What Do Parents Perceive To Be Effective Characteristics Of A Family Literacy Program?

An Action Research Project

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Abstract

This study examined how a Grade 1/2 teacher implemented a family literacy program for the families of the children in her class. Using action research, this research study asked the question, “What do parents perceive to be effective characteristics of a family literacy program?” The researcher implemented a family literacy program for a six-week period in her classroom. Before beginning the study, the researcher invited parents to participate in an information evening designed to provide ideas and strategies for reading with their child at home. After the six-week study period, data was collected in the form of a survey. Through literature review, analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, and reflecting on the feedback from participants, this study provided the researcher with information to guide the development of her family literacy program. The data collected during this study showed that parents found the family literacy program effective when children were able to choose their own books and were taking books home every night.
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Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this teacher led action research was to explore what characteristics of a home reading program the parents of Grade 1/2 students perceived to be effective in helping their child learn to read.

Learning to read is a lifelong skill and is one of the most critical achievements in life (Kent, 2005). Learning to read is a complex process for young children. Home and life experiences before children even come to school have a significant impact on their emergent reading skills. According to Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2006):

Very early, children begin to learn about spoken language when they hear their family members talking, laughing, and singing, and when they respond to all of the sounds that fill their world. They begin to understand written language when they hear adults read stories to them and see adults reading newspapers magazines, and books for themselves. These early experiences with spoken and written language set the stage for children to become successful readers and writers (p. 7).

While early experiences influence children, attitudes towards literacy in the home can also have a direct influence on children (Saracho, 1997). The home environment has an important role in helping young children learn to read before they come to school.

Children learn to read at varying rates and many children struggle with the process of learning to read. According to Dee Nichols, Faires, and Rickelman (2000), “There is an intense interest in the development of proficient readers and stringent criticism against education for its failure to bring all students up to acceptable literacy
levels” (p. 195). For those students struggling with reading, family literacy becomes an important tool for increasing reading skills. With family support, many children show significant gains in their reading progress in a short time. Students who receive support from their parents significantly improve their reading levels compared to children who receive no additional help from home (Dee Nichols et al., 2000). There are many different ways of involving parents in the reading process. Some programs have parents reading alongside their child while other programs have parents implementing reading lessons and strategies to help their children learn to read. While any kind of family literacy involvement is likely beneficial for children, some home literacy programs are likely more effective than others (Senechal, 2006). It is important for schools to facilitate this process, thus this study aimed to discover what characteristics of a family literacy program parents perceived to be effective in helping their child learn to read. This information was used by the researcher to improve her family literacy program. By improving her family literacy program, the researcher hoped to improve her students’ reading scores.

Justification of the Study

A literacy environment has a significant effect on the development of a child’s reading skills. A home filled with books in which the family displays positive attitudes towards reading has a positive effect on children learning to read. When parents provide literacy activities and materials for their children, those children have significantly higher scores than children whose parents do not (Saracho, 1997). According to Denton, West, and Walston (2003), “children with rich literacy environments at home were more likely
than other children to perform well in reading at the end of both kindergarten and 1st grade” (p.11).

When developing a primary literacy program, it is crucial that parents take an active role in the literacy development of their children. There are many factors that influence a child’s literacy experiences and ability to learn to read. Some of these include social class, family size, and parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). However, parental involvement is a more powerful force than other family background variables when a child is learning to read (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Recognizing that parental involvement holds such a powerful influence on the reading process is important for teachers and parents. Teachers need to design literacy programs that support successful parental involvement. Primary teachers especially need to be aware of the power of family literacy. According to Mullis, Mullis, and Cornille (2004), the earlier parents become involved in their children’s literacy practices, the longer lasting the effects, and the more profound the results. Reading is a lifelong skill and one of the most important skills young children learn. The focus of many schools is on reading, and looking at outside influences on this process is imperative when designing literacy programs for young children.

When working with family literacy programs, many schools simply encourage parents to listen to their children read at home (Dee Nichols, et al., 2000). In a review of over 40 studies, it was shown that when parents simply listen to their children read, those children did not show significant literacy gains, especially children in at-risk situations (Toomey, 1993). While reading with children is very important and should not be forgotten, when parents are trained in reading procedures, the work done at home can be
more effective and higher gains can be made by their children (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003). Fredricks and Rasinski (1990) outlined four criteria for involving parents successfully in their child’s reading. They suggested that effective programs involve reading out of books, include activities which are enjoyable and easy to implement, maintain a connection between home and school, and provide consistency over the long term rather than short term single activities. When these four criteria are met, children remarked on reading more often at home in their free time and with adults (Morrow & Young, 1997). When teachers are developing their home reading programs, it is crucial they keep these criteria in mind. They need to ask themselves how much training they need to give parents, and what set up will work best for parents.

Because home literacy programs are critical for children who are developing their literacy skills, and because schools have teachers with the ability to teach parents how to help their children learn, and can provide the resources they need to do so, it is incumbent upon schools to offer support to the home. “Schools are in a position to advise parents of effective reading strategies. By working within the home environment, many children’s literacy experiences can be enhanced” (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003, p. 614). When creating a home literacy program, teachers need to be aware of the needs of their students and parents. By creating a program that works for parents, the commitment to a long-term program will be greater, and in turn, create more success for the children in the classroom.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

The present study explored the question: “What do parents perceive to be effective characteristics of a family literacy program when helping their child learn to
read?" In essence, the action research process contributed information to the teacher conducting the study, and possibly other primary teachers, on what characteristics their own family literacy programs should have in order to be effective for the parents involved, therefore improving the reading skills of the children in their classrooms.

The researcher assumed that parents were familiar with family literacy programs and were willing to spend time every evening reading with their child. The researcher predicted that on the survey, parents would convey that a family literacy program where children take home books to read every day for the duration of the school year would be effective. The researcher also thought parents would state that an effective program is one which has the children taking books home that are at their reading level. In addition, including a recording sheet/comment sheet to keep track of their child’s reading is a characteristic of the program that the researcher thought parents would find effective in helping their children develop reading skills. Finally, the researcher believed that training for parents before the program began would be what parents would say is the most effective characteristic in helping them carry out a family literacy program and improve their child’s reading skills.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher defined a family literacy program as a program initiated, designed, and monitored by the classroom teacher but which is designed to occur in the home and aims to improve a child’s reading. The students in this study were in Grade 1 or Grade 2 and the parents involved in this study were the mother and/or father/guardian of the child in Grade 1 or Grade 2. Parents were asked to rank characteristics of a reading program for their effectiveness. Characteristics were defined
as elements of the design of the family literacy program that were carried out at home. Effectiveness for this study, was defined as the ability to produce a desired effect in the area of learning to read. Finally, for the purpose of this study the term reading was defined as a complex system of deriving meaning from print and included reading fluently, demonstrating the ability to decode unfamiliar words, and understanding the material being read. It is important to recognize that the expectations for the term reading were at a Grade 1 reading level.

**Brief Overview of Study**

Over the course of six weeks, a family literacy program was implemented by the researcher with the Grade 1/2 students in her class. Before beginning the program, a parent training evening was offered to all parents of the children in the researcher’s Grade 1/2 class. During this training evening, parents were given information regarding the rationale behind the program, how the program worked, and how they would be able to help their child learn to read at home. Over the six weeks, children in the Grade 1/2 class took home books nightly to read with their parents and were given the opportunity to pick out new books every day while they were at school. After six weeks, the researcher asked parents to complete an 11 question survey. On the survey, there were eight questions using the Likert Scale and three open-ended questions. The open ended questions asked parents to comment on the information night given at the beginning of the study, what they would like to see included in a family literacy program, and if they noticed any changes in their child’s reading ability and reading attitude over the course of the study. The feedback from parents was crucial to the results of the action research. The information provided by the parents through the survey was used to change and
improve the family literacy program that the researcher offered to her students and the results were made available to other primary teachers at that school so that they too could benefit from the knowledge gained.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study explored what characteristics of family literacy programs were effective for parents to use at home and what characteristics were effective in increasing a child’s reading skills. A review of current research supported that the implementation of family literacy programs was beneficial for children who are learning to read. The literature review also illustrated how parental training is a key component of family literacy programs when the aim is to increase a child’s reading skills.

Studies Directly Related

Effects of parental involvement in developing competent readers in first grade

Dee Nichols, Faires, and Rickerman (2000) stated that “the development of reading proficiency in children is perhaps the highest-ranking educational objective of legislators, administrators, teachers, parents, and the community” (p. 195). As a result, there is an interest in the role parents play in the development of proficient readers in the educational system. According to Dee Nichols et al. (2000), a parent’s role in their child’s early learning is crucial and parents need to be viewed as partners in the learning process. However, problems arise when parents are unsure of how to help their child and do not have the confidence or skills needed to help their child learn to read (Dee Nichols et al., 2000). While many schools are encouraging parents to listen to their children learn to read, many are not facilitating effective literacy partnerships. “The purpose of this study was to determine if parental training and involvement in the
teaching of selected reading lessons increases first-grade children’s reading levels.” (Dee Nichols et al., 2000, p. 196).

This study was conducted in a Grade 1 classroom in a major city in the Southeastern United States. Eight students in this classroom were identified as reading below grade level at the mid-year point. Letters discussing this study were sent to the parents of these eight students and four of these parents responded as being interested in participating in this study. The parents committed to using reading lessons prepared by the teacher for 20-30 minutes three times a week for five weeks. Each parent received training prior to beginning the reading lessons.

In order to track the progress of these four students, the teacher used a running record system that had been put in place by the district. The teacher also kept a journal and recorded the students’ progress.

The results of this study revealed that “a significant difference occurred in the amount of growth in reading levels for students receiving treatment.” (Dee Nichols et al., 2000, p. 206). When the experimental group (parents using lessons provided by the teacher) was compared to a control group (four other children reading below grade level in the classroom who did not receive any lessons at home), the experimental group improvement was twice as much as the control group over the same time period. These findings suggested “parental training and involvement in teaching reading lessons and strategies can increase first grade students’ reading levels.” (Dee Nichols et al., 2000, p. 210). The authors also discussed the fact that parents did not need to have in-depth reading training in order to help their children learn to read. Instead, they needed to be shown ways to be supportive of their children’s learning.
While this study showed that parental involvement increased their child’s reading success, there were limitations to this study. Because parents were not recorded helping their children and the lessons occurred at home, it was difficult to determine the quality of the interactions. As well, it was hard to determine if the progress made by the children would have occurred even without parent training. Finally, the results were limited due to the small number of participants in the study.

This study supported this researcher’s project by showing that parental support is an important part of a child’s education, especially in the area of literacy learning and provided support for the claim that parents should receive some training, but do not need to become experts. For the current study, the researcher hypothesized that parental training was something parents would perceive to be a key component to helping their child learn to read at home.

**Parent involvement and reading: Using curriculum-based measurement to assess the effects of paired reading**

Intervention programs can positively affect reading achievement of children who are struggling with learning to read. In their experimental study, Fiala and Sheridan (2003) studied the paired reading (PR) method. The paired reading method involved parents reading simultaneously with their child, and providing support when they are reading independently. The purpose of their study was to investigate three questions:

1. Does parent tutoring via the PR method with controlled reading material produce increased accuracy and fluency based on curriculum-based measurement probes from grade level materials?
2. Can parents implement the PR method with integrity following minimal training?
3. How do parents and children
rate the acceptability of the PR intervention, and how closely do participants
close participants following intervention? (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003, p. 615).

Fiala and Sheridan clearly stated the purpose of their study and attempted to address concerns with previous research in the area of reading.

There were three student participants in this study from an elementary school in a small, rural school district. There were two males and one female, one of which was in Grade 4 and the other two were in Grade 3. All three students had the same teacher and showed difficulties in learning to read. The reading instruction in the classroom was a combination of phonics and whole language. The child and their parent engaged in the paired reading approach for a minimum of 10 minutes four times a week for the length of the study.

The main purpose of this study was to look at the effectiveness of parents using the paired method approach in helping their child learn to read. The researchers performed curriculum-based measurement testing before starting the intervention, during the intervention, and upon completion of the intervention period. They used descriptive statistics to discuss the results of their intervention program. Faila and Sheridan also asked the parents and children to complete an Intervention Rating Profile. When the data were analyzed, the results revealed “improvements in reading performance for two of the students” (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003, p. 623). These two students had a longer intervention phase than the third student. This suggested that the length of the intervention period influenced the results. The parents rated the intervention quite positively, as did the children.
The limitations of this study included the variability of the data, which made it difficult to discern if improvements were truly made by the students during the intervention. Fiala and Sheridan acknowledged the fact that this was most likely due to the fact that there were different lengths of intervention for the three students involved in the study (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003).

The study by Fiala and Sheridan was important to this researcher in two ways. When conducting research, it will be crucial to look at the length of the intervention program and recognize that the short period of time to conduct research may affect the data collected. This study has also shown the researcher that while the researcher will not be able to control every variable affecting participants, ensuring that everyone participates the same length of time will be very important.

**Using the home environment to support emergent literacy**

Literacy learning begins in the home long before children enter into a formal school setting. Parents provide many opportunities for their children to engage in reading and writing activities from a very young age. Numerous studies have demonstrated the impact parents have on a child’s emergent literacy skills. According to Olivia Saracho (1997), “The home environment can have an especially important impact on children’s learning to read.” (Saracho, 1997, p. 201). While there have been many studies showing the importance of parent involvement in children learning to read, research continues to examine the different types of involvement and the impact of these different forms of involvement (Saracho, 1997).

If family literacy programs are going to be implemented, it is important to describe the practices happening in the home and at school. In her study, Olivia Saracho
examined the home literacy experiences of 15 families who participated in a family literacy program. The participants in her study came from a school located in a community in the southwestern part of the United States which was mainly a working class community. The participants were 15 families with children in kindergarten and five teachers of these children. These families and teachers participated in an intervention literacy parent program and agreed to attend literacy training workshops for a period of five months.

In her study, Saracho collected two principal forms of data: comprehensive observations and interviews with students, families, and teachers. Direct observations were made and interviews were videotaped and transcribed. Running records were taken and nonverbal behaviour was noted. As well, samples of children’s stories were collected, sketches were drawn of the physical environment, and photographs were taken. The data were collected in a school setting even though the literacy program was implemented in the home. This was done to give parents the opportunity to share their experiences more comfortably (Saracho, 1997).

Saracho’s study revealed that “Parents implemented what they learned in their home.” (Saracho, 1997, p. 208). During the study, it was revealed that parents used the literacy activities they had learned from the teacher. These activities fell into four categories: non-literacy resources which were non-print materials that parents used to enhance their child’s literacy experiences, literacy resources which were print materials parents used, library resources, and human resources which were opportunities children had to interact with adults or peers to enhance their reading skills (Saracho, 1997).
Saracho’s data demonstrated that this family literacy program with the 15 families was successfully implemented. The study described practices related to family literacy. Saracho (1997) stated that “It seems that parents can motivate children to acquire, develop, and use literacy. The results in this study support parents that can accept new roles to assist in their children’s literacy development” (p.215). This study provided an understanding of families and how they could use their environments and training to enhance their child’s reading skills.

This study supported this researcher’s project by providing evidence that parents can, and do want to be, partners in the literacy development of their children. It provided data that showed effective strategies and resources that can be used by parents in the home setting. Therefore, literacy programs that train parents in methods are valid because it is likely that parents are implementing the strategy effectively at home. It also showed that strategies and resources from the school setting can be instrumental in helping parents become active participants in their child’s learning to read.

**Studies Tangentially Related**

**Parental involvement in the teaching of reading: A comparison of hearing reading, paired reading, pause, prompt, praise, and direct instruction methods.**

Many researchers have concluded that family literacy programs are an effective way to help young children learn to read. There are many different ways parents can become involved in their child’s learning. According to Leach and Siddall (1990), “Since 1970, a growing number of publications have shown how parents can be guided to help their children acquire reading skills at home. Such additional help has often led to faster rates of progress than those achieved by schooling alone.” (p. 349).
In their study, David Leach and Susan Siddall investigated four different instructional methods for parents to use with their children. The purpose of their study was to find out which instructional methods brought about faster reading progress for Grade 1 students. Leach and Siddall attempted to compare the effectiveness of four different strategies parents used with their children. They compared the Paired Reading method, Pause, Prompt, Praise method and a Hearing Reading strategy. They also looked at a fourth, more complex method, Direct Instruction. Before beginning their research, Leach and Siddall hypothesized that parents using Direct Instruction would bring about the greatest reading gains for their children when compared to the three other strategies, and that the Hearing Reading strategy would be the least effective in helping children learn to read (Leach & Siddall, 1990).

This study involved parents and their children from two Grade 1 classes in two primary schools. While all parents of the children in these two classes were asked if they would like to participate in the study, only those children who were considered by their teachers to have reading difficulties were included in the experimental sample. The final sample of children included 26 boys and 14 girls. These 40 families were randomly assigned to receive training in one of the four methods (Paired Reading; Pause, Prompt, Praise; Direct Instruction; and Hearing Reading). At the beginning of the study, parent training was carried out at the school with respect to three of the four groups, with no formal training given to the Hearing Reading group. The reading sessions were then carried out by the parents in their homes for 10 weeks, 10-15 minutes per weekday.

Leach and Siddall examined the results of reading scores after the 10 weeks of reading sessions and found that the observed differences between groups were
statistically significant (Leach & Siddall, 1990). Results showed that those children receiving Direct Instruction and Paired Reading showed the most significant gains in their reading. According to Leach and Siddall (1990), “beginning readers taught by these methods achieved rates of progress in reading that were two to three times greater than rates achieved by the HR group.” (p.353).

Some limitations of this study were that it included a small sample of students (10 for each strategy). As well, the data Leach and Siddall used in their findings was strictly quantitative and did not include any observations or anecdotal notes on the reading behaviours of the children and parents involved in the study. Reading is a complex process and therefore, the representation of a child’s reading success through numbers only is limiting to the reader of the study. Another limitation of this study was the fact that the researchers do not know how well the reading program was actually implemented at home.

The importance of this study to this researcher lies in the quantitative data collected by Leach and Siddall. The data demonstrated that while all four types of parent involvement were beneficial, some types of parent involvement were more effective than others. Thus family reading programs are an effective intervention to study, and the choice of reading program chosen for the current study was influenced, in part, by the results of Leach and Siddall (1990). It also showed that investing time as a teacher into the training of parents before beginning a family literacy program was an important characteristic of an effective family literacy program.
A family literacy program connecting school and home: effects on attitude, motivation, and literacy achievement.

Morrow and Young (1997) stated, “A child’s success in school literacy programs often depends on the experiences he or she has at home: consequently, there have been many efforts to understand powerful home-school literacy connections” (p. 736). Teachers must be aware of the experiences the children in their classrooms have had before entering school as well as those that occur while they are in school. With their focus on attitude, motivation, and literacy achievement, Morrow and Young were interested in how a family literacy program could enhance these areas of a child’s education.

This study looked at a home and school-based program that was created to bring about awareness of the importance of the role parents, teachers, and the children play in the literacy development of the children. Morrow and Young stated that, “We were interested in the effects of this family literacy program on enhancing children’s achievement and motivation to read and write, as well as on parents’ and teachers’ interests and attitudes about literacy development.” (p. 736).

The participants in this study included children from two first grade classes, two second grade classes, and two third grade classes. Parents and children were randomly selected to be part of this study; however, all parents and children in these classes received either a home and school-based program or a school-based program. According to Morrow and Young, “Testing of all participants would not have been possible given the resources available for the study.” (p. 737). This study took place in an urban inner-city school where many of the children were considered “at-risk”.
The programs in this study were carried out for an entire school year. There were two programs, one was a home and school-based program and the other was a school-based program only. The purpose of the school-based program was to promote interest in reading and writing and the home and school-based program was designed to provide a collaborative effort between school and families. This study looked at both of these groups over the school year. In the school-based only program, students participated in classroom literacy centers; the teacher modeled reading and writing activities to create interest, emphasized elements of story structures, and carried out discussions about the stories being read. In the home and school-based study, there was an effort made to create collaboration between home and school. “Teachers initiated the program for home, and the home program supported what was happening in the school.” (p. 737). Teachers carried out the same activities as in the school-based program, but in addition, each parent received materials that were being used in the school program to use at home with their children. Parents were also given a parent handbook that included suggestions for parents when working with their children at home.

According to Morrow and Young (1997), “The study quite successfully revealed differences in literacy achievement on the part of the children in the family literacy program.” (p. 740). The study revealed that children read more often and were more interested in reading. Some children also showed improvement in their literacy skills (p. 471). As well, many parents reported that they had more confidence when helping their child with reading at home and were eager to help their children. “Many (parents) said they never felt they knew how to help their children but now realized how important it was that they take an active role in their literacy development.” (p. 741).
One limitation of this study was that the sample came from only one school and generalization to other types of settings was limited. It would be important if future studies were conducted, to look at different school settings and other grades. As well as this limitation, there was some difficulty getting parents to participate in the study because many parents found it difficult to take on more responsibilities. In addition, many children were from single parent homes.

This study was important as it demonstrated how a collaborative effort between parents and the school can bring about positive changes to a child’s reading attitude and achievement. Giving parents the opportunities to learn how to help their children at home and providing the resources to use can positively effective the literacy development of children.

**Participation structure impacts on parent engagement in family literacy programs**

There are many different types of programs that involve parents in the education of their child. While family literacy programs have been used by many educators to try and improve the literacy skills of their students, it has been the researcher’s experience that certain types of family literacy programs have more parent engagement than others.

In their study, Antoinette Doyle and Jing Zhang (2011) suggested that the structure of the program being presented to parents has an impact on parent involvement. According to Doyle and Zhang (2011), “participation structure does impact parents’ decisions to enroll in programs and remain in them.” (p. 232). When discussing family literacy programs, Doyle and Zhang also stated that, “Giving parents a choice of program types may be the ideal approach” (p. 232). Parental involvement is beneficial for
children in developing literacy skills, and creating a program that meets the needs of both the students and their parents will provide greater commitment to the family literacy program being offered.

In their study, Doyle and Zhang examined the relationship between participation structure and parents’ commitment to the program as well as their motivations for remaining in the program. In their study, parents of preschool children were invited to take part in an eight-week family literacy program. There were two types of programs offered, one was a parent-only model and the other was a parent-child model. In the parent-only model, parents attended meetings where they were given strategies and suggestions for working with their children at home. Parents were engaged in discussions about literacy strategies and given materials to take home. In the parent-child model, parents and children attended the program together. They participated in literacy activities such as stories, songs, and rhymes. There was a break-out time during which a facilitator worked with the parents alone while another facilitator worked with the children. In the parent-child model, time was given for the parents to work with their children on activities related to what had been discussed during that session.

The participants of this study were families with children between the ages of three and five who lived close to the schools offering these programs. The model the participants participated in depended on which model was offered at their neighborhood school. While many family literacy programs included caregivers other than the parents, in this study, it was only the parents of preschool age children that were included.

At the conclusion of the eight-week study, a discussion was held with each group of parents to discuss what motivated them to participate in the program, what their
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expectations had been of the program, and their reasons for staying in the program. There were 45 parents who participated in this discussion, 21 in the parent-only program and 24 in the parent-child program. In the parent-only program, “parents saw their role as learners as the key to achieving their goals for helping their children” (p.225). In the parent-child program, parents were motivated to come to the program because they believed it provided social and educational experiences for their children (p.225).

Through the discussions with parents, it became clear that there were certain characteristics of each program that motivated parents to commit to the program and motivated them to work with their children at home. These characteristics included having the content and expectations clearly communicated at the beginning of the program, having a clear structure during the sessions and for at home, and having take-home materials for parents to use with their children. In their findings, Doyle and Zhang also found that some parents liked the parent-only model and were uncomfortable with the parent-child model, while other parents said the opposite. Therefore, Doyle and Zhang concluded that, “the goal of program practitioners to enroll and maintain as many families as possible might best be achieved where variations in program participation structure are available as options.” (p.226).

A limitation to the study by Doyle and Zhang was that while some of the families involved in the two types of programs came from a variety of educational backgrounds and socio-economic levels, most of them came from a middle-income level and had some educational background. A further study looking at more vulnerable populations would be needed to see if the same characteristics to motivate and retain parents in a family literacy program hold true.
The study by Doyle and Zhang was important to this researcher’s study as it provided insight into some of the characteristics of a family literacy program that parents of this study found effective when working with their children on literacy skills. This provided the researcher with ideas of what to include when developing her own family literacy program. The study also provided the researcher with information about offering more than one type of family literacy program to her parents so that it would fit different families’ needs.

The research reviewed in this study has shown the importance of a family literacy program for children who are learning to read. The literature examined what characteristics were effective when implementing a family literacy program. Many of the studies reviewed showed that parental training is key when implementing a family literacy program. When parents received training on how to read with their children they were motivated to do so and children’s reading skills improved (Saracho, 1997). Many researchers have concluded that family literacy programs are an effective way to help young children learn to read (Dee Nichols et al., 2000; Fiala, & Sheridan, 2003).
Chapter Three: Procedures and Methods

Research Design

The methodological framework the researcher used for her study was Teacher Action Research. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) define action research as being “conducted by one or more individuals or groups for the purpose of solving a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice” (p. 589). The study was designed to offer the researcher information about what her parents found to be effective characteristics of her home reading program. With this information, the researcher hoped to inform her own practice and improve the reading of her students. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) also state that action research “involves the attention paid to the active involvement of the subjects in a study, as well as those likely to be affected by the study’s outcomes” (p. 13). In this study, participants were actively involved and would likely be affected by the results of this study. The researcher had been wondering about the perceived effectiveness of her home reading program for the Grade 1/2 students in her class and their parents and wanted to improve the reading skills of her students.

In October of 2011, the parents of the students in the researcher’s Grade 1/2 class were invited to attend an information evening that discussed the researcher’s family literacy program and the action research project the researcher would be implementing. See Appendix A for an agenda of the meeting. At this meeting, parents were provided with information about how they could implement a family literacy program and help their child learn to read. After the information meeting, parents and their child participated in a family literacy program set up by the researcher for a six-week period. This family literacy program was offered to all of the children in the class, even those
who had not participated in the information evening. All of the parents were sent a survey (Appendix B) at the end of the six-week study period. This survey asked the participants which characteristics of the family literacy program they perceived to be the most effective in helping their child learn to read.

Sample

The Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District #68 is located on Vancouver Island. It is located mid-island and serves the communities of Ladysmith, Nanaimo, and Lantzville. The study took place in an elementary school located centrally in Nanaimo. The school has a population of approximately 380 students in Kindergarten through Grade 7. The school has a fairly unstable population and is located in a lower income area of the city.

The target population of the study were parents of the students in the researcher’s class. The purposive sample chosen for this study were the parents of the researcher’s Grade 1/2 class in the 2011-2012 school year. The researcher’s Grade 1/2 class had 24 students, 12 boys and 12 girls. They were a challenging group with many different learning and behavior challenges. Each student was assessed before the study began to determine his or her reading level. The reading levels of the class ranged from below level 1 to level 22 using the PM Benchmark reading scale. At the beginning of Grade 1 it students are expected to be at the beginning levels and at the beginning of Grade 2 students are expected to be around level 16. This purposive sample was chosen because the responses from parents would be most likely to inform her practice at this school.
**Instrumentation**

This action research study collected both qualitative and quantitative data using a survey. A survey was selected as the data collection instrument by the researcher because it was an easy tool for parents to use, and it provided the information the researcher needed to find out what parents perceived to be the effective characteristics of the family literacy program which was implemented. A survey was able to provide the researcher with information from a sample of parents (the participants of the study) and therefore, infer what a similar population of parents (of children at the same grade level in the same school) would find to be true. The survey used in this action research study asked questions about characteristics of the family literacy program using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”.

The readings done by the researcher before this study influenced the types of questions asked on the survey. One question focused on the attitudes towards reading that the children held while reading at home with their parents. Through this question the researcher was interested in finding out if the children in her class became more interested in reading when the books they were taking home to read were at their reading level rather than books that they needed help reading. According to a study by Bauserman and Edmunds (2006), “children were motivated to read when they were given an opportunity to decide what narrative text they would like to read.” (p. 417). Thus, a question on the survey asked if parents found their child motivated to read at home when the books were ones that the children were able to choose themselves. The researcher wanted to know if her students would be more inclined to read at home if it was a book they were interested in reading as compared to one that had been chosen for them. The
researchers’ experience over her teaching career had been that children were more motivated to read in the classroom when they had some choice over the material they were reading. Another question on the survey asked about the usefulness of the information night the researcher offered to her parents before the study began. As Dee Nichols, Faires and Rickerman (2000) stated, “they (parents) need to be shown ways that they can be supportive of their child’s reading growth.” (p.211). The survey also asked three questions which asked parents to describe the experiences they had during the study when reading with their child. A child’s experiences in the home and the attitudes towards reading in the home can have a great effect on a child who is learning to read. According to Morrow and Young (1997), “A child’s success in school literacy programs often depends on the experiences he or she has at home” (p. 736).

By using a mixed-method data collection instrument, the researcher hoped to obtain clear information about what parents perceived to be effective in a family literacy program. At the end of the study, parents were invited to include any other comments they would like to make about their experience and what they perceived to be effective characteristics of a family literacy program.

**Procedures**

Before the study began, the participants were invited to attend an information night at the school led by the researcher. When parents are aware of the importance of literacy in the home and how to help their child they are more enthused and eager to participate (Morrow & Young, 1997). The participants were the parents of the Grade 1/2 students and the information night was held at the beginning of October 2011. The purpose of this information night was to give parents some suggestions and training on to
how to read with their child at home as well as provide some information about the study being conducted. The researcher discussed with parents the purpose of the study as well as how the study would be conducted. Parents were given information on the importance of family literacy for children learning to read and were given strategies they could use with their child at home. Parents were invited to ask questions during this information night and contribute to the discussion. The researcher modeled the strategies being discussed and invited parents to share experiences they had reading with their children at home.

After the information evening, the researcher began a six-week family literacy program for all the students in her class. This family literacy program was offered to all of the students in the researchers Grade 1/2 class, even if they had not attended the information evening. Each child was given a book bag and a recording sheet to take home during the six-week study. Every morning at school, each child picked out his or her own book to take home to read. These books were within two levels of their own reading level, with some books being able to be read independently and some books needing assistance from their parents. The students took the books home each night to read and were aware they would receive a new book when they returned the book they had the next day. As part of the Family Literacy Program, parents were encouraged to write down the books their child read as well as any comments they would like to make about how their child read the book. After the six-week period, a survey was sent home in the children’s planner to the participants of the study. This survey asked the participants which characteristics of the family literacy program they perceived to be the most effective for their family. By completing and returning the survey, parents gave
consent to participate in the researcher’s study. Parents were asked to complete the survey and place the completed survey in a drop box located in the office. Parents were asked to return the survey within one week of receiving it. After a week, the researcher collected the surveys that had been put in the drop box in the school office. The information gathered from the parents participating in the study was stored at Vancouver Island University in the office of Professor Rachel Moll. The data was stored for one year, after which it was destroyed. A copy of the final report was sent to all participants of the study as well as those colleagues who were interested in the study.

**Validity**

A challenge for the researcher involved in this study was her dual relationship of both researcher and teacher and having her student’s parents as participants. The researcher anticipated questions from the parents about the study and any impact it might have on their child. The researcher was open and willing to answer questions and assured parents that their child’s reading assessment would not be part of the study.

Due to the voluntary nature of the study, the information gathered by the researcher was limited, based on the limited number of participants in the study. This meant the number of surveys completed was limited. As well, because the family literacy program occurred in the home, the researcher did not know how the family literacy program was actually implemented for the six-week period. Surveys completed by participants who were part of the family literacy program but did not implement it would affect the data collected.

There were two main internal validity threats to this study. Due to the nature of this study, the first was maturation. Through this study, the researcher hoped to improve
her family literacy program and therefore, improve the reading scores of her students. Through the course of the study, the children in her class improved their reading skills with the passage of time and the instruction of reading in the classroom, which may or may not be influenced by the involvement in a family literacy program. The second internal validity threat was the attitude of the participants. The school experiences of the participants themselves and their attitudes toward the school system could have influenced their answers on the survey completed at the end of the six weeks.

The validity of the data collected was dependent on the truthfulness of the responses given by the participants on the survey. The purpose of the survey was to find what each parent perceived to be effective characteristics of a family literacy program. Therefore, the researcher did not anticipate that the parent’s would have difficulty answering the questions on the survey. This gave validity to the survey as a reliable data collection instrument. Before handing out the survey to parents, the researcher consulted with several colleagues with regard to the clarity of the questions being asked to ensure that the meaning of the question was clear to participants.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was both qualitative and quantitative. The analysis of data, along with the reviews of the literature, were used to make interpretations and conclusions in order to improve the family literacy program of the researcher. The information from the eight Likert Scale survey questions was converted to a bar graph. This organized the data for quick reference. The information from the three questions that asked parents to describe their experience was analyzed by looking for common themes. The information was then reported on as anecdotes to inform the
interpretation of the results of the action research study. All of the data analysis was included in this research paper.
Chapter 4 – Research Findings and Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

The researcher of this study identified her family literacy program as an important part of her teaching practice. In an attempt to improve her family literacy program, the researcher conducted a six week action research study to answer the following question: What do parents perceive to be the most effective characteristics of a family literacy program?

Before beginning the six-week research study, the researcher held an information evening for parents. At this evening session, parents were provided with information about the study and were shown how to read with their child at home during the six-week study. There were two parents out of 24 who attended the parent information evening. At the end of the six-week study, information was gathered from parents in a survey that was sent home. This survey provided the researcher with information on what characteristics of the family literacy program parents found to be the most effective when reading with their child at home. There were eight statements that parents agreed or disagreed with and three short answer questions on the survey sent home to parents. There were three out of 24 parents who completed the surveys and sent them back to the researcher.

Given the low survey response rate, the researcher used the recording sheets provided to parents at the beginning of the study to gauge whether the response rate was low because parents’ didn’t participate in the program or because they didn’t participate in the survey. While only three parents completed the surveys, 16 out of 24 parents participated in the six-week family literacy program as was indicated on the recording
forms sent home to track the reading of each child. The researcher found that out of the 16 parents who used the recording sheets, nine parents participated in the family literacy program at least four nights a week. This lead the researcher to conclude that 37% of the children in her class were reading at least four nights a week at home during the study. The data collected from the eight survey responses was collated and are presented in quantitative form in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Parent Survey Results Graph**

As displayed in the Parent Survey Graph (Figure 1), the characteristics parents found effective in the researcher’s family literacy program included having their child pick the books they brought home to read and having their child be able to read the books independently. Parents also indicated that having their child bring home a book everyday was effective and equally effective was the option of being able to have books for a week.
In addition, the parent participants indicated that finding time to read every night was not easy. The question regarding the information evening provided for parents resulted in neutral responses leading the researcher to question whether or not any of the survey respondents were among the parents who attended the information evening before the research study began.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative data were collected from the three short answer questions on the Parent Survey. The question asking about the strategies/ideas used from the information night was not answered by any of the three participants. This also led the researcher to question whether or not any of the participants of the survey attended the information evening provided to parents before the study began. Two of the participants commented on positive changes to their child’s reading behavior during the study. When asked the question, “Is there anything you would like to see included in a family literacy program that would increase the effectiveness of reading at home with your child?” one participant commented that, “It should be everyday for families.” This led the researcher to believe that having a book to read each night during the week would be an effective characteristic of a family literacy program for this participant. The researcher also provided a comments section on the survey for parents to discuss their experiences during the six-week family literacy program. It was the researcher’s hope that parents would comment on a more personal level about their own experiences reading with their child at home.

The following three excerpts from the Parent Surveys described the experiences of the parent participants in the survey regarding any changes in their child’s reading or reading attitude over the six-week study period:
“He became more willing to read the whole book first time asked and his expression improved.” (Participant 1)

“I sure did notice changes in my child’s reading” (Participant 2)

When asked to provide any further comments regarding their experiences during the six-week study, one parent participant responded:

“We really enjoyed that one on one time together. We used a reading chart for sounding out words as well.” (Participant 2)

Of the three parents who completed the Parent Survey, two included comments to the short answer questions and one included a personal comment regarding their experiences during the study. This data, while minimal in nature, was informative to the researcher.
Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

Summary

The purpose of this teacher action research was to explore what characteristics of a home reading program that parents of the researcher’s Grade 1/2 class perceived to be effective in helping their child learn to read at home. The research focused on the question: What do parents perceive to be effective characteristics of a home reading program? The researcher invited the Grade 1/2 parents to an information evening before the study began. At this information evening, the researcher provided information about the study she was conducting and explained the voluntary nature of the study. The researcher also provided strategies and suggestions for parents when reading with their children at home during the six-week study period. All parents were invited to attend the information evening. At the beginning of the six-week study period, an information letter was sent home to parents explaining how the home reading program would be designed over the study period. All parents were encouraged to participate, even if they did not attend the information evening.

The researcher found that the parents were supportive of the home reading program and many children were taking home books nightly to read with their parents. The researcher observed how many children were choosing new books out of the book bins in the mornings. There were no complaints about the program and occasionally a parent would comment on how much they were enjoying reading with their child at home when meeting with the researcher before and after school. As part of the six-week study, a recording sheet was sent home with the books so that parents were able to track the books their child was bringing home and comment on how their child was reading.
At the end of the six-week period, a survey was sent home to all parents of the students in the researcher’s Grade 1/2 class. The survey included two parts. The first part was comprised of eight statements regarding their experiences with the home reading program during the six-week action research study. They rated their opinions on a five-point scale. The second part of the survey had questions which gave parents the opportunity to comment on their personal experiences and ideas about the home reading program designed by the researcher. The surveys were sent home and returned to the school office within one week of the study ending. Since the response rate to the survey was low, the researcher used the recording sheet that had been sent home at the beginning of the study to gauge parents’ participation in the reading program. There were many positive comments on the recording sheet and 16 out of the 24 parents used the recording sheet consistently over the six-week study period. The information collected was valuable information in relation to answering the research question.

Discussion

While any kind of family literacy involvement is likely beneficial for children, some home literacy programs are likely more effective than others (Senechal, 2006). This study endeavored to find out which characteristics parents found most effective and therefore, increase the benefit for the children involved. The data collected was analyzed and converted to a graph format in Figure 1. There were only three surveys completed and returned as part of the study. The data collected were analyzed and due to a low response rate, were not sufficient to give a clear picture of what characteristics were found to be effective for parents in helping their child learn to read. However, the researcher did find that there were similarities between the three surveys completed and
used this data to summarize the results of her study. Two out of the three parents agreed that their child was eager to read at home when they could read their book independently. Two out of the three parents also agreed that returning books and getting a new book everyday was motivating for their child to read, especially when their child was able to choose his or her own book. This corroborates the research of Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) who found that when children are able to choose their own books to read their desire to read increases.

The data retrieved from the three open ended questions asked on the survey also provided some insight into what was effective for the parents involved in the study. One parent commented that they enjoyed the one on one time and used a reading chart for sounding out words in addition to reading the story. This parent also commented on observed changes in the child’s reading and reading attitude over the six-week study. Based on the information provided in the survey statements and the participant's comments, the researcher will continue to send home books on a nightly basis. The researcher will also continue to allow the children to pick their own books. The researcher will adjust her home reading program to include a greater selection of books for the children to choose that are within their independent reading level. This concurs with the researcher’s belief in the importance of meeting the individual needs of the children in her class and providing successful experiences with reading. According to the International Reading Association (1998), “Good teachers make instructional decisions based on their knowledge of reading and writing, current research, appropriate expectations, and their knowledge of individual children’s strengths and needs.” (p. 207).
By improving her family literacy program, the researcher hopes to improve her students’ reading scores.

Prior to the beginning of the six-week study, the researcher provided an information evening for all parents of the children in her Grade 1/2 class. This information evening was designed to explain the action research study and to provide suggestions and strategies for reading with the children at home. In her research before beginning her study, the researcher found that the most effective family literacy programs were ones in which parents were given training on how to read with their child at home. Fiala and Sheridan (2003) discussed the fact that while reading with children is very important and should not be forgotten, when parents are trained in reading procedures, the work done at home can be more effective and higher gains can be made by their children. Toomey (1993) found that in a review of over 40 studies, it was shown that when parents simply listen to their children read, those children did not show significant literacy gains, especially children in at-risk situations. By providing an information night for parents, the researcher was hoping to provide some important ideas and suggestions for parents to use before they began the six-week family literacy program. Unfortunately, there were only two out of 24 parents who attended the information evening provided by the researcher. These two parents were very receptive to the information given and there was an in depth discussion on strategies to use with their child when reading at home. At the end of the six-week study, the surveys were sent home with a statement for participants to rate a question on how effective they found the information evening. The three surveys returned all replied neutral to the statement, “The information night was beneficial in teaching me how to read with my child at home.” As
well, none of the participants answered the question, “What ideas/suggestions from the information night did you use when reading with your child?” This led the researcher to believe that the three participants in the survey did not attend the information evening at the beginning of the six-week study. Thus more data is necessary in order to assess the effectiveness of an information evening as a characteristic of a family literacy program.

The low response rate to the researcher’s survey impacted the conclusions the researcher was able to make about her family literacy program. The researcher believed that the low-response rate to the researcher’s survey occurred due to a number of factors. The researcher being new to the school and unknown by many parents may have affected parents’ willingness to complete the survey. The researcher was just beginning to develop trusting relationships with the participants and had not yet met all of the parents of the children in her class. At the time of the study there was strike action happening in the province and this may also have affected the participation rate in her study. Meet the Teacher night at the beginning of the school year had been cancelled. This is often an opportunity to meet parents for the first time. As a result, the information evening offered to parents as part of this study was the first opportunity for many parents to meet the teacher. As well, the researcher conducted this study in a low socio-economic area of the city and there was not a lot of parent involvement within the school. While the response rate to the survey was low, the researcher was able to make some conclusions about her family literacy program and begin to think about changes to increase its effectiveness for her parents.

The limited data the researcher collected from this study provided some support for other studies conducted in the area of family literacy programs. Through informal
data collection, the researcher was able to support previous research that discussed the importance of involving families in a child’s learning. The importance of involving families in a child’s learning is widely understood and the number of programs encouraging parental involvement is increasing (Barbour, 1999). Many parents commented on the recording sheets and to the researcher verbally about the excitement their children had towards reading at home during the six-week study. However, this study was unable to support other studies which found that training parents how to help their child read at home increased parental involvement and children’s reading skills. Due to the lack of participation at the researcher’s information evening, the researcher was unable to gain enough information about its effectiveness. While the data collected was limited, the researcher gained important information about her family literacy program.

**Limitations of the Study**

One of the challenges faced by the researcher was the dual relationship as a researcher and teacher. This dual role could have affected the researcher’s study in two different ways. The researcher was aware that the results may have been influenced by the fact that she was also their child’s teacher as well as the researcher of this study. The researcher also recognized the fact that she was new to the school and was in the beginning stages of developing trusting relationships with her parents when the study was taking place. The lack of relationships with the participants likely had an impact on the participation in her family literacy program.

Another limitation of the study was the low sample size (three parent participants). The researcher was disappointed by the fact that three out of 24 parents
completed the survey and participated in the study. Low participation in the research study was likely due, in part, to the lack of trusting relationship between the researcher, a new teacher at the school, and the parents. Analyzing the data was limited by the low participation and provided only a small amount of information regarding what characteristics parents find effective in a home reading program.

Another limitation faced by the researcher was the location and socio-economic situation of the school. The researcher’s class was located in a large elementary school in a low socio-economic area on Vancouver Island. There were many single parent families who worked one or two jobs as well as a number of parents who were illiterate themselves. At one point in the study, the researcher had a parent comment on the recording sheets that there were words in the book that the parent did not know how to read. The researcher also had parents comment on their difficulties learning to read as a child and that they did not like to read. Research has shown that parent attitudes towards reading have a direct influence on children’s attitudes towards reading (Saracho, 1997). The attitudes of the parents towards reading and their struggles with reading may have contributed to the low participation in the researcher’s study. The researcher was also aware that the attitudes of the parents towards reading may have influenced her student’s motivation to read at home. There was low parental involvement in many programs and activities that the researcher set up during the same school year. Low participation from parents was seen school wide. The study did not have a broad participation group from which to gather information. Therefore, generalizing information and making recommendations was difficult for the researcher.
As previously mentioned, the researcher also faced the challenge of coming into a new school in which to conduct her research. The researcher started working at the school in September and implemented the action research study at the beginning of October. The researcher considered the fact that being a new teacher and not having developed those important relationships with parents affected the study she was conducting as a key factor that impacted the response rate of the survey and attendance at the parent information evening. Without those important relationships in place yet, the researcher wondered if there was hesitation on the part of the parents to participate in a study conducted by someone they did not yet know very well. As Tschannen-Moran (2004) state, “Making parents more active partners in the educational process involves fostering trusting relationships” (p. 100).

**Suggestions for Further Research**

A further interest of the researcher is to look at the power of relationships with parents when trying to implement a family literacy program. The researcher is interested in examining the impact of trusting relationships between teacher and parents on involvement in family literacy programs. Through her masters program, the researcher has done work in the area of building trusting relationships and has learned how crucial these relationships are when working with children, their parents, and the school community. The researcher would like to explore how taking the time to build relationships with parents can increase literacy work at home. According to Tschannen-Mornan (2004), when developing a successful school experience, trust is a significant factor. Teachers need to work with parents to develop trust and encourage participation in their child’s learning. The researcher would like to offer more opportunities for
parents to come into the school to work with and observe the researcher interacting in literacy activities with their children. Through increased parent interaction with the school and through parents learning reading strategies to use at home, the researcher would like to explore if there is an increase with literacy work at home.

Another area of interest for the researcher is the effectiveness of parent training before implementing a family literacy program. The researcher was aware of studies that had explored the importance of training parents how to read with their children when trying to implement an effective family literacy program. According to Leach and Siddall (1990), “increases in rates of reading progress can be expected if parents are taught more precise instructional methods” (p. 352). The researcher would like to develop a more structured training program for parents, especially for those parents who are struggling with reading themselves. Through this training, it is the researcher’s hope that she would be able to increase the involvement in her family literacy program and the reading scores of the children in her class.

**Conclusion**

This action research study was a learning experience for the researcher. The researcher had been implementing a family literacy program for years and was very interested in improving the program she was offering in her classroom. The researcher was pleased with the participation in the family literacy program over the six-week study that was indicated on the recording sheets sent home with the books every night. The researcher was disappointed in the participation of her information evening provided for parents and with the number of surveys returned at the end of the six-week study. The low participation in these two important parts of the researcher’s program influenced the
data the researcher was able to collect and analyze. Therefore, the researcher was not able to clearly see what characteristics parents were finding effective in a home reading program. Through the readings the researcher conducted and the data informally analyzed from this study, it was clear to the researcher that implementing a family literacy program is important in the primary years to increase reading proficiency. When teachers create a program that works for parents, there will be commitment to reading at home, and in turn, will create more success for the children in school. The longer children are engaged in a home literacy program the greater the improvements and scores in their reading (Morrow & Young, 1997). Teachers need to recognize the importance of family literacy programs for children who are developing their literacy skills.

The researcher is looking at implementing changes to her family literacy program to increase the effectiveness for the children in her class and their families. She is looking at offering multiple information evenings to parents before setting up her family literacy program. She is hoping that by offering more than one meeting she will create opportunities for more parents to attend. The researcher is also looking at offering an information meeting half way through the program to provide an opportunity for parents to share their successes and struggles with reading at home. She is also looking at providing an opportunity for parents to come to school during the day to read with their child. She is hoping that this might provide an opportunity for those parents who are unable to find time in the evening to read with their child. For those parents who would be unable to attend, it would be important for their children to have another adult or older student to read with during this time.
The researcher of this action research project is looking forward to sharing her results with interested participants. She is also looking forward to using her new research skills to bring about meaningful change to her program to increase her students’ reading skills.
References


*Early literacy outcomes and parent involvement*, Florida State University Family Institute.


Appendix A: Parent Information Meeting Agenda

Parent Information Meeting –October 2011

1. Introduction of researcher and the researcher’s role during this study

2. Explanation of the purpose of the study and the study itself.

3. Explanation of the family literacy program which will be implemented this year
   - daily reading
   - children picking their own book
   - recording/comment sheet

4. Suggestions for reading with your child
   - find a set time of day which will become a routine time for reading together
     (right before bedtime is often not the best time)
   - find a spot with no distractions such as T.V. or video games
   - be supportive and encouraging, your child needs to believe they are a reader
     and be comfortable to take risks with their reading

5. Strategies for reading with your child
   - have your child point to the words on the page as they read them, we call this
     tracking in the classroom
   - before beginning the story, look at the title and go for a picture walk…what
     could this book be about?
   - Go through any vocabulary your child may not know or words they may not
     be familiar with before beginning the story
   - If your child is stuck on a word, give them a chance to figure it out. And
     remind them of their strategies
     - Look at the picture
     - Sound the word out
     - What would make sense here?
     - Give a nudge or a nod to let you know they need help
- Ask questions as your child reads about the story
- At the end of the story, ask your child to retell the story in their own words and tell what their favorite part of the story was

6. Reading activities
- Many books lend themselves to activities, these may include puppet plays, baking, going for a walk, drawing a picture, writing a different ending, reenacting the story, or working on words that appeared in the story such as word families or exceptions to our reading rules

**Story: The Very Hungry Caterpillar**

Using this story I will demonstrate a number of the suggestions and strategies I talked about here tonight.

**Questions from parents**

**Ending Thought:** Most importantly…Have fun reading with your child!!
Appendix B: Parent Survey

**Parent Survey**

**What do you perceive to be effective characteristics of a family literacy program?**

For the past six weeks, you and your child have been participating in the family literacy program that I introduced to you at the beginning of October. I hope you have found these reading experiences enjoyable and that they have helped improve your child’s reading skills.

This survey is designed to ask you questions about what you think are effective characteristics of a family literacy program. The data collected from this survey is anonymous. Please do not put your name anywhere on this survey. Please read each statement and question and select the response that best describes what you think about that particular characteristic of a family literacy program. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason. Please complete the survey within one week of receiving it and return the completed survey to the drop box in the school office. By completing and returning the survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research and for the information you provide to be used in the research results.

There are 8 statements in this survey, followed by 3 questions asking for information on how specific characteristics of the family literacy program worked for you and your child.

**Part A**

On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how effective you found the following characteristics of the family literacy program.

1= Strongly disagree  2= Disagree  3= Neutral  4= Agree  5= Strongly Agree

******************************************************************************
1. We easily found time to read every night.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. My child was eager to read when able to read the book independently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I would rather have five books to keep for a week than a new book every day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I regularly used the recording sheet and comment section to keep track of the books read and my child’s progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. My child was eager to read when needing help reading the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Choosing his/her own book to bring home to read was motivating for my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. The information night was beneficial in teaching me how to read with my child at home.
8. Returning books every day and receiving a new book was motivating for us to read each night.

Part B

Please answer the following questions:

1. What ideas/suggestions from the information night did you use when reading with your child?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Did you notice any changes in your child’s reading and/or reading attitude over the six-week study period?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Is there anything you would like to see included in a family literacy program that would increase the effectiveness of reading at home with your child?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Any additional comments on the topics in this survey would be greatly appreciated.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Please return completed surveys to the drop box in the school office.

Thank you
Appendix C

Approval from Vancouver Island Research Ethics Board

Dear Ms. Jamieson:

The Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (VIU REB) has reviewed your project entitled “Effective Parent Involvement in a Family Literacy Program,” originally submitted May 4, 2011.

I am pleased to relay that your application, as revised and re-submitted as at June 16, 2011, has been approved. I will send a Letter of Approval for your signature shortly. In the meantime, this electronic notification will suffice to commence the proposed research.

If you have a preferred mailing address for me to send the written approval or a fax number to which I can fax it, please supply. If I don’t hear from you in the next few days, I will send the approval to you in care of Rachel Moll in the VIU Faculty of Education.

Best wishes for your research!

Sincerely,

Lars Apland, on behalf of the VIU Research Ethics Board