The Effect of At-Home Parental Involvement on Early Childhood Attendance

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The Effect of At-Home Parental Involvement on Early Childhood Attendance

By

Alison Spankowski

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Abstract

This study documents the effects of at-home parental involvement on average attendance in a four-year-old kindergarten classroom. Previous research suggests that there are six main factors that affect attendance. One such factor is parental involvement with homework assignments. An action research was designed to increase student attendance averages by implementing a weekly parent-child homework activity. The results of the action research suggest that there is no correlation between parental involvement with homework and attendance. However, future research is recommended by the researcher in part to unforeseen and uncontrolled variables that may have affected this study’s results.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The following action research study involves the intervention and results of at-home parental involvement with academic work on attendance within a four-year-old kindergarten classroom. The chapters include an introduction to the study, a review of literature pertaining to vocabulary instruction, procedures of the study, an explanation of the data collected along with the results, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter one introduces the need for the current action research study, the research base behind the study, and a brief overview of the study.

Problem

The action research was implemented in order to address the inconsistency in attendance for early childhood education classrooms and the lack of educational support for low-income students at home. Before the intervention, on average, students were absent slightly more than 10% of school days. Seven students in the class had absentee rates higher than the class average with three students missing over 20% of instructional time in school. At home, 60% of parents reported practicing academic skills with their children and an additional 20% of parents reported working on social skills with their children at home instead of academics. The remaining 20% of parents reported to not work on social or academic skills at home with their children. These children were considered to be the most at-risk students for attendance and were the students with higher than average absences prior to the intervention.

Previous research suggests many variables, including parental involvement, as factors linked to student absences. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) sight in their research that “attendance improves when schools implement positive activities that support good attendance and affect
home-school connections” (p.317). However, past research lacked insight to how parental involvement in an at-home setting could affect children’s attendance at the early childhood level.

**Research Base**

The present study implemented at-home child-parent take-home activities once a week. The families had an entire week to finish the activities at home with their child. Explicit instructions were given both in Spanish and English for all activities to avoid any bias in language. For parents that were illiterate in both Spanish and English, older siblings were asked to help guide their four-year-old family members through the activity or the researcher would orally explain each activity to parents.

The researcher based the decisions for strategies used on prior research studies. Prior research from Ready (2010) shows that students who are of a Hispanic or Black race (or non-Asian minority), come from single-parent homes, have significantly lower social economic status, and speak a language other than English at home are more likely to be absent in the first two years of formal schooling (p.277). All 20 of the students in this research study came from homes that speak Spanish and all had socioeconomic status’ that fell below the poverty line for the area. During the first six months of the school year, there was little to no success at preventing student absences or decreasing the average by using the more conventional methods of communicating with parents and increasing calls to families from the school and social workers.

Altschul’s (2011) research lent itself as further evidence for schools to apply early intervention strategies in elementary school, as parental involvement is shown to play a more significant role within the younger grades. Ready’s 2010 study also portrayed that the students benefiting most from early childhood education programs are low-socioeconomic children.
Additionally, results from Ready suggest that “low SES children with good attendance gain almost 8 percent more literacy skills per month during kindergarten and almost 7 percent more during first grade” (p.280). Based on the findings from Ready’s study, the population of this research action study had a lot to gain from being present in school each day.

Concurrently with Ready’s research, Domina (2005), Durand (2011), and Altschul (2011) all agree that parental involvement does have an effect on student progress within a formal academic setting. Durand (2011) found evidences that parental involvement during kindergarten does positively correlate with students’ literacy skills development. Without intervention from teachers, school, and social workers, student from previous research rarely improved their attendance rates. The previous studies mentioned justify the researcher’s choice to focus on parental involvement as an intervention strategy for attendance. At-home parental involvement both increases parent-teacher communication while also heightening families’ focus on academic skills.

Overview of the study

There were 20 students that participated in this study along with their respective families. There were 7 male and 13 female subjects. Students were four to five years in age, and the classroom to which all students pertained was a bilingual (Spanish-English) kindergarten classroom located in urban public school. In terms of ethnicity, 14 students were Mexican-American, five students were Puerto Rican American, and one student was Dominican-American. Students’ individual skill levels in academic and social areas ranged from minimal (at risk) levels that estimated up to a one year delay in a specific skillset to above average levels that showed up to a one year advantage over same-age class peers. No students participated in standardized testing because of their young ages.
The study was conducted over a 10 week period of time. Each week, students took home assignments that were to be completed with parental assistance. Along with each assignment, parents filled out opinion-based surveys to evaluate whether parents felt time was well-spent with their children or not. Students, with parental help, also reported their opinions of each assignment over the 10 week intervention. Before completing the first assignment, parents were also asked to complete a pre-intervention survey. At the end of the 10 weeks, parents completed a post-intervention survey which evaluated their opinions of the effectiveness of the entire intervention. All information collected from surveys throughout the 10 week intervention was self-reported by parents.

The researcher expected to see a positive correlation between the attendance rate and at-home parental involvement variables. However, the overall results showed that while attendance may have improved during the study, there was no correlation to the intervention of at-home parent-child activities. Questions for future research are also provided in the conclusion of this study.

**Chapter Two**

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

Chapter Two is divided among three subcategories to better review the literature presented. The subcategories include “Differences Among Latino Subcultures and Expectations of Parental Involvement,” “Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement,” and “Student Attendance: Parental involvement and Academic Progress” respectively. The first section addresses two research articles that center on Latino parenting practices. While the two articles differ in overall theme, both relate to parent practices used by Latino parents to help
improve students’ chances at academic success. Both of the articles within “Differences Among Latino Subcultures and Expectations of Parental Involvement” outline the statistically significant parenting traits that increase academic progress, and the article written by Maria Zarate (2007) focuses additionally on the perspectives of schools, community education organizations, and the students themselves in determining helpful parenting practices.

The second section entitled, “Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement” contains article summaries that consider six specific forms for parental involvement. The three studies show varied results in terms of the effectiveness of the six practices of parental involvement. The study by Thurston Domina (2005) focuses more thoroughly on the impact these six traits have on students’ behaviors within an elementary school setting while Tina M. Durand (2011) chooses to call attention to the correlation between parental involvement and kindergarten literacy skills. Inna Altschul (2011) provides a slightly different perspective of the six forms of parental involvement as her study revolves around how parental involvement affects the academic progress of middle and high school students.

“Student Attendance: Parental involvement and Academic Progress” is the final section, and it includes literature regarding student attendance. All three articles take different angles in assessing the reasons behind and consequences of student absences. The article, Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement, investigates the effectiveness behind seven different school-based attendance programs in reducing chronic absenteeism and raising daily attendance. The 2011 article, Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with student characteristics, school readiness, and third grade outcomes, analyzes the impact of attendance on student achievement based on initial student readiness skills in kindergarten and third grade standardized test scores.
The research within this study is also aligned to demographic factors such as school performance and family income. The last article summarized in this review of literature is Douglas Ready’s (2010) article, *Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The differential effects of school exposure*. Ready (2010) studies kindergarten and first grade literacy and math scores in conjunction with demographic factors such as social class, ethnicity, and single parent status to find the consequences of chronic absenteeism among students.

**Differences Among Latino Subcultures and Expectations of Parental Involvement**

The articles *Variations in Latino Parenting Practices and Their Effects on Child Cognitive Developmental Outcomes* and *Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education* are two articles that closely examine the values of Latino parents in regard to education. The first article summary that is presented reviews the differences in parenting practices among Latino subcultures that affect student academic success. The following article summary presents research that uncovers the differences in parental involvement expectations among parent, student, school, and partnering educational organizations.

To begin, researchers from the University of Rochester and from Georgetown University teamed up in this investigation, *Variations in Latino Parenting Practices and Their Effects on Child Cognitive Developmental Outcomes*. De Von Figueroa-Moseley, Ramey, Keltner, and Lanzi (2006) set out to find “a more balanced perspective” concerning the effects cultural differences among Latino parents have on their children’s cognitive development (p.102-103). Researchers cited that the majority of previous research on Latino families has grouped them as one homogeneous, cultural entity when in fact they represent a much more heterogeneous conglomerate of many Hispanic nationalities and ancestries. The authors also
mention that prior research on Hispanic children and cognitive outcomes has usually focused on “bilingualism and its relationship to intelligence-test performance, academic achievement and self-concept” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley, Ramey, Keltner, & Lanzi, 2006, p.104). The purpose of this study is broken down into three components: (a) to examine the fundamental differences “intraculturally” among Latino subgroups, (b) to analyze the relationship between Latino parenting techniques and students’ scores on cognitive development standardized exams, and (c) to distinguish the effect of intracultural differences on educational achievement scores (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.104).

This investigation included participants from the National Head Start/Public Schools Early Childhood Transitions Project, a longitudinal study assessing the benefits members of Head Start services gained through the program (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.105). From the total population of 6,588 children and families, investigators of the present study selected to analyze a subgroup of 995 Hispanic parents and children who had contributed data from 1992-1997 (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.105). Data was collected in the fall and spring of children’s kindergarten year in the native language of children and parents or in a combination of English and a native language. The National Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project collected information using a variety of methods, however the current study employs only the three measures of family (demographics, parenting practices, and child education achievement) all collected through parent and child interviews (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.106). Also incorporated in analyses of ethnic group differences are the results from three “cross-culturally reliable and valid” inventories, the Family Background Interview, the Parenting Dimensions Inventory, and the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.106).
The three ethnic subgroups that form the sample population are El Salvadoran, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican. Each subgroup records an almost even number of male and female participants, and for all three subgroups it is most likely to have one to three children per family household (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.106-107). The preferred spoken language among all groups is Spanish however “El Salvadorans spoke significantly more Spanish (90.6%) than Mexican Americans (56.9%) and Puerto Ricans (44.8%)” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.107). The family components examined within this study are “nurturance, parental control, consistency, responsiveness to child inputs, nonrestrictive attitudes, and anger management” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.107). Statistical analyses revealed that across the six different factors of parenting, the Latino groups differ significantly in regard to nurturance and consistency. The comparisons demonstrated that “Puerto Ricans scored significantly higher in nurturance and consistency than Mexican American and El Salvadorans.”

In response to the analyzing how parental techniques affect students’ scores on standardized exams, all three subgroups show a positive correlation between responsiveness to child inputs and Letter Word Identification or Applied Problems subtests (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.107). As students had been tested in both the fall and spring of their kindergarten year, the present study states that while all subgroups displayed some level of positive correlation between responsiveness to child inputs and achievement tests El Salvadorans scored higher than the other subgroups in fall Letter Word Identification and on the fall and spring Applied Problems subtests while “Puerto Ricans scored lowest on the fall and spring Applied Problems subtest…[and] Mexican Americans scores lowest on the fall Letter Word Identification subtest” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.109).
All subgroups reported high levels of nurturance tendencies although Puerto Rican caregivers demonstrated higher levels than Mexican Americans and El Salvadorans (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.110). Parental caregivers also varied by subcultural according to how much consistency was provided within a household with Puerto Rican caregivers recording more consistency than the other two subgroups (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.110). Results for the other four domains of parenting techniques showed no significant variation among subgroups which the authors state is consistent with previous research findings for Latino families to be “very permissive and indulgent with their young children” and to “not push them toward certain developmental and achievement milestones” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.110).

Overall, responsiveness was the only of the six parental domains that illustrated any effect on achievement scores. Responsiveness is shown to be most influential for El Salvadoran parents and least significant for Puerto Rican parents in terms of their children’s achievement test scores (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.111). For Mexican American families, the authors state that while numbers do not correlate responsiveness to student achievement in the fall of kindergarten, by the end of kindergarten (spring tests) parents do seem to be “affecting their children verbally and quantitatively” (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006, p.111). De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al. (2006) suggest that the difference in how different subgroups responsiveness affects student achievement points to the “diverse nature of the Hispanic and/or Latino culture” (p.111). The authors suggest that future studies could further investigate the role of acculturation on student achievement test scores, as well as the how socioeconomic status may affect performance scores.
Switching gears slightly from subculture differences to differences found among groups within communities, Maria Estela Zarate (2007) along with the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute investigated parental involvement in schools with a focus on Latino families. In discussion about why this study was held, Zarate contests that one of the main reasons Hispanic families continue to cycle through low-waged positions is because their schooling conditions are often less then optimal. The institute argues that the definition of parental involvement is often ambiguous in national research and moreover that Latino families are often not included in other research samples. The elements considered in this study are Latino parent’s thoughts about participation in schooling, academic institutions expectations of parental involvement, local and national organizations addressing issues of parental involvement in schools, and Latino students’ ideas of how their parent’s become involved in their education.

In order to gather a well-rounded representation of Latino perceptions from the United States, Zarate (2007) collected data from three large cities across the U.S. including Miami, New York, and Los Angeles. According to previous research cited within the article, “30 percent of all Latinos in the United States reside in these three cities” (p.7). The samples in each city were broken down into groups of Latino parents of middle and high school students; teachers, counselors, and school administrators; Latino students; and coordinators of parental involvement organizations. The three focus groups of parents ranging from eight to ten individuals were held in all three cities. Each city conducted two of the group sessions in Spanish and one group session in both Spanish and English to fit the language needs of their participants. Fifty-three percent of the parents were female and 59 percent of parents had not graduated from high school. While a majority of the participants were born in foreign countries, the average time spent living in the United States was 21 years. In regards to both parents and students, the majority was of
Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican descent. Two student groups of 10 participants were surveyed in Los Angeles and had been recruited from an educational program for future first generation college students. There is no listed explanation for not including student subjects from Miami and New York.

From the schools surveyed in the area, a mix of 15 school staff members from the schools serving the parent participant families were asked to participate in 30 minute interviews. All schools selected to provide staff for the interviews had more than 50 percent minority student enrollment. Across the three cities, 14 directors or coordinators of educational organizations involving parents in education were selected for interviews. The organizations had to list parental involvement as a major factor of their program and had to be based in at least one of the three cities in order to qualify for the interview. (p. 7)

Throughout all of the interviews, a handful of significant ideas are highlighted within the article. In terms of parent opinion of their involvement in schools, Latino parents tended to view their participation in what the study entitled “life participation” more valuable than “academic involvement” (p.8). Most parents listed their attempts to provide “moral guidance” as a way to improve classroom behaviors and overall academic achievement. It was also stated that parents felt that as their children aged, their ability to help with homework was often hindered by language barriers and their own personal lack of educational opportunities. Further research showed that while language can be a hindrance for parents while helping their students with homework, presently it should not be a communication barrier between schools and parent. The study further unraveled the larger barrier standing between schools and increasing parental involvement. According to parents, adequate advanced notice for meetings and special school programs parents were invited to attend during the year. Parents often stated their inflexible
schedules did not permit them to request off of work frequently throughout the year, especially without advanced notice. Parents continued to dissect the communication barrier with the school referring to the difficulties they had reaching teachers during school hours, as many teachers could not be reached in their classrooms or otherwise during school. (p.10)

There is a difference in perspective between educators’ definition of parental involvement in academics and parent’s definition. According to educators interviewed in this study, parents involved in dynamics such as school leadership, administrative support, academic support, along with solid parenting are ways in which parents can assist their student’s educational experience. Parents tended to have a narrower view in terms of believing their parenting was the “at home” version of education that students did not receive in school. Zarate (2007) continues to elaborate on the systematic operations in place within schools to invite parent involvement. However, two main discrepancies surface from her research: schools often gave increased opportunities for parents to be personally invited to participate in school meetings and functions when their children were labeled as “gifted students” and schools often lacked an “organizational focus on creating long-term, sustainable, or innovative parental involvement programs” (p.11-12). Because of this lack of direction, teachers were often left to make decisions on their own about how parents should be invited to participate in different activities and school programs.

Additional differentiation of the definition of parental involvement is discussed in the findings from interviews with educational organizations and students. Different organizations have different ways of reaching out to families and engaging them in academic activities related to their children. Across the different organizations included in the sample, the similarities noted are that parents are often offered educational courses or training sessions to help prepare them to
support their children academically; many programs try to arrange transportation services and establish partnerships with the schools to help create stronger parent-school relationships and try to create a sense of trust among the families with whom they work; and lastly all of the schools incorporated some type of reflection or evaluation on their organization as a whole or about their educational program(s) in particular. (p.13)

Students’ voices within the study reported that they felt the largest support coming from their parents was emotional and motivational encouragement and that this help had been best served during their elementary years. Most students reported that as they grew older, their parents struggled more with helping them directly with homework assignments due to low educational backgrounds. Zarate (2007) connects the students’ thoughts to show us that many of the students felt comfortable making pivotal decisions, like attending college, without much input from their parents frequently because they felt that by high school they had already attained more educational experiences than their parents (p. 14).

Zarate (2007) concludes the study with a list of suggestions to improve parental involvement in schools based on specific resources and opportunities participants (teachers, students, parents, and organizations) mentioned they would need. The most potent message sent out from her findings is that schools and school organizations need to be more organized in their expectations for parents in order to successfully relay those expectations to parents. Other suggestions included a better system for measuring and tracking parental involvement in schools, legislation supporting working parents so that they can request time off from work without penalty for school related functions, and both cultural and language courses in Spanish for staff members and in English for parents to help bridge cultural differences that may be keeping communication lines open (p. 15). Zarate (2007) also specifically suggests that teachers consider
putting in extra effort to reach out to and engage parents in their children’s’ academic career through non-traditional contact information and application of outside resources (p. 16). Zarate (2007) urges schools and parents alike to work together in order to form a cohesive and less divergent, measurable definition of parental involvement in schools and to work together to make involvement opportunities accessible to all parents within a school.

Upon summarizing these two articles it is evident that further research is needed in the area of parental values among Latinos in respect to the importance of parental involvement. The research of De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al. (2006) depicts that parent responsiveness does indeed have a significant effect on student achievement scores and also varies among Latino subcultures. According to the research, El Salvadoran parents were most likely to display responsiveness while Puerto Ricans were least likely to show responsiveness toward their children’s academic work and progress (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006). Within the study the Mexican ethnic group tends to demonstrate a time contingency in which responsiveness is more impactful during students second semester of kindergarten (De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al., 2006). Zarate’s (2007) investigation included middle and high school students of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban descent and focused on the expectations held by parents and schools. The main findings suggest that many Latino families perceive their role to be most important in maintaining good behaviors at home which are perceived by Latino parents to translate to better classroom learning habits. Schools, on the other hand, held the expectation that parents should not only be working with students at home on academic and behavioral assignments but also participate in school events and meetings. All schools interviewed valued both at-home and in-school parental involvement. Both studies from this section acknowledge the need for continued research on parental values and expectations, especially among Latino
Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement

The next three studies strive to distinguish the types of parental involvement that affect student behaviors in school and student achievement. All three studies refer to Epstein’s model of parental involvement and include six similar forms of parental involvement: attending parent-teacher meetings, participation in school based organizations such as the PTA, volunteering in the classroom, volunteering at school events, helping their children with homework, and checking their children’s homework. Thurston Domina (2005) investigates the effects of parental involvement on both student behaviors and cognitive development of students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. Tina M. Durand (2011) writes about the differences among parental involvement activities and student achievement in kindergarten students. Unlike the first two studies that focus on the effects of parental involvement on early childhood academic development, Inna Altschul (2011) studies the forms of parental involvement that most benefit student achievement test scores from eighth grade to tenth grade.

Jumping into the array of effects of parental involvement on children’s cognitive development, Domina (2005) uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) to inspect the effect of different forms of parental involvement on the academic achievement and behavior problems of elementary school students while also studying the variance due to socioeconomic status (SES) (p. 233). In the article, Leveling the Home Advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school, the author finds reason to believe that parental involvement has little to no effect on students’ academic achievement but does help to prevent behavioral issues at school.
After reviewing multiple studies regarding parental involvement and student achievement, the researcher from this study concludes that up until this study no research had proven a consistent link between a certain act of parental involvement and “favorable children’s outcomes” (Domina, 2005, p.234). The majority of past investigations, despite their various methods and controls, often produced no significant correlations between parental involvement and students’ educational performance. The author of this study argues that an evaluation of the 1979 data is warranted because past research has often focused solely on middle and high school populations and academic success. While reviewing the data, Domina (2005) takes into consideration the fact that often times parental involvement is more closely tied to students’ behavior than students’ educational growth (p.235). Based on the research of McNeal (1999), Domina (2005) recounts that parental involvement may be seen more accurately through student behavior because parental involvement allows parents to form positive study habits through socialization (social-behavioral theory), creates social networks that strengthen parents’ relationships within the schools, and provides parents with more timely access to information about school events, problems their child may be having in school, and possible solutions (p.235-236).

The population of students that represents this study is comprised of 1,445 of the children from the NLSY79 who were registered for elementary school in 1996. These children had all completed the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) and the Behavior Problems Index (BPI) as part of the NLSY79 and were all in the fourth or lower grades (Domina, 2005, p.237). In this study the PIAT and the BPI are the dependent variables assessed in connection with the six parental school-involvement activities. The PIAT is a standardized test that measures
children’s academic success on math and reading while the BPI measures “the frequency, range, and type of childhood behavioral problems” (Domina, 2005, p.238-239).

The six parental-involvement factors can be broken down into four at-school parental involvement measures along with two at-home parental-involvement measures which are listed respectively as: “attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in the PTA, volunteering in the classroom, and volunteering outside the classroom...how often the parents helped the children with homework and how often the parents checked the children’s homework” (Domina, 2005, p.239). The author admits that these six traits of parental-involvement most likely do not holistically represent parental involvement which in turn could lead to data that underwhelms the effectiveness of parental involvement. The variables that are controlled within this study include race, gender, student’s grade, school type, two-parent family, and family SES (Domina, 2005, p.239). The researcher uses time-lagged growth analysis to predict the effect of parental involvement from the 1996 PIAT and BPI exams to the 2000 PIAT and BPI exams. Lastly, the student’s SES is also analyzed as a factor that may lend itself to producing different results among families (Domina, 2005, p.249).

Within this investigation, the author creates three models of how parental involvement may be affecting student achievement and behavior. The base model observes “the effects of parental involvement without any controls” while the second model controls for SES background (Domina, 2005, p.240). The third model analyzes the actual growth or lack of growth over time in terms of students’ scores on the PIAT and BPI from 1996 to 2000.

The base model suggests that increased parental involvement leads to increased academic success as children who had parents involved in at least five areas of parental involvement were likely to score roughly 15 points higher on the PIAT in 2000 than students whose parents were
less involved (Domina, 2005, p.240). However, the second model produces findings that indicate that at least part of the correlation between academic achievement and parental involvement is due to differences in SES background among students (Domina, 2005, p.240). The third model is used to explore the author’s theory that parents will adjust their level of involvement according to their child’s initial need. The results show that parents tend to become less involved once their children have attained academic achievement (Domina, 2005, p.242).

In terms of student behavior, the results of this study are much more conclusive. All three models point to a positive correlation between parental involvement and the amount of behavioral issues students pose within school (Domina, 2005, p.242). Furthermore, the author states that the two mechanisms influencing parental involvement most in regards to children’s behavior are socialization (such as teaching positive study habits) and establishing social control (such as building strong school relationships).

The results of the interaction between the effectiveness of parental involvement and family SES are limited. The author conveys that only “three of the 12 models reported here show statistically significant interactions…” (Domina, 2005, p.244). The author continues to explain how two out the three significant interactions point to evidence that supports parental involvement as a way to improve children’s academic growth and behavioral issues for families with low-SES (Domina, 2005, p.244). The third significant interaction points in the other (negative) direction suggesting that parents in low-SES may be increasing student behavioral problems by helping with homework. The type of parental involvement that shows the most improvement for BPI scores of students coming from low-SES backgrounds is parents volunteering at school. In the discussion of the article, Domina (2005) states that there is a “clear causal link between parental involvement and children’s behavior in school” (p.245). The author
outlines that, in general, the three most helpful ways parents can be involved, according to the results of this study, are “volunteering at school, helping with homework, and checking their student’s homework” (Domina, 2005, p.245).

From elementary students to early childhood students, Durand (2011) continues to research the effects of specific types of parental involvement with a much narrower student population of only kindergarten students. Instead of focusing on cognitive and behavioral development, Durand (2011) elects to study the development of kindergartners’ literacy skills within their first formal year of education.

Durand (2011) is an assistant professor from the Department of Human Development at Wheelock College in Boston, MA. In 2011 Durand published the article *Latino Parental Involvement in Kindergarten: Findings from the early childhood longitudinal study*. The author’s article explores Latino parents’ role in education both at home and at school and how it affects their children’s literacy skills, as well as the effect of social capital (parents’ status to and involvement in social networks within the school) (Durand, 2011, p.469). Within the article there is also a lengthy review of possible third variables that may take effect on parental involvement and children’s overall success in literacy. Durand (2011) bases the study off of Epstein’s model of parental involvement which includes six areas: “parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision making in the school, and collaborating within the community” (p.470). Within this study, parental involvement is more broadly categorized into two categories of “at home” and “at school” which allows Durand to measure the amount of at home or at school involvement by defining each with specific activities such as reading with child (at home) or attending a parent-teacher conference (at school). Durand (2011) states within the article that there is now research available that cites a “positive relation between
parental involvement and children’s academic achievement” (p.471). However, it is mentioned that there is little current research on specific ethnic minorities, including Latinos, that supports a direct connection between parental involvement and literacy skills in early childhood. The purpose of this study is to identify the specific variables that affect parental involvement at home and at school and consequently to measure how parental involvement affects literacy skills in Latino early childhood students (Durand, 2011, p.474).

Within this study there are two terms that are crucial to the understanding of the findings of this research: social capital and habitus. Social capital is defined by Durand (2011) to be the relationships and interactions between children and adults, or in this particular case a family and a school (p.472). Habitus is defined within the article to be a “’subjective but not individual’ set of internalized beliefs, perceptions, and actions, informed by a group’s collective history” (Durand, 2011, p.472). An individual’s habitus cannot be understood outside of the environment in which it was created; the article continues on to state that “[new immigrants of an area] may experience significantly more situational and personal barriers that limit their ability to be involved…” within their schools and communities (Durand, 2011, p.472). As such, Durand (2011) suggests that when the habitus of an individual agrees with the norms and expectations of the environment in which he or she operates, he or she is more likely to gain social capital and benefits for their family members (p.472). In the beginning of the article, it is noted that one major factor for the progress of immigrant Latino families within schools is their level of acculturation (understanding and acceptance of) how the U.S. school system operates and schools’ expectations of families and students (Durand, 2011, p.473).

To conduct this investigation, Durand (2011) selected all of the children who were identified at Hispanic in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) class
of 1998-1999 (p.474). Due to the author’s specific interest in early childhood, the only data
drawn out of the study was from the fall and spring of the children’s kindergarten school year
were excluded from the analyses of this investigation (Durand, 2011, p.474). Data from the
longitudinal study included measurements of student’s initial transition into kindergarten and
their further cognitive, social, and health-related development as they aged through elementary
and middle school along with data from each child’s family, school, and classroom (Durand,
2011, p.474). The ECLS-K reading assessment included various measures of literacy
development (i.e. print familiarity and vocabulary skills) that was administered in two parts to
children through a computer-based test. Similarly, information collected from parents also used
a computer-based interview that asked parents to provide demographic information, home
environment data, and information regarding their interactions with schools (Durand, 2011,
p.476). Scores taken into account from the ECLS-K for the present investigation are the
parental-involvement scores (based on measures of both at home involvement and at school
involvement) along with the children’s literacy scores for both kindergarten and first grade.

There are many possible third variables and covariates that are monitored within this
study. The third variables recognized within this study are school communications with parents,
teacher support that may benefit student growth, parents’ social capital, parent nativity (country
of birth), and language barriers for parents with limited English proficiency. The covariates
included within the research include parents’ level of acculturation, maternal education,
household income, child age and gender, and marital status. (Durand, 2011, p.477-478)

The results of this study show immediately that there is a positive correlation between a
family’s socioeconomic status (SES) and a child’s literacy skills, a parent’s home and school
involvement, and a parent’s social capital (Durand, 2011, p.479). According to this research, children of families of low SES are more likely to have immigrant parents who also faced language barriers at school. Teacher support seems to be one factor from this study that remains consistent across all variable groups. The covariate with the most significant impact on parental involvement is maternal education and is listed as the “strongest individual predictor of children’s literacy skills” (Durand, 2011, p.479-480). While acculturation did not have a significant effect on literacy skills, children’s gender data reveals the correlation of older and female students being connected to higher literacy scores (Durand, 2011, p.480). The most prominent factors affecting parental involvement at home are listed as maternal education, acculturation, and social capital respectively (Durand, 2011, p.480). The most significant predictors for parental involvement at schools are social capital, maternal education, and acculturation respectively (Durand, 2011, p.481). Durand (2011) specifically cites within the results that although income is not directly affecting parental involvement, it does account for a significant amount of variance in “parents’ school involvement practices” and “meeting times that were inconvenient” (Durand, 2011, p.481).

The article is wrapped up with a discussion that focuses on potential downfalls of current educational practices in regard to Latino students and possible improvements that could be made to correct the disadvantages certain ethnic minorities may face. Overall, the study showed parental involvement to be the most significant factor in raising student literacy skills within early childhood. Due to the disadvantage some Latino families may experience because of language barriers, marital status, and financial hardships, Durand (2011) recommends that legislation reform educational laws and schools adapt policies to encourage more “democratic models of education” and increased opportunities for ethnic minority families to unite and have a
voice within their educational community (p.481). Increased and more effective communication between schools and parents can permit Latino parents more opportunities to become familiar with their children’s curriculum and how to support their child at home and at school. The significance of social capital reinforces this need for increased parent voice and opportunities to unite and participate within schools for Latino parents, who are frequently the subjects of marginalization within U.S. school systems (Durand, 2011, p.483). The positive correlation between families with higher SES and higher parental involvement alongside the significant variance of acculturation indicates that as parents (mothers) become more educated they also become more acculturated and begin to apply more mainstream practices and values of education within their own family (Durand, 2011, p.482). The author urges schools to take action and create environments in which the cultural needs of families are recognized and supported so that families can be empowered to participate and make positive changes regarding their children’s educations. Validating cultural differences and needs, such as hiring teachers and staff that can communicate using a family’s native language, can also help new immigrant families to better adapt to the current habitus U.S. schools and help them to ultimately gain social capital within their community.

Continuing on the track of standardized test scores measuring students’ academic progress, researcher Altschul (2011) investigates the relationship between students test scores and the effects of parental involvement. Unlike Domina (2005) and Durand (2011), Altschul (2011) focuses on how different forms of parental involvement affect middle school and high school test scores.

Altschul (2011) examines parental involvement and academic achievement in Mexican American adolescents in a study that explores six forms of parental involvement. The purpose of
This study is to understand which forms of parental involvement are the most beneficial in terms of raising academic achievement for students. The factors monitored within this study are (1) parents being involved with school organizations (school, time), (2) parents discussing school-related matters with their child (home, time), (3) parents assisting their child with homework (home, time), (4) parents and children engaging in enrichment activities together at home (home, time), (5) parents investing in educational resources in the home (home, money), and (6) and parents investing in extracurricular instruction for their child (home, money). Thus the central variables reviewed in the study are school-based parent involvement, home-based parental involvement, time invested in academics, and resources (money) invested in academics.

The research from this study relies on data that had been collected in a 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). The data collected by NELS had assessed parenting influence on academic achievement from 8th grade to 10th grade. Altschul’s research focuses on the Mexican American population due to the shortage of research collected in respect to educational outcomes for children of color and Latino children in particular. The Mexican American sample of data from NELS includes 1,609 cases of Mexican American students that had fulfilled both the initial 8th grade study and the follow-up study in 10th grade. NELS surveyed 8th graders from both private and public schools across the United States in the Spring of 1988 in order to create a comprehensive sample population representative of the larger group.

During the two waves of study, 8th grade and later in 10th grade, students underwent four standardized tests in reading, math, science, and history. Parental factors were monitored largely through written surveys administered to parents. For investigating parental involvement with school organizations, parents were asked five questions about which organizations they were a part of or had attended meetings for in the past, and then responses were scaled in terms of how
many organizations they had become a part of in the current school year. The amount of time spent discussing school related issues was calculated in terms of 0= Not at all, 1=Rarely, 2=Occasionally, 3=Regularly. Parental help with homework used a scale that recognized frequency of parental input and assistance on homework assignments ranging from 1=Seldom or Never to 4=Almost Every Day. Parents were also asked to supply a list of enriching activities that they were involved in with their child and a count of the number of educational resources the student had access to within the home. Lastly, parents were asked to provide a count of activities their child participated in after school such as art, dance, and computer skills. The three control variables the Altschul mentions are generation, family income, and child’s sex. The data of students’ achievements was then compared to that of their parents’ involvement using structural equation models.

The results show that the strands of parental involvement are all very tightly connected. The following types of parental involvement were shown to be correlated to higher test scores: extracurricular instruction, educational resources in the home, parents and children engaging in enriching activities together, and parents discussing school issues with children. The controlled variable of family income was also shown to be related to higher test scores for students. While the different forms of parental involvement are significant factors to student achievement, the strongest predictor of 10th grade test scores was found to be prior achievement on the 8th grade tests. Overall, in this study the research points to the fact that money may trump time in terms of parental involvement. It is suggested that “financial resources toward children’s intellectual development through extracurricular instruction and educational resources in the home had a somewhat greater impact on achievement than did forms of involvement that represent an investment of parents’ time” (p. 166). It is also cited in the article that while the six forms of
parental involvement are found to be good predictors of student achievement, none of types of involvement were significantly related to changes in academic achievement from 8\textsuperscript{th} to 10\textsuperscript{th} grade. The author points out that this is further evidence that suggests early intervention and support for students are essential both inside of the classroom and at home in terms of time and resources. One of the authors main concluding suggestions left to readers is that by raising the amount of educational opportunities to which Mexican American children are presented alongside various forms of parental support, Mexican American students will likely gain increased academic success.

In review of the articles presented by Domina (2005), Durand (2011), and Altschul (2011) it is evident that further research is necessary to better define the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in terms of student age, initial student readiness skills, and student SES. Domina (2005) finds, unlike the other two investigators, that parental involvement is not linked to student achievement scores. Domina (2005) instead proves with her research that the effects of parental involvement take place in helping to improve student behaviors in school. The most influential type of parental involvement in terms of lowering poor student behaviors in school according to Domina (2005) is parents volunteering at school events. On the other hand, Durand (2011) finds that parental involvement in kindergarten is the most significant factor in improving students’ early literacy skills. Durand (2011) also suggests that the process of acculturation plays a large role in determining the academic success of a student within the school environment. The article strongly recommends further research on the role of acculturation in predicting student achievement scores. Lastly, Altschul (2011) finds that rather than parental involvement, the most significant predictors of tenth grade standardized test results are eighth grade scores. None of the six parental involvement practices were found to be
statistically significant in determining tenth grade scores. However, financial resources allocated toward a student’s education tended to be more impactful than involvement practices requiring parents’ time. Altschul’s (2011) research lends itself as further evidence for schools to apply early intervention strategies in elementary school, as parental involvement is shown to play a more significant role within the younger grades.

**Student Attendance: Parental involvement and Academic Progress**

The final three articles presented within this chapter summarize different correlations to student attendance. Joyce Epstein and Steven Sheldon (2002) research the effectiveness of school attendance programs in raising daily student attendance and decreasing chronic student absenteeism. Stepping away from school-based programs, the additional two articles present data on the effect of student absences on students’ academic development. Applied Survey Research (ASR, 2011) analyzes the relationships among attendance, student readiness skills, and third grade achievement test scores. In comparison, Douglas Ready (2010) explores the associations among school attendance for students in their first two years of formal schooling, student SES factors, and cognitive development in terms of literacy and mathematic skills.

Before looking at the student and family effects on attendance rate, the effect of school attendance programs will be reviewed. The article *Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement* aims to uncover the major factors at play in low average attendance rates and chronic absenteeism. Researchers Epstein and Sheldon (2002) from the John Hopkins University state that their research stems from the fact that many school environments are affected by inconsistent attendance rates (p.308). In addition to the overall ambiance of a school, attendance frequently is a major deciding factor for certain states when allocating funding and determining how efficiently a school is operating (Epstein &
According to previous research cited within this article, in order for schools to take corrective action for low daily attendance and chronic absenteeism, “schools need to change the way they are structured, improve the quality of courses, and intensify interpersonal relationships between students and teachers” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.309). Previous studies’ findings have varied in suggesting which aspects of family involvement and family practices most affect student attendance and dropping out (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.309). In designing this study, the researchers take note of the fact that previous research indicates the most effective school attendance programs are often paired with a variety of parent and community involvement methods such as communicating, volunteering, and learning at home.

The present study examines the relationship between elementary schools working to implement new or updated partnership programs among school, family, and the community alongside the rate of student attendance.

Data used in the analysis for this study were collected from 12 different elementary schools during the 1996-1997 school year; five of the schools were rural schools and 7 were urban schools. The schools ranged in size from 172-1,020 students. From the entire student population sampled, 60% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. It is also reported that 52% of students walked to school, 36% were transported by bus, and 8% were driven. The racial composition across all schools included “White students (54%), African American students (30%), and Hispanic students (11%).” While the study overall can be considered demographically diverse, individual schools differed in their percentages of students served free and reduced lunches (18% to 100%), racial make-up (0% to 100% White or African American students), and average baseline daily attendance rate (89.7% to 97%). Information from each school was provided by elected respondents, usually teachers or assistant principals, through
surveys. Schools were asked to provide information about average daily attendance rates for the three years prior to the 1996-1997 school year. (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.311)

On the surveys distributed to schools, respondents report on their school’s implementation and use of the seven specified attendance programs, the helpfulness of these practices, and how effectively information is communicated with families. The seven practices for improving student attendance within schools are listed as “rewarding students for improvements in attendance, calling home when students are absent, visiting the homes of chronically absent students, giving families the name and telephone number of a person at the school to contact with questions about attendance and other policies, conducting workshops on attendance and other related issues, referring chronically absent students to a counselor, and using truant officers or the court system to work with students who have serious attendance problems” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.310). Consistent with prior research, this study presented similar statistics demonstrating “that students in high-poverty communities live closer to their schools, yet are likely to be absent from school more often [than their more rural counterparts]” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.311).

The data collected in this study shows that, on average, schools that applied programs focused on raising student attendance saw an overall increase of .71% in daily attendance (in comparison to the overall increase in average daily attendance from 1995-1996 of 0.12%) (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.311). Chronic absenteeism showed improvement over the 1996-1997 school year with a decrease in percentage from 8% to 6% (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.311). On average, schools reported having used more than five of the seven practices and were confident that they communicated information regarding attendance policies and student-based attendance issues effectively with families, including those families who do not speak English.
Interestingly enough, “schools reported that they were least effective in providing information about school attendance policies to families of chronically late students (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.313). The practices perceived by the schools to be most effective in generating student attendance were making “making home visits, rewarding students for improved attendance, having a person at the school for parents to contact, and calling home when a student is absent” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.312). In general, schools identified attendance workshops for parents, referring students to a counselor, and using truant officers as less beneficial practices in raising student attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.312).

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that six out of the seven practices implanted by schools show a strong correlation to increased daily attendance (p.314). The strongest correlating factor, despite schools’ perceptions, is the use of truant officers with students and families facing attendance issues (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.314). The seventh practice that is not shown to increase a school’s average daily attendance is home visits. Home visits, along with rewarding students for attendance and connecting parents to a specified attendance contact, are proven to be effective practices for chronically absent students. Similar findings are found in this study when researchers control for prior levels of attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.314). Schools with after-school programs tended to see increases in daily attendance as well as decreases in chronic absenteeism while schools without after-school programs demonstrated less of an increase in attendance and at times an increase in student absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.315).

In their discussion and conclusion, the researchers suggest the following practices as the most beneficial for schools struggling with attendance rate issues: awards for student attendance, increased communication with families with special attention to the communication needs of
bilingual families, workshops for parents to learn about attendance data, and home visits to help decrease chronic student absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.315-316). In general, the authors stress a need for continued research due to their relatively small sample size (only 12 schools) and lack of control over variables such as classroom instruction and student motivation as possible third variables. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) leave readers with the final thought that “attendance improves when schools implement positive activities that support good attendance and effect home-school connections” (p.317). The authors suggest that when implemented with fidelity the seven practices reviewed within this research study will help schools raise future attendance rates by giving “a human quality to corrective action” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.317).

After reviewing the impact of school attendance programs on student attendance rates, it is time to take a look at the effects of chronic absenteeism on student attendance. Following the summary of this study’s findings on chronic absenteeism, the effects of absenteeism in relation to social class will be discussed.

ASR (2011) published the study Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with student characteristics, school readiness, and third grade outcomes. The study addressed two main focus questions: “How does attendance in early grades relate to third grade performance?” and “Does the association between attendance and later school outcomes depend on the readiness skills that students possess when they enter kindergarten?” (ASR, 2011, p.3). These questions were proposed to further investigate the role of attendance as a factor of student success between kindergarten and third grade (ASR, 2011, p.3).

The research for this study took place in California where 19 participating school districts supplied attendance data and 640 students were selected as part of a longitudinal study. The
study states that 37% of the schools selected were labeled at the time as “low-performance” schools. The large majority of students were both Hispanic in race, were English language learners, and one-third of the sample came from low income households. Two-thirds of the sample of students had attended a preschool before entering kindergarten. Data was collected for two cohorts of students, the first cohort starting in fall of 2004 and the second beginning in fall of 2005. (ASR, 2011, p.4)

The patterns of absences found in this study demonstrated that “attendance rates tend to improve slightly as children get older” (ASR, 2011, p.6). It was noted that chronic absences decreased by approximately 50% from kindergarten to third grade (ASR, 2011, p.6). The overall academic performance of a school (low, middle, or high performance) seemed to be a factor of student attendance as well. Students from low and middle performing schools had more student absences than high performing schools (ASR, 2011, p.6). While absences were reported to decrease for all schools by third grade, the low and middle performing schools continued to report more absences in third grade than high performing schools (ASR, 2011, p.6).

ASR (2011) studied both the school risk factors outcomes (low performing schools versus high performing schools), as well as individual student risk factor outcomes. Students were broken into four risk categories for group analyses. “No risk” students are students in the study only absent 0-4% of the school calendar for both kindergarten and first grade. “Small risk” students are students in the study absent 5-9% of scheduled school days, while “Moderate risk” students spend one of the two years labeled as “Small risk” and the other year labeled as “High risk.” “High risk” students are students in the study who are considered “chronically absent” or absent more than 10% of the school calendar. (ASR, 2011, p.8)
The study reports that the most significant factor that seems to distinguish “No risk” students from “High risk” students is family income. “At-risk” and “Moderate risk” students are more likely to come from households where the income is less than $32,000 (ASR, 2011, p.8). Aside from income, there were no other significant findings in terms of differences in student demographics that distinguished particular attendance patterns (ASR, 2011, p.9).

ASR (2011) finds staggering results in relation to their second focus question of how attendance affects third grade performance. Students who reported no attendance risks for both kindergarten and first grade tended to score 50 points higher on ELA tests and 76 points higher for math tests in comparison to students who were chronically absent both years (ASR, 2011, p.11). Similar results are found in regard to attendance and grade-level placement. The trend from this study illustrates that as absences increase in kindergarten and first grade, “the likelihood of a student performing at grade level decreases” (ASR, 2011, p.12). The study cites that while 64% of students who have consistently good attendance place to be “on-grade level” only 17% of “high risk” students place as “on-grade level” for ELA (ASR, 2011, p.12). Continuing the trend, ELL students with no risk or “Small risk” consistently scored better on the California English Language Development Tests than their peers with chronic absences; although ASR admits the sample size was not large enough for this particular statistic to become significant within this study (ASR, 2011, p.13).

According to the study, a tertiary factor that must be examined when considering the effects of attendance on later school outcomes is the amount of “readiness skills” or academic skills they possess while entering kindergarten. The study lists that students entering kindergarten with strong readiness skills are more likely to have better attendance, although this result was not statistically significant (ASR, 2011, p.14). Attendance appears to have a larger
impact on students who enter school with more readiness skills. Those who enter kindergarten with more readiness skills but who are chronically absent are separated by 58 points on third grade ELA tests and 95 points on third grade math tests in comparison to their peers who entered with high readiness skills and maintained “No risk” attendance (ASR, 2011, p.15-16). Students who begin kindergarten with low readiness skills and are chronically absent remain below proficiency on both ELA and math tests in third grade, but only trail their low-entering, “No risk” counterparts by 18 and 25 points respectively (ASR, 2011, p.15-16).

The study proclaims that helpful next steps would be to “explore the role of other demographic and background factors” of students who are chronically absent and to continue to work with school officials and policy makers on how to improve attendance and promote school readiness for early elementary students (ASR, 2011, p.19). In the present study it is demonstrated that low attendance rates for students nearly eliminates any benefit of entering school with strong academic skills. ASR (2011) suggests that future research continue to delve deeper into the factors that are at play between attendance throughout the early years and later school success (p.19).

While the previous study makes it clear that absenteeism affects students’ achievement scores, Douglas Ready (2010) recognizes the need for research to examine the effect of school absenteeism and social class differences in cognitive development. Ready (2010) hypothesizes that children in lower-socioeconomic classes will experience stronger negative effects of school absences than their “more advantaged peers” (p.272). Previous research done tended to focus on high school populations, and while investigations had taken place to help explain why children of lower-socioeconomic households may experience more absences—very little research has
taken place to account for the relationships among school attendance, socioeconomic status (SES), and cognitive development.

In the present study, Ready focuses his research on the association of school attendance for kindergarten and first grade students and their progress in literacy learning. This study proposes that “school absences will have a disproportionally negative affect” for disadvantaged students because these students have been shown to enter formal schooling behind their more advantaged peers. Within the article, Ready expands upon three research questions: How can the relationship between social class and student attendance be described during kindergarten and first grade? How much does school attendance affect early academic development and are there differences across literacy and mathematics? “Does the link between social class and cognitive development depend on school attendance?” (Ready, 2010, p.274)

The data used for this study is provided from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) which was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics. The longitudinal study tracks students from roughly 1,000 different public and private schools offering kindergarten programs. The present study focuses on the first four waves of data provided in the ECLS-K, or the information collected in the fall and spring of both kindergarten and first grade (Ready, 2010, p.274). From there Ready (2010) narrowed the analytic sample by selecting students that advanced to the first grade from kindergarten, did not change schools within the first four waves of data collection, had at least two out of four literacy and mathematics scores, and attended schools with a traditional nine-month calendar (p.274). Altogether, the sample used in this study includes 13,613 children who provide a combined 42,229 literacy and mathematic test scores (Ready, 2010, p.275). Data from the ECLS-K study also allowed Ready (2010) to align this study’s measurements according to different
demographic factors such as socioeconomic status (determined by parental income and occupational prestige), single-parent status, gender, race, and home language (p.275). Because of the differences in timing and administering tests that can occur even among classes within a school, this study examines the connections between school attendance and SES status among children attending the same school (Ready, 2010, p.275). The study also incorporates the timeframes of exposure to academic material for each child within the models of the investigation ((Ready, 2010, p.276).

As an answer to the first research question, “How can the relationship between social class and student attendance be described during kindergarten and first grade” the descriptive results show that “student attendance and social class are clearly related” (Ready, 2010, p.276). The analysis shows that “a one-third standard deviation SES gap separates children with good versus poor kindergarten attendance” and states that a similar, albeit slightly smaller, gap separates children in the first grade, as well (Ready, 2010, p.277). Demographic variables such as living in a single-parent home and speaking a language other than English at home were strongly correlated with students with higher rates of absenteeism (Ready, 2010, p.277). Lower rates of absenteeism tended to be found among White and Asian children in comparison to non-Asian minorities and no significant relationships are described between school attendance and age or school attendance and child gender (Ready, 2010, p.277). All in all, the descriptive results reveal that students who are of a Hispanic or Black race (or non-Asian minority), come from single-parent homes, and speak a language other than English at home are more likely to be absent in the first two years of formal schooling.

The next two research questions are then answered by a string of analytical data. The second and third research focus questions are, “How much does school attendance affect early
academic development and are there differences across literacy and mathematics?” and “Does the link between social class and cognitive development depend on school attendance?” The present study incorporates four different models of analysis to answer the previously scripted research questions. Model 1 takes specific parameters such as initial literacy skills, kindergarten development (progress), first grade development, and summer learning between kindergarten and first grade to examine the relationships between SES and initial literacy skills and continued literacy development. Model 2 provides a descriptive analysis of the school absences measure while “Model 3 incorporates the SES by absence interaction term” (Ready, 2010, p.277). Model 4 is explained as the “full model” that adjusts the coefficients listed in Model 1 to account for “racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender, age, full-day kindergarten attendance, kindergarten repetition, home language, and single-parent status” (Ready, 2010, p.278).

The simple answer to both these questions is school attendance has a strong affect for early academic development in both literacy and mathematics. The descriptive statistics from this study’s research state that students with higher SES in kindergarten tend to be students with higher initial literacy skills and that the children with increased absences in kindergarten are apt to have fewer initial literacy skills (Ready, 2010, p.278). While the research demonstrates an initial gap in literacy skills between high and low-SES children, the present study shows that kindergarten begins to close this gap in literacy skills between different SES although it does not eliminate the gap (Ready, 2010, p.278). Model 2 finds that students with chronic absences tend to learn 14% less literacy skills over the period of one traditional school year (Ready, 2010, p.279). Model 3 illustrates the disparity between SES in terms of the impact of student absences on cognitive development. According to this model, the negative impact of student absences on
cognitive development is 75% larger for low-SES children than average SES children in kindergarten (Ready, 2010, p.279).

Again in first grade, many of the findings can be restated. The author once again describes first grade as having the potential to “somewhat equalize” the gap in literacy skills among different socioeconomic levels, although children from low-SES continue to score below their more advantaged peers throughout the year (Ready, 2010, p.279). Again, school absences in first grade affect students who have low-SES more, limiting their overall cognitive development of literacy skills. The article recounts that school absences are approximately 40% more impactful for low-SES children (Ready, 2010, p.279).

During the summer months, this study finds that SES plays a large role in the development of literacy skills. Students of high-SES tend to gain literacy skills during the summer months while students of average SES experience no gain or loss of literacy skills, and students of low-SES tend to fall behind in literacy development (Ready, 2010, p.279). This study finds that the gains made during the year to close the literacy development gap between high and low socioeconomic strata are lost and low-SES children fall even further behind (Ready, 2010, p.279). The study also points out that children’s attendance rates during the year demonstrate no effect on the summer learning effects for children of higher SES.

For mathematics development, increased absences during the school year did correlate with lower mathematics development. However, this study finds that for mathematics the effect of absences on mathematic cognitive development is not stronger for low-SES students. Similarly to literacy, during the summer months when school is out of session “monthly learning rates were considerably lower” for students (Ready, 2010, p.280).
Ready (2010) repeats toward the conclusion of this article that “most striking here is the fact that low-SES children who attend school regularly appear to benefit most from early schooling” (p.280). Furthermore, results suggest that “low SES children with good attendance gain almost 8 percent more literacy skills per month during kindergarten and almost 7 percent more during first grade” (Ready, 2010, p.280). In the author’s closing thoughts, there is an urgency to continue researching how high-quality teaching affects students of low SES, to reconsider how schools and educational policies approach absences in regard to school funding, and for schools to reassess the services provided to low SES students in order to help improve the overall quality of education students receive.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002), ASR (2011), and Ready (2010) all contribute to a more holistic understanding of the importance of student attendance. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) distinguish that six out of the seven school initiatives to improve student attendance had positive effects on raising student attendance. In contrast to what schools and families perceived, the use of truant officers within schools was the strongest factor (not the weakest as many participants thought) in helping to decrease chronic absenteeism for students. Within this study, home visits were only shown as an effective way to improve attendance for chronically absent students. In addition, schools that offered afterschool programs to their families saw a higher decrease in daily absences as well as chronic absenteeism. In turn, ASR focused research efforts on discovering the cross-correlations among student readiness skills, third grade achievement scores, and student attendance. The study broke the student sample population into four categories ranging from “No risk” (students that were consistently attended school) to “At-risk” (students that were chronically absent). The study found that the most significant factor distinguishing “No risk” to “At-risk” students was family income. In general, students in the
study that were from lower performing schools exhibited more absences in kindergarten and even more significant absences in third grade in comparison to higher performing schools. In regards to the relationship between absences and academic achievement, students who were labeled as “No risk” showed an average of 50 points separation in ELA test scores and an average of 76 points separation for math scores compared to their “At-risk” peers. Strong readiness skills alone were not seen as a significant way to predict third grade achievement. However, when analyzed in conjunction with student attendance students who entered school with high readiness skills but who were chronically absent fell behind their peers who entered school with similar readiness skills and good attendance rates by 58 points in ELA scores and 95 points in math scores. There is no doubt from the ASR (2011) article that student attendance does affect student achievement. Taking a slightly different perspective on researching student attendance aligned with student achievement, Ready (2010) found that social class also plays a significant role in students cognitive development. Ready (2010) finds that the following all significantly decrease student attendance in kindergarten and first grade: students from low SES, students from single parent homes, and students belonging to non-Asian minorities. Similar to the ASR (2011), Ready (2010) also found that students displaying chronic absenteeism were likely to fall behind by 14% in literacy skills during the traditional school year. All three studies argue that further research is needed to continue to better schools’ understanding of how student attendance affects student scores across student ages and specific ethnic groups, as well as the school-based attendance programs that best improve student attendance both in terms of daily attendance and chronic absenteeism.

**Conclusion**

Upon summarizing all eight articles, there are certain findings from each article that lend themselves more specifically to the purpose of this investigation. De Von Figueroa-
Moseley et al. (2006) conclude that out of six domains of parent practices, only one domain, “responsiveness,” was deemed significantly relevant to the standardized test scores of Latino students. De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al. (2006) suggests within the article that the results found within their research are limited and require further investigation of the differences among subgroups of the Latino race to better define the actions and communication schools should take to relate to the needs of different ethnic student populations. Along the same line of thought, Zarate (2007) assesses the differences in opinions among students, parents, schools, and school organizations in regards to parental involvement in students’ education. While it is clear from the study that all of the schools interviewed valued parental involvement, at times schools appeared to favor the involvement of parents with children enrolled in the gifted and talented programs and supplied those parents with increased opportunities and personal reminders to become involved (Zarate, 2007, p.11-12). According to this study, Latino parents are much more likely to consider teaching their children positive behaviors and habits their active role in participating in the education of their children—regardless of school expectations for parental involvement. Zarate (2007) encourages teachers to put in extra effort to communicate equally among all parents in order to express concerns over becoming active participants in the school community.

Continuing on the theme of parental involvement, Domina (2005), Durand (2011), and Altschul (2011) all agree that parental involvement does have an effect on student progress within a formal academic setting. Domina (2005) argues that parental involvement affects students’ behaviors much more significantly than their acquisition of academic skills. Domina (2005) concludes that parental involvement in the form of volunteering at school events improves student behavior, especially for students of low SES. Durand (2011) finds evidences
that parental involvement during kindergarten does positively correlate with students’ literacy skills development. Durand (2011) also highlights the roles of social capital and habitus (norms and familiar environments) as factors in allowing immigrant families equal access to success within formal education settings in the United States. Similarly, Altschul (2011) finds that the time to allocate resources to help students with academic achievement is during elementary school. Due to the lack of correlation between Latino students’ test scores and parental involvement in middle school and high school, Altschul (2011) recommends that students receive any necessary academic intervention and support before they enter middle school.

The last three articles summarized within this literature review all found connections between students of low SES and increased absenteeism. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) concentrated on revealing the practices having an impact on student attendance. The following six practices are listed within the article as significant factors for improving daily student attendance: “rewarding students for improvements in attendance, calling home when students are absent,…giving families the name and telephone number of a person at the school to contact with questions about attendance and other policies, conducting workshops on attendance and other related issues, referring chronically absent students to a counselor, and using truant officers or the court system to work with students who have serious attendance problems” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.310). The seventh practice, home visits, although not significant for daily attendance, did prove to be an effective method of decreasing chronic absenteeism. In turn, ASR (2011) and Ready (2010) both listed numerous consequences of absenteeism on student achievement. ASR (2011) discovered the trend that overall absences tend to improve across the board for students from kindergarten to third grade. Low performing schools, however, consistently experience higher rates of student absenteeism in both kindergarten and third grade
than their higher performing counterparts. Students who were continually present for school showed higher statistically significant gains than their peers who were chronically absent and were much more likely to be functioning on grade level in third grade. Ready (2010) exposes similar negative impacts to student progress in relation to chronic absenteeism. Additionally, in this article it is noted that the negative impact of being absent on cognitive development is 75% greater for students with low SES backgrounds. All in all the eight articles reviewed in this chapter suggest that students need parental support both in-school and at-home, teachers and schools need to remain in constant communication with families regarding students’ progress and attendance, and certain school-based programs have had positive impacts on improving students’ attendance.

Chapter Three: Procedures for the Study

Chapter Three will discuss all of the methods of the study. To begin, the demographics of the population of students and families observed in the study will be defined. Next, the school and classroom are discussed in detail. Then procedure of the intervention will be elaborated, and lastly the intervention effectiveness will be outlined.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between attendance and at-home parental involvement in education for Latino, low-income, urban early childhood students. After studying literature based on achievement score factors, it was clear that attendance was linked to higher achievement scores. However, how to improve attendance for at-risk (low attendance) students was not well defined. In an effort to find a clear factor correlated to attendance scores, specifically for early childhood students, this study focused on a four year old kindergarten class from a large urban school district. The intervention was comprised of a series of at-home parent-student homework assignments that were implemented to raise parent
awareness about the importance of education both inside and outside of a structured educational environment, and therefore raise attendance.

**Introduction**

According to ASR (2011), attendance during kindergarten and first grade has been linked to student achievement scores in third grade. The study highlighted that students who showed no attendance risks for both kindergarten and first grade tended to score 50 points higher on ELA tests and 76 points higher for math tests (ASR, 2011, p.11). The present study was created to also assess student attendance, but this time in relation to at-home parent involvement. The same ASR (2011) study also mentioned how a large majority of students coming from low income families lack [academic] readiness skills and nodded to the fact that students with strong [academic] readiness skills were more likely to have better attendance. While their study showed little correlation between attendance and readiness skills, it begged the question of whether or not parent involvement at home could also supplement those readiness skills and help improve attendance.

**Population Demographics**

The population of this study consisted of 20 students, 7 male and 13 female subjects, from the teacher-researcher’s bilingual four year old kindergarten class. This school offers bilingual classes for all grades K-3 through 5th grade. From K-3 to K-5, all bilingual students are taught class entirely in their native language. In the teacher-researcher’s classroom, the native language spoken and taught was Spanish. In terms of bilingualism, it should be made clear that when a student is referred to as Spanish-dominant or English-dominant, it simply highlights the fact that their home life reflects a Spanish-only or English-only language environment. One student of the teacher-researcher’s K-4 class was placed in the classroom by parent preference
despite the fact that English was her dominant language. Five other students spoke English and Spanish equally at home, and the other 14 students spoke Spanish as their dominant language at home. In terms of ethnicity, 14 students were Mexican-American, five students were Puerto Rican American, and one student was Dominican-American.

Students ranged in age from four to five years of age with no more than a seven month age difference between students. The mean age of students was 4 years 8 months. Students’ individual skill levels in academic and social areas ranged from minimal (at risk) levels that estimated up to a one year delay in a specific skillset to above average levels that showed up to a one year advantage over same-age class peers. Because of their young age, these students did not participate in any standardized testing.

**School and Classroom Demographics**

With the exception of three students, all had participated in three-year-old kindergarten at the same school the previous 2011-2012 school year. The teacher-researcher’s classroom also participated in the Head Start early childhood education program which limited the class size to 20 students and provided specific classroom resources such as books, field trip funding, a teacher assistant, and in-classroom, self-serve lunch service. The school was known as a neighborhood school and the majority of the families serviced at the school were drawn in from a 15-block radius. Per Head Start regulations, the students in the Head Start classrooms had to be brought to school and picked up from school by a parent or guardian each day.

In order to participate in a Head Start classroom, families had to enroll their children separately with Head Start the year prior and had to meet specific income requirements (Figure 1). After being chosen to participate in a Head Start classroom, families agreed to bring their children to school every day with the exception of illness. In this classroom’s experience for
four students in particular, however, low attendance was frequently overlooked by the social worker in order to keep needy families enrolled in the program. Instead of removing families from the program, the program’s social worker would talk to the families in the morning upon arrival or upon picking up their children in the afternoons to remind them of their attendance commitment. After speaking with the family, the social worker would also plan further attendance intervention strategies like car-pooling or daily phone call reminders so that the Head Start program could support them more as a family to ensure stable attendance in the future.

Figure 1: Head Start 2012-2013: Family income guidelines and birthday guide

(Poverty Guidelines, 2012)
This study was designed to improve parent involvement at home and observe the relationship between at-home academic involvement and student attendance. Aside from the attendance data, the researcher relied on self-reporting from families to collect data. An opinion survey was given with each assignment to question the duration of each activity at home, as well as how useful both students and parents found the activity. The purpose of the survey was to acknowledge any additional variables that might co-exist with the relationship of at-home academic activities and attendance such as time or level of contentment with the assignment.

**Intervention Steps**

As part of the Head Start classroom guidelines, parents were to be invited into the classroom at least once a month to learn educational activities they could do with their children at home. Apart from the educational trainings given to parents each month, during the parent educational training of March, the teacher-researcher explained the plan to send home weekly parent-child homework assignments. The assignment would be sent home each Friday and would be due by the next Friday. The aim was to involve parents in their children’s academic education not only once a month but as frequently as possible. Parents were also allowed to choose the language with which they worked with their children at home. In certain households, moms and dads spoke different dominant languages and needed the option to work in English or Spanish. For the study’s purpose, the language is not the focus, but rather the study focuses on how parent-child interaction on academic tasks affects attendance at school.

During the March parent training, the teacher-researcher explained that the weekly homework assignment would focus on a specific aspect of classroom learning and would be completely optional. The teacher-researcher had all willing participants sign voluntary participation waivers (Appendix A). The waivers allowed the teacher-researcher to collect data
based on the homework assignments completed and the opinions of both parents and students participating in the study for up to ten weeks. At the beginning of the study, parents also completed a pre-screen survey about a student’s current academic progress and current parental efforts toward education at home (Appendix B). Although it was planned to have students completing one assignment per week with their families, many families often turned in the assignments late due to heavy work schedules or late night shifts which provided them little time at home to complete activities with their children. All completed assignments were accepted as part of the study and counted toward the family’s overall commitment to at-home academic support for this study.

**Figure 2: Academic skills applied to at-home assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills used</th>
<th>Assignments applying skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary skills: phonics, recognizing letter sounds, alphabet recognition, vocabulary</td>
<td>1, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing: letters, words, creative thinking and drawing</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science: nature (insects, plants, animals), food, nutrition, exploration</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math: adding, measuring, rote counting, shapes</td>
<td>3, 8, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social: responsibility, respect, helping, friendship</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first assignment was given on March 22nd, 2013. Families were reminded that they would have one complete week to finish the assignment with their child. The assignments given tended to coincide with academic units being taught in class. The second part of each assignment, apart from the academic task, was to fill out an opinion survey (Appendix C). The survey, like the assignment, was given in both Spanish and English and asked both parents and children various questions regarding the skills and effectiveness of the assignment. In order for
an assignment to be considered complete, the activity must have been completed in addition to the weekly survey.

The first assignment was aligned with the class unit of recognizing letters by sound. Students had to search their homes for objects starting with as many letters of the alphabet as they could find. The subsequent fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth weeks also focused on phonics, recognizing letter sounds, alphabet recognition, and vocabulary skills. The second week’s assignment aligned with insects due to the nature unit students were learning in science. The third, eighth, and tenth weeks’ assignments were created in respect to specific math themes the students were learning. As K-4 and Head Start in particular concentrate on building social skills and positive social norms with children, the fourth and fifth weeks were designed to invite parents and students to work on the same elements of friendship, responsibility, and helpfulness that students were taught in school. As can be seen in Figure 2, many assignments could be aligned to more than one academic material. Only two of the ten assignments align to only one academic subject (weeks five and ten). On the tenth week, parents also received a post-study survey. This survey had parents reflect on their attitudes and opinions toward the weekly assignments (Appendix B). To see exact copies of each week’s assignment, please see Appendix D. During the weeks where school was released early on a Thursday, students received their homework assignments on the Thursday instead of Friday.

**Intervention Effectiveness**

As previously mentioned, collection of data was loosely controlled. Families were given a deadline of one week to turn in each weekly assignment, but due to family needs, assignments were turned in late. This was allowed because it was less the time frame in which families completed the assignments and more a study of how any at-home academic interaction supported
students in school—primarily through attendance. As assignments were turned in, students would receive an “X” for that week’s assignment. On separate chart, the answers to the student opinion and parent opinion surveys were recorded. Please see Appendix E and Appendix F for these records.

In terms of validity, the population sample size is limited to 20 individual students. While the sample does relate entirely to the desired target ethnicity, Hispanic, it is unlikely that this group would effectively validate any results found for a larger community. More studies would have to be completed with larger sample sizes to confirm any results found within this study.

In terms of effectiveness and reliability, the intervention strategy was thoroughly carried out during the ten weeks of research. Each assignment was always prepared the week before and given to the families to allow ample time for completion—at minimum 7 days. Families consistently used the surveys as a way to give feedback about the assignments directly to the teacher. Because Head Start families always have to have a family member receiving the student after school, verbal communication was key to letting families know students had taken home their weekly assignments. Families were purposely not pressured into completing assignments for many reasons. This intervention was meant to show signs of increased attendance and was not being tracked to see improvements in students’ achievement scores. As such, pressuring families or too constant of reminders, could have suggested to families that it was better to rush through or fight through an assignment even if they truly did not have adequate time or a positive attitude about completing the assignment. As can be seen on the chart found in Appendix E, out of the 101 assignments that were completed by students and their families, only one was reported on the surveys as a “negative” or “frustrating” experience. That was the project’s goal: to create
positive learning experiences at home that would reinforce the need to learn in-school and therefore increase students’ attendance.

**Conclusion**

At the end of the ten weeks, 101 assignments had been completed and all of the 20 students invited to participate had worked at least once at home on an activity. While higher incomes may not be an option to help improve this population of urban students’ education, the opportunity to participate in premade at-home activities has been shown to also improve student achievement (Altschul, 2011). The intervention strategy to send home family homework assignments, where both parents and child were asked to work together, strong correlations have yet to be proven between family involvement in education at home and attendance or student achievement. However, De Von Figueroa-Moseley and team (2006) were on the right track to finding this correlation as they stated that parents do seem to be “affecting their children verbally and quantitatively” (p.111).

All previous research used to base this study had used interview and survey techniques that asked parents to self-report the amount of at-home parent-child educational activities were occurring on a daily or weekly basis. The change made for the research in this study was that families were provided specific assignments each week. Parents did not need to buy any educational resources or rely on any technology in order to complete these tasks with their children. In addition, parents with busy work schedules or parents that may have had limited educations themselves, did not have to create or plan educational activities at the level of their child. The at-home activities sent home with students were created by the teacher to serve as a link between school and home. The assignments were created to be highly accessible for all income levels, but especially the lower income levels of families that Head Start programming
services. This study prompted parents to work at home with their children, provided them with 10 weekly assignments and verbal reminders when the assignments were being sent home with the students. Families were then allowed to turn in the assignments within a recommended one week time limit. The time limit was often not enforced, and if an assignment was completed well with the survey—it was accepted after one week’s time. The results of the survey were recorded along with the records of student attendance and who turned in each week’s assignments.

Chapter 4: Results

The data were collected over a 10 week period of time. Each week, students took home assignments that were to be completed with parental assistance. Along with each assignment, parents filled out opinion-based surveys to evaluate whether parents felt time was well-spent with their children or not. Students, with parental help, also reported their opinions of each assignment over the 10-week intervention. Before completing the first assignment, parents were also asked to complete a pre-intervention survey. At the end of the 10 weeks, parents completed a post-intervention survey which was used to evaluate their opinions of the effectiveness of the entire intervention. All information collected from surveys throughout the 10-week intervention was self-reported by parents. For two families in particular, the researcher would read the instructions orally to parents as assignments were given, and then, upon returning the activity, the parents would orally report to the researcher their opinion-survey choices. These two families self-reported answers to the researcher as their options were read to them. All 20 students participated in completing at least one assignment with their families over the 10 weeks of intervention.
Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections of analysis. The first section relates to the results of the at-home assignments’ intervention strategy. In the first section, pre- and post-surveys will be discussed along with the overall ratings of effectiveness for each week’s at-home parent-child assignment. The second section compares the attendance data with that of the intervention opinion surveys results. The third section refers to variables that likely affected the results but that were not controlled by the researcher.

Presentation of Intervention Results

The following data on pre- and post-intervention surveys will be presented across the group of 20 students. In the pre-survey, 60% of parents reported working on academic skills such as math, reading, and writing skills at home with their children prior to the intervention. Additionally, 20% of parents reported that they were working on social skills and religious values at home, but did not report practicing academic materials at home. The last 20% of parents did not report practicing any academic or social skills at home with their children prior to the intervention.

The post-intervention survey data showed 100% of parents were satisfied with the intervention assignments. On a five-point scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree,” parents were asked to report on the first three questions. The final question was categorized as a “Yes” or “No” item.

1. Did you feel that the parent-child assignments sent home were quality learning opportunities for your child?

2. Did you feel that your child benefited academically from these additional opportunities to learn at home?
3. Would you say that the time you and your child spent on these assignments was quality time spent together?

4. Would you continue to work one-on-one with your child for a certain amount of time each week on school “family” assignments?

All families reported “Strongly Agree” for questions one through three and “Yes” for question number four. All families reported that the assignments sent home during the 10 week intervention were quality learning opportunities for their children. All parents also reported that they felt that their time had been well spent in aiding their children improve academically. All families also reported that they would continue to work with their children at-home on parent-child specific assignments.

During the 10 weeks, parents and students also reported how effective and interesting they found each individual assignment. Appendix G shows the distribution of responses over the 10 separate at-home assignments. As can be seen in Figure 3, no student reported “Boring and would like something new” for any of the assignments. Across the 10 assignments and 20 students, 87% labeled their homework assignments as “Really fun!” and 13% labeled the assignments as “Just okay.”

**Figure 3. Student average across 10 week intervention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student average opinion for all 10 assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really fun! (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just okay (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of participation, Figure 4 demonstrates that students reported that they could complete “Most” of the assignment for 70%. Out of the 101 assignments completed by families, there were 28 instances of students being able to complete “Some” of the assignment without help and two incidences in which students reported they could not complete any of the assignment on their own.

**Figure 4. Average student ability to participate in activities**

Parents reported similar opinions about the weekly joint assignments. Figure 5, exemplifies that over the 10 weeks, parents felt that they could assist their children most of the time with the assignments sent home. For only 5% of at-home assignments, parents reported feeling confused or that they had difficulty leading their child through the assignment. Figure 6 illustrates parents’ average opinions about the usefulness or worth of assignment across the 10 assignments. Like students, 81% of parents found that they “Strongly Agree[d]” that the assignments given were worth the time spent to complete them at home.
Figure 5: Parents' average ability to help child for all 10 assignments

Parents' average ability to help child for all 10 assignments

- Strongly agree (74%)
- Agree (21%)
- Undecided (0%)
- Disagree (4%)
- Strongly disagree (1%)

Figure 6. Was homework assignment worth the time spent at home?

Was homework assignment worth the time spent at home?

Parents' average opinion of assignment worth/usefulness

- Strongly agree (81%)
- Agree (17%)
- Undecided (1%)
- Disagree (1%)
- Strongly disagree (0%)

Presentation of Relationship between Attendance and Intervention

In order to find a relationship between attendance and the at-home work completed, first the researcher looked at the averages in attendance for each student pre- and post-intervention.
For the first 125 days of school, students and parents did not work with the intervention program.

For the last 50 days of school, students and parents had the opportunity to participate in at-home family-child intervention assignments each week. Figure 7 is a table that lists the average absences pre- and post-intervention for each student.

**Figure 7. Individual Student Absence Totals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention Absences</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention Average</th>
<th>Post-Intervention Absences</th>
<th>Post-Intervention Average</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention Average minus Post-Intervention Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>-2.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>-8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.00%</td>
<td>-6.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>-1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
<td>-0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>4.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26.40%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.40%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
<td>24.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>-0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>-0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>-0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>-2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
<td>-10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 shows which students improved their overall attendance during the last 50 days of school. If students had less absences during the intervention period than the pre-intervention period, their pre-intervention average minus their post-intervention average would produce a
positive value. Students with a higher average of absences during the intervention than earlier in the year would produce a negative net value. Over the course of the intervention, eight out of twenty students improved their daily attendance average.

In addition to averages, the researcher chose to evaluate the students’ attendance over periods of 25 days. By blocking the school year into 25 day periods, the researcher was more effectively able to analyze the trends in each individual student’s attendance data despite the asymmetry of the intervention timeline (125 days without intervention versus 50 days of intervention). Figure 8 shows how each student varied across the year in terms of absences.

**Figure 8. 25 Day period- Block analysis of student absences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear from Figure 8 that the majority of students varied over the course of the year in terms of attendance stability. No student had the same amount of absences across all seven periods of 25 days. With this chart the researcher was able to look at each individual line of data and depict whether or not the student had improved their attendance score based on prior absences. To do so reasonably, the researcher created a point-value system in which students earned points for improved attendance scores in the sixth and seventh periods. Figure 10 shows the point-value system created.

**Figure 9. Point-value system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Period absences 6 and/or 7 improved more than any other period or student had zero absences for the period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>Period absences for periods 6 and/or 7 were the same or better than lowest amount of period absences during periods 1-5, other than zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Period 6 and/or 7 listed the same amount of absences as 2nd lowest absence score during periods 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Period 6 and/or 7 did not show any improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this point-value system, the researcher was able to assign numerical values showing the overall improvement, or lack thereof, for each individual student across the year of attendance. Students showing high values—1.00 points to 2.00 points—had improved their attendance in at least one if not both intervention periods. Respectively, Figure 10 depicts the meanings behind each possible numerical value for students, while Figure 11 illustrates the points earned by each student according to their attendance scores.
### Figure 10. Decoding student point-values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Improved attendance or had zero absences over all 50 days of intervention periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Improved attendance or zero absences over at least one period of 25 days, then also matched prior highest attendance score other than 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Improved attendance or zero absences over at least one period of 25 days, then matched prior 2nd lowest absence score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Improved attendance or zero absences over one period of 25 days, or for both periods 6 and 7 had same or improved absences than lowest absence score during periods 1-5, other than 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>One period of 25 days that showed same score as lowest absence score other than 0, and one 25 day period with same as or better than 2nd lowest absence score for periods 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Either period 6 or period 7 had absences that were the same or better than lowest amount of period absences during periods 1-5, other than zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Either period 6 or period 7 had same score as or slightly higher than 2nd lowest absence score during periods 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No significant improvement in either 25 day period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 11: 25 Day period- Block analysis with student absence improvement scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 11 illustrates that, in terms of attendance trends, all but one student improved or stayed consistent with prior low attendance scores during the intervention. 13 students out of the 20 showed either their best attendance scores during periods six and seven or had zero absences during those periods. The other six students who scored below between a 0.25 and 0.75 were students who did not improve but rather returned to (a) prior low-absence score(s) that had been seen during periods one through five. These scores are more personal for each individual student. They better reflect the personal growth in attendance the students had during the intervention periods than the averages that were first shown in this chapter.

In order to more closely evaluate how the intervention may have affected attendance, the researcher compared how time spent on each individual assignment may have affected students’ attendance. In terms of averages, Figure 12 models how much average time students spent for each assignment. The times spent on assignments ranged for different assignments and individuals.
Figure 12. Average time spent on all assignments

Figure 13 is a table that displays and compares how much time each student spent on each assignment to their net average attendance. The median was used as a measure of average for minutes spent on homework so as to not allow the two students who only completed one assignment in five minutes to skew time averages. The median time spent on across the intervention period is 95 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student absence improvement score</th>
<th>Total Minutes Spent on At-Home Assignments</th>
<th>Improved Absences, High Minutes Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 13 illustrates that there is a positive correlation between times spent on assignments and increase or stability in attendance scores. Students with time spent on homework equal to the median (95 minutes) or higher also tended to be students that showed improved attendance. The table highlights that 12 out of the 20 students showed positive correlations between time spent on the at-home intervention assignments and attendance scores.

Likewise, the amount of assignments completed was evaluated in comparison to improved attendance scores. Figure 14 shows that 11 students that completed five or more assignments (50% or more of the given assignments) had improved attendance scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student absence improvement score</th>
<th>Number of Assignments Completed</th>
<th>More than 5 Assignments Completed, Improved Absences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While slightly less correlated, the data here would suggest that participating in more than 50% of the intervention homework assignments did correlate with higher attendance scores.

**Presentation of Additional Uncontrolled Variables**

There were various situations for which the researcher could plan not to control. This section addresses the uncontrollable variables that likely affected attendance results.

Throughout the academic school year, students faced various situations preventing students from coming to school. For one student, a grandparent passed away and the family left for about two months to live in another country. For two other students, abusive situations rendered their health and emotional stability inadequate for attending school many days. In all cases, social workers and medical professionals were involved when necessary for each child’s well-being. With the social worker’s help and professional opinion, the researcher continued to invite families to participate in the at-home assignment opportunities.

Another factor affecting attendance scores during the intervention was that the intervention occurred over the last weeks of the school year. Many families were already arranging child care and travel plans for their children for the summer. As such, parents would
often neglect to bring their children to school due to summer plans and outside child care needs. Furthermore, the averages of attendances could not be evaluated extensively because of the discrepancy between the amounts of non-intervention days versus intervention days. The control period of non-intervention lasted 125 days while the intervention was conducted for 50 days. While the averages took into account the asymmetry of the two periods, the researcher was unable to clearly see the patterns of change for each individual student and then for the population as a whole.

**Conclusion**

It was extremely difficult for the researcher to draw any conclusions toward the effectiveness of the at-home assignment intervention strategy using stark averages from the control period versus the intervention period. As such, the researcher developed a point-value system and divided up the school year into 25 day block-periods. These blocks allowed the researcher to more clearly see and analyze trends in the data.

From the data collected from the at-home assignment opinion surveys, it is evident parents were in favor of participating in helping their children at home with academic assignments. After analyzing the trends in the data, the researcher’s intention to show a strong link between attendances with family commitment to academics at-home did produce consistent results. The data showed that 13 students out of the 20 showed either their best attendance scores during periods six and seven or had zero absences during those periods. Another six students who scored below between a 0.25 and 0.75 were students who did not improve but rather returned to one or more prior low-absence scores that had been seen during periods one through five. Using the block analysis data, it was clear that all but one student showed stability or improvement in attendance during the intervention periods. Additionally, a positive
correlation between the amount of homework assignments completed and improved or stabilized attendance was found across the student population. Likewise, a slightly stronger positive correlation was found between students who spent at least 95 minutes or more total on all assignments and the increase in attendance. In Chapter Five, the researcher will discuss more thoroughly possible adaptations of this study and general suggestions for future research on student attendance in early childhood classrooms.

Chapter 5
Conclusions

The data provided by research can be summarized and analyzed in this concluding chapter through connections to previous research and extension of the current results to future studies. This chapter will present the results of the study by making connections to previous research, provide an explanation of the results, and discuss strengths and limitations of the study. Lastly, the chapter will provide further possibilities for the direction that the study could be taken in the future.

Introduction

The literature review was divided among three subcategories: expectations of parental involvement across cultures, effects of parental involvement on student achievement and student attendance in relation to parental involvement and student progress. The first section of this chapter will follow a similar format starting with discussing how implementing parent involvement through homework assignments affected student attendance. The second section will review the results of this study in comparison to previous research. The third section will elaborate on the results found within study while also discussing the strengths and limitations of the study. The conclusion of this chapter and study will make recommendations for future
research. Following the discussion of strengths and weaknesses, the researcher will discuss recommendations for future studies.

**Discussion of Results**

Upon analyzing the attendance results and at-home assignment productivity, it appears that the at-home assignment intervention strategy did produce positive correlations with student attendance. It was evident parents were in favor of participating in helping their children at home with academic assignments. There was the intention to show a strong link between attendances with family commitment to academics, and the at-home intervention did produce consistent results.

The averages of the non-intervention versus the intervention period would only highlight that eight students did improve their attendance, but that their change in attendance was not statistically significant for all eight students. However, upon further review of the trends of data across the entire year, the researcher was able to show that all but one of the students stabilized or improved their attendance during the intervention period. Those who improved their attendance demonstrated better results than any other non-intervention period or had returned to zero absences for the entire period. Thirteen students showed the best attendance scores or scores of zero absences during one or both of the two intervention periods. Students who stabilized their attendance scores demonstrated a return to prior low-absence scores during the two 25-day intervention periods. Likewise, a positive correlation was found linking the amount of homework assignments completed by students and the improvement of attendance. A positive correlation coupling total minutes spent on homework assignments and improved attendance was also noted by the researcher.
Connections to Previous Research

From the research of De Von Figueroa-Moseley et al. (2006) and Zarate (2007), it is suggested that many Latino families perceive their role to be most important in maintaining good behaviors at home which will then translate to good behaviors at school. In the present study, only 20% of families reported focusing on teaching social skills and behaviors to their children. It was clear that, for the majority of parents participating in this study, academic skills were equally valued at home. Both prior studies acknowledged the need for continued research on parental values and expectations, especially among Latino sub-ethnic populations, and both studies encouraged schools to continue to reach out to families and effectively communicate their expectations regarding parental involvement. This present study had attempted to reach out to families on a weekly basis to present them with subject-specific assignments that would encourage a well-rounded educational learning environment at home as well as in school. While the parent opinion surveys revealed parents felt good about working with their students at home, there were also positive correlations linking parental involvement in terms of assignments completed and time spent working together that showed an increased attendance score.

Previous research studies also cited Epstein’s model of parental involvement. Epstein’s model includes six different forms of parental involvement which include: attending parent-teacher meetings, participation in school based organizations such as the PTA, volunteering in the classroom, volunteering at school events, helping their children with homework, and checking their children’s homework (Domina, 2005; Altschul, 2011; Durand, 2011). Domina (2005) admitted in the study review that these six traits of parental-involvement most likely do not holistically represent parental involvement which in turn could lead to data that underrepresents the effectiveness of parental involvement. The author outlines that, in general,
the three most helpful ways parents can be involved, according to the results of this study, are “volunteering at school, helping with homework, and checking their student’s homework” (p.245). In lieu of that research, this present study attempted to study more closely the effect of parental involvement with homework at-home. With the variables of race, gender, student’s grade, school type, two-parent family, and family SES controlled, this present study was able to produce positive results. This study supports the results found in the research of Domina, Altschul, and Durand that parental involvement at-home can influence student attendance in school.

Durand (2011) suggested that the positive correlation between families with higher SES and higher parental involvement alongside the significant variance of acculturation indicated that as parents (mothers) become more educated they become more aware of the importance of education and begin to impart that value onto their own family. The author encouraged schools to take action and create environments in which the cultural needs of families are recognized and supported so that families can be empowered to participate and make positive changes regarding their children’s educations. This study did allow parents to feel involved and participate in their students’ educations. All parents reported that they would continue to work on homework with their children in the future if offered similar assignment opportunities.

Previous studies’ findings have varied in suggesting which aspects of family involvement and family practices most affect student attendance and dropping out (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p.309). In designing the current study, the researcher took note of the fact that previous research had indicated the most effective school attendance programs are often paired with a variety of parent and community involvement methods such as communicating, volunteering, and learning at home. This study had attempted to find out how strong of a factor at-home learning
opportunities were in connection to student attendance. The results from this study show that parental involvement at home with learning opportunities has an effect on attendance averages.

**Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The analysis of results of the current study along with the connections to previous research studies in the area of at-home parental involvement lead to the presentation of the strengths and limitations of the current study. The primary strengths of the study were the increased communication with parents and parental support of the assignments. The limitations of the study were found in the lack of control over numerous variables including self-reported data, small population of participants and unforeseen excused extended-absences, and very brief intervention timeline.

The first strength of this study was increased communication between teachers and parents. Although not formally observed, the researcher felt more informed about each child’s at-home learning environments. Some students had reported not being able to concentrate because of poor living conditions while others had thrived working on assignments with parents or siblings. On a weekly basis, the researcher was able to discuss themes being learned in the classroom with parents before sending them home with assignments. Parents then often took that time to discuss the assignment and any confusion they may have had with assignment instructions.

The second strength of the study was parental support of the assignments. The results show that only during the assignment for Week 3, one parent reported feeling unable to help their child with the assignment at home. Most other assignments received “Strongly agree” remarks in response to if parents felt they could participate in helping their children’s with homework assignments. Although not formally observed, some parents also made comments to
the researcher about further learning opportunities that they had created based off of the weekly homework assignments. As Durand (2011) had suggested, parents were in fact learning from the educational opportunities they were presented with and likewise reinforcing the value of education at home.

The first limitation to be discussed from this study is the self-reported data. Simply stated, while self-reporting is a viable way to collect data it is not always the least biased form of data collection. Parents were given questionnaires that used Likert scales to reduce bias but all the same, many parents could have reported false information to try to keep up appearances with the researcher.

Other limitations of this study include extended absences and a small set of participants within the study. During the pre-intervention time period, a few students had accumulated long periods of absences due to unforeseen family situations. These situations were common throughout the school in which the research took place, but may not be applicable for all urban schools. Additionally, the sample size of students used for this case study was small. A small sample size can create a bias of information only applicable for the population or group to which those participants belong, in this case one specific urban school. Therefore, the results of this study may not be transferable to other school communities.

Lastly, a third limitation may be the timing of the intervention. The intervention stage was not as long as the pre-intervention stage or control period. As such, the researcher was not able to evenly distribute the periods of the school year between control and intervention periods and have an equal opportunity to see changes produced using the intervention. The intervention also took place during the last 10 weeks of school. During this time period, the researcher
observed that families often tried to make arrangements for summer child care and tended to use those weeks to move apartments or homes which often resulted in increased student absences.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The current study provides a useful extension in the field of at-home parental involvement, but can be improved in various ways so that it may produce more results and relate more to the demographic of the entire community instead of one small class.

In order to truly measure if providing parents with at-home resources to help their students increases their likelihood to come to school, students would have to be screened for pre-existing attendance risks. Risks could include health factors of the child, health factors of parents such as pregnancy, parental employment status, and housing stability (likelihood to relocate within the school year). With more outside variables controlled for, it would be easier to accurately determine how parental involvement at-home affects children’s attendance.

Additionally, a second major recommendation would be for a larger sample population. By creating a study with a more diverse population, a researcher might obtain results that can be generalized across a larger community. Further research should be conducted using separate control groups. Each control group would focus on a specific type of parental involvement at-home and would, ideally, have equal amounts of high-risk absentee students. Different types of parental involvement may include open option involvement where parents are provided a number of educational resources they can choose from freely throughout the intervention, project-based learning activities, and theme-specific worksheet based learning opportunities for at-home learning.

Lastly, with a large enough study population in the future, it would be best to also track excuses for both excused and non-excused absences. In this current study, extended absences
were accounted for with reasons, but frequently one or two day absences went unaccounted for in terms of excuses. The school normally turns all excuses into either excused or unexcused. With such general labels, it is hard to find the root of most absences and how absences and at-home parental involvement may be correlated.

**Conclusion**

In previous research at-home learning opportunities have been linked to improved attendance. However, this study has not been able to find any correlation between at-home parental involvement and student attendance. However, the findings do suggest that the activities did increase parent communication with the researcher. Parents also agreed that they felt the assignments were a valuable use of time at home with their children. They were satisfied with the outcomes of the assignments effects on their children’s learning.

More research should be done on the facets of at-home learning opportunities and how different learning opportunities may be better for specific causes of absenteeism with larger sample populations to help make the data collected applicable to other populations.
References


Appendix A: Waiver of Consent

Informed Consent Form

February of 2013

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Presently, I am completing my Master’s degree at Cardinal Stritch University. As part of my Master’s program I am coordinating a scientific study regarding education. The purpose of my study will be to identify how additional academic opportunities at home help support students within school.

The participants of the study will be 4-5 year old children enrolled in the bilingual program at Forest Home Avenue Elementary and their families. As part of the study you and your child will be asked to complete one homework activity, together, at home each week. Additionally, each weekly activity will ask you to respond to an opinion survey about the homework activity. The questions of the survey will help to identify the way in which the homework assignments are helping—or not helping—advance your child with his/her studies at home. The first homework activity will be sent home at the end of March and the final homework assignment will be presented the first week of June. The results of the surveys and assignments will be reviewed to see how they compare to your child’s attendance for the months of March-June and the advances your child made in school.

I have received the necessary instruction required to coordinate this type of scientific study. In addition, this study is founded on prior academic studies and articles. There are no predicted risks for any participant. All of the information collected from families will be collected and stored in a confidential manner. Additionally, the results of this study will not be published in a way in which individual participants are not personally identified.

The results of this study will not produce immediate benefits for participants or educators. However, it is important to follow through with this study to better understand the relationship among educational opportunities with a family-home setting, attendance, and parental attitudes toward educational opportunities. The participation in this study is completely voluntary. You and your child are able to stop participating in this study at any time without consequences. In the case of stepping away from the study, all of the information you may have previously provided will be destroyed.

I appreciate your help with this study. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you,

Ms. Spankowski
K4 Educator
Forest Home Avenue Elementary
(414) 902-6200

☐ I have received an explanation of the study.

☐ YES I do give permission to my child to participate in the study.

☐ I DO NOT give permission for my child to participate in the study.
Estimados padres y tutores,


Los participantes del estudio serán los estudiantes de 4-5 años que están inscritos en el programa bilingüe en Forest Home Avenue Elementary y sus familias. Como parte del estudio Usted y su hijo/a tendrán que completar una actividad de tarea en casa, juntos/as, cada semana. Adicionalmente, cada actividad requiere que Uds. responden a una encuesta de opinión sobre la tarea. Las preguntas de la encuesta ayudarán a identificar la manera en la que la tarea mejora—o no ayuda—a su hijo avanzar en sus estudios en casa. La primera tarea se presentará al fin de marzo y seguirán hasta la última semana de mayo. Los resultados de las encuestas y tareas se compararán para identificar cómo las tareas de familia apoyan el aprendizaje de los estudiantes y si aumenta la asistencia del (la) niño/a.

He recibido la instrucción requerida para coordinar este tipo de estudio científico. Además el estudio está basado en estudios previos de otros investigadores y artículos académicos. No hay riesgos predecibles para ningún participante. Toda la información colectada se registrará de una manera confidencial. Adicionalmente, los resultados no serán publicados de una manera cuya se podrá identificar a los participantes.

Los resultados del estudio no resultarán en beneficios inmediatos para los participantes ni para los maestros. Pero es importante ejecutar el estudio para comprender la relación entre oportunidades educativas de casa, el nivel de asistencia y cómo los padres evalúan oportunidades educativas. La participación en el estudio es un trabajo voluntario. Su hijo/a puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento del estudio sin consecuencia. En ese caso, la información de su hijo/a será destruida.

Les agradezco su ayuda con este estudio. Si tienen alguna pregunta por favor comuníquense conmigo.

Gracias,

Ms. Spankowski
Educadora de K4
Appendix B: Pre and Post-Surveys

Pre-Screen Survey/Pre-Encuesta

Student Name: __________________________________________ Date: _________________________________

Adult(s) Involved: ________________________________________

1. In which areas of study would you like to work with your student most? (Math, science, social studies, etc.)
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________

2. Do you have any concerns with your child’s academic progress at this time?
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________

3. Other than school related assignments, what else are you currently doing with your child to help improve their academic and social skills?
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________
Nombre del estudiante: _________________________________________ Fecha: ________________________
Adulto(s) Involucrado(s): ___________________________________________________________________

1. ¿En cuales áreas de estudios le gustaría trabajar con su hijo? (Matemáticas, estudios sociales, ciencia, etc.)
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

2. ¿Tiene alguna(s) duda(s) sobre el desarrollo académico de su hijo?
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

3. En adición a la tarea de la escuela, ¿Actualmente, qué más hace Ud. en casa con su hijo para mejorar sus
habilidades académicas y sociales? ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Final Survey/Encuesta Final

Student Name: _________________________________________ Date: ________________________
Adult(s) Involved: _______________________________________________________________________

1. Did you feel that the parent-child assignments sent home were quality learning opportunities for your child?

   Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree  (Please circle one option)

2. Did you feel that your child benefited academically from these additional opportunities to learn at home?

   Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree  (Please circle one option)

3. Would you say that the time you and your child spent on these assignments was quality time spent together?

   Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree  (Please circle one option)

4. Would you continue to work one-on-one with your child for a certain amount of time each week on school
   “family” assignments?

   YES    NO  (Please circle one option)
1. ¿Sintió Ud. que las tareas mandadas a casa eran oportunidades de aprendizaje de buena calidad?

| Totalmente de Acuerdo | De Acuerdo | Indefinido | Desacuerdo | Totalmente en Desacuerdo |

*(Favor de marcar una opción)*

2. ¿Sintió Ud. que su hijo se benefició académicamente al tener estas oportunidades extras de aprender en casa?

| Totalmente de Acuerdo | De Acuerdo | Indefinido | Desacuerdo | Totalmente en Desacuerdo |

*(Favor de marcar una opción)*

3. ¿Diría Ud. que el tiempo que Ud. y su hijo pasaron haciendo juntos las tareas fue tiempo bien invertido?

| Totalmente de Acuerdo | De Acuerdo | Indefinido | Desacuerdo | Totalmente en Desacuerdo |

*(Favor de marcar una opción)*

4. ¿Diría Ud. que continuará trabajar uno-a-uno con su hijo en el futuro por una cantidad de tiempo cada semana en tarea de “familia”?

| SÍ | NO |

*(Favor de marcar una opción)*

---

**Appendix C: Weekly Student/Parent Opinion Survey**

**Student Name:** _________________________________ **Date of Assignment:** ________________________

**Student Opinion**

1. I thought this assignment was ________________ to do with my mom/dad/family. (Please circle one below)

   - Really fun!  
   - Just okay.  
   - Boring and would like something new for next week.

2. I was able to complete ________________ of the assignment by myself. (Please circle one below)

   - Most  
   - Some  
   - None

3. I enjoyed working with my family (Circle one):  

   - YES  
   - NO

4. What did you learn about from this assignment?
5. What are you learning at school with your teacher that is like this assignment?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________

Family Member Opinion
Family Member Name: ____________________________________________
Relationship to student: __________________________________________

1. I found that I was able to help guide my child through the assignment with little difficulty or misunderstanding.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree  (Please circle one option)

2. We spent a total of __________ minutes on this assignment.

3. I found this assignment was worth the time we spent working on it.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree  (Please circle one option)

4. In the future, I would prefer assignments: (Check all that apply)
   □ That work on my child’s reading skills.
   □ That work on my child’s math skills.
   □ That work on my child’s social skills.
   □ Other: ____________________________________________

Nombre del Estudiante: _________________________________ Fecha de la Tarea: ___________________________

Opinión del Estudiante

1. Yo pienso que hacer esta tarea con mi familia fue ______________. (Favor de marcar una opción)
   Muy divertida!  Así, así.  Aburrido y me gustaría hacer algo diferente para la próxima semana.

2. Yo sí pude cumplir ______________ de mi tarea por mí mismo(a). (Favor de marcar una opción)
   La mayoría  Parte  Nada

3. Me divertí al trabajar con mi familia. (marcar una opción): SI  NO

4. ¿Qué aprendiste al hacer esta tarea?
5. ¿Qué estás aprendiendo en la escuela con tu maestra a la que pertenece ésta tarea?

________________________________________________________________________________________

Opinión de un Integrante de la Familia
Nombre del integrante de la familia: _________________________________
Relación con el estudiante: _________________________________

1. Yo encontré que podía guiar a mi hijo en la tarea sin mucha dificultad y confusión
   Totalmente de Acuerdo   De Acuerdo   Indefinido   Desacuerdo   Totalmente en Desacuerdo
   (Favor de marcar una opción)

2. Pasamos, en total, una cantidad de ________________ minutos trabajando en ésta tarea.

3. Yo creo que ésta tarea valió el tiempo que invertimos para terminarla. (Favor de marcar una opción)
   Totalmente de Acuerdo   De Acuerdo   Indefinido   Desacuerdo   Totalmente en Desacuerdo
   (Favor de marcar una opción)

4. En el futuro, me gustaría trabajar con mi hijo: (Favor de marcar todas las que apliquen)
   □ En tareas para practicar literatura.
   □ En tareas para practicar matemáticas.
   □ En tareas para practicar conceptos sociales.
   □ Otras tareas: _________________________________
Appendix D: Examples of 10 Weekly Assignment Used in this Study

Week 1 Assignment

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Week 2 Assignment

This week in class we will be exploring the world of insects. We will be talking about the unique characteristics insects have—such as all insects have 6 legs, a head, a thorax (chest), and an abdomen (stomach). For this week’s parent-child homework assignment, I am asking you to take 10 minutes with your child to talk about which insect your child would like to be if he or she was an insect. The homework assignment is important for children because it allows them to practice one aspect of science and also invites them to be creative by making them think of how their lives would be different as insects. Below, your child should draw a picture of the insect he or she would like to be, and you (or an older sibling) can help them by writing which insect they chose to be and why.

Nombre del estudiante

A ella le gustaría la mariposa por que se siente libre y por que campeaza por una araña y termina como mariposa. Por que el de muchos colori
Week 3 Assignment

For this homework assignment that parents and children will complete at home, I created mathematics ladybugs. For each number that is in the list (all of which are numbers we have studied in class) you and your child should draw that number of spots on the ladybug located on the other side of the number. Parents should not be the ones drawing the spots but rather should be there to count and check the number of spots each ladybug has with their child. Thank you both for participating!

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Week 4 Assignment

Esta semana, la tarea para padres e hijos es preparar comida juntas. Pueden preparar cualquier comida de cena, desayuno o simplemente una merienda. Los estudiantes deben tener la habilidad medir ingredientes, mezclarlos, poner la mesa, y/o limpiar después de comer. El punto de esta tarea es apoyar los niños formar responsabilidad y además mejorar su autoestima. En el salón los niños siempre ayudan con preparar almuerzo y poner y limpiar la mesa y servir la comida. Las habilidades que usan para preparar y servir la comida les enseña sobre comida sana (frutas y verduras) y hábitos sanos (como lavarse las manos antes de comer).

Abajo su hijo puede dibujar sobre su experiencia ayudando en la cocina. Van a tener la oportunidad compartir y hablar con sus amigos de su experiencia en clase, también.

This week, the parent-child homework is to prepare food together. You can choose to prepare whichever meal or food you wish—dinner, breakfast, or a snack. Students should be able to help measure ingredients, mix, set the table, and/or clean up after the meal. The point of this assignment is to support our students in forming responsibility and positive self-esteem. In the classroom, the children always help to prepare and serve lunch and set and clean the tables. The skills that they use to prepare and serve food teaches them about healthy food and eating as well as healthy habits (such as washing hands before eating). Below, your child can draw about their experience helping in the kitchen. In school, they will also have an opportunity to share with their friends about their cooking experience, too.
La gallinita roja

Érase una vez una gallinita roja que vivía en un granja con un perro, un gato y un ganso. Un día, la gallinita roja encontró unos granos de trigo. “Puedo hacer pan con estos granos”, pensó.

La gallinita roja preguntó:
—¿Quién me ayuda a sembrar el trigo?

—Yo no, —dijo el perrito negro.

—Yo no, —dijo el gatito anaranjado.

—Yo no, —dijo el gansito amarillo.

—Entonces lo haré yo sola —dijo la gallinita roja.

Y sembró el trigo sin ayuda alguna.

Coméntenlo

Comentar el cuento es casi tan divertido como leerlo.

Ensaye estas ideas para iniciar el diálogo.

A. Pregunte: ¿Te gustó el cuento? ¿Por qué?
A. Miren de nuevo las imágenes. Señale algún detalle interesante. Pregúntele al niño qué le llamó la atención de las ilustraciones.
A. Comparen el cuento con su vida o con la del niño. Pregúntele si el cuento lo hace recordar alguna cosa o persona. O digale: Al leer este cuento me acuerdo de la vez que...
A. Expliquen el significado del cuento. Pregúntele: ¿De qué trata el cuento? ¿Por qué crees que los otros animales no quisieron ayudar? ¿Qué pasó al final?

A. Convídale al niño a contar el cuento de nuevo con sus propias palabras.
A. Juntos, inventen otras versiones del cuento. Ésas una vez un niño que quería hacer un pesebre.
A. Hágale que el niño participe en el cuento. Pregúntele: Si pudieras habitar con la gallinita roja, ¿qué le dirías?

¿Qué te pareció ese cuento, León? ¡Genial!
¿Qué parte te gustó más?
Creo que cuando la gallinita roja hizo el pan.
¿Sobre qué tema podrías escribir un cuento?
Podería escribir sobre lo que en que Lionel y yo tratamos de hacer unas gallinetas...

Libros sobre...la colaboración

El viejo y su puerco de Gary Soto
Amita y Bolo de William Steig
W6: ¡Adivina Que Es!

Instrucciones:

1. Llenar la bolsa con objetos pequeños de la casa (por ejemplo: un Kleenex, una cuchara, un Dulce, un cepillo de dientes, un calcetín, etc.).

2. Con ojos cerrados o usando una venda para cubrir los ojos, su hijo debe recoger un objeto de la bolsa.

3. Su hijo tiene que adivinar lo que tiene y describir lo que siente en la mano (como reconoce este objeto).

4. Ud. puede decidir si su hijo va a adivinar para todos los objetos o si quieren tomar turnos para que su hijo puede escuchar como Ud. usa sus palabras para describir el objeto que tiene en la mano (le daría a su hijo un modelo seguir cuando es su turno). (Ejemplo: “Yo creo que tengo una cuchara en la mano porque siento que el objeto es frío, metal, delgado por una parte y más redondo para otra parte. ¿Si tengo una cuchara? (Abra los ojos para checar si tiene una cuchara.)"

Esta actividad ayuda a su hijo formar y añadir nuevas palabras descriptivas a su vocabulario. Sin verlo que están tocando, los niños tienen que usar palabras para adivinar lo que han encontrado en la bolsa. Por ejemplo, un niño puede poner su mano en la bolsa y recoger un muñeco. Si el niño dice, “Yo sé que este es un muñeco.” Ud. debe preguntar, antes que abra sus ojos, “¿Cómo te diste cuenta que habías encontrado un muñeco? ¿Qué sienten las manos?” Preguntas así ayudan formar el proceso pensativo de su hijo. Muchas veces niños pequeños dependen en usar sus manos para señalar a lo que quieren o lo que buscan. Esta actividad les ayuda desarrollar su habilidad de describir su mundo con palabras.

W6: Guess what it is!

Instructions:

1. Fill the bag with a variety of small household items (for example: a Kleenex, spoon, piece of Candy, toothbrush, sock,... etc.).

2. With closed eyes or a blindfold, have your child reach into the bag and choose an item.

3. Your child must guess what they are holding and must describe what they feel in their hand (how he/she can recognize the object).

4. You can decide whether or not you want your child to guess all of the objects or whether you would like to take turns with your child. Taking turns would allow your child to hear you describing the objects and provides them with an example to follow.

This activity helps your child form and add new descriptive words to their vocabulary. Without seeing what they are touching, the children must use their words to describe what they have found in the bag. For example, a child may place his hand in the bag and grab a doll. If the child says, “I know this is a doll,” you (the parent) should ask (before the child opens their eyes), “How do you know you have found a sock? What do you feel in your hands?” Questions such as these help form your child’s thought process. Many times small children rely on their hands to point to things they want or are looking for. This activity helps them to form their ability to describe their world using words.
**W.7 Tarjetas de Flash del Alfabeto/Alphabet Flashcards**

Es increíble pensar que solo tengamos cuatro semanas más de escuela hasta que todos se gradúan a Kindergarten de 5 años. Esta semana, me gustaría revisar todas las letras del alfabeto con los estudiantes. En casa, padres e hijos pueden trabajar juntos para hacer tarjetas de flash del alfabeto. A un lado de la tarjeta, su hijo debe escribir la letra en forma mayúscula y minúscula (ej: A a). Al otro lado, su hijo debe dibujar algo que empieza con esta letra. Durante el verano, pueden usar las tarjetas para practicar reconocer las letras y sus sonidos.

It is incredible to think that we are already four weeks away from the day all of our students will graduate to 5 year old kindergarten. This week, I would like to review all of the letters of the alphabet with students. At home, parents and children can work together to make flash cards of the alphabet. On one side of the card, your child should write the upper and lower case form of the letter (ex: A a). On the other side of the card, your child should draw something that begins with that letter. During the summer, you can use the flashcards to practice recognizing the letters and their sounds.
Week 8 Assignment

| 3 estrellas | 2 estrellas | = 5 |
| 2 corazones | 2 corazones | = 4 |
| 5 círculos  | 1 círculo   | = 6 |
| 1 rectángulo| 2 rectángulos| = 3 |
| 3 diamantes | 4 diamantes | = 7 |
| 2 cuadrados | 3 cuadrados | = 5 |
| 4 óvalos    | 1 óvalo     | = 5 |
Week 9 Assignment

**Mi Animal Favorito/My Favorite Animal**

Tenemos dos semanas hasta que visitamos al Zoológico. Para ayudarles a los niños preparar para el paseo, hemos hablado mucho de los animales y sus hogares. Para que yo sepa cuales sean los exhibiciones mas interesantes para los niños, favor de trabajar con su hijo/a y ayudarles dibujar y escribir dos oraciones de su animal favorito y porque le gusta ese animal.

We have two weeks until we visit the Zoo! In order to prepare the children for the field trip, we have been talking about animals and their homes. In order for me to know which animal exhibits are most interesting to the children, please help your child to draw and write two sentences naming his/her favorite animal and why it is his/her favorite animal.

---

Me gustan las zebres por sus colores y su gran habilidad de correr.
Week 10 Assignment

Look at the height of each of the lines. Color in the measurement bars up to the right height to match each line.

Colorear la barra de números hasta el número que corresponde con la línea.
## Appendix E: Completion Record of At-Home Assignments

| Students Participating | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Completed by Class |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------------|
| Week 1: March 25-28 | T | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | 11 |
| Week 2: April 1-8 | S | I | F | U | E | R | A | I | N | S | E | C | T | O |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Week 3: April 1-15 | I | A | D | B | U | G |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Week 4: April 16-22 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Week 5: April 23-29 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 6: May 2-8 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Week 7: May 9-15 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 8: May 16-22 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 9: May 23-29 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 10: June 1-7 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 11: June 8-14 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 12: June 15-21 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Week 13: June 22-28 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Total Assignments Completed by Individual Students | 4 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 4 |
### STUDENT RESPONSES TO WEEKLY SURVEYS

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Appendix G

Student and Parent Responses to Weekly Surveys

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