

Early Literacy Development in Minority, Middle-Class Families

A Qualitative Research Study

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Abstract

The present study investigated early literacy development in minority middle-class families. The subjects were parents and preschool children ages 3-5 that attended a private early childhood center in Irvington, New Jersey. Each family was given one home visit and a library visit. The literacy practices of the families were observed and recorded during each visit. The homes had many literacy practices and materials to support the practices. Parents taught their children alphabet knowledge and as a result the children recognized, wrote and stated the sound of many letters. The patterns of interaction, when the parent read to the child and when the child read to the parent, were supportive of literacy development. The families made optimal use of the library and the children exhibited high levels of excitement while utilizing the services.

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Acknowledgements

Parent involvement and early literacy development is a topic of great interest to me. I was very fortunate to grow up in a literate environment where my parents encouraged reading, writing, speaking and listening through various activities. As I completed the Literature Review, I asked my parents how they knew all the strategies to encourage my literacy development. As I have shared information with them from the Literature Review, they are impressed that they knew the right strategies to encourage this development in my siblings and me. I now believe they had the tools because they were much further along the continuum of the spectrum of knowing and knew that I was at the beginning of the spectrum. I believe they looked at the information that they had obtained and scaled backwards to invent strategies that would take me to the level of full literacy development. Instilling all of the strategies has aided in my becoming a lifelong learner. It has also aided in my desire to also be a lifelong educator and aid others in the early literacy development of their young children. My parents have truly given me a treasure in which monetary value cannot be placed. The ability to read, write, speak, and understand are treasures that I will use for a lifetime.

Literature Review

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Parent Involvement

Parental involvement has been defined as “any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child’s development or direct parent participation with a child’s school in the interest of the child” (Reynolds, 1996 as cited in Anderson, 2000). Epstein (1995) classified parental involvement behaviors into six discrete categories of influence, from proximal home influences to the more distal community influences.

Two categories involve immediate home-based influences. The first home-based category describes specific ways in which parents meet their children’s most basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and safety). The second category relates to concrete things that parents do to establish a positive learning environment for their children. For example, this category includes providing learning materials, setting aside space for learning activities, and participating in these activities with their children. Two more direct school-based categories emphasize the importance of contact between family members and school on specific child issues. This involves both dynamic communication with school personnel and active participation in classroom or school activities. The last two categories represent more distal school- and community-wide advocacy. These broader influences involve parents participating in decision-making processes related to school governance and political issues that affect children (Epstein, 1995 as cited in Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000).

In a study by Mantzicopoulos (2003), parental involvement was viewed as a form

of participation that included communicating with the teacher, participating in school activities planned for parents, volunteering in the classroom, and communicating with the child about school. This is in agreement with Epstein's classification of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995 as cited in Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Attending parent-teacher conferences, being active in parent-teacher organizations, as well as keeping in contact with the teacher are thought to each "represent a way for parents to invest in their children that is independent of parent education and background characteristics" (Reynolds, 1992a, p. 457 as cited in Mantzicopoulos, 2003). Mantzicopoulos, (2003) also reported that other studies (Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Marcon, 1993; Reynolds, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Taylor & Machida, 1994) have shown that several of these forms of involvement have been associated with children's school success. Other studies (Jimerson et al., 1997; Reynolds, 1992b) showed these forms of involvement were associated with a lower risk of grade retention.

Anderson (2000) reported that several of these forms of direct parent involvement in preschool intervention are expected to enhance parent-child interactions as well as attachment to school. This also promotes school readiness (Comer, 1988 as cited in Anderson, 2000). Preschool participation affects later school competence outcomes, which is in agreement with Mantzicopoulos (2003). Parental involvement is viewed as an essential component for the success of children (Comer, 1986 as cited in Rodriguez-Brown, Li, & Albom, 1999) which is also in agreement with Mantzicopoulos (2003). Parental school involvement is thought to be especially critical in the early years because of the multiple new demands placed on the parent as a result of the child's entry into school. Such demands may include making adjustments to the family's schedule, getting

the child ready for school, and helping the child with academic and nonacademic aspects of school life (Stevenson & Baker, 1987 as cited in Mantzicopoulos, 2003).

Parental involvement has a profound effect on the education of children, and it has been extensively documented over the past sixty years. Even as early as 1936, (Becker 1936 as cited in Anderson, 2000) it was found that the love of reading was instilled by recitation of nursery rhymes at the cradle. Parents play an important role in their child's success because they are their child's first teachers. Hill (2001) reported that because early school interactions have been shown to affect later school performance, and parents believe they have a greater impact on their younger children than on their older children, it is important for parents to understand how their expectations for and involvement with school-related activities, as well as their show of warmth, acceptance, and discipline, affect their children's school performance.

Differences found between Euro-American and ethnic minority samples are often interpreted from a deficit framework, that is, making an assumption that Euro-Americans are the "normative" group and ways in which ethnic minorities differ from Euro-Americans are pathological or deviant (McAdoo, 1988; Phinney & Landin, 1998). Such comparative designs post serious risks of misinterpretation unless the ethnic groups are closely matched on relevant background variables, such as socioeconomic factors (Hill, Ramirez, & Dumka, in press; Roosa, Morgan-Lopez, Cree, & Specter, 2002).

Language Development

Bus et al., (1995), meta-analysis supports the hypothesis that parent-preschooler book reading is related to outcome measures such as language growth, emergent literacy, and reading achievement. In contrast to these findings Scarborough and Dobrich, 1994

(as cited in Bus et al., 1995) reported a relationship between book reading and reading achievement, but they do not conclude that book reading is associated with emergent literacy and language growth.

Simply reading aloud to children, as many parents do at bedtime and as teachers do in kindergarten and primary classrooms, has proven more beneficial to children's language development and their eventual ability to read than many parents or teachers realize (Morrow & Smith, 1990). One study (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Vladez-Menchaca, & Caulfield, 1988) showed through experimentation, how parents talk to their children makes a difference in language development. Senechal & LeFevre, (2002) reported that several studies showed that learning to read is related to children's phonological awareness (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Wagner et al., 1997), to their knowledge of letters (Ehri, 1998; Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Wagner et al., 1997), to their knowledge about the functions of print (Purcell-Gates, 1996), and to their language skills (Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Mathews, 1984; Wagner et al., 1997).

Purcell-Gates (1996) reported that learners develop their understandings, both implicit and explicit, of language systems through experience, by using that language in interaction with others within specified cultural contexts (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 1992; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). This is true for written language development as it is for oral. Everything young children learn about written language is constrained by what they learn through experience about its functions and the values placed on its various forms within their particular sociocultural communities (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Clay, 1979 as cited in Goodman & Goodman, 1976; Heath, 1982; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Scheffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Taylor, 1982; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Picture book story time offers a potentially rich opportunity for young children to learn language. The results of studies in this area lead us to conclude that variations in reading to young children can have appreciable effects on language development (Whitehurst et al., 1988). The results of the research support the hypothesis that exposure to storybooks is positively related to young children's language abilities (Bus et al. 1995; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 as cited in Senechal, LeFevre, Hudson & Lawson, 1996). In two experiments, Senechal et al., (1996) found that parents' and children's knowledge of children's books were very good predictors of language skills for preschoolers.

Experiences that included informal interactions with print, such as storybook reading, were associated with the development of children's receptive language, and experiences that included more formal interactions with print, such as teaching about reading, were associated with the development of emergent literacy (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Shared book reading supported children's receptive language development, and receptive language development (in this study) began to show a strong link to reading performance once the mechanics of reading were under control and children were reading more fluently, which is also reported in Hinchley and Levy, (1988). The implications of this research, that vocabulary and listening comprehension skills are predicted by parents' knowledge of storybooks, add to the literature on the role of storybook reading in the development of these language skills (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). These implications are in agreement with Senechal et al., (1996).

Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, (1994) reported that one promising vehicle for transmitting knowledge to children is a method of reading picture

books to children, called dialogic reading, which is effective in enhancing children's language skills. This method is supported in the studies (Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein, 1994; Valdez-Menchaca and Whitehurst, 1992; Whitehurst et al., 1988). In dialogic reading the adult assumes the role of an active listener, asking questions, adding information, and prompting the child to increase the sophistication of his or her descriptions of the material in the picture book. As the child becomes more skillful in the role of storyteller, the adult is encouraged to ask open-ended questions and to avoid yes/no or pointing questions. Dickinson and Smith (1994) reported that children need to become part of a teacher-student dialogue by actively contributing or by attending to the responses of others. This finding is consistent with Wertsch, (1991) as cited in Dickinson & Smith's, (1994) recent claim that dialogic interaction is critical to internalizing social languages. This is also in agreement with Whitehurst et al., (1994). Morrow and Smith (1990) reported that several experiments in school settings (Brown, 1975; Morrow, 1985; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982) indicate that eliciting children's active responses to literature enables them to integrate information and to relate various parts of a story.

In a study that focused on literacy development, through small-group story readings, children who listened to stories in small groups achieved greater comprehension and engaged in more verbal interchange than children who did not participate in story reading (Morrow, 1989). Returning to the sociocognitive model of literacy, we see that child-involved analytical talk may well be an interactional precursor to later literacy (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

Vocabulary Acquisition

Young children have a remarkable facility to acquire new vocabulary (Carey,

1978 as cited in Senechal, Thomas & Monker, 1995). It is estimated that during the first 6 years of life, children will have acquired 8,000 root words of English (Templin, 1957; Carey, 1978 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995) and will know approximately 10,000 words (Anglin, 1993 as cited in Senechal, 1997). Learning new vocabulary is a major part of acquiring language (Clark & Clark, 1977 as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993). The process of learning new words starts in infancy and continues throughout one's lifetime. Children with smaller vocabularies may have more difficulty learning words from context not only because they have more words to learn but also because they have a less well-developed understanding of known words (Shefelbine, 1990 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995). A recent study (Robbins & Ehri, 1994 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995) demonstrated that the relationship between prior vocabulary and word acquisition also holds when 6-year-olds, who differ in vocabulary knowledge, listen to an adult read a story. Dickinson and Smith (1994) reported that access to and use of a varied vocabulary is central to explicit uses of language, and limited vocabularies have been linked to some of the comprehension difficulties of low-income children during the middle grades (Chall, 1983; Dickinson, Cote, & Smith, in press). Social class differences were examined and it was found that lower-class mothers were less likely than middle-class mothers to engage in a number of potentially instructive behaviors during story time (Ninio, 1980 as cited in Whitehurst et al., 1988). Correspondingly, lower-class children had smaller productive vocabularies than middle-class children.

One situation in which young children learn words incidentally is while listening to adults read storybooks (Robbins & Ehri, 1994 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995). A primary activity associated with vocabulary development has been joint picture-book

reading by an adult and a child (Durkin, 1974-1975; Wells, 1986 as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993). Whitehurst et al., (1994) reported that children acquire specific new vocabulary in the context of shared book reading (e.g., Cornell, Senechal, & Broda, 1988; Elley, 1989; Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984; Leung & Pikulski, 1990). Shared reading has a variety of characteristics that may facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Ninio & Bruner 1978; Snow & Goldfield 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Senechal et al., 1996). In a recent study, however, Evans et al., (2000) as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, (2002) did not find storybook exposure to predict the vocabulary of kindergarten children after controlling for parent education. The differences across studies may be attributable to the measures used.

Book reading is assumed to be effective for teaching labels because it is highly repetitive and narrows down possible meanings of words by showing specific illustrations (Ninio & Bruner 1978; Snow & Goldfield, 1983 as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993). These descriptive studies (Whitehurst et al., 1988), suggest that picture book reading is an activity that parents approach with intent to teach language to their young children and that in so doing they use techniques such as asking questions, giving feedback, and adjusting questions to the developmental level of the child that might have desirable instructional functions. Reading instruction in the Netherlands focuses strongly on the technical aspects of reading, that is, learning to decode, whereas oral language development, including development of vocabulary and text comprehension skills, is (in most schools) not an explicit part of the early years curriculum (Leseman, de Jong, 1998). Recent evidence on vocabulary acquisition has shown that some 3-year-old children can successfully extract word meanings from listening to storybooks being read (Senechal,

1993 as reported in Senechal et al., 1995). The frequency of book reading at home influenced children's vocabulary development, while teaching alphabet knowledge in the child's daycare setting influenced reading and writing (Whitehurst et al., 1994 as cited in Evans, Shaw & Bell, 2000). Parents and daycare workers can be trained to use behaviors that will promote vocabulary gains in young children (e.g., Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein 1994; Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Whitehurst et al., 1988 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995).

Senechal (1997) demonstrated that specific types of book reading events had a differential impact on the acquisition of receptive and expressive vocabulary; increased exposure to book reading events enhanced children's receptive and expressive vocabulary similarly, whereas active responding during repeated book reading events enhanced children's expressive vocabulary more than their receptive vocabulary. Whitehurst et al., (1988) as cited in Senechal et al., (1995) have found effects of interactive reading for young children's acquisition of expressive but not receptive vocabulary. Whitehurst and DeBaryshe, 1989 (as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993) have suggested that the processes of acquisition of these two types of vocabulary might be different. In contrast, Senechal and Cornell, 1993 (as cited in Senechal et al., 1995) found that children could comprehend novel words but could not produce novel words after a single exposure to a storybook. The most interesting result of this study is that requesting active participation in the book-reading interactions did not boost children's vocabulary learning; reading the book verbatim was just as effective as asking questions or recasting new vocabulary introduced in the book. The results showed that a single reading of a storybook boosted young children's receptive vocabulary, which is in contrast to the results of Leung and

Pikulski, 1990 (as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993)

Children also benefit from listening to multiple readings of storybooks (Eller, Pappas, & Brown, 1988; Leung & Pikulski, 1990 as cited in Senechal et al., 1995). Children made more gains in vocabulary after three readings of a book than after a single reading Senechal, (1997). Senechal and Cornell, 1993 (as cited in Senechal et al., 1995) hypothesized that children's comprehension vocabulary would be enhanced by listening to multiple readings of books because of the additional opportunities to encode, associate, and store novel information. The findings of the study Senechal et al., (1995) showed that all children benefited from opportunities to practice retrieval of the novel words.

Print

The most beneficial read-aloud events appear to involve social interaction between an adult and a child, in which both participants actively construct meaning based on the text (Bloome, 1985; Heath, 1982; Flood, 1977; Ninio & Bruner, 1978 as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990). Even a teacher's reading style can affect how well children comprehend stories read to them (Dunning & Mason, 1984; Green & Harker, 1982; Peterman, Dunning, & Mason, 1985 as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990).

Cochran-Smith, 1984 (as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990) compared transcripts of readings to groups of three children with transcripts of readings to groups of 12, and found that in the small groups children participated more, and the discussion was more complex, than in the larger groups.

The best predictors of reading success include the number of words and questions used, asked or answered by children, the number of preparatory and post-story evaluative questions asked by the parents, and the number of instances of positive reinforcement by

parents (Morrow & Smith, 1990). By imitating the model provided by an adult reader and reenacting a story-reading event, a child can vicariously experience independent reading. This social interaction apparently affects the child's acquisition of information, attitudes, and literacy skills from the story (Teale & Sulzby, 1987 as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990). Children given the opportunity to retell stories that had been read to them scored better on both probed recall and free recall than children who were not given such an opportunity (Morrow & Smith, 1990). Cornell, Senechal, and Broda, 1988 (as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993) found that 3-year-old children anticipated storybook events from page to page after being questioned about book content during a previous reading. Morrow, 1984 (as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993) found that story comprehension by kindergartners was better when they were asked questions either about the structure of the story or about facts presented in the story compared to children who were only read the book.

Book reading brings young children into touch with story structures, schemes, and literacy conventions which are prerequisites for understanding texts (Cochran-Smith, 1984 as cited in Bus, IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). Children's knowledge of book titles was moderately correlated with parental knowledge of children's books, as were the number of children's books in the home, storybook reading onset, and the frequency of library visits (Senechal et al., 1996). The correlations reported between book reading and preschool measures of orthographic knowledge and general concepts about print (e.g., Wells, 1985 as cited in Phillips & McNaughton, 1990) may be explained by the fact that families that practice storybook reading also engage in a number of other literacy activities, some of which may be more closely related to these print skills. Heath, (1983)

as cited in Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda & Brody, (1990) found that middle-class mothers and their children are familiar with the traditional children's book format, for both narrative and expository texts, while low SES mothers and children are more familiar with less traditional narrative (e.g., newspaper, cartoon) and expository (e.g., newspaper advertisement) formats. In this study based on HOME Inventory interviews (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984 as cited in Pellegrini et al., 1990), it was found that families generally did not have children's books in their homes, but they did receive the local newspaper. The results from the study (Phillips & McNaughton, 1990) extend the limited existing descriptive data on storybook reading, and are consistent with findings from other countries that in "mainstream" families preschool children often select and participate in storybook reading (Morrow, 1988; Snow & Goldfield, 1982; Wells, 1985 as cited in Phillips & McNaughton, 1990). The effect of the frequency of parent-preschooler book reading is not dependent on the socioeconomic status of the families. Even in lower-class families with (on average) low levels of literacy, book reading frequency affects children's literacy skills (Bus et al., 1995).

Bus et al., (1995) reported that Sulzby's (1985) emergent reading scale suggests that American children internalize knowledge about the written language register long before they turn into conventional readers. Reading books to children also exposes them to the written language register (Mason & Allen, 1986 as cited in Bus et al., 1995). Haney and Hill (2004) found that children receiving instruction in writing words scored significantly higher on the measure of alphabet knowledge and beginning decoding skills (from TERA-3 Alphabet subtest) than those children not receiving such instruction. This finding is consistent with research indicating that children construct a great deal of

knowledge about print and decoding through writing activities (Ferreiro, 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Haney & Hill, 2004). It has been proposed that the process of writing teaches children segmentation of script into phonemic units, provides them with an understanding of the concept of word as a symbolic system for meaning, and provides them with an awareness of grammatical rules about the structure of language (Purcell-Gates, 2001; Scholnick, 2002; Silva & Alves-Martins, 2002 as cited in Haney & Hill, 2004).

Parents and teachers who are eager to foster growth of early literacy skills need to be encouraged to challenge children by exposing them to varied experiences with print (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991 as cited in Faires, Nichols & Rickelman, 2000). These findings call into some question the common-sense notion that children begin to learn about how print works, including a grasp of the Alphabetic Principle, from exposure to environmental print such as store signs and container print (Purcell-Gates, 1996). When adults read picture-books to children, active responding can be easily incorporated by asking simple questions during reading. The questions can be requests to label pictures of novel words or requests to point to pictures of novel words Senechal et al., (1995). The findings suggest that asking children questions requiring them to produce novel words is an important element in word acquisition during storybook reading Senechal, (1997). In similar research, (Shanahan & Hogan, 1983 as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990) researchers found that the number of answers to the child's questions during readings, the number of minutes of book reading per week, and the number of references to the child's own experience best predicted the child's print awareness.

Dickinson and Keebler, 1989 (as cited in Dickinson & Smith, 1994) found two

general orientations: an interactive style that includes considerable discussion of the text as the story is read, and a performance style that treats the story as an aesthetic experience that is disrupted only minimally by talk. Turkish mothers differed in other typical ways from both Dutch and Surinamese mothers. They made far less use of the pictures in the picture book to support the book reading and story comprehension process. And related to this, they also had more difficulties in dealing with the child's spontaneous reactions to the book reading event. Turkish children, like Dutch and Surinamese children, wanted to look at the pictures, turn the pages, and grasp the book, but their mothers often regarded this as inappropriate. The tendency to avoid the pictures in the picture book can be seen as related to a perception of literacy, in particular its printed form, as sacred (Leseman and de Jong, 1998).

We can assume, therefore, that preschoolers who began to construct knowledge about the forms and concepts of print of written English and its alphabetic nature will begin formal literacy instruction in school with schemata for literacy which puts them at an advantage over their peers who have yet to begin this learning (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Purcell-Gates (1996) concluded that those children who entered kindergarten knowing more about print and its functions in the world were generally more successful with the formal literacy instruction they encountered in school, performed higher on achievement tests, and were judged as more advanced readers and writers by their teachers. We can infer that children who experience many uses of written language to which they attend and personally experience have more opportunities to build the important conceptual basis of literacy development-that print is symbolic and serves communicative purposes.

Reading Achievement

Education is more important than income in explaining parenting beliefs. Education plays a role in one's knowledge about children and about developmentally appropriate parenting beliefs (Turner & Johnson, 2003). It is widely known that children reared in middle-class homes with well-educated parents will generally thrive; those who do not have these advantages are likely to start school behind and stay behind, with patterns of underachievement especially stark for children of diverse cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Juel, Griffith & Gough, 1986; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990 as cited in Neuman & Celano, 2001).

Anderson, (2000) reported that educators recognize that there is significant improvement in a child's reading readiness upon entering school and successful reading experiences in school are more prevalent when parents regularly read to their child when the child is very young. Preschoolers who were read to more and who participated in more solitary book activities at home became better readers by Grade 2 compared to preschoolers with less frequent early literacy home experiences (Scarborough, Dobrich, and Hager, 1991 as cited in Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000).

Meyer et al. (1994) found that the type of literacy activity the teacher engaged in, but not the amount of time spent reading to children, predicted reading achievement in kindergartners. Similarly, the amount of time parents read to children in kindergarten and first grade was not related to reading achievement, but time children spent actively involved in the reading process was related.

The 1985 Commission on Reading Report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (as cited in Bus et al., 1995) found that the single most important home activity for building knowledge required for success in reading is reading aloud to children. These findings

are consistent with the view that continued exposure to print is an important component of the development of skilled reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1993 and 1998, as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Book exposure can be thought of as an enduring aspect of home experience that is likely to contribute to children's reading performance (Senechal & Cornell, 1993). In this study, early home literacy experiences were indirectly related to later reading performance. Interest in reading is as much a prerequisite as a consequence of book reading, and the mere presence of models and materials such as books may not stimulate children's development as effectively as parental support during book reading activities (Sulzby & Teale, 1991 as cited in Bus et al., 1995). Bus et al., 1995 reported that without parental support, books are only partly accessible to young children who are not yet conventional readers. Mothers who reported that they regularly listened to their children read had children with significantly higher scores on reading achievement tests compared to those mothers who did not (Hewison & Tizard, 1980; Hannon, 1987 as cited in Evans et al., 2000). Results of the Bergin, (2001) study suggests that the affective quality of parent-child interaction during joint storybook reading is related to reading fluency and to attitude toward reading in beginning readers.

Evans et al., 2000 (as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, 2002) also found that storybook exposure was unrelated to the frequency with which parents reported teaching letter names and forms. Alphabet knowledge is another strong predictor of reading achievement (Adams, 1990; Elbro et al., 1998). Furthermore, teaching letter names and letter sounds is one of the earliest literacy skills generally taught to children (Worden & Boettcher, 1990). Joint parent-child and caregiver-child reading, trips to the library, purchasing books, and early onset of parent-child literacy activities are likely to involve

exposure to letter names and letter sounds but are less likely to involve explicit teaching of these print-to-sound associations (Frijters, Barron, & Brunello, 2000). Direct teaching of letter names and letter sounds was the most frequently reported literacy teaching activity by parents. Parents may perceive themselves as ineffective in teaching more complex reading skills to their children (Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998 as cited in Haney & Hill, 2004). Evans et al., 2000 (as cited in Haney & Hill, 2004) found that even when parental education and child ability (as measured by a standardized intelligence test) were held constant, reports of parental teaching activities were associated with higher scores on tests of alphabet knowledge and phonological sensitivity than were parent reports of mere exposure to book reading.

Low-SES Hispanic families are less likely than Euro-Americans and African-Americans to engage in shared book reading and other activities that positively contribute to literacy development (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Teale, 1984 as cited in Rodriguez-Brown et al., 1999). The results of the study Pellegrini et al., (1990) generally suggest that LSES black mothers use teaching strategies with their preschool children around books that are similar to those used by MC mothers. Other researchers, Ninio, (1980a), have not found similar teaching strategies between mothers due to relatively short observation periods and infrequent home visits of family interaction. When teachers believed the education-related values of parents differed from their own, they rated children as less competent academically and had lower expectations for their future academic success (Hauser-Cram, Sirin & Stipek, 2003).

The number and the nature of parent-child joint book reading experiences during early childhood are assumed to set the stage for future differences in academic

achievement (Cochran-Smith, 1983; Mason & Allen, 1986; Teale, 1981 as cited in Bus et al., 1995). Children who arrive in first grade with more knowledge of letters, deeper phonological awareness, greater familiarity with environmental print, the ability to recognize sight words with greater speed and accuracy, and with larger vocabularies are more likely to learn to read without difficulty (Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991 as cited in Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000). Children whose word reading is good at the end of grade one are also more likely to be reading well in grade three (Wagner et al., 1997 as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). In the study, Bus et al., (1995), the meta-analysis shows the effect of book reading is not restricted to children of preschool age. However, the effect seems to become smaller as soon as children become conventional readers and are able to read on their own. This may mean that the school environment or independent reading by the child may compensate for a lack of family reading experiences (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991 as cited in Bus et al., 1995). Rowe, 1991 (as cited in Bergin, 2001) found the interdependence between self reports of reading activities in the home and attitude toward reading, both of which significantly influenced reading achievement, became stronger from 6 to 14 years of age.

Home Environment

Parents and the literacy environment they create in their homes are widely believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills. Evidence to support this belief has often focused on the time that parents spend reading to their children (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000). Children whose home experiences promote literacy as a source of entertainment are likely to be motivated to read (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995 as cited in Anderson, 2000). Therefore, whether rich or

poor, two-parent or one-parent, families can provide a rich learning environment for children. By having this rich, stable literacy environment, school success begins at home. Research has indicated a significant positive relationship between the child's attitude toward reading, based on home experiences, and achievement in reading in the schools (Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Faires et al., 2000). Although excellent preschool and kindergarten classrooms can provide children with opportunities to learn and refine literacy skills, it is widely acknowledged that linguistically rich home environments contribute more powerfully to the early development of these critical abilities (Bus, van IJzendorp, & Pellegrini, 1995; Hart & Risley, 1999; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 as cited in Jordan et al., 2000).

Differences in home environments have been linked to differences in early reading achievement, and later school success (Heath, 1983; Wells, 1985 as cited in Jordan et al., 2000). Baker, 1999 (as cited in McCarthey, 2000) elaborated on those important factors in her synthesis of home features associated with reading engagement. She identified the following features as being supportive of children's learning to read: (a) availability of reading materials and technologies such as television and computers; (b) observations of adults reading; (c) parents reading to children regularly and providing them space and opportunity for reading; (d) engagement in conversation and language play; (e) parents' valuing reading; and (f) connection of home and school literacy. Evans et al., (2000) reported that parents and the literacy environments they create in their homes are widely believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills.

Other studies show an array of literacy experiences beyond schooling to exist in families of low, middle, and high economic status including literacy for entertainment, daily living purposes, general information, and religion (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Ortiz, 1996 as cited in Ortiz, 2000). It is hard to identify particular experiences that foster literacy because literacy practices pervade our society - for example, through environmental print (e.g., signs, labels) and every day practices such as writing letters, keeping lists, and using TV schedules (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1989; Wagner, 1991 as cited in Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Despite this problem of analysis, book reading in the home has been shown to make distinct contributions to young children's literacy development (Chomsky, 1970; Clark, 1975; Durkin, 1974-1975; Heath, 1982; Mason & Allen, 1986; Wells, 1985 as cited in Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

Phillips and McNaughton, (1990) reported that the importance of storybook reading at home derives not only from the participation of children as active learners in a literacy environment, but also from the influence of the environment itself as an active socializing setting. Senechal et al., 1998 (as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, 2002) argued that children are exposed to two types of literacy experiences at home; namely, informal and formal literacy activities. Informal literacy activities are those for which the primary goal is the message contained in the print, not the print per se. On the other hand, formal literacy activities are those for which parent and child focus on the print per se. Home-based practices such as acquiring children's books, modeling literacy activities, and observing that literacy can be functional, have also been found to benefit children's literacy development (Schuele, 1994 as cited in Ortiz, 2000). The families in the study all used print for various purposes as they went about their daily activities and pursuits,

confirming previous accounts of literacy practice in low-SES home (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986 as cited in Purcell-Gates, 1996). The majority of print use in the homes involved, for example, reading container text (e.g., cereal boxes, milk cartons), flyers, coupons, advertisements, movie or TV notices, writing grocery and to-do lists, and signing names. The seminal study *Ways with Words* (Heath, 1983 as cited in Rodriguez-Brown, 2001) showed low-income families using literacy practices at home that differed in nature and purpose from those of middle-income families.

McCormick and Mason, 1986 (as cited in Whitehurst et al., 1994) demonstrated large social class differences in the availability of printed materials in the home. For example, 47% of public-aid parents of preschoolers reported no alphabet books in the home, compared with 3% of professional parents. Feitelson and Goldstein, 1986 (as cited in Whitehurst et al., 1994) found that 60% of the kindergartners in neighborhoods in which children did poorly in school did not own a single book; in neighborhoods characterized by good school performance, kindergartners owned an average of 54 books each. The ethnographic study of White middle-class homes of children who were successfully learning to read suggests that young children learn the meaning of print (a) by being surrounded by it in their immediate environment, (b) by their explorations in play, and (c) by understanding its role in their everyday lives (Taylor, 1983 as cited in McCarthy, 2000). It was estimated that a typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading, whereas the corresponding child from a low-income family averages 25 such hours (Adams, 1990 as cited in Whitehurst et al., 1994). Ninio, 1980 (as cited in Whitehurst et al., 1994) found that

lower-class mothers were less likely than middle-class mothers to engage in a number of potentially instructive behaviors during story time.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988 (as cited in McCarthy, 2000) conducted an ethnography of five low-income families whose children were successful in school. The families used literacy for a variety of purposes, audiences, and situations. They read to gain information to meet practical needs, to deal with public agencies, to schedule daily functions, and to learn about events. Reading also was used for recreational and educational purposes. The families used writing as a substitute for oral communication, as a memory aid, to establish or maintain social relationships, and to record financial transactions. In the study (Purcell-Gates, 1996) children that scored high on the knowledge of print tasks, had parents that were involved with literacy activities such as helping their children with spelling, printing letters and reading baseball cards.

In the sample of 24 children from White, Black and Mexican American families that Teale, 1986 (as cited in McCarthy, 2000) studied through naturalistic inquiry, literacy functioned not as isolated events but rather as components of the social activities in the homes and communities; literacy served daily living, entertainment, religious, interpersonal, and school-related purposes. Teale (1986) found that environmental print was relatively similar for all the families, but availability and use of connected discourse, such as children's books, varied widely. The amount and types of adult materials also varied. In some homes there were many newspapers and magazines; in other homes, few were evident. Religious materials and pamphlets were prevalent in some homes, but not in others. Some children had many more opportunities than others to interact with literate persons; a number of the focal children read and wrote copiously, whereas other

rarely wrote. The literacy environment of the homes was greatly influenced by the relations that family members had with other social institutions. Teale, (1986) concluded that home background does play a significant role in children's literacy development. Yet, home background is a complex configuration of economic, social, cultural, and personal factors that defies simple categorization. The implication of the study (Teale, 1986) is that it is important to avoid reductionism when discussing children's home backgrounds.

In her year-long, descriptive study of 20 low-income families from diverse backgrounds, Purcell-Gates (1996) found support for the view that families use print for various purposes as part of their daily lives. In homes where children scored high on the knowledge of print tasks, the environments were filled with children's books, posters with print, notebooks for children to write in, and literature related to work and church. In homes where children did not score as highly, literacy materials were scarce and few literacy events occurred; environmental print was evident but was not used for furthering children's knowledge of print. Purcell-Gates (1996) also found that children whose home lives included more instances of persons reading and writing more complex texts demonstrated more conventional concepts of writing as a system. The studies challenge the myth that children from low-income backgrounds are not exposed to literacy materials and that parents are not concerned with their children's education. The studies also suggest that the type and amount of materials and the amount of time that parents and children engage in literacy-related activities are important factors in children's later school success.

Training/Strategies

Whereas the vast majority of parents want their children to be successful in school, many do not know the best ways to enhance their children's school performance (Epstein, 1986 as cited in Hill & Craft, 2003). Knowing how parental involvement in schooling results in better achievement may improve parents' knowledge of how to become effectively involved in their children's education. These results indicate that programs targeted at optimizing the development of young children, such as early intervention programs and preschools, should encourage parents to facilitate the development of emergent literacy in their young children by teaching literacy skills Haney and Hill, (2004).

The Bergin (2001) study suggests as do others (e.g., Bergin et al., 1994; Bus et al., 1997; Edwards, 1989; Rubert, 1994 as cited in Bergin, 2001) that literacy programs should not simply encourage parents to read at home, but should help them change reading habits if they are not likely to promote positive attitudes and fluency in the children. Toomey, 1993 (as cited in Bergin, 2001) has argued that sending home books for parents to hear their children read has little impact compared to programs that train parents how to help their children read, particularly for children at risk for reading failure. Earlier studies demonstrated that in insecure parent-child dyads the parent is less sensitive to the needs and problems of the child and that, in those cases, the pleasure of sharing a book might be low (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1994). Under these circumstances, this type of book reading may affect the child's emergent literacy skills and interests negatively; because the reading situation is unpleasant and the interaction is not very effective, encouraging book reading without helping the participants to change their reading habits might have a counterproductive effect (Bus, 1993, 1994 as cited in

Bus et al., 1995).

Time allotted to reading is not synonymous with positive task engagement, and it is the latter that is associated with reading outcome (Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993 as cited in Bergin, 2001). Explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships at home can help children succeed in school and informal play can enrich children's knowledge (McCarthy, 2000). The results of this study (Faires et al., 2000) suggest that parental training and involvement in teaching reading lessons and strategies can increase first-grade students' reading levels. Developing literacy networks among family and community members to interact with and discuss literacy materials may be central to nurturing home-school connections (McCarthy, 2000). Reutzel and Cooter, 1996 (as cited in Faires et al., 2000) suggested that, in order to train parents in effective tutoring strategies, teachers need to conduct periodic seminars to introduce effective strategies used in the classroom reading instruction. Evening sessions, open houses, and classroom newsletters are all effective ways to inform parents about how their children learn to read and write. Results of this study (Faires et al., 2000) support the research that suggests that, when parents are given the skills and opportunities to help their children academically, they can become active and resourceful.

As this literature review shows early literacy experiences are crucial in shaping the foundation for children's reading and writing development, however, one area that hasn't been fully studied is the home literacy environments of children from minority backgrounds. As a result this study was designed to further investigate this issue.

Methodology

I did a Qualitative Research Study that focused on parent involvement and early literacy development. The research problem is that the home environments of children from minority backgrounds need to be further studied in order to assist parents with the skills and opportunities to help their children's literacy development, which in turn makes them active and resourceful in the area of parent involvement.

Subjects

The subjects in this study are middle class parents and preschool children ages 3-5 that attend a private early childhood center in Irvington, NJ. The center is located in an Abbott District in Central New Jersey. The district receives extra funding from the state as a result of a lawsuit won that stated if urban districts received the same funding as suburban districts they would see better results. I delivered parent workshops to the parents of this center monthly for the past year. I also delivered staff workshops. The parenting workshop was enriching for all of us.

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

Kristina's family lives in Irvington, New Jersey. The family is from Jamaica. The parents are married. The mother, Sadie, is 39 years old and has resided in the United States for 16 years. She graduated high school and has an Associates degree. She works full time as a registered nurse. The father, Errol, is 45 years old and has resided in the United States for 6 years. He graduated high school and hasn't attended college. He works full-time as a truck driver. The family owns a three-family house and lives on the first floor. The mother's sister, husband and three children live in the second floor apartment. A tenant lives in the third floor apartment. The parents have three children

Stacy-Ann 22 years of age, Kristina four years of age (subject of study) and Kristan who is nine months old. The other relative that resides in the house is the wife's mother, Euleita. Kristina's overall performance at the daycare center is above average.

The family reported that Kristina reads to herself three to four times per week and she is read to by others three to four times per week. One-two books are read per reading session. Kristina likes to be read to by others. Evidence of this is the way she is always asking someone to read her a story and how she memorizes the book and tries to read it by herself. The mother reports that she asks Kristina questions as she reads to her. She reports that Kristina enjoys fairy tales and nursery rhymes, predictable books and poetry books. Kristina writes at home. The family utilizes the library once a month and Kristina has a library card. Kristina's father, grandmother and sister also read to her. The family reported having 30-40 books in the home. The other family members read for learning, gaining information and recreation. They read non-fiction books, newspapers and magazines. Kristina observes other family members reading. She observes her mother reading one-two times per week.

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

Nia's family lives in Irvington, New Jersey. Nia's family is from the United States and has resided in the area for 32 years. Nia's mother is a single parent. She is 32 years old and works full-time as a Circulation Assistant in a teacher resource center. She graduated high school and completed three years of college. The family lives in a one-bedroom apartment in an apartment complex. The mother has two children Nyasa 12 years of age and Nia four years of age (subject of study). Nia's overall performance at the daycare center is average.

The family reported that Nia reads to herself three to four times per week and she is read to by others three to four times per week. Three-four books are read per reading session. Nia likes to be read to by others. Evidence of this is the way she brings her mother books and asks her to read them, and how she tries to reads them by herself. The mother reports that she asks Nia questions as she reads to her. She reports that Nia enjoys fairy tales and nursery rhymes, picture books, and wordless picture books. Nia writes at home. The family utilizes the library once a month and Nia has a library card. Nia's sister also reads to her. The family reported having 30-40 books in the home. The other family members read for learning and recreation. They read both fiction and non-fiction books. Nia observes other family members reading. She observes her mother reading three to four times per week.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara 4, Cierra, 3)**

Zahara and Cierra's family lives in Irvington, New Jersey. The parents are married. The mother, Wendy, is 34 years old, from Jamaica and has resided in the United States for 16 years. She graduated high school and has an Associates degree. She works full time as an Assistant Teacher at the day care center her daughters attend. The father, Roger, is 33 years old, from Trinidad and has resided in the United States for 16 years. He graduated high school and has a Bachelor's degree. He works full-time as an Actuarial Analyst. The family lives in a two-family house. The couple has three children: Naya, eight, Zahara, four years old (subject of study) and Cierra, three years old (subject of study). Zahara's overall performance at the daycare center is above average. Cierra's overall performance at the daycare center is average.

The family reported that Zahara and Cierra read to themselves often and they are read to by others three to four times per week. One to two books are read per reading session. The sisters like to be read to by others. Evidence of this is the way they ask questions, ask their mother what she thinks is going to happen next and anticipate where the story is going. The mother reports that she asks the sisters questions as she reads to them. She reports that the sisters enjoy fairy tales and nursery rhymes, picture books, concept books, predictable books, information books and poetry books. The sisters write at home. The family utilizes the library four times a month and they each have a library card. The sisters' father and older sister read to the sisters. The family reported having more than 50 books in the home. The other family members read for learning, gaining information and recreation. They read both fiction and non-fiction books, newspapers and magazines. The sisters observe other family members reading. They observe their mother reading three-four times per week.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

Natashia's family lives in Irvington, New Jersey. The mother and father live together but aren't married. The mother, Sol, is 33 years old and was born in the United States. She graduated high school and hasn't attended college. She works full-time as a Transportation Planning Manager. The father, Blas, is 28 years old, from Puerto Rico and has resided in the United States for 23 years. He graduated high school and completed one year of college. He works full-time as an Electronics Technician. The family lives in a single-family house. The parents have two children Alize who is 10 years of age and Natashia who is three years of age (subject of study). The other relative that resides in the

house is the father's adult brother. Natasha's overall performance at the daycare center is average.

The family reported that Natasha doesn't read independently and is read to by others once a week. One book is read per reading session. Natasha likes to be read to by others. Evidence of this is the way she reads, making up stories as she looks at the pictures. The mother reports that she asks Natasha questions as she reads to her. She reports that Natasha enjoys fairy tales and nursery rhymes, picture books, and wordless picture books. Natasha writes at home. The family utilizes the library once a month and Natasha has a library card. Natasha's father and older sister also read to her. The family reported having more than 50 books in the home. The other family members read for employment, learning, gaining information and recreation. They read fiction and non-fiction books, magazines and utilize the Internet. Natasha observes other family members reading daily.

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

Sean's family lives in Irvington, New Jersey. The parents are married. The mother and father are from the United States and have resided in the tri-state area all their lives. The wife, Lena, graduated high school and completed two years of college. She is 33 years old and works full-time as a Payroll Administrator. The husband, Mark, graduated high school and hasn't attended college. He is 33 years old and is currently a full-time student at Apex Auto School in New York. The family lives on the first floor of a three-family house. The parents have one child, Sean who is five years of age (subject of study). Sean's overall performance at the daycare center is average.

The family reported that Sean reads to himself one to two times per week and he is read to by others three to four times per week. Three to four books are read per reading session. Sean likes to be read to by others. Evidence of this is the way he chooses the books, participates in the storytelling and points to the pictures. His mother reports that she asks Sean questions as she reads to him. She reports that Sean enjoys fairy tales and nursery rhymes, picture books, wordless picture books, concept books, and information books. Sean writes at home. The family utilizes the library twice a month and Sean has a library card. Sean's father and extended family that live outside the home read to him. The family reported having 20 to 30 books in the home. The other family members read for employment, learning, necessity, information and recreation. They read fiction and non-fiction books, newspapers and magazines and utilize the Internet. Sean observes other family members reading all the time.

Materials

The materials used in this study were workshops, surveys, observations and interviews. The questionnaires determined the parents' knowledge of literacy and the home literacy environments.

The surveys covered parents' knowledge of creating a literate environment in the home: materials, space, activities, book purchasing, library usage, adults reading to children, kinds of books children enjoy, and adult reading habits.

The first observation assessed the following information: literacy materials in the home environment, parent reading practices when reading to their child, child reading practices when reading to the parent, letter recognition, letter sounds and letter writing. The second observation assessed family library practices.

The interviews clarified and extended information gathered during the observations.

Procedure

A literacy workshop was delivered to all the parents in January, 2006. Thirteen families were present for the workshop. Each family received a literacy toolkit with 13 items for their preschool child. The items were a book, ruler, pencil, pen, crayons, marker, paper, index cards, envelopes etc., they were packaged in a colorful zippered bag. A brief explanation of the study's objective was explained and volunteers were requested. Seven families volunteered for the study and five were chosen. One family wasn't chosen because their child was a toddler and this study focused on preschool children. The other family had illness in the family that included the subject, so they couldn't complete the process. Each family was given one home visit and a library visit during the first three months of 2006.

The first visit was conducted in the home for one hour. I gathered data through observations and interviews during each home visit. The story sessions of the parent reading to the child and child reading to the parent were taped. The assessment of alphabet knowledge was done using the Coconut Tree prop, from the book *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin and John Archambault. The tree included all twenty six alphabet Velcro letters. I spread the letters on the table and asked the child to take the letter stated and stick it onto the tree. I marked the letters that the child recognized correctly. The children were also instructed to sing the Alphabet Song. The children were shown the letters and instructed to state the sound. They were also given paper and instructed to write each letter that was stated.

The second visit was conducted in the library for one hour. There were no guidelines used. The family was instructed to do what they normally do when they visit the library and I took notes.

Survey results were compiled to identify practices. The observations were conducted to verify practices assessed by the families in the survey. Interviews were conducted to ensure the validity of the information gained from the surveys and observations. These methods utilized together created a balanced, well documented account of personal experiences of all the involved parties.

Results

What are the major characteristics of the child's home literacy environment?

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

There are one hundred and seven preschool books, of every genre, in Kristina's home. There are no books made by the child. The following writing materials are in the home: pencils, pens, crayons, markers, chalk/chalkboard, unlined paper, and a journal. Other literacy materials that are available for the child's use are a stapler, scissors, ruler, water paint, paint brushes, abacus. The following technology is available: television, DVD Player, VCR, computer, tape recorder/headphones, calculator, keyboard, and cash register. The following preschool computer games are available: Sesame Street, Toddler Games-colors and shapes. There are preschool videos and DVD's. Kristina's work is displayed on her room door and also the refrigerator. Kristina works alone at her small table with two chairs in the foyer and in the computer room.

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

There are twenty preschool books, representing six genres, in Nia's home. There are no books made by the child. The following writing materials are in the home: pencils, pens, crayons and a journal. Other literacy materials that are available for the child's use are scissors, a ruler, dry erase marker board, paint/paintbrushes, alphabet puzzle, early memory matching game. The following technology is available: television, DVD Player, VCR, computer, tape recorder/headphones, and calculator. Nia's mother visits the Sesame Street and Nickelodeon website. There are preschool videos and DVD's.

Nia's work is not displayed in the home. Nia doesn't have an area of the home that she can utilize to work alone.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara and Cierra)**

There are fifty preschool books, representing four genres, in Zahara and Cierra's home. There are no books made by the children. The following writing materials are in the home: pencils, crayons, lined paper, unlined paper, construction paper, tracing paper and journals for each child. Other literacy materials that are available for the children's use are: a stapler, scissors, stencils, ruler, dry erase marker board, paint/paintbrushes and puzzles. The following technology is available: television, computer, tape recorder, and calculator. The following preschool computer games are available: Reader Rabbit, Hello Kitty, Blues Clues and Veggie Tales. The children's work is displayed on the refrigerator. The children use the following areas of the home to work: dining room table, kitchen table, computer room and their bedroom.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

There are one hundred eighty two books, of every genre, in Natasha's home. There are no books made by Natasha. The following writing materials are in the home: pencils, pens, crayons, markers, lined paper, construction paper and a journal. Other literacy materials that are available for the child's use are a stapler, scissors, stencils, and paint. The following technology is available: television, DVD Player, VCR, computer, tape recorder/headphones, and calculator. The following preschool computer programs are available: Word Muncher Deluxe, Reader Rabbit, Knowledge Adventure, Jump Start Reading and Music Learning Games. There are preschool DVD's and video tapes. The child's work is displayed on the refrigerator and the Mom's dresser. Natasha works alone in the family room that has a small table and three chairs, at the dining room table and in her bedroom.

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

There are forty six books, representing three genres, in Sean's home. There are no books made by Sean. The following writing materials are in the home: pencils, pens, crayons, markers, lined paper, unlined paper, construction paper and writing books. Other literacy materials that are available for the child's use are scissors, stencils, a ruler, a dry erase marker board, and paint/paint brushes. The following technology is available: television, DVD Player, VCR, computer and headphones. Sean's mother visits the Sesame Street and Nickelodeon website. There are no preschool computer programs available. The child's work is displayed on the refrigerator. Sean works alone in his bedroom, the living room and computer room.

Do you teach your child the alphabet? If so, how?

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

Kristina's mother reported during the interview that she sings the alphabet song with Kristina. She utilizes the Leap Frog technology Alphabet A-Z. She shows the letters while reading and asks Kristina to identify letters. She utilizes dots in the form of letters that Kristina connects and she also has Kristina trace letters. She uses magnetic letters that are displayed on the refrigerator. Kristina finds the letter as her mother states it. She traces the letters in her name and calls out letters and words that start with letter-S for Sadie, Stacy and sunshine, E for Errol, D for Dane, K for Kristina, Kristan and Kayla, A for apple, B for bees, bears, butterfly, bird, bed, bottle.

I administered an alphabet assessment and Kristina was able to sing the alphabet, recognize all 26 letters, state 16 sounds and write 14 letters.

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

Nia's mother reported during the interview that she sings the alphabet song and places letters on the floor for Nia to jump hopscotch onto the letter called by the mother. She doesn't report any other activities to teach letters.

I administered an alphabet assessment and Nia wasn't able to sing the alphabet, she recognized 13 letters, stated two sounds and could write one letter.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara and Cierra)**

Zahara and Cierra's mother reported during the interview that she sings various alphabet songs with the girls. One song is "There are 26 letters, names and sounds" during the song they sing each letter name and sing each sound. She also sings song "Do you know your letter sounds". She utilizes their book bags that have velcro letters in the pockets to have them identify letters and sounds. The girls watch Sesame Street DVD's and Sesame Street programs. The mother points to letters when reading and asks the girls

to make the sounds of letters. While traveling in the car they read street names and signs. When they are walking on the street or in various establishments the mother reads words and the girls recognize.

I administered an alphabet assessment and Zahara was able to sing the alphabet, recognize all 26 letters, state the sound of all 26 letters and write 21 letters. Cierra didn't want to sing the alphabet but was able to recognize all twenty six letters, state the sound of twenty one letters and write nine letters.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

Natashia's mother reported during the interview that she sings the alphabet song with Natashia. The family has the following preschool technology that teaches letter names and sounds: Phonics Radio, My First Leap Pad, Leap Frog ABC Bus, Mr. Owl/Language Professor, IPOD, See & Say and Sesame Street. The mother uses home-made flash cards to review letters and when reading and writing points to letters. She utilizes wooden letter blocks to teach Natashia. She instructs Natashia to utilize crayons to color over letters. She teaches letters in groups instead of all at one time.

I administered an alphabet assessment and Natashia was able to sing the alphabet, recognize all 26 letters, state the sound of 16 letters and write 14 letters.

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

Sean's mother reported during the interview that she sings the alphabet song with Sean. She teaches him to recite the letters and points to the letters when reading and writing. When they ride in the car she points out letters and words. She points out letters while they read the newspaper together and she points out letters in commercials and

cartoons. She uses the Internet to visit Sesame Street, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network sites to practice letters.

I administered an alphabet assessment and Sean wasn't able to sing the alphabet, he recognized ten letters, couldn't state any letter sounds and could write any letters.

What are the patterns of interaction during storybook reading when the parent reads to the child?

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

The duration of the story session was three minutes. Kristina's mother stated the title but not the author and illustrator. She didn't ask Kristina what she thought the book was about. She didn't change her voice for different characters or ask open-ended questions. She didn't relate the story to the child's own experience. She did allow the child to make statements and ask questions. No new vocabulary was introduced. Kristina's mother reads stories multiple times to Kristina.

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

The duration of the story session was six minutes. Nia's mother stated the title but not the author and illustrator. She didn't ask Nia what she thought the book was about. She read the book with expression and changed her voice for different characters. She didn't ask open-ended questions and relate the story to the child's experience. She read at the right pace. Nia only made one statement during the whole session and didn't ask any questions. No new vocabulary was introduced. Nia's mother reads stories multiple times to Nia.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara and Cierra)**

The duration of the story session was 10 minutes. The mother stated the title, author and illustrator. She asked the girls what they thought the book was about. She read with expression and changed her voice for the different characters. She asked open-ended questions and related the story to the children's own experience. She read at the right pace, allowed the children to make statements and ask questions. She introduced new vocabulary, defined words and reads stories multiple times.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

The duration of the story session was four minutes. Natashia's father stated the title, author and illustrator. He asked Natashia what she thought the book was about. He read with expression and changed his voice for the different characters. He related the story to the child's own experience. He read at the right pace and allowed Natashia to make statements and ask questions. He introduced new vocabulary, defined words and reads stories multiple times.

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

The duration of the story session was five minutes. Sean's mother stated the title but not the author and illustrator. She didn't ask Sean what he thought the book was about. She read with expression but didn't change her voice for different characters or ask open-ended questions. She didn't relate the story to the child's own experience. She read at the right pace and allowed Sean to make statements and ask questions. No new vocabulary was introduced. Sean's mother reads stories multiple times to Sean.

What are the patterns of interaction during storybook reading when the child reads to the parent?

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

The duration of the story session was four minutes. Kristina read with expression, read at the right pace and asked the parent questions. Kristina: “Mommy what is that?” Mother: “a rug”. Kristina also demonstrated the following concepts of print: held the book right side up, turned the pages left to right, read from top to bottom of page, read from left to right, pretended to read while turning pages, paid attention to print while reading and read some of the print.

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

The duration of the story session was two minutes. Nia demonstrated the following concepts of print: held the book right side up and turned pages from left to right. Nia didn’t read with expression. The other concepts of print couldn’t be observed because Nia stated: “I don’t want to read”.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara and Cierra)**

Zahara read and the duration of the story session was seven minutes. She read with expression and at the right pace. She didn’t change her voice for different characters and didn’t ask her mother questions. The following concepts of print were demonstrated: held the book right side up, turned pages left to right, read from top to bottom of page, labeled or made up sentences about pictures in the book, pretended to read while turning the pages and paid attention to some of the print while reading. Cierra didn’t read.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

Natashia read “Dora, The Halloween Cat” to her father, mother and sister. The duration of the story session was eleven minutes. She read with expression, changed her voice for different characters, read at the right pace and asked her father questions. The following concepts of print were demonstrated: held the book right side up, turned pages

left to right, read from top to bottom of page, labeled or made up sentences about pictures in the book, pretended to read while turning the pages, paid attention to some of the print while reading and read some of the print.

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

The duration of the story session was three minutes. Sean read at the right pace but his enunciation wasn't clear. The following concepts of print were demonstrated: held the book right side up, turned pages left to right, labeled or made up sentences about pictures in the book and pretended to read while turning pages.

The use of the library in the families' life and how it affects their child's literacy development

- **Subject 1 (Kristina)**

When Kristina entered the door of the library she stated "I'm going to take a book".

Kristina: "I have this book, Mommy".

Kristina chose the following books: "Berenstain Bears", "Maisy's Best Friends" and "Maisy likes Music". The mother chose the following books "The Grouchy Ladybug" and "My Kindergarten". Kristina also chose "The School Play", and "Jimmy Neutron".

Mother: "This book is a little difficult to read-too many words".

Kristina: "No, read it" and Mom started reading. She read the first page,

Mom: "What is going on here?" "Why did the mother want him to come in Kristina?"

Kristina: "She wanted him to clean up his mess".

Mother continued to read, "You were right Kristina".

Mother: "Who do you think is going to pick up the pants?" Mother repeats that the book is too hard for her age, she ends the story and Kristina closed the book. The mother then begins to read the "Berenstain Bears Report Card Trouble".

Mother: "How does he look Kristina?"

Kristina: "Scared"

Mother: "What do you think is going to happen?"

Kristina: "He's going to get a needle"

Mother: "Why do you think he's going to get a needle?"

Kristina wanted to stop reading and work on the computer. Her mother goes to the sign in sheet and writes her name. Kristina chooses the computer program The Magic Schoolbus-Bugs. She types in her name and calls each letter. Kristina clicked on nose, eyes, ears, hair and mouth. The mother pointed to words as Kristina clicked the mouse.

Mother: "What's that?"

Kristina: "A teeth"

Mother: "Yes it's a tooth."

They discussed the color of the hair, nose and butterfly. Kristina checked out four books utilizing her library card. She handed the card to the librarian and gave her books. She checked out "Rugrats Surprise Angelica", "Report Card Trouble", "Jimmy Neutron", "When Pants Attack", "Nick good Enough to Eat". Kristina watches all of these shows on television. As they leave she states "Mommy I like the library, I like the computer".

- **Subject 2 (Nia)**

Nia walked to her section and chose Sponge Bob books-"The Whole Truth about Work" and "Sponge Bob Squarepants". She also chose Sesame Street-"Elmos Loves You" and "Elmo Says Achoo". She also chose the following "Where is Maisy's Panda?", "More Fun with Maisy", "Maisy Likes Music", and "Maisy Goes Camping". Nia gave the librarian her card; the librarian swiped the card and returned it. Nia said "Thank you". Nia placed the checked out books into her book bag. Nia had a very bad cold and was on the way to the doctor's. Before they left the library the mother went to the adult section and checked out three books.

- **Subject 3 (Zahara and Cierra)**

The mother and father accompanied their three daughters along with three neighbor's children. They entered the library very excitedly. The father takes the girls to the library every Saturday after their ballet class. They have lunch and then spend two hours in the library while the mother gets a break. The father reminded everyone to use their inside voices. Zahara chose three books. They took off their jackets and found seats.

Dad: "This is too hard, let's get another book."

The children went to their section, Cierra chose "The Digger Wasp".

Cierra: "Daddy can you read this book? "Berenstain Bears-Big Blooper"

Mother read titles of Curious George books.

Cierra: "Here's another Curious George."

Zahara: "We have the movie."

Dad: "Yes we do."

Dad: "Which book do you want to read first?" "Put your stack here Cierra and your stack here Zahara, and let's read."

The children are seated and the Dad tells them to move closer.

Dad: "Curious George goes to the Beach" "What is it called?"

The girls repeat the title.

Dad: "What do you do at the beach?"

Girls: "Go in the water and make sand castles."

Dad read the following words claw, shovel, bucket and beach ball.

Dad: "What is curious?" "It means to be interested in stuff."

Dad: "What is a surprise?"

Cierra: "A beach umbrella."

Zahara: "A snack"

Dad: "It's giving something that someone doesn't know about"

The Dad handled all interruptions and refocused the children.

Dad: "Have you all been in the ocean before?"

Girls: "Yes."

The older daughter Niya went to her section to choose books.

Dad: "What's a picnic?"

Cierra: "It means when you eat."

Zahara: "Something you eat."

Cierra: "You spread the blanket and put what's in the basket on the blanket."

Dad: "What's in the basket?"

Zahara: "Apples."

Cierra: "Sandwich."

Zahara: "Juice and soda." "Daddy he's burying him in the sand" "Daddy you buried me in the sand"

Dad: "Yes I did, who else did I bury?"

Zahara: "Niya"

Dad: "What is a friend?"

Cierra: "Somebody you play with."

Zahara: "Daddy she has a loose teeth."

Daddy: "She has a loose tooth, tooth is singular, teeth is plural."

Daddy: "What is a lifeguard?"

Zahara: "When you see someone in trouble you ask the lifeguard for help."

Cierra: "When you go to the cave somebody will save you."

Dad: "A lifeguard is someone who saves you when in the water if someone is drowning or in trouble."

Dad: "Children what are binoculars?"

Children: "You can look through and see."

Mother came and took over reading the story while Dad went to adult section to find a book for her.

Mother: "What is George doing?"

Children: "Swimming."

Mother: "How do the people look on the shore?"

Children: "Happy."
 Mother: "What's in the basket?"
 Children: "Watermelon, cookies, chips, banana, sandwich."
 The mother read the title "The Cat in the Hat"
 Mother: "What does hat start with?"
 Cierra: "H"
 Mother: "What sound does H make?"
 Cierra: made the hhhh sound
 Mother: "Cat begins with?"
 Cierra: "C."
 Mother: "What sound does it make?"
 Cierra: "ssss"
 Mother: "And what else" "kkk" "Zahara and Cierra what books do you want to take out?" "You can take out 3."
 Mother gives a preview of the books.
 Zahara: "That and that and that and that" as she points to books.
 Mother: "We're going to take the Berenstain Bears and I can read it to you tonight."
 There are 23 books on the table. Older daughter Niya was called for her turn on the computer. The girls gathered around to watch her.
 Cierra: "Where are my books?"
 Mother: "Here they are" she named four titles. "Let's take out four."
 Mother read the first book Cierra picked "Digger Wasp" (informational book)
 Mother: "This is his belly that is called his abdomen" she then called out all body parts, Cierra is in her mother's arms
 Cierra: "That's me when I was a bug."
 Mother: "You were a bug before?"
 Cierra: "Yes."
 Mother and Father have a discussion about the books being checked out.
 Zahara checks out the following books: "Franklin Plants a Tree", "La bella Durmiente"(a Spanish book on tape), "Magic School Bus", and "Butterfly Battle".
 Cierra checks out the following books: Blues Clues-"Be Safe Blue", Berenstain Bears-"Big Blooper", "The Digger Wasp", "Who are you?", and "Berenstain Bears "Clean House".
 Zahara hands the librarian the card.
 Librarian: "These are due back March 18th"
 Zahara: "Thank you."
 Cierra hands the librarian the card, her Dad picks her up to reach the librarian.
 Niya checks out four mysteries.

- **Subject 4 (Natashia)**

The family returned the following books: "Delicious Desserts", "Just Like Dora", "The Halloween Cat", and "Eggs for Everyone". Natashia sat at the table and read to her mother "Is this Maisy's House?"

Natashia: "The end." after reading the story.

She then chose "Maisy Makes Lemonade"

Mother picked American Girl magazine off the shelf to introduce to 10 year old Alize, she also picked the magazine Spider. Natashia continued to read silently. Natashia and Alize then walked on the letter rug and sang the letters as they went around. Natashia took "Bob the Builder" off the shelf and read to mother.

Natashia: "Where's four?"

Mother pointed to four.

Natashia: "Good job!"

Natashia continued to read books independently, spread books around her and lay on her back on the rug while she held the book up to read. She took the Sesame Street magazine and told me to read it, since I was just sitting there. Natashia read "Happy Birthday Maisy", "Dora the Explorer", and "Let's Catch Stars".

Natashia: "Mommy can we stay here for a minute?"

Mother: "Yes, but we have to leave soon they're going to close."

Natashia read "Curious George"-a pop up book.

The mother informed me that this is what Natashia does at home. When she's really quiet the mother thinks she's up to something, she goes to check on her and finds her reading a book.

Natashia picture read The Berenstain Bears-"Mad, Mad, Mad Toy Craze" and held the book up for everyone to see the pictures.

Mother: "Which books are you taking?"

Natashia: "All of these books" 12 books are on the table.

Mother: "You can take three."

Natashia: "I want to take five; I have to read all of them"

Natashia looked at the back of one of the Berenstain Bears books; she read all the titles and stated the ones she had at home already. She then discussed the channels of her favorite shows Sponge Bob on Nickelodeon, Sesame Street on PBS Kids Sprout, Maisy on Noggin and Nick Jr. on Diego. She gave her mother a high five when she remembered Nick Jr.'s channel. The mother asked her what shapes are in Dora's book and Natashia named them. She had trouble naming the star and her mother helped her. Natashia announced the end and her mother states "Wow, you finished another one".

Natashia then took five books off the shelf and took them to another table; she stated "wow, these are heavy". Her mother didn't restrict her. She read "Rugrats Surprise Angelica". She read "Happy Thanksgiving" to her mother.

Natashia: "Mommy I want to go on the computer"

Mother: "We can't tonight they're about to close."

Natashia checked out the following six books: "Baby Animal Friends", "Happy Thanksgiving", "Happy Birthday Maisy", "Maisy at the Fair", "Maisy Cleans Up", and "Maisy Makes Lemonade".

- **Subject 5 (Sean)**

This is Sean and his mother's first time at the library together. Sean has visited with his school. Sean chose "Ninja Turtles", "The Santa Snatcher", "The Green

Monster”, “The Secret” and “Meet Casey Jones”. The librarian gave the mother a brief tour and informed her that formal tours of the entire library are given on Tuesdays.

Sean: “I’ll read it, it’s for me” “It comes from my cartoons”

Sean went to the carpet and sat down and read. Mother pointed out Scooby Doo books, Sean chose 2 of them. Sean put Scooby Doo back and decided he wanted Ninja Turtles.

Mother: “Do you want me to read it to you or do you want to read it yourself?”

Sean: “I’ll read it.”

He finds a torn page and states “It’s not me.”

Mother: “I know you didn’t do it.” “Do you want to check these out or get something else?”

Sean: “Get something else.”

Mother instructed him to put the books back where he found them.

Mother: “There are four books here, that’s it.”

Sean uses his card to check out the following books: “Moonlight the Halloween Cat”, “Tomorrow’s Alphabet”, “Click, Clack, Moo-Cows that Type”, and “Ninja Turtles”.

Discussion

This study investigated the home environments of children from minority backgrounds. I conducted a Qualitative Research Study on five families that focused on parent involvement and the early literacy development of preschool children. Data was gathered on the home and library literacy practices of parents with their preschool children.

Summary of key findings

The homes were found to have many literacy practices. There were a large number of books and a great deal of technology. All of the parents reported teaching their children the alphabet and ways of doing this were minimal to high level. The children that were exposed to high levels of alphabet teaching by parents and lived in literate rich home environments, recognized all twenty six letters, stated the sound of some, and wrote some. The patterns of interaction, when the parent read to the child and the child read to the parent, were high. There was discussion and many questions asked

and answered. The parents engaged in the following literacy practices: stated the title, author, illustrator, read with expression, asked open-ended questions, allowed children to make statements, introduced new vocabulary and read stories multiple times. The children showed the following emergent literacy practices: holding the book upright, reading at the right pace, reading left to right and top to bottom, pretending to read while turning pages, paying attention to the print and reading some of the print. The families made optimal use of the library and the children exhibited high levels of excitement while utilizing the services. The children had their own library cards.

How results compared with other research findings in the field

The literate environments that the parents created were instrumental in the development of literacy in their preschool children. The preschools that the children attend provide quality services to encourage their growth, but the preschool without the parents teaching at home is not as effective. This has been validated by Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, (1995); Hart & Risley, (1999); Scarborough & Dobrich, (1994) as cited in Jordan et al., (2000) who stated that parents and the literacy environment they create in their homes are widely believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills. Although excellent preschool and kindergarten classrooms can provide children with opportunities to learn and refine literacy skills, it is widely acknowledged that linguistically rich home environments contribute more powerfully to the early development of these critical abilities.

The literacy practices of parents while reading stories to their children is critical in encouraging their literacy development. This is substantiated in The 1985 Commission

on Reading Report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (as cited in Bus et al., 1995) which found that the single most important home activity for building knowledge required for success in reading is reading aloud to children. The parent's example of reading provided an excellent model for the child and the child in turn reproduced the behaviors while reading to the parent. This result is supported by Morrow & Smith, (1990) who stated that the best predictors of reading success include the number of words and questions used, asked or answered by children, the number of preparatory and post-story evaluative questions asked by the parents, and the number of instances of positive reinforcement by parents. By imitating the model provided by an adult reader and reenacting a story-reading event, a child can vicariously experience independent reading. This social interaction apparently affects the child's acquisition of information, attitudes, and literacy skills from the story (Teale & Sulzby, 1987 as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1990).

How results contrast with lit review

The results of this study demonstrated how the exposure to storybook reading by the parent supported the child's language growth and emergent literacy. The child utilized a high level of language while interacting with the parent during the story. Emergent literacy was evidenced as the child read to the parent. These results are in direct contrast with Scarborough and Dobrich, 1994 (as cited in Bus et al., 1995) who report a relationship between book reading and reading achievement but they do not conclude that book reading is associated with emergent literacy and language growth.

Furthermore, these results showed some parents utilizing vocabulary development by defining words while reading to their children. The children were able to give the definitions of some of the words they were asked, and those that they didn't know the

parent defined for them. This literacy skill will aid the children in their vocabulary knowledge when they enter kindergarten because they will have higher vocabularies which will aid in greater reading comprehension. This result is in direct contrast to the study of Evans et al., (2000) as cited in Senechal & LeFevre, (2002) who did not find storybook exposure to predict the vocabulary of kindergarten children after controlling for parent education.

How results extend the current research

The results of this project extend the current research that when parents are given the skills and opportunities to help their children academically, they can become active and resourceful Faires et al., (2000). The parents in this study were very involved and interested in the success of their children. They were interested in being a part of the study in order to receive more strategies for enhancing their children's literacy development. The parents in the study all taught their children literacy skills. They were given additional strategies, by the preschool program, to develop emergent literacy skills in their children which are supported by Haney and Hill, (2004).

Additional Findings

The result that I would like to comment on is the alphabet assessment. The parents understood the need for teaching the alphabet. However parents need to be instructed how to also teach the letter sounds which leads to the development of phonological awareness which is a crucial component of reading success. The parent who is an assistant teacher at her daughter's school understood the importance because this is one of the teaching strategies of preschool teachers. This knowledge needs to be

imparted to all parents. The parents also encouraged letter recognition wherever they traveled by pointing out letters in words and signs.

The Literature Review has shown that differences found in parental involvement between Euro-American and ethnic minority homes have often been viewed from a deficit framework, making the assumption that Euro-Americans are the “normative group” and that ways in which ethnic minorities differ from Euro-Americans are pathological or deviant (McAdoo, 1988; Phinney & Landin, 1998). Many research studies choose subjects of unmatched socioeconomic status often comparing middle-class with poor and gaining results. Comparative designs pose serious risks of misinterpretation unless the ethnic groups are closely matched on relevant background variables, such as socioeconomic factors (Hill, Ramirez, & Dumka, in press; Roosa, Morgan-Lopez, Cree, & Specter, 2002).

Limitations of research

This study represents a very small segment of a large preschool population. Parents that volunteered were already teaching their children some literacy skills. A broader view of the scope of the research problem would be seen if some of the subjects had limited knowledge of how to teach their children early literacy.

Ideas for future research

Future research should address how different minorities’ perceptions of literacy shape their teaching of their preschool children. Cultural backgrounds and value systems that could be an impediment to effective teaching strategies should be examined.

Final conclusions

Parents care about their children, but with the many demands of life placed on families today, the child is usually the one that suffers. Parents need to be aided in understanding the importance of being the first teacher and take this responsibility seriously. They also need to recognize the huge demands placed on teachers and assist them by sending their child into the school system prepared with the tools necessary to be a literate individual. The community needs to understand the importance of literacy and how the lack of it affects everyone. Everyone needs to make a conscious effort to bridge home, school and community to improve the lives of children and families in order to be successful.

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Appendix A

Early Literacy Parent Survey

Name _____

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Date _____

PARENT/CHILD SECTION

1. How often does your child read books, magazines or any printed material when he/she is alone?

___ none ___ 1-2 times per week ___ 3-4 times per week ___ other

2. How many times in a week do you read to your child?

___ none ___ 1-2 times per week ___ 3-4 times per week ___ other

3. How many books do you read per reading session?

___ 1-2 ___ 3-4 ___ 5-6 ___ 7-9 ___ 10 or more

4. Does your child like to be read to? ___ yes ___ no

5. What does your child do that shows his/her interest in reading? Or non interest?

6. When you read to your child, do you ask questions? ___ yes ___ no

7. What kinds of books does your child enjoy?

Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure
Picture Books	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure
Wordless Picture Books	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure
Concept Books	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure
Predictable Books	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure
Information Books	___ yes	___ no	___ unsure

- Poetry Books _____yes _____no _____unsure
8. Does your child write at home? _____yes _____no
9. How many times a month do you and your child visit the library?
_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5 or more
10. Does your child have a library card? _____yes _____no
11. Who else in your household reads to your child?

12. How many books does your child have at home?
_____none _____5-10 _____10-20 _____20-30 _____30-40 _____50 or more

PARENT SECTION

13. What does the word “literacy” mean to you?

14. Why do you read?
_____Employment _____Learning _____Necessity _____Information
_____Recreation
15. What types of materials do you read?
_____Books (Fiction) _____Books (Non-Fiction) _____Magazines
_____Newspaper _____Internet information

16. Does your child observe you reading? _____yes _____no
If yes how often?

___1-2 times per week ___3-4 times per week ___other

Appendix B

Household Information

Parent (s)/Guardian (s) Name_____

Who else in household reads to child? _____

Child's Name_____

Child's Age_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

Telephone Number (Home)_____ (Cell)_____

Observation #1 Schedule

Monday_____ Time_____ Tuesday_____ Time_____

Wednesday_____ Time_____ Thursday_____ Time_____

Friday_____ Time_____ Saturday_____ Sunday_____

Observation #2 Schedule

Monday_____ Time_____ Tuesday_____ Time_____

Wednesday_____ Time_____ Thursday_____ Time_____

Friday_____ Time_____ Saturday_____ Sunday_____

Observation #3 Schedule

Monday_____ Time_____ Tuesday_____ Time_____

Wednesday_____ Time_____ Thursday_____ Time_____

Friday_____ Time_____ Saturday_____ Sunday_____

Appendix C
Early Literacy Home Observation Form (1)

Date_____ **Day**_____ **Time**_____

Parent (s)/Guardian (s)

Name_____

Child's Name_____

Child's

Age_____

Home Environment

How many books are in the home?

_____Books made by child _____Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes _____Picture Books

_____Wordless Picture Books _____Concept Books _____Predictable Books

_____Information Books _____Poetry Books _____Books on Tape _____Magazines

What writing materials are in the home?

_____Pencils _____Pens _____Crayons _____Markers _____Chalk

_____Chalkboard _____Lined Paper _____Unlined Paper _____Construction Paper

_____Tracing Paper _____Journal/Notebook

What other literacy tools are available for child's use?

_____Stapler _____Scissors _____Stencils_____ Alphabet Letters (Magnetic or Foam)

_____Hole Puncher _____Ruler _____Dry Erase Marker Board _____Chalkboard

_____Stamp Pads _____Stamps _____Paint _____Paint brushes _____Puzzles

What forms of technology for child's use are in the home?

_____Television _____Computer _____Preschool Computer Games

_____Tape Recorder _____Headphones _____Calculator

Is child's work displayed? _____Yes _____No Where? _____

What area of home does child utilize to work alone? _____

Reading Session (Parent to child recorded on tape) Start_____ End_____
_____States title, author and illustrator before each reading

_____Asks what the child thinks the book is about

_____Reads with expression _____Changes voice for different characters

_____Asks open-ended questions _____Relates story to child's experience

_____Reads at the right pace _____Allows children to make statements and ask questions

_____Introduces new vocabulary _____Defines words

_____Reads stories multiple times

Reading Session (Child to parent recorded on tape) Start_____ End_____
_____Reads with expression _____Changes voice for different characters

_____Reads at the right pace _____Asks parent questions

The following concepts of print are demonstrated:

_____Holds book right side up _____Turns pages left to right

_____Reads from top to bottom of page

_____Labels or makes up sentences about pictures in book

_____Pretends to read while turning through pages of book

_____Pays attention to some of the print while reading _____reads the print

Alphabet Knowledge

_____Child can sing the alphabet

_____Child can recognize #_____ letters of alphabet

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

_____ Child can state sounds of # _____ letters of alphabet

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

_____ Child can write # _____ letters of the alphabet

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Appendix D

Early Literacy Home Observation Form (2)

Date _____ **Day** _____ **Time** _____

Parent (s)/Guardian (s)

Name _____

Child's Name _____

Child's

Age _____

Library Visit

_____ Parent and child meet or greet librarian

_____ Parent and child fill out application for library card and check out # _____ books

_____ Parent and child receive a tour of the library

Parent and child receive information about the following services:

_____ Story Hours _____ Computer Games _____ Movies _____ Presentations

_____ Other (list) _____

_____ Parent informs librarian of child's interest

_____ Parent gets recommendations from librarian

_____ Parent utilizes a reminder system for return of books

Describe reminder system _____

_____ Parent and child know the names of librarians (list them) _____

_____ Child that already has library card checks out # _____ books

_____ Child is returning from home/or currently has # _____ books checked out (list)

_____ Parent and child currently utilize the following services

_____ Story Hours _____ Computer Games _____ Movies _____ Presentations

_____ Other (list) _____