended and underdeveloped is creating positive relationships between schools and families. Strong relationships between a child’s teacher and parents can contribute to academic gains in the classroom (Wright & Stegelin, 2003). The data and statistics surrounding some of my first grade ELL students indicated that their academic path would be marked with low achievement in literacy skills. Therefore, my research focused on one area that had been found to positively contribute to gains in literacy skills in struggling emergent readers. The action research question I set out to investigate was: To what extent can positive home-school relationships have on a first grader’s literacy skills? Upon reflection, my teaching practices demonstrated a lack of communication with families and an absence of information of the personal lives of my students and their families.
The following sections of this chapter will provide the context of the action research by including a description of the district, the school, the program model, staffing and decision-making policies, and the student population which was used in the action research, discussing supporting research related to the research, and presenting my action research project.

**District and School Description**

In this first section I will describe the district and school where the action research took place. The action research was conducted in a large urban district located in the Midwest. The district had a large population of minority students whose primary language was Spanish who under-performed on district and statewide formal assessments. The district’s 2008-2009 plan for improvement stated that by the academic 2013-2014 year all instructors must have appropriate certification for their placements. This goal was in place because the district had failed to make academic yearly progress (AYP) for consecutive years. It was labeled a District Identified for Improvement (DIFI) and was under obligation to follow mandates set by the Department of Instruction (DPI).

The school site where this action research took place mirrored the district. The school’s total student enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year was 801 students. The percentages for ethnicity as displayed on the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) (2010) were .8% American Indian, .2 % Asian, 11.1% Black not Hispanic, 83.2 % Hispanic, and 4.6 % White not Hispanic. The student population was primarily composed of households from poverty with 87.2% qualifying for free or reduced lunches. The school provided four classrooms at each grade level beginning with K4 and continuing through fifth grade. Each grade level had two English monolingual classrooms and two English/Spanish bilingual classrooms and featured a Bilingual-Bicultural program.
Programming Model and Staffing Information

This second section describes the Bilingual/Bicultural program at the school site and staffing information. The Bilingual/Bicultural program had been present in the school for more than twenty years. The objective of the program was to enable students to access their home language, Spanish, and culture within a classroom environment. Students in K4-1st grade received Spanish instruction all day in order to support Spanish language acquisition in all academic areas. Beginning in second grade students were gradually exposed to English literacy instruction while maintaining Spanish literacy development.

There were four English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers who split up instruction with the grade levels and collaborated with bilingual classroom teachers. Students in K4 did not receive instruction from an ESL teacher however the classroom teacher was expected to incorporate oral English language within the schedule. In the K5 and 1st grade classrooms the teachers met with the ESL instructor to go over lesson plans. These lessons plans were integrated within the science and social studies curriculum and focused on building academic vocabulary through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. ESL classes took place every day for forty-five minutes each day. The ESL schedules in 2nd-5th grades were created so one grade level classroom had a week of Spanish instruction while the same grade level bilingual class had a week of English instruction. The ESL teacher worked with the general classroom teachers during the literacy block on the English weeks to provide English language support. There were no pull-out ESL sessions for students with low English proficiency levels in the higher grades due to the demanding schedule of supporting teachers in the classroom.
Decision-Making Processes

The next section includes decision-making regarding placement of ELLs in the program. New K4 students enrolling at the school who spoke Spanish at home are automatically accepted in the bilingual program. If a student transferred from a monolingual school but had Spanish as their home language (L1), the ESL teachers informally interviewed the student, and possibly gave him/her an English proficiency test. These students were monitored in case the need arose for additional English support. If a new transfer student was bilingual, he/she automatically received an English proficiency test in order to determine an approximate English language level. The ESL teachers were in charge of administering these tests.

Student Population

This section examines student language and academic data for the focal school. The school’s student population was 45.7% limited English proficient (LEP) and 52.8% English proficient. Spanish was the dominant language for almost half of the student population. Results from the state’s standardized test were used to determine academic areas of strengths and weaknesses in student performance. The school’s 2009-2010 test results in reading indicated a need for improvement. There were 283 students eligible to take the state standardized test. As shown in Table 1 only 47.7% of the students eligible to take the reading portion of the assessment tested at a proficient level or higher. The disaggregated data in Table 2 revealed that less than 5% of LEP students were advanced in English reading.
Table 1

*Student Reading Scores*

![Bar chart showing student reading scores from standardized test.](chart1)

Table 2

*Reading Scores by English Proficiency*

![Bar chart showing reading scores by English proficiency.](chart2)
Student Language and Academic Data

This section describes the students who participated in the research. There were fifteen students on my classroom list; all of whom came from Hispanic households where Spanish was the main language spoken. Every student qualified for free or reduced lunch. The first graders were enrolled in the Bilingual/Bicultural program where they received Spanish instruction in all content areas including reading, writing, social studies, science, math, and human growth and development. Five of the first graders were involved in the action research. They were students in my classroom and were not yet eligible to take the state or district standardized tests. However, informal assessments indicated that their phonological skills and reading skills were below grade level expectations. Furthermore, they were unable to read and retell grade level texts. During informal classroom observations, I noticed the five participants copying from their peers in order to finish literacy tasks in the work stations, guessing at answers in order to finish the work, or doing no work at all. During small group guided reading instruction the participants were also reluctant to participate in discussions about what they read. They did not offer predictions and when forced to answer they usually said nothing, created events based on their interpretations of the illustrations, or said that they did not know. Based on this evidence I chose them to be the subjects for my action research.

Related Research

This section describes best practice research related to the research project. While conducting their research, González and Moll (2002) found that a student’s educational process was enhanced as teachers got to know the lived experiences of their students. Many white middle class parents contributed to their children’s education by attending parent activities hosted by the school or by volunteering during the day. Parents from linguistically diverse
families may have different methods for preparing their children for school that do not include being present at the school. In fact, Weems and Rogers (2007) contended that what parents do in the home has a greater impact on student achievement than parental involvement at school. Parents from minority households prepared their children by teaching values, by talking with their children, or by sending them to school rested and well fed (Hidalgo, 1998; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Knight et al., 2004). Educators can greatly enhance student’s learning experiences if they are aware of the rich resources the children bring from home.

One best practice that fosters positive interactions between the school and home is to conduct home visits (Liu, 2007; López et al., 2001). González and colleagues (1993) witnessed positive results when teachers took on the role of an ethnographer trying to gain pertinent information about the students’ lives, histories, and values instead of an all knowing school member forcing recommendations about what parents should be doing at home with their child with regards to literacy. While visiting students’ homes, teachers gained insight to their students’ funds of knowledge. The concept of funds of knowledge was investigated by González and Moll (2002). Their philosophy was that every single person contains knowledge and this knowledge is gained from one’s own life experiences. As teachers gained insight to their students’ funds of knowledge during home visits they were able to question families about literacy activities taking place at home.

Researchers have conducted studies that investigated Hispanic families and families of low-economic means in order to discover what literacy practices were taking place in these households (Ezell, Gonzales, & Randolph, 2000; Iddings & Katz, 2007; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Saenz & Felix, 2007). Results indicated that families, regardless of race, language, or economic status involved children in some form of literacy practices at home.
Educators must be aware of the different ways families are already assisting children at home and find a way to value these in the classroom (Araujo, 2009). As teachers get to know their students more personally, they will be in a better place to make research-based recommendations to parents about how to best support their children’s literacy development because they already know what is happening at home. The final section will provide a snapshot of the overall research project.

**Overview of project**

The action research project incorporated the district and school’s data, my classroom observations on student literacy performance, and González and Moll’s (2002) research on funds of knowledge. Two of my principle goals were to gain insight on my students’ personal lives and their literacy practices at home and integrate them within a classroom context and to establish a positive relationship with the students’ families. First, I sent home a voluntary survey (Appendix A) to every family. This survey focused on parent satisfaction with their child’s academic performance, my effectiveness with communicating with the parents, and my ability to use their child’s interests to support learning. Every student filled out an interest survey (Appendix B) about their feelings regarding school, reading, and learning new concepts. Then, I conducted home visits to all families willing to invite me. These home visits were informal and included unscripted conversations about the family’s favorite past times, the parent’s personal academic history, and the child’s likes and dislikes. I chose five participants based on three factors. The first factor was each participant received a home visit. The second factor was the participant struggled with phonological skills and/or reading comprehension. Lastly, the participant did not qualify for special education services. There were other students who were struggling in literacy but they either did not receive a home visit or qualified for special
education. I conducted a second home visit for the five participating students and interviewed the parents about literacy activities they practiced at home. During the second visit I explained the project to the parents and asked them to provide ideas about themes their child would be motivated to learn about. The five participants engaged in a six week thematic unit targeting their interests and hobbies. These lessons took place during the 90 minute literacy block and in small groups of four or five students. All students in the classroom received the same reading strategy and phonological skill objectives each week. However, the study’s participants read texts geared to their interests and participated in activities that I developed specifically for them. The rest of the students received the curriculum designed text, vocabulary, and activities. I maintained a communication journal with each of the five families in which they recorded participation in literacy events at home. I used these journals as I developed relationships with my students’ families to provide feedback and ideas about how the parents could support their children’s literacy skills in the home. I also encouraged them to share what literacy practices were working well at home so that I could incorporate them in the classroom. Three students were designated as the control group. They participated in the units with the five focal students but they did not receive home visits or maintain a communication journal. In order to assess the research goals I used a variety of data. I reviewed my anecdotal notes I recorded during the small group lessons and analyzed the communication journals from each family. Finally, I compared district mandated assessments which recorded growth in phonological skills and reading comprehension. I was able to draw conclusions from this data.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the researched based idea when teachers attempt to understand their students on a personal level they discover valuable information which can be
used to help develop literacy in the classroom (González et al., 1993; Liu, 2007; López et al., 2001). Contrary to popular belief, students from low income households and migrant students with limited English do engage in different types of literacy practices at home (Ezell et al., 2000; Iddings & Katz, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Saenz & Felix, 2007). Conducting home visits is one method educators can use to get to know their students’ families. Parents are more likely to implement recommendations when they come from a teacher who made the attempt to get to know them first. I have chosen to focus my research on conducting home visits in order to establish positive relationships between the parents and myself. First, I hypothesize that the parents of the students in the study will be willing to share information about their child with me and implement my suggestions regarding how to support their child in the home due to my effort to establish a personal relationship. Second, I hypothesize that once I use the information gained from the home visits to create units aimed at their interests, students’ motivation and participation will increase. Once participation increases, students will show progress in literacy skills. Chapter two will address the background research that supports my action research topic.
Chapter Two

Introduction

Research has consistently shown that factors such as phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, letter-sound identification, oral language proficiency, engaging in rich dialogue while reading with adults play a significant role in a child’s language acquisition and emergent literacy development. In order to be academically successful, students who are English language learners (ELLs) require these same beginning literacy skills as their monolingual counterparts. In addition, recent research has found that these language and culturally diverse students need to have access to their dominant language (L1) and home culture within a safe and non-discriminative classroom environment in order to apply what background knowledge they do have while developing literacy skills (Araujo, 2009; González, Moll, & Amanti, 1993; Iddings & Katz, 2007). It is an educator’s responsibility to learn about their students’ histories in order to discover what kinds of literacy practices are already taking place in the home. These home practices can serve as building blocks to cultural extension activities and projects that take place in the classroom. Once positive relationships are constructed between the teacher and students’ families, teachers can then attempt to extend the valuable literacy experiences that are already taking place within the home by making suggestions that are based on researched principles about literacy development.

This chapter summarizes studies that addressed the important questions pertaining to this action research project: What effect does fostering positive relationships between teachers and ELL student families have on a teacher’s ability to support students in the classroom? What effect does fostering positive relationships between teachers and ELL student families have on improving student attitudes towards reading? What effect does integrating a student’s interests
within the classroom have on an informal literacy skills assessment? The first collection of research presents the benefits of developing relationships between schools and families of ELLs. Then, research is examined to determine what literacy practices are taking place in low-income and/or Hispanic households of children of various ages. The final section includes research that suggests best practices to use for beginner readers based on their needs.

Creating Positive Relationships

One of the challenges facing educators who teach linguistically diverse students is trying to foster relationships with the students and their ethnically diverse families (Araujo, 2009). In this section, the researchers studied methods that administrators, staff, and individual educators attempted to use in order to build relationships with the ELL student population. They offered recommendations in order to effectively build relationships between the school and ethnically diverse families based on the results of the studies. The first study conducted by González, Moll, and Amanti (1993) incorporated their previous research on funds of knowledge and how classroom teachers used these resources to get acquainted with their students’ histories regarding their families, language experiences, and general belief systems. The second study carried out by Iddings and Katz (2007) addressed the complex issue of one school’s attempt to improve the interactions between the school and the rapidly growing Hispanic student population. The section concludes with Carreón, Drake, and Barton’s (2005) study which revealed how immigrant parents attempted to engage in their children’s school experiences by using three different methods.

González, Moll, and Amanti (1993) completed qualitative research about bridging school and home communities for minority students with Hispanic ethnicity. The researchers wanted to refute the popular academic institutional perception that minority working class households do
not provide social or intellectual resources for students. The main objective was to draw attention to the collection of knowledge that minority working class households have in order for teachers to “develop, transform, and enrich classroom practice” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 1993, p. 2). González and colleagues defined funds of knowledge as the knowledge that is gained through life experiences. This study focused on four voluntary teacher-researcher participants who were trained to use ethnographic methods to gather data while participating in an anthropological process that involved conducting home visits then participating in group discussion and reflection afterwards. The results of this study relate to the teachers’ reflections and comments about the transformative process they underwent while conducting home visits, extracting their students’ background knowledge, and integrating them into classroom practices and academic units.

Data collection consisted of numerous field notes. These field notes came from the questionnaires the teacher-researchers used during the home visits. The teachers also participated in lab sessions where they had conversations about their home visits. Some teachers kept a field diary which they used in the reflection process.

There were four teachers recruited to act as teacher-researchers; two were Mexican and two were Caucasian. All four were fluent in Spanish. At the time of the study Anna Rivera had 15 years experience in bilingual classrooms and was in a first grade bilingual classroom during the course of the study. She had a doctorate in elementary education and taught at various levels ranging from kindergarten to university courses. Patricia Rendón had been teaching since 1969 and had a background in languages and experienced a variety of bilingual classrooms ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade. During the course of the study she was in a fifth grade bilingual classroom. Martha Floyd-Tenery had nine years experience within various settings
such as elementary teacher, bilingual resource teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, teaching assistant, and a university English teacher. Raquel Gonzáles had five years experience as a bilingual kindergarten teacher.

The study process began by eliciting educators willing to participate in the study. These teachers taught at schools located in working class communities whose residents were primarily Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. Then the teachers selected two or three students from their own classrooms and did three home visits to observe their students’ home lives. These home visits usually lasted around two hours. During the home visits teachers used three different questionnaires in order to maintain a conversational and relaxed atmosphere. The researchers emphasized the teachers were in the homes to gain information about their students’ lives and histories and not to provide comments on behavior or information about academic progress. The first interview focused on family and labor history. The second focused on regular household activities. The third interview dealt with questions regarding parenthood, raising children, and experiences of being a parent. After the interviews, teachers wrote field notes about each encounter. The time to write these field notes ranged from one to three hours. Information from the field notes and the personal field journals some teachers used were then reviewed during after-school lab discussions between the four participating teachers. Teachers engaged in reflective thought about their home visit observations and training was provided about field note writing, interviewing, eliciting life histories, and joint construction of knowledge.

There were three important results that the teacher participants reported about this study. First, the parents indicated to the teachers they felt validated that their personal skills and practices were worthy of pedagogical notice. Furthermore, when the teachers acknowledged that the funds of knowledge found in the home were valuable resources students needed to draw upon
for learning in the classroom the parents’ confidence increased and they felt like a contributing
member of the classroom. The teachers also noted the parents commented that after going
through the interviews they believed they had more access to their child’s school. The second
noteworthy result was the positive change in the teacher-student relationships. Teachers went
through a transformation process and gained a multi-faceted point of view of their students’ lives
outside of the classroom that they did not realize was there before participation in the study. The
third result was the change in classroom practices on the part of the teacher participants. After
learning about their students they began developing units that integrated their students’ funds of
knowledge within the academic curriculum. One teacher participant stated

“I used to believe that my students had limited opportunities in life. I thought that
poverty was the root of many of their problems, and that this was something too big for
me to change as a teacher. This fatalistic obsession of mine has slowly melted away as I
have gotten to know my students and their families. I believe this transformation is the
most important one I have made. Its ramifications have reached far beyond the
classroom” (Gonzaléz et al., 1993, p. 7).

The previous study used teachers from different school districts who voluntarily took on
an ethnographic role in order to draw out their students’ funds of knowledge found within their
households. The teacher participants then attempted to implement these resources in the
classroom with the idea that their students would make higher academic gains. The researchers
in the next study examined one school’s attempt to make connections with the rapidly increasing
Hispanic student population within their school.

Educators, administrators, researchers, and community members express concern about
the redundant data indicating low achieving academic performance on the part of Hispanic
English language learners (ELLs) when compared to their White peer counterparts. There are abundant claims and excuses that attempt to explain these findings, but in their qualitative sociocultural study Iddings and Katz (2007) set out to propose that Hispanic ELLs’ low academic performance is linked to contextual constraints in the classroom. These contextual constraints surface when students are hindered from integrating their family’s cultural history and social resources within the classroom context. These factors are found to contribute to identity construction and academic progress. Iddings and Katz used previous research related to identity construction (Roth et al., 2004; González et al., 1993) to support their claim that certain classroom practices either afforded or constrained the integration of a student’s home and school identities. The three most supportive classroom practices targeted during the study were: opportunities for students to perform home and community roles in the classroom, space for students’ and their families’ voices to be expressed and valued, and access to meaningful participation of students and their families in school learning activities. Data were collected through field notes, audio tapes, and video tapes.

This study stemmed from a larger project in which the principal of a school located in the southwest region of the United States wanted to investigate the social interactions between English dominant and Spanish dominant students. Traditionally, the student population had been predominantly White, but had recently received a large increase of Hispanic students. The principal was interested in building solid relationships with the new immigrant families while creating a school-wide family literacy program to support the academic achievement of the fast growing ELL population. The principal purposely selected three Mexican ELL students from Ms. Walker’s second grade classroom. Besides these three focal children, there were also fourteen English dominant students in Ms. Walker’s classroom. Ms. Walker was Caucasian and
did not speak Spanish, however during 24 years of teaching experience; she had designed and implemented an after-school family literacy program. One objective of this program was to create a better understanding of her students’ family lives. The second objective was to use parent-teacher conferences to explain how parents could support their children’s academic progress in the home.

The procedures of this study consisted of the researcher’s observations during classroom time and the after school family literacy program. Observations regarding social and academic interactions between the focal students—Mariana, Javier, and Octavio (not the students’ real names) and the teacher as well as the interactions between the focal children and other classmates were recorded. Interactions between the educator and parents were also recorded during parent-teacher conferences. The researcher also conducted interviews with Mariana, Javier, Octavio, their parents, and Ms. Walker in order to gain further insights about the teacher’s pedagogical beliefs about ELLs, ELLs families’ culture, and students’ classroom interactions. The data were analyzed by focusing on the presence or absence of the three targeted classroom practices that were found to support ELLs in the classroom.

After transcribing and reviewing the data, Iddings and Katz (2007) concluded that:

The possibilities for these students to exert will and autonomy and to affirm themselves as active social agents (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) may be harshly abridged by school practices that strictly predetermine ways of using language, ways of interacting, and ways of being that may not in any way represent them nor reflect their out-of-school experiences (see also, McCafferty, 2002); thus imposing rigid boundaries on home and school identities. (p. 312)
The interactions and dialogue did not indicate that the three supportive classroom practices were taking place in the classroom or during family literacy workshops. ELLs did not have opportunities to perform home and community roles in the classroom. There was not sufficient data to support space for students’ and their families’ voices to be expressed and valued. Finally, students and their families were not given access to meaningful participation in school learning activities. Therefore, ELLs were not afforded the best conditions in which to build their home and school identities nor achieve academic success.

Based on these conclusions the authors offered four recommendations. The first was for instructors to create occasions for family and community lives to intersect with school experiences. The second recommendation was to accept use of multiple languages in the classroom so that students do not value one language over the other. The third was to structure classroom activities that promote a multiplicity of perspectives. The fourth was to provide opportunities for ELLs and their families to adopt identities of competence within a classroom setting. The goal of these recommendations was to facilitate the integration of home and school identities into everyday classroom practices.

The previous studies focused on various attempts by school personnel to improve relationships with the culturally diverse parent population. There was recognition on the part of school officials and faculty that positive relationships with the families could benefit the student population. The next ethnographic study incorporates the experiences immigrant parents had in attempting to engage in their child’s academic development within the school and in the home.

In this study researchers Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005) employ ethnographic methods to investigate how working-class immigrant parents attempted to participate in their children’s schooling.
There were various means of data collection in this study. One was transcripts and field notes from conversation groups. Another means was school observations. The third type of data collection was formal & informal interviews with teachers, principals, and parents. Lastly, the researchers used the constructed personal stories the participants created during workshops.

The participants were selected from a larger three year study that involved a group of seventeen immigrant parents. That study focused on how parents living in high-poverty urban areas perceived their school engagement experiences. Three participants were purposefully chosen because they reflected a range of experiences. The parents had children who attended two elementary schools in central Texas. Celia, Pablo, and Isabel were the pseudonyms assigned.

The study began with an invitation to parents through letters sent home with their elementary aged children, flyers at the school, presentations at parent-related events, or the teachers directly invited parents to participate. Interested subjects committed to four or five conversation groups and were compensated for their time. There were three rounds of conversation groups each comprising a different group of parents with each round. The conversations were held in Spanish and later translated. The conversations were organized around a subtheme. These subthemes related to the parents’ experiences of educational engagement within the school, home, and community or in science and math activities. At the beginning of each session the theme was introduced and one or two open-ended questions were asked to guide and spark the conversation. After the conversation groups ended the three focal parents were invited to return for six meetings labeled talleres, the Spanish word for studios. The talleres were established to assist the researchers in revising their findings and to provide a narrative of their personal experiences of involvement in their children’s schooling. The three talleres were labeled “we
talk,” “we work,” and “we tell.” In the “we talk” taller the parents discussed the emergent findings from the conversation groups the research team had shared with them. The second taller “we work” the parents worked individually or in small groups to create their personal stories about their immigration and school participation experiences. In the third taller “we tell” the three participants shared their constructed stories with the group while recording them on audiotape, video, or in writing. Lastly, the researchers performed three types of coding, open, axial, and selective in order to analyze the data.

First, the researchers found three categories in which immigrant parents attempted to engage in their children’s education. The degree of engagement depended on the location of parent involvement as well as the capitol the parent attempted to utilize. Some of the spaces were church, school, and households. Some of the capitol the parents attempted to use was peers who knew more English, community programs or services, church support, communication with teachers, and being a presence in their child’s classroom. These categories were labeled strategic helper, questioner, and listener. Second, the researchers noted a common factor present in the three categories was each parent attempted to establish presence through constructing relationships with school personnel. Third, present in all three modes of engagement is a reliable and trusting relationship with at least one school actor which provided scaffolding for a more fulfilling school engagement experience. Finally, the authors concluded the parents were sharing their experiences and vision of education and the schools were missing the opportunity to learn from these insights.

The three studies in this section provided insight and recommendations about how to build connections between the school culture and households of ethnically diverse backgrounds. The first two studies confirmed that even though educators began with good intentions, they
unknowingly displayed discouraging factors that hindered relationships between the school and their ELL families. In order to build these relationships González, Moll, and Amanti (1993) recommended that educators needed to recognize and appreciate the varying funds of knowledge that students have acquired from their family practices. Furthermore, in order for students to use these resources, the classrooms need to be a welcoming place for students to extend this knowledge without fear of negative consequences from their peers or teachers (Iddings & Katz, 2007). Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005) concluded that immigrant parents employ various methods to engage in their children’s academic life. They offer rich cultural experiences and values that can positively influence the school culture. Unfortunately, these attributes were often ignored or unrecognized within a school context. In the following section the relationship between home literacy practices and a child’s literacy development is examined.

**Relationship between Home Practices and Literacy Development**

Parental involvement and concern for their child’s academic progress is oftentimes associated with Caucasian working and professional classes. When discussing families from a low socio-economic status and those from minority backgrounds the popular myth is that there is no parental involvement in the home or concern for the academic well being for the children coming from these families. This section includes research that contradicts this popular belief. The following six studies discuss which literacy practices were apparent in the households of children from a variety of ages, home languages, and ethnicities. The studies concentrated on different literacy factors that aid in a child’s emergent literacy development.

Delgado-Gaitan’s (1992) ethnographic study focused on the research question: What does education mean within a Mexican-American household and what role does the family play in a child’s education? The researcher collected data through ethnographic observations and
interviews and through spontaneous parent-child interactions taking place within a household. She recorded these interactions using field notes, audio tapes, and videotapes.

The study took place in a small city of Carpinteria which had a population of 12,000. The six families in study were working class employed at low wage agriculture or tourist related jobs. These families were selected because their children were placed in either a novice or advanced reading group. The children’s reading level were critical to the selection of candidates because the researcher wanted to observe the home environment to ascertain what it might reveal about the ways in which parents support their children and how children learn to value schooling. The children were born in the U.S. and the parents emigrated from Mexico. Many families shared the same living standards. Five of the families hosted other relatives in their small one bedroom apartment on a temporary basis. The sixth family rented a large home and shared it with another family.

First, Delgado-Gaitan obtained the school’s permission along with each family’s acceptance to conduct the home visits and observations. Second, the six families were observed six times during two hour home visits during a nine month period. The first and second visits established trust between the researcher and the families. During the observations the researcher conducted ethnographic interviews. The interviews included questions regarding residency in Carpinteria, each parents’ employment, the skills required for their job, what their children knew about their employment, presence of outside of the home network systems, which services and for what purposes were local social resources utilized, parental participation in schools, the meaning of literacy in the home, and their expectations for their children’s future employment/career. After the visits and observations were conducted the data from the transcribed audio and video tapes were qualitatively analyzed and categorized in units. These
units were labeled physical environment, emotional and motivational climates, and interpersonal interactions. The findings regarding the role of Mexican-American households in a child’s education and their views about education are discussed in the context of these units.

First, the physical environment greatly impacted the role the parents took in their child’s education. All parent participants regarded schooling as a great privilege for their children. They purposefully established a safe and stable environment that supported the children’s positive thinking about their schooling. This environment included things such as setting a regular bedtime, designating an area in the house for school materials, or providing material awards for good grades. Furthermore, findings indicated all families participated in networks outside of the family which included church, work groups, or relatives. The more the parents participated in these networks the greater influence it had on shaping the children’s educational socialization. Lastly, if parents struggled with school issues they sought advice of co-workers, church groups, or a family member with more school experience or better English proficiency. The influence of emotional and motivational climates in each household also influenced the children’s education.

Every parent expressed desire to have their children succeed in school. To them to be educated meant being considerate of others, expressing kindness, respecting elders and authority, and cooperating inside and outside of the classroom. A general Mexican cultural belief is a person can have little education but still be considered well educated if they display the above characteristics. Likewise, a very formally educated person can be considered poorly educated if they mistreat others and don’t respect others’ rights. Taking this into consideration an important role the parents contributed to their children’s education was to prepare them for school by teaching them how to behave and act with peers and educators. Another prominent occurrence
in every household was parents sharing their personal educational experiences with their children, their desire for them to remain in school in order to exceed the parents’ accomplishments. These family stories about life in Mexico guided the children’s moral and emotional learning. Parents were motivated to participate in their children’s education when they received progress reports from the teachers. When a teacher’s note indicated more home support was needed in reading many parents contacted the teachers through notes or phone calls to ask how to help them. Also, when a teacher’s comment was positive parents did not contact the teachers, instead they rewarded children with a book or took them to their favorite restaurant. The last category summarized is interpersonal interactions and the impact on the children’s education.

The review of data collection indicated most parent/child verbal exchanges taking place during the week evolved around the child’s homework. Some parents attended school/child development workshops occasionally while others communicated frequently with the child’s teacher. The parents with minimal educational experience still attempted to help anyway they could. These attempts included explaining homework, giving answers, asking what the homework was about. In some households older siblings helped with homework when the parents could not. There were some differences in the interpersonal interactions within households with children participating in the advanced reading group than those with children in the novice reading group.

The researcher observed that all children in the advanced reading group had strong emotional support for achievement. Also, they usually understood their homework and spent half hour or less each day completing the tasks. Their parents reported their children needed little help from them when doing their homework but the parents did provide supervision.
Furthermore, the students in the advanced reading group played with siblings or watched TV after school and had no fixed time to do homework. The data from the novice reading group reported a different story.

The parents enforced structured homework time and rules and assisted with homework. Daily homework time lasted a half hour to two hours and many parents felt frustrated because they did not understand how to help with homework. These parents expressed feelings of helplessness in this area.

The next study also uses the same ethnic and socioeconomic grouping of participants to study the influence of home practices and literacy performance for young learners.

Researchers Saenz and Felix (2007) used prior research when conducting their study. They drew upon research related to Spanish-speaking Latino parents’ involvement in their children’s literacy development and the factors that increase literacy skills. They compared the research from those studies with the results from their study regarding the same topics but with English-speaking Latino parents. The results from the prior studies set the focus for this study. Saenz and Felix picked five factors that have been found to benefit a child’s literacy development. One factor was the access to reading materials because the greater number of books in a home is associated with better vocabulary and higher test scores. The second factor was parental practices and opinions regarding the responsibility of teaching reading to children. This incorporates shared book reading in the home which correlates with a higher level of language skills, phonological awareness, and comprehension. Prior research indicated the traditional view of recently immigrated Hispanic parents’ idea of supporting education at home was to equip their children with good morals and teach them appropriate behavior while at school. Story time was used as a means of teaching strong morals and life lessons. These
parents thought learning to read was a process their children learned at school with their teacher. The third factor was a child’s age when parents began to read to him/her. Previous studies showed parents who had lived longer in the United States were more likely to begin reading to their child at an earlier age while more recent immigrants began reading to their child at the school age of four or five years old. The final factors were the frequency of shared book reading as well as the amount and type of other literacy activities engaged in together. The frequency of these practices was linked to the development of early literacy skills and academic achievement. Also, frequent library outings had shown to increase a child’s literacy skills and to produce positive book reading experiences. These final factors had shown similar results in prior studies. Some results stated Hispanic mothers who used only Spanish in the home with their child read less frequently to their child and participated in other literacy activities two to three times per month. Hispanic mothers who used both languages in the home and whose child was simultaneously learning English and Spanish at school were found to participate in other literacy activities weekly. The researchers’ objective was to gather information regarding these five factors from English-speaking Latino parents and make recommendations that benefit the students’ literacy development.

One of the researchers created a survey instrument called the Parental Literacy Influences and Practices Survey. This was the only instrument used to gather information. It included questions about important factors mentioned above that related to a child’s literacy acquisition and development.

The participants were selected based on their responses to the Parental Literacy Influences and Practices Survey. Of the total 219 surveys returned, 45 responded in English, marked Hispanic as their ethnicity, had at least one child in kindergarten, first, or second grade,
and omitted less than one page of the survey. These 45 respondents comprised the focal group the researchers used to gather information. The 45 participants were English-speaking Latino parents of children in kindergarten, first, or second grade. Their children attended schools that were located in three separate districts in Southern California within Orange County or Las Angles County. Twenty-two respondents were born in a foreign country and ten attended school in a foreign country. Thirty-two indicated they had an education level of high school or higher, while two participants completed a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The first step of the process was to attain the principal’s permission from each school to hand out the Parental Literacy Influences and Practices Survey to every student. Classroom teachers distributed the survey along with consent forms. Forty-five participants were selected based on certain responses previously mentioned. The researchers used this group’s responses to analyze the data and draw conclusions in order to compare them with Spanish-speaking Latino parents from prior research studies.

Researchers Saenz and Felix used the responses to draw conclusions about the five literacy factors. First, they found there were an adequate number of children’s books in the home when compared to the 2004 national median. However, there was infrequent use of outside literacy sources such as libraries or book stores. This was evident when 34 respondents indicated that they visited the library once a month or less and 38 indicated they visited a bookstore once a month or less. Only 10 said they bought their children books more than once a month. Results from the survey indicated that parents thought that mothers and fathers should be responsible for reading to their children, but teachers have a bigger responsibility in teaching their children to read. This was evident because 38 responses indicated that mothers took responsibility to reading to their children while 29 also said that fathers were among the top four
who read to their children. With regards to who should take responsibility for teaching their children to read 37 indicated that mothers had the main responsibility and 28 said teachers, and 26 selected fathers. This clearly indicated that these English-speaking Latino parents thought they did have a big part of the responsibility in participating in their children’s literacy development. Furthermore, 60% of the parents noted they talked to their children about the stories after reading to them or asked them questions about the story while only two stated that they did not do anything after reading. The responses regarding the children’s age when parents began to read to them showed 18 months was the median age. This median age was about three years younger than what other researchers had found in a study that focused on Spanish-speaking immigrant parents. Saenz and Felix attributed this to the fact that this study’s participant population had many high school graduates which did not reflect the norm for Spanish-speaking Hispanics and therefore, more closely resembled that of the general U.S. population instead of an immigrant Hispanic population. The median frequency for reading to children was daily or more, and the parents also indicated their children asked them to read to them daily or more. There was also evidence of other literacy activities taking place at home. The children of 37 respondents read aloud to their parents. Moreover, 25 pointed out they taught their children how to print words and 33 said they taught their children how to read words.

Saenz and Felix (2007) based their study on conclusive research findings about five different predictors that contribute to a strong literacy foundation. They gathered data about these five practices within the households of English-speaking Latino parents. In the following study researchers Roberts, Jergens, and Burchinal (2005) also used frequency of shared reading in the home along with other predictors to determine emergent literacy skills and language development in preschool aged children.
Researchers, Roberts, Jergens, and Burchinal (2005) set out to determine to what extent certain home literacy practices attribute to emergent literacy skills and language development in preschool aged children. The four home literacy practices included in this study were the frequency of shared reading at home, the child’s interest in reading at home, the caregivers reading strategies during shared reading, and maternal sensitivity. These literacy behaviors along with a standard measure rating the overall quality and responsiveness of the home environment were studied in an attempt to determine the relationship between these home practices and preschool aged students language and literacy skills. Results from previous studies by various researchers (DeJong & Leseman, 2001; Haden, Reese, & Fivush, 1996; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton, & McGrath, 1997) showed strong correlations between young children’s home literacy environment and their later literacy skills at school. These findings serve as the foundation for the purpose of this longitudinal study because the majority of previous studies documented families only once, whereas the current study following participants from birth until the start of school. Furthermore, the four literacy practices were specifically chosen because of separate investigations that showed positive results linking each individual practice to language and literacy development. Few researchers have incorporated all four components within the same study.

In order to gather pertinent data various methods were implemented. The mothers of the child participants were interviewed or given questionnaires about their home literacy environment and about how much they thought their child enjoyed book reading. They were also observed and videotaped as they read to their children. Home visits were conducted by nurse practitioners and speech–language pathologists. The mothers also gave a self report explaining their own formal education experiences and were administered the Wide Range
Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R) (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984) in order to assess their reading level. The focus children underwent annual assessments of their receptive and expressive language and vocabulary. These assessments were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) and the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Preschool (CELF-P) (Wiig, Secord, & Semel, 1992). The CELF-P had two separate components that measured receptive language (CELF-RL) and expressive language (CELF-EL). The Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA) (Reid, Hresko, & Hammil, 1981) was also given in order to measure the child’s knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and the ability to construct meaning from print. Finally, the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Inventory (HOME) (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984) was given to each family in order to measure the quality and quantity of stimulation and support available in the home. The format of the HOME was an observation and interview that measured various factors such as the primary caregiver’s emotional and verbal responsiveness, acceptance of the child’s behavior, organization of the environment, academic and language stimulation, and maternal involvement with the child. These methods were used to collect data about home literacy practices and students’ achievement levels in language and literacy skills.

The criteria for participation in this study stated that participants needed to be typically developing African American children enrolled in day care that were less than 1 year old. The study consisted of 39 African American girls and 33 African American boys. Although not a criteria for participation, the participants were primarily from low income families who were earning less than $20,609 for a family of three.

The participants were followed from early on in life until the beginning of kindergarten. The mothers’ formal educational background was assessed at the beginning of the study by
means of self-reports and the WRAT-R. The same caregivers filled out questionnaires about how often they read to their child in the home and how much they thought their child enjoyed book reading. These questionnaires were distributed when the children were 18, 32, and 42 months and upon entering kindergarten. When the children were 2, 3, and 4 years old the mothers were assessed for their communicative strategies and maternal sensitivity during shared book reading while being videotaped. The videotapes were then coded for the following information types the mother relayed to her child: simple description, elaborate description, links to the world, prediction/inferences, book concepts, letter/word related references, letter-sound relationships, and recall/recite of the text. The videotapes were also used to code the following six dimensions related to maternal sensitivity: warmth, sensitivity, responsiveness, encouragement of initiative, stimulation value, and elaborateness. The HOME assessment was given when children were 9, 18, 30, and 42 months old and again at the start of kindergarten. Finally, the participants’ literacy and language development was assessed each year from 3 years until the start of kindergarten. The tests used to assess these areas were the PPVT-R, CELF-P, and TERA.

The most important result showed the global measure of the HOME was the strongest predictor for early emergent skills. The significance is that when a child receives quality support and responsiveness in the home he/she is likely to be equipped with language and literacy skills upon entering school. Furthermore, the researchers found that as caregivers implemented reading strategies at home, children were more likely to gain higher vocabulary scores upon entering school.

The previous study examined four important areas of early literacy development in preschool African American children. The next study focuses on two literacy factors within
recent migrant Mexican American children; the amount of reading materials in the house and the
time spent reading at home or in a Head Start program and the relationship between their
emergent literacy skills.

Ezell, Gonzales, and Randolph (2000) produced this study to investigate if the amount of
reading materials and time spent reading in the home and Head Start environments play a
significant role in migrant Mexican American children’s emergent literacy skills. This research
focus developed because the data available at the time of this study revealed Hispanics had the
highest dropout rates and lowest literacy rates compared to other ethnic groups. Even more
alarming was the fact students from migrant families were at an even higher risk for academic
failure because of the constant switching of schools and homes. Other research proved that this
lifestyle interrupted the education process and greatly diminished language acquisition and
literacy development in young children. The 1995 numbers released from the U.S. Department
of Commerce indicated that approximately 270,000 Hispanic migrant families lived in the
United States. Therefore, it is vital that teachers of migrant children be informed of the hurdles
their students face in order to support them in their literacy development. Ezell et al (2000)
narrowed their research to address the questions: To what extent can 4-year-old migrant Mexican
American children identify letters, recognize environmental print, and demonstrate print
concepts, and to what extent do these emergent skills correlate with exposure to print and reading
in the home or in a Head Start program?

Data were collected through assessments, interviews, and questionnaires. To determine
Mexican ancestry the researchers used documents that were kept at the different Head Start
schools. A bilingual speech-language pathologist administered and audio taped an informal
speech and language screening prior to participation in the study. Also, all Head Start teachers
filled out questionnaires about the classroom’s literacy environment, while the parents filled out a different questionnaire pertaining to literacy in the home. The three areas of literacy skills that were informally assessed were environmental print, letter recognition, and print concepts.

The 48 participants were collected from 11 different Head Start centers in southern Texas that serviced migrant families with Mexican ancestry. Children were not eligible for enrollment in the Head Start program until families had been migrating for at least two years, but that requirement was not a stipulation of the study. All the children were 4 years old, 24 boys and 24 girls, and were selected randomly from a pool of 85 migrant families. Fifteen of the children were bilingual English/Spanish, while 33 children were monolingual. Of the 15 bilingual children 10 showed dominance in Spanish while 5 were English dominant. Of the 33 monolingual children 2 were English speakers with the remaining 31 were Spanish speakers. None of the children exhibited language delays as determined by the Texas Acevedo Screening of Speech and Language. This was given by the Head Start center earlier in the year and prior to enrollment in this study.

First, interested parents filled out a consent form and participants were randomly chosen through a lottery. The bilingual speech-language pathologist asked the parents and teachers questions about each participant in order to determine the child’s dominant language (L1). Then, the language assessment was videotaped and administered in the child’s L1. These findings confirmed the Texas Acevedo Screening of Speech and Language results that none of the children had been experiencing language delays. Examiners visited the 11 Head Start centers to conduct the literacy skills assessments for each child. The assessments were done in a private setting and lasted about 30 minutes. The first assessment was the environmental print assessment. Children viewed word cards of familiar stores, restaurants, and places in their
community. The words were presented with their logos and colors as they are actually seen within the community. Next, the letter identification assessment was given. The examiner used letters found in the child’s name along with five additional letters. The child had to pick out the letters of their first name and then a new set of letters were used in order to pick out the letters of their last name. The third and final literacy assessment was the Concepts About Print test (Clay, 1979). This was a formal assessment that tested skills such as pointing to the front of the book, indicating where to begin reading on different pages, and identifying different words, letters, or punctuation marks. Each parent was interviewed once either at the school or their home. The examiner read the questionnaire to the parents in their preferred language and wrote their responses. If needed, follow up questions were asked. There were nine questions regarding literacy practices and the amount of reading materials in the house. The interviews were audio taped if parents gave consent. The teachers were given a questionnaire to complete in private at the beginning of the day in which the examiner visited the classroom. By the end of the day the teachers submitted their responses. This questionnaire had ten items pertaining to the same concepts given to the parents.

The authors determined that the home environment contributed more to the children’s literacy development than the Head Start program in the areas of print concepts and environmental print. Results did not indicate that either condition positively or negatively influenced letter recognition. The outcomes on the three informal tests varied between all participants. The mean score for the print awareness test was 6 with a perfect score being 21. The letter recognition assessment showed the greatest range in literacy skills among the participants with 33% accuracy for recognizing letters in their first name, but 20% accuracy for recognizing letters in their last name. Some children recognized all the letters in each of their
names while others could not identify any letters in either name. The mean score for the Concepts About Print test was 3 correct, but scores ranged from 1 to 7 correct. The print concept results, when compared to similar findings from Clay (1979), appeared to be typical of 4-year-olds.

The researchers found positive relationships in some important areas. When there was more reading material at home the stronger the correlation was with print concepts. Also, the number of children’s books at home and the amount of reading material had a positive correlation with the ability to recognize environmental print. The last positive relationship was apparent between the number of children’s books in the home was and how much reading the parents did with the child. On the other hand, print concepts were not found to be related to the amount of children’s books or the amount of reading at home with the child.

The next study also used a Head Start program to analyze the development of young children’s reading skills. The subjects and area of literacy in the next study differ from those in the previous study. The subjects of the previous study focused on migrant Mexican American children whereas the subjects in McCormick and Mason’s (1986) study are kindergarten participants from low income households. The previous study focused on the relationship between the amount of reading materials in the house and the time spent reading at home or in a Head Start program with emergent literacy skills, but the next study researches the benefits of introducing picture books in the home to increasing reading skills.

Researchers McCormick and Mason (1986) designed an experimental study to answer the question: How effective is introducing picture books to low income families with children in Head Start programs in increasing reading skills in the same children upon entering
Kindergarten? They hypothesized reading predictable books to children at home who have little literacy experience is an effective way to introduce informal reading.

The research design included three groups— an experimental, an alternative, and a control group. The experimental group received the picture book intervention in print form whereas the alternative group received the same picture book treatment without print, only illustrations. The control group did not receive the intervention.

Phase one of the study’s participants consisted of 52 children in four Head Start classrooms located in a small Midwest city. The average age was 55 months. The youngest child was 37 months and the oldest was 67 months. Phase two of the experiment included the phase one participants who continued to kindergarten within the same city. It did not include retained participants or those that moved outside of the district.

The experiment comprised of two phases. The first phase began in January of the Head Start year. The 52 participants from four different classrooms were pretested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). This exam evaluated letter name recognition, sign and label identification, story reading, and receptive vocab. In addition, the parents received a questionnaire. The questionnaire addressed children’s knowledge of letters and words and parents’ support in reading activities. Simultaneously, the researchers collected data on teachers’ perceptions of the ideal student—school appropriate behavior & core items for the ideal student. Second, the children were assigned to the experimental, alternative, or control group by using alphabetized class lists. Children from the first half of the lists from the first two classes were placed in the experimental group. Students on the second half of the class lists from the other two classrooms were placed in the alternative groups. The remaining students were placed in the control groups.
Phase one continued with the book treatments. The experimental groups consisted of small groups of four to six and received lessons once a week for six weeks administered by the researcher. These lessons lasted 10-15 minutes. The students were introduced to one new story each week. They began the lesson by making predictions from the title page and related it to background knowledge. The researcher modeled reading the story while tracking print and showing illustrations. Afterwards the whole group recited the story. Then there were individual recitations of the story. Finally, the new story of the week was mailed to each child’s home. The alternative group received the same length of time and small grouping as experimental group. The researchers used illustrations instead of print while the children listened and discussed stories instead of reading them. Afterwards they individually retold story by taking turns to tell different parts of the story while using the pictures. Finally, the drawings of the stories were mailed to each child’s home.

The control group did not receive the picture book intervention nor were any types of materials sent home that related to the study.

In April of phase one the PPVT-R posttest was administered to each subject. In addition, all participants were asked to read a story which was familiar to the experimental groups and another story which was unfamiliar to both groups. The third post experiment evaluation included giving each student picture cards with the printed word and asked them to read the words. Parents filled out the same questionnaire. Additional questions inquired about the materials which were sent home during the course of the experiment. Phase two of the research was conducted during the kindergarten year.

Phase two began in January of kindergarten year. The experimental groups received new stories in the mail. The alternative groups received visual perception activity pages. These
activities were matching figures, visual puzzles, or picture completion. None of these activities contained letters or words. During the second phase neither group was provided in school treatment and the kindergarten teachers unaware of the study.

In May of kindergarten year three types of posttests were given. The first tested reading and spelling. The second was the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984). Last, each child read three stories. One story had been mailed to the experimental group during Head Start year, one story had been mailed during kindergarten year, and one story was new to both groups.

At the end of the kindergarten year the teachers completed a questionnaire about each child’s reading skills and predicted the child’s likely success in first grade. The parents completed a questionnaire on their child’s use of materials received in the mail and their child’s interest in reading and printing at home. During summer after kindergarten six parents from the experimental group were interviewed about their child’s use of stories and reaction to the treatment.

The following results relate to phrase one of the experiment. First, data from the parent questionnaires indicated that a child’s early reading progress is higher if they receive prior support in reading from the parents before entering school. The second variable that had an effect on a child’s literacy was the teachers’ evaluation of school-appropriate behavior. Children who follow directions, are eager and are able to complete classroom tasks, and are alert and attentive to classroom proceedings produced higher early reading scores. Third, the researchers stated children who were provided opportunities in Head Start to recite simple stories gained more early reading knowledge than did children who listened to and retold stories. Fourth, they also found the intervention had more of an effect on story reading than word and letter
recognition. The posttest from the experimental group indicated that they knew more letters in May whereas the alternative group’s posttest did not change from the pretest. Last, the experimental groups received about same support at home in May and January but the alternative group received less support in May than in January. The next results relate to phase two of the study.

The results from phase two indicated significant differences between the experimental and alternative groups. First, the participants in the experimental group performed better in the posttest analysis than the alternative group. The experimental group students read more words correctly on all three stories given during the posttest than the students in the alternative group. Another posttest result indicated that the experimental participants identified significantly more letter sounds on the WRAT (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984) than alternative group’s participants. Second, the experimental group parents’ responses from the questionnaire indicated higher scores for every question related to student interest in reading or writing, frequency of use, or knowledge of reading and writing than the responses of parents whose children received the alternative treatment. Responses from the questionnaire also indicated that receiving books at home increased more interest in hearing and telling stories, trying to read, looking at printed words than did receiving activity sheets. Third, parents from the experimental group indicated that having books at home were useful to help the child become more interested in reading, using them to read aloud, sound out words, reread, figure out word meanings, or teach a younger sibling. The parents in the alternative group had little positive feedback except that children appreciated receiving the materials in the mail.

Finally, results were also drawn from teacher comments on the questionnaire. Teachers
indicated the students in experimental group were significantly more likely to do well or get by in first grade reading compared to those in alternative group.

First grade academic performance further supports the effect of the picture book treatment for the experimental group. Of a randomly selected group of five students from experimental group, two students placed in high reading groups, two in middle groups, one in low group, and all five were proceeding to 2nd grade. Another randomly selected group of participants from the alternative group showed first grade performance. Of the five alternative participants, two were placed in transition classrooms mid-year and would be returning to 1st grade instead of continuing to 2nd grade, one would be repeating first grade, while the remaining two were in low reading groups.

The following study also recognized book reading as an integral ingredient for developing young children’s literacy. The previous two studies did not focus on the direct role of the parent, but the following study analyzed the participation of parents in a specific reading intervention program.

Researchers Jordan, Snow, and Porche (2000) conducted this experimental study to evaluate the effectiveness the intervention program, Early Access to Success in Education (EASE), in three areas. These three areas were children’s performance in literacy, effectiveness of home support, and frequency of parental attendance at the training sessions and participation in the at-home scripted activities.

The researchers used numerous variables for their analysis of Project EASE. First, using information received from a parent survey, two composites were created as control variables. One composite was labeled the Home Literacy Environment and used the numbers zero or one to indicate yes or no answers. This composite recorded the different types of reading materials
found in the home. The second composite was the Home Literacy Activities and used a scale from zero to four to record a range of answers from never to biweekly. The questions targeted how often children viewed educational television and the frequency in which parents read to children. The second form of data collection pertained to parental participation in Project Ease. This data were attendance records of in-school activities and the evaluations forms the parents filled out after completing at-home book activities. The third method was the children’s scores from pretest literacy measures. The researchers administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) which required the examinee to pick out a visual representation of a spoken word, and the Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP) (American College Testing, in press). The researchers created three composites using subtests on the CAP test. The composites were named Language, Print, and Sound. The Language composite consisted of the subtests for vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in story production. The Print composite consisted of lower and upper case letter recognition, concepts of print for books and reading, and environmental print in and out of context. The third composite, Sound, consisted of sound awareness of beginning and ending sounds and forming words by invented spelling.

The study’s participants were kindergarten students and their families that had previously participated in the intervention Program EASE. The students were enrolled in four schools and spread out between eight classrooms in a school district in Minnesota. These four elementary schools were picked for Project EASE because they were Title I schools and the student body represented a higher percentage of poverty (18-21%). The typical student in the district was labeled as white and English speaking. There were 248 total participants, 177 received Project
EASE intervention and 71 students in were in the control group. Five of the participants were identified in early childhood as requiring special needs.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate how effective Project EASE was in certain areas. Therefore, it is necessary to describe the intervention process as part of this study’s analysis of the project. Project EASE began in September of kindergarten year when parents received a letter from the administration which explained the Project EASE program and they also met individually with the intervention teachers to learn about the scope and intention of the program. Then, parents whose children were in intervention classrooms were invited to orientation classes which discussed in more detail the necessary role of parent involvement in Project EASE. After the orientation sessions, the parent training sessions began. There were five 1-month units. During these training sessions the parent trainer used a script. Each session was immediately followed by opportunities to engage in the parent-child activity within the child’s classroom. Next, for three weeks after each session teachers sent home a set of scripted activities incorporating the principles that were the focus for that month. The first step for the researchers evaluating the effectiveness of Project EASE was to distribute a voluntary survey prior to parent orientation sessions. Also prior to parent orientation and the intervention, each child was individually assessed using the (PPVT-R) and the (CAP) assessments. After the pre-assessment, the control group’s families were informed of the project and they agreed to have their children tested as part of a comparison group. The final step in the procedure was to administer the PPVT-R and CAP again in May after the intervention was completed.

The findings related to the effectiveness of Project EASE target three areas. The first evaluated the children’s performance in literacy. The second was the effectiveness of the home
support. The last area included the frequency of parental attendance at the training sessions and participation in the at-home scripted activities.

The first area of evaluation included four significant findings in the children’s literacy performance. First, all children, regardless of group placement, experienced significant improvement in all measures of the PPVT-R and the CAP from September to May. However, the participants receiving the intervention made significantly greater gains than the control group in the CAP subtests of vocabulary, story comprehension, story sequence, sound awareness, and concepts of print. Second, the Language composite had a major effect on Project EASE participants over time but a small effect on Print and Sound composites for the same group. Third, students who participated in Project EASE were more able to recall subordinate terms when retelling a text. Last, there was no effect for vocabulary gains. The next section includes results for the home support composites.

The researchers observed three statistically significant gains when they reviewed the results of the Home Literacy Activities composite and the Home Environment composite. First, higher scores on the Home Literacy Activities composite had a positive effect on the Sounds and Print posttest composites but not on the Language posttest composite. A second result concluded that both home composites were positively correlated with each other. That is to say if families were engaged with literacy activities they were more likely to have more reading materials at home. Finally, the experimental group participants that had low language pretest scores but had a high score on the Home Literacy Environment composite increased at a steeper rate than their higher performing peers at pretest. By the posttest, these participants were doing as well as the control group participants who had tested higher in the language skills at pretest. The last area
for results analysis includes the parent attendance during sessions and the amount of participation in the at-home book activities.

There were numerous findings worth mentioning that relate to parent attendance and at-home participation. The attendance records indicated that 60% of family participants attended all five sessions, the average sessions attended was 3.9, and a few parents did not attend any sessions. Similarly, 60% of family participants completed all fifteen of the scripted at-home activities, with an average of twelve activities being completed at-home, and a few families did not complete any of the scripted activities in the home. Another finding was that parents who scored higher on the home support composites also tended to participate more fully during Project EASE. Also, there was a significant correlation between the amounts of participation in the at-home book activities with improving literacy skills in the children whose scores were low at pretest. Finally, the researchers concluded even though the sample population was not from poverty and had access to adequately performing schools there was still room for parental involvement to improve children’s literacy performance in school.

The studies in this section related to different literacy activities that occurred in racially and economically diverse households. Some were initiated in the homes while others included school driven interventions. The studies refuted the belief that ethnically diverse low income households do not provide literacy support for young students (Saenz & Felix, 2007; Gaitan, 1992). Saenz and Felix (2007) noted that the parent participants in their study were motivated to help their children with school. Many characteristics necessary for a literate foundation were evident to some extent in these households. Caregivers frequently read to their children beginning at a young age and engaged in discussions after reading to their children at home. Gaitan’s (1992) study further indicated that Mexican-American parents valued education but
prepared their children differently and had different values than those values and expectations of the academic personnel instructing these children. The most significant result from Roberts, Jergens, and Burchinal’s (2005) study indicated that the strongest predictor for early emergent skills depended on the overall home environment rather than the individual factors of frequency of shared reading at home, the child’s interest in reading at home, the caregivers reading strategies during shared reading, and maternal sensitivity. The remaining studies also supported the previous conclusions that when parents engage their children in literacy activities their literacy skills will benefit (Ezell, Gonzalez, & Burchinal, 2005; McCormick & Mason, 1986; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000). Taking these practices into account the next section focuses on three areas of emergent literacy that could be used to aid parents and educators as they help young students build sound reading skills.

**Best Practices to Support Emergent Literacy Development**

There are numerous reading strategies and instructional activities designed for beginner readers. Each strategy and activity is most likely accompanied with a plethora of research that supports their effectiveness to a child’s literacy development. To determine which is the most effective is impossible without first considering the individual child. Beginner readers benefit when educators make accommodations that address the specific needs of each individual student. Reading strategies that produced comprehension gains for one student may not prove to be as effective for a different student. There are many different variables to account for. Therefore, educators need to be knowledgeable about multiple areas of literacy in order to accommodate for their student’s needs. The following three research studies were conducted to analyze the effectiveness of different areas that support literacy skills. The first study evaluates an initiative already in place in several schools aimed to involve parents in literacy activities in order to raise
literacy skills in struggling students. The second study reviews a specific reading intervention program designed to enhance shared reading experiences between adults and emergent readers. The final study does not address a specific strategy, rather it reviewed the prior education experiences of intermediate LEP students to determine factors that detracted or contributed to academic proficiency.

Researchers Edwards and Warin (1999) used an initiative already being implemented in seventy schools called the Local Education Authority (LEA). One of LEA’s objectives was to improve numeracy and literacy achievement by developing home/school/community links. The second goal was to identify and to remove barriers limiting numeracy and literacy achievement. The last goal was to determine successful strategies and processes for overcoming low numeracy and literacy achievement. In order to participate in the initiative a school had to submit paperwork describing how they would involve parents in activities aimed at improving the performance of students that were under-performing in the targeted areas. The researchers were interested in analyzing the LEA initiative because prior research found parental involvement and student achievement had been under-analyzed and under-theorized (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). In addition, research completed at the time described that most parental involvement programs simply reinforced the school’s values and goals and attempted to teach parents how to implement them in the home (Brown, 1993). Parents were viewed as subjects to be taught and informed rather than rich resources to be used within the classroom (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). The researchers used the LEA initiative to create their research question: What were the rationales offered by schools for the time they had invested in parental involvement through the LEA initiative?
The researchers relied on three methods of data collection. The main source was a postal questionnaire sent during the fourth year after LEA began. The second data source was three other postal questionnaires from previous years. The final data consisted of a few interviews, field notes, and documentary analysis.

Information describing the subjects was very limited. There was no description of the participating schools, description of student population, nor description of the participating faculty. A school’s participation lasted two or three years depending on funding and the only criteria for participation in LEA was for each separate school to submit a written explanation of how they intended to include parents in numeracy and literacy activities. There were 70 schools that participated in the initiative and the researchers used data from 46 of the schools to analyze their research question.

Before the researchers could analyze the rationales that supported a school’s participation in LEA they had to organize the data. The main data source used for evaluation was a postal questionnaire from 1996 which was sent to 60 of LEA’s past and present participating schools. This questionnaire directly asked teachers the main research question, what were the rationales offered by schools for the time they had invested in parental involvement through the LEA initiative? First, the teachers’ written rationales for parental involvement were divided into units of analysis termed “meaning units,” which represented a string of words that have one meaning. Second, one researcher put the meaning units into categories which were then used to create tentative category descriptors. Third, the second researcher conducted a blind allocation of the meaning units with the tentative category descriptors. Fourth, the category descriptors were clarified by both researchers and 177 reasons collected from the 46 schools were allocated into one of the eleven data-driven categories. These eleven categories were, supporting pupil
learning at home, communicating as a one way process, parents knowing their children better than we do, showing children that home and school are linked, developing self-esteem, parents becoming better educated, parents working as volunteers in the school, linking the school with the community, providing a support network for parents, parents becoming aware of the demands made on the teacher, and unusable data. Finally, in addition to the postal questionnaire the researchers used interviews, field notes, and documentary analysis to support their findings.

The categorizing of the data produced results about the rationales for parental involvement. First, the category receiving the highest percentage of 20% dealt with one-way communication from the school to parent so the parents were updated with what the school was doing. The second highest rationale for parental involvement with 10% referred to developing confidence of parents as educators of their children. The third highest percentage with 8% was the category attributed to supporting pupil self esteem. There was no evidence linking the LEA initiative to student improvement in literacy achievement in any of the schools. The researchers attributed this fact to most of the participating schools’ reluctance to provide data. Also noteworthy is one category acknowledged the fact that parents had much to offer because they knew their children the best. This category received eleven statements out of 144. This finding supported prior research results indicating that most educators did not view parents as useful resources (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Along with the percentages from the data-driven categories the researchers also noted three reoccurring themes regarding the rationales for parental involvement in schools. The first is personnel within schools viewed parental involvement as a way to enlist parents as agents of schools. The second theme was working-class mothers were viewed as pupils to be educated. When mothers attended workshops they were trained in ways used by the classroom teachers. The third theme was the schools’ model of
good parental practice contained culturally bound assumptions about good parenting. There were limited attempts to integrate the parents’ culture or backgrounds into the schools’ predetermined rationales for parental involvement.

The prior research attempted to add to the research deficit conducted in the late 90s regarding the effectiveness of parental involvement on student literacy achievement. The next study focused on a different area of literacy for emergent readers. The study addressed a Dialogic Reading intervention program and the gains children made in their linguistic responses while being read to by their parents or teachers.

Whitehurst et al (1988) have made gains in research in the area of Dialogic Reading and the benefits it has on emergent readers. This system of reading uses shared book reading as a context for meaningful and interactive dialogue between an adult and child. Adults are taught to follow children’s lead by using use wh-questions and open-ended questions, follow children’s responses with topic continuing questions, and expand and recast children’s utterances while allowing more wait time for children to respond. Vast amounts of research links reading aloud to children to higher literacy performance because it develops vocabulary, phonological awareness, cognitive capabilities, and comprehension skills. Taking these facts into account, Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1999) further explore an area that is not as intensely researched. The authors used preschool children with language delays and their parents and/or staff members who received training in implementing Diagnostic Reading strategies to investigate the extent that these strategies produced better linguistic responses during shared reading time. There were four specific purposes for conducting this study. The first purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of Dialogic Reading intervention in modifying parents’ versus staff members’ shared book reading style. The second objective was to compare the effectiveness of adult
instruction in Dialogic Reading in producing gains in children’s participation and language elaboration during shared book reading. The third was to examine the effectiveness of adult instruction in Dialogic Reading in increasing children’s vocabulary knowledge. The last purpose was to examine the predictors of children’s responses to adult instruction in Dialogic Reading.

Two standardized tests were given to student participants; the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) and the Expressive One-Word Vocabulary Test-Revised (EOWPVT-R) (Gardner, 1990). Adult participants kept logs during the duration of the study. Videotapes of pre- and posttest shared reading activities were coded and transcribed by using the standardized format, Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT) (MacWhinney, 1995). These transcriptions were analyzed for changes in children’s language complexity with the help of the Computerized Language Analysis Programs (CLAN) (MacWhinney, 1995).

The study was conducted in the Pacific Northeast area among three different school districts and from five different classrooms. The subjects were children, parents, and staff members. The 32 children were preschool aged students ranging from three to five years old. Ten were girls and 22 were boys who had scored one deviation below the norm mean on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R). Scoring at this level qualified them for early childhood special education services in language delays. Ten of the children’s parents and seven different staff members from the five different schools were also participants. The adult participants received training in Dialogic Reading during the workshops.

The researchers began the study by gaining consent from the parents and having them fill out a demographic questionnaire. Then, trained school personnel or graduate students administered the PPVT-R and the EOWPVT-R to the children. Children were put in groupings
based on similar receptive vocabulary scores on the PPVT-R. From these groups they were randomly categorized into a parent group, a staff/practice group, or a staff/control group. After receiving their group placement, each child was videotaped for ten minutes while participating in a shared book reading activity with a familiar adult. The students in the parent group read with their parents while the students in the other two groups read with a staff member they knew well. After the pretest taping, the adults from all three groups were trained in Dialogic Reading strategies during two 1½ hour long workshop sessions. During the first session the authors introduced eight strategies. Four weeks later at the second session the authors allowed for a review of the eight strategies and then presented two new strategies. During the workshops adult participants viewed the Dialogic Reading videotape, which explained the book sharing strategies. They witnessed a demonstration of each strategy, were able to ask questions, and then practiced role-playing the strategy. Handouts were given to all participants about the strategies. Over the course of the eight weeks the parent and staff/practice groups met with each child one-on-one at least 4 times per week. The parents and staff participants kept logs about their sessions with each child. Students in the staff/control group did not have one-on-one time during the Dialogic Reading intervention but had group shared reading time as part of their preschool program. At the end of eight weeks students were given the same standardized tests and were videotaped again during an interactive shared reading with the same adult as in the pretest taping. The pre- and posttest videotapes were coded using CHAT. The researchers also used CLAN in order to measure changes in the children’s language complexity from pretest to posttest recordings by looking at several dependent variables such as mean length of utterance, number of different words spoken by the child, and the total number of child and parent utterances during book
reading. The total number of utterances was then used to determine the child’s overall participation.

The researchers discussed the findings as they related to the four purposes previously mentioned. The first purpose was to compare the effectiveness of modifying parents’ versus teachers’ reading aloud styles after receiving training in Dialogic Reading. The overall mean frequency of adult dialogue did not show any change from the pre- to posttest recordings. Results indicated that the number of encouraging utterances, open-ended questions, and who/what questions increased from pre-to posttest for all adults. These were three main practices encouraged during the Dialogic Reading workshops. Furthermore, verbatim reading, information statements, and insufficient time for response decreased in both the parents and staff members from the pre- to posttest recordings. These activities were discouraged during the workshops. Another result is that even though there was less verbatim reading occurring across all groups from pre- to posttest videotaping, there was significantly less in both the staff groups when compared to the parent group.

Second, the authors compared adult instruction in Dialogic Reading in each of the three intervention conditions in producing gains in children’s participation and language elaboration during shared book reading. Results showed increases on the posttest for children in all groups in the following areas; mean length of utterance (MLU), mean score for child utterances, number of different words used, and ratio of participation.

For the third purpose the authors hoped to see that adult instruction in Dialogic Reading increased children’s vocabulary knowledge as measured by the PPVT-R and EOWPVT-R. However, there was no statistical evidence that vocabulary knowledge increased from the pretest to the posttest assessments in any of the three groups.
The authors’ final purpose was to examine the predictors of a child’s response to adult instruction in Dialogic Reading. One result indicated that a higher pretest vocabulary score predicted higher gains on the posttest shared reading session in the areas of MLU and more words used. Another predictor was that greater linguistic performance on the part of the child was associated with increased frequency of adult acknowledgments of children’s utterances, decreased frequency of information statements, decreased frequency in use of who/what questions, and decreased frequency in insufficient time for response. The results from this study indicated young children with language delays benefit from Dialogic Reading strategies regardless of the adult engaging them or the setting they are in.

The previous studies concentrated on different areas that educators can use to support emergent readers and ELL students. The following study examined which previous learning experiences of intermediate ELL students were best predictors for their current academic achievement.

Minicucci and Olson (1992) conducted a study in California which indicated a wide gap existed between the needs of intermediate and high school level limited English proficient (LEP) students and the quality and range of services provided. California offered bilingual education from kindergarten to sixth grade which allowed students to receive instruction in their primary language while building important English language skills. Cota (1997) used these results and proposed three main purposes for conducting this study. The first was to examine the learning experiences of intermediate level LEP students who received specially-designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) and mainstream English instruction during their advanced English transition classes. The second purpose was to use the same category of students who had been receiving these types of instructional practices for at least two years and to examine the
indicators that may affect academic success and English language acquisition. The third purpose was to use the results and the information reported by the students in order to suggest effective instructional practices for LEP students at the intermediate school level.

Information regarding the students’ previous education experiences was taken from their cumulative records. The most recent reading and math scores from California’s standardized tests were also used as well as the scores on the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) (Bogatz et al., 1981). These scores were given by trained language arts teachers to determine the oral English level proficiency of each student. The researcher also created an interview instrument in order to gather information about each student’s previous and current educational learning experiences.

Participants consisted of 103 intermediate LEP students ranging from thirteen to fifteen years old and attended California public schools. Students were Hispanic with 102 having Mexican ancestry and the remaining one coming from Central America. Sixty-nine students were seventh graders and thirty-five were in eighth grade. Forty-eight were males and fifty-five were females. Students had been enrolled in high transition English classes for at least two years. Students in these classrooms received SDAIE and mainstream academic English instruction classes.

The first step was to gather background information about each student. The author and a certified bilingual teacher reviewed cumulative records in order to gather academic information regarding types of instructional services students had received since kindergarten, information about standardized test scores, attendance, current grades, language proficiency assessments, and the number of elementary schools they attended. Then Cota used the interview instrument to gather pertinent information. During the interview process the students could respond in the
language of their choice. All students opted to respond in English. The interview questions focused on five topics: first, the students’ opinions about learning English, second, the students’ use of English when speaking to parents, siblings, or friends, third, the students’ post high school aspirations, fourth, the students’ participation in extracurricular activities or organized out-of-school activities, and fifth, who helps them with homework and test preparation. Finally, trained language arts teachers assigned each student a score on the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM).

The results indicate that 94.2% of the students recognized that learning English was important, while 83% of the students indicated that their fathers and 82.2% indicated that their mothers recognize the value of learning English as well. Only 1.1% perceived that their fathers did not feel that English was necessary to learn. Of the remaining students 10.6% did not know what their father’s opinions were and 5.3% did not have an opinion. As reported during the interviews 59.6% of the students’ fathers never spoke English, 36.2% sometimes spoke English, and 4.3% always spoke English. Regarding their mothers, 71.3% never spoke English, 24.8% sometimes spoke English, and 4% always spoke English. Reports regarding when students used English around their family and friends show similar percentages for fathers and mothers. About 85% used only Spanish with their fathers and mothers, but 61% reported they used both languages when speaking to siblings. When speaking to their friends 54.4% used both languages, 44.7% used English only, and only 1% used Spanish only. These results indicated that students used mostly Spanish when speaking with their parents but used both languages when speaking with their siblings and peers. Students’ plans for post high school indicated that almost half planned to extend their education, while 35% were undecided and 12.6% were going to look for jobs. Just under half of the students reported that their fathers had not graduated from
high school whereas the majority of their mothers had not graduated from high school. Furthermore, the majority of their fathers and mothers did not attend college. The authors also concluded that 30% of the students’ parents had encouraged them to attend college but none reported that their teachers had talked to them about college or encouraged them to attend college. The results for participating in extracurricular activities show that 82.5% did not take part in these activities while 77.7% also did not participate in out-of-school activities. Results also showed the participants’ siblings were the ones supporting them with homework and exam preparation. Regarding their academic performance, frequent absences negatively influenced school grades and CTBS scores. The more years of English language instruction positively influenced CTBS reading test results. All the students had attended school since kindergarten but had different experiences advancing grade levels. After receiving four or more years of Spanish reading instruction 15.5% of the students were given automatic transition to English reading instruction. Results also showed that 34% were automatically advanced to 8th grade because their LEP status was given as the reason for them not achieving the requirements for promotion. Similar reasons and their migrant status explain why they were advanced in the primary grade levels as well.

The articles summarized in this section provided a limited overview about three areas that can be used to influence beginner readers that are struggling in different literacy areas. The first study concluded that even though various schools’ attempted to increase parental involvement there was no link to gains in literacy. The researchers attributed this finding to the overwhelming practice of viewing parents as subjects to teach school accepted practices and activities at home. The findings from Crain-Thoreson and Dale’s (1999) study suggested students who struggle with oral language made gains from being read to by adults who
implemented certain strategies. These strategies included encouraging dialogue with the child, asking open-ended questions, and asking who/what questions. The results from Cota’s (1997) study had implications for primary bilingual educators. She found intermediate ELL students made more language gains when exposed to SDAIE instruction when compared to other intermediate students who did not have this advantage. In summary, these articles suggested educators can take advantage of various strategies if they have students struggling in specific areas of literacy.

Conclusion

One factor contributing to a solid base in emergent literacy skills for students with diverse ethnic backgrounds is positive relationships between parents and teachers. The first section of this chapter reviewed best methods teachers can employ to build relationships with their students’ families. When educators discovered the varying types of resources and knowledge that households provided young learners, they were better equipped to support these children in the classroom. Furthermore, parents began to feel the literacy practices they used at home were significant in their children’s education and their voices were acknowledged and valued within a classroom setting (González et al., 1993; Iddings & Katz, 2007). As teachers strived to get to know families, they also became aware of the literacy practices that were evident in different households.

The second section of research in this chapter revealed that even though the participants came from various households of socio-economic levels and heritages, there was evidence in all three studies that various literacy practices were taking place. These practices played a role in later literacy development in school. There were reading materials available within households and parents read aloud to their children beginning at different ages (Roberts, Jergens, &
Burchinal, 2005). Also, Saenz and Felix (2007) found parents felt that they were responsible to contributing to their children’s education. The evidence from these three studies contrasted a popular belief that students from poverty or households where a language other than English is spoken do not offer rich academic resources or literate experiences.

Taking this into account the third section attempted to address specific issues some emergent readers struggle with and suggested specific strategies to aid in literacy development.

The research conducted by Edwards and Warin (1999) focused on increasing parental involvement in order to build struggling students literacy achievement. They concluded what prior research had already found. Educator’s primary view of parental involvement is extending the teacher’s role and learning objectives by instructing parents how to perform activities that were taking place in the classroom in the home. Rarely, did educators use parents as informational resources to improve instruction within the classroom. The second study conducted by Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1999) showed gains in oral language output when young children were involved in a Dialogic Reading intervention. As caregivers and educators improved on acknowledging child dialogue and asking open-ended questions as well as wh-questions while reading aloud, children participated with longer utterances. This routine while reading aloud to young ELLs proved beneficial to enhancing oral language acquisition. Finally, intermediate ELL students enrolled in bilingual education who received instruction in their L1 and/or SDAIE performed better at school than their peers who did not receive these advantages (Cota, 1997). Educators can also take this into account as they prepare their younger students for future academic success.

These strategies and practices need to be put into place in the classroom if it is appropriate for a particular student. After teachers have built positive interactions with students
and their families, it will become clear in what area each individual student will need support. Part of building relationships incorporates finding out what families are doing at home with regard to literacy in order to support them by making suggestions based on best researched practices. While this chapter reviewed research which supported the topic of my action research, the next chapter will provide a clear description of the overall action research.
Chapter Three

Introduction

This action research examined the role that positive teacher-parent relationships had in young readers’ attitudes towards literacy as they participated in reading units designed around their interests. The research design for this study was developed from a combination of research articles, responses from student and parent surveys, and information collected from home visits. This chapter includes a description of the student population, a detailed explanation of procedures, and the type of assessments and data collection that took place during the course of the study. First, the sample population is described.

Sample Population

The students in this study were from a first grade classroom in an urban setting in the Midwest. There were fifteen first grade Spanish speaking students on my classroom list; all of who qualified for free or reduced lunch. This was the first experience in first grade for the six year olds. Nine of the students were of Mexican heritage, six students were of Puerto Rican ethnicity, and one student was born in Cuba. Five of the students were the focus of this study and received multiple home visits and participated in the theme units. Three students were used as controls and also participated in the theme units but did not receive home visits, while the remaining seven students received one home visit but did not participate in the theme units. The following section explicitly describes the procedural steps taken during the research project.

Procedures

This section presents the step by step process of the research project. First, at the beginning of the school year and prior to the project’s data collection phase I observed every
student’s literacy behaviors in order to gauge which students were proficient or basic. The entire class participated in a daily ninety minute literacy block. They worked on phonological skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and story mapping. Students had the option to work independently, with a partner, or in a small group to finish their work. During these informal classroom observations, I noticed eight students copying from their peers in order to finish literacy tasks in the work stations, guessing at answers in order to finish the work, or doing no work at all because they were distracted. Moreover, I noted little motivation on the part of some of these same students to read and participate during small group reading lessons. They did not offer predictions and when forced to answer text questions they usually said nothing, created events based on their interpretations of the illustrations, or said that they did not know. Based on this evidence I predicted these students would be possible subjects for this study.

Second, in September I administered the district wide Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment to every student. Tesoros assessed Spanish literacy skills including letter/sound recognition, beginning sounds, rhyme words, and retelling an unfamiliar text.

Third, in November and still prior to the actual research data collection, every parent was given the opportunity to fill out a pre-research survey (Appendix A). The same week I conducted a reading interest pre-survey (Appendix B) with every student. I used the information from the parent and student surveys to distinguish which students expressed low interest in reading and whose parents expressed negative opinions about my communication and ability to support their child’s learning. These surveys are described in greater detail in the data collection section.
Fourth, after receiving the parent surveys I sent a letter (Appendix C) home with each student indicating my desire to conduct home visits in order to get to know my students and their families on a personal level. I emphasized the home visits would be informal conversations centered on their beliefs, interests, and extracurricular family activities and would last about an hour. They would not be conferences about their child’s academics. I received ten responses and visited all ten households from November through February.

Fifth, once I finished with the ten home visits I reviewed Tesoros assessment results, the parent and student survey results, and reflected on my informal observations. Using this information I chose the five student participants. TESOROS results indicated that eight students’ phonological or reading comprehension skills were below grade level expectations. Of these eight students, five of them received home visits. These were the five students I picked to participate in the study.

Next, I sent consent letters (Appendix D) home to the five students who tested below grade level on the Tesoros assessment or indicated little interest in reading and school, and with whom I had done a home visit. Each of the five students returned the signed consent letter. The next steps took place as part of the study’s data collection phase.

The first two weeks of data collection were dedicated to recording anecdotal notes on a data collection sheet (Appendix E) I created. I collected the information during small group reading lessons for the five confirmed participants and the three students in the control group. The anecdotal notes recorded how many utterances the students produced while discussing and answering questions about the district mandated text for the week. I also wrote down any other relevant information related to phonological skills and reading comprehension. During these two weeks I also conducted the second home visit for the five participants. At the second home visit I
interviewed the parents about literacy practices that were taking place at home and the parent’s opinion about the child’s motivation and interest in reading. This information was recorded on a questionnaire (Appendix F).

Next, I developed two six-week thematic units that incorporated the interests of the five students. The first theme related to horses and Barbies. Two focus girls and one control girl participated in this group. The second unit was Toy Story (Arnold & Lasseter, 1995) and included three focus boys and two control boys.

Then, I observed each child for six weeks during the small group thematic reading lessons. I took anecdotal notes while the child participated in literacy conversations and phonological awareness activities similar to those that were assessed on Tesoros. Throughout the six week thematic units the parents were asked to maintain a journal. Every weekend I reviewed the parents’ notes about what was taking place at home and planned the following week’s lessons and activities that incorporated similar extension activities. Every Monday I sent the journal home with a recommendation about an activity or a technique and collected them at the end of the week. I encouraged them to write about their observations as they practiced the activities and techniques with their child at home. The parents wrote their observations, notes, and suggestions to me in the journals. I wrote out each activity and included examples in the journals. These activities incorporated their observations about what was taking place at home and extensions of what we were doing in the classroom. After the six week observation period I administered the Tesoros assessment and the same student reading interest survey. I compared the post assessment and survey results with the pre test results in order to draw conclusions. I also reviewed my anecdotal notes and the parents’ journals to track correlations between the relationship I was building between the classroom and the home as well as the student’s reading
progress. Last, I sent home the same parent survey to every parent in the classroom. I used results from the parents whose children participated in the project to make comparisons with those parents I had not visited.

**Data Collection**

In this section I discuss the data sources I used. Before implementing the action research project I reviewed the parent surveys. The surveys targeted their opinions regarding my effectiveness of communication. They indicated their comfort level in approaching me to discuss their child and if they used suggestions I provided at the October parent teacher conferences. Also, I used student surveys to get an idea of students’ attitudes about academics. These survey questions related to how much they enjoyed reading at home or at school, who they read with at home, and how much they liked coming to school. A third data source was scores from Tesoros. The scores indicated which students were struggling with beginning phonological awareness skills. Information collected during the home visits was essential in planning for the thematic units. While visiting families for the first time I audio recorded the visits. I did not have access to the recorder for all visits. In these cases I summarized the visits in a journal. These summaries included the student’s interests, hobbies, and literacy practices in the home. They also included background information about the family, the parent’s academic history, and any other pertinent information. During the second home visits I created a questionnaire (Appendix F) with specific questions regarding parent aspirations and goals for their child, the child’s weaknesses and strengths when reading, how the parent assists with homework, and how the parent viewed the child’s attitude towards school. I used data collection sheets (Appendix E) I created to use during small group reading lessons. The data collection sheets gathered student utterances during book discussions, scores for informal assessments on phonological skills, and
anecdotal comments for each student. At the end of the project I used the same parent and student surveys to compare with the pretest surveys.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described the student population of a first grade classroom, outlined the procedures, and explained the data collection including surveys, assessments, anecdotal notes, and information from home visits related to the action research. These sections are important to examine in order to comprehend the results. While this chapter discussed the participants, procedures, and data collection the following chapter discusses the results of the role that home and school relationships play on improving literacy skills for the study’s five participants.
Chapter Four

Introduction

This chapter will present and analyze the data collected during the course of the study. One goal was to observe the effectiveness that creating positive relationships with a student’s family had on a student’s literacy skills. Another goal was to use students’ interests in thematic units in order to increase positive attitudes towards reading. In order to analyze these goals I will compare responses from pre and post student and parent surveys, and include supporting anecdotal notes from the thematic units, parent notes from communication journals, and students’ scores from a pre and post literacy assessment.

Presentation of data

In this section, data are presented in three subsections. In the first subsection I will present and discuss the data related to the effectiveness of creating positive relationships with students’ families. Parent pre and post surveys (Appendix A) were compared and excerpts from communication journals were used as supporting evidence. The second subsection will include data related to student attitudes towards reading by comparing pre and post student surveys and discussing pertinent information from the anecdotal notes taken during the reading units as well as parent observations at home. The last subsection will analyze student progress in three different areas of phonological awareness skills assessed on the district Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment.

Positive relationships between the school and home

This section discusses parents’ responses from a pre and post survey (Appendix A). Eight of fifteen parents returned the pre survey and seven of fifteen parents returned the post survey. On the pre survey 1 parent responded I communicated poorly regarding the child’s
academics while 7 parents responded well or very well. The post survey results did not show change; 7 parents indicated that I communicated well or very well with them. This was an anonymous survey therefore I cannot distinguish which parents received or did not receive home visits or which parents communicated via journals. The pre and post survey also indicated many parents felt comfortable in approaching me regarding their child’s academics. Seven parents responded on the pre and post survey they were comfortable to very comfortable, while one parent on the pre survey indicated a low comfort level in talking to me about his/her child.

Figure 1: Communication Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Parent Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Start of week 3 the mom asked me to call because she did not understand the activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Week 1 mom wrote that her daughter loves to talk about horses and suggested Student 2 needs more help with the Spanish sounds <em>gui</em> and <em>que</em>. Week 2 mom wrote that Student 2 insists on practicing the vocabulary from the unit for longer times than the parents wanted to. Week 3 mom wrote that the activities are helping Student 2 improve in reading because she now wants to read every evening. Week 4 the mom informs me that Student 2 is confusing the /b/ and /d/ sounds. Week 5 mom comments that Student 2 likes to read and plays teacher at home and she always carries a book with her when they leave the house. She also observed that Student 2 was reading faster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Week 1 parent wrote that Student 3 liked the activity Week 2 parent observed that Student 3 wanted to continue practicing the vocabulary activity Week 4 parent observed that Student 3 was able and wanted to do the activities by himself. Parent stated that he is more active and takes out his homework to do right after getting home from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Journal has examples of how the parents extended the activities by using vocabulary in sentences, drawings, and breaking them into syllables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Week 1 Mom observed that Student 5 had problems with separating long words into individual sounds. Week 2 Student 5 extended the activity by using vocabulary in a fiction story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The communication journals the parents maintained were also used to analyze the effect of the home school relationships during the reading unit intervention. Figure 1 indicates which households were implementing my suggestions and activities during the five week reading unit. Also included are parent comments written in the journals that pertain to student reading attitudes and teacher/parent relationships. The communication journals indicate parents were implementing most of the activities at home with their child. I received a note from Student 1’s mother in the communication journal at the beginning of week three of the thematic unit. She wanted me to call to explain the journal activity because she did not understand it. After this phone call the communication journal was filled out with parent observations and comments, therefore having skipped week 1 and 2. In the fifth week, Student 3 and Student 5 did not complete the activities. During the course of the reading unit all households attempted to share observations and comments about the activities and recommendations I assigned. One example was both Student 2 and Student 3’s parents’ comments on their children’s positive attitudes when performing the activities. Another instance was Student 2 and Student 5’s parents’ suggestions to me regarding areas that their children were struggling with.

In addition to the parent survey and communication journals there was other communication with parents. At the start of the reading units two parents whose children participated in the study and had received the initial home visit called me to request additional information about the communication journals. Both invited me to visit them at home to talk more about the project. They expressed thanks for including their children in the study and asked questions about their role at home. I did not receive phone calls or any form of communication from the three parents whose children participated in the units but did not receive
the first home visit. The next section discusses the student’s attitudes towards reading as they participated in the thematic unit.

**Attitudes**

Another purpose of this action research was to create positive attitudes towards reading by integrating student’s interests during small group reading lessons. The following visuals provide information from the pre and post student reading interest survey. Figure 2 displays the results from the survey question, “I like to read.” The numeric values on the horizontal scale represent responses on the pre and post survey. The number one represents low interest, two is medium interest, and three is high interest.

Figure 2: Student Survey Question- I like to read

![Figure 2: Student Survey Question- I like to read](image)

Figure 3 displays the results from the survey question, “How often do you read at home?” The horizontal numeric scale refers to the frequency the students recorded reading at home on the pre and post survey. Number one represents never, number two represents sometimes, and number three represents every day.

![Figure 3](image)
There are differing results from the questions on the student reading interest survey. Figure 2 shows Student 4 and Student 3 experienced an increase in a desire to read from medium to high, Student 1 and Student 2 maintained the same interest level to read, and Student 5 decreased his interest to read from high to low interest. Student 5’s response on the post survey contradicts several notes from his the data collection chart (Appendix E). On three separate occasions he did not want to leave the reading group but desired to continue with the activities. A different day when I called Student 5’s small reading group he hurriedly jumped up from his work and announced, “It’s time for me to go!” This data could be seen as positive interest towards reading rather than low interest.

Results from figure 3, regarding the question about the frequency in which the students read at home indicated 3 students maintained the same frequency from pre to post survey, 2 students sometimes read at home and 1 student always read at home. One student indicated an
increase in reading at home from pre to post survey from never to sometimes. One student recorded a decrease in the frequency in which he read at home from always to sometimes.

Another data source used to measure reading interest level came from the student data collection sheets. I tallied the number of times a student contributed a complete thought during text discussions. These remarks ranged from personal connections while reading or previewing a text, making predictions, asking questions while reading, and answering comprehension questions. Students did not receive marks for one word responses such as yes or no. Answers given during phonics activities were not included in this data. Figure 4 represents the five student participants that received the home visits as well as the three members who did not receive the home visits. The pre data refers to the two weeks prior to implementing the thematic units. These first two weeks of reading lessons contained the districted selected text, phonological activity, and comprehension skill. The unit weeks refer to the thematic unit lessons which included the texts, activities, and games I created around the students’ interests.

Figure 4: Student Participation Prior and During Thematic Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>pre data week 1</th>
<th>pre data week 2</th>
<th>unit week 1</th>
<th>unit week 2</th>
<th>unit week 3</th>
<th>unit week 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was wide variation in the frequency of participation from the individuals who received the home visits and participated in the communication journals. Each member participated during every week of the study’s unit. The participation was much lower for the members who did not receive home visits. Each member of the control group had zero incidences of participation until week three of the unit.

The last data source I used to analyze a change in student reading interest was the anecdotal notes I recorded on each member’s data collection sheet. I took notes during the small group reading lessons. The reading units consisted of two groups. One group comprised of five boys and the theme was *Toy Story* (Arnold & Lasseter, 1995). The second group consisted of three girls and the topics were Barbie and horses. My anecdotal notes showed one lesson in particular provided insight to the attitudes of the boys participating in the *Toy Story* unit. Student 1 and Student 5 expressed a desire to continue singing a song from *Toy Story* instead of returning to the literacy centers. Also, the data collection sheets from the female participants during the four week unit on Barbie and horses shared additional information regarding positive attitudes about reading. Anecdotal notes from the three girls indicated they participated more when they shared personal stories about their experiences with horses or playing with Barbie dolls at home. One observation stated Student 4 vigorously waving her hand to share a personal story and when she was not called on she dropped her shoulders and frowned while looking at the floor. This body language could indicate disappointment when not allowed to share her background knowledge. Notes about Student 2 similarly showed repeated instances of sharing personal stories about riding her mom’s horse, asking questions about a nonfiction text, and talking about a book about dolls while previewing it with the other members. The next section details the
literacy progress for the five students on the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment

**Student literacy achievement**

Another objective of this action research was to determine if student learning in three areas of phonological awareness improved when students participated in specifically designed reading units tailored to their interests. The following chart tracks the five students’ scores on the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment administered in the beginning of the school year and again after the research study took place. The three areas of phonological awareness evaluated were letter name identification, letter sound identification, and rhyme word identification.

Figure 5: Tesoros Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Name Identification</th>
<th>September possible 22 points</th>
<th>May possible 22 points</th>
<th>Gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Sound Identification</th>
<th>possible 25 points</th>
<th>possible 25 points</th>
<th>Gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5 shows literacy growth from September to May for each student in the study.
These areas of phonological awareness were integrated within the reading units by creating games and activities using the vocabulary terms, topics, or technology which interested the children. Gains were made in all areas with the exception of two students. One student achieved all seventeen points in the September letter sound evaluation and the same holds true for a different student in the area of identifying rhyme words.

**Analysis**

In this section the data presented is used to analyze the hypotheses I made prior to conducting the research. First, data did support my first hypothesis that parents would be willing to share personal information about their child with me and implement my suggestions regarding
how to support their child in the home because of my effort to establish a positive relationship. Responses from the pre and post parent survey indicated most parents who replied were more than satisfied with my efforts to communicate with them about their child’s academics, felt comfortable approaching me with concerns, and agreed I supported their child in the classroom by using their interests. Since the parent surveys were anonymous and seven of fifteen surveys were returned I cannot distinguish between parents who received home visits and those parents who did not. Overall, parents expressed much satisfaction regardless if they received a home visit and their child participated in the intervention or did not receive a home visit. Data from the communication journals revealed the parents’ willingness to implement my suggestions and share their observations about their child at home. All parents practiced in the majority of the activities during the course of the research as indicated in Figure 1. Parent comments in the journals were evidence of their willingness to communicate with me. Student 3’s parents commented about his growing independence to complete his homework which indicated a change in attitude they had not observed before. Also, Student 1’s mother felt comfortable requesting a phone conference in order to clarify how to implement the activities with her son. Lastly, Student 2 and Student 5’s parents suggested I work with them on specific areas their children struggled with during the recommended activities. These correspondences were revealed during an already established relationship between the parents and me. These data supported the hypothesis established that building relationships with families will play a positive role in the parents’ willingness to implement my suggestions in the home and in return provided feedback about supporting their children in the classroom.

Second, I hypothesized that once I used the information gained from the home visits and journals to create units aimed at students’ interests, students’ motivation and participation would
increase. This in turn would contribute to gains in literacy skills. Data collected from the student reading interest survey, data collection sheets, communication journals, and the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment were used to discuss this hypothesis. One way I used to measure student attitudes was comparing responses on the pre and post student survey. While this revealed the majority in the intervention group liked to read and were reading at home after participation in the study, it is not conclusive that the thematic unit was the main cause of their positive attitudes.

Another indicator of increasing reading interest during the unit was shown in Figure 4 which compared the participation frequency of the five focus students to three students who did not receive home visits nor participate in home activities. The participation of the five students was greater than the three students who participated in the thematic unit but did not receive home visits. There was minimal participation on the part of the three students. This can be contributed to the fact that the thematic topics were not designed at their specific interests or hobbies. Since they did not receive home visits, I did not have the information about them as I did for the other five participants. The thematic units were specifically designed for the five participants and data in Figure 4 supported the hypothesis that participation increases when students’ interests are used to support their learning. Parent observations displayed in Figure 1 supported positive attitudes not observed in the classroom context. One example noted was Student 2’s mother’s comment connecting the intervention to Student 2’s increased desire to read every day and bring a book every time they left the house. She also observed that Student 2 was reading faster at the end of the intervention. Student 3’s parents contributed by writing he liked a specific activity in week one wanted to continue practicing week two’s assignment, and by week four he began his homework right after arriving from school and accomplished the tasks independently.
Third, the data in Figure 5 indicated there was academic progress in the areas of letter name identification, letter sound identification, beginning sound identification, and rhyme word identification. All five students showed gains in these three areas. The improvement in these areas of literacy could be linked to the increased participation which took place due to the integration of the thematic unit, especially in those students receiving low scores in September on the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment. Student 1 and Student 3 scored the lowest in all four literacy areas and also participated the least in the two weeks prior to the thematic unit. During the study both students increased the frequency of participation and made the greatest overall gains on the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment when compared to the other three students. Student 1 gained 54 points while Student 3 gained 30 points. Student 1 and Student 3 had other factors in common that contribute to the effectiveness of the study for these students. Classroom observations before the study indicated Student 3 and Student 1 were frequently distracted and rarely completed their work station assignments. During the second home visit Student 3’s father explained he was exasperated with Student 3’s lack of attention when doing his homework. He did not know what to do to help support Student 3 because he was so distracted and did not pay attention. Student 1’s parents informed me at his home visit he needed someone at his side to help with homework in order to finish. Also, Student 3’s response on the post survey revealed he increased his desire to read to high. Student 1’s post survey response indicated he maintained medium interest in reading. Moreover, these two students indicated they were not reading at home every day. These data suggest this study is more effective for students with low reading interest and struggling in literacy. It is expected that students at this grade and age level would make academic progress in these three areas, therefore the gains cannot be solely contributed to the intervention.
Conclusion

This chapter presented and analyzed the data from the action research study *The Role that Positive School-Home Relationships Play in Creating Positive Attitudes and Increased Literacy Skills in Young Readers*. Data was collected from a pre and post student reading interest survey, a pre and post parent survey, as well as a pre and post literacy assessment. The literacy assessments targeted four areas of beginning reading phonological skills. Other information analyzed consisted of the teacher created data collection sheets and five parent communication journals. The results indicated when positive home-school relationships are established parents feel comfortable communicating with the teacher and providing personal information to help the teacher address student needs in the classroom. The frequency of student participation remained the same or increased during the thematic units specifically designed with students’ interest in mind. All participants made gains in the four areas assessed on the post literacy evaluation. There may be a stronger effect for lower achieving students. Data indicated that students with low literacy scores at the beginning of the year made the most gains on the same assessment when their participation increased during the intervention. In the next chapter, connections to existing research, an explanation of the results, the strengths and limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research will be explored.
Chapter Five

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence home visits have on increasing positive reading attitudes and literacy skills in a group of first graders. There were two hypotheses guiding this study. First, I hypothesized that the parents of the students in the study would be willing to share information about their child with me and implement my suggestions regarding how to support their child in the home due to my effort to establish a personal relationship. Second, I hypothesized that once I used the information gained from the home visits to create units aimed at their interests, students’ motivation and participation would increase. Once participation increased, students would show progress in literacy skills. In this concluding chapter I synthesize the information from the previous four chapters as well as offer my own opinions related to the research. This chapter has been organized into the following sections: connections to existing research, an explanation of the results, the strengths and weaknesses of the study, and recommendations for the future research.

Connection to Existing Research and Common Core Standards

My action research project titled *The Role Home Visits Play in Creating Positive Attitudes and Increased Literacy Skills in Young Readers* was created based on several findings from various researchers. My students came from low income Hispanic households. A popular perception by educators was that children from these households have no parental involvement nor are the parents concerned about the academic well being of their children. One goal of my research was to build support contradicting this idea. Prior research found parental involvement was taking place in low income households of various minority populations and, furthermore, parents expressed much concern for their child’s current and future academic progress (Delgado-
Positive Home-School Relationships

Gaitan, 1992; Saenz & Felix, 2007; Roberts, Jergens, & Burchinal, 2005; Ezell, Gonzales, & Randolph, 2000; McCormick & Mason, 1986; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000). The same researchers similarly found many of these households provided rich social, intellectual, and educational resources for their children, however the schools did not recognize these as tools to be used within a classroom context. In order to collect information about my students’ personal lives and integrate their interests and familiar resources in my teaching I visited them at their homes.

Home visits were an essential component of my study. I used the home visits to build positive relationships and open communication lines with my students’ families. I hoped to see a connection between improved literacy skills as parental support increased. Also, I used the personal information collected during the home visits to create the specially designed reading units for my study’s participants. Three prior studies’ findings provided the background for the manner in which I conducted home visits. First, one important finding was Brown’s (1993) conclusion that most parental involvement programs simply reinforced the school’s values and goals and attempted to teach parents how to implement them in the home. Walkerdine and Lucey’s (1989) study also confirmed this concept. They found parents were viewed as subjects to be taught and informed rather than rich resources to be used within the classroom. The final study by González and colleagues (1993) pioneered the idea of every household having funds of knowledge regardless of their race and income. The students in my classroom were similar to the subjects in this last study; they were low income Hispanic families with children attending an elementary school in an urban district. Gonzalez’s study taught classroom teachers to take on the role of an ethnographer by collecting information about their students’ families while visiting their homes. The teacher participants were not in the homes to instruct families how to help their
child academically or express behavior concerns, but to observe the everyday lives of the families while collecting information about the social and intellectual resources the households provide. I used this home visit concept when I met with my students’ families. Home visits were essential to discovering the student’s interests and motivating factors I used when designing the thematic units. These units were designed with the intent to increase positive reading attitudes which would positively affect essential literacy skills in beginner readers.

The instruction implemented during the thematic units incorporated a teaching technique which previous research had found positively influenced literacy skills in a study group similar to that of mine. Small group reading discussions taking place in the classroom were planned to elicit student-lead participation and discussion rather than teacher initiated. To accomplish this I used specific question types as suggested by Crain-Thorenson and Dale (1999). These questions included, but were not limited to wh-questions and open-ended questions. By allowing students to direct the conversation with these types of questions the children’s interests and opinions were often the main topic. This allowed for more opportunities to participate with longer utterances instead of one word responses. As I created the reading units I incorporated the skills evaluated on the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) district wide assessment and first grade phonological awareness objectives indicated in the Common Core Standards. The Common Core Standards were adopted as the new Wisconsin Standards in 2010 (Department of Public Instruction, 2011). Students practiced these skills within the specially designed thematic units. The activities, vocabulary, and discussion during the thematic units were tailored to the participants’ interests and hobbies. Since strong relationships between children’s teacher and parents can contribute to academic gains in the classroom (Wright & Stegelin, 2003) communication journals were used to maintain
open conversations with each participant’s family. These units were meant to increase positive attitudes towards reading by incorporating parental cooperation in the home. Weems and Rogers (2007) emphasized what parents do in the home has a greater impact on student achievement than parental involvement at school. The combination of information gathered at the home visits, district and state academic goals, and consistent communication with families during the units was necessary to complete this research project. The next section provides an in depth explanation of the results.

**Explanation of Results**

The results of this action research project supported my first hypothesis; parents of the students in the study will be willing to share information about their child with me and implement my suggestions regarding how to support their child in the home due to my effort to establish a personal relationship. It was evident the home visits established trust and confidence between me and the parents. Excerpts from the communication journals indicated parents’ willingness to implement my suggestions at home. Moreover, parents provided feedback about their child’s reactions to the activities, questions about the activities, or other pertinent information which I was able to use in the classroom. It was clear from the data of the communication journals that parents were working with their children on a weekly basis. One exception occurred when a parent did not understand the exercise. In this instance the parent requested I call her to clarify. These conversations and communication may not have taken place if there was not an already established relationship.

The results were inconclusive for the second hypothesis; once I use the information gained from the home visits to create units aimed at their interests, students’ motivation and participation will increase. Once participation increases, students will show progress in literacy
skills. These data showed some of the students who participated in the intervention exhibited positive feelings towards reading and all five participants made gains in literacy skills. First, responses from the student post reading interest survey indicated some positive attitudes. Four students responded they had moderate to high interest in reading. I believe the study had an influence in fostering these positive attitudes. My anecdotal notes stated these students appeared to be excited to come to the small reading group and eagerly participated on a daily basis. One individual cheered and clapped when we sang songs from the movie *Toy Story* (Disney, 1995). These behaviors were strong evidence of positive attitudes. One student responded he did not enjoy reading, but his pre survey response was he had high interest. The low interest response could be explained by his joking personality. Also, this same student frequently replied with silly answers in order to make jokes with his peers or get reactions from the teachers. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 4, there were various instances when he desired to stay longer to continue reading and doing the exercises, which would indicate a positive attitude and contradict his response on the posttest. Comparing individual responses from pre to post survey showed less supporting evidence that each member increased their attitudes towards reading. Two of the study’s participants did not experience an increase in reading interest. Their responses from pre to post survey remained unchanged, one student maintained moderate reading interest while the other maintained high reading interest. The remaining two students expressed an increase in reading interest from pre to post survey. I believe the five responses were not related with the participants’ reading attitudes while participating in the thematic units for two reasons. First, the survey did not mention the thematic unit but asked about their feelings regarding reading in general, so students were not forced to make connections between their reading interests and the units. A second factor may be attributed to the mood of the student at
the moment. A first grader’s response would be affected if they were having a good or bad day and what type of activities were taking place right before taking the survey. Whether they were struggling with work or finishing it without problems would play a role in their responses on the survey. Frequency in participation was also analyzed to measure student attitudes.

Results taken from the frequency of participation from the study’s five members compared to the three control students as recorded on the student data sheets revealed varying individual results in participation from pre to post intervention. As a whole, the study group averaged 35 participation occurrences per week prior to the thematic unit and increased to 41 occurrences per week during the intervention. The control group did not have any participation occurrences prior to the unit and during the unit averaged 5 occurrences per week as a group. I contribute the control group’s lack of participation to a general disinterest in reading and the fact that the thematic units were not personally designed for them. The thematic units were created from the personal information collected during the home visits of the five focus participants. The three control students did not receive home visits and therefore, these units were not tailored to their individual preferences. Even though this data reinforced the idea that using students’ interests can contribute to increased participation it cannot be determined to what extent the thematic units played in individual participation. Students who participated frequently prior to the intervention continued to average about the same amount during the units. I believe these results were because students who frequently participated prior to the intervention and demonstrated positive reading attitudes continued these behaviors throughout the study. The study did not increase positive attitudes because they were already present. One of the study’s participant’s average participation decreased from 6 times per week prior to the intervention to 4 times per week during the intervention. I noted on this student’s data collection sheet he was
often distracted and did not pay attention to the texts or discussions. He needed constant reminders to stay focused and not look around the classroom or play with his hands. I believe these behaviors subtracted from participation since he did not know what his peers were discussing or the activities they were accomplishing. At the second home visit his parents expressed concern and exasperation because they could not get him to concentrate on his homework or other literacy and math activities they attempted with him. Perhaps this frequent distraction and disinterest during the reading group is because the student did not find the activities stimulating or the theme motivating. The scores from the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment were used to discuss student gains in literacy skills.

The final part of the second hypothesis was students would make progress in literacy skills. Data collected from the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment supported that children made gains in literacy skills. The scores from the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment in May showed gains in the four phonological skills practiced during the thematic unit for the five participants. The net gains ranged from 9 points to 54 points. I believe there are two reasons why students made these gains. First, I designed activities which targeted these phonological areas during the course of the thematic units. The increase in practice and instruction may have contributed to the literacy gains. Second, the literacy gains can be due to regular development which takes place in first graders from September to May because all students, regardless of participation in the study or not, made academic gains on the same assessment over the course of the academic year. One student in particular who was a year and a half below grade level at the beginning of the school year made the greatest gains in every area when compared to the rest of the study group. I believe this student benefited the most from this study because of the increased exposure and
practice to these basic phonological skills. During the second home visit for this student the parents commented he needed support to finish his daily homework because he did not understand the tasks. This was not the case during the thematic unit. The parent comments from the communication journal noted he was able to perform the activities at home independently. Taking this data into account, I contribute this individual student’s success to the specially designed thematic unit. This section provided possible explanations for the results of the study.

The strengths and limitations of this study are addressed in the following section.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This action research had strengths as well as limitations. The first strength was the parent-teacher relationships evident prior to beginning the study. On the pre-survey parents indicated they already felt there was a positive relationship with the teacher and communication was effective. Overall, the parents who returned the survey felt they were informed of their child’s academics in the classroom. I believe these positive feelings played a role in the parents’ willingness to invite me to their homes because of fifteen families, ten families invited me to do home visits. Furthermore, when I was in the families’ homes I felt welcomed and genuinely appreciated for the effort to get to know them outside of the classroom. Every parent was willing to share personal life stories about themselves and their child. If parents were unsatisfied with me there may not have been as many families requesting visits. Without these strong relationships, it would have been more difficult to get the cooperation of parents during the course of the study.

The second strength of the home visit portion of the research was that I was able to provide individualized instruction for ten of the fifteen students in my classroom. The stories, relationships, and practices I witnessed in the homes impacted the design of my instruction for
all these students. When creating lessons plans, whether they were related to the thematic units or other not, I predicted which students would struggle or excel. I was able to make modifications by providing more support or even extension activities that would not have been possible if I was unaware of families’ situations and experiences.

There were also limitations to this study. First, the intervention group was very small. It consisted of only five participants and incorporated a range of attitudes towards reading and literacy levels. It is difficult to determine the true efficiency of the intervention due to the small and diverse group. Conducting this research as a school wide or district wide initiative in order to increase the number of first graders who come from low income Hispanic households and exhibit a deficiency in beginner literacy skills as well as low reading interest would increase the validity of this study.

Second, the students who may have benefited the most from this study were not part of the focus group. It was my intention to include four particular students who, through classroom observations and the Tesoros (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg & Beeler, 1999) assessment, were below grade level in literacy skills and lacked motivation and interest to learn in the classroom. One of these students was a participant but the remaining three were not because I was not invited for a home visit. I believe these three students would have benefited if they took part in units designed for their interests while I developed better relationships with their families because of the results from the one lower achieving student who was in the study. Prior to the study this student rarely contributed during small reading group discussions and was performing below grade level. However, during the course of the unit he participated several times every day and made the most gains in literacy skills.
Lastly, the data collected and the intervention format could not specifically assess the study’s direct impact on participants’ reading attitudes or progress in the literacy skills evaluated. Each participant made gains in the phonological skills assessed, but the progress cannot be attributed solely to the intervention. It cannot be established how much of the literacy progress occurred due to the positive reading attitudes or to outside factors. It would be expected that students would progress from September to May in these phonological skills regardless of participating in this kind of study. While this section addressed strengths and limitations of the research, the next suggestion provides recommendations for future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are two important areas in this study that merit further attention and research; changes in the participant group and the connection home visits have on classroom instruction. First, results indicated students who began significantly low in the four areas of literacy skills assessed as well as expressed low interest in reading benefited the most from the thematic unit intervention. I recommend the same research be conducted with this type of intervention group rather than with students who expressed high interest in reading and are proficient readers at the beginning of the study. An additional recommendation would be to have a larger group of students with these characteristics thus providing more conclusive results regarding the connection between home-school relationships and a student’s reading interest and literacy skills development.

I also suggest further research directed at the impact home visits have on educators’ classroom instruction. This recommendation is based on the personal experiences I had while conducting this research. I recommend every educator take the initiative to conduct home visits for two reasons. First, Brown (1993) found that most school programs which were designed to
increase parental involvement do not utilize the vital resources provided in the students’ homes. One way to combat this would be for educators to be present in their students’ homes as an observer, not as a tool to reinforce a school’s objectives or initiatives. Second, I recommend teachers do home visits because of the transforming effect it had on my teaching philosophy and my interactions with students within the classroom. Before beginning the home visits I was part of the majority of teachers who Brown (1993) described as acting as a school’s agent who viewed families as subjects who needed instruction on how to educate their children in their own home. By following the home visit format set forth by González and colleagues (1993) I now view my role as one who needs to investigate and value what families provide and practice in the home and then integrate these resources in the classroom context. The resources and experiences which these families naturally developed were unfamiliar to me because of differences in race, beliefs, culture, and academic expectations I had. This change in philosophy helped me to see my students as unique individuals. Listening to the parents as they revealed their child’s strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and sharing childhood stories allowed me to address their individual needs in the classroom. Without this history I would not have been able to view my students in this personalized way and I would not have been able to create the thematic units as part of this study. This section offered suggestions of how to expand on the research and make it more meaningful to lower achieving students and teacher practices. The following section will summarize the ideas of this chapter.

**Conclusion**

This chapter revisited some of the major ideas presented in this action research project such as how it related to existing research and the Common Core Standards, as well as provided an explanation about the results, discussed strengths and limitations, and offered
recommendations for future related research projects. The study examined the role that home visits play on increasing positive attitudes towards reading and literacy skills. First, results showed that parents were willing to practice my suggestions and provide useful feedback to me for classroom instruction. This willingness to participate could be because of the positive relationships and consistent communication I established by conducting the home visits. Second, the participants showed positive attitudes towards reading when they participated in the thematic units. Third, each participant made academic gains in the phonological areas assessed. The complete role the reading intervention had in the areas of reading attitude and literacy skills is undetermined because there were other contributing factors that were not accounted for. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, evidence suggested the lowest achieving student with minimal reading interest benefited the most from this type of intervention. More research is necessary to conclude if the positive home-school relationships or other factors played the greatest role in creating positive reading attitudes and increasing literacy skills demonstrated by this study’s small group. In my own practice in the future, I will continue to visit students’ home to gather useful information about the families and integrate these resources in my classroom. Hopefully my effort to establish these relationships will continue to be reciprocated by the parents. In return, I will continue to strengthen the resources I utilize in the classroom and ideally the students will benefit inside and outside of the classroom in more areas than just literacy.
References


Appendix A

Parent Survey

Greetings parents,
I would appreciate it you could take about five minutes to complete the following survey and return it in your child’s homework folder by __________. There will be a student helper collecting the surveys so I will not know the identity of who filled out the survey. The information I collect from these surveys will help me better serve you when communicating about your child’s academic progress. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

1) How does Ms. Connor communicate with you about your child’s academic progress?
   1  2  3  4  5
   Very poorly  Very effectively

2) I feel comfortable contacting Ms. Connor with questions or concerns about my child.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Not at all comfortable  Very comfortable

3) Ms. Connor knows how to use my child’s interests and hobbies in order to motivate him/her while teaching.
   No  Somewhat  Yes  I don’t know

4) I implement the literacy practices and activities at home that Ms. Connor suggests.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Not at all  All the time

Comments
____________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Student Pre and Post Reading Interest Surveys

Nombre [redacted]

1) A mí me gusta ir a la escuela.

2) A mí me gusta leer.

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   casi todos los días
   a veces
   nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   sí  no
1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.

2) A mi me gusta leer.

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - casi todos los días
   - a veces
   - nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - sí
   - no
Nombre: Student 2

1) A mí me gusta ir a la escuela.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No

2) A mí me gusta leer.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - [ ] Casi todos los días
   - [ ] A veces
   - [ ] Nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No
Nombre  [ nombre ]  Student 2  Post

1) A mí me gusta ir a la escuela.
   ☑ ☑ ☐

2) A mí me gusta leer.
   ☑ ☑ ☑

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.
   ☑ ☑ ☑

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   casi todos los días
   a veces
   nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   sí  ☐  no
Nombre: Student 3 PRE

1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] No

2) A mi me gusta leer.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] Más
   - [ ] Menos

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] Más
   - [ ] Menos

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - [ ] Todos los días
   - [ ] A veces
   - [ ] Nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - [ ] Sí
   - [ ] No
Nombre Student 3 POST

1) A mí me gusta ir a la escuela.

2) A mí me gusta leer.

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - casi todos los días
   - a veces
   - nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - sí
   - no
1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.

2) A mi me gusta leer.

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - casi todos los días
   - a veces
   - nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - sí
   - no
1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.
   
2) A mi me gusta leer.
   
3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.
   
4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   
   casi todos los días
   
   a veces
   
   nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   
   sí
   
   no
Nombre  

Student 5  
PRE

1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.
   
2) A mi me gusta leer.
   
3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.
   
4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   casi todos los días
   a veces
   nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   sí  no
Nombre  Student 5  POST

1) A mi me gusta ir a la escuela.

2) A mi me gusta leer.

3) Me interesa aprender sobre cosas nuevas.

4) ¿Cuánto a menudo lees en la casa?
   - casi todos los días
   - a veces
   - nunca

5) Hay alguien en la casa me lee.
   - sí
   - no
Appendix C

Home Visit Request

Greetings parents/guardians

It has been a pleasure to work with your child since the beginning of the school year. Although this is the sixth year I have been a first grade teacher, I am always surprised and fascinated at the variety of abilities, personalities, hobbies, and academic skills that all of the students have. I enjoyed meeting you at conferences and getting to know you a little better. With 30 students in one classroom it is almost impossible to learn everything about each student. I think this is a disadvantage for the students and for me as a teacher because kids learn faster when they study themes that are interesting to them. One of my goals this year is to integrate my students’ culture and topics that are interesting to them.

In order to do this I would like to make visits to my students’ homes. These visits would not be more than one hour. Also, these visits would not be conferences, but opportunities to talk about your culture and your life and to get to know you better. I hope to use the information from these visits and plan lessons and activities that will benefit the students. I am going to begin with the 15 students that are on my class list even though I work with all 30 students. I hope that we can work together and provide your child with the best education possible. If you would like me to make a house visit please indicate your availability below. If you want more information before deciding please call me at 791-4663.

________ Yes, I would like to have a home visit.

Days and times ________________________________

________ No, I would not like to have a home visit.

Student name ____________________________

Parent name ____________________________

Thank you for your cooperation,

Ms. Connor
Appendix D

Informed Consent Letters

Dear Parents or Guardian,

I am conducting a research project to study the role a positive school and home relationship has on the development of reading skills in young readers. A major goal of the research is to conduct home visits to build relationships with the student’s family. This research project is part of the program I am in at Cardinal Stritch University to complete requirements for a Master’s degree in Literacy and English as a Second Language. I would like to include your child and you in this study.

Procedure: Your child took a pre-survey about their attitudes towards school and reading at the beginning of the school year. I will give them this survey again at the end of the project. The data from the pre and post-survey will be used in the final write up. I will visit your home during the first week of the project. Weeks two through six students will participate in guided theme units tailored to their interests. The information covered in the units will come directly from the information gathered during the home visit. At the beginning of each unit you, as parent, will be given suggestions about how to support your child at home with literacy skills.

I will compare the Tesoros Reading Verification scores from September and compare them with the same verification scores that will be given after week six. I will also keep a data collection form to take notes about your child’s participation and attitudes throughout the thematic units. I will also send the same parent survey home at the end of the unit that I sent at the beginning of the school year for parents to voluntarily fill out.

Confidentiality: All information obtained will be recorded in a confidential form and the results will not be released in any way that could identify your child in this project.

Risks: I do not anticipate this study will cause any type of risk. The immediate benefits are increased phonological awareness skills and increased interest in learning to read. Furthermore, the information derived may be helpful to others.

Use of Your information: My goal is to present the results of this study for an Action Research Paper required for completion of my graduate program. Your child’s name and personal information will not be associated with this study.

Participation is Voluntary: If you wish to withdraw your child from the study at any time, you may do so without prejudice or penalty, and the information collected up to that point would be destroyed upon request.

Your participation, as the parent, is also voluntary. In addition to the parent survey, I will suggest activities to use at home to support your child’s literacy. You can use these recommendations at your discretion. If you wish to withdraw from this study at any time, you may do so without prejudice or penalty, and the information collected up to that point would be destroyed upon request.
Your child is still able to participate even if you do not complete the parent survey or implement my suggestions at home.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please call or write:
Lindi Connor
730 W. Lapham Blvd.
Milwaukee WI, 53204
414-791-4663
lindisue22@hotmail.com

I have received an explanation of the study and permit my child to participate in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary. Please initial next to your choice.

_____ I agree to permit my child to participate in this study.
_____ I do NOT permit my child to participate in this study.

Name of minor child ______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent

I have received an explanation of the study and I will participate in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary. Please initial next to your choice.

_____ I agree to participate in this study.
_____ I do NOT agree to participate in this study.

______________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent
**Student Data Collection Sheets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assessment/Activity</th>
<th>Letter/Sound Recognition</th>
<th>Beginning Sounds</th>
<th>Rhymes</th>
<th>Week One (Pre records)</th>
<th>Week Two (Pre records)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Specially designed Unit</td>
<td>Week Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td>Week Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Week Five</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Participation data (X = complete thought)

- **Week One (Pre records):**
  - X X X X X

- **Week Two (Pre records):**
  - Specially designed Unit
  - X X X X X X

- **Week Three:**
  - Week Four
  - Week Five

---

**Notes:**
- **Week One:**
  - Completed all assessments.
  - Participated in all activities.

**Week Two:**
- **Assessment:**
  - Letter/Sound Recognition
  - Beginning Sounds
  - Rhymes

**Week Three:**
- **Assessment:**
  - Letter/Sound Recognition
  - Beginning Sounds
  - Rhymes

---

**Week Four:**
- **Assessment:**
  - Letter/Sound Recognition
  - Beginning Sounds
  - Rhymes

**Week Five:**
- **Assessment:**
  - Letter/Sound Recognition
  - Beginning Sounds
  - Rhymes

---

**Additional Notes:**
- All assessments were completed on time.
- Participation was high in all activities.
- No issues were reported during the assessments.

---

**Student Comments:**
- Great improvement seen in letter/sound recognition.
- Still working on beginning sounds.
- Rhymes were challenging but improved over time.

---

**Parent Feedback:**
- Parents noted significant improvement in letter/sound recognition.
- Requested more practice on beginning sounds.
- Appreciated the feedback on rhymes.

---

**Teacher Observations:**
- Student showed consistent improvement.
- Encourages continued practice on beginning sounds.
- Rhymes still need work but progress is noted.

---

**Summary:**
- Student made significant progress in letter/sound recognition.
- Beginning sounds require more focus.
- Rhymes are improving but need additional practice.

---

**Future Activities:**
- More practice on beginning sounds.
- Additional rhymes exercises.
- Encourage student to practice at home.

---

**Conclusion:**
- Student is improving steadily.
- Continuous monitoring and feedback will be necessary.

---

**References:**
- Positive Home-School Relationships
### Positive Home-School Relationships

**Student Data Collection Sheet**

**Name:** Student 2  
**Phonological Awareness Skills Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assessment/Activity</th>
<th>Letter/Sound Recognition</th>
<th>Beginning Sounds</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Week 1</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
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**Participation data (X = complete thought)**

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<th>Week One (Post-research)</th>
<th>Week Two (Post-research)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**Phonetically Aligned Unit**

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<th>Week Three</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>FH</td>
<td>FH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional notes:**

- Shared story of mom's horse.
- Extended conversation on background.
- Participated regularly by sharing general stories.
- Wrote outworded words.
- Shared a book sharing about lost objects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Initial Sound Recognition</th>
<th>Beginning Sounds</th>
<th>Rhythm</th>
<th>Week One (Pre-research)</th>
<th>Week Two (Pre-research)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Student 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phonological Awareness Skills Assessment</strong></td>
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<td>yyy</td>
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</table>

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**Observation Notes:**
- Student raised hand excitedly to say the teacher's name.
- Student not paying attention in last discussion.
- Student not participating in class.
- Student asked to write up details.
- Student didn't contribute.
- Student raised hand to ask a question.
- Student didn't know what to do
- Student asked after reading instructions.
- Student opened book when necessary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assessment Activity</th>
<th>Letter/Number Recognition</th>
<th>Beginning Sounds</th>
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### Participation Data

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Specially designed Unit:

- Week 3
  - Week 1:
    - Week 1
    - Week 2

Assessment notes:

- Week 1: Dropped due to 101 errors.
- Week 2: Ongoing fluency issues.
- Week 3: Excellent transition.
- Week 4: Questions answered when I don't fully understand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assessment/Activity</th>
<th>Letter/Sound Recognition</th>
<th>Beginning Sounds</th>
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<td>______</td>
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**Weekly Notes:**
- Exclaves Mr. Potato
- He likes when he sees "Dueling Horns" looped in the video.
- He wanted to sing more after the video.
- He exclaimed, "I'm going to sing!"
- He asked, "Did you know...?"
- He wanted to go back to others instead of new games.

Exclaves Mr Potter
- He likes when he sees "Dueling Horns" looped in the video.
- He wanted to sing more after the video.
- He exclaimed, "I'm going to sing!"
- He asked, "Did you know...?"
- He wanted to go back to others instead of new games.
Appendix F

Second Home Visit Questionnaire

1. Qué son sus deseos para ___________ este año escolar y para su futuro cuando se
   gradúa de high school?

2. Cuando era más joven y antes de matricularse en K4 o K5 qué hacías para prepararle a
   ___________ para ir a la escuela?

3. Cuando hace la tarea en la casa y no entiende algo a quien le ayuda y cómo?

4. Hay alguien que revisa la tarea cuando la termina?

5. Qué tipos de materiales de lectura hay en la casa? Por ejemplo revistas, periódicos, libros,
   letreros, cartas, etc?

6. Cómo es la actitud de ___________ hacia la lectura?

7. Qué son las prácticas, juegos o actividades literarios que implementan in la casa?

8. Cómo le soporta a ___________ para desarrollar sus destrezas de lectura?

9. Habla de su experiencia personal con escuela. Asistía a la escuela? Sabe leer? Le gusta?

10. Qué cosas dice ___________ que no le gustan de la escuela?

11. Qué cosas dice ___________ que le gustan de la escuela?