

The Effect of Parent Involvement on Reading Comprehension
on the
Academic Achievement of Second Grade Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether second graders' reading comprehension was affected by a brief parent involvement intervention which consisted of reading together with students at home. Twenty students in a selected second grade classroom and their parents, some of whom did not speak English, comprised the convenience sample for this study. In order to identify the effects of parent involvement on reading comprehension, a parent or primary caretaker was instructed to read books on the child's reading level with each student four nights a week. Using a pre-test-post-test design, students' reading comprehension test scores were compared using a t-test for paired samples. Results indicated that the students' reading test scores did improve significantly, so the null hypothesis was rejected. Results also suggested that the intervention generally was well-received by parents and students. Future and more in depth research is recommended to identify what aspects of parent involvement have the most positive effect on diverse students' achievement in reading and in other subjects.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parent support and involvement in the education of their children is considered to be essential to student success. However, for parents living in poverty, being involved can be difficult due to the need to support their family financially, lack of knowledge about how to provide support, and difficulty participating in school sponsored events and that there may be only one parent in the home. It is important to identify and share ways that schools can assist parents in fulfilling this important obligation to their children.

Overview

Unfortunately, in 2014, 46.7 million people or 14.8% of the population of the United States were living in poverty, according to the United States Census Bureau (2014). For children, the rate was higher, with 21.1% meeting the criteria for poverty. When children live in poverty, they are at-risk for school failure and mental, behavioral, and educational difficulties (Carter, 2008). As noted, parents may be less likely to help their children when living in poverty due to their lack of knowledge, resources and time, and stresses related to working multiple jobs as well as other demands or circumstances (Carter, 2008).

At the time of this study, this researcher taught in a public Title I school at which more than 95% of the students received free and reduced priced meals (FARMS), suggesting that many of these students lived at or below the poverty line. Of the 618 students at this school, 54% were male and 46% were female. With regard to racial make-up, 38% of the students were Black/African American, 55% were Hispanic/Latino, three % were White, and two % were two or more races and two % were unaccounted for in terms of race.

After experiencing her students struggle with reading, this researcher became interested in

learning how best to help students living in poverty succeed academically, especially in reading. To reach this outcome, the researcher required her students to read each night for homework. However, many failed to do so consistently. This led the researcher to question whether and how parents were involved in helping their children with their homework and if those efforts might be improved.

This study was designed to identify how parents were involved in supporting school success at home and to determine whether a more structured intervention, in which the teacher provided books for students to read at home four nights each week, would result in increased parent involvement and make a difference in students' success at school.

Statement of Problem

This study examined whether parallel reading test scores would differ for students before and after a four-week long intervention during which students were requested to read four nights a week at home with their parents or primary caregivers.

Hypothesis

To determine whether the intervention affected students' reading scores significantly, the following null hypothesis was tested using a t-test for dependent samples.

ho: mean pre-intervention reading test score = mean post-intervention reading test score

Additionally, survey data were recorded and analyzed to determine how students and parents felt about reading and completing homework together before and after the structured home reading intervention.

Operational Definitions

The independent variable for this study was the number and type of books students read at home with their parents. During the intervention, parents and students were instructed to read two different books to each other for four nights each week. Each book was to be read on two successive nights. Prior homework habits were assessed before the intervention by sending home a survey for parents to complete. Additionally, students completed a survey to identify their interests and habits related to reading. These data were collected to identify how students felt about reading in general.

The dependent variable for the study was the students' change in performance on the reading tests, which the researcher considered might be affected by the home reading intervention. Parents' and students' feelings about reading together and completing homework during the intervention also were assessed before and after the intervention using brief surveys.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the relationship between parental involvement and reading skills of elementary students living in poverty. Section one provides an overview of what poverty entails and what characterizes at-risk students. Section two discusses parental involvement and how it relates to educational success. Within this section, there are portions that discuss the effect of being born into poverty and its role in education and parents' patterns of interaction with schools. Section three describes the concept of school readiness as well as exploring intervention programs and how parents can support their child's education at home. Section four focuses on promoting literacy and reviews two different projects to promote literacy. Additionally, it describes ways parents can encourage language development at home.

Poverty and At-Risk Learners

At-risk learners often experience many challenging situations in their lives. These challenges may include poverty and related effects such as health issues, attendance problems, and learning difficulties. Challenges also may occur for children born into the United States to foreign parents.

Poverty and At-Risk Learners

To live in poverty means to lack an acceptable amount of money or material possessions (Carter, 2008). When living in poverty, individuals generally are unable to access resources to meet their basic needs. Basic needs are what people require to survive to live an adequate life. Food and, clothing are examples of essential basic needs. If people cannot meet their basis needs, they are at risk for experiencing poor health, low education skills, and the inability to achieve satisfactory work experiences (Carter, 2008).

When children live in poverty, they are at-risk for school failure and mental, behavioral, and educational problems (Carter, 2008). Certain racial groups are more at-risk for poverty than others and poverty frequently has been described as generational. Ethnic minority groups such as Hispanics and African-Americans are more likely to be at-risk as compared to other groups of peers such as Asians and Whites (Carter, 2008). The most at-risk subgroup for poverty is single-family, female led households. “According to reports, 25% of the 38.1 million families in the United States with children under 18 are headed by single female parents (with no male spouse). Meanwhile, almost half (47%) of all single-family, female-headed households with children under 18 live in poverty” (Carter, 2008, p. 132).

According to Carter (2008), it is important to note that children born into the United States to foreign parents are more likely to be at-risk for poverty than their peers, and immigration has increased in recent years. From 1990-2005, children born in the United States to foreign parents increased by 50%. Many of these children, primarily those who are Hispanic, are born to parents without a high school diploma. These children are more likely to be at an academic risk because their parents may be unable to help them with school work. Also, because their native language usually is not English, these children generally have more difficulties in school and tend to fall behind due to limited English fluency.

Challenges for At-Risk Students in the Educational Setting

Students who are at-risk in the education setting face many challenges in their lives. In addition to educational difficulties, they also are at-risk for “health-related conditions, engagement in criminal activity, low economic productivity, and higher mortality rates” (Carter, 2008 p. 133). If students are at-risk, they are more likely to miss many days of school which results in failure to learn and engage in academic opportunities available to their peers who

attend school on a regular basis. Children from low socio-economic families are “more likely to have difficulty learning to read, compared to children in middle-income households...” (Dodici, Draper, Peterson, 2003, p.126). If students are not making academic progress they then become at-risk for grade retention. At-risk students who are not retained generally exhibit lower scores on standardized tests than their peers, and do not progress at a rate similar to their peers who are not at risk.

Parental Involvement and Educational Success

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in students’ academic success. Parent involvement often is defined as “volunteering at school, helping children with their homework, attending school functions, and visiting the child’s classroom” (Darling, Kleiman, LaRocque, 2011, p. 116). These particular tasks may be quite challenging for parents from low-income backgrounds.

Development of effective literacy skills is of major importance in children’s overall development. According to a study done by Lee (2009), “children who lived in early poverty had lower reading scores at a young age, and this negative effect on reading scores persisted throughout childhood” (p. 89-90). Lee also notes that it is important to understand that poor parents may be able to provide their children with books to read at home, but they may not be able to give them extra learning opportunities such as camp experiences and tutoring lessons that their peers who do not live in poverty receive. A lack of these experiences puts at-risk children at a disadvantage in terms of their educational progress. Lee also maintains that governmental support is needed to provide programs to help eliminate the large gaps in achievement that are created as a result of to the limited resources of poor parents.

Children who experience an emotionally and cognitively nurturing environment tend to

be more successful in school (Darling, et al. 2011). Given the importance of such an environment for children's development, identification of ways to enhance parents' support of children who are at-risk for school failure clearly is needed.

Generational Poverty

Children who are born into and grow up in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty have a very difficult time getting out of poverty. A study completed by Ainsworth in 2002 identified many factors that account for 40% of the neighborhood effect on educational achievement. He stated that "collective socialization" described as shaping the type of role models that youth are exposed to outside of the home, was the strongest influence. Ainsworth notes that Wilson (1996) identified "neighborhoods where most adults have steady jobs foster behaviors and attitudes that are conducive to success in both school and work. In neighborhoods in which many adults do not work, life can become incoherent for youth because of the lack of structuring norms modeled by working adults" (p. 119). Children living in these neighborhoods also receive fewer opportunities to better themselves compared to peers who live in wealthier neighborhoods. If children have fewer positive role models and are surrounded by negative messages, they will be less likely to learn the value of education or attain the success in school which is needed to secure a financially stable future. Ainsworth notes that when children live in neighborhoods where there are fewer adults or where adults have limited time available to give to children, children are less likely to have opportunities available to them. Additionally, children who live in poverty have fewer choices regarding how to spend their free time constructively. For example, they may not be able to participate in sports or social clubs due to limitations related to time, transportation or financial constraints. It also is important to note that when adult supervision is limited, peers become very influential in the lives of children. Ainsworth's

findings suggest that the most important factor related to student success is the presence of high status residents (people who are involved) in the neighborhood. When children are with adults who have steady jobs, who value education, and who are active members of the community, they are more likely to attain academic success.

Parents in the Classroom

Parental involvement in the classroom may be an effective way to help students succeed. Such involvement enables students to know that their parent(s) value their education and what is happening in their lives. Studies such as those reported by Bower and Griffin (2011) suggest that with increased parental involvement the achievement gap eventually can decrease over time.

There are many ways that parents can be involved with the school. Parents can volunteer on a weekly/monthly basis, communicate with teachers, assist their child with homework or attend school events. According to Bower and Griffin's research (2011), parent involvement among African American and Latino families is low compared to the involvement of families of other races. Bower conducted a study using the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement at an elementary school that had a majority of African American, Latino and high poverty students. This school lacked parental involvement which was presumed to be associated with or lead to low student achievement. The Epstein Model of Parental Involvement suggests using an array of strategies such as communication, volunteering, at-home tasks, and collaborative decision-making to encourage parent involvement. The school's parental involvement intervention included not only parents, but other family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and other caretakers. The results of the study revealed that parent involvement at this school did not increase significantly using this model, although the researcher advised that the results should be interpreted with care (Bower). Because the study involved only one school, the findings may not

be generalizable to other urban schools with similar populations. However, educators should consider the characteristics of the student population, including the race of parents. Bower and Griffin state that “Latino families tend to respect the role of the school and teacher and are therefore less likely to contact the school regarding potential problems...however, schools often view a lack of family-initiated communication as a lack of involvement rather than an act of deference” (p. 81). The authors state that The Epstein Model might not reflect how parents want to be involved in their child’s education. Therefore, when working with parents in high-minority, high-poverty schools, it is important for educators and researchers to identify effective strategies to increase home-school collaboration and foster student achievement and motivation.

School Readiness

School readiness refers to the knowledge that students need to have to enable them to be successful at school. School readiness encompasses many factors. According to Hilferty, Redmond, and Katz (2010), “The readiness for school model once narrowly focused on cognitive and verbal ability, yet has been expanded more recently to include non-cognitive skills, such as children’s ability to interact effectively in the classroom, listen with attentiveness, and follow simple instructions” (p. 64). Compared to school readiness, readiness to learn involves the child’s ability to learn and develop at each stage of life. Hilferty et al. explain that school readiness is crucial for academic achievement in the later years. When children enter school significantly behind their peers, the achievement gap is likely to widen rather than close as students fall further and further behind their peers. In 2008, Engle and Black noted that “Between 30 and 40% of children entering kindergarten in the United States are estimated to not be ready for school” (p. 2). Engle et al explains that children falling into this category tend to come from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Evidence from the National Institute of Child

Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (2005) suggests that when children live in disadvantaged families, they are more likely to experience academic failures, behavior problems, and low cognitive performance add cited in Engle et al. When children come from poor families, they are less likely to be able to read compared to children who do not come from poor families. In particular, “In the United States, fewer than half of low income preschoolers are read to on a daily basis, compared with 61% in families above the poverty line” (Engle et al, p. 4).

Intervention Programs

Early intervention programs that focus on socially disadvantaged families and use strategies that involve both the parent and the child have been successful. Hilferty et al. (2010) state that intervention programs should “enhance vulnerable children’s school-related achievement and behavior” because it is most beneficial at the beginning of the primary school years (p. 67). These researchers further state that early intervention programs also need to be intensive and teach important cognitive and language concepts. While early intervention programs are beneficial, they cannot alone achieve long-term success. Providing school-based programs should be the next step to help children grow and achieve success. Schools serving children in poverty may receive additional funding such as that offered through Title 1 to purchase supplemental learning materials and provide additional support. These resources also may be used to fund extra teachers to reduce class size and provide more intervention programs. Such funding is intended to reduce the achievement gap in student learning and to improve numeracy and literacy skills (Hilferty et al. 2010).

Parent Involvement at Home

While schools and early intervention programs can help students of poverty achieve

success, parents need to be involved to promote a positive view of learning and ensure that their children are completing work at home. “Being read to in the first few years of life contributes to the development of phonemic awareness and comprehension skills” (Engle, 2008, p.4). As stated earlier, parental support and involvement in school varies across racial, ethnic and social economic status (SES) categories. Researchers such as Dodici (2003) assert that it should become a school priority to assist parents to interact with their child and be aware of what is happening in their education. For example, teachers can send home high-frequency word cards to practice with their children, invite parents into the classroom to see what their child is learning, and send home weekly or monthly newsletters to keep the parents informed and involved in the school setting. Parents also can read nightly to their child and engage in speaking activities with their child starting at a very young age. “Understanding how everyday interactions of parents with their infants and toddlers may influence early literacy skills, and possibly later school success, is critical, especially for parents from low-income households” (Dodici et al. p.134). Children learn from participating in and observing their parents’ every day social interactions.

Promoting Literacy

Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate lower levels of school readiness as compared to peers of higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Educators can do much to enhance literacy-related skills of children living in poverty. Descriptions of several such efforts follow.

Kids in Transition Program

One program that was developed to assist children in poverty is called The Kids in Transition to School (KITS) Program. This program was developed to “increase early literacy, social, and self-regulatory skills among children with inadequate school readiness” (Pears,

Healey, Fisher, Braun, Gill, Conte, Ticer, 2014, p. 431). A study was conducted including 39 different families from disadvantaged neighborhoods to examine the feasibility and impact of the program. After the study was completed, “children who received the intervention demonstrated significantly greater improvements in letter naming, initial sound fluency, and understanding of concepts about print than their peers who did not participate in the intervention...” (Pears et al. p. 431-432). This study suggests that a brief, attentive intervention focused on school readiness may help children gain critical skills needed to succeed in reading and school.

Emergent Literacy Project

Another intervention used by schools to help students of low socioeconomic backgrounds enhance emergent literacy skills is a classroom-based approach called The Stony Brook Emergent Literacy Project. Included in this project are teacher training, classroom-based activities, and teacher-evaluated performances. “Research on emergent literacy has identified a set of skills that are strong predictors of later formal literacy development” (Masseti, 2009, p. 555). The findings of this study suggest that targeting emergent literacy skills is essential and more effective than traditional methods of teaching. “On letter recognition, a skill considered highly predictive of reading performance in later grade school years, children in the Literacy Project group identified on average 2 out of 12 letters in the fall and 7 out of 12 in the spring. Children who were not in the Literacy Project group identified 3 out of 12 letters in the fall and 4 out of 12 in the spring” (Masseti, p. 564). These data suggest that early intervention and explicit teaching can promote aspects of literacy achievement.

Four Blocks Framework

The Four Blocks Framework is a system that was introduced in 1989 in a first grade classroom and since that time has been expanded to lower and higher grades (Cunningham,

2006). It consists of a word block that focuses on sight words, fluency and spelling; a guided reading block that concentrates on comprehension strategies for fiction and informational text; a writing block that includes focus and process writing, as well as a self-selected reading block that involves a teacher read-aloud and independent readings (Cunningham, 2006). Cunningham, 2006 states that many factors come into play when using the Four Blocks Framework and all factors should be included. The primary focus should be on “instruction, real reading and writing, student engagement, and perseverance in implementing a strong instructional framework” (p. 385).

Promoting Language

While it is extremely important for schools to promote and support literacy, parents need to be involved in supporting their child’s development of literacy skills. “Children from low income families are less likely to have conversations with adults and are exposed to fewer words than children from families with high socioeconomic backgrounds” (Dodici et al., 2003, p.125). A study completed in 2003 and reported by Dodici examined the relationship between parent-infant/toddler interactions and early literacy skills of children living in low-income households. The findings of the study suggest that parents should interact with their infant and toddler by using appropriate language, positive or negative comments with suitable tone, parental guidance and parental responsiveness. Results from the study also suggest that interventions designed to focus on parent-child interactions could be implemented during that time. These interactions could be supplemented with school interventions (Dodici et al., 2003).

Summary

It is well accepted that parental involvement can influence children’s reading skill development (Engle & Black, 2008). Children living in poverty begin school and early literacy

development at a disadvantage compared to their peers who do not live in poverty. They are at risk for school failure, behavior problems, and grade-level retention as well as future consequences of these factors (Ainsworth, 2002).

While there are many programs that schools can implement to improve literacy and collaboration with parents, it is important that parents begin working with the child to help close the achievement gap (Pears et al, 2014; Massetti, 2012). Sometimes there are barriers to parent involvement such as limited time, language differences, and financial or other stressors on the parents who may be adjusting to a new culture. Schools and educational professionals can help address student needs when parents are not able to provide a stimulating environment on their own and implement feasible ways for parents to stay informed and promote learning at school (Bower and Griffin, 2011).

Parents need to support their children's readiness to learn and succeed in school. Ways in which they can do this include daily interactions with their child, creating a positive learning environment, and being attentive to and present in their children's educational experiences (Dodici et al, 2003). Bridging the gap between the achievement of students in poverty and those who are not is a challenging task but there are many ways schools and parents can collaborate to support student success.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study was designed to identify how parents were involved in supporting school success at home and to determine whether a more structured intervention, in which the teacher provided books for students to read at home four nights each week, would result in increased parent involvement and make a difference in students' success at school. The study examined whether parallel reading test scores would differ for students before and after they participated in the intervention.

Design

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design and reading test scores for the group were compared using a dependent t-test for paired samples. The independent variable for this study was assignment of books to students to read at home with parents. The dependent variable was the change in performance on the reading tests, which the researcher considered might be affected by the home reading intervention. Supplemental surveys also were administered to assess students' and parents' reading and homework habits at home and their perceptions of the intervention.

Participants

The study took place at a public, Title 1 school in Maryland for students enrolled in prekindergarten through grade five. Twenty students in the researcher's second grade class participated in the intervention. Of these, nine or 45% were male and 11 or 55% were female. In terms of racial composition, 40% were Black/African American, 55% were Hispanic/Latino, 0% were White, and one child (5%) identified with two or more races.

Instruments

The instruments used for this action research study included reading tests and pre and post-intervention versions of parent and student surveys. Students' reading success was assessed before and after the intervention using unit comprehension tests at the second grade level from Macmillan/McGraw-Hill *Treasure's Reading Program*. These tests were parallel in content and consisted of reading passages and comprehension questions. The tests consisted of eleven questions; nine of which were multiple choice and two of which were short response. A copy of one of the tests is included in Appendix G.

The parent and student surveys were developed by the researcher. The parent surveys were designed to identify how often parents read with their child and whether and how they assisted their child with homework. The student surveys assessed their reading and homework habits and their feelings about reading, as well as their interactions with their parents regarding homework. Both versions of each survey were similar and contained Likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended questions to assess the respondents' reading and homework habits and to determine whether those changed over the course of the study. Copies of the surveys are included in Appendices B-E.

Procedure

Along with a letter introducing the study (Appendix A), parents were sent and asked to complete a pre-intervention survey assessing their perceptions related to supporting their child's reading at home (Appendix B). Students' reading habits and preferences also were assessed with a survey before the intervention (Appendix D). All students completed a second grade level reading comprehension test before the intervention which consisted of a reading passage and 11 comprehension questions in the form of multiple choice and short response items.

For the intervention, students received two different books each week to read at home with their parents. They also practiced answering questions regarding the books they read at home which were similar in format to those on the pre- and post-tests. The books assigned were on each student's individual reading level to avoid frustration. Their reading levels were based upon their Fountas and Pinnell reading levels (Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S., 2007) which were determined in January, 2016. Students and parents were advised to read the first book for two consecutive nights and the second book for the next two consecutive nights. Students could read to their parents, but parents could also read to their child and then have their child read the book to them afterwards. Parents were-instructed to ask the questions found in the back of the book to their child in order to assist in their comprehension of the book. During the weekends of the study, students were instructed to read any books they had at home.

At the end of the four weeks of the study, students took a post-test on the second grade level that paralleled the *Treasures Reading Program* pre-test they had completed. The post-test consisted of two similar passages to read and 11 comprehension questions to answer.

A second parent survey, found in Appendix C, was administered after the four week intervention and replies to parallel items were compared to identify changes in parents' reading with their child and choices of school-related support activities. Their feelings about the intervention also were assessed.

Students also completed a post survey, found in Appendix E, to determine whether their parents read with them four nights each a week and whether their parents helped them with homework. This survey also assessed students' views of the structured home reading intervention.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether parallel reading test scores would differ before and after students were requested to read four nights a week at home with parents for a period of four weeks. Surveys also were completed to determine how the student and parent participants felt about reading, homework, and the intervention. Summaries of data regarding the intervention follow.

Reading Intervention

Students were asked to read at home with a parent figure four nights per week for four weeks. The mean number of days read by each student was 13.65 out of 16 assigned evenings. The range reported was from 8-16 nights and the standard deviation was 2.93 days. Two parents reported reading eight times, one read nine times, six read 12 times and 11 reported reading 16 times, so all participated at least half of the nights assigned, but most did more often.

Reading Scores

To test the main hypothesis, that the reading scores would differ after the at home reading intervention, descriptive statistics for the pre and post intervention reading test scores were computed. Then a t-test for paired samples was run to compare the pre and post intervention reading test scores. Descriptive statistics follow in Table 1. The maximum score possible on both of the parallel tests was 11.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Pre and Post Intervention Reading Test Scores

Test	Mean	N	s.d.	SEM
Pre Intervention	5.75	20	2.593	.579
Post Intervention	8.4	20	1.875	.419

The results of the t-test for paired samples follow in Table 2 and indicated that the mean difference of 2.65 between the mean pretest score of 5.75 and the mean post test score of 8.4 was statistically significant ($t = 7.919, p < .00$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 2

Results of Paired Samples T-test Comparing Pre and Post Intervention Reading Scores

T	df	Mean difference	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence interval of the difference	Significance (p)
7.919	19	2.65	1.496	.335	1.950-3.350	.00

Survey data

Parent responses

Parents were asked to describe their habits related to reading with and helping their children with homework on two surveys which contained several parallel items. As noted, one was administered before and one after the four-week home reading intervention.

Item one on the pre-intervention survey asked responding parents whether they helped their child with homework. Seventeen out of 20 said yes, they did, and three said no. On the post

intervention survey, 19 said yes to this item and one said no.

Items labeled 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 11 on the initial survey were also asked on the post intervention survey and had quantitative responses which allowed for comparison of the responding parents' pre and post responses. Descriptive statistics of each of these parallel items' responses follow in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Parallel Pre and Post Intervention Parent Survey Items

Item	mean	N	s.d.	SEM
2. How many nights a week do/did you help (your child with homework)?				
Pre	3.34	17	1.03	.250
Post	3.41	17	.712	.173
3. How many nights a week do/did you read with your child?				
Pre	3.56	18	1.381	.326
Post	3.94	18	1.161	.278
1. How many minutes per night do/did you read with your child on nights you read?				
Pre	17.89	19	8.21	1.885
Post	16.31	19	7.42	1.703
6. Does/did your child read to you?				
Pre	1.50	20	.513	.114
Post	1.15	20	.366	.082
7. When reading together, what percent of the time does/did your child read to you?				
Pre	50.29	17	22.183	5.38
Post	43.82	17	21.832	5.29

10. Do/did you enjoy reading with your child?				
Pre	1.70	20	.470	.105
Post	1.85	20	.366	.082
11. Does/did your child enjoy reading with you?				
Pre	1.65	20	.489	.109
Post	1.8	20	.410	.092

The t-tests for dependent (paired) samples were then run to compare the mean parent responses to the items above on the pre and post parent surveys. Results follow in Table 4 and indicated that only the mean pre and post intervention responses for item 6 differed statistically significantly ($t = 2.33, p < .031$). That item asked, “Does/did your child read to you?” and the result was based on comparing the pre and post intervention responses which ranged from never (0) to sometimes (1) to often (2). The results (mean difference pre-post= .35) indicated the children read less (but still slightly more than sometimes) to parents after the intervention.

Student Reading Habits

Where Students and Parents Read

Item 6 on the pre survey and item 2 on the post survey were open-ended and asked where parents and students read together. A tally of responses to each follows in Table 4. The bedroom was the modal response on both surveys and two additional locations were listed on the post-intervention survey as compared to the pre-intervention survey, including the tub and closet.

Table 4

Where Students Read with Parents

Student Survey		
-----------------------	--	--

Item 6 pre intervention/Item 2 post intervention		
Where do you read with your parent?	Pre	Post
Bedroom	10	13
Living room	6	3
Kitchen	2	2
Home	1	
Tub		1
Closet		1
No response	1	1

Tallies of items reflecting student likes and preferences regarding reading (items 2,3, 9 and 10) were also computed and follow in Table 5.

Table 5

Tally of Student Reading Preferences: Pre Intervention Survey Items 2, 3, 9 and 10

Student Survey	Response Options		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
2. I like when someone reads to me.	1	8	11
3. I like to read to someone.	4	9	7
	Happy	Funny	Sad
9. I like to read stories that are:	3	16	1
	Real	Make-Believe	
10. I like to read stories that are:	4	16	

Table 6

Results of Paired Samples t-test Comparing Pre and Post Parent Survey Responses to Parallel

Items

Item	Mean	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence interval of the difference	t	df	Significance (p)
2	-.18	1.07	.261	-.729-.376	-.677	16	.508
3	-.39	1.61	.380	-1.191-.414	-1.022	17	.321
4	1.58	8.002	1.835	-2.278-5.436	.860	18	.401
6	.35	.671	.150	.036-.664	2.33	19	.031
7	6.47	26.854	6.513	-7.336-20.278	.993	16	.335
10	-.15	.489	.109	-.379-.079	-1.371	19	.186
11	-.15	.587	.131	-.425-.125	-1.143	19	.267

Reading Preferences

A multiple choice item, which provided an option to cite other responses which were not provided, asked parents to report what type of books they read at home with their child. A table follows which lists the frequency with which each type was cited on both the pre and post intervention surveys.

Table 7

Parent Reports of Type of Reading Done (Item 5 Pre and Post Intervention Surveys)

Genre Read	Frequency chosen
------------	------------------

	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Fiction	11	12
Non fiction	4	5
Comics	8	8
Sports	2	2
Bible	2	1
Other	3	1 (“stories”)

Both versions of the parent surveys had two parallel items, numbers eight and nine, which asked about parents’ questioning of children while reading and library use. A tally of responses to the survey questions follow in Table 8. The results suggest questioning children about reading did increase some from before to after the intervention. Given the different response options on the two surveys, the change in library use was not clear.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Items 8 and 9

Item	Frequency chosen				
	Pre Intervention Rated 0=never, 1=sometimes, 2=often			Post Intervention Rated 1=yes, 0=no	
	Never	Sometimes	Often	No	Yes
8. Do/did you ask your child questions after reading?	1	12	7	0	20
9. Do/did you check out books from the library?	6	12	2	15	5

Student Responses

Student perceptions of Reading and Homework

Responses to the students’ pre intervention survey item 1 were tallied and descriptive statistics were computed for student pre-intervention survey items 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and the five parallel items which corresponded with those items from the post survey, items 1, 4, 3, 5 and 6. These summaries follow in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

Tally of Responses to Student Pre Survey Item 1

Item	Frequency		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Item 1: Student pre intervention survey			
I like to read books	0	12	8

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of Parallel Pre and Post Intervention Student Survey Items

Item	mean	N	s.d.	SEM
4/1. My parents read with me.				
Pre	1.158	19	.602	.138
Post	.737	19	.733	.168
5/4. My parents ask me questions after reading.				
Pre	.895	19	.875	.201
Post	1.263	19	.805	.185
7/3. I read at least one book every night.				
Pre <i>Rated yes or no</i>	1.579	19	.607	.139

Post	<i>Rated never sometimes often</i>	1.000	19	.000	.000
8/5. I check out books from the library.					
	Pre	.632	19	.597	.137
	Post	.421	19	.692	.159
9/6. My parents help me with my homework.					
	Pre	1.474	19	.697	.160
	Post	1.211	19	.631	.145

Results of t-tests for paired sample which compared the mean responses for the matched items above follow in Table 11. The t-test results indicated that the children’s responses differed significantly on only one item, which was “I read at least one book every night”. This was item 7 on the pre-intervention survey and item 3 on the post-intervention survey. However, this difference should be interpreted with caution as the pre-intervention rating options ranged from 0 (never) to 2 (often) whereas the post-test rating options were dichotomous and ranged only from 0 (no) or 1 (yes).

Table 11

Results of T-tests Comparing Means of Parallel Pre and Post Intervention

Student Survey Items

Item (pre/post)	Mean (pre- post)	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence interval of the difference	t	df	Significance (p)
--------------------	------------------------	------	-----	--	---	----	------------------

4/1	.421	.901	.207	-.014-.856	2.036	18	.057
5/4	-.368	1.164	.267	-.930-.193	-1.379	18	.185
7/3	.579	.607	.139	.286-.871	4.158	18	.001
8/5	.211	.631	.145	-.093-.516	1.455	18	.163
9/6	.263	.733	.168	-.090-.617	1.564	18	.135

Finally, responses to items 7 and 8 on the post-intervention survey were tallied to reflect how the students felt about the intervention and its effect on homework and reading. Those totals follow in Table 12. Student responses indicated more of them felt the project made homework and reading better, easier and fun than felt it made them worse, harder or more boring.

Table 12

Tally of How the Intervention Affected Homework and Reading

Survey Item	Frequency					
	Worse	Better	Harder	Easier	Boring	Fun
7. I think this project made homework:	5	15	6	14	2	18
8. I think this project made my reading:	1	19	4	16	2	18

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether parallel reading test scores would differ before and after students were requested to read four nights a week at home with parents

for a period of four weeks. Surveys were completed to determine how the student and parent participants felt about reading, homework, and the intervention.

Results of the study supported the hypothesis that reading scores would differ after parent involvement in an at home reading intervention. The null hypothesis that the pre and post intervention reading scores would not differ was rejected, as the mean post-intervention reading test score was significantly higher than the mean pre-intervention test score. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution as confounding variables or maturation could have influenced the results and no control groups were included as part of the study.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study indicated that reading comprehension test scores increased after students read and were questioned about the readings for four nights a week for four weeks with their parents. Based on these results and the researcher/teacher's observations, the students appeared to increase their stamina for reading and improved their comprehension skills.

Overall, students who participated in the intervention appeared to benefit from and enjoy it. From among the 20 students who were involved in the study, 15 students responded that the intervention made their homework better and 18 students stated the intervention made their homework fun. Nineteen stated their reading was made better due to the intervention. Most (18) students also thought reading the books for the intervention was fun.

Based on these findings, it appears that structured and regular parent support of reading at home could result in improved enjoyment of reading and homework and reading comprehension. However, it is important to consider the threats to validity of the study, discussed below.

Threats to Validity

Several factors posed threats to the validity of this study. Among these threats were factors such as honesty on the parent surveys, the duration of the intervention, and the language spoken by parents.

All students in the class were part of the study; however, it is not clear if all students or parents were completely candid when answering the questions on the pre and post surveys. Some survey items were not answered, resulting in incomplete information. While completing the pre-surveys, parents may have overestimated how much they usually help their child with homework or for how long they read each night in order to meet what they felt was expected. These threats to validity could have resulted in inaccurate data which could compromise the validity of conclusions about the effect of the parent involvement intervention.

The study was only four weeks long. Although the students' post-test results reflected gains in comprehension, a longer, more thorough study would be needed to determine if a larger range of growth might occur and to clarify which skills can be improved with specific types of home interventions/questioning methods. Additionally it is important to consider that students only were required to read for 20 minutes, four nights a week. Longer at home reading sessions and/or a longer intervention period may have yielded different results and affected feelings about the intervention either positively or negatively.

Assessment of parents' and students' feelings about the intervention indicated that while many parents stated the assignment was not a major change compared to what they already were doing, it increased how often they read to their child. Parents also indicated that they now plan to ask their child questions after reading.

It is important to note that among the parents who participated in the study, 10 did not

speak English. The survey was translated for them so that they could participate. Families with Spanish-speaking parents were given the same directions as those parents who spoke English. The students whose parents spoke Spanish still were required to read orally to their parents, but the Spanish-speaking parents were required only to listen to them read. Given their limited English reading abilities, these parents likely were unable to ask their child the comprehension questions found in the back of the book or read the books aloud to their child, as those books were not translated. The children who were not read to at home were unable to hear how the book should sound, which may have had a negative effect on their progress in their reading as compared to the progress of their peers whose parents read to them.

Comparison to Findings in Previous Research

Many strategies and interventions to improve students' reading comprehension have been implemented and evaluated in schools throughout the nation. Parent involvement and its relationship to students' success in reading also has been on the forefront of research. A review of the literature suggests parent involvement and reading success are related.

Reglin and Cameron's 2012 study of 60 seventh graders focused on the effectiveness of a parent support intervention to improve students' reading scores. In their study, the experimental group had failed an end of grade reading test and the controls had passed it in 2009-2010. Parents of students in the experimental group participated in the parent reading support workshops two days a week for 36 hours over 12 weeks and also were expected to help their child with reading homework for one hour a night. After the intervention, results suggested that the experimental group of students increased their reading comprehension scores. The authors concluded that "Although parent involvement has the greatest effect on reading in the early years, its importance to children's reading and literacy outcomes continues

into the middle school years and even adult years” (p. 12). The present study supports these findings even though there were some differences in how the studies were conducted, including students’ ages and the duration of the study and the particular parent support activities. Parents in the current study were not involved in parent workshops, but were instructed to help their child with homework and read to and with their child four nights a week and were given structured books and questions with which to do so.

Pears et. al. (2014) conducted a study of 39 families from disadvantaged neighborhoods to determine if promoting early literacy had an effect on young children’s academic progress. Findings indicated that children who participated in the study had more advanced concepts of print and letter naming than children who did not participate. This study suggests that early intervention and parent involvement can support students’ skill development. The findings of the study reported by Pears et. al. align with those of the present study in suggesting that parent involvement can result in improved academic skills among students.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of the researcher’s study lend support to the concept that parent involvement may enhance the reading success of students. Because this study was completed without a control group, the researcher was unable to determine with certainty if the results were caused by the intervention. In future studies, use of a true experimental design using random assignment of participants to experimental and control groups would be better able to determine whether the actual intervention caused the changes observed.

Another implication for future research that appears to be warranted based on past studies is to involve parents earlier in the education of their child. Teachers need to work collaboratively with parents to achieve the greatest amount of success of which each child is

capable. The findings of the researcher's study also suggest that students' reading and home-school relationships might improve if teachers encourage family involvement throughout the year and across grades. Schools might encourage parent involvement by hosting workshops, such as those described above. Building on this study, future studies could focus on what methods of involvement are best received and most effective in what subject areas and with which particular students or families.

Additionally, future studies with English Language Learners might control for the effect of who reads (the parent or child) by assigning books and questions to ask students in the parents' native language for them to share with children, presuming the children speak that language. If children do not speak the parents' language, researchers might provide audio recordings of the books and questions in English for the children to listen to so they receive a listening experience comparable to peers whose parents read to them in English.

Counterbalancing the study so that participants systematically are directed to read or be read to for determined amounts of time might help to determine what type of reading assignments at home are most beneficial.

It is possible that had the students been given a greater length of time to read and practice comprehension questions with their parents, the results may have differed. Possibly, the intervention would have reflected more growth in achievement, but it also could have become monotonous or resulted in less reading as the novelty of the intervention gradually subsided.

Conclusion

This study was completed to determine the effect of parent involvement on students' reading achievement. The results of the current study support the findings of the Reglin-Cameron study

(2012), as the results of both studies suggest that students who receive support and involvement at home from their parents have higher reading comprehension scores than those of their peers without such support. Based on these findings of this study, further research that would continue to identify factors that make parent support programs effective is recommended. Results of such studies could be helpful for educators as they strive to improve home-school collaboration and increase student achievement in a variety of subjects.

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Appendix A

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

I am interested in determining how parent involvement and reading at home can impact children's reading. As part of a graduate course in which I am enrolled, I would like to conduct a simple study to test an intervention I believe may be helpful to students. In order to help me do this, I am asking that you fill out the survey attached to this letter as honestly as possible and return it to me by February 26, 2016. Then, for the next four weeks, I will be sending home two books on your child's reading level. Please read one book for two nights (Monday and Tuesday) and the other book for two more nights (Wednesday and Thursday).

I will send directions home with the books each week and ask you to check off on a simple chart on the days you read with your child. When reading with your child, you can read the book first to your child so they can hear how the story is supposed to sound (read fluently) or you can allow your child to read the book out loud to you. You should assist them when they come to a word they do not know. After your child finishes reading the book, ask questions pertaining to what they just read. If the story is fiction, some examples of questions are "who are the characters in the story, where does the story take place, what was the problem in the story, and how was the problem solved?" You could also ask your child to retell the story from beginning to end. If the text read was non-fiction, you might ask your child to identify the main idea and details of the story or the text features in the book. Questions and extension activities are also provided in the back of each book. Please use these suggestions to guide your discussion with your child. Conversation plays a large role in the development of comprehension.

After four weeks, I will be sending home another survey to find out how you felt about the impact of this project on your child's reading. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Ms. Stone

APPENDIX B

Parent Survey (pre-intervention)

Please complete this survey. Be honest in your responses. This survey will be used to gauge parent involvement.

1. Do you help your child with homework? **Yes or No**

2. If so, how many nights a week do you help? **1 2 3 4**

3. How many nights a week do you read with your child? **1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

4. On average, how many minutes per night do you read with your child on nights you read? _____

5. What type of books do you read at home with your child? Circle all that apply.
Fiction Nonfiction Sports Comics Another type of book: _____

6. Does your child read to you? **Never Sometimes Often**

7. When reading together, what percent of the time does your child read to you? _____

8. Do you ask your child questions after reading? **Never Sometimes Often**

9. Do you check out books from the library? **Never Sometimes Often**

10. Do you enjoy reading with your child? **Never Sometimes Often**

11. Does your child enjoy reading with you? **Never Sometimes Often**
 - a. How can you tell? _____

12. Please explain what type of activities you do with your child at home to encourage learning. Why do you choose these activities?

13. Are there activities you do not do with your child? What are they and why don't you do these activities?

APPENDIX C

Parent Survey (post-intervention)

Please complete this survey. Be honest in your responses. This survey will be used to gauge parent involvement.

1. Did you help your child with homework in the past four weeks? **Yes or No**
2. If so, how many nights a week did you help? **1 2 3 4**
3. How many nights a week did you read with your child? **1 2 3 4 5 6 7**
4. On average, how many minutes per night did you read with your child on nights you read? _____
5. What type of books did you read at home? Circle all that apply.
Fiction Nonfiction Sports Comics Another type of book: _____
6. Did your child read to you? **Never Sometimes Often**
7. When reading together, what percent of the time did your child read to you? _____
8. Did you ask your child questions after reading? **Yes or No**
9. Did you check out books from the library? **Yes or No**
10. Did you enjoy reading with your child? **Never Sometimes Often**
11. Did your child enjoy reading with you? **Never Sometimes Often**
 - a. How could you tell? _____
12. Please explain what type of activities you did with your child at home to encourage learning.
Why did you choose these activities?

13. Was the assignment to listen to your child read 4 nights a week a change from the usual reading or homework support you provide? If so, please state how?

APPENDIX D

Student Pre-Reading Survey

I want to know about your current reading habits and favorite genres to understand your needs as a reader. Circle your answers.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. I like to read books. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 2. I like when someone reads to me. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 3. I like to read to someone. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 4. My parents read with me. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 5. My parents ask me questions after reading. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 6. Where do you read with your parent? | _____ |
| 7. I read at least one book every night. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 8. I check out books from the library. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 9. My parents help me with my homework. | Never Sometimes Often |
| 10. I like to read stories that are: | Happy Funny Sad |
| 11. I like to read stories that are: | Real Make-believe |
| 12. What is the name of your favorite book? | _____ |

APPENDIX E

Student Post-Reading Survey

I want to know how you feel about reading with your parents for the past four weeks.
Please circle your answers.

1. Did your parent read to you? **Never Sometimes Often**
2. Where did you read with your parent? _____
3. I read at least one book every night. **Yes or No**
4. Did your parents ask you questions about the books you read? **Never Sometimes Often**
5. I checked out books from the library during this project. **Never Sometimes Often**
6. My parent(s) helped me with my homework during this project. **Never Sometimes Often**
7. I think this project made homework: (circle one of each and say why you picked the answer you did)

Worse Better Why? _____

Harder Easier Why? _____

Boring Fun Why? _____

8. I think this project made my reading:

Worse Better Why? _____

Harder Easier Why? _____

Boring Fun Why? _____

APPENDIX F

Chart to Track Days that Parents Worked with Child

Parents,

Each week, you will receive a chart that looks like this and two new books to read to and with your child. Please place a check mark in the box indicating that you helped your child with homework and read to/with your child. Thank you for your cooperation and involvement!

Ms. Stone

	Week 1
Day 1	
Date:	
Day 2	
Date:	
Day 3	
Date:	
Day 4	
Date:	

	Week 2
Day 1	
Date:	
Day 2	
Date:	
Day 3	
Date:	
Day 4	
Date:	

	Week 3
Day 1	
Date:	
Day 2	
Date:	
Day 3	
Date:	
Day 4	
Date:	

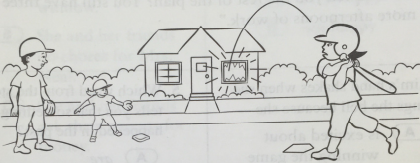
	Week 4
Day 1	
Date:	
Day 2	
Date:	
Day 3	
Date:	
Day 4	
Date:	

APPENDIX G

Treasure's Unit 2 Assessment - Comprehension

DIRECTIONS
Read each selection. Then read each question that follows that selection. Decide which is the best answer to each question. Mark the space for the answer you have chosen. Write your answers to questions 8 and 14.

Kim's Good Idea



1 Kim had never hit a beautiful fly ball like this one! It sailed up and went right out of the playing field. Then came the awful sound of breaking glass. The ball had gone right through Mrs. Neal's front window!

2 "Let's get out of here!" shouted Lola as she grabbed her jacket.

ERROR: ioerror
OFFENDING COMMAND: image

STACK: