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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to encourage 60 at-risk young children in a Chapter 1 reading program at a rural primary school to read for pleasure so that they would eventually increase literacy development. The parents, teachers, and volunteer readers would increase the amount of time spent reading aloud to the children in the Chapter 1 reading program. These individuals would become the reading role models for at-risk children. A grade level in-service program presented current views and information necessary for teachers, staff, and volunteers of enrichment reading for at-risk children. The value of reading was reinforced by providing increased books and magazines that assisted the teachers with classroom libraries and materials for reading aloud. Volunteers, such as peers and individuals from the community, were effectively incorporated with the teacher's needs. Analysis of the data indicated that parents reported their children enjoyed the time spent reading stories together and that they had increased their reading. Teachers stated that the at-risk children who were read to exhibited an attitude of confidence and expanded literacy development. (Contains 33 references. The beginning survey and the parent survey instruments are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Enhancement of Communication Development
of Primary Grade, At-risk Children
Through Reading Aloud for Pleasure

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by

Elaine L. Wilczynski

Cluster 58

A Practicum I Report presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Approved:

July 23, 1994
Date of Final Approval
of Report

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ABSTRACT

Enhancement of Communication Development of Primary Grade, At-risk Children Through Reading Aloud for Pleasure. Wilczynski, Elaine L., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University. Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Media Specialist/Librarian.

This practicum was designed to encourage young children to read for pleasure so that they would eventually increase literacy development. The parents, teachers, and volunteer readers would increase the amount of time spent reading aloud to the children in the Chapter I Reading Program. These individuals would become the reading role models for at-risk children. A grade level in-service program was utilized to present current views and information necessary for teachers, staff and volunteers of enrichment reading for at-risk children.

The writer reinforced the value of reading by providing increased books and magazines that assisted the teachers with classroom libraries and materials for reading aloud. Volunteers, such as peers and individuals from the community, were effectively incorporated with the teacher's needs.

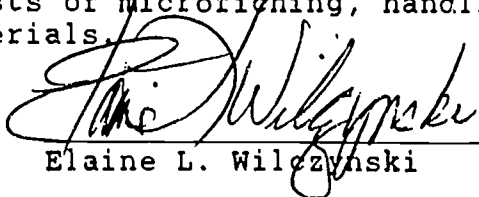
Analysis of the data indicates that parents reported their children enjoyed the time spent reading stories together and that they had increased their reading. Teachers stated that the at-risk children who were read to exhibited an attitude of confidence and expanded literacy development.

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Elaine L. Wilczynski

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The setting of the practicum implementation is a small public school in one of several small towns in a rural area. The rural attendance area's population is approximately 2,000.

Originally called the Little School, it was built in 1934 to serve only black children before segregation. After segregation it was closed for many years and reopened fourteen years ago in November 1978 with grades Kindergarten through second. In 1986 grade three was added. Since 1987 the school has grown to include gymnasium, three portables, a music room, a non-categorical room with facilities, and a room for at-risk four-year-old children with special learning needs.

The school now has two buildings that run parallel. The first wing consists of eight classrooms, a teacher's lounge and eating space, and an office area. The second wing, added in 1992, contains seven classrooms, a library, guidance, speech, and conference room space. There are four portable buildings and a large multi-purpose building.

The ethnic population of the school is 87% white, Native American and white, and 16% black or Native American and black. There have been no significant

changes in the ethnic composition of the student body in recent years. The population is stable, with fewer than forty students transferring into or out of the school in any year. Pupil transfers do not have a significant impact on the school program. A majority of the families are in the middle to low socio-economic range, with 118 children qualifying for the Federal free breakfast-lunch program and 27 children qualifying for the reduced federal free breakfast-lunch program. A survey of the educational levels of the parents and guardians of children revealed that 4% of the mothers did not complete high school; 4% of the fathers did not complete high school; 68% of the mothers completed high school; 59% of the fathers completed high school, 12% of the mothers completed college, 14% of the fathers completed college. One hundred forty-eight surveys were returned, which gives a sixty-one percent response.

California Achievement Test results are analyzed once a year to identify children who might be at risk and would benefit from programs designed to meet their needs. A plan is developed based on this analysis to improve areas of weakness.

This school has a Chapter I remedial tutor program in reading and a Chapter I remedial classroom for students in reading in addition to the regular homeroom

teachers. There is also one readiness class as well as the three regular first grade classes. The county is also currently implementing a Chapter I Child Development Program for four-year-olds who are at risk.

A wide variety of Special Education programs are available at the county level. They are: gifted and talented program (art and drama), itinerant music program, speech, vision and hearing program, and Suzuki String Program. The county also provides social services such as free and reduced lunch and breakfast program, itinerant school nurse services, pupil appraisal personnel (psychologist, social worker, assessment teacher, speech therapist), one special education resource room, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and referrals to the proper agencies for suspected abuse and neglect. Many of the parents are initially reluctant at the prospect of placing their child in special education programs, fearing a possible stigma attached to themselves or the child.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer was born in the Midwest and finished high school before moving south for undergraduate and graduate education. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, certified in the Teaching of Gifted and Library Science, Kindergarten through Grade 8, and earned a Master in Education degree in Mentally Retarded and

Learning Disabled and additionally certified as a Supervisor of Student Teaching with concentration in Reading, Library Science and Library Management.

Eleven years of teaching experience in the third, second and first grades have been followed by two years as Media Director in a public school system. She has used several systems of child management in teaching: tracking (placement by ability), self-contained, mainstreamed and inclusion.

In her current role as the Media Director she serves 297 students in grades kindergarten through third grade and an additional 20 children in a Chapter I At-Risk four-year-old program. The school library receives funding from the county, state and federal government, and from parents. The library program is maintained in a classroom redesigned to serve the school as a library for students, parents, faculty and resource teachers.

The Media Director has no professional or nonprofessional assistance in the Learning Media Services, but two parent volunteers will soon be trained in the staff involvement to provide support in reading aloud. The library materials have been purchased to enhance the curriculum which is designed for teaching a literature based program. The language arts program integrates science, social studies, art,

music, and writing. It is organized to create an environment that encourages children to read for ideas. It does not, however, include reading for pleasure. This new development, literature-based class program, further emphasizes the importance of providing both teacher understanding and support of media materials that can expand the classroom reading curriculum and also expand reading to individual interests.

CHAPTER II
STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In the spring of each year the following tests are administered to children in first through third grades: California Achievement Test (CAT) - Grade 1-3, and Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) - Grade 3. The results are analyzed to assess areas of the student's strengths and weaknesses to provide information regarding necessary enhancement and special modifications. In short, the problem was that 60 at-risk primary students were not reading for pleasure.

At the time, at-risk children with a reading weakness characteristic were identified and referred to the Chapter I Reading Program. Information gathered indicated that these at-risk children were not reading at home, did not observe other members of the family reading, and very seldom or never were read to at home. As children view the important persons in their lives reading and discover the joy of being read to, a vitally important preparation is established toward their literacy development. The teachers at this time were following an established school curriculum provided by county and state guidelines. The teachers had so many curriculum requirements to fulfill that often the time to read aloud was used in other language areas. The Chapter I Reading Program teachers were

assisting the children at various levels of time, from thirty minutes to two hours daily.

Various factors contribute to the problem of primary students in Chapter I Reading Program not reading for pleasure. Many of the families have both parents working, leaving little time to read to their children. The single parent family has similar difficulty in finding time to read. There are two public libraries within a radius of twenty miles in this county from which parents may withdraw books. Many parents are living on a limited budget and do not choose to buy books for their children. Some parents experience difficulty reading to their children due to limited literacy skills themselves. The enrichment of reading is not encountered because there is no joy or value realized by the child. There are many elements causing difficulties for the students who need to be read to at home and school in order to achieve optimal literacy enrichment.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of this problem was supported by survey, interviews, and observation. One-on-one interviews were administered to ten of the fourteen classroom teachers. They stated that the reading series adapted by the school board did not allow leisure time in which students were permitted freedom to choose reading

material in their interest. On days when recess is contained in the classroom, teachers may read aloud to the students or allow them to read books of their choice.

A survey was sent home with 45 children in the spring of 1993 requesting that the parents respond to five brief questions (see Appendix A). Fifteen parents indicated that they did not read aloud to their child. Twenty-one stated that they did not read aloud to their child on a regular basis, and six stated that they read daily, usually at bedtime. Three did not respond to the survey.

During interviews with parents by the Chapter I Resource teachers for the reading aloud programs at parent-teacher conferences, telephone conferences for parents who could not physically attend, and Individual Educational Progress Conferences (IEP's), parents expressed verbal concerns regarding reading aloud to their children on a daily basis. Their work schedules left no opportunity for this communication process. Some stated that they did not buy books, had only a few at home for their children, but did not enjoy reading aloud.

Each of the fourteen classrooms was visited in April and September of 1993 and six of the rooms did not contain a child's classroom library. Material and

some books were placed on shelves and/or tables that coincided with the thematic unit being introduced by the teacher. The teachers in the eight classrooms that did have libraries expressed concerns that they did not have the means to readily provide more books (1, 2, or 3 books) per child. They stated that books placed on the shelf were rotated at least once a year. This meant that the books on the shelf were placed in boxes and the boxed books were rotated to the shelf. This process is repeated several times during the school year.

The children in each class were interviewed in the Media Center as they conducted research in the Spring of 1993. Two questions were asked: 1) to describe themselves as readers in one or two sentences, and 2) to tell all the places they have ever read a book or had a book read to them. None of the children in the Chapter I Reading Program saw themselves as readers and or had parents who read books to them at home.

Teacher observation also showed that the Chapter I Reading children recognized few books or were able to identify literary characters that were not in movies or videos. The information gathered through interviews with the writer, teacher observation, and surveys has indicated a problem called reading. There is a need to read to children while they are young, thereby insuring

a future reading interest.

Causative Analysis

Many parents of the second and third grade primary students in the Chapter 1 Reading Program that were not reading for pleasure reported that they did not enjoy reading themselves. When interviewed, parents stated that a cause of the problem may be that their role models did not read to them and so they as role models do not read to their children on a regular basis. Some of the parents have a low educational level that has resulted from their inability to read at the lowest ability level.

Many young parents are unaware that their role is of prime importance in listening comprehension, vocabulary and language development. They lack the knowledge that reading aloud has value in that primary children imitate most of what they see and hear. With the rising illiteracy, parents are not aware that many authorities view reading as a major strength.

Teachers are required by the state to provide definite amounts of time per subject or skill area. This formula does not permit an unstructured reading time to inform, entertain, or arouse curiosity in experiencing reading materials of the child's choice during free encounter time.

Some teachers stated that the children in their

rooms already knew how to read and should be reading silently or to their parents and not the other way around. These teachers also reported that the readers provided by the school were based on books that determined language and built reading success. All of the teachers reported that they would like to review new books first hand that they could use in correlation with the school reading program.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

It is the writer's impression that one of the most important programs for developing the knowledge necessary for achievement in reading is that parents, as a child's first teacher, must read aloud to them. The vital role that parents play in the literacy development of their children is not surprising since children are always asking, "What's that?" The child's vocabulary skills develop naturally through the inquiries regarding signs, pictures, television commercials, food containers at stores, books, magazines, or anything displaying the printed word. This parent-child reading and writing association that takes place even before school starts is the beginning of the child's literacy.

The Coleman Report (Coleman, et al., 1966) recognized the importance of parents and the environment in which the child lived. Many studies

were introduced regarding the participation of parent in the development of the literacy process. Early educational development of reading and writing takes place at home before the child enters school. There is no beginning, middle or end as to when children gain experience with vocabulary, reading and writing. These stages of development are created simultaneously (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Hall, 1987; Schickedanz, 1986).

The preliminary literature reviews show that Criscuolo (1989), Young and Vardell (1993), and McGill-Franzen (1993) all agree that motivating children to read is very important and that practical activities would contribute to assist children in their literacy development. Dewey (1899) included lectures for parents that encouraged interactions between parents and teachers to improve children's literacy. Montessori provided an affirmation to the importance of communication between teachers and parents when she established an open-door policy for parents at her school in Italy as early as 1907. Huey (1908) stated that literacy development is not new concerning reading, but that "the secret of it all lies in the parents' reading aloud to and with the child" (p. 332). Trelease continues to bring parents and children together as he states, "the desire to read is not born

in a child. It is planted by parents and teachers" (p. 39).

Riley (1993) has suggested that research between the family environment and educational success depends on the ability to read and communicate for the child. Government research is a strong indicator,

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well off the family is (U.S. Department of Education, 1986, p. 7).

A variety of activities involving the community and parents in the process of reading will enhance the literacy development of the child while combining experiences between teachers and parents. The teacher will respond to the parent in a manner that corresponds to materials, resources, documents and relevant information regarding the effect that parents reading aloud to children correlates to literacy achievement in an academic environment.

Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) indicated that a family's home environment provides the first foundation in reading. Bailey (1990) stressed that a child's reading success may be based on three indicators controlled by the parent. Young children may develop into good readers when parents read aloud

to them, develop oral communication with the child, and continually provide enriched experiences.

It was previously thought that the reading process depended upon reading readiness skills of phonics, word recognition and comprehension. It is now being discovered that children bring more prior knowledge and communication skills into their language development. The developmental theoretical model of emergent literacy is a term used first by Clay in 1966. Morrow (1989, p. 71) stated that each skill enhances the others as they are learned concurrently." Morrow describes emergent literacy as:

Emergent literacy assumes that the child acquires some knowledge about language, reading, and writing before coming to school. Literacy development begins early in life and is ongoing. There is a dynamic relationship between the communication skills: each influences the other in the course of development. Development occurs in every day contexts of the home and community (p. 72).

Emergent literacy is still in the development research process. There are three processes of reading whose development Mason (1984) has considered. They may develop individually or conception may take place simultaneously. One process is the orientation of left

to right using print, letter spacing, print and punctuation. A second process is that of names, shapes, sizes, forms of print, and sounds and rhythm of the letters or words. The last process is the function and purpose of the print.

Emergent literacy in childhood research comprises Prater's (1985) observations that having individuals read stories aloud to children permits them to listen and be motivated to read and this is an important foundation of literacy development. Morrow (1989) refers to four objectives that are necessary in the development of young readers: "positive attitudes toward reading;...concepts about books;...comprehension of story;...concepts about print" (p. 82). Research by Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) states:

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years. The benefits are greatest when the child is an active participant, engaging in discussion about stories, learning to identify letters and words, and talking about the meanings of words (p. 23).

The New Orleans Public Library and several local schools (1993) recommend checking out stories for children to obtain literacy knowledge. This highlights

the two elements of emergent literacy, oral language and social context. Goodman (1984) found that social context is very important for the literacy development of the child. Listening to stories in the library program and discussing them helps in the development of a child's oral language and the development of social context (Prater, 1985).

Estes (1971) affirms that children's self-concept about reading is as important as whether they are able to read. Adults and parents can be great reading partners for children. Willoughby-Herb (1988) depicts the environment of a good reader as "rich in reading and writing materials" (p. 60). She found that a common characteristic of parents of good readers was that they "read, read and reread to their children and most important they placed great value on reading themselves" (p. 60).

Trelease (1989) states that an effective advantage to the reader and child is to:

keep in mind the physical bonding that occurs during the time you are holding the child and reading. To make sure you never convey the message that the book is more important than the child, maintain skin-to-skin contact as often as possible, patting, touching, and hugging while you read. Linked with the normal parent-infant

dialogue, this reinforces a feeling of being well-loved (p. 44).

Prater (1985) reported that reading was also important because of the wonderful perception of closeness and the increase in the creativity shown by the child. Strickland and Morrow (1990) indicated that reading permitted parents and children to share experiences and feel closer to one another.

Reading literacy must be developed in young children from early conception (McGill-Franzen, 1993; MS Read-a-thon, 1974; Bradley, 1982; Gersten, 1981). Many parents are motivated by a genuine concern regarding the importance of reading aloud to their child. But not all parents understand the importance of reading in the child development process. Strickland and Morrow (1990) and Willoughby-Herb (1988) state that teachers need to adequately answer their questions and provide information on the continuum of reading. Regular encounters between parents and teachers will eventually provide better and more excited readers that have learned to love and appreciate books.

Television viewing by children conspires to make our bright children non-readers with short attention spans. Trelease (1989) found four strong distractions in the child's environment: first, that ninety-eight

percent of Americans have 2.3 television sets and watch television for more than seven hours per day, second, that even three-year-olds are being left to watch television more than thirty hours per week, third, that VCRs and videos have a greater circulation than our public libraries, and fourth, that fifty-nine percent of children own and use their own television and VCRs. Lamme (1988) is most emphatic in her condemnation of television. She says:

Education's greatest enemy is the television. It is far more addictive than smoking and just as detrimental to one's health...children should never watch television. There is always something better to do...children who watch TV have shorter attention spans and more violent behavior than their non-TV watching peers (p. 124).

According to Prater (1985), single parent families and changes within the traditional family are factors that impact the time allotted to reading aloud to our children and the value we place on reading. The increased number of single parents, whether male or female, has increasingly left social services to schools and child care facilities.

The emergent literacy development process is in a continuous flux of change. Research affirms that by reading aloud to their children, parents can provide to

that child a positive attitude, and increase in the child's self-esteem, enhance the child's literacy and extend potential talents. Evidence indicates that too little reading aloud by parents or adults at home has lessened a love of books, and denied a broad experiential background and oral language development in a child's literacy process. Trelease (1989) has determined that reading aloud each day could be the most important gift we can give to our children. The gift to success.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The general goal of the practicum was to encourage young children to read for pleasure so that they would eventually increase literacy development. The parents, teachers, and volunteer readers would increase the amount of time spent reading aloud to the children in the Chapter I Reading Program. These individuals would then become the reading role models for at-risk children.

Expected Outcomes

As a result of the practicum implementation, the writer expected at least five positive results. At the end of the three month practicum 35 of 60 primary at-risk Chapter I Reading Program children would indicate an improvement in their description of themselves as readers by oral statements to the writer and by teacher observation records. Second, at the end of the implementation period, 35 out of 60 parents would indicate on a written survey an increase in the books their child had read in a similar time period prior to the implementation period. Third, children would indicate an increase in reading knowledge by their improved report card scores. Finally, the number of trade books per child would be increased in the classroom libraries.

Measurement of Outcomes

A survey was sent to each parent at the end of the program to indicate the amount of time spent reading to the child at home, a teacher and volunteer book recorded time spent at school reading aloud. The survey included three choices: do they read more often, read approximately the same amount of time as before the implementation, or is less time now spent reading aloud (Appendix B).

The Chapter I Reading teachers held conferences during the final weeks of the program with parents and children. This was a relaxed period of time in which parents and teachers reevaluated the goals established for the child's reading program. Negative and positive comments concerning the reading and attitude of each child were recorded and tallied by the writer.

CHAPTER IV
SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem was that 60 at-risk Chapter I Reading primary children were not reading for pleasure. Continuing studies of a child's literacy development, linguistics, and psychological behavior describe reading experiences as invaluable recognition to primary students in the Chapter I Reading Program who are not reading for pleasure. Research emphasizes the value of a child's playful exploration where parent, teacher or volunteer reader can share reading a book. These adults represent an educational center and support group through books. It is essential to encourage the literacy development of all children by increasing the systematic amount of beginning reading experiences.

Proposed activities in the Learning Media Center will support the reading experience because Trelease (1989) has noted:

A large part of the educational research and practice of the last twenty years confirms conclusively that the best way to raise a reader is to read to that child in the home and in the classroom. This simple uncomplicated fifteen-minute-a-day exercise is not only one of the

greatest intellectual (and emotional) gifts you can give a child; it is also the cheapest way to ensure the longevity of a culture (p. xiv).

An integrated literature-based program should include opportunities for children to listen, read, think, play, and share their affection for books. Oral reading broadens and strengthens living reading skills, and improves the chances of reading for ideas.

A typical day for the students in the Learning Media Center includes whole group activities, small group activities, acquiring independent study activities through instruction in library use, guidance for special reading problems, interests, and assisting students in making the proper selection of material that are chosen to be read aloud because "not all books are worth reading aloud" (Trelease, 1989).

Parents, grandparents and the community were encouraged to observe, participate in oral reading, or send favorite books to the Learning Media Center as often as possible. Also, a list of old favorite children's books were made available to generate discussions about books they remember. Regardless of the increasing number of working parents, participation was not affected by this factor. To offset this possibility school board members, community leaders, and retired people were approached and agreed to read

aloud and share their memories with at-risk children in the Media Center.

Additional help came from a resource teacher, a guidance teacher, curriculum specialists, a librarian, and from agencies such as state and county libraries, the local library association, and regional and state associations. The Media Director collected a variety of observations, checklists, and video samples of reading aloud or being read aloud to in the Media Center and resource room in order to monitor the developmental oral reading progress of each child. This information was used to open communications with the parents regarding the importance of oral reading and to provide information about the purpose of reading aloud, as well as when to begin and how to read aloud. This has challenged and promoted responsibility in parents and improved the ability of the students to listen for ideas.

Research through children's surveys, parental interviews and teacher observations identified Chapter I at-risk reading children as not pursuing reading books for their own interest and ideas. Information strongly indicates that parental involvement is recommended but it is not always possible in considering current times and conditions. Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez and Teale (1993) note, "It is

equally important to help children learn to value reading so that they will read, both for enjoyment and for information (p. 476)." It is of national concern to recognize that adults must work together to assure continual high standards of literacy for children are observed. Federal reports rank this state near the bottom in educational reading levels, stating that children had difficulty understanding simple grade level reading material. Reading researchers are acquiring data that informs the writer that the American family is changing. Traditions and values are continually being challenged by things like television (Lamme, 1988; Trelease, 1989). Prater (1985) is concerned by the increase in the number of single parents and the number of families where both parents worked. Other writers, such as Fredericks and Taylor (1985) argued "the crowded schedules of most families demand that effective parent programs today be flexible and varied" (p. viii).

Clay (1990) recognizes the participation in an intensive daily tutorial reading recovery to develop self-monitoring strategies. Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale (1993) are currently suggesting that it is important to help children learn that reading has great value so that they will read. Curiosity is the seed to imagination, and almost

nothing nourishes that imagination more than books.

Motivating children to read freely for enjoyment, both in and out of the classroom will encourage literacy through reading activities (Criscuolo, 1979). An important ingredient in reading aloud is the type of books that are read. Book lists are used by teachers and should be shared with parents. Willoughby-Herb (1988) indicated that certain books are categories to encourage parents in locating reading material that matches the child's attention/listening span and interest. Trelease (1989) devotes an entire chapter to recommending books, with a short synopsis of each in his read-aloud handbook written for busy parents and teachers who want to provide more literature but who are not sure where to begin. Parents who read aloud to encourage literacy will increase a child's reading success (Bailey, 1990).

Research is proving that literacy development depends on several recognizable interactions. The first and most qualitative interaction is the adult-child time spent together sharing books and the value the adult places on literacy. Haussler and Goodman (1984) reported that early reading interest was only increased when parents assisted in their child's literacy development. Other authors have published books and pamphlets containing information about

reading just for parents. These established authorities have dealt with rapid social changes, and how parents may gain knowledge regarding the literacy development and the philosophy that reading aloud to children may be the most important activity in providing knowledge (Trelease, 1989). A booklet written for parents on the development of reading is How to Help Grow a Reader (Flippo, 1982).

The classroom library is a solution for at risk children who do not have access to books either at home or at a public library. The books must be immediately accessible with a focal area within the classroom library to allow all readers to be stimulated. Another approach to solving the problem is to allow the parent to check out books from the school library and that way there is quality of interaction for the adult-child interest.

Hauser's book, Growing Up Reading - Learning to Read through Creative Play (1993) includes interesting activities, materials, and a list of books for children pre-readers to independent readers.

Children learn the value of reading by watching adult role models whether they are parents, teachers, or volunteers (Taylor, 1983). Haussler and Goodman (1984) determined that the attitude of a parent toward reading literacy is a precedent for imitation by the

child and will influence literacy development.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer recognizes that reading depends on a background of a wide variety of experiences that are sometimes curtailed due to circumstances in the environment of the child. Working parents, day care services, insufficient leisure time, economic difficulties and lack of books are all factors that may place constraints on a child's literacy progress.

Three solution strategies seem likely to increase the reading level of the at-risk child in the Chapter I Reading Program. Networking literacy knowledge with teachers, faculty, and colleagues regarding developments that nurture voluntary reading will increase knowledge. Sharing information with parents regarding integrating reading instructions and voluntary reading by demonstrations, school newsletters, and creative reading activity suggestions will develop awareness of reading materials. Providing opportunities and time for the children to practice reading at school by influencing the physical environment with stimulating materials will entice literacy experiences.

Report of Action Taken

The parents of the third grade Chapter I Reading Program were surveyed in the spring of 1993 at the

conclusion of the school year. The implementation will involve forty-five parents, fourteen teachers, two adult volunteers, and twenty-nine Chapter I Reading children.

FIRST WEEK: To implement the practicum, approval will be obtained from the Principal of the school and the Supervisor of Library Curriculum. New books will be listed, magazine subscriptions renewed and placed in a quiet space.

SECOND WEEK: A child's storytelling center will be created, children's library cards typed and color-coded by grade level, and a library club established. Interviews will be held with the children and the parents will be surveyed. An inservice workshop will provide for a network of sharing among staff regarding developing a literate child who practices reading skills through a voluntary reading program.

THIRD WEEK: Time will be spent creating a space for materials that will enhance literacy experiences during the primary child's free choice time.

FOURTH WEEK: Readers' theatre and story-telling activities during group library time will be used to demonstrate topics of interest within the reading material. Care of books, repairing books, creating new books for other children in the school and procedures for locating and checking books in and out of the

library are experiences created to give books value.

FIFTH WEEK: Parents, teachers and volunteers will be asked to schedule a daily time allowing children to listen to books being read and discuss what they have heard and enjoyed.

SIXTH WEEK: A school newsletter for parents is necessary to present information regarding the development of the project. The children will be asked to present information for the newsletter as an enhancement to their reading. Accessible classroom reading centers will have available trade books that provide for developmental differences and a wide variety of interests among the children while participating in reading motivated activities. Classroom teachers tend to be interested in developing an area where children can find easily materials that they enjoy.

SEVENTH WEEK: Parents will be invited to observe these activities and to ask questions about the program for reading in the classroom and the media center. All parents are encouraged to participate in any of the activities that they feel comfortable with.

EIGHTH WEEK: A book fair will be implemented to assist parents and resistant readers. An open house for the parents, faculty and friends will be held and a book talk will be given using the books from the fair.

A brief synopsis of many books will be incorporated into the book talk using title, author, illustrator, characters, and in some cases costumes, to recommend the book.

NINTH WEEK: The media center is will be designed to entice children to select reading materials of interest. The development of self-selected reading materials from the media center is in place to provide enjoyment and preparation for the next level of reading development.

TENTH WEEK: A reading literature workshop for teachers, parents and volunteer readers will be implemented based on direct feedback, its goal being to emphasize suggestions, interests and concerns and to develop lines for future communication.

ELEVENTH WEEK: The reading project, surveys and children's interviews will be collected, read and analyzed.

TWELFTH WEEK: A terminating newsletter will be given to the parents inviting all involved to a reading video presentation held by the children. At this presentation the children will display non-fiction or fiction trade books as evidence of their literacy skills and success. The participants will receive a certificate at this time. Parent-teacher conferences will be held and parent surveys will be tabulated.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem that existed in the writer's school was that sixty at-risk primary students were not reading for pleasure. There appeared to be several causes for the problem. The children did not observe other members of the family reading, single or working parents had little time to read to their children, and some parents experienced difficulty reading to their children due to limited literacy skills. The caregivers were unaware that reading aloud to these children could provide them with literacy enrichment.

The solution to the problem involved several steps. Activities in the Learning Media Center supported the reading experience with an integrated literature-based program. The benefit of reading aloud to children was shared by parents, grandparents and the community. Books and magazines for parents and children that promoted pleasurable reading were made available for classroom and home on a daily system.

The goal of the practicum was to encourage young children to read for pleasure so that they would eventually increase literacy development. The parents, teachers, and volunteer readers would increase the time spent reading aloud to the children in the Chapter I

Reading Program. These individuals would become the reading role models for at-risk children.

The first objective was that at the end of the three month practicum, 35 of 60 primary at-risk Chapter I Reading Program children would indicate an improvement in their description of themselves as readers, either by oral statements to the writer or by teacher observation records. This objective was attained with 35 of the now 42 Chapter I primary children's oral or written statements that they enjoy reading books.

The second objective was that at the end of the implementation period, 35 of 60 parents would indicate on a written survey an increase in the number of books their child had read in comparisons to a similar time period prior to the implementation period. This objective was attained with 37 individuals indicating an increase in the books their child had read. Only two participants indicated no change and six did not respond to this statement.

The third objective was that the children would indicate an increase in reading knowledge by their improved report card scores. This objective resulted in improved report card grades for 30 of the 42 children.

Finally, the fourth objective was that the number

of trade books per child would be increased in the classroom libraries. This objective was attained through better communication of topics needed by the teachers for curriculum, by giving teachers a discount on needed books, and by soliciting used books from the community.

Discussion

The objectives of this practicum were met. These results indicate that volunteer reading will often provide the necessary reading aloud that enables children to participate in pleasurable reading. The additional books and magazines for caregivers were especially necessary to increase reading role models. The writer's program was embraced by faculty, parents, grandparents and children.

The children's literacy development was expanded with the creation of class books and individual books submitted to the Learning Center for binding. These books were read by the volunteers. The peer readers used puppets while reading books the children had created. The principal was challenged and had to spend the day on the roof of the library when the children read over 7,500 books. The principal entertained the children with stories and questions from the roof that day. The children invited their parents to a second book fair where the community provided discount books.

A request was made through a newsletter for books that were not being used. The letter stated that for every three books donated the child or classroom would receive a credit slip for a free book during the discount book fair. The response was that 87 books were donated from the community and the credit slips were given to the children. Another 119 books were donated from another school library and sold for 25 cents each. A video was shown at this time of the children telling their favorite books. On the video the children showed the title of the book, shared the story in their own words, and then explained why they chose that book.

The children's excitement in books indicated an improvement in reading literacy. During the implementation books were checked in and out of the library not only by children, but by parents and grandparents. Parents informed the writer that they were excited about buying books as gifts for their children and also for their children to give as gifts.

Effective benefits were noted regarding parents and caregivers reading aloud to their children. Seven parents stated that the family shared this time with enjoyment. Three parents commented that they had visited the public library and checked out books. Four parents mentioned that reading aloud before bedtime was

now a time the child looked forward to.

Parental comments also included improvement of reading skills, exhibiting understanding of story sequence, storytelling, prediction and comprehension.

The comments from parents, grandparents and children indicated positive excitement regarding books read aloud. Sheila Stroup stated "...because every time I saw her I'd read to her and she'd read to me' David said. 'I won't forget her. I'll remember her a long, long time.'"

Recommendations

1. The writer recommends that children be read aloud to each day in the classroom.
2. It is recommended that the peer readers be given an in-service workshop at the beginning of the school year.
3. It is recommended that research be conducted to develop additional systems to inform parents of the enrichment value of reading aloud.
4. It is recommended that funding sources be sought to bring authors of children's books to the Learning Center to provide reading enjoyment.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared with the faculty and staff at the school. The writer also shared the practicum with Media Center Specialist Librarians and

teachers in interested school districts.

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APPENDIX A
BEGINNING SURVEY

BEGINNING SURVEY

1. What activities do you like to do with your child?

2. Do you read to your child?

3. Does she/he have any books of his/her own?

4. What story does your child like best?

APPENDIX B
PARENT SURVEY

PARENT SURVEY

Please complete this form and return it tomorrow. No signature is necessary.

My child likes for me to read stories.

_____Yes _____No

I have been reading more often to my child since this reading program began.

_____Yes _____No

I read to my child about the same amount as I did at the beginning of the program.

_____Yes _____No

I am not reading to my child as often as I did at the beginning of the program.

_____Yes _____No