EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A FIRST GRADE TEACHER'S AND FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

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EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A FIRST GRADE TEACHER'S AND FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

Emergent literacy values early literacy development through social interaction and experience from birth until a child reaches the developmental level at which time they are reading (Teale, 1986; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Hence, early literacy development occurs in environments other than schools such as homes and communities. Building relationships with both families and teachers is essential in providing a well-rounded education. Epstein (2011) states “with the lack of partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child” (p. 5). To better understand the teacher and families’ experiences regarding first graders’ early literacy development using a socio-cultural lens, the primary question that guided this case study was: What is an early childhood teacher’s and families' experiences with first graders' home and school literacies practices? With multiple data sources, I gained insight on the significance of an early childhood teacher and families and their involvement in a first grader’s early literacy development. The findings of the study showed a disconnect between the first grade teacher’s theoretical belief and instructional practices. Regarding the families, the data revealed families’ various engaging and meaningful multiliteracies events occurring within the home environment. However, the communication between the teacher and the families was one sided and focused more on school literacies. The teacher and families were not collaborating effectively to form a partnership.

Keywords: Early literacy development; Emergent literacy; Partnerships

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the United States and countries around the world, early literacy instruction is a priority of educators, researchers, politicians, and the public. Knowing how to read and write are essential experiences, especially for young children, and these experiences optimally result in a well-educated work force, which has a direct impact on a country's continued success and global competitiveness (Papen, 2016). For children to gain knowledge through reading textbooks, and then relate this knowledge through their own written words, they must have effective literacy knowledge (Papen, 2016).

Papen (2016) states, "being literate is regarded as crucial to a child's wider education" (p.1). According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (2012), the United States ranks 17th out of the 34 countries (PISA O.E.C.D, 2012), which many stakeholders find unacceptable. Accordingly, the push to improve is driving a greater emphasis on early literacy instruction in education and educational research.

Early Childhood Literacy Instructional Paradigms

Emergent literacy and reading readiness are two paradigms influencing early childhood literacy instructions (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, 1991). Emergent literacy embraces the significance of literacy knowledge found in the home and community environments. Unlike the reading readiness paradigm, emergent literacy values literacy development through social interactions and experiences from birth until a child reaches the developmental level where they are reading (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, 1991; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Talking to and reading to children are considered important aspects of early literacy development and promoted through emergent literacy theory. Emergent literacy is defined as "skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are

presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing" as well as the "environment that supports these developments" (Sulzby, 1989; Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1989 cited in Whitehurst & Longian, 1998, p. 849). Essentially, emergent literacy focuses on children as active participants in their literacy development (Purcell Gates, 1997), continuous learning despite the development age, and home and individual experiences that are viewed as essential in literacy development. Emergent literacy's framework is centered on a socio-cultural paradigm highlighting the importance of learning through social interaction in environments other than school.

While emergent literacy has become more prevalent in classrooms, aspects of reading readiness are still present in literacy curriculums and programs (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Reading readiness is a paradigm to reading instruction, "where educators focus on facilitating reading development through instruction in skills and subskills identified as prerequisites for reading" (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 51). The reading readiness approach focuses more on a direct instruction approach centered on whole group activities. Therefore, teachers use direct instruction that is centered around whole group activities utilizing more pencil and paper assignments such as sub skill-based worksheets.

Family Involvement

Kabuto (2009) states, "parents do not always have the same knowledge as teachers and reading specialists. There is no guarantee that the discourses of school personnel will match those of parents" (p. 220). However, studies show that families feel strongly about the importance of supporting their children through their educational journey (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Compton-Lilly, 2009; Dudley-Marling, 2009; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Volk, 1999). Parents/guardians view their role as being just as important as the teacher's role.

Moreover, research indicates that parents do not feel supported in their role. Lapp, Fisher, Flood, and Moore work (as cited in Edwards et.al, 2009) states that "parents in culturally and linguistically diverse families are not unaware or unconcerned with their children's academic needs, but many are unequipped to give their children the necessary economic, social, and cultural capital"(p. 88). In other words, some families may not be familiar with the *school-based literacy knowledge* (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012*);* therefore, they need to be informed to help support and guide their children with their early literacy needs and interests.

Teacher Involvement

In classrooms today, there is more emphasis being placed on student literacy and the instructional practices of early childhood teachers. Lester (2000) states that "preparing students to become productive citizens in a society permeated with literacy events is an evolving responsibility. The degree of each student's success depends upon whether or not individual teachers consider literacy to be a fundamental part of their instructional planning" (p.10). Acknowledging the importance of early literacy development is an important aspect of the early childhood teacher's role in a child's literacy development, one that should influence the teacher's approach to literacy instruction and planning. Understanding the concept of emergent literacy enables the teacher to provide more effective and engaging opportunities for early literacy development (Morrow, 1990) while creating a solid foundation for children to develop literacy knowledge.

While having a firm grasp of emergent literacy is critical, so too is the idea of learning about students' home and community experiences, and integrating these experiences into the schools. Dewey (1956) asserts:

> When the child gets into the schoolroom, he has to put out of his mind a large part of the ideas, interests, and activities that predominate in his home and neighborhood. So the

> school being unable to utilize this everyday experience sets painfully to work on another tack and by a variety of [artificial] means, to arouse in the child an interest in school studies …. [Thus, there remains a] gap existing between the everyday experiences of the child and the isolated material supplied in such large measure in the school (Dewey 1956, pp. 75–76).

In other words, educators are not utilizing valuable funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) that students entered the classroom already having.

Young children's literacy development can be enriching when teachers inquire about their students' lives and the environment in which they live (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002). Home, school, and community provide children an abundance of literacy practices and unique experiences that follow the student into the classroom, which can be utilized to enrich the learning experience so long as the teacher acknowledges that they exist. As Pahl and Rowsell (2012) state, "home literacy practices can remain invisible to schools unless there is time to listen to them" (p.56). Teachers should make a conscious effort to learn more about students' cultures and backgrounds and how these influences shape the literacy skills they are learning at home. This insight can then help teachers create a more inclusive curriculum that incorporates all types of literacy practices**.** A child's prior experience is an important aspect of emergent literacy; therefore, the concept of integrating a child's funds of knowledge is vital to promoting effective literacy development. Incorporating a child's funds of knowledge requires teachers and families to be aware of what each are doing in support of early literacy development. Therefore, partnership between teachers and families is imperative for meaningful communication to occur.

Teacher and Families Collaboration

Research shows (Heath, 1983; Moll, 2013; Taylor, 1983) that learning occurs not only in schools, but also in homes and communities. Therefore, families and communities, like educators, are influencing a child's learning and growth. Researching the collaboration between

teachers, families, and communities, Epstein brought to the forefront the importance of viewing the relationship between teachers and families as a partnership where responsibilities of supporting a child's development is shared. Epstein (2010) states, "people in these three contexts affect children's learning and development, for better or worse, from infancy through the school years and beyond" (p. 42). Knowing that both the teacher and family have a significant position in a child's early literacy development, a partnership between the two is essential in order to create an effective learning environment. Similarly speaking, a partnership requires all individuals involved to contribute equally toward supporting a child's growth in learning. In a partnership, "reciprocal interactions [are] needed of [families], educators, and community partners to understand others' views, identify common goals for students, and appreciate others' contributions to student development" (Epstein, 2010, p. 44). Thus, open communication and trustworthiness is necessary for teachers and families to build an effective partnership.

Federal, state, and local policies continue to be developed to help strengthen the importance of teacher and family partnerships. Schools who are considered Title I have mandated family partnership guidelines and standards that have to be met to qualify for or receive funding (Epstein, 1995). National organizations such as the Council for the Accreditation of Educators Preparation have developed curriculum standards for teacher education programs that focus on how to work with families.

As Epstein (1995) states, "viewing students as children, [teachers] are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school" (p. 701). Thus, the students are the central link to a partnership. Therefore, being aware of each partners' responsibilities helps to create a strong collaboration that provides meaningful opportunities for children to learn.

Statement of the Problem

Views on early literacy education have shifted over the years to focus more on the social dimensions of learning and development that are prevalent in the emergent literacy theory (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Unlike the emergent literacy theory, reading readiness does not view the student as an active learner; therefore, constructive, reflective, and individualized instruction does not occur. Razfar and Gutierrez (2003) assert that the reading readiness instructional framework does not acknowledge the importance of the socio-cultural aspect of learning and development, which is problematic when considering family literacy. Family literacy is centered on children being socially active with their families and community in order to gain literacy knowledge; thus, a paradigm such as reading readiness that does not support learning socially will not be as effective.

Reading Readiness in the Classroom Environment

For my research, I am aware that the reading readiness paradigm is dated and ineffective; however, aspects of the reading instruction are visible in today's classroom and school districts. Facets of reading readiness such as the mastery of sequential skills can be visible in literacy assessments developed by national organizations and local school district (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). These assessments guide the placement of students in reading groups and the data is utilized by teachers to drive their literacy instruction. When focusing instruction on sequential skills, more direct instruction from the teacher is needed which does not leave room for family literacy to occur. Assessments focus more on the school/academic literacies; hence, literacy curriculum is less permeable for allowing home literacies into instruction. Thus, creating an environment where less collaboration is needed between teachers and families which, in turn, affects the partnership between teachers and families negatively.

In the absence of the socio-cultural aspects to learning, reading readiness is not a conducive framework for developing a socio-cultural curriculum for literacy development. In contrast, emergent literacy "stresses the importance of parents, caregivers, teachers, and literacy rich environment in children's literacy development" (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 37). Utilizing all the significant adults in a child's life is essential for the advancement of a child's early literacy development. Emergent literacy's theoretical framework supports a socio-cultural perspective, which promotes involvement from not only teachers but families as well. Hence, shared understanding of each key player's role is crucial for a child's early literacy development. Conversely, evidence from research shows that families and teachers may have different beliefs on supporting a child; therefore, the shared understanding is absent (Windrass & Nunes, 2003). Miscommunication and misunderstanding between the teacher and the families regarding their roles can be detrimental to a child's literacy development, which can then lead to a disconnect between the teacher and the families.

Families' and Educators' Influence on Early Literacy Development

Literacy scholars and educational leaders have acknowledged (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Compton-Lilly, 2007; Moll, 2013) the value of the diverse family unit and the positive effect that the home environment can have on literacy development. From my experience as a first grade teacher, I observed students from diverse backgrounds enter the classroom with funds of knowledge from their home environment. A parent's influence on a child can affect the way the child perceives and experiences reading, writing, and other uses of language (Edwards, Paratore, & Roser, 2009).

Along with family involvement, teachers also play a significant role in developing a child's literacy knowledge. As Hindman and Wasik (2008) state**, "**teachers play a pivotal role in

providing children with optimal environments for early language and literacy learning" (p. 479). Knowing that both the family and early childhood teacher have such a major influence on early literacy knowledge, a strong and solid partnership between the dyad is vital for children to be successful in their literacy development. To develop an alliance that supports a child's early literacy knowledge, the teacher and the family need to find a mutual foundation to begin collaboration. In other words, both the teacher and the family need to be aware of what the other is doing regarding early literacy development. Communicating each other's roles and experiences is key to forming an effective partnership in order to support early literacy development. Lack of communication between teacher and families can result in misconceptions and misunderstandings (Edwards, 1995). Edwards (1995) suggests that without both groups attempting to understand one another, families and teachers misinterpret ideas about what the other is doing. Therefore, perceived reciprocity is crucial because without family and teacher participation, a child's early literacy development may be affected.

Building partnerships between teachers and families is essential to effective collaboration when providing a well-rounded early literacy education. Knowing the importance of the teacher/family relationship, I will explore the processes that drive how this partnership is established. As a former early childhood educator, I have experienced the benefits of strong relationships between the teacher, the family, and the student. Epstein (2011) states:

> educators need to understand the contexts in which students live, work, and play. Without that understanding, educators work alone, not in partnership with other important people in students' lives. With the lack of partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child (p. 5).

Thus, the purpose of my study was to better understand and examine the teachers' and families' experiences regarding first graders' early literacy development through an emergent literacy and socio-cultural lens. The primary question that guided my study was: What are early childhood

teachers' and families' experiences with first graders' home and school literacy practices? The following sub-questions guided my inquiry:

- How does the role of an early childhood teacher support a first grader's early literacy development?
- How do the home experiences of families support a first grader's early literacy development?
- How do teachers and families collaborate in order to build a partnership that connects home and school experiences to support a first grader's early literacy development?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of an early childhood teacher's and families' experiences regarding both the home and school literacy practices that support the early literacy development of a first grader. There are three main goals: 1) to explore and document how an early childhood teacher's beliefs, experiences, and expectations of school literacies support the development of a first grader's early literacy knowledge; 2) to learn more about how families' home experiences aid in the early literacy development of a first grader; and, 3) to examine the relationship between the teacher and families to understand how and if they work in a partnership to bridge home and school experiences to aid in the child's early literacy development.

Based on a socio-cultural theoretical framework, I plan to utilize multiple cases and include home visits. As Whitmore (2007) asserts, "when we enter families' homes with the intentions to learn rather than to teach, we learn amazing and surprising information" (p. 182). Home visits enabled me to communicate with and observe families in their natural setting.

Researcher Background

I was born and raised in a small, rural town in North Carolina. Many family members are former and current educators who helped guide me toward my career as an early childhood teacher. Being a White female from a middle class family where education was important, as well as being a part of a racially diverse school system during my adolescent years, have influenced my position on education, family, and diversity.

Formerly, I was a first grade teacher at a Title One school in a small Mid Atlantic town, where I taught a linguistically and culturally diverse population which included English for Speaker of Other Language (ESOL), special needs, and low socioeconomic students. I was also a graduate assistant in the Teacher Education Department at Salisbury University, a teaching assistantship that required me to teach two courses in the department. I taught a variety of courses including Social Studies and Science Methods. Being a graduate assistant gave me the opportunity to work as a liaison in a Professional Development Schools partnership with an elementary school in a nearby county. With my recent jobs and my participation in a doctorate program, my knowledge has grown in the areas of literacy, educational theories, multicultural education, and family literacy.

As an educator, I view all educational theories as vital to any learning environment, and have leveraged numerous theories in my classroom throughout my career both as a first grade teacher and now as an instructor in a teacher education department. Currently, socio-cultural theory and funds of knowledge are the two paradigms with the greatest influence on my teaching and research. I have found both to be effective in enhancing my classroom instruction and investigative endeavors.

My ontological and epistemological beliefs stem from the socio-cultural perspective; thus, I believe in the authentic integration of both home and school literacies to support a child's

early literacy development. By understanding and integrating the aspects of socio-cultural theory, an early childhood educator can become more socio-culturally receptive while preparing a foundation capable of "producing involved citizens capable of successfully participating in and contributing to a democratic society" (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, pg. 59). Whether utilized separately or in tandem, these theories can aid teachers and families with young children by orchestrating a learning environment that cultivates equity, social justice, and active learning.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the operationalization of key terms in alphabetically order are:

Case Study: Merriam (2014) defines a case study as "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (p. 8).

Early Childhood Teacher**:** Knowing that a child has many adults who are considered "teachers," for this study I define the teacher as "an educational professional who engages development through interactions with young children in classrooms and schools" (Pianta, Dickinson, and Neuman, 2006, p.150).

Emergent: Teale and Sulzby (1986) pointed out that the term emergent has two facets: "a continuation of old development and the beginning of something truly new" (p. 278).

Emergent Literacy: A leading theory that expounds on early literacy development as well as provides a framework for literacy instruction in early childhood education (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Emergent literacy is a term used "to denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 848).

Family: The term family will be used to refer to all members, including parents, guardians, siblings, and grandparents who are a significant part of the child's life**.**

Family Literacy: Morrow (2009) depicts family literacy as "the ways families, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community" (p. 378).

Funds of Knowledge: Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) refer to funds of knowledge as "these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133).

Kidwatching: Owocki & Goodman (2002) refers to kidwatching as a way to, "gain insight into children's learning by (1) intensely observing and documenting what they know and can do, (2) documenting their ways of constructing and expressing knowledge, and (3) planning curriculum and instruction that are tailored to individual strengths and needs" (p. 3).

Multiple Literacies**:** What is considered literacy is evolving to much more than just learning from printed text. According to Piazza (1999) multiple literacies can be viewed as "multimodal forms of representation or mixed varieties of meaning-making shaped and presented in different ways" (p. 3).

Partnerships: Epstein (2018) defines parentships as "educators, families, and community members working together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate success" (p. 2).

Reading Readiness: Tracey and Morrow (2012) define reading readiness as "another form of reading instruction that is reflective of a behavioral theoretical orientation. Educators focus on facilitating reading development through instruction in skills and subskills identified as prerequisites for reading" (p. 51).

Sociocultural Theory: According to Purcell-Gates (1995), this theory posits that "all learners are seen as members of a defined culture, and their identity with this culture determines what they will encode about the world and the ways in which they will interpret information" (p. 4).

Organization of Dissertation

To answer the research questions, I utilized a qualitative research method, more specifically multiple case studies to gain a better understanding of the experiences of both a first grader teacher and families of first graders in supporting a first grader's early literacy development. Along with the home and school experiences, I was curious to learn more about how the first grade teacher and families of the first graders collaborated in order to form a partnership to integrate the home and school experiences. Chapter two discusses the literature that supports my research questions. As for Chapter three, I provide in depth information regarding theoretical framework, research setting, participants, and data sources utilized for the study. In Chapter four, I structure the findings by providing a snapshot of the two main contexts: the classroom environment and the home environment. Within those contexts, I elaborate on the major themes. Furthermore, I elaborate on what the data reveled regarding teacher and families partnerships. I conclude the dissertation focusing on the discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this research is to explore an early childhood teacher's, five first graders', and their families' experiences regarding a first graders' early literacy development. To better understand a teacher's and families' experiences with first graders' home and school literacies practices within a socio-cultural context, it is important to review relevant literature. I begin with an overview of emergent literacy theory and the various aspects of the paradigm such as competing theories, multiple literacies, and kidwatching. From there I present an examination of the funds of knowledge concept, which is relevant for both teachers and families to acknowledge to provide a child with effective early literacy development. Next, I focus on literature regarding the role of the family in fostering early literacy development. I then examine the importance of the early childhood teacher's knowledge and the significant role the teacher has in early literacy development. I conclude by providing literature focusing on teacher and parent collaboration and the importance of building a partnership to guide a child's literacy learning.

Methodology for Literature Review

To begin this review, I utilized interdisciplinary, electronic databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, and ProQuest to locate scholarly journals, peer-reviewed articles, books, literature reviews, and empirical research studies that focus on family literacy. Additionally, relevant media outlets, such as the *National Center for Family Literacy* (NCFL) and *United States Department of Education* (USDE), were explored to locate archived articles and studies. These

sources provided a foundation for in-depth analysis and synthesis of themes and categories relevant to my topic.

Emergent Literacy

Marie Clay (1996) was one of the first researchers to use the term emergent literacy to describe young children's print behavior prior to traditional reading and writing. Presently, emergent literacy is a leading theory that expounds on early literacy development and provides a framework for literacy instruction in early childhood education (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Emergent literacy is a term used "to denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 848). In other words, at birth a child is developing literacy knowledge and actively participating in literacy experiences through social interactions. Per Razfar & Guiterrez (2003), this is "one of the first theories of early literacy to challenge the commonly held assumption that reading and literacy activities are intrapersonal and a linear mental process" (p. 36).

Unlike the reading readiness perspective, which focuses on grasping fundamental skills sequentially taught within a formal school setting through direct instruction (Tracey & Morrow, 2012), the emergent literacy theory "posits that literacy develops from birth with many important steps towards reading occurring in the years leading up to conventional reading and writing" (Mallette, Duke, Strachan, Waldron, & Watanabe, 2013, p. 107). Hence, literacy development is not only occurring in schools, but in other environments such as homes and communities.

Emergent literacy versus reading readiness. The theory of emergent literacy situates the children as active participants in their literacy development (Clay, 1966; Purcell-Gates, 1997). Educators using reading readiness rely on direct instruction of sequential skills with skills

assessments randomly placed to mark particular skill levels (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1991). Differing from the reading readiness theoretical framework, emergent literacy supports literacy development through active and engaging activities such as talking, singing, and reading, which all occur from the early stages of a child's life. Numerous social interactions and environments impact a child's early literacy development; learning is more social. As Whitehurst and Longian (1998) note, "reading, writing, and oral language develop concurrently and interdependently from an early age from children's exposure to interactions in the social contexts in which literacy is a component" (p. 849).

In the reading readiness paradigm, reading must be learned first before writing or other subject areas can be taught; this is a guiding principle for more traditional approaches to literacy development. For some curricula, this approach is still viewed as effective instruction. However, advocates of emergent literacy theory embrace the belief that all areas such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are interconnected (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Children's knowledge and strategies in these areas develop concurrently and it is generally accepted that "children learn to be literate in different ways and at different rates of development" (Vacca, Vacca, and Grove, 1991). The interrelatedness of literacy knowledge results in children who thrive in one area will show positive growth in other areas of literacy development. As children are actively involved in developing literacy knowledge, they also develop literacy strategies through meaningful and authentic contexts that focus on engaging their prior experiences (Vacca, Vacca, and Grove, 1991).

Multiple literacies. When referring to the road to literacy, Goodman (1997) asserts, "there are many ways, equally important but different, in which children are immersed in literacy events that positively influence their development" (p. 56). Hence, multiple literacies or

multimodal literacies became a prevalent pedagogy in the field of literacy. Norris (2014) and Kress (2000) define multimodal literacy as "the study of a vast number of naturally occurring modes including verbal and nonverbal" (p. 70). Not only is it important for a child to be able to read a book, but the need to be able to make sense of the world is just as vital in today's society. Therefore, what is considered literacy is evolving to much more than just learning from printed text. According to Piazza (1999), multiple literacies can be viewed as "multimodal forms of representation or mixed varieties of meaning-making shaped and presented in diverse ways (p.3). From singing songs from a song book to reading the comics in the Sunday newspaper, emergent literacy knowledge is being developed. Multiple literacies events, such as those that occur in the daily routines of households (e.g., cooking and shopping), are just as imperative as reading a book at bedtime. Supporting and respecting the multiple literacies interactions that occur within a family are an important aspect in early childhood literacy development.

Family literacy. Recognizing the home environment as a place where literacy development occurs, emergent literacy has become a paradigm of choice for many family literacy supporters and programs. As Haney and Hill (2004) state, "the process of becoming literate begins long before a child enters a formal education environment," thus illustrating the importance of parent involvement and family literacy programs (p. 215). Heath (1983, 2013) and Taylor's (1983) pivotal works on learning through everyday family activities brought the term *family literacy* to the forefront. From the creation of the term *family literacy*, numerous definitions, all with a distinct perspective, have been developed to explain the meaning. Anderson (2010) describes family literacy as different intervention programs for lower socioeconomics and/or illiterate families that help guide and support them. Yet others such as the National Center of Family Literacy have a more deficit view of parents in family literacy. In

1990, the National Center of Family Literacy stated that "uneducated parents usually do not pass on positive educational values to their children. Neither, in many cases, do they provide an adequate economic, emotional, or social environment" (p.2).

Situated in a socio-cultural theoretical framework, my study supports Morrow's (2009) definition which defines family literacy as "the ways families, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community" (p. 378). Morrow's definition illustrates the importance of children learning and developing literacy knowledge through social interaction.

Funds of knowledge. There are many influences in an individual's surroundings that affect a child's literacy development, such as families, communities, friends, school, family members' work, culture, language, and so on. These various environments, specifically the home, provide children with an abundance of literacy practices and a variety of knowledge that are presented in unique settings. As Moll (2013) states, "everyday concepts provide the 'conceptual fabric' for the development of schooled concepts" (p. 35). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) refer to the term funds of knowledge as "these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). They conducted studies that focused on how these household knowledges, experiences and practices could be used to enrich the learning environment in schools, understanding that students' everyday experiences (i.e., funds of knowledge) give them knowledge and practices that make them knowledgeable individuals. According to Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014), "the key point is that human beings and their social worlds are inseparable" (p. 36). Individuals are active participants in their culture through their participation in social connections, communities, and the work place; through these

everyday experiences, individuals acquire new skills and concepts that help to define their identity. Literacy related funds of knowledge can be found in the home, school, and community and can provide children with an abundant amount of literacy experiences. Literacy experiences found in the home and community follow the student into the classroom, and can be utilized to enrich the learning experience so long as the teacher acknowledges and values that these literacy practices exist.

Comparatively, as Dail and Payne (2010) explain, "a wealth view acknowledges that all families have resources that can be used to enhance children's literacy development" (p.331). Researchers (Heath, 1983, 2013; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Taylor 1993) support the wealth view by arguing that many parents who come from a diverse background or low socioeconomic status have a wealth of knowledge that is not leveraged in school. Taylor (1993), an educational ethnographer who has worked with families in a naturalist setting, proclaims that:

> In developing educational opportunities for families, it is essential that we begin by learning about their lives so that together we can build meaningful connections between everyday learning and school learning. We need to understand, from the personal and shared perspectives of individual family members, the extraordinary funds of knowledge that they bring to any learning situation (pp.551-552).

Gadsden (1994) agrees and further explains that when family literacy endeavors do not capitalize on the funds of knowledge found in the home environment, the efforts may be successful only for a short time instead of providing lasting success for families. Placing parents in a position that focuses on their weaknesses instead of their strengths creates an atmosphere filled with apprehension that can cause difficulty in promoting family literacy and literacy development.

Kidwatching. The concept of "Kidwatching" dates back to the 1930s during the child-study movement (Goodman, 2014), with continued growth in the 1970s and 80s through the work of Yetta Goodman. The term "kidwatching" was developmed by Yetta Goodman in the 1970's. Goodman's work with the concept of kidwatching "popularized the concept by giving it

definition and helping teachers and researchers learn to use it to structure and enhance their work" (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 3). Kidwatching allows teachers and researchers to acquire information about a child's literacy development processes by observing and documenting how the child learns in a school setting. Confident teacher researchers utilizing the concept of kidwatching view their classrooms as "places where they are the learners-learning from their students" (VanDeWeghe, 1992, p. 49). In other words, obtaining information through observation and documentation can provide teachers with data that can support a child's literacy learning. According to Owocki & Goodman (2002), kidwatching is:

> primary goals are to support and gain insight into children's learning by (1) intensely observing and documenting what they know and can do, (2) documenting their ways of constructing and expressing knowledge, and (3) planning curriculum and instruction that are tailored to individual strengths and needs (p. 3).

By observing all aspects of literacy including reading, writing, and speaking, teachers gain a better understanding of a young child's language development and support literacy development (Goodman, 2014). Teachers and researchers who utilize kidwatching gain unique data by observing young children as they are engaged in learning and participating in literacy activities. Kidwatchers are then able to take this data and make curriculum and instructional decisions that will help each individual student (Owocki & Goodman, 2002).

Early Literacy Standards and Policies

In 1983, there were many questions as to why American students were not achieving at a rate comparable to other countries. T.H. Bell, Secretary of Education under the Reagan Administration, was tasked with implementing the National Commission on Education Excellence. This Commission released a report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, which provided an analysis of the quality of the United States education system. According to the report, the system was in a dire need of change. Our schools were not

producing graduates who could succeed in the global workforce, and schools were held responsible for the problems in the nation (Fowler, 2013). This one report led to numerous educational reforms and policies that targeted various aspects of education, including teacher accreditation.

With this focus on public education (specifically literacy), the Federal government has become more involved in spawning numerous educational reform efforts focused on improving student success. The 2001 educational reform act No Child Left Behind (NCLB), passed under the leadership of George W. Bush, stated that education should be a priority and has caused the nation to focus on the way teachers teach and students learn (Peterson & West, 2003). With this increasing focus on student achievement and national standards, educational leaders are concentrating on instruction and how it affects student achievement. Over the last few years, the NCLB's requirements were becoming a challenge for schools; therefore, President Obama began to make clarifications to the law to help students succeed in college and in their careers. The result of this effort was the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed into law on December 10, 2015.

With each recent law, early childhood education, including literacy development, has become part of a standards-based curriculum. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009), "as of 2007, more than three-quarters of the states had some sort of early learning standards—that is, standards for the years before kindergarten—and the remaining states had begun developing them" (p. 3). Organizations such as Head Start have developed standards in areas such as early literacy and mathematics for early childhood education. Similarly, the Common Core standards for early childhood created standards "that speak to multiple domains of child development and learning—typically

including early literacy and mathematics, but also including social skills, emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical and motor development" (NAEYC, 2015, p. 3).

Catapano (2005) asserts that "standards are simply shared expectations or goals for children's learning" (p. 225). In other words, standards like the ones mentioned above provide a framework for schools and programs to utilize to help create and develop appropriate curriculum to help meet the learning needs of children. That said, standards have not been developed to dictate *how* a teacher should teach; rather, standards were created to offer support and guidance on instructional decision making to help children learn and develop. Knowing that "national reports and public policy statements have supported the creation of standards-based curriculum as part of a broader effort to build children's school readiness by improving teaching and learning in the early years", national organizations such as the NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) have voiced their position on such matters as standards and policies (NAEYC, 2009 p. 3). In a joint position statement written in 2009, both NAEYC and NAECS-SDE (2009) stated, "that early learning standards can be a valuable part of a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children, contributing to young children's educational experiences and to their future success" (p.5-6). They further explained:

> But these results can be achieved only if early learning standards (1) emphasize significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes; (2) are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes; (3) use implementation and assessment strategies that are ethical and appropriate for young children; and (4) are accompanied by strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families (p. 5-6).

Both NAEYC and NAECS-SDE understand the importance of standards; however, both organizations agree that when developing early childhood standards developers need to consider certain aspects of learning in order to create effective learning goals.

Early childhood education standards and policies have been developed to guide and support the teachers in helping children achieve developmentally appropriate learning goals. "By defining the desired content and outcomes of young children's education, early learning standards can lead to greater opportunities for positive development and learning in these early years" (NAEYC & NAECS-SDE, 2002, p. 1). Regardless of the learning environments, the standards provide educators with a framework to help ensure that young children are thriving in their learning environments. To develop effective standards, "standards need to be not only comprehensive but also address what is important for children to know and be able to do; be aligned across developmental stages and age/ grade levels; and be consistent with how children develop and learn" (NAEYC, 2009, p. 3). In the end, learning standards are just a small piece of the puzzle. For students to meet the early childhood standards and expectations, teachers and families must collaborate to ensure the children have the support and guidance to become competent readers and writers.

Families' Role in Fostering Early Literacy Development

Decades ago, even before the research showed the benefits, the involvement of parents in their children's literacy development occurred through everyday activities such as verbal storytelling and reading bedtime stories. For years, parent involvement was encouraged (Wasik & Hermann, 2004). However, according to Wasik and Hermann's study in the 1950's, parent participation was frowned upon, as many educators believed that teaching and learning should be handled by teachers in a formal education setting. These educators felt that outside-of-the-school readiness efforts hindered development by requiring children to learn when they were not developmentally ready to do so (Waski & Herrmann, 2004). Gradually by the 1960s and 70s the view shifted back to the importance of parent involvement in preparing children for school.

Studies show that the majority of parents feel strongly about the importance of supporting their children through their educational journey (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Compton-Lilly, 2009; Dudley-Marling, 2009; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Volk, 1999). Volk (1999) conducted an ethnographic study that explored how families promote teaching and learning of literacy, and, more specifically, how learning occurs through sibling interaction. Volk based his research in a highly-populated Midwestern city with a vast number of Puerto Rican families. With the help of a kindergarten teacher, two Puerto Rican students were chosen based on their success in the classroom. Volk utilized interviews, field notes, observations, and tape recordings to collect data. During a parent interview, one parent spoke of the significant impact education has on their children's lives. The parent indicated that teaching basic skills was a parent's responsibility, and shared proudly how they prepared their child for school. When the mother was asked to explain what the family was doing that she saw as essential to her child's learning, she responded:

> I find that the most important thing is that the family is together and shows each other love. And there is where then the child, well, can learn most. Because sometimes what good does it do to teach someone math or teach them to write if the family is not together and there isn't love? Now when the whole family works together with all the children I find that helps the children the most (Volk, 1999, p. 15).

This mother stressed that it was the positive learning environment that they created through *love* and family that allowed for effective literacy practices to transpire.

The parents in Dudley-Marling's (2009) study had similar feelings as Volk's parents. Dudley-Marling (2009) conducted a qualitative study on how African American and immigrant parents perceived the school-to-home literacy initiatives within their children's schools. The study found the majority of the parents supported their children's education and believed it was the parents' responsibilities to teach their child. According to mother Sandra M, "My job is to teach my son… Whatever is done in class I need to continue at home. That is my responsibility" (Dudley-Marling, 2009, p. 1731). Another mother shared similar beliefs when she stated that

“supporting children’s schooling is a parent’s job… We’re [supposed] to feed them, put a roof over their heads, and educate them” (Dudley-Marling, 2009, p. 1731). The parents felt strongly about providing a home environment that reinforced skills that were taught in the classroom. The parents acknowledged that these literacy initiatives were crucial to their child’s literacy and educational development. Dudley-Marling (2009) noted this strong loyalty to their children and the children’s education as a prevailing theme.

Comptom-Lilly (2007), using a case study research design, conducted a year-long study on two Puerto Rican families located in a northeastern city of the United States. The study investigated the literacies found in school and home and how they are viewed in the school setting. More specifically, the study “suggests that reading success in school is contingent on a complex set of practices and ways of being that often fail to reflect the rich strengths and abilities that are valued in home communities” (Comptom-Lilly, 2007, p. 75). One participant named Ira demonstrated her support in a variety of ways, from reading assigned books brought home from school to making sure the children attended school each day. Similarly, Dail, McGee, and Edwards (2009), while working in counties with low socioeconomics were implementing reading programs, found parents who were willing to go above and beyond to help their children learn. Parents participated in workshops and community book clubs with their children to help support their children’s literacy development. Undeniably, as a sponsor of literacy, a parent provides their child with the support and guidance needed to thrive in literacy development.

Families’ roles in family literacy. Research shows that families are providing enriched literacy home environments through a variety of literacy practices (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Heath, 1983, 2013; Taylor, 1983, 2013; Volk, 1999; Weinsberger, 1996). Researchers such as Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983) conducted ethnographic studies that yielded data on the

importance and value of the family in regard to literacy development, which brought more attention to family literacy. These pivotal works focused on how literacy practices were infused in the day-to-day family routine (Heath, 1983, 2013; Taylor, 1983; Moll, 1992), and illustrated how the social and cultural aspects of the home and community affected literacy development in children.

For numerous years, both Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983) immersed themselves in the lives of families from diverse backgrounds to learn more about the literacy knowledge and development occurring within families' homes and communities. Heath's research (1983) revealed that regardless of differing factors, such as socioeconomics, race, and ethnicity, the families in the two communities fostered enriching literacy activities in multiple forms. Similarly, Taylor's (1983) study provided vast data on how literacy practices occurred in the participants' everyday lives. Both Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983) found that the parents in the studies surrounded their children with literacy activities unintentionally, which, in turn, provided an environment where children were developing literacy knowledge. Heath (1983) and Taylor's (1983) work showed similarities in the fact that they both felt "each family is an original, that there is a seemingly infinite variety of patterns of cooperation and domestic organization… With family settings, there are both multiple literacies and multiple literacy practices" (Taylor, 1997, p. 1). This research concluded that children will be exposed to different types of literacy depending on the families' social and cultural practices (Morgan, Nutbrown, and Hannon, 2009).

Weinsberger (1996) discussed in her own study how one participant named Dawn utilized various opportunities throughout the day to promote literacy development with her two kids. For example, while grocery shopping, her daughter would read the items on the shopping list and help retrieve products from the aisles. The same family also read different birthday cards to find

the perfect one for their grandmother, listened to her favorite book being read, explored the TV guide to locate her favorite show, and wrote their names in the birthday card. This research shows that families are active in children's learning in many ways, and as Comptom-Lilly (2009) asserts, "my students and their families [are] powerful, resilient individuals who [enjoy] stimulating and supportive home environments" (p. 452). Despite the preference in what is being used or what is occurring in the home environment in regard to literacy, the fact that parents are fostering literacy practices in homes is vital for family literacy and literacy development.

Zone of proximal development and family involvement. Vygotsky's (1980) notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is utilized to explore more in depth the literacy interaction and development that is occurring between the parent and child. ZPD is "the ideal level of risk difficulty to facilitate learning, which is the level a child can be successful with appropriate support" (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, p. 128). Families "are often most familiar with the child's current skills; thus, can target instruction in such a way as to correspond with the child's ZPD" (Haney & Hill, 2004, p. 216). In other words, parents/guardians know their child the best; thus, can motivate and scaffold learning specifically for their child providing them an enriching learning experience. More specifically, scaffolding is considered the support needed when students are facing a challenging learning situation. In Temple, Ogle, Crawford, and Freppone's (2014) book, they refer to scaffolding as the assistance that adults and more competent peers provide during their learning episodes (as cited in Tracey and Morrow, 2012). Having knowledgeable individuals to work with young children is one of the key aspects to his theory of ZPD. Experienced individuals provide guidance to children through examples, breaking down a concept, and/or praise (Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

Challenging deficit views of parents in early literacy. According to Yosso (2005), "deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (p.75). Auerbach (1995) refers to this type of view as focusing more on the abilities that parents lack while disregarding the valuable skills that are present in their home and community. A literature review composed by Morrow et al (1993) revealed how schools view more about the wealth of knowledge parents can gain from schools, yet little focus is given to the abundant knowledge that can be learned from parents. Torres and Hurtado-Vivas (2011) collected numerous statements from teachers who blamed parents, stating "their Spanish dialect is different, so we cannot understand each other, many parents are illiterate, and even with the translator we don't understand each other" (p. 235). Various studies (Mui & Anderson, 2008; Purcell- Gates &Waterman, 2000) have proven that schools should move away from a deficit-thinking model and instead acknowledge, value, and embrace the rich literacies of non-mainstream parents. These deficit views and opinions can be detrimental to family literacy and may alienate families from wanting to work with the school to support early literacy development.

Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Roles in Early Literacy Development

Knowing that a child has many adults who are considered "teachers," for this study I utlized Pianta et al's (2006) definition of an early childhood teacher which states "an educational professional who engages development through interactions with children in classrooms and schools" (Pianta, Dickinson, and Neuman, 2006, p.150). Current instructional theories and educational practices are vital for teachers to know in order to guide and support a child in reaching their academic goals, as is appreciating that "the world has changed and different kinds

of skills and knowledge are required for successful and productive lives in the twenty first century" (Darling-Hammond & Bradford, 2005, p. 42).

Teachers have a responsibility to remain knowledgeable about instructional strategies, paradigms, and curriculum. For teachers, participating in professional development and educational courses and reading professional journals enables them to gain insight into theories and practices that can be used to become more culturally responsive. Darling-Hammond and Bradford (2005) assert that to be effective, teachers must be knowledgeable in their disciplines. Furthermore, "effective teachers are able to figure out not only what they want to teach, but also how to do so in a way that students understand and use the new information and skills" (Darling-Hammond & Bradford, 2005, p. 88). As teachers continue to grow in their content area, their "theories and beliefs, represents (sic) the rich store of knowledge [they] have and will affect their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions" within the classroom environment (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p.11). In other words, teachers' knowledge affects the organization of their classrooms, lesson planning, and choices they make, but it impacts their beliefs as well. Along with being knowledgeable with theories and instructional practices, a "teacher's knowledge of her students can affect aspects of learning" (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 55).

Teachers' knowledge of students. Being a culturally responsive teacher is essential given the diversity in classrooms today. As Darling-Hammond & Bradford (2005) assert, "the more we know about someone, the more we are able to connect to their specific interests and needs and explain things in ways that make sense to them "(p. 55). Luis Moll and his colleagues took the concept of funds of knowledge, first created by Vygotsky, and applied the concept to the realm of education. Moll et al. (1992) assert that "our analysis of funds of knowledge represents a positive view of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great

potential utility for classroom instruction" (p.134). Learning how to utilize a student's funds of knowledge can enable a teacher to become more aware of the student's cultural background, and how to best use this knowledge to truly connect with the student and deliver effective teaching. Certainly, the benefit in leveraging this knowledge to provide a more enriching and engaging student-centered educational environment.

Amanti and Neff, two teacher researchers in a study conducted with Moll et al (1992), shared how they designed a themed unit based on the knowledge they gathered from students' households and families. During their interviews, they learned that Carlos, a student in the study, enjoyed selling Mexican candy to his friends. Taking this new information, Amanti created a unit centered on candy. The students completed a variety of activities, including a KWL chart, researching different ingredients in candy, comparing and contrasting candy, designing labels and posters for candy, and making candy with a Latino student's parent. This inquiry-based lesson proved to be effective and utilized numerous funds of knowledge that were gathered from the home visits. While the authors of this study did not identify how this information could influence teaching practices, the study shows how the funds of knowledge concept can have an enormous impact on how a teacher implements their instruction based on knowledge of the student. Inquiry-based instruction, designing more student-centered lessons to effectively engage the students in the learning process, and utilizing community resources (e.g., parents) to enhance the learning environment are key tenets of knowing your students. As Filmore and Snow (2000) state:

> teachers who respect their students' home languages and cultures, and who understand the crucial role they play in the lives of the children and their families, can help children make the necessary transitions in ways that do not undercut the role that parents and families must continue to play in their education and development (p.12).

Using their theoretical knowledge as well as their knowledge on the student can help teachers build a partnership with families that can support the integration of home and school literacies.

Collaboration Between Teachers and Families

Knowing that "children spend more time with parents and family members especially in the first decade of life," families become vital contributors to children's literacy development (Reynolds & Clements, 2005, p. 109). Within households, valuable literacy knowledge is being developed (Moll, 2013). Students' funds of knowledge are excellent resources that teachers need to leverage to provide a rich and engaging classroom environment. Teachers should understand and accept that literacy skills are often learned outside of the classroom. By embracing home literacy knowledge in the classroom and incorporating it into the classroom learning environment, teachers can strengthen the learning experience for their students. In order to effectively use these literacy practices in the classroom, teachers should make a conscious effort to learn more about students' socio-cultural backgrounds and seek to understand how these influences help shape the literacy knowledge students learn in the home. Similarly, families should also make a conscious effort to become more aware of what is occurring in the school environment regarding early literacy development. Hence, a teacher and family partnership is crucial to support and guide the "whole child."

As Epstein (1992) asserts, the term partnership "implies a formal alliance and contractual agreement to work toward shared goals and to share the profits or benefits of mutual investments" (p. 1). A partnership between a teacher and family would provide a child with supportive people from both their home and school environments working together to assist and guide a child to develop early literacy knowledge. An effective partnership between a teacher and a family is "characterized by continuous exchange of information, mutual respect, and

shared power and responsibilities for education and development of children" (Moles, 2005, p. 131). Communication is vital for the partnership to be effective. Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002) state in their paper on family-school communication that "teachers who practice effective communication with families report improved parent-teacher relationships and stronger parental support; they are also perceived by parents and by principals as having stronger teaching abilities than teachers who communicate less effectively" (p. 6). As a teacher-researcher, Amanti (2005) learned through her strengthened relationship with a family member "the importance of early literacy educators coming to know their students from a cultural, social, community, and family perspective that enables children's whole identities to exist in the classroom" (p,178). Taking the time to build a relationship with families provides opportunities to see potential hidden skills of a student and integrate them into the classroom to provide a more child-centered literacy curriculum. According to Epstein (1986), there are five key types of involvement that assist in guiding both schools and families to share the responsibility of a child's learning:

Type 1: Basic obligations of families

Type 2: Basic obligations of schools

Type 3: Involvement at school

Type 4: Involvement in learning activities at home

Type 5: Involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy (p. 126)

This involvement provides a foundation for a strong partnership between a teacher and a family, which then supports the early literacy development of young children.

Moll (2013) asserts that, for a teacher, "the social relations formed with families became a major resource for teaching. The social connections bring not just new content and participation but also a new-found intimacy to teaching" (p. 119). The day-to-day activities in

families offer children the opportunity to participate in authentic literacy practices, which help to provide a foundation of literacy knowledge that the children need to succeed in life. Working and collaborating together, teachers and families are ensuring a connection of both home and school literacy practices that offers many benefits to the child.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I have illustrated the importance of both the early childhood teacher and the families when supporting and guiding a child's early literacy development. I first provided a look into the emergent literacy theory in contrast to the reading readiness theory. I then related the funds of knowledge concept to early literacy development and the importance of integrating this resource into the classroom environment. I provided examples of what families are doing to support and guide a child in developing literacy knowledge through home practices. Additionally, I discussed how the teacher's beliefs and knowledge influences the school literacy practices of a child. I concluded this chapter by focusing on developing a partnership between teachers and families and how they can work together to form a relationship to best integrate both home and school literacies.

Throughout the literature review I reflected on my own experiences and perspectives that I am bringing to this study, drawing from my multiple roles as an early childhood teacher, parent, and doctoral candidate. In the next chapter, I present a detailed description of my research methodology and theoretical framework supporting my study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I present an overview of the research methodology used for the study. First, I discuss the theoretical framework that supports the research. Second, I provide an explanation for the research design highlighting my positionality as a teacher- researcher. Then, I describe the context and research setting in detail. Within the research setting, I provide a brief history of the elementary school as well as an analysis of the first grade classroom. After describing the research setting, I then present a profile of the participants who are participating in the research. Then, I explain the type of data resources collected as well as an overview of my data analysis. In conclusion, I describe the trust worthiness and validity of the study and a timeline.

Theoretical Framework

Socio-cultural theory. For this study, the term literacy includes "all aspects of all kinds of language and language development" (Goodman, Fries, & Strauss, 2016, p. 157) including, reading, writing, speaking, listening, internet, music, drawing etc. Much of this research draws on seminal work within the socio-cultural umbrella. Positioned in the social learning perspectives, socio-cultural theory emphasizes that social interaction is crucial in individuals' growth of knowledge and scholarship. According to Purcell-Gates (1995), "all learners are seen as members of a defined culture, and their identity with this culture determines what they will encode about the world and the ways in which they will interpret information" (p.4). Specifically, a socio-cultural perspective looks at how social, cultural, political, and historical factors impact an individual's learning experience. Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning acquisition follows the guiding principle that "developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer

group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sports activities, and work places, to name only a few" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2014, p. 197). In other words, various social factors and environments help to shape the way an individual learns and develops. Knowing that the home environment is the earliest learning environment for children, understanding the social interactions that children have with their parents and/or guardians is important in promoting early literacy development.

Based on the socio-cultural theory, emergent literacy values literacy development through social interaction and experience from birth until a child reaches developmental level and is reading (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Essentially, emergent literacy focuses on children as active participants in their literacy development (Purcell Gates, 1997), sees learning as continuous despite the development age, and views all home and individual experiences as essential in literacy growth.

A number of literacy researchers (Gee, 2013; Goodman & Goodman, 2011; Heath, 2012; Moll, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 1997) utilized a socio-cultural view to gain more insight into valuing authentic learning experiences such as diverse households and communities. Purcell-Gates (1997) states that "socio-cultural theory of learning also suggests that all learning takes place within a social context, and to understand the processes of learning, one must also specify and seek to understand the social context within which learning occurs" (p. 6). To view learning through a socio-cultural lens means looking outside of the classroom walls to understand the learning that is occurring in other environments. John Dewey (1956) felt education was not utilizing valuable resources that students entered the classroom already having. This idea of learning about students' home and community experiences, and the importance of integrating

these experiences into the schools, spans over a few eras and is still of great interest to researchers today (Saracho, 1996).

Socio-cultural theory emphasizes learning through socialization and promotes learning through collaboration and as a part of social groups. Moreover, instead of encouraging antagonism in learning, the theory aims to promote a more democratic learning environment where individuals collaborate and work together to learn and develop. The theory acknowledges that in culturally rich learning environments such as the home, thinking has a social foundation in each individual's involvement with people in their everyday lives, as it is these people who have played a critical role in shaping the individual's views and beliefs (Smagorinsky, 2013).

Research Design

I utilized a qualitative methodological approach to investigate the experiences of an early childhood teacher and families regarding first graders' early literacy development. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Researchers using qualitative research are seeking meaning and understanding of how people view their world as well as their circumstances that occur in their world (Merriam, 2014).

I utilized a case study research design to explore the research question and better understand the teacher's and families' roles in early literacy development. Merriam (2014) defines a case study as "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (p. 8). My research included multiple case studies to "build a stronger understanding and a more compelling argument for the significance of the work" (Barone, 2011, p. 9). Unlike a single case study, multiple case studies use several cases to investigate an event or occurrence and as a result, provide stronger

credibility with the findings. As Yin (2013) asserts, using multiple cases provides the researcher with the opportunity to see patterns between the individual cases that show case replication and makes the findings more generalizable (Yin, 2013). Even though I used multiple cases, I did not present each case study; therefore, I used cross-case anaylsis. To develop and execute a comprehensive case study, I implemented Yin's (2002) elements of design.

One noticeable characteristic of qualitative research is using the natural setting to collect data. In a natural setting or environment, I had direct, sustainable contact with the participants, both in the school and the home environment. Multiple data sources were used to gather extensive data through a variety of data collection methods, including group and individual interviews, classroom observations, home visits, review of documents and artifacts, and a reflective journal. Through the evidence gained from these sources, I built "a compelling case for [my] results and conclusions" (Barone, 2011, p. 23). Dissemination of my findings will occur at national conferences, within peer-reviewed research journals, and through professional development sessions.

The researcher's positionality. As a researcher**,** my "beliefs, political stance, cultural background are important variables that may affect the research process" (Bourke, 2014, p. 2). Since this involved in an interpretative and descriptive style of study, my values, personal background, and experiences contributed positively to the study. Being cognizant of my various identities and multiple roles throughout the research process is important, as is being open with my participants on the different positionalities that I brought to this research (Bourke, 2014).

As a qualitative researcher, "transparency of positionality and my intent as a researcher are now central to my researcher efforts" (Bourke, 2014, p. 7). As a former first grade teacher, parent, doctoral student, and a teacher-researcher, my experience in multiple roles can potentially

have an impact on the different phrases of this research. Being a parent of three young children, I am more of an "insider" and share a mutual connection with my participants. I recognize the importance of the role families play in early literacy development and strive to support and encourage my children in providing a literacy-enriched home environment. With my experiences as a first grade teacher, I know the importance of building relationships with families to learn about their children's funds of knowledge and provide a more enriching and engaging student-centered educational environment. I have seen the benefits of family involvement in my students' literacy development and feel strongly that familial interactions serve as a bridge between home and school literacy. Additionally, as a doctoral student and teacher-researcher, I have gained a better understanding of the theories and pedagogies that support early literacy development and the importance of family involvement.

My multiple roles in education shaped my belief that learning begins at home and that children thrive most in environments where teachers and families are supportive and play a substantive role in the child's early literacy development. Regardless of the culture, social status, and educational level, the day-to-day activities in families offer children the opportunity to participate in authentic literacy practices, which helps children to learn (Heath, 1983; Moll, 2014; Taylor, 1983). Furthermore, my epistemology on early literacy development has been influenced by my numerous educational roles and experiences; thus, I believe that culture and social interaction play a vital role in literacy development.

From my experiences in these roles I bring numerous biases on the expectations of the teacher and the family, the types of literacy interactions and activities, and the value of effective partnerships between these stakeholders. As Bourke (2014) states, "our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way" (p.1). Stated differently, it is imperative

for me to be aware of my biases in order to be as objective as possible with my views and opinions while conducting, analyzing, and interpreting data for this study.

Context of Setting

The research was conducted in Abby County located on the eastern shore of a north-eastern state. According to the US Census Bureau, as of July 2015, there were 51,540 residents living in Abby County. The demographic composition of the county's population include 82.7% Whites, 13.6% Blacks, and 3.4% Latinos. The median household income for residents is $56, 773. Due to the popular beach town located in Abby County, tourism is the leading economic sector.

Abby County has twelve schools located throughout the county with approximately 6,684 total students. As per Abby County Board of Education Basic Facts report for 2015-2016 (2016), Whites make up 66.08%, Blacks 20.15%, and 6.22% Latinos. Other ethnicities, including American Indian, Asian, and "Multi-racial" make up 7.515% of the student population. Out of the total number of students attending Abby County public schools, 44% live in households at or below the poverty level qualifying the families for the Free and Reduced Meal Service (FARMS) program.

Research Setting

Baylor Elementary School. Located in a small, rural, eastern shore community, Baylor Elementary School (BES) is one of two elementary schools in the Bakersville area. Bakersville has an estimated population of 4,500 residents. According to the town's website (2017), Whites account for 75.5%, Blacks 21.2%, Latinos 3.0%, and Asians 1.6% of the population with an average household income of $58,800. The historical aspect of the town has been preserved with forty-seven structures noted in the National Register of Historical Places.

History. Since its origin dating back to the late 1700s, BES has experienced significant transformation. BES was first known as "Bakersville Academy;" however, with the changing of location in the 1800s, the school was renamed "Baylor Academy." From the 1800s to 1954, BES served both elementary and high school aged students. Elementary leveled classes were held in the rear section of the building, which allowed for high school classes to utilize the front of the building. In 1954 with the opening of the local high school, BES became strictly an elementary school providing education for students in grades first through sixth. It was not until the 1960s, with an increase of enrollment, that kindergarten was added as a grade level. With changes in the student population, faculty, and redistricting, BES eliminated grades fifth and sixth, moving those students to another area school. Given the need for renovation and increased space to accommodate the growing population, a new building was constructed in 1978. Using the "open education space" approach, the school was designed with the media center as the central hub. Several "pods" are situated off of the media center, which houses individual classrooms as well as a common space where grade levels can meet as a whole grade if needed. Cafeteria, gym, and office spaces are located throughout the building along with an art and music room.

Present-day. Currently, the structure and design of the building remain the same; however, renovations have been made with the changing of times. With the advancement of technology, BES underwent numerous changes electronically to integrate the latest technology such as computers, smartboards, etc. Also, minor cosmetic changes have been made such as placing tile flooring in all classroom and learning areas. Four portable trailers have been placed behind the building for classroom and office space due to the increase in enrollment. In recent years, with the focus on early childhood education, BES added two Pre Kindergarten classes in

order to meet the needs of preschool aged children in the local area. Due to the changes in the diversity of the population over the years, BES became known as a one of three Title 1 schools in the county.

Title I. With 59% of the student population living in poverty, Baylor Elementary School meets the qualification of a Title I school. Therefore, the school receives extra funding from the federal government which is allotted to provide additional materials that are not funded by the district or county of which they are a part. The Board of Education and administrators for Title I schools work closely together in order to decide how the monies will be spent to best support the students. As for Baylor Elementary School, the federal dollars have been utilized to purchase books, technology, and manipulatives to support student learning as well as support several staff positions. Parents' and families' engagement is a significant aspect to the Title I program; thus, Baylor Elementary School allocates portions of the monies to be used for parent and family engagement activities such as Math, Literacy, and Science Nights.

Demographics. According to the School Improvement Plan Executive Summary Report for Baylor Elementary School (Baylor Elementary School, 2017), there are a total of 546 students in Pre K through fourth grade currently enrolled at Baylor Elementary. The table below (Table 1) illustrates the demographics of the ethnicity of the students who attend Baylor Elementary School during the 2017-2018 school year. As the table demonstrates, Whites represents half of the student population. Out of 564 students, 27% are Blacks while 11.5% are Latinos. Other non-Caucasian ethnicities, including Native Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders, make up even less of the student population.

Table 1. *Demographics of Students at Baylor Elementary School*

Ethnicity	Percent (Total # of Students: 546)

Latino	11.5 %
Black	27%
White	50.5%
Asian/Pacific Islanders	2%
Native American	0%
Others	9%

Baylor Elementary School has more than seventy faculty and staff of which sixty seven are considered administration, teaching faculty, and/or student support staff. There are 25 general education teachers and 18 teacher assistants. There are four administration positions at the elementary school: Principal, Assistant Principal, Curriculum Resource Teacher, and the School Counselor. Special education and resource teachers are assigned to a grade level. The part-time specialized teaching staff positions such as physical therapist and school psychologist are shared amongst the five elementary schools in the county.

Research Context

First grade classroom. There are five first grade teachers with classrooms all located in one pod area. All first grade classrooms have a similar set up with a community or carpet area, individual student desks, classroom library, various areas for small group work, smartboards, and other technological devices. Class size ranges from seventeen to twenty one students per class. The five first grade classes are ethnically diverse. Currently, I am the After School Care Academy Director working with students in grades second through fourth. Being part of the staff at Baylor Elementary School, I work closely with a first grade teacher and the diverse families within the classroom.

The five first grade classrooms are nestled in a pod area in the back of the school. The pod has an open concept with closets and partitions separating the five classrooms, two bathrooms, and a counter with a sink in the middle. Also in the center of the pod, the special education teacher has a small area where they work with students throughout the day.

The first grade classroom utilized for the study is located in the middle of the five classroom areas. A total of twenty students are in the first grade classroom with ten boys and ten girls. Having a small space, the teacher has strategically utilized every aspect of the room. In the middle of the room, the teacher has arranged the students' desks in groups. Her desk is in the back corner by the one small window. A bright colored rug is in the front of the room where the students gather throughout the day for lessons, read alouds, and other fun activities. Positioned on the front wall by the rug, the smartboard is used throughout the day to enhance instruction such as displaying books, worksheets, or playing videos from the internet. Colorful crates full of books for the children to read are located on the floor by the rug. On either side of the classroom, there are two tables where small group instruction occurs with the teacher and education assistants. Student work such as writing samples, strategy posters, and ABCs are displayed on the walls throughout the room. An area on the back wall is designated to exhibit student work and changes throughout each month. The time I was in observing I saw math and writing work. Student work is neatly completed and positive comments from the teacher are written on the work to highlight the student's achievement with the activity. ABC's are placed above the smartboard for students to view to help with forming letters or spelling words. Strategy posters such as "transition words" used for writing are placed on the wall for students to reference in order to support writing.

Participants

A multistage sampling (Creswell, 2014) procedure was used to select an early childhood teacher, five first graders and their families who attend Baylor Elementary school and are enrolled in the early childhood teacher's class for the 2017-2018 school year.

Teacher participant. Working with the administration of the elementary school, I asked for teacher nominations to participate in the study. Using a purposive sampling procedure (Creswell, 2014; Duke & Mallette, 2011), one first grade teacher was selected as the teacher participant.

Sally. After receiving an undergraduate degree in marketing, Sally realized her true passion was working with young children. Thus, she earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education and began her ten-year teaching career in the southwest. While teaching in the southwest, she taught both first grade and third grade as well as spent one year teaching a combination class of first and second graders. After starting a family, Sally and her husband decided to move back to the east coast to be closer to her extended family. Moving back to the area, Sally took a job as an educational assistant for two years before being hired as a first grade teacher at Baylor Elementary School. While teaching first grade the last five years at Baylor Elementary School, she has had the opportunity to be a mentor to new teachers and teacher candidates and serves on numerous committees. The teacher is thirty seven and has taught for a total of ten years. Having a master's degree in Early Childhood Education, the teacher is continuing to take more classes to work on her recertification and earn plus thirty. Sally is 37, married, and has a third grader and kindergartner who enjoy reading as much as she does. Both of her sons attend Baylor Elementary School.

First grader participants. The five first grade children participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were a first grade student in the teacher participant's classroom

whose family agreed to participate. The child's parent or guardian was present while the Child Assent form (See Appendix A for Child Assent Form) was being read using child-friendly language and signed by the child. If the child is 7 years of age and older, with the parent present, they signed the form. If they are under 7, oral assent was sufficient. Out of the twenty students in the classroom, five students signed the consent form to participate in the study.

Table 2 describes the demographics of the five first graders who participated in the study. According to the table, there was only one female out of the five participants. The same female was also the only Latina and special education student in the study. Also, there was only one Black participant and two participants in the Free and Reduced Meal Program at Baylor Elementary School. All five participants were seven years old. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and were used in all data collection and analysis.

Table 2. *Description of the Five First Graders*

Child (Pseudonym)	Ethnicity	Gender	Age of Participant	FARMS	ESOL	Special Education
Logan	Black	M	7	Y	N	N
Will	White	M	7	N	N	N
Mike	White	M	7	N	N	N
Jack	White	M	7	N	N	N
Lucy	Latina	F	7	Y	Y	Y

Note. Female=F; Male=M.

Logan. Logan, a seven year old Black child, wears his "Captain America" jacket every day. He has a little sister in Pre Kindergarten at Baylor Elementary. He is energetic about learning and bright child.

Will. Will is a White, seven year old boy who is full of life. Always smiling and eager to learn, Will has many friends both boys and girls in the classroom. Will is the youngest child of two in his family. His brother is a fourth grader at Baylor Elementary School.

Mike. Mike is also seven years old and White. He is an easy going child and gets along with all his peers. Mike is the oldest of two and his little sister attends Baylor Elementary School as well. She is in Pre K.

Jack. For Jack, this is his first year at Baylor Elementary School. He is the middle child with an older sister and a younger sister who both attend Baylor Elementary School. One sister is in fourth grade and the other is in the 3 year- old pilot program class. Jack is a detail-orientated student who takes pride in his work.

Lucy. The only female in the group of student participants, Lucy is in the English Language Learner and Special Education programs at Baylor Elementary School. She is an only child; however, she lives with her two younger cousins. She is bilingual in Spanish and English. Lucy is a happy little girl who is always smiling.

Family participants. For this research, the term family was used to refer to all members of the family such as parents, guardians, siblings, and grandparents as well as other relatives who are a significant part of the child's life. Working with the administration of the elementary school and the first grade teacher, I invited all the families in the class to participate in the study.

Logan's family. Brandy and Larry were born and raised in the local area. They have a son and daughter. Their son, Logan, is in first grade and their daughter just started Pre K at Baylor Elementary School. Currently, Brandy is working a full-time job and taking classes at the local community college to be a dental hygienist. Larry, who graduated from the local high school, works for the convention center in the area.

Will's family. The Manning family relocated to the East Coast four years ago from a group of islands in the Pacific. Having started their family while living in the islands, both Nikki and Jerry wanted to be closer to family; therefore, they moved to a place that was close to both the family and a beach. Not only was being close to family and the beach important, but a good school district was high on their list as well. Nikki asserts, "we handpicked Abby County." They have two boys, one in first grade and one in fourth grade. Jerry is a dentist and just recently started working only a mile away from home. Nikki has a master's degree in Public Health and has worked numerous part time jobs since having children.

***Mike's family*.** The Bennett family moved to the area from the west coast. Even though Elaine and Brian moved back to the area fourteen years ago, Elaine stated during our group interview introductions, "I've only lived on the eastern shore, um ... Well, since 2004, but it still feels new." Brian was born and raised in the area; therefore, he was familiar with the area and all it has to offer. Once they moved back, Elaine and Brian were surrounded by family. They have two children, who are in first grade and pre- kindergarten. Elaine has a Master's Degree in Social Work and works for the state university system. Brian is currently working on his master's in technology and works at the local university in the IT department.

Jack's family. One year ago, the Aubrey family moved from an urban area to the rural area of Baylor County. Rick, Jack's father, came to the area a few months before the rest of the family to begin his job as an operations manager for a local flooring company. Jane felt strongly that her three children finish out the school year before entering a new one. Now her children are at Baylor Elementary School in fourth grade, first grade, and the three year old program. With a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology, Jane previously worked with families who had a

child with autism. Once they started a family, she decided to work part time and currently works two or three days a week with her husband.

***Lucy's family*.** Mandy, a single mother, is raising Lucy with the help of her mother and sister. Mandy's parents brought her and her four brothers and sisters to the United States when she was eight years old from Mexico. Although Mandy has been living in the United States for the majority of her life, she continues to share with her daughter aspects of her Mexican culture. Currently, she lives with her mother, sister, and her sister's family. At the age of four, her daughter Lucy was diagnosed with a special need. Mandy works full time; however, her schedule is flexible which gives her the ability to take her daughter to weekly appointments and to be more active in her child's life.

The below table (see Table 3) illustrates the demographics of the five family participants for the study. Five families agreed to participate in the study. As the table illustrates, three out of the five families have both parents who have graduated from college with two of them having a master's degree, while one is working on his degree. Out of the five families, one is a single parent. The age range amongst the families varies from the youngest being twenty six and the oldest being forty two.

Table 3. *Description of Parent(s) Participants*

Families (Pseudonym)	First Grader	Ethnicity	Age of Participant	Occupation	Education
Brandy	Logan	Black	26	Works at hospital	High School

Larry		Black	29	Works for the city	High School
Nikki Jerry	Will	White White	40 42	Works Part Time Dentist	Master's Public Health Dental School
Elaine Brian	Mike	White White	38 39	Works for state university system Works for Saxton University	Master's Social Work Working on Master's in Technology
Jane Rick	Jack	White White	38 40	Works Part Time at local tile store Works Full Time at local tile store	BS Psychology High School
Mandy	Lucy	Latina	29	Works Full Time at local restaurant	High School

Data Sources

Merriam (2014) suggests that qualitative research utilizing "multiple methods of data collection will bring more validity to the study" (p. 12). Indeed, gathering multiple data sources is imperative to identify your participants' lived experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Merriam 2014, Seidman, 2006). For my research, I collected data via group interviews and individual interviews, classroom observations, home visits, teacher's reflective journal, and documents/artifacts (see Table 4). For the most part, the mothers and the five first graders

represented the families as the primary participant for the study. During data collection, the mothers participated in both the group and individual interviews as well as the home visits. The fathers, if their schedules allowed, were present during the home visits.

Interviews. Topical interviewing is an approach used when trying to "seek perceptions and attitudes toward some topic" (Glesne, 2016, p. 97). I conducted topical interviews both in a group setting and individually to gain more information on roles, the types of early literacy related activities engaged in with the child, and how participants view and define early literacy.

Group interviews with families. Once families have signed the consent form, I coordinated a time for a group interview with the families. The group interview was held at Baylor Elementary. The format for the interviews were both semi-structured and unstructured (Glesne, 2016, Seidman, 2016), lasting between forty-five minutes to an hour. Additionally, a discussion guide was provided to allow the participants the freedom to explore other relevant topics that arose during the group interview. The participants were encouraged to rely on their own experiences when answering questions or to share relevant events and activities about their child in first grade from their experiences to illustrate a point. I used the attached questions (see Appendix B) for the group interview to explore the families' experiences with early literacy development and types of literacy interactions they have with their child. One group interview was scheduled in the beginning of the data collection process, the second interview was scheduled in the latter stages of data collection. I audio-recorded and transcribed the group interviews verbatim. Pseudonyms for participants were used in transcription of the interview and personal names or descriptions of other individuals were not included.

As far as the two group interviews, scheduling with five different families was challenging. With every family having different schedules, finding one time for all to meet posed a few challenges; however, with everyone being flexible we were able to make it work. With all the families having children, the mothers were the ones who attended the interviews while the fathers stayed home with the children. Baylor Elementary School was a central location, hence both group interviews were conducted in the media center in the evening. Both group interviews lasted about an hour and half which provided me the opportunity to gain rich data.

Individual interviews. I conducted individual interviews with both the teacher and each family. The first set of interviews were semi-structured (Glesne, 2016) using discussion questions to guide the interviews (Appendix C and D). To help guide the development of the discussion questions, the book *Kidwatching* (Owocki & Goodman, 2002) was utilized. Using an unstructured format (Glesne, 2016), the second set of interviews (Appendix E and F) had open-ended questions that expanded upon the analysis of the group interview, individual interviews, classroom observations, and home visits. The individual interviews were conducted at Baylor Elementary School or at a place where the participant felt comfortable (such as the local library or restaurant). Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour. I audio-recorded and transcribed the individual interviews verbatim. Pseudonyms for participants were used in transcription of the interview and did not include personal names or descriptions of other individuals.

For the two individual interviews with the first grade teacher, we met in her classroom after school. Sally is not only a teacher but a busy mother of two; therefore, I worked around her schedule when planning the interviews. Both interviews lasted approximately an hour and half,

with a little small talk in the beginning to help create a comfortable and relaxing environment. The two individual interviews with each family were not as difficult to schedule. Each of the individual interviews were either conducted at their house or at the school. Again, the five mothers were the members of the families available for the interviews. I asked the participants to decide on the location in order to ensure they were comfortable. Each individual interview lasted about an hour, for some a little longer depending on the discussion that occurred.

Observations

According to Glesne (2016), qualitative researchers rely on numerous forms of data collection. In additional to group and individual interviews, I also spent time with the participants in the school and home setting. When conducting observations, a researcher "carefully observes, systematically experiences, and consciously records in detail the many aspects of a situation" (Glesne, 2016, p. 68). I observed the teacher, families, and children to learn more about their experiences with early literacy development in a variety of settings. As Duke & Mallette (2011) explain, "to understand participants' perspectives, the researcher must live in their world as a participant, interacting with group members, observing, and interviewing" (p. 138). Therefore, I utilized a phenomenological approach to better observe and document home and school literacies practices through the lived experiences of the teacher and families.

Classroom/Teacher observations. I coordinated with the classroom teacher to schedule fifteen classroom observations. Each classroom observation lasted one hour. During each classroom observation, I recorded written field notes using the observation protocol that was developed (See Appendix G). Classroom observations focused on the teacher's role with early literacy development as she interacted with students during whole group, small group, and individual activities. I limited observational data collection to interaction involving the

participant. Pseudonyms for participants were used in recording observations and did not include personal names or descriptions of other individuals present during the observation. The classroom observations were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. During the classroom observations, I took detailed observational notes and triangulated the data sources. By utilizing field notes and triangulation, I transcribed audio recorded materials from the five participants. Along with the field notes, I triangulated multiple data sources. Also, I utilized a time stamp to ensure only the voices of consenting participants were analyzed. Thus, protecting the other participants who were not a part of the study.

I completed fifteen classroom observations within a three month period. In order to complete fifteen classroom observations in a short period of time, I scheduled two hour long observations per week. Visiting the classroom allowed me the opportunity to gain more insight into the experiences of the first grade teacher in the classroom environment, Sally's interaction with the five first grade children, and how the first grade children interact in their classroom environment.

Child observations. During both the classroom and home visits, I observed the child's interaction with the teacher and families. Throughout each classroom observation and home visit, I recorded written field notes. Both the classroom observations and home visits focused on the teacher's and/or families' interaction with early literacy development. Since the research takes into account the authentic learning environment of the classroom and home, other children and adults were present during the observation. However, I only focused on the five children with signed assent forms.

Home Visits

As Whitmore (2007) asserts, “when we enter families’ homes with the intentions to learn rather than to teach, we learn amazing and surprising information” (p. 182). Home visits provided opportunities to interact, observe, and communicate with families in their natural setting which supplied data on first grader’s early literacy development. I coordinated with the families to schedule two home visits which lasted approximately twenty minutes to an hour depending on the interaction occurring. I developed a home visit protocol (see Appendix H). Home visits were conducted in a courteous and considerate manner in order to “leave families with a sense of assurance that [the researcher] would use the information gathered in efforts to help teachers and students; that [the researcher] had an educational agenda” (Moll, 2014, p. 124). The purpose of the home visits was to “pay attention to detail, for [the researcher] is interested in the mundane- that which is easy to overlook-in the concrete conditions and practices of life” (Moll, 2014, p. 123). I was attentive throughout the visits in order to observe what was occurring in households that supported early literacy development in first graders. During the home visits, I took detailed observational notes to document what was observed with regard to home experiences supporting early literacy development. The interview questions I asked during the home visits were semi-structured**.** After the group interview, I scheduled my first visit with the family. My second visit was scheduled at the end of my first home visit**.** All home visits were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Every adult who participated during the home visits filled out the Consent to Participate in Research form (Appendix I). During the home visits, I only audio recorded participants, both adults and children, who signed a consent and assent form. If during the home visit there were adult family members who had not signed a Consent to Participate in Research form, I asked them to sign the form in order for them to be included in the recording. If the adult or adults who were present during the home visits decided not to sign,

then I did not include them in the audio recording. To ensure that only family members who have signed the consent form would be audio recorded, I utilized the detailed observational notes and time stamp to ensure only the voices of consenting participants were analyzed. If participants did not feel comfortable with the home visits, they did not have to participate in the home visits; however, they were still permitted to participate in other aspects of the study. I stored transcriptions and electronic copies of documents and audio files in password protected files in a password protected folder. Pseudonyms for participants were used in transcriptions of the home visits and did not include personal names or descriptions of other individuals.

The home visits provided me with an abundance of data pertaining to the families and their home environment. Visiting each family twice in their home environment required flexibility and time. Each home visit lasted between twenty minutes to an hour. While visiting the homes of the families, I was able to learn more about their environment, interaction as a family, as well as what occurs in their daily routine.

Artifacts

Collecting documents and artifacts from participants "enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 191). Hence, I asked participants to provide a variety of documents and artifacts for data analysis.

Documents/Artifacts. According to Glesne (2016), participants' artifacts "tell specific stories" and "have meaning and function" (p. 84). Therefore, the teacher and family participants were asked to share examples of emergent literacies text that were significant to them. Such texts included but were not limited to lesson plans and child's work products, either from school or home assignments. Documents and artifacts were photocopied or scanned using mobile scanning technology. Identifying information was removed prior to data analysis.

Reflective journal. After the first individual interview, the teacher participant received a folder with copies of a reflective journal (McKechnie, 2008) (See Appendix J). The teacher participant was asked to reflect on her experiences with early literacy and interactions she had with her first graders. Utilizing a reflective journal, the teacher participant was asked to record what she did and observed while participating in the literacy lesson observed during the classroom observation. I asked the teacher to reflect only on the lessons that were being observed during the fifteen classroom observations. This accumulated to ten reflective journals. After the first individual interview, I provided instruction for completing the reflective journal. Additionally, an example of a filled out reflective journal was provided in the folder for a reference guide. In order to have ongoing data analysis, I collected the teacher's journal entry the day after the lesson/unit was completed. When the teacher needed more pages for the reflective journal, more copies were made.

Table 4. *Data Sources for This Study*

Data Sources	Purpose	Participants
Group Interview (Semi Structured & Unstructured)	How participants define literacy and family literacy; what are their roles in their child's literacy development; what types of literacy interactions; demographic information	Teacher Families
Individual Interviews (Semi Structured & Unstructured)	Elaborate more in depth on their answers from group interview; to share personal stories on the topic	Teacher Families
Classroom Observations	What types of literacy interactions and/or activities are occurring in the classroom; insights on how the teacher and students feel about the interactions	Teacher Children
Home Visits	What types of literacy interactions and/or activities	Families Children

	are occurring in the day to day lives of the participants; insights on how the parents feel about the interactions	
Reflective Journal	Teacher reflects on the types of literacy interactions and/or activities that are occurring in the classroom; insights on how the teacher feels about the interactions	Teacher
Documents/Artifacts	Gain more knowledge on the different types of early literacy activities occurring in both the home and the school environments	Teacher Families Children

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, both data collection and analysis should occur concurrently. Being able to make ongoing changes or adjustments to the data throughout the study, is an important advantage of simultaneously collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 2014). An inductive approach to each of my data sources was used to identify common themes as well as patterns and terminology that participants use. Using an inductive approach allowed a more methodical set of actions for evaluating collected data; using a systematic set of procedures for interpreting data yielded findings that were beneficial for this study. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to organize and manage data which "[allowed] an increased focus on ways of examining the meaning of what [was] recorded" (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 2).

Using thematic analysis, I used codes to organize the different categories discovered in the data (Glesne, 2016). A code, as defined by Saldana (2016), "is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a

portion of language-based or visual data" (p.4). In other words, what is the meaning behind the words of the participants? Holistic coding was utilized during the first cycle of coding. This type of coding, as defined by Saldana (2016), "applies a single code to each large unit of data in the corpus to capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop" (p. 165). Using this type of coding, I was able to analyze a larger portion of the data at a time instead of line-by-line, thus allowing me the opportunity to look for and identify themes and categories in each piece of data. Also, I observed how themes and patterns emerged in the data. To better analyze the data and begin to find themes, second cycle coding was conducted. Pattern coding (Saldana, 2016) was applied to condense the codes into manageable categories; thus I was able to notice emerging themes. Again, I reviewed the data to discover meaningful themes and patterns. Using an interpretation means of data transformation (Glesne, 2016), I was able to identify emerging themes.

Timeline for the Study

This research was conducted over a nine month period starting September 2017 and concluding at the end of April 2018. Below Table 5 summarizes the timeline for the study. At the end of September, data collection began with a group interview with families and an individual interview with the teacher. After the individual interview with the teacher, the teacher received her reflective journal and for the next two and half months the teacher completed the journal. Once the first group interview had been conducted, I discussed with the families about scheduling the home visits which occurred two times per family during October and November. Along with the reflective journal, during the months of October and November, I observed in the classroom at least once a week observing early literacy interactions occurring. Documents/artifacts collection occurred during this time as well. Second individual interviews

and group interviews with the teacher and families were then conducted for participants to expand upon the data collected.

Date	Research Activity
September 5 2017	IRB Committee Meeting
Mid-September 2017	Selection of Participants; meeting with participants; all consent forms signed and returned
End of September 2017	Begin data collection; complete first group interview, family individual interviews, and teacher's individual interviews
October 2017	Continue to collect data; conduct home visits, teacher's reflective journals; classroom observations; document collection; data analysis
November 2017	Continue with data collection; conduct second group interview; conduct teacher and family individual interviews, teacher's reflective journal; home visits; classroom observations; document collection; data analysis
First of December 2017	All data collection complete; continue with data analysis
Middle of December 2017 through March 2018	Develop a written study that elaborates on all aspects of the research; send drafts to committee
May 2018	Submit dissertation

Table 5. *Time Line for Study*

Trustworthiness/Validity

Creswell (2014) defines qualitative validity as the "process [in which] the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures" (p. 201). For the study, I utilized

numerous validity procedures to ensure the credibility of my discoveries. Using multiple strategies, I was able to evaluate the authenticity of the findings while at the same time present the findings in a manner credible to the readers (Creswell, 2014).

Collecting data using multiple approaches such as group interviews, individual interviews, classroom observations, home visits, and reflective journals provided triangulation of the data. As LeCompte & Preissels (1993) asserts, "using multiple sources, in fact, corroborates the coding and enhances the trustworthiness of the findings" (pp. 264-265). Member checking was an effective tool to ensure accuracy of the data by sharing the findings of the study with the participants. Therefore, I conducted a follow-up interview with the participants and provided them with a draft of the major findings. During the interview, I allowed them the opportunity to provide any feedback on the findings. Additionally, transcripts from the group and individual interviews were reviewed to check for accuracies and followed up with the participants to see if questions arose. Taking the time to follow the above strategies served to validate my findings and build trust for the study.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I presented an in-depth description of the methodology utilized for the study. Within the chapter, I discussed the theories that support the research as well as a detailed description of the elementary school and first grade classroom. Along with the research setting, I provided a narrative of the research participants. A rational for each of the data sources was stated as well as a table highlighting the sources. Additionally, I discussed the validity and trustworthiness of the research. In the next chapter, I present the major themes in the data illustrating the experiences of the teacher and families regarding a child's early literacy development.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings for the study. At the same time, I integrate snapshots of the first grade classroom and families' homes, offering a context for understanding the environments of the participants. Through group and individual interviews, reflective journals, observations, artifacts, and home visits, I was able to hear the participants' voices and gain a better understanding of their views and beliefs regarding early literacy development, as well as how their environment supports literacy development. Next, I present the research findings and data analyses as well as describe the application of the research methods. Then, I elaborate on the themes in the two contexts, first grade classroom and families' homes, that were identified from the data analysis as well as on the communication between the teacher and the families. In conclusion, I provide a summary of the chapter.

Early Childhood Teacher and Classroom

First Grade Teacher's Experiences with Early Literacy

Personal experiences. Through the two individual interviews, I gathered information regarding Sally's personal and educational experiences with early literacy which influenced how she defines terms such as literacy, early literacy development, and family literacy.

When I asked Sally during her first individual interview to elaborate on her literacy practices outside of the classroom, she alluded to the number of books she has her in home. As a mother of two boys, she strives to provide them with a literacy-filled home environment. While discussing her home environment, Sally stated, "I've really started my own children reading from an early age. We do a lot of reading together." Once she became a mother, her personal reading was set aside in order to focus on reading what her children prefer. She candidly explained, "I read a lot of books, just maybe not the books that I have chosen." For Sally, reading with her children is just as important as reading for herself. She continued to discuss how much her children enjoy reading and seem to have established a love for reading. You can see this love for reading from her boys when she explained, "they would really rather have a story read to them before bed instead of dessert."

Professional experiences. When Sally switches environments from home to school, her love for literacy continues. During her graduate program, Sally was required to take educational classes pertaining to literacy. Given the number of years since she was in her master's degree program, Sally had a hard time remembering the specific courses she took for literacy. However, last year Sally enrolled in two literacy courses to complete her re-certification process. In Sally's first individual interview, she stated, "I just took two courses through an online university program titled Children's Literacy and Reading Assessment." Along with strengthening her knowledge of literacy through graduate classes, Sally expands her learning by participating in professional development through the school district as well as holding a position on the reading committee for the county. During one particular professional development, Sally gained new information on how to plan for a small reading group. When asked to discuss more about

planning for her small reading group time, she elaborated on taking knowledge from other colleagues who had success with their form of instruction. Sally asserted:

> what I used was presented to us from some teachers at [Sandy Creek] that were successful with it. The presenters were teachers that I know and respect, so I've just kind of taken it and used it in my own classroom with little changes here and there.

Expanding her knowledge of literacy through graduate level courses, participation in professional development, and her personal life, Sally gained more experiences with literacy that have impacted her role in a child's early literacy development.

Sally's view of literacy. Through her own personal and professional experiences, Sally has developed her own view on the meaning of literacy, early literacy development, and family literacy. Knowing that a teacher's belief can have an impact on his or her classroom structure and instruction (Clark & Peterson, 1984, Darling-Hammond & Bradford, 2005), I was interested in learning her meanings of literacy, early literacy development, and family literacy. During the first individual interview, I asked the question, "How would you define the word literacy?" To my surprise, Sally was slow to respond; however, laughing as she spoke she said, "Um, I don't know. I've never thought about it." Continuing, Sally talked about how literacy to her was reading and writing, which, as she explained "seems too simple that it's just reading and writing because it's such a big concept." She elaborated by explaining different concepts with reading such as "tracking print and being able to put letters with sounds to make words which then leads to putting words together to make meaning." When asked to define literacy, Sally's responses highlighted aspects of the reading readiness paradigm which focuses on sequential skills (Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1991). One facet of the reading readiness theory is centered on students mastering skills sequentially in order to learn how to read. In hearing the answer of Sally, I was intrigued to see if her view of the word literacy

influenced her literacy instruction. Further in this chapter, I provide more in-depth information regarding how the teacher's form of instruction is impacted by her personal and professional views of the term literacy.

Early literacy development and family literacy. During the first individual interview, I asked the question "How would you define the term early literacy development?" Sally quickly responded:

> I would describe it as a very complex concept that starts from day one of a child, of a baby's life, that from the very beginning they are observing everything around them whether it be something that is presented to them or things just in their environment. And so children from an early age can read the environmental print even if they can't read words.

Sally shared the McDonald's restaurant sign as an example of environmental print, suggesting that children know the big yellow M signifies McDonalds which is a familiar place for many children. As she stated, "children can read the things around them."

Another aspect Sally focused on with this particular term was the importance of the family. As a first grade teacher, Sally can see after the first few days of school the students who have had a solid foundation of early literacy development. When continuing our discussion on early literacy development, she explained:

> I think that children starting from the earliest age they can with exposure to text, being read to, is vital to their foundation that we work off of in first grade. A lot of students come to us not having that time being read to and you can tell it makes a big difference in the language that they're exposed to, their language they use, and how to maneuver a text, and then just answering questions and knowing about books and stories. This transfers into being able to write a story.

Thus, Sally's response led to our discussion about how she perceives family literacy. For example, Sally further elaborated on the importance of the parent involvement when she stated:

> Family literacy is the development of reading and literacy. Obviously from an early age, it does involve the parents a lot, and the parents to sit down and read to their child or to ask questions while they're reading. Not just read to them, but, it's more than that, it's asking the questions while they're reading and asking the kids their ideas.

Sally perceives the family as playing a key role in literacy development. According to Sally, modeling excellent reading habits is one way a parent helps their child develop a love for reading. She asserted, "if they see a parent doing it on their own time and sees their parent has a love of reading, then chances are they will take that on as well."

Teacher's goals and expectations. In our first individual interview, Sally described in detail what she expects from first graders entering her classroom on the first day. When the students begin first grade, she expects that they have mastered foundational skills such as letter and sound recognition, sight words, and blending sounds to make words. For Sally, having foundational skills mastered, allows for the first graders to be able to achieve the first grade goals. In the excerpt below Sally described her literacy goals and expectations for first grade students:

> Once they're in the classroom, I expect them to want to further their experience with literacy and be able to then take those foundational skills and apply it to bigger text, so they become more fluent and not having to sound out and blend words. I expect them to be able to sit and read a book on their own without asking for help. I want them to do it on their own and really use self-questioning while they read to make sure that things make sense while they're reading and not always jump to ask for help.

She continues to elaborate on her expectations for writing as seen in the below excerpt:

> They are expected to be seated, silent, self-reliant. We're building up our time and our stamina and I don't want them to ask me how to spell things. I want them to be able to listen for the sounds in the word and write the sounds that they hear. Even if they don't spell it correctly, I want them to start thinking about each sound that they hear.

From enrolling in graduate classes to expand her knowledge to providing abundant amounts of printed materials and other resources in the classroom, Sally is surrounding her students with reading and writing. By following the allotted schedule time for literacy in the daily schedule, Sally is providing students with the opportunity for literacy. For her, literacy is essential for a child to develop in order for a child to achieve academic and personal success;

therefore, she utilizes the function of the classroom and her resources to teach literacy within the classroom environment.

First Grade Classroom

From the arrangement of the desks to the types of resources available, Sally is providing a classroom environment that allows students to read and write. Along with resources, Sally's classroom management techniques and systems help to provide a structured setting. Sally implemented skill-based activities and strategies as well as materials focused on literacy skills in her first grade classroom.

Arrangement of the classroom. When entering the first grade classroom for my first observation, I found the room to be welcoming and full of energy. This same feeling remained throughout the duration of the classroom observations. To keep the students focused, Sally constantly rearranged the desks. Students would at times sit in two long rows where other times they sat in groups of four. Despite the arrangement of the desks, students were able to work with partners, groups, or individually.

Resources. Throughout the classroom observations, I was able to view the setting of the room as well as all the resources available for the teacher and the students. The nametag on the desk was an artifact I collected, which provides all the students with information to help with literacy learning such as print awareness. Positioned at the center top of the desk, the nametag not only included the students' names, but other helpful strategies and resources as well. Alphabet, number line, hundreds chart, shapes, and color words were vibrantly situated on the name tag. Another unique feature that is included on the name tag is a "Stuck on a Word Chart." Using a hand, five different strategies were written on each finger reminding students of approaches they can utilize when they see a word they do not know. "Does it make sense?, Does

it sound right?, Does it look right?, Get your mouth ready. Does the word look like another word you know?" were the five strategies depicted as well as "Think about the story, Check the picture, and Look for chunks." During one particular classroom observation, Mike and Will were reading independently and both came to words they did not know. At different times, I observed them read the strategies on the nametag to guide them into figuring out the correct word. For Will, the "check the picture" helped him to determine the word "leopard" in a story he was reading. Mike, on the other hand, found the "look for chunks" helpful when he came to a compound word he could not pronounce. Along with the nametag, other resources were displayed on the walls throughout the classroom such as the alphabet, students' math, reading, and writing work, sight words, anchor charts, and other classroom resources. After a Writer's Workshop session, the students had created a chart filled with transition words Sally posted on the wall. During a classroom observation, I noticed Logan utilizing the chart. Before the students started writing, Sally reminded the students by saying, "Be sure to use your transition words in your 'how to text'." While writing, Logan periodically looked at the chart to figure out what word to use.

Technology resources. Along with a variety of posters and charts, Sally utilizes different forms of technology to teach reading and writing. As she stated in our interviews, "we supplement our literacy time with apps like Raskind's (2018) where they can read on their own with iPads." Each grade level has two carts with twenty-five iPads for students to use. For first grade, the five teachers share the iPads among their classrooms. Sally uses the iPads during guided reading when students are working independently. After the group, who is working independently finishes their work, they are allowed to utilize the iPads. Sally designates certain sites such as RazKids for students to visit during their iPad time. RazKids is an approved

reading site for students to use in the county. The site provides students with comprehensive leveled reading resources where students have their own portals. Each child in the class is provided a login and password for the site which allows the teacher to view and assess where students are working. This portal also allows the students to utilize the site at home through the BES website.

Classroom management. Sally noted that she created a structured environment where classroom routines help manage classroom behavior as well as provide a classroom environment with less distraction from negative behavior. On each visit to the class, Sally used phrases such as "Oh, class, class,class" and the students would respond "Oh, yes,yes, yes." This attention-grabbing chant started by the teacher would alert the students to stop what they were doing and listen to the teacher. While observing a writing lesson, the teacher said to the students as they were working independently, "we are seated and silent so we can be self-reliant." When hearing this phrase, the students know to focus and work independently on their work. For Sally, the goal is to teach the students to solve literacy problems by relying on their own knowledge, thus using their strategies before asking for help.

According to Sally, to help manage the students' behavior, she has a classroom management protocol in place. An artifact for the study was a photo of the behavior system chart. Located on the wall beside the outside door, there is a chart with seven different colored squares. Each of the colored squares is labeled: purple=role model; pink=outstanding; blue=showing pride; green=ready to learn; yellow=think about it; orange=teacher's choice; red=parent contact/office. Students each have clip and start on "ready to learn." Throughout the day students will be rewarded for good behavior by moving up as well as moving down for negative behavior. Students can move up or down or back up depending on their choices and

behaviors throughout the day. Jack has been one of the lucky students to move to the top as a role model. During a math and writing observation, Jack was able to transition from math to writing quickly and quietly. Sally provided students with the instruction to end math and prepare for writing and Jack put all his math materials away quietly and quickly and was prepared to begin. Seeing his face when the teacher told him to move his clip up and he realized he was on "role model" was priceless. For Sally, the chart provides the students with structure which allows instructional time to be utilized effectively with less distraction from negative behavior.

Providing praise to the students throughout the day was another approach the teacher utilized to promote positive behavior. Throughout the classroom observations, I constantly heard Sally saying phrases such as "Good job! I liked how you sounded that out," "I like your fluency. It is like you are talking to me," and "I love hearing students stretching out their words." For Mike, this kept him engaged and motivated. At times during Writer's Workshop, Mike focused more on illustrating his text and less time on writing. Hearing, "I love how nicely Mike is writing today" from the teacher, kept Mike engaged throughout the writing block. Based on multiple classroom observations, I noticed Sally was providing praise constructively and consistently in order to encourage students to respect the learning environment. Hence, I saw the five first graders more eager to follow the classroom rules which in turn provided Sally the opportunity to utilize the instructional time productively throughout the day. I observed more students staying on task and more focused to learn without the added distractions of negative behavior.

Daily routine. As a part of Sally's classroom management, she has a structured daily routine that allows for learning in literacy to occur with less distraction from negative behavior. As she stated in one of her reflective journals, "I try to keep my class on a very structured routine

so that they know exactly what to expect and they are comfortable with it so they can apply what they know to new knowledge."

During our first interview, I asked Sally to describe what a typical day looks like for her students. She stressed the importance of establishing classroom management in order to provide the students with effective instruction and learning environment. "Unpacking book bags, copying homework, eating breakfast, and listening to the morning announcements" are all a part of the students' morning routine as Sally stated in our interview. Below she continued to elaborate on instructional time of the day:

> After morning routine, we have our Enrichment block where we break into groups within the whole grade. Then we do foundational work for the next half hour block. Then I do whole group reading. Next, an hour of guiding reading then we have our lunch, recess, and specials. When we return from specials we have an hour for math and then we end with Writers Workshop and our end of the day routine.

Sally noted the majority of the day is focused on literacy either with reading or writing. With the amount of time spent on literacy activities, Sally views literacy and literacy development as an essential part of the classroom environment and a child's life. Sally has made reading and writing a priority and is creating a learning environment for her students to read and write daily. Knowing the students are more alert and awake in the morning, she believes scheduling literacy earlier in the day is a huge benefit for the student's early literacy development. As she noted, "I feel like that's important to have that literacy block in the morning because they are ready to go and awake before the afternoon hits and they are tired." As far as what occurs during each of the literacy blocks, Sally described in the second interview what occurs after enrichment. She stated:

> That time is more of a read aloud type of reading block where we're reading texts above their reading levels to get that richer text. Then they answer a lot of questions about and have to think about the text so that then when we break into our guided and foundational time, we're really working on those phonic skills and reading text at their level.

Each block of literacy time has been structured to work on different aspects of literacy development utilizing a variety of instructional practices from whole group to small group to individual time. Based on classroom observations, Sally utilized skill-based literacy instructional practices which was not a reflection of her theoretical belief. When analyzing Sally's views, I was surprised at the differences in her responses. Whereas her definition of the word "literacy" reflects characteristics of reading readiness, her interpretation of "early literacy development" and "family literacy" exhibits more aspects and characteristics of the emergent literacy paradigm. Regarding the teacher's beliefs and instructional literacy practices, the data revealed a disconnect between her theoretical beliefs and her instructional practices.

Reading Program

Throughout this study, I was able to learn more on the type of reading program Sally utilized in her first grade classroom. During our interviews and classroom observations, Sally explained first grade does not have a specific reading program. Per the county, Sally is required to utilize the College and Career Readiness Standards as well as Universal By Design (UbD) (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) lessons and units. When I asked what UbD units were, Sally explained how a committee of teachers from each grade within the county was formed to create reading units using the UbD framework. As Wiggins and McTighe (2011) assert, "the UbD framework is a three stage 'backward design' process used to plan curriculum units that include desired understanding and performance tasks that require transfer" (p. 7). During the planning, the committee members researched many resources such as units from the Massachusetts Department of Education during the planning of the UbD units. Sally, a member of the committee, helped to edit and modify the units for the first grade teachers in the county. Being a

part of the reading committee, Sally was knowledge on how to use the units in the classroom. According to Sally, the UbD units "meet and support the College and Career Readiness Standards for first grade." The units are supposed to be used county wide, but as Sally stated, "some schools do their own." As for the first grade team at BES, they met and decided which units would meet the needs of their students. The team worked together to change the order of the units to flow better with the writing curriculum. As Sally described:

> So writer's workshop a few years ago before the UbD units, we did the poetry unit. A lot of our students don't hear poetry, don't read it, don't see it, don't hear it so that was a challenge for the students. Last year when we saw the UbD units, I was like oh poetry. We have to put that with the poetry writing unit and the student did so much better.

The UbD units are flexible and easy to modify. Sally and her colleagues have been working constantly to modify the UbD units to meet the needs of the students.

Reading instruction in the first grade classroom. As far as how Sally teaches reading, the data revealed she utilized a skill-based type of literacy instruction. Sound flashcards, decodable books, and phonics worksheets are an example of the different types of skill-based reading activities I observed while visiting Sally's classroom.

Guided reading. As for the guided reading block, with no set reading program, the teacher has the freedom to structure it to best fit the needs in the classroom. Sally defined her guided reading block as "My time to work with a small group of students all on the same instructional level." Sally utilizes the "decodables from Reading A-Z books" (2018) which have a specific order to them. Some of her other team members use the previous reading program's leveled books and curriculum. Sally prefers the Reading A-Z decodable books because they "build off each other." According to Sally, she has created her own system with guided reading and utilizes a variety of resources during her small reading group time. As mentioned in a

previous section, Sally was introduced to the small group reading routine by colleagues from another school and made modifications to the routine to best meet the needs of her students.

Unlike guided reading, the enrichment block follows a certain program. Sally works with the below level group of students using the Soar to Success (2017) reading program. The enrichment block allows the students in each of the five classrooms to switch classes depending on their reading level. Sally has some of her own students, but the majority of students are from other classes. The Soar to Success program was developed by Houghton Mifflin and provides the students with structured, fast-paced lessons that help them strengthen their literacy skills. Through the use of fiction and non-fiction books, the program focuses on foundational skills and reading strategies to improve the students' level of reading. Sally discussed how she enjoyed the structure and the routine the program offers.

Aspects of the skills model of reading instruction (2001) is evident in the types of resources and reading program Sally utilizes in her classroom which does not reflect her theoretical belief and views of literacy. For Sally, reading instruction focuses on subskill practice such as sound and letter flashcards to recognize letter and sound relationships before introducing the reading of the text. However, based on the interview session, Sally's view of early literacy falls more under the emergent literacy paradigm where the focus is not on specific skills but on all areas such as listening, reading and speaking that are interconnected. Proponents of the skills model of reading instruction believe it is important to provide "instruction directed toward the mastery of subskills usually precedes a focus on understanding the meaning of what is being read." Regarding Sally's reading instruction, students were instructed to master sequential reading skills which did not reflect her view of early literacy development. Thus, the data illustrates the disconnect between her theoretical belief and practice.

Reading assessments. As an educator agent, Sally measures the first graders' early literacy development through different forms of literacy assessments. Knowing the importance of assessments, I was interested in learning more on the types of assessments Sally utilizes in her classroom. After observing some of her informal types of assessments, I asked the question in her second interview "How do you assess your students?" in order to gain more insight into the formal assessments. Sally responded that she uses both formal and informal types of assessments throughout the year in her first grade classroom. As far as informal assessments, Sally discussed how she relies mainly on observations through kidwatching and student work such as classwork and homework. Again, authentic teaching was occurring; however, not consistently. Also, the first grade team has daily meetings where they discuss the students in each of the enrichment groups. Through the discussion, Sally was able to learn more about her students.

Regarding formal assessments, Sally explained how the teachers in the county are directed by the school leaders to complete the Fountas and Pinnell (2017) assessment three times a year on each student. Fountas and Pinnell is a benchmark assessment system that helps teachers determine the appropriate reading level for each individual student. According to the Fountas and Pinnell (2017) website," Teachers are able to observe student reading behaviors one-on-one, engage in comprehension conversations that go beyond retelling, and make informed decisions that connect assessment to instruction." The majority of the students are tested three times a year; however, if a student scores at a low level he or she may be retested to see areas of improvement. The first grade team is fortunate to have a reading resource teacher who assesses the students using the Fountas and Pinnell (2017) assessment resources. After the resource teacher assesses the students, Sally meets with her to discuss each student's results. As

Sally discussed, the data from the Fountas and Pinnell is utilized to place students in enrichment groups and guided reading groups.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is another system the county uses for placing students in reading groups and identifying students who are below level with reading. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) describe RTI as "a new, alternative method of providing early intervention activities" to at risk students (p. 93). RTI is a system where students are identified by three tiers, Tier 1, 2, or 3. As Sally explained in her second interview:

> Students in Tier 1 are good and receive whole group instruction, Tier 2 students need smaller groups and may be pulled out at different times to receive more support, and Tier 3 are considered the low, at risk students. Tier 3 students get the whole group instruction that they cannot be pulled out of and then they get more [instruction]. They will get pulled out by the reading resource teacher as well as work in small groups.

After hearing Sally talk more about the different tiers, I was curious to learn how the students are placed in the tiers and receive the different forms of interventions. Sally explained how the scores on Fountas and Pinnell are utilized to place the students in the tiers.

Sally briefly described iReady, which is another form of assessment completed on the computer. Sally asserted, "we also do iReady three times a year as well. It's online and it gives us levels on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, sight words. Kind of a little bit of everything." Sally prefers the Fountas and Pinnel form of assessment over iReady because "it's administered with a human and so you know what you are getting." With the computerized form of assessment, the students take it all at the same time unlike the Fountas and Pinnel. This makes it challenging for Sally to see what every child is doing during the assessment. Therefore, Sally relies on the Fountas and Pinnel as well as her informal assessments to help guide her instruction.

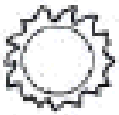
Reading instructional strategies. Throughout the day for reading, the teacher utilizes whole group, small group, and partner work. Within the various types of instructional groups, Sally incorporates skill-based reading strategies such as questioning, choral reading, and popcorn reading to teach literacy.

Whole group instruction. When using whole group instruction, Sally encourages peer discussion by utilizing instructional techniques such as "turn and talk" or "turn to your shoulder partner" where students discuss a question or aspects of the lesson with other students. While observing a whole group reading lesson, Sally was focusing on autobiographies and asked the students to "talk to their neighbor about what they know about Jackie Robinson." Sharing with their peers allowed the students to gain literacy knowledge socially as well as provided an opportunity for all the students to share their thoughts.

Another part of the day where students work together as a whole class was during the whole group reading block. Before reading the text in the book, Sally had the students work on different phonics skills through worksheets. During one of the classroom observations, Sally focused on the short /u/ sound. After reviewing the sound, Sally passed out a phonics worksheet (see Figure 1) to each student and gave them ten minutes to complete. The phonics worksheet focused on the short /u/ sound. The objective of the activity was for the students to say the picture, listen for each sound, and then write the beginning, middle, and ending sounds to make a word. Once the students completed the worksheet as a whole group, Sally went over the pictures and words to assess students' ability to identify the correct sound in order to correctly spell the word. In Figure 1, Jack was able to correctly identify each sound, and using neat handwriting was able to record the appropriate spelling of the word. This activity revealed how Sally integrates a skill-based literacy activity in her classroom.

Short u

Directions: Say the name of each picture. Write its name.

1. drug	2. tub	3.  sun
4. Kut	5. hut	6. buz
7. bug	8. drums	9. gum
10. Sub	11. mug	12. bus

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During whole group instruction, Sally utilized different read aloud strategies. Read aloud strategies such as choral and popcorn reading were observed during classroom observation and documented in Sally's reflective journals. Sally stated in one of her reflective journals how she utilizes choral reading to promote and model fluency. Throughout the day, Sally had the students choral read directions on worksheets and a variety of text. Along with choral reading, Sally also utilized popcorn reading. Visiting the classroom during a whole group reading block, I observed the students doing a read aloud from their anthology book. Sally would call on a student to start reading and then once that student read a page they had to call on another friend to continue to read. Using this strategy, Sally tried to reinforce the importance of listening and

following along with the story in order to be prepared to read if called upon. She also reminded the students to use their different strategies to help them if they struggled with a word in the text. "Students, make sure you are tracking along as your friends are reading," Sally instructed. During this read aloud activity, the five students struggled with staying engaged. Will and Mike who both sit next to one another, were playing with a pencil under their desk. Jack was staring up at the ceiling and Logan had his head down on his book. Lucy had her book closed and was playing with her crayons in her desk. Depending on the student who was reading, this read aloud activity moved either quickly or slowly. When the pace of the story slowed, the five students would seem to lose interest. This activity took a lot of time and most of the students were not engaged in the activity. This is another example of a direct teaching activity that Sally implemented in reading instruction.

Asking questions was another strategy Sally implemented in literacy instruction during whole group. Sally explained that asking questions helps her to see how the students connect prior and background knowledge to the discussion as well as to assess who has retained the information from previous lessons. As she reflected on a lesson working with an autobiographical book on Jackie Robinson (Mara, 2002), Sally recounted how she asked students questions to gain more insight into their background and prior knowledge. She wrote:

> I first held up two different books and asked the students to explain why they are different. I was looking for the fact that one book had illustrations and the other book had photographs. Another question I asked focused on what they already know about Jackie Robinson from a previous book we read. I was looking for text to text connection from the students and found they were able to make the important connections.

Other times throughout the day, Sally asked questions to begin discussion or to make sure the students were comprehending the activity. For example, during a classroom observation with a choral reading activity during whole group instruction, Sally asked questions such as "What

genre of text is this?", "How do you know your answer is correct?", and "What do you notice about the title page?" Students' responses helped Sally to see how well they remembered specific reading skills they learned in previous lessons. For example, she asked the students to look through the pages and said, "What do you notice about this text that is different than the text we read yesterday?" Jack very quickly raised his hand and responded, "There are pictures of real people and homes and not drawings." Sally then asked Jack, "So what type of genre do you believe is this text?" and Jack said, "nonfiction." Yes, Jack's response was correct; however, Sally asked Jack to explain how he knew the answer. Jack responded, "Because the author uses photographs." By asking Jack to explain his answer, Sally was able to understand his thinking process. Sally continued in the whole group block of time to have the students answer questions about the text through writing in their journals. After reading the text, Sally asked the students, "Which type of house would you like to live in a clay house or igloo?" Below in Figure 2, Jack and Logan answered Sally's question as well as explained their reasoning during whole group reading instruction. The writing samples illustrate another way that Sally utilizes questioning to gain a better understanding of the students' thinking and comprehension. This particular reading activity was more comprehension-centered and integrated writing. For this reading assignment, Sally utilized more student centered stragies and less skill-based.

Small group. Small group instruction was implemented more during guided reading allowing the teacher to work with three to five students at a time. Using the assessment scores from the beginning of the year, Sally created small reading groups according to student reading levels. Sally created a chart to help her organize her groups to ensure she met with each reading group at least two to three times a week for thirty minutes. Groups are color coordinated and each student knew their group based on their color. To transition into small groups, Sally announces, "For guided reading today, green group will work with Mrs. Taylor at her table, blue group you are working independently at your desk, orange group you are working with Mrs. S, and yellow group come to my table." Guided reading block is probably one of the most structured lessons observed. Sally utilizes small group instruction for this block of reading time. While I observed numerous guided reading sessions, Sally began each group having them review their sound/letter flashcards. The teacher held up a flashcard with the letter, the sound the letter makes, and a picture that begins with that sound. Students together said the letter, sound, and the name of the picture. Once the flashcards were completed, Sally passed out their "phonic" sheet with a particular sound such as short e. The worksheet had seven rows starting with row one that

had five words with the short e sound. Using Slinkies, which are plastic pre-compressed helical spring toys, the students taped out the word, then stretched it out with the Slinkies. Then there was a row further down the page that had the words in sentences where the group read the sentences out loud together. After they reviewed each row of the phonics worksheet, the teacher took out a big die. Each student rolled and whatever number they rolled, they read that row on the worksheet. Next, the teacher passed out the decodable books for students to highlight the phonic sound they worked on earlier. Once the words were highlighted, the students chorally read the book together. This is another example of how Sally focuses her instruction using skill-based literacy strategies. This teacher, creating routine and structure provides a learning environment where reading and writing can occur.

The majority of her routine with her guided reading block is centered on the skilled-based strategies. Below is an excerpt from one of her reflective journals that highlights these strategies:

> For this lesson I reviewed letter and sound recognition by holding up flashcards and the students said the letter, sound, and the picture on the card. After the flashcard activity, I passed out new phonics sheets and Slinkies to practice sounding out words. For the first row on the sheet, the students tapped out the sounds using their fingers and stretched each word using the Slinkies and put it all together to say the word. Then we played a roll and read game where the students roll the dice, then look at the number and find that line on the phonics sheet and read those words out loud. Then we did a quick read through the rest of the phonic sheet which includes reviewing decodable words, high frequency words, and phrases from the text.

Sally continued in her description of the lesson to discuss what happened once the students reviewed the skill- based strategies. To introduce the new book, she passed out the Reading A-Z printable decodable book *Get the Pets* (Miller, 2018) to each student and asked them to write their names on the top. She informed students that the book would be used for the next few days as they worked on different strategies with the book. For this particular lesson, the students were

introduced to a new book. In her journal she described what the students do when given a new book. In her description she wrote:

> I passed out a book to each student as well as highlighters. Since this book focuses on words with the short e sound, I had the students read through the book and highlight words that had the short e sound. Once the students finished highlighting, we went around the table and the students each said a word they highlighted in the story. I explained to the students if they needed to use the Slinkies to stretch out the words or tap out the sounds to help them they were allowed to use them.

While I was observing this lesson, Logan and Jack were in this group and were focused and engaged while completing the activities. Both first graders were following directions and using the reading manipulatives correctly. Jack was concentrating on reading each word in the text, and quietly I could hear him sound out each word especially when it was a short /e/ word. When he did find a short /e/ word, he would slightly smile because he liked to use the highlighter to circle the word. Logan also utilized his strategies and manipulatives to help guide him through the activity. At times during the oral reading of the story, Logan had to use the Slinkies to help him. He used the Slinkies to help him stretch out the sounds that then helped him to blend the sounds to make the word. Logan used this particular strategy throughout the activity. Again, the lesson highlighted mastery of phonics skills before reading the text. Although Logan and Jack were active participants in the text, they were focused so much on the particular short /e/ words that they were missing the whole meaning of the text. I wonder at any point throughout the year, Sally establishes other routines and strategies once the students have mastered the foundational skills. After observing and assessing the students, will Sally change to a more holistic model of reading instruction?

Writing Program: Writing Instruction in the First Grade Classroom

As for writing instruction, Sally utlized a scripted mandated writing program, various writing strategies, assessments, and instructional practices. Writer's Workshop developed by

Lucy Calkins (2013) is the writing program used county wide. Sally explained, "For our writing curriculum we use Writer's Workshop which is a philosophy of kind of letting them work on being a writer, not the writing." The new series of Writer's Workshop is centered around the College and Career Readiness standards and is a scripted program. In the new series, the units are created by grade level and presented in cumulative lessons. According to Lucy Calkin (2013), "often that instruction may have occurred in a different genre within the same year" (p. 6).

Basically, the units build off each other and presents lessons that include collective, sequential skills. With the writing curriculum, Sally wrote in one of her reflective journals how "We're really working on them becoming writers and enjoying what they are doing." In general, Sally feels that the writers workshop and UbD units work well together and rarely do they have to make many adjustments to the writing curriculum to correspond with the UbD units. During classroom observation, I observed the writing block. The block of time was structured. During this time, students gathered for a "meeting" on the carpet to discuss aspects of the unit for that particular day. Sally displayed strategies and notes on the big chart paper for students to refer to when working independently. After the group meeting time, Sally dismissed the "writers" to their desks where they took out their writing folders and began to write. With the lights down low and soft music playing in the background, Sally created a calm learning environment with more writing and less talking. During this independent writing time, Sally conferenced with students individually and spent about fifteen minutes with one particular student to discuss his/her writing. While the students worked on writing their stories, the teacher took her stool, notebook, and green index cards and worked

individually with that particular student. Each day the teacher meets with two students during the writing time. Detailed notes and records provided the teacher with information on the students' writing as well as which student she needs to meet with that day. While visiting the classroom, I observed the teacher meeting with Mike. While all the students were writing independently at their desks, the teacher placed her stool beside Mike and observed him while he was writing. After watching him write, Sally began her conference by saying, "Good job sounding out words as you were writing." Next, she asked Mike, "What do you want to do to become a better writer?" Mike replied, "I want to make it come alive." Sally then proceeded to ask Mike to read his story aloud. While he was reading, Sally wrote notes in her notebook. Starting with positive comments, the teacher explained to Mike that he did a nice job giving his characters voices. Knowing that he wanted to make his story come to life, Sally provided suggestions such as "adding more movements" to his story to bring the characters to life. After a short conversation, Mike continued to work while Sally recorded her comments on a green index card. Sally read over the green index card with Mike and asked him to place it in his writing folder in order to help him with his future writing. All five first graders enjoy Writers Workshop. At different times visiting the class during the writing block, I noticed that the students were actively engaged.

An aspect of the Writer's Workshop Program is to meet the needs of the individual writer as well as to develop confident writers. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the differences in writing styles and needs among the students. Mike and Will preferred to illustrate their thoughts in the sketch area (see Figure 3) first. Then they used the detailed pictures to write their text. For example Mike's writing sample, which is the first one in Figure 3, depicts numerous members of a family.

Will's, the second writing sample in Figure 3, sketched a detailed scene about nature. Illustrating with details, as Sally suggested, helps the students use more details in their writing. Based on the writing samples, Mike and Will have illustrated detailed pictures; however, they needed work in using the illustration to provide details in their text. Jack and Logan (see Figure 4), as the data shows, focused more on writing the story and less time on illustration. As for Jack, his writing sample highlights his ability to add detail to his text by explaining why he likes alligators. In the second writing sample in Figure 4, Logan did not sketch a detailed illustration. Both figures draw attention to the different levels and needs of each writer in a classroom. With the writing program structured around individual conferences, this allowed Sally to work with student's individual writing needs.

Sally expressed negative feelings toward some aspects of the writing program. Writer's Workshop is very rigid and structured with not a lot of flexibility. Having the students write with pens is one facet of the program Sally would like to see changed. For example, during a classroom observation I watched Mike use his black pen to cross out when he made mistakes. I asked Sally why the students use pens and not pencils and she explained that the program says to use pens, so children do not erase their mistakes which allows them to see what they did wrong and how they corrected it. This is an aspect of the program that the county requires. For Sally, having the students use pens makes it difficult to read their text at times because some students have to cross out so many times. With so many marks, the students themselves have a hard time reading and seeing their mistakes. In one of Sally's reflective journals, she reflected on one of the Writer's Workshop lessons:

> Writer's Workshop is a part of my day that I am most conflicted about. The students (some) love writing about themselves, but at the same time some spend the time "sketching" more than writing, write stories that are obviously not from their lives, and some write using techniques I can't correct quickly enough to help them communicate their ideas. Each day I only get to conference with about two students so to get through the whole class takes time. This particular lesson was a difficult concept and the script gave little support.

For Sally she finds certain aspects of the writing curriculum to be challenging such as not having time to conference with more students in a day. With the mandated program, Sally follows the writing curriculum and allows the students a learning environment where they can write. Unlike the skill-based reading block of time, the writing block was more student-centered. The data revealed through the many classroom observation the reading block of time is more structured than the writing time which is surprising considering Sally has a mandated program for writing.

Writing assessment. Assessing the students' writing is done both formally and informally by the teacher. Within the writing program, the formal assessments through Writer's Workshop are called *On Demand Performance Assessment Prompts* (Calkins, 2013). During a classroom observation, I witnessed the students completing an *On Demand* assessment at the start of the new unit. Sally passed out pens and new writing booklets to the students and then read a script from the manual. The new writing chapter focused on writing an informational text. This *On Demand Prompt* was the first time students were introduced to this type of text. Without providing the definition of informational text, Sally read the script which explained to the students to think of a topic they knew about and write about that topic. In Sally's reflective journal, she wrote:

> All the students use their pens to write with so they can't erase so they can see how they changed their writing over time. After reading a script explaining to the students what they need to do they were allowed to write for 45 minutes. This is different than our regular writers workshop lesson because they are expected to plan, write, and revise in all one sitting.

She later explained that the *On Demand Prompts* are giving at the beginning and end of each unit. The teachers are only allowed to read the script from the manual which explains to the students what to do. While observing the class during their assessment, I noticed that Logan struggled in the beginning about what to write and then he seemed to get an idea and his pen did

not stop moving. He was writing about how to be a teacher. On the other hand, Mike, Will, and Jack could not pick up their pens fast enough to start writing. For Jack, he sat with perfect posture and began to write about alligators. He chose to write his text first and then illustrate at the end. However, Mike immediately began to draw pictures on each page, then returned to write the text. For Sally, the writing assessment provided her with information regarding the students' prior knowledge with informational text. Furthermore, Sally was able to use the data from the assessment to drive her instruction for that particular unit.

Writing instructional strategies. Student-centered instruction was observed mostly during individualized writing instruction. While having students work individually, Sally asked questions to probe more into the students' thinking which assisted in helping the students with their writing.

Individualized instruction. Individualized instruction was seen more during the scheduled writing portion of the day. Writer's Workshop, the writing curriculum used in the district, stresses the importance of conferencing individually with each student. Thus, the teacher takes time each day during Writer's Workshop block to conference for at least ten minutes and work with at least two students a day. Depending on the lesson, the teacher used inquiry-based instruction that is more student centered; whereas, other times the lesson is more teacher led. Sally continuously asked higher-level questions to capitalize on students' curiosity and eagerness to think critically. Through individualized instruction, Sally creates an environment in which students are writing.

Similar to reading instruction, Sally asked questions during Writer's Workshop time. During a Writer's Workshop lesson, I observed how Sally asked questions during individual conferencing. In the beginning of the lesson, the class met together on the carpet where Sally

reminded them to use complete sentences and work on adding details to bring characters to life. She also stated how they were continuing to work on the text that relates to their life. After meeting with the students in a whole group, Sally sent the students back to work individually on their writing and asked them to remember what was discussed on the carpet. Will quickly walked back to his desk to begin making his story about surfing come to life. Will's story was all about going to the beach with his family and surfing big waves. In his writing sample, he gave voice to his characters by having them describe what it feels like to surf a big wave. Mike also rushed back to his desk ready to bring his characters to life. Mike's writing sample revealed that he loved green ninjas. In his writing piece, Mike brought the characters to life by describing the ninjas more in detail.

During independent writing time, Sally worked individually with students to gain more knowledge about their writing by asking questions. While conferencing with Mike, Sally started with the question "What do you want to do to be a better a writer." Mike responded quickly, "I want to make my story come alive!" She continued to work with him on his writing and asked another question pertaining to his illustration. "What do you like about this Green Ninja?" which helped Mike add more description in his writing about the Green Ninja. Mike said, "I like this Ninja because he is green and can move really fast." For Mike as a writer, these questions helped him because he spends a lot of time sketching his pictures and less time writing his text. Reviewing Mike's writing piece, I noticed that Mike added two more sentences that added details to his character. He wrote that his Ninja was "super fast" and "could move at the speed of lightning."

Strategies that focused on editing, writing style, and stamina seemed to be the most utilized during Writer's Workshop. On the wall, Sally posted a stamina chart with different fish

and numbers starting with 15 and going to 45. Before the students begin to write, she consistently says, "Remember, we are seated, silent, and self-reliant." Sally uses this to help the students remember to stay focused and work independently. Their goal as a class is to be able to write for forty five minutes without needing assistance. Sally wants her students to be able to work on their writing and utilize the writing strategies that she teaches to help guide them to become self-reliant writers. If the students face a challenge while writing, Sally wants them to be able to use the writing resources and/or strategies to guide them through their obstacle independently. She colors in the fish each time she notices them working for a certain amount of time without getting up or asking for help. So far, the first grade class made it to twenty minutes of independent writing. For her this meant they are learning to become writers and trusting themselves with their writing knowledge. The students were not afraid to take risks and use strategies such as drawing elaborate illustrations to help them remember to add details in their text or working to make their characters have a voice. In one of her reflective journals on a Writer's Workshop lesson, Sally reflected on the success of her students' independence regarding writing. She wrote:

> I do feel successful in the fact that I was able to introduce and explain to the students how to bring life to their stories by giving their characters voices. While conferencing with students, I saw they had their characters talking and added more description to their text. Providing this strategy and how I delivered the lesson worked because they wrote without needing much assistance.

Sally also acknowledged the kindergarten teachers in effectively helping with the Writer's Workshop writing routines in the same reflection. She wrote, "I can tell that the kindergarten teachers worked hard to teach the Writer's Workshop routines last year because for the most part, the students have a high writing stamina." As a former first grade teacher, I found young children enjoyed writing; however, at times students found writing challenging as they tried to organize their thoughts. Young children have a lot to

say, but putting all the words together can be difficult. Seeing the Writer's Workshop curriculum in action as well as reading the five first graders' text, it can be noted that these five young children have a foundation of writing knowledge that will continue to help them grow as young writers. Most importantly, the data revealed that five first grade students enjoy the writing block and the writing environment that Sally has created.

In her first grade classroom, Sally implemented reading and writing instructional strategies differently (see Table 6). As for reading, Sally utilized more skill-based activities and strategies, whereas writing strategies were more student centered. Also, the data revealed the disconnect between Sally's theoretical beliefs and views of literacy and the instructional practices that she uses each day. When considering Sally's definition of literacy and early literacy development, the data showed her instructional practices did not reflect her theoretical beliefs. Having viewed what occurred in the first grade classroom regarding reading and writing, now it is important to learn what is occurring in the home environment.

Table 6. *Description of Literacy Instructional Practices*

Reading	Writing
No specific program; Universal By Design	Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop (2013)
Guided Reading & Whole Group Time	Writing Block: scripted units that build on one another
Assessments: Fountas and Pinnell; Iready; Informal	Assessments: On Demand performance assessment designed by the program; informal
Instruction: Whole and small group	Instruction: Individual and conferencing
Skill-based instruction: direct instruction; sequential skills; worksheets	More student centered to focus on individual needs

Supporting Literacy Through Families Funds of Knowledge

Experiences of the Five First Graders and Their Families

Logan's family. Logan is an active first grade boy, his favorite parts of the day are recess and math. One can see by the coat he wears that super heroes are one of his favorite types of toy. When at home, Logan plays with his super heroes and enjoys using other toys to create homes for the super heroes. Not only does Logan play with super heroes, he also enjoys cutting pictures out of magazines and making collages. In school, he loves Writer's Workshop. Currently he is writing a "how to" text on being a teacher. He is also part of the Free and Reduced Meal Service at Baylor Elementary School.

During the first individual interview, Logan's mom, Brandy acknowledged the importance of communication when viewing literacy. Brandy elaborated on her definition by talking about communication and the importance of being able to communicate with the environment. For Brandy, literacy is "trying to get your point across really in writing and stuff. I can speak but can I put that on paper? Just to me like a whole different way of communicating." Brandy, a working mom who is raising two kids, also finds it hard to make time for her own personal literacy activities. Even though she does not have as much time to read or do other things, the children know education is important. While visiting their home, I noticed both Brandy and her husband had their high school diplomas displayed on the table in the family room. This is something their children see every day and understand going to school and graduating is an important belief in their family. As far as family literacy, Brandy's perspective focused on an actual event or part of the family's daily routine. For Brandy, family literacy is the family dinner time. As she explained, "Our dinner time is the one time I can say we're all

actually sitting down at the table and we are talking." She further explained, "We're talking about our day and the kids ask me how my day was and I ask them. I ask them what they have learned and stuff like that."

Will's family. Will enjoys reading magazines and books on animals. Panda bears and tigers are the animals that interest him the most; however, he enjoys reading books on all animals. In his free time, Will plays soccer and participates in a hip hop dance class at the local community center. Participating in arts and crafts such as making decorations for his house and collages from pictures in magazines, are other activities that Will enjoys.

Nikki, Will's mom, remembers loving to read as a child and a young adult; however, once she started a family her time for reading shifted to taking care of two little ones. She stated:

> I read a lot as a child. I was reading a lot in my career. I was writing and reading. My background is public health, so I was doing a lot of research. But no reading for fun and then my kids came along and there was certainly a slow period.

Now that her children are older, Nikki has been able to find more time for reading for enjoyment. As she exclaimed, "I am back at it. For fun, pleasure, and enjoyment."

In regard to literacy, Nikki's perceptive on literacy is not only reading to your child but also providing "this exposure to reading and writing and letters and words and the shapes." She believed that her children would be early readers and reading by age three or four; however, she realized that was not the case. Below Nikki described the importance of nurturing their curiosity to want to read:

> I always thought before my children were you know when my children were babies. I was going to be that person, oh you know of course they're growing up in a household with educated parents and they're going to be the ones reading at 3 or 4 years old…I just assumed that. I am going to expose them to this and they're just going to naturally have this curiosity; however, I then realized I cannot control that and I can't push them. It has to be on their own time. I can provide that environment for them.

Her beliefs on literacy have impacted how she views family literacy. To Nikki, family literacy "is how we coach each other along and support each other."

Mike's family. Mike is an energetic first grade boy. His mother, Elaine described him as "an experiential learner." He prefers hands on activities and more inquiry-based instruction where he can solve problems such as science and math activities. Conducting science experiences is one of Mike's favorite family activities. He also enjoys using his imagination by recording songs and stories in his home journal. As a child, Elaine remembers being a huge reader. She described herself as "that kid that was staying up super late and getting in trouble because I was reading until two in the morning with a flashlight." Elaine continued to speak of the importance of her children being "big readers" and valuing that the same as she did. Elaine remembered her parents reading to her and participating in school events. A memorable event was watching her mother return to college. Elaine elaborated on how she learned from her mother, "You know my mom was late going to college because she stayed home with us when we were little. So, I watched her go to college when I was younger, which made a huge impact on me."

Elaine, who has a master's in social work, has the opportunity to work with school age children. During our individual interview she explained:

> My line of work has set me up pretty well to be able to handle things. Like I watch the way my husband and I and how we're different parents. Like you know the silliness and the curiosity, and the endless questions and all those things don't bother me because I know what it would look like if my children didn't have that. So, you know like I kind of know how to think. I think I'm prepared because I know how to manage behavior a little bit more.

When discussing the meaning of literacy, she summed up her thoughts by stating, "I think it's just having a desire to read. It is just layered. Someone who is passionate about literacy you actually have to have a genuine curiosity for things and other people." Elaine feels that early

literacy development is the foundational skills or "the building blocks that come before reading." Elaine feels strongly about parents modeling good reading habits. She asserted:

> When you have kids you don't read as much on your own for enjoyment, or at least I don't. Like, it's like I've lost it a little bit. So, I realized how important it is that, not only do I need to read with my kids, which we do all the time. We have tons of books that are kids books, but they actually need to see my passion for reading, also as a model.

Elaine elaborated further by focusing on not just modeling, but "that integration into everything and really being thoughtful and intentional about doing it. Making sure they see everything that we do as a family with literacy."

Jack's family. Jack, a middle child, is experiencing his first year at Baylor Elementary School and according to his mother Jane, he is having a very successful year. He is an active boy; Jack enjoys playing school with his sister, drawing, and playing board games. In school and at home, Jack enjoys writing. After drawing a picture, Jack enjoys using his imagination to create a story about his picture.

When discussing past experiences with literacy, Jane, Jack's mother, mentioned how as a child she struggled with reading. During the group interview she discussed how she did not enjoy reading as a child and started reading more when she became a young adult in her twenties. As a child, Jane explained how she had to "re-read stuff four or five times before it sunk into my brain." Jane described herself as a child as someone "who needed someone to teach it to [her], rather than reading it and learning it."

Jane's work with children with disabilities has helped her with supporting her children's early literacy development. Below she elaborated:

> I think as far as with helping my kids learn, my background in working with kids who had learning disabilities and learning how to teach, because I used to do applied integral analysis with them and giving them the foundation blocks to be able to do things.

Being able to read is important; however, Jane also believes literacy is gaining and applying knowledge. During our individual interview, she asserted:

> I think it's really kind of like just gaining knowledge or applying the knowledge you have. I mean I think they are using it even if they are watching TV, they are taking in words and seeing how they can use them and in different formats. I mean it just has anything to do with knowledge. Gaining and applying it.

As far as early literacy development, Jane explained how "early literacy development is being able to recognize the letters, the numbers, context clues from what they're looking at to help them with reading."

Lucy's family. According to Lucy's mom, Mandy, routine is important for Lucy and having a schedule helps her to stay focused. Lucy loves Minnie Mouse which was very noticeable during the home visits. In her room, that she shares with her mother, Lucy has five big Minnie Mouse dolls, a table, and puzzles. Along with Minnie Mouse, Lucy enjoys playing with Shopkins, singing, and taking care of her two guinea pigs. At home, she speaks both English and Spanish**.**

For Lucy's mother Mandy, being involved with Lucy in all aspects of learning is important. As a parent, she wants to be more involved than her own parents were with her education. During Mandy's individual interview she stated, "When the school has field trips or events, I try to go there because I wish I could have had that when I was little." Mandy's view of literacy encompasses everything from "reading to writing." As far as family literacy, Mandy exclaimed, "Family literacy is writing and literature with the whole family." During our second interview, Mandy discussed some of the challenges with Lucy's special needs. Once Lucy was diagnosed with a special need, Mandy explained she went through challenges and obstacles every day; however, through these difficult times she was able to learn the best approach to help

Lucy with aspects of literacy such as speaking and writing. For example, Mandy explained, "At first it was like I'm unable to hear her say Mommy or able to talk to her. But now we both understand each other. We have like our own language between us." Establishing a routine helped to solve many of the issues Mandy had in the beginning with Lucy and as she stated, "I kind of learned from all the bad moments. Now Lucy can follow routines, even say her name and write it. For Mandy, she learned from each obstacle what worked best for Lucy regarding literacy.

Families' Goals and Expectations

Families have certain goals and expectations for their own children. For the most part, the families want their children to enjoy reading and writing. When discussing goals and expectations in the group interview, Jane asserted, "I just want them to enjoy it. So, enjoyment right now is my biggest goal for my first grader and even fourth grader." Lucy's mother, Mandy, hopes that by the end of first grade Lucy will be more independent and "want to read more on her own without me telling her." The families want their children to be independent and enjoy reading and writing.

As our group discussion on expectations continued, Elaine, Mike's mother, expressed her concern how it was a struggle to set her own personal goals because she feels the school environment sets many of the goals. She expounded more on her thoughts in the below excerpt:

> I've struggled because you said personal goals and I feel like there's a lot of goals that are set by the school, which I totally understand and appreciate. However, at the same time it's hard because there's a balance.

Elaine's son Mike is more of an experiential learner and prefers hands on activities where he can play and feel; therefore, reading is harder for him. The expectations of the

classroom being so structured and regimented every day can be a struggle for both Mike and herself. This regimented structure is not how she has created the environment at home. Homework, for example, is a struggle because the expectation is for first graders to read twenty minutes every day. Elaine elaborated on her thoughts by discussing a recent incident that had just occurred over homework. She asserted, "like today we were literally fighting over the reading for twenty minutes." Elaine is worried in the end her son will have negative feelings toward reading. Hence, in her family environment, she is trying to create an atmosphere where he is having fun with reading.

Knowing more about the families' expectations and views on literacy, I was interested in seeing how their beliefs on reading and writing helped shape their home environment regarding early literacy development. What are families doing in their homes and daily routines to help their children grow and develop literacy knowledge?

The Home Environments

During the semester, I planned and scheduled two home visits with each of the five families. In the five families' homes, I was able to observe an abundant number of books, magazines, puzzles, technology, arts and crafts, games, etc. The numerous resources found in the home environment play a role in their early literacy development by exposing the five children to multiliteracies and creating the opportunity for literacy activities to occur. From reading books together to playing board games to making an art project, the children are surrounded with literacy resources.

Printed materials. In Mike's and Jack's homes, I noticed there was an area designated as a playroom which stored numerous books, toys, and arts and crafts. While visiting Mike's family for the second time, I observed him finishing his homework in the playroom. During the

visit, I observed the mini library Mike's parents created in the corner of their playroom. Mike and his little sister have a few baskets of books. At one point during the visit, Mike was looking through the basket to find his favorite book. Mike is very particular about selecting books. Watching him in the playroom as well as watching him select books from my "free book basket," he flipped through all the pages slowly and looked at the pictures to help him decide if he wanted to read the book. He explained to me how he likes colorful pictures and the pictures for him illustrate if the story is worth reading. The more color and the more detailed the illustrations, the more interesting the book is to Mike.

As I observed him during class as well as reading through his journal, I have observed the elaborate illustrations Mike draws before he begins writing his text. For Mike his technique for selecting books has helped him with his writing techniques. Jack's parents, Jane and Jerry, have provided a spacious area for playing and a variety of books located in baskets around the playroom. This area for Jack and his siblings is what his parents refer to as the "kid zone." The playroom is located on the bottom level of the three-story townhome. On my first home visit, Jack took me on a tour of the room where I was able to see all his Legos and Nerf guns. There was also a TV and an area where Jack and his two sisters like to play school. Crayons and other arts and craft supplies were stored in an area of the room.

Logan's books and toys are kept in his bedroom. My first home visit with Logan, he was so excited to show me his two favorite books. When I asked him about books, his face lit up with excitement and he ran upstairs to grab two of his favorite books. Dr. Seuss' *Foot Book* (1968) and a book on Star Wars were the books he wanted to read. We sat on the couch and looked through the books and he read a few pages to me.

As for Lucy, her books were also located in the bedroom she shares with her mother. On the bedside table, she had a bag of books that her teacher sent home from school. Her mother explained, "We will read these books for a few days and then we send them back to school for more." Also, in the room is a Minnie Mouse table where she has more books and likes to sit to read at times.

Entering Will's home, I noticed a variety of magazines on the coffee table. Nikki, Will's mother, explained, "we have magazines that come in and then the kids will request a magazine and so they have a subscription to some magazines as well." On the table there were sports, animals, and gardening magazines. For Will, the National Geographic Kids magazine is his favorite especially the one about panda bears. He keeps this one in his room and was excited to show me. He flipped straight to the page and read some of the article to me. Nikki stated that most of the time her boys "just look at the pictures but will read the article if it looks interesting."

New Literacies: Technology. For all five families, new literacies especially concerning technology, are a part of their everyday lives. From iPhone to tablets to video games, the children are surrounded by different forms of technology that are important in supporting their literacy development. Mike and Will both enjoy watching television. For Mike, he has learned how to properly navigate through Netflix to find shows and movies. When using Netflix, users have to select or type in the "search area" what they would like to watch. Elaine, Mike's mother, explained how Mike can now read the information on the Netflix screen and explore his movie options without needing assistance. During one of Will's mother's interviews, she discussed the importance of providing opportunities for literacy which can be as simple as "looking things up and trying to make out or navigate the television listings." In Will's home, they use Direct TV, which also has a search area where viewers locate a movie or show by typing in the title of the

movie or show. She explained Will can now sound words out on his own without having to ask her to spell them when he is trying to locate a show or movie on the television.

Another form of technology the five families utilize are their smart phones. As Mandy, Lucy's mother, discussed during our first individual interview, Lucy loves to listen to diverse types of music. She enjoys listening to stations that feature the current top forty hits, hip hop, and Latino music. With such a variety of music, Mandy acknowledged that the smart phone allows Lucy to listen to her variety of music. For Lucy, she likes having music on as background noise when she is home playing. Mike, on the other hand, enjoys using the smartphone for texting his father about his day when he gets home from school. During our group interview, Mike's mother, Elaine stated:

> Every day now Mike will text my husband and read the text. They'll like text for five to ten minutes. This is a big deal because he is actually trying to figure out words and then he is trying to read them.

Similarly, Jack utilizes his parents' smartphones to text as well. Since the move to the area, texting has been an effective approach for Jack and his siblings to communicate with their grandparents. In the beginning, Jack's older sister spent time texting her friends and relatives. After seeing his older sister texting, Jack asked if he could have the opportunity to text as well. Jane, Jack's mother, explained how he now will "take my phone and like want to text Gammy 850 emojis. They have their own little conversation." For Will, reading texts has become a new use of his mother's smart phone. Will's mother Nikki, mentioned how Will enjoys reading her texts and trying to sound out the words. "He will hear the text notification on my phone and will read the message to me," she exclaimed. Nikki explained how she has noticed over the past few months Will has had to have less help sounding out his words and is reading the text more fluently.

Daily activities. Each family developed a daily routine that works best for their child and families. As Mandy mentioned, her daughter "Lucy thrives off a routine and needs a schedule." Having a child with special needs, Mandy requires a daily routine in order to help her child succeed through her day. Mandy's routine as she laughs said, "Every day is crazy in our house." Living with her sister, brother in law, their two children, and her mother, it can be challenging getting five kids ready and out the door for school. At one point during the interview, Mandy remarked, "It is like team work getting kids ready for school and everyone pitches in where needed. Having simple procedures that Lucy follows each day, reminds her what she needs to do in order to complete a task whether it is her homework or getting ready for school." For Lucy, a routine helps her stay focused and reminds her of the steps she needs to take to accomplish her goals.

Simple routines and structures in the daily activities can help to prepare children for routines that support their early literacy development such as reading before bed. Having to go to different places for extra services to help her with her needs such as Easter Seals and speech therapy, Lucy likes to know her schedule ahead of time to prepare for her day. Each morning, Lucy's mother goes over each aspect of her day from getting up in the morning, going to school, being picked up early for appointments, lunch, and bed time routine. On Mondays, Lucy has to go to appointments at Easter Seals, so her mother always explains today is Burger King day. Burger King is her favorite place to eat and on days with appointments she eats lunch at Burger King. Just hearing the words "Burger King" helps Lucy know her routine. On a day with no specific place to go, Lucy arrives home from school via the school bus and immediately gets a snack and some quiet time. Once Mandy returns home from work, they have dinner together,

complete homework, and then bedtime. As Mandy elaborated during the interview, "We put the kids to bed at 8:30 so they can get between eight and nine hours of sleep."

Jack's mother Jane has established a morning and afternoon routine that helps Jack and his siblings complete tasks such as getting to school. Below Jane described a typical weekday routine:

> We get up in the morning, get dressed, teeth brushed, come downstairs. We get breakfast unless they decide to eat breakfast at school. Then they help pack their lunches and we get out the door. I drop them off and then have to go back to get my little girl from Pre K. Then after school depending upon what day it is some days we come home. They might play outside for a little. They might get their homework done or watch a movie. We make dinner, do baths, read, and go to bed.

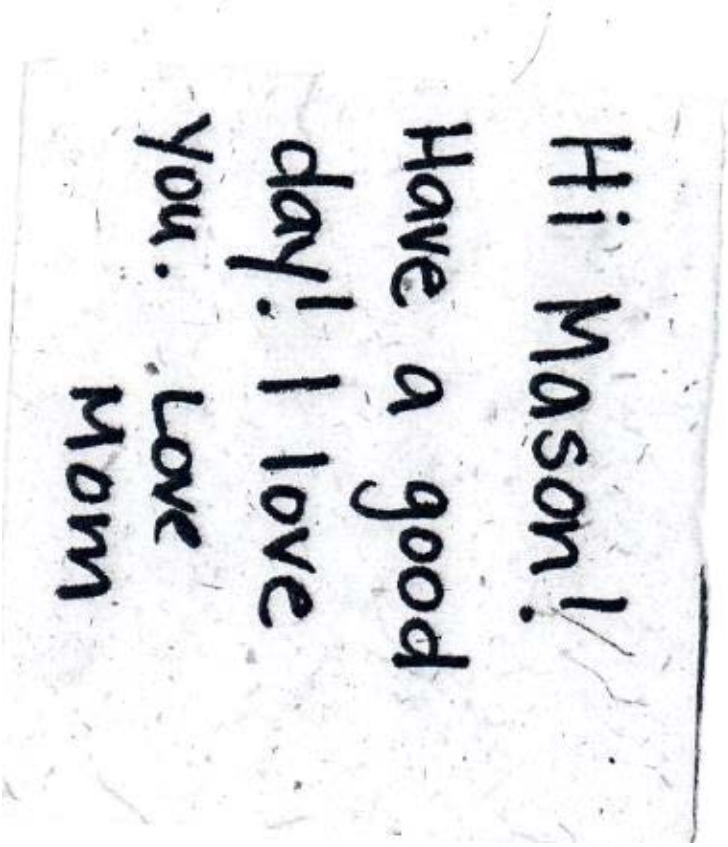
Having daily routines in the home environment provides the children with structure which allows for families such as Jane's to support reading and writing. The children know the expectations within the homes which enables them to learn.

Afterschool activities. The other four families follow a similar morning routine as Jane; however, the differences arise after school depending on work schedule or after school activities. For Jack, downtime afterschool is important. When describing the after school routine, Jane stated, "He needs to just chill out. Jack and his sister are similar in that they both need to decompress after school." Brandy, Logan's mother, made a similar comment when explaining their typical daily routine, which starts at 5:30 in the morning. Logan's down time occurs after he eats dinner which as his mother exclaimed, "After dinner he plays on his Leapster tablet which connects to the tv and he reads. He is off in his own little world which is his downtime. He has worked hard all day."

On the other hand, Mike has a set routine when he arrives home from school. During one of my home visits, I was able to witness the routine. The school bus drops Mike off and Mike

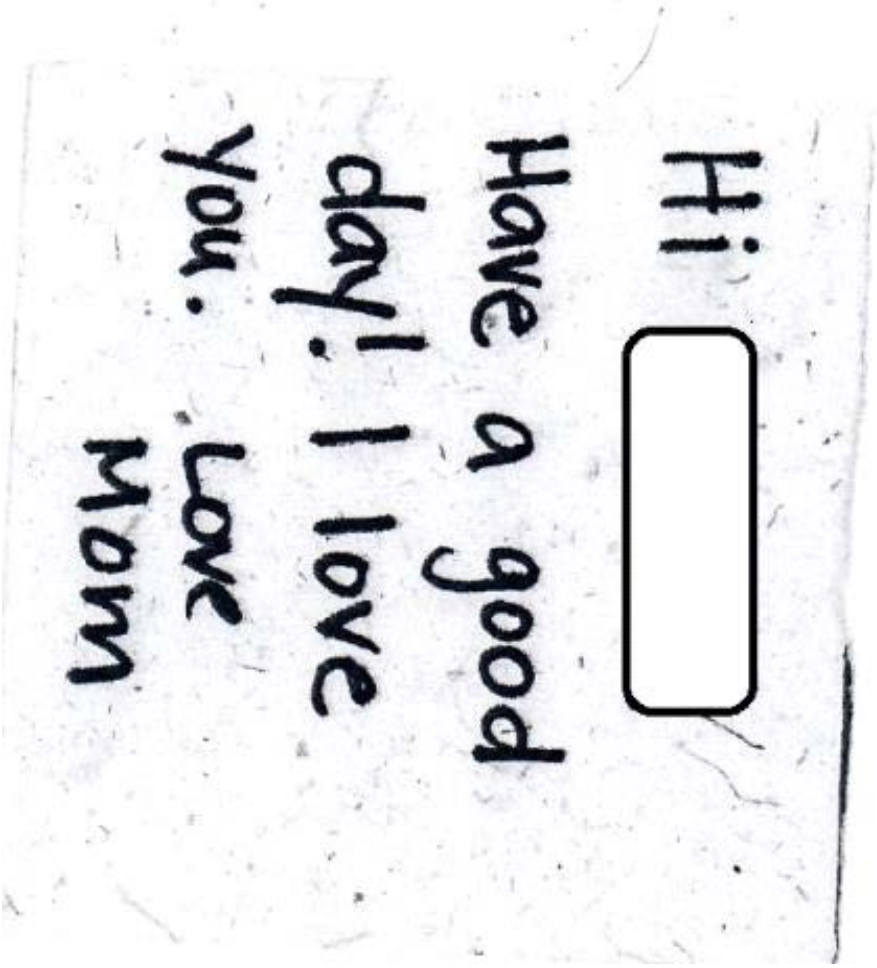
and his mother sit on the stairs in their home to go through his folder. Elaine elaborated on the routine during our first home visit and asserts:

> Each day we sit on the stairs to go through his folder. I have been putting little notes in his lunch box (see Figure 5) so I have him read those to me before he starts his homework. Then he completes his math worksheet independently. He reads me the directions and then I am there to support him. We then read for 10 minutes and we finish the last 10 minutes before bed.



In Figure 5, is an example of one of the notes Mike's mother wrote one day and placed in his lunchbox. Elaine, Mike's mother, incorporated literacy into the family's daily routine by writing one simple note each day. The note became a part of Mike's daily routine providing him practice with reading fluency as he reads the note out loud each day to his mother. Mike thrives on routine and according to his mother this helped to keep him focused and engaged in order to complete his homework. During the second home visit, I observed the after school routine with Mike and his mother. As I observed Mike both at home and school, I noticed how Mike has a tendency to be stimulated by

his environment and can be easily distracted by his surroundings. Hence, his mother established a routine that allows Mike simple procedures where Mike can stay focused to complete his task with minimal distractions. For Mike, having his mother or father as support also helps



him complete his routine.

As for Nikki, she was still trying to figure out homework time and which time of the day works best for Will. When visiting his home, Will did an excellent job explaining his daily routine. He discussed how he wakes up and sits on the sofa, watches his brother read, and then gets ready for school. Nikki confirmed his description of the routine and added, “We are still trying to figure out when is the best time for Will to complete homework.” These days they are doing it at different times to try to determine when he is the most focused and if he needs some down time right after school. Although different from routing the teacher provides, the five families also provide a daily routine and structure both on the weekdays and the weekends for their children

Weekend activities. All five families have a more relaxed weekend schedule that centers around families and activities. Will elaborated on his weekend routine and explained how he plays soccer and does hip hop dance classes on the weekend. Having observed Will and hearing his mother explain his “good energy,” providing Will with extracurricular activities with less structure allows him the opportunity to be creative. Will talked about “Game Day Sunday”

where he enjoys playing the board game Chutes and Ladders because he likes to move the characters.

As for the weekend with Jack's family, his mother Jane discussed how they are either traveling or entertaining friends and family each weekend. Jane described in her first interview, "we haven't had a typical weekend since we moved here." Having justed moved here a few months ago, Jane explained how her weekends are either centered around guests coming to visit or traveling to Baltimore for family events such as weddings. When home entertaining our guests, "We like doing tourist stuff like visiting the boardwalk or walking downtown." She noted how much she is looking forward to the new year when they do not have many plans and can be at home as a family. Lucy's mother Mandy explained how during their weekends they travel to places for family events. On Saturdays, Mandy usually has to work, and Lucy is able to have a relaxing day of watching movies and staying in her pajamas. Mandy stated, "Lucy loves her lazy day when the schedule is more relaxed and not so busy." Mandy, as a working mother, is glad that there are some days where Lucy can relax because she works so hard during the week in school and at home. Saturday evenings they usually travel to another state to visit Lucy's uncle for the night. While a their relatives house, Mandy stated, "we cookout with family in the backyard cooking meat, talking, and playing with the kids."

Various literacy strategies. In supporting their children's literacy development through authentic literacy activities, the five families also practice school-based literacy strategies as well as create their own literacy strategies based on their child's interests and needs. Some of the strategies are reflecting on the instruction they are receiving at school such as flashcards and using pictures to help with word recognition. Other strategies the families have created to support early literacy development.

School based literacy strategies. Brandy, Logan's mother, has kept Logan's word jar that he made in kindergarten and she discussed during one of the interviews how Logan enjoys utilizing that word jar even now in first grade. She explained how in kindergarten the teachers created a "word jar" throughout the year to support students with sight words. At the end of his kindergarten school year, the teachers sent the jar home. Logan has kept the jar and enjoys practicing his sight words. As his mother discussed, Logan has incorporated the word jar in his daily homework routine. She said Logan will say "Mommy can I do my word jar? And then he will pull out each card and practice saying the words." In order to make the routine more engaging, Brandy asserted how Logan plays different games with the word jar such as keeping points on how many he can say correct in a minute. Also, Logan uses the word jar to help his younger sister start to recognize words. A simple literacy activity created at school has helped to enhance early literacy development in the home environment.

Elaine talked about how Mike looks at pictures to help him with new words; however, sometimes he just fakes it and continues to read. Hence, she and her husband are pushing Mike to not look at the picture but sound out the words. In the excerpt below, Elaine explains more in detail:

> We're trying to get him to try to sound the words out first before looking at the clues in the pictures because he's a smart kid. He can look at a picture and then kind of get the gist and kind of fake it. You know kind of tell you what he thinks the word says. So, we're trying to get him to slow down and really sound out each word.

Family literacy experiences. The five families have also developed creative approaches to make learning enjoyable and engaging for their children. For example, Mandy discussed how she reads with Lucy and they enjoy using different voices when reading. She explained during a home visit how she encourages Lucy to read by telling her

for this reading we can use our pretend voices. Mandy continued by explaining while reading books she changed her voice to sound like an old man and then Lucy changed her voice to sound like a mouse. Other times, Mandy said they will have to guess the type of voice the other is using. For example, while reading a Minnie Mouse book, Mandy struggled to figure out the loud angry voice Lucy was using until Lucy said it was her "monster voice." Utilizing different voices while reading was an engaging and fun strategy created to encourage reading.

Nikki, Will's mother, explained how she made practicing sight words over the summer something fun for Will. Worried about retention of literacy knowledge over the summer break, Will's mother allotted a block of time each day for learning time. During one of our individual interviews, Nikki described a specific learning time event where she had to capitalize on Will's abundant amount of energy by initiating a new strategy for practicing sight words using flashcards. In the beginning, Nikki stated she was holding up the flashcards for Will to say each word; however, she quickly realized that Will was not engaged and moving from couch to chair and all around the room. Fearing the learning time would not be effective, Nikki devised a new approach for Will to use both his energy as well as practice sight words. As she explained, "When I made it a game where he had to hop to each word and I increased the distance it made it more of a physical challenge for him and he was more responsive and willing to participate in the learning time." Eventually, Nikki said this has become a strategy Will loved and would utilize when working on math facts and other content areas. For Nikki, while becoming aware of Will's individual needs and knowing her child as a learner, she was able to develop a meaningful literacy activity in the home environment that encouraged her child

to learn.

Literacy strategies are just as important in the home environment as well as school. Regardless of the environment or type of strategy, strategies help to support a child's early literacy development. Based on the above data, the five first graders were actively involved in learning to use multiple literacy strategies to enhance their development. Families were cognizant and attentive to their children's style of learning, using appropriate literacy strategies to meet the individual needs of the child. By either modifying school-based strategies or inventing a new literacy activity, families were promoting an environment fostering early literacy development. The five families created multiple ways that met the child's individual needs and interests.

The families provide resources, routines, strategies, and structure to support their children's early literacy development. Based on the data from the group interview, individual interviews, and the home visits, I illustrated how the families' home environments help support a child's early literacy development.

Multimodal Literacy Experiences in the Homes

The home visits, interviews, and artifacts provided me with rich data on the types of literacy activities occurring in the home environment. Analyzing the data from the home visits and individual interviews showed families' involvement in literacy development is transpiring through authentic, multiple literacy activities.

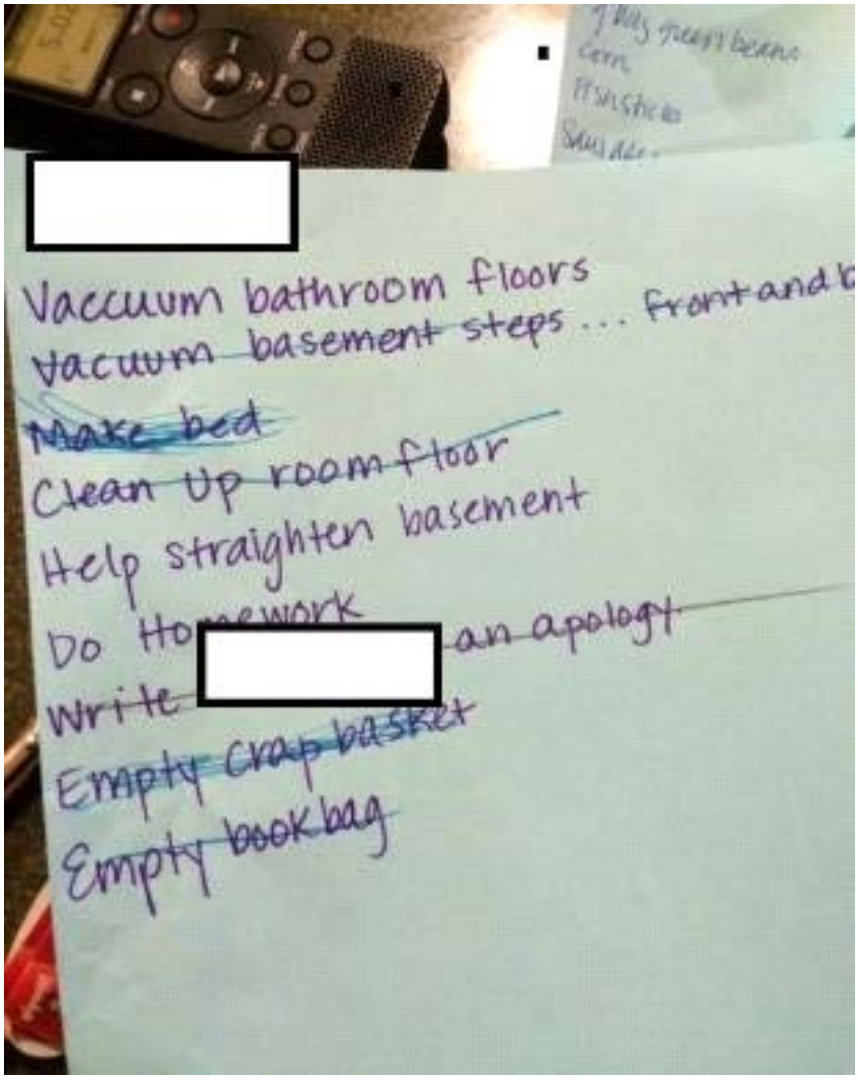
Authentic literacy, as defined by Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, and Towers (2007), is "reading and writing that is unlike the kind done in school" (p.346). Furthermore, "We conceptualize authentic literacy activities in the classroom as those that replicate or reflect reading and writing activities that occur in the lives of people outside of a learning-to-read-and-

write context and purpose" (Duke et al, 2007, p.346). In other words, unique literacy activities such as cooking and shopping that occur in people's daily routine are important to children's literacy development and relates to their families' funds of knowledge. The activities that the families do with their children as well as individual activities the children do alone supports the families' definition of literacy and illustrates their active involvement in literacy development through multiple literacy activities.

Making lists. Various parts of the daily activities such as making lists, provided parents opportunities with authentic literacy environments to interact with their child and/or children. During her individual interview, Jane discussed the challenges of a busy schedule and finding time for literacy interaction. Knowing the issue of time, Jane took advantage of moments such as making a grocery list or cleaning the house. During a home visit she explained how she has made the daily task of creating a grocery list a family affair:

> I take an inventory of what we have in our food pantry and write down what is needed for the week. The children will then look at the list and prepare different meals they want using the items on the list. If the children want a meal that has other ingredients not on the list, then they have to write the recipe out and add the items to the list.

Taking the time to capitalize on her children's comprehension knowledge, Jane was engaging in a literacy interaction with her children that was supporting their literacy knowledge. Another artifact that Jane gave me during a home visit was a chore list (see Figure 6) for Jack and his two sisters. Again, in a list form, each child had a piece of paper with their names on it and under their names were chores that had to be completed by Fridays of each week. Jane explained how the children had to read the list and once the chore was completed they had to mark it off. Jack's chore list included tasks such as "complete homework, make bed in morning, vacuum playroom, write your apology letter." Again, Jane provided an opportunity for literacy development through a daily activity as a list of chores.


Vacuum bathroom floors
Vacuum basement steps ... front and b
Make bed
Clean up room floor
Help straighten basement
Do Ho
an apology
Write
Empty crap basket
Empty book bag

Family calendar time. Elaine incorporated writing events on the family calendar as a time to promote literacy development. In order to keep up with the family's comings and goings, Elaine bought and hung up a dry erase board calendar. During the second home visit, Elaine showed me the calendar and discussed how each Sunday they had "family calendar time." Family calendar time consisted of her or her husband asking Mike and his sister to state the month, day, and year. Then the parents would point to the day and ask Mike to read what events were occurring on that day. For example, Elaine stated, "I asked Mike to read what we have planned for Saturday November 20th and pointed to the day and then read what is listed on the dry erase board under that date." Elaine has noticed since they started family calendar time, Mike is improving on reading fluently. She explained, "I have seen less sounding out of words

and better job reading the words fluently." Elaine has taken a task she did to help her stay organized and turned it into a family literacy interaction.

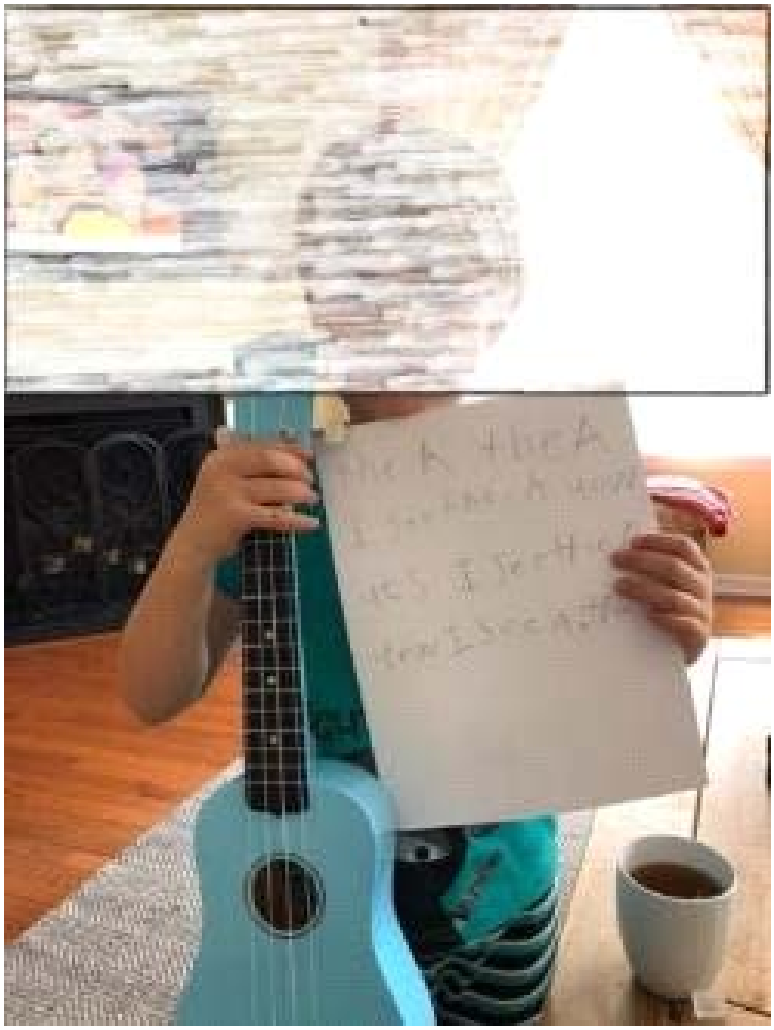
Music. For Mandy, riding in the car allows her the opportunity to incorporate singing and elements of literacy to foster literacy development with Lucy. While talking about literacy activities in her individual interview, Mandy shared her thoughts on singing and how she relies on singing as an effective approach to literacy development for Lucy. When Lucy was an infant, Mandy would play music in the car and sing to Lucy. She soon realized how much Lucy enjoyed this type of activity. Thus, singing has become an important aspect in her literacy interaction with Lucy, which occurs frequently while riding in the car. Mandy shared in her individual interview:

> Lucy is all about textures and sounds. If she hears something, she likes to put her ears to get the texture and sounds. She loves music and singing. Just recently I noticed instead of singing she just likes to make different sounds to the tone of a song. The other day in the back of the car she was making all these noises and at first, I was like what is she doing, but then I noticed she was making words and sounds and singing a song.

For Mandy, riding in the car allows her the opportunity to incorporate singing and elements of literacy to promote literacy development with Lucy. Based on Mandy's discussion about music, it is apparent that she relies on singing as an effective approach to literacy development for Lucy. Mandy has capitalized on an interest of Lucy's and uses the interest to help develop literacy knowledge.

Mike enjoys creating songs and playing an instrument. As a birthday gift, Mike received a child's guitar and quickly picked up on making music using the instrument. Elaine, his mother, discussed during a home visit how much Mike enjoys playing his guitar and writing songs. She stated, "Mike will sit for hours in the playroom or in his room and strum his guitar. Then he will create and write a song on his writing paper about various topics." Elaine explained sometimes

Mike will write a song he already knows such as “Row Row Row Your Boat;” however, other times he will create an original song. One of the artifacts that I collected was a song that Mike wrote about the letter /a/ (see Figure 7). The song Mike shared with me was neatly written with four complete sentences. Mike explained to me that he likes the sound that the letter /a/ makes so he wanted to write a song about the sound. Elaine continued to discuss how much Mike enjoys performing his original songs for his family. During the home visit, Elaine said, “Mike will gather us all together on the couch and will then stand in front of the TV and strum his guitar while singing his song.” Again, using music to enhance literacy development is evident in Mike’s home. Knowing the importance of music and literacy development, Elaine and her husband provided Mike with an opportunity to increase his literacy knowledge through writing and singing songs. Figure 7 depicts Mike before one of his performances of a song he created. He is proudly holding up the song he wrote and his guitar that he uses in his performance. Based on the photo, music provides support with Mike’s early literacy development by helping with writing and public speaking.



Writing letters and cards. Authentic and engaging literacy activities such as making cards and writing letters provided families with an opportunity to integrate literacy development in a fun and engaging way. Making cards is another creative arts activity that was a common theme found in the data. Jane talked about how Jack and his siblings practice writing letters and handwriting by creating and sending holiday cards to their friends and family. They practice "writing their address and signing their names" when we make our holiday cards. Jack and his siblings pick out the cards and then make a list of family and friends. Jane explained once Jack has a list of friends, he will then find an evening where he will address the envelopes and sign his name on the cards. Jane mentioned how she usually assists with the first envelop to explain the correct location of the return address and the recipient's address. Jack will then write out all the cards he plans to send. Another example that Jane discussed related to Thanksgiving. For the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, Jane said her children were writing "thankful letters." Below is an excerpt from our group interview where Jane explained the process:

> Right now, as a family each of my kids have to pick five people that they're grateful for and write them a letter and explain why they are grateful for that person. It has brought up some good conversations because they're not allowed to say that they're grateful for someone because of something that someone purchased for them. It has to be why you're

> grateful they're a part of your life. For Jack I do not want it to feel like a chore for him, I want it to be something fun, so he is dictating to me what he wants to write. I write it out and then he copies it.

This simple activity of writing letters and cards to family and friends has allowed Jack and his siblings to develop as well as acquire writing skills through a fun and authentic writing activity.

Another type of letter that Jack had to recently write was an "apology letter" (see Figure 8) to a friend's mother for not listening. In both the home visit and individual interview, Jack's mother Jane talked about how she made Jack write a letter to a mother apologizing for not listening. Jack went to play at a friend's house and when Jane told him it was time to go Jack continued to play. Jane felt this was being disrespectful in front of the mother and so when Jack returned home from the playdate he sat down and wrote an apology letter to the mother. Reading the artifact, I noticed that Jack utilized the proper letter writing format. He had a greeting, body, and signature. In the letter Jack wrote he stated, "I am sorry for not listening to you and I promise to be a good boy next time." Jack continued to write, "You have the best kids in the whole wide world and I am glad I could play at your house." For Jack's mother, she took advantage of an opportunity to teach Jack not only a life lesson but also how writing a letter is another form of apologizing. Jack had the opportunity to learn from his mistake as well as practice his writing skills. Writing different types of letters allows the children to be creative while at the same time learn through their real lived experiences.

[redacted]

I am [illegible] and
to you [illegible]
I will be a Good Boy Mom
[illegible] have the best
[illegible] in the house [illegible]
and I hop Next tom
[redacted] will be dun my
bigo home Next tod
I love you [redacted] and
y [illegible] and [illegible]
and I love [illegible]

Games. Another common multiple literacy activity in the data focused on playing games during literacy interactions. Jack's mother Jane reflected on a game played around the dinner table in her individual interview. For this particular game, the whole family played including her husband. She stated, "During dinner the whole family plays the "Highs and Lows" game. Each person has to say one thing that they did that day that made them proud, a high for the day, and a low for the day." While visiting their home, I was able to not only see this game being played, but also participate in this game. Jack hesitated to start the game and decided he was going to go last on this day. When it was his turn, Jack said "I am proud of myself for writing the apology letter to my friend's mother, but my low is that I had to write the letter for not listening." When Jack was discussing his highs and lows, I noticed he put his head down when speaking about having to write the apology letter. Seeing his posture, revealed how he felt about his actions and for being disrespectful. This game provided Jack and his siblings the opportunity to practice public speaking and listening knowledge.

Mike's family also enjoys playing games during dinner time. For Mike's mother, waiting for dinner has provided a learning opportunity to support phonemic awareness knowledge. Browsing in an educational toy store in the local area, Elaine, Mike's mother, discovered and bought phonic placemats. During our home visit, Elaine showed

me the phonics placemats and explained how Mike and his sister love using them while waiting for dinner. Elaine shared how she and her husband have created a variety of activities using the placements. For example, Elaine talked about a simple activity where she asked Mike and his sister to point to different letters. Another activity focuses on sound recognition where she makes a sound and Mike points to the correct letter. While visiting Mike, he discussed his favorite game he likes to play using the placemats. He explained, "I like when my mother sounds out a word and I have to point to all the letters and then say the word in a sentence." Elaine exclaimed, "Sometimes Mike will be so engaged that we have to force him to stop and eat his food." Once again, the family has made learning fun with a dinner table game and seizing an opportunity to work on phonemic awareness knowledge to support their children's early literacy development.

From reviewing events on a calendar to writing letters to playing games, families are actively involved in creating and sustaining an engaging learning environment for literacy development through authentic literacy events. The multimodal aspects of literacy events in the home environment revealed the families' rich funds of knowledge.

Challenges with Communication Between The Families and Teacher

A major topic that arose from my data analysis was communication between Sally and the five families. Both the teacher and the five families discussed the importance of open communication and dialogue between each other to help support the child.

Teacher's View on Communication

As the first grade teacher, Sally, stated in the individual interview:

> I think having open communication between the parents and myself is very important. If they see anything at home that they have a concern or question about, I want them to be able to come to me. And vice versa if I'd seen anything you know during conferences we

> can discuss their child's literacy development. I am able to learn if they're doing what they need to do or need to take a more active role and do a little more at home.

For Sally, open communication provides an opportunity for her to learn more about the students and what is happening in the home. Creating a trusting relationship that allows both the teacher and the families to feel comfortable talking and communicating is essential to gain more information on what the families need or what she as the teacher needs to do to support the child's early literacy development.

Families' View on Communication

From a parent's point of view on the importance of communication, Elaine spoke about parents needing communication, so they better understand their child as a learner as well as their child's teacher. Below she elaborated:

> If you don't communicate, then you have no idea who that student is as an individual, you don't have any idea who that teacher is as an individual. And so parents, don't know how to intervene without communication with the teacher.

In other words, without that correspondence with the teacher a family is disconnected from the school. Being able to make a connection or converse with the teacher provides families with valuable information on their child as a student as well as learning more about the teacher and her expectations. Nikki, Will's mother, discussed how simple communication can include taking the time "to just check in and being like How's my kid doing? Do you see any concerns? And asking these questions on a regular basis." Nikki found that asking these two simple questions opens up the lines of communication between the teacher and the parents. Nikki stated during the group interview, "I would like to do better at communicating with the teacher. This is a good reminder for me." Nikki acknowledged the importance of communication and felt she could do a better job.

Ways of Communication

Both the teacher and the families realized communication is an important aspect to forming a partnership, thus, how are they communicating. Data from the interviews and home visits showed that communication between the teacher and families is occurring often through classroom resources such as agendas, scheduled school events, and students sharing with families. Classroom resources such as agendas and newsletters were the main form of communication that the teacher and families utilized throughout the school year. For both the teacher and families, this form of communication provided important information that was seen each day regarding the students.

Agendas. Both the teacher and the families discussed how they stay in communication through the students' agendas. At the beginning of the school year, students are given an agenda which is a calendar where they are to write down their homework and other activities that need to be completed. *Take home folders* and *agendas*, which have important information, go home and parents are responsible for signing the agendas each night. When students arrive at school as part of their morning routine, they turn in their agendas to the teacher. This agenda is seen by both the teacher and the families on a daily basis; teachers and families will write notes to one another regarding the child. Jane, Jack's mother states, "If I've had a question about something, I write it in the planner and get feedback immediately." Elaine also uses the agenda to share information on her son Mike and is touched that the teacher always responds. She exclaimed, "I write little things in the agenda, even silly things just like what Mike said and she'll always respond which is nice considering all the agendas she has to read daily." For Elaine, the agenda provided her an opportunity to share home occurrences or aspects of Mike with Sally. Elaine was able to help Sally learn more about Mike and his home environment that she can then integrate into her classroom environment and support Mike's needs as a learner.

Classroom newsletters. Along with the agendas, Sally explained how she communicates through her classroom newsletter she sends out once a month. The newsletter was an artifact collected and it provides information to the families regarding what is being focused on with each of the subjects as well as what to look forward to in each of the content areas. The letter also provides information on special events in the classroom and/or school with dates and times. At times, the newsletter may have information that supports literacy such as information "on why I asked them to read for twenty minutes each night or other strategies they can use at home to help their child" (see Figure 9). The figure below depicts an excerpt from one of Sally's newsletters explaining a strategy they could utilize during their nightly reading time. Each newsletter introduced a different literacy strategy to the families to help support their children with literacy at home. The five families felt the newsletters helped them stay informed on what is occurring in the classroom with regard to the subject areas as well as upcoming school and classroom events. During the group interview, Jane stated, "I like the monthly newsletter because it explains what they are doing, what they are learning, and what they are going to be learning." The newsletter is one way families can stay connected with the classroom and school environment. One of the newsletters Sally sent home in December focused on the importance of reading each night. She stated, "At this time the reading should be shifting to the parents reading less and the kids reading more." For the families, this provided a reminder of what they need to be doing at home each night regarding literacy. Sally also explained what they could do to better support the literacy growth in the child by having them read more to the parents.

Nightly Reading Log

Now that it is the third term, I just wanted to remind you of the importance of reading daily. As part of your child's homework every night, they are expected to read at least 20 minutes. Now that they are getting closer and closer to second grade, they should be reading more and you should be reading to them less. Each night after you have seen them read, you should initial the agenda letting me know that they did read. If you feel you don't have books on your child's level at home, please let me know and I can send some home.

School Events

Throughout the school year, the administration schedules special school events such as "Parent/Teacher Conference Nights" or "Back to School Night" where families can come to the school after school hours. The events are often held between 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to accommodate families' after school schedules. Teachers are required to be at the school events in order to provide opportunities for families to learn more about their child's school, classroom, and teacher. During both the group and individual interviews, Sally and the families discussed how the different school events give them an opportunity to communicate more with the teacher other than the daily classroom resources.

Parent/Teacher Conferences. Parent conferences were another form of communication that was discussed by both the teacher and the families. Sally elaborated on the importance of parent conferences because it allows her the opportunity to explain the progress of their child and where they should be in first grade. She asserted:

> My big thing with conferences is to show them where their child should be right now and where they are and I can share information with them and give them some tips on things they can do at home and that kind of thing.

For Sally, conferences open up the line of communication between the teacher and the family which allow her the opportunity to share information regarding their child. Sally is able to meet with the families face to face and explain to them what is occurring with their children in the classroom. She provided data from assessments and is able to explain to the families what the

data means regarding their child's literacy development. The above quote illustrates the teacher centered form of communication that the data revealed which focuses more on the school literacies such as assessment results.

Beginning of the year events. Back to School Night and Open House which are school events that are held at the beginning of the school, families discuss the importance of communicating how the teacher would like to stay in contact. For example, Nikki, Will's mother, was able to learn how the teacher would like to communicate via email, text, and notes through the Back to School night event. During the Back to School Night event, Sally gave a presentation to the families about her expectations for the school year. In the conclusion of the presentation, Sally explained to the families how they could contact her if needed during the school year. Nikki felt hearing the teacher say the best way to communicate with her was very helpful and allowed her to feel more comfortable knowing how Sally preferred to be reached.

For the families, knowing more from the teacher and her expectations with regard to how she prefers to communicate is vital. The group and individual interviews revealed the major concern of parents was that of overwhelming the teacher with communication requests. Jane acknowledged how she realizes that teachers are overwhelmed with responsibilities and she "does not want to be adding anything more to her plate." Jane's career has provided her with opportunity to be in the school environment and work with teachers; therefore, she has learned how much more teachers are required to do then to just teach. Also, realizing that there are twenty families the teacher must be in contact with they acknowledged that the teacher is the "Key to how they're going to set up the form of communication." Jane elaborated more about the teacher's role being crucial:

> It's the teacher. One personality versus you know 25 different personalities or however many it is. If they kind of set the bar, like okay this is the format I want to go with I feel it's just easier.

Elaine agreed with Jane during the group interview; however, she added the importance of the teacher acknowledging that every family may have had a different school experience in the past and may not feel comfortable with communication. Hence, as Elaine asserted:

> So teachers need to be able to engage each parent and each type of parent and each experience because that is the part of the learning process. So if communication is not happening I think then it's the teacher's role to engage that person and figure out what format works the best.

As Elaine discussed regarding her job as a Social Worker, "I work with parents who have had an unpleasant experience with school and feel intimidated by teachers. They do not feel comfortable talking to teachers because of their bad experiences." Educators may feel that some families do not care about their child's education because they do not communicate with the teacher or attend school events; however, it may be another reason, such as the experiences parents have had with school. Hence, educators need to take the time to learn more about the lack of communication and what they can do to build a relationship with the families.

Student Sharing

Another form of communication Sally reflected on in the journals was the students sharing what they learned with their families. This allowed the students to become part of the partnership. For instance, Sally described how she asked the students to share their new knowledge on Jackie Robinson with their families as well as what they had learned about autobiographies. In Sally's reflective journal, she stated, "I didn't communicate personally with the families, but I did encourage the students to discuss what we have been talking about with social justice, specifically segregation." Veteran's Day activity with the *Scholastic News* magazine was another event that Sally highlighted in her journal and discussed how she asked

the students to share one new fact about Veteran's Day they learned with their family for homework. Sally stated in her reflective journal, "I sent home the *Scholastic News* magazine with the students and asked them to share the magazine with their families for homework. I told them to make sure they share one fact they learned about Veterans' Day with their parents." Encouraging students to share with their families what they are doing in school, provides Sally with another avenue of communicating what is occurring in the classroom.

Student work. Sally also recounted numerous times in her reflective journals how she would send home classwork and other assignments weekly so the families could see the different activities as well as the progress of their child. For example, Sally explained how at the end of each of the Writer's Workshop units, she would send home all the writing drafts so parents could read their child's writing. She also sends home the decodable books once they are finished using them in guided reading. Other forms of communication such as texting, emailing, and phone calls were mentioned; however, not used often.

One Sided Communication

Data showed that communication was occurring between the teacher and families; however, were they communicating effectively in order to support early literacy development? What was being communicated had a primary focus on student behavior and not truly learning what was occurring in the different environments regarding literacy development. Sally's communication with the families is primarly focused on certain reading strategies such as sounding out words they need to work on to support school literacies instead of inquiring about what they are doing at home with literacy. The parents also were not taking the initiative to share their home literacy experiences with the teacher. In regards to the teacher in this situation, a teacher needs to show through their words and/or actions they value the families funds of

knowledge. Without this respect of both the teacher and the families regarding the different environments, the opportunity to make the connection between home and school is being missed. The communication is there; however, what is being communicated seems to be the issue in establishing a true partnership. Both the teacher and the families were establishing a convenient relationship but not a mutal partnership where both are working together to connect school and home experiences in order to teach the whole child. . During one of my classroom observations, I noticed this disconnect first hand. While observing the class, I observed a missed opportunity on both the teacher and family's part. In the guided reading block, if a student's group is working independently the student is allowed to select a book from a colored basket after completing an assignment. On this particular day, Will was given the chance to read independently and he noticed some magazines. From my home visit observation, I knew that Will's environment is full of magazines and he reads on a daily basis from magazines. He asked his teacher if he could read a magazine instead of the books in the basket and without knowing his background the teacher said no. He needed to read the books from the basket. If the teacher and family had taken the time to learn more about the experiences in the home and school, Will could have been learning just as much from the magazine as the books. Whether through agendas, conferences, or the students, in all of the forms of communication, the teacher and the families seem to be assessing peripheral elements and not truly learning more about the other's experiences with literacy development and how to bring both the school and home literacies practices together to teach the whole child.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provides the reader with the research findings by documenting and analyzing what is occurring in both the school and home environment. Utilizing the participants' stories

from interviews as well as my rich data from classroom observations, the teacher's reflective journals, and home visits, I illustrated what was occurring in the school and home environment regarding reading and writing. With regard to the teacher, the data revealed the teacher's instructional practices did not reflect her theoretical belief or views on early literacy development. As for the families, their children are gaining literacy knowledge through multiple literacies activities occurring in their everyday routines. The home environment offers early literacy support through the families' funds of knowledge. Furthermore, the data suggest that communication was occurring between both the teacher and families; however, the communication was most often targeting school literacies and less on the home literacies. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of the findings and my recommendations on future research.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study examined the experiences of the first grade teacher, first grade students, and families and how their experiences impact early literacy development. This chapter provides an overview of the themes identified from the data analysis. Next, I discuss the significance and implications of the research as it relates to early childhood literacy development. Then, I explain the limitations of the study. Also, I offer suggestions for future research with regard to early literacy development as well as reflect on my research experience.

Understanding of the Study

The purpose of the study was to acquire more in-depth insight on how school and home literacies support first graders' early literacy development. Another intention of my study was to better understand how teachers and families collaborate in order to build a partnership that connects home and school experiences to support a first grader's early literacy development. Data analysis for this study focused on addressing the following primary research question: What are an early childhood teacher and families' experiences with first graders' home and school literacies practices? The following sub-questions guided my inquiry:

- How does the role of an early childhood teacher support a first grader's early literacy development?
- How do the home experiences of families support a first grader's early literacy development?

- How do teachers and families collaborate in order to build a partnership that connects home and school experiences to support a first grader's early literacy development?

For this qualitative study, the framework is supported by aspects that fall under the socio-cultural umbrella. Utilizing multiple data sources such as group and individual interviews, home visits, and observations, I was able to not only triangulate the data but also collect rich data that explored and examined the research questions. The study was focused on one first grade teacher, five first graders and their families at an elementary school located on the east coast. Both the teacher and the five families were able to offer rich data through their personal stories and lived experiences with regard to supporting early literacy development. Hence, the research findings pose vital information regarding a first grader's early literacy development. The focus of the findings was on two main contexts: the first grade classroom and the home environment. As for the first grade classroom, the teacher arranged and provided resources throughout the classroom. My findings revealed a disconnection between the teacher's theoretical belief and her instructional literacy practices. Families aided in early literacy development by surrounding their children with literacy rich home environments through resources and multimodal family activities. Regarding collaboration between the teacher and the families, the data indicated that communication was seen as an important aspect of building a relationship; however, the communication was extremely one-sided focused, mainly on what was occurring in the classroom context. Also, the communication was driven by scheduled school events, such as parent/teacher conferences.

First grade teacher's literacy teaching practices. Data revealed that the teacher used numerous skill-based practices and resources in her classroom environment. The teacher made various resources readily available such as technology, charts, and printed materials in order to

expose the students to an assortment of literacy tools. Along with resources, Sally's daily routine and classroom management not only engaged students, but also encouraged positive behavior. Out of the 4.5 hours of instructional time in the classroom, 3.5 of those hours are focused on reading and writing. Most of the schedule is centered on literacy, which allowed Sally ample time to teach literacy. In small and whole groups, the children are constantly working on skills such as phonics, decoding, blending, and sound recognition as a part of their structured daily routine for literacy. More direct instruction was utilized during reading blocks; however, the writing program requires more individualized work and indiviualized teaching. Conferencing is a major aspect of the writing program, where the teacher provides one on one feedback on students' writing, which allows for more personalized instruction to support specific individualized needs. Suprisingly, with regards to integrating reading and writing, this integration was observed very little. When integration did occur, it was during the reading block as a form of comprehension assessment having the students write to answer a question about a text.

Regarding the theoretical framework of instruction, it was surprising to see the teacher utilizing more aspects that relate to a reading readiness and behavioristic perspectives rather than socio-cultural and emergent literacy perspective, which did not correlate to her personal belief or views of literacy. Based on my data, I found a disconnection between Sally's theoretical beliefs and views on early literacy development and her type of literacy instructional strategies she utilized in her classroom. This was surprising for me considering Sally's beliefs and views on early literacy development fell under the emergent literacy umbrella. Even though Sally believes early literacy begins the moment a child is born, her reading instruction was not a reflection of her literacy belief. When utilizing aspects of the socio-cultural theory in the classroom, this

theory can aid teachers in orchestrating a learning environment that cultivates active learning in supporting early literacy development.

Family literacies. "Parental involvement in children's literacy practices is a more powerful force for academic achievement than family social class, family size, or level of parent education" (Larotta & Yamamura, 2011; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Hence, the role of parents/guardians is important in children's early literacy development. As far as the families and home environments in my study, they supported their children's early literacy development through their everyday daily routines and family literacy activities. After hearing the families different responses to literacy and early literacy development, their views of literacy helped to shape the types of family literacy events that they participated in with their child and/or children to help support early literacy development.

As far as what types of early literacy related activities they engaged in with their children, the parents discussed numerous authentic, multiliteracy activities such as playing games, writing letters, and family calendar time. During my many home visits, I was able to observe the various multimodal literacy events. Research shows that "parent literacy involvement practices often include reading bedtime stories, buying educational toys, and implementing shared reading techniques" (Larotta & Yamamura, 2011; Daniel-White, 2002; Zarate, 2007). Through these family-oriented multiliteracy activities, the families are building and strengthening their children's funds of knowledge in literacy. For the parents, specifically the mothers in this study, literacy activities have become such a part of their daily routines they do not even realize they are engaging in literacy activities. Along with exposing their children to multiliteracy events, the families utilize both school-based and uniquely designed literacy strategies to encourage growth in literacy knowledge. Through the use of sight word flashcards, games, and other activities, the

families were providing an engaging way to support literacy development in the home environment. For example, one mother created a “leap frog sight word” game where her child had to say a word then jump to the flashcard. One can see through the actions and practices of the families that literacy plays a significant role in their home environment. Regardless of their socio-economic status, literacy was happening. In observing and hearing the stories of the families, the data revealed that the families are seeing the importance of connecting literacy learning to their specific environment in order to support and foster early literacy development in their children.

Challenging issues regarding partnership. Regarding collaboration, my data showed communication was an important factor to both the teacher and families in establishing a partnership. All participants stressed the need for open communication in order for a relationship to be established. Communication was occurring between the teacher and families in various ways such as school agendas, parent/teacher conferences, or students sharing with their families. Although communication was occurring, the topic of the conversation focused more on the early literacy development occurring in the classroom and not on what was also happening at home. As a former first grade teacher, I was surprised that the teacher did not reach out more to learn about the families of the importance of integrating students’ interest to make learning more engaging.

As for the families, they talk about the importance of open communication; however, each was hesitate to share what was happening in the home, reportedly due to fear of overwhelming the teacher. In order to form a meaningful partnership that works to support the whole child, both the teacher and families need to take communication to the next level and be more open with what is occurring in all the environments that surround a child. Starting with a

simple conversation about the home environment can help create the beginning of the bridge to connect the school and home literacies in order to provide more effective support for early literacy development.

Significance of Study

Disconnect between educational theories and practice in a contemporary classroom. My study revealed that the first grade teacher supported a first grader's early literacy development through the structure of the classroom and instructional practices. In my findings, I discovered that the teacher was not applying best practices for teaching and supporting early literacy development based on the theories and paradigms that are proven to be effective for a child's learning. The findings showed that the theories on how children learn literacy are not congruent with the practice of teaching in today's classrooms.

As other research shows, children's literacy knowledge grows in an environment where they can learn socially; thus, one would expect to see aspects of the socio-cultural theory present in the classroom. By understanding and integrating the strengths of the socio-cultural theory, an educator can become more culturally receptive while at the same time "producing involved citizens capable of successfully participating in and contributing to a democratic society" (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, pg. 59). Yet, the teacher in my study focused more on direct instruction, using aspects from the behaviorist perceptive rather than the socio-cultural paradigm. Through the use of direct instruction in teaching reading skills in isolation and utilization of skill-based reading strategies, the teacher in the study unintentionally utilized facets of the reading readiness paradigm in her early literacy instruction. Having a reading program which is based on a socioculatural perspective would provide teachers with a more student centered framework allowing for children to be more socially activity in their learning. According to

Tracey and Morrow (2012) educators who use the reading readiness paradigm "focus on facilitating reading development through instruction in skills and subskills identified as prerequisites for reading" (p. 51). Phonics worksheets, sound and letter flashcards, tracking as you read, are all strategies and activities the teacher used in reading instruction. Research shows that the reading readiness paradigm is less effective in teaching young children how to read. Knowing the teacher's belief and views on early literacy development aligned with the emergent literacy theory, as a researcher I was surprised to see her use of skilled-based instruction. For teachers, self-reflection is an essential aspect to growing and improving as an educator. In a situation such as Sally's, taking the time to reflect on her instructional practices would allow her to see that her theoretical belief and instructional practices do not complement one another. Teachers need to be proactive and realize when changes need to occur in order to provide students with effective early literacy development.

One-sided partnership: Focus on school and not families' funds of knowledge. Another implication to emerge from my analysis was focused on the teacher and family collaboration in forming a partnership to connect both the school and home experiences. My data from the home visit confirmed the families were providing early literacy support meaningfully in the form of resources found in the home and the types of family literacy activities; however, more importantly, what is occurring is not being shared with the teacher.

Epstein's (2010) study shows that educators, families, and students view partnerships as essential to help students succeed throughout their schooling. The findings in my research indicates the importance of the teacher and families collaborating to support the first grader's early literacy development. Collaboration is occurring through open communication between the teacher and families. Epstein's (2010) Framework of Six Types of Involvements that guide

schools and families toward a partnership has communication as the second of the six types. There is communication occurring between school and home and home and school through various avenues such as school agendas, parent teacher conferences, and student sharing. However, throughout the different forms of communication, the data showed that the majority of the discussion focused on what was occurring only in the classroom environment. Neither the teacher nor the families were focusing on the literacy experiences occurring in the home environment. As Epstein (2010) states:

> The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students (p. 81).

The communication is more one sided and lacking in the discussion of what is occurring in the home environment, thus disconnecting the school and home environment. With this disconnect, a partnership will struggle to be effective

Implications

Challenges faced with mandated school curriculum and policies. My findings revealed the disconnection between the teacher's theoretical beliefs and her instructional practice. An implication for the disconnect may revolve around the county and school wide mandated curricula that does not support socioculturally instruction. Teachers are faced with the challenges of mandated educational policies and required student testing. With the increased number of assessments and the shift of teacher responsibility being assumed for student test scores, teachers are spending more time focusing on the assessments and less time on the students. Teaching to the test is encouraging teachers to engage in rote instruction, leaving little

room for students to learn socially as well as to incorporate students' funds of knowledge into lessons. The socio-cultural theory emphasizes learning through socialization and promotes learning through collaboration and as a part of social groups (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Moreover, instead of encouraging antagonism in learning, the theories aim to promote a more democratic learning environment where individuals collaborate and work together to pose and solve problems. In these environments, thinking has a social foundation in each individual's involvement with people in their everyday lives, as it is these people who have played a critical role in shaping the individual's views and beliefs. (Smagorinsky, 2013). School districts and administrators need to consider the following statement by Moll and Arnot-Hopfferr (2005):

> In teacher education, it does well to always remember that power never goes unchallenged, it always produces resistance and contestations; and schools are not fixed or immutable entities, they are built environments, socially produced and recreated through the actions of human beings, especially teachers, who ultimately must find ways to participate in and mediate their realities for the benefit of the children they teach, even when those realities include significant constraints. (p. 246)

Thus, school districts need to provide more student-centered literacy curricula where teacher knowledge is valued as well as supported by a more socio-culturally responsive way of learning.

Theories and paradigms on effective early literacy curricula on teaching and supporting early literacy development are not being reflected in today's classrooms. Research has provided useful knowledge on the importance of the theories and reasons for utilizing; however, the theories are not applicable for what is happening in many school environments. My research revealed a disconnection between a teacher's theoretical belief and her literacy instruction. The findings of this study brought forth pertain to this disconnection with theory and practice. What can we do to move forward and help in-service teachers put theories into practice? Research shows that classroom teachers are the most knowledgable about best practices in the field (Clark & Peterson, 1984; Darling-Hammond & Bradford, 2005) considering they are the ones in the

field and seeing what is occurring with students. However, teachers' voices can be silenced with mandated curricula and policies which does not provide them with freedom to utilize their theorticial beliefs within their instruction. Encouraging more teachers to become teacher-researchers would provide valuable opportunity to apply theory to practice. Teacher-researchers would have an authentic opportunity to advocate for how to apply appropriate theories into practice. Teacher-researchers would have the opportunity to collect data while teaching and apply the theories and instructional paradigms within the curriculum. They would be able to implement, explore, and analyze aspects of theory, potentially making current early literacy development theories more applicable to the contemporary curriculum of today's classrooms.

With the challenge that many new teachers face with school systems' mandated curricula, it is important to instruct teaching candidates on ways to handle these challenges that they will surely face during their first few years of teaching. As Schultz et al. (2008) stated, "although it is important to give student teachers a strong theoretical understanding of these new practices, we have learned of the equally important need to explicitly teach new teachers how to negotiate all of the competing sets of beliefs-including their own-that they will encounter in their early years of teaching" (p. 182). In order to guide pre-service teachers, teacher education programs could design a curriculum that teaches candidates how to develop and weave their new knowledge and beliefs into the mandated school curriculum and standards effectively and respectfully.

Valuing and integrating student's funds of knowledge. As Epstein (2010) acknowledges, "the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life" (p. 82). Knowing the importance of establishing a partnership, the data shows that there is more work needed on how to create an effective teacher/family partnership. Purcell-Gates states that "sociocultural theory of learning suggests that all learning takes place

within a social context, and to understand the processes of learning, one must also specify and seek to understand the social context within which learning occurs" (p. 6). To view learning through a sociocultural-theory lens means that educators need to look outside of the classroom walls to understand that learning is occurring in other environments. Once teachers acknowledge and understand the tremendous resource we have in outside-of-the-school literacy, they are more likely to make the effort to develop a partnership with families in order to integrate home literacies throughout their curriculum to enhance learning development and better engage their students in the learning process.

Students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992; Moll, 2013) are valuable resources that all teachers need to leverage to provide a rich and engaging classroom environment. Teachers should understand and accept that early literacy knowledge is often learned outside of the classroom. By embracing home literacy knowledge and experiences within the school curriculum and incorporating them into the classroom learning environment, teachers and families can enhance the learning experience for their students. To effectively use these literacy practices in the classroom, educators need to acknowledge students' funds of knowledge and strive to learn as much about them as possible from students and families. Specifically, teachers need to make a conscious effort to learn more about students' cultures and backgrounds and how these influences help to shape the literacy knowledge they develop at home. As Hogg (2011) states, instead of focusing on assessment figures, teachers should value and integrate learners' funds of knowledge that enable them to look at the lives of their students to identify previous knowledge (p. 673). Families also need to take the initiative to share their home experiences regarding literacy development with the teacher. This insight and information can then help teachers create a more socio-culturally responsive curriculum that incorporates diverse literacy

practices. Foote (2009) states that the funds of knowledge project "is based on the belief in the student as a person with a broad base of valuable experience and resources" (p. 41). If teachers and families focused their attention on their students' lives, they would see the enormous amount of knowledge that they bring into the classroom. Knowing the research and theories supporting partnerships and funds of knowledge, why is there a disconnection between the school and home literacies? What can we do as educators and researchers to create more effective partnerships?

Teachers can be the link that connects out of school literacies to the classroom. Teachers are in the position to realize the positive impacts of the students' funds of knowledge on the learning environment. Therefore, providing pre-service and in-service teachers with the knowledge and importance of the student's funds of knowledge would be a foundation for teaching them the importance of a partnership and begin to better prepare teachers on the importance of collaboration. To prepare pre-service teachers, teacher education programs need to first create a curriculum that prepares the pre-service teacher to understand and integrate students' funds of knowledge and become more culturally responsive. Not only do education programs need an effective curriculum, but all involved in the program need to share the same vision. Professors and instructors need to take the curriculum and model in their courses pedagogy that is effective to use with the funds of knowledge concept. According to Loughran (2006) displaying how to use pedagogy can be a powerful instructional strategy. Teacher education programs should provide research and reading materials to students throughout the course to analyze the importance of the notion of funds of knowledge as well as illustrate different instructional strategies for integrating diverse learners' funds of knowledge. Professors and instructors need to design course assignments such as autobiographies, that will help the students identify their own funds of knowledge and bring better awareness of the skills that

students bring from their everyday lives. I agree with Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) when they state, “teaching teachers is certainly among the most demanding kinds of professional preparation: teacher educators must constantly model practices; construct powerful learning experiences; thoughtfully support progress and understandings; and help link theory and practice” (p. 441). As far as preparing in-service teachers, school districts could offer professional development that focuses on the importance of forming a partnership with families and provide tools and resources for teachers to utilize to help establish effective partnerships. Other learning experiences can be designed to help teachers know how to take the information learned from the partnership regarding the families’ funds of knowledge and implement it into the classroom environment. The school system leaders could offer an on-line discussion board such as a blog where teachers can share their experiences and suggestions on what they are doing in their classrooms regarding partnerships.

Also, families need to be included on the importance of partnerships and funds of knowledge. For schools, it is imperative to make families aware of the importance of their role in a child’s early literacy development and that the school values what is occurring in their home environments. Offering more opportunities in the schools through engaging learning experiences, in order to invite families to collaborate with schools in forming partnerships that can help to support children’s early literacy development. In the beginning of the school years as part of a school’s Open House event, provide information to the families on the importance of a partnership. Throughout the school year, offer learning experinces on steps and strategies to help create an effective relationship with the teacher and the schools. Within the learning experiences, offer literature and resources that can guide families on how to share their families’ funds of knowledge with the school and classroom teacher. Offer more opportunities for the families to

collaborate with the teacher through scheduled events at the school. Schools need to continuously stay in contact with families to show they are valuable parts of a child's learning as well as to understand the families' interests and needs in order to have meaningful partnerships.

This study demonstrates that the teacher and family can learn the importance of their role not only in their child's early literacy development, but also in forming a partnership with one another. The teacher can realize how valuable it can be to reflect on their teaching to ensure their beliefs and views on literacy are being reflected in how they provide literacy instruction. Regarding the families, the study highlights how much they are doing in their everyday routines that support early literacy development. Both the teacher's and families' roles are vital to a child's early literacy development as well as the activities occurring in both the school and home environments. Most importantly, the study provides valuable information on teacher/family partnerships and how to better collaborate in order to connect both the school and home literacies.

Limitations

As Glesne (2016) explains, "limitations are aspects that [limit] the research in some way but were beyond your control or perceived only in hindsight" (p. 214). Thus, one of the limiting factors associated with the study pertained specifically to the number of participants. For this study, I used a convenience sample (Creswell, 2014) which means the subjects were easily accessible as well as close in proximity. I also utilized purposeful sampling which allowed me to select "information rich cases" (Patton, 2002). Both convenience and purposeful sampling creates limitations. Selecting only one first grader teacher, five first graders, and their families limits my participant sample, which in turn will not be a representation of the entire population. Acknowledging that a small number of participants were selected, the results are not

generalizable; therefore, does not speak for the entire population. Allowing for the fact that was a purposeful sample within the study readers should recognize that this does not represent the entire population for Baylor Elementary School.

Another limitation was the research site. Utilizing only one elementary school (Baylor Elementary School) and one classroom narrowed the focus to just this school, which limits the representation of other elementary schools in the county, state, or country. A more in-depth longitudinal study would need to be conducted possibly using multiple classrooms to reach a larger population. In addition, time is another limitation to the investigation. Data collection occurred over a three-month period, which provided just a snapshot of the literacy experiences occurring during that time with the first grade teacher, students, and families. Again, a longitudinal study would need to be completed based on the data that was found in this initial investigation.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study provided a better understanding of how first grade students were learning to become readers, writers, and learners in both the school and home environment. Furthermore, the study offered in-depth information on challenging aspects of the communication between the teacher and the families including the lack of partnership between the teacher and the families. Communication was evident; however, the communication was ineffective in forming a partnership that links the school and home literacies practice. This study identifies that it is essential to build not just a relationship but a partnership between the teacher and the families in order to collaborate more effectively and provide a well-rounded education. Seeing the one-sided communication between the teacher and families, a future study could focus more on the school/teacher/family partnership. What are the elementary schools doing to involve families in

the child's learning? What are the teachers and families doing to establish a partnership? In order to answer the above questions, I would collaborate with the school administrator, teachers, and families in order to gain more knowledge on what is occurring regarding a partnership.

Through my study, it was evident the teacher was not integrating the families' funds of knowledge into the classroom environment. Schultz, Jones-Walker & Chikkatur (2008) note that "prospective teachers enter teacher education programs with preconceived ideas about what it means to teach and to learn and these ideas continue to evolve as they move into their own classrooms. Part of the task of teacher preparation involves helping new teachers learn from their students…" (p. 156). Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzela (1992) assert that "teachers rarely draw on the resources of the 'funds of knowledge' of the child's world outside the context of the classroom" (p. 134). Teachers can utilize students' individual knowledge and experiences, or funds of knowledge, to make learning deeper and more enriching. School districts and teachers are constantly in need of resources to help improve student learning, including books, computers, and supplies. Unfortunately, many of these educators and administrators fail to see that these funds of knowledge are a valuable resource as well. Why is this happening in our classrooms? Are college and university teacher education programs preparing teachers on how to collaborate with families to support literacy, learn about families' fund of knowledge? Are the universities' curricula providing the teacher candidates with courses that provide rich content knowledge on effectively working in conjunction with families to teach children literacy knowledge by integrating learners' funds of knowledge? Answering the above questions can prepare future teachers on effective approaches to supporting early literacy development by building relationships with families to learn about the funds of knowledge of the families. Teacher education programs have a major influence on the views and beliefs that pre-service teachers

take with them when they graduate (Nieto, 2000). To better prepare teachers, it is imperative for teacher education programs to redesign curriculum that includes how to create a classroom environment that fosters building partnerships with families in order to share the responsibilities of teaching the whole child.

Closing Remarks

Undertaking this research has been a valuable learning experience for me as a teacher-researcher, a former first grade teacher, parent, and doctoral candidate. I have gained a better understanding of the nature of qualitative research. For example, the importance of knowing my positionality as a researcher when conducting, collecting, and analyzing data. Being a former first grade teacher, it was challenging at times not to show biases during classroom observations and analysis. Also, analyzing the enormous amount of data was overwhelming at times; however, considering the amount of time spent collecting the data and multiple data sources provided me with rich information on early literacy development.

Conducting this research has also helped me to examine my own professional view on teacher's and families' partnerships in regard to early literacy development. Since I now have a better understanding of what is occurring in the school and home environments regarding early literacy development, I intend to further explore how to connect school and home literacies through the creation of a partnership. I have begun to question more about the curriculum in teacher education programs and how they are preparing pre-service teachers in the importance of collaborating with families. Along with the teacher education program, what are the elementary schools providing to in-service teachers and families in supporting the teacher/family relationship? The research process has also encouraged me to view my own partnership with my children's teachers and what I need to do in order to make that partnership more effective in

order to support my children's literacy learning. As a parent, my children rely on me to provide them with literacy knowledge and experiences they need to be successful in school and the real world. It is my responsibility to be a role model, advocate, and facilitator to my children and provide them with a literacy enriched learning environment. During my research, the families were responsive and collaborative considering my background as a former teacher, parent, and doctoral candidate. Throughout each interaction, conversations were natural and comfortable between myself and the participants. As an educator, families and students view my role as essential to help support their early literacy development; therefore, it is my role to make needed changes to ensure students are provided with an enriching literacy environment.

Seeing and learning about the multiliteracy activities occurring within the dynamics of the home environment was phenomenal and the families' every day routines were surrounded with effective literacy activities that encouraged and supported literacy development for their children. As the researcher, educator, and parent, I was surprised and elated to see home environments full of family literacy events. However, through my many classroom observations, I am concerned with seeing how many of the theoretical paradigms are not relevant or applicable in today's contemporary classroom curriculum. Establishing an effective partnership between a teacher and a family can ensure the joining together of school and home literacies in order to teach the whole child. I agree with Dewey's (1956) statement, [Thus there remains a] gap existing between the everyday experiences of the child and the isolated material supplied in such large measure in the school" (pp. 75–76). This idea of learning about students' home and community experiences, and the importance of integrating these experiences into the schools, began over one hundred fifteen years ago. As a teacher-researcher and a parent, it is my responsibility to continue to advocate for more effective and engaging partnerships between

teachers and families to ensure the integration of a learner's funds of knowledge in the school and home environments.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Child Assent Form

Title of Project: Early Literacy Development: A Teacher and Families' Experiences

(I will read this letter aloud to the children)

Hi! I want to learn what you do with reading and writing. I will be in your classroom and at home. I want to see things you do at school and home.

If you say yes and change your mind later, that is OK. If you want to stop, please tell me or your teacher. Whatever you choose, your teacher will still be happy with you. If you want to be in this study, you can write your name on the line. You can ask me questions. You can stop at any time.

Your printed name: _____

Date_____

Signature of person obtaining consent: _____

Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining

consent:_____

Appendix B

Group Interview-Semi-Structured Interview with Families

Hi, my name is Gray Jack. So, it's good to see you again. I am here today to ask you some questions about your child in first grade and literacy. I will be asking questions about your experiences, beliefs, roles, and knowledge in literacy and early literacy as well as different types of early literacy interaction you have with your child and/or children. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- Tell me about yourself?
- When you hear or think of the word "literacy," what do you think about or what comes to mind?
    - Using your own words, how would you describe what the phrase "early literacy development?"
    - Using your own words, how would you describe family literacy?
- What are your own personal experiences with literacy? early literacy?
- What goals and expectations do you as a family have for your child regarding early literacy?
- What are your beliefs about the roles families have in regards to a child's early literacy development with their child?
- How would you describe your own role with early literacy learning /development with your child?
- What literacy activities do you and your child participate in at home?
- How would you describe your relationship with your child in first grade in regards to early literacy development?
- What kinds of literacy interactions does your child in first grade have with friends and family in other settings?
- What do you recall about your own experiences with literacy in a school setting? Home setting?
- What types of literacy activities does your child in first grade see you doing? See other people in your house doing? (Prompts may include mail, instruction manuals, TV guides, etc.)
- Do you feel you are leading by example and being a literacy role model for your child? Why or why not?
- What are your expectations of the teacher in regards to your child's early literacy development?
- What are your views and experiences regarding family/teacher relationships in supporting the child's early literacy development?
- How do you communicate with your child's teacher?
- How does your child's teacher communicate with you? If so how often…. and regarding what specific topics/issues?

Group Interview 2 – Semi-structured Interview with Families

Hi, it's great to see you again. I'd like to ask you some questions about your responses from the group interview, individual interview, and my observations through the home visits thus far. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- So, since our group interview, we have had an individual interview. I have had the opportunity to visit your home to learn more about your early literacy experiences with your child in first grade. Is there a particular visit that you would like to share more about?
- Did anything surprise you about your early literacy experiences of your child in first grade so far? What have you noticed?
- Additional questions will be developed after initial analysis of the group interview, individual interview, home visits, and documents collection.

At the end of the first group interview, I will discuss the home visits and explain to the families how the observations will work. I will ask if the participants have any questions. I will remind the participants of my contact information and also remind the participants that he/she can stop participation in the study at any time. I will make tentative plans for scheduling the home observations and conducting individual interviews

Appendix C

Individual Interview-Semi-Structured Interview with Families (adapted from Owocki and Goodman's Interview Protocol, 2002)

Hi, my name is Gray Jack. So, it's good to see you again. I am here today to ask you some questions about your first grade child and literacy. I will be asking questions about your experiences, beliefs, roles, and knowledge in literacy and early literacy as well as different types of early literacy interaction you have with your child and/or children. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- Tell me about your family? Who lives in your house? How many children? What are the ages of your children?
- Tell me about your child in first grade and his or her experience with reading and writing activities?
- What types of literacy activities interest your child in first grade?
- What themes and roles does the child explore in play? How is literacy (for example, reading, writing, drawing, sharing stories etc.,) used in play?
- Share what a typical school day is like for your family?
- Share what a typical weekend is like for your family?
- During our group interview, everyone described their thoughts on literacy. Could you please elaborate more on your thoughts of literacy?
- Another discussion we had at the group interview was on family literacy. Please explain more how you describe family literacy?
- Can you tell me about one of your recent literacy interaction or experience you have had in the past few weeks with your child?
- How has your past experiences prepared you for interacting with your child/children with literacy?
- Has anything surprised you about your literacy interactions and role? What have you noticed about your role?
- Do you still have the same goals and expectations regarding literacy for your child?
- We also talked about the teacher's role in early literacy development during the group interview, could you elaborate more on your thoughts?
- We also talked about collaboration with teachers in supporting early literacy development, could you elaborate more on your thoughts on building a strong relationship with the teacher?

Appendix D

Individual Interview – Semi-Structured Individual Interview with Families

Hi, it's great to see you again. I'd like to ask you some questions about your responses from the group interview and my observations through the home visits thus far. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- So, since our group interview, we have had an individual interview. I have had the opportunity to visit your home to learn more about your first graders' early literacy experiences. Is there a particular visit that you would like to share more about?
- Did anything surprise you about your early literacy experiences of your child so far? What have you noticed?
- Additional questions will be developed after initial analysis of the group interview, individual interview, home visits, and documents collection.

Appendix E
Individual Interview-Semi-Structured Interview with Teacher

Hi, my name is Gray Jack. So, it's good to see you again. I am here today to ask you some questions about your early literacy experiences. I will be asking questions about your skills and knowledge in Early Literacy and different types of early literacy interaction you have with your students. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- Tell me a little about yourself? How long have you been teaching? Educational background?
- What grades have you taught?
- How long have you been teaching your current grade level?
- What does a typical day look like in your classroom?
- What educational courses have you taken in literacy?
- In those courses and your own teaching experiences, can you tell me your thoughts on early literacy development?
- How would you define the word literacy?
- How would you describe early literacy development?
- How would you describe family literacy?
- Have you heard of the Emergent Literacy Theory? If so, can you tell me what you know and your thoughts on this theory?
- Have you heard of the Reading Readiness theory? If so, can you tell me what you know and your thoughts on this theory?
- What differences do you see between the emergent literacy theory and reading readiness theory? What are your experiences with either of the theories?
- What are your expectations of your students with respect to early literacy development?
- How much time in each day do you spend on teacher-initiated literacy activities?
- What types of literacy resources and materials do you have in your classroom?
- What do your own literacy practices look like? What types of literacy materials are in your home?

- How does your view of early literacy influence your organization of the classroom? How you teach? Your interactions with your students?
- What are your roles as a teacher regarding early literacy learning/development?
- Do you feel you are leading by example and being a literacy role model for your students? Why or why not?
- What are your expectations of the parents' role regarding their child's early literacy development?
- What are your views regarding family/teacher relationships in supporting the child's early literacy development?
- How do you communicate with the parents?
- What specific literacy related issues do they want to discuss?
- Do you have parent volunteers?
- How does the parent communicate with you?

At the end of the interview, I will discuss the classroom observations and explain to the teacher how the observations will work. Also, I will give the reflective journal template to the teacher. I will review the instructions and questions on the journal as well as provide an example. I will ask if the teacher has any questions. I will remind the teacher of my contact information and remind the teacher that she can stop participation in the study at any time. I will make tentative plans for scheduling the classroom observations and conducting another individual interview.

Appendix F

Individual Interview 2 – Semi-Structured Individual Interview with Teacher

Hi, it's great to see you again. I'd like to ask you some questions about your responses from the first individual interview and my classroom observations thus far. I am recording this interview. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop the interview. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

- So, since our last individual interview, I have completed numerous classroom observing your experiences with early literacy lessons. What have you noticed so far about your early literacy experiences with your students?
- Has anything surprised you with your early literacy lessons? What have you noticed about yourself and/or your students?
- Additional questions will be developed after initial analysis of the first individual interview, observation, and documents collection.

Appendix G

Teacher's Name_____ Date of Observation_____ Time_____ Subject_____ Setting_____ Whole Class / Small Group / Individual	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Classroom Observation Protocol

Hello again! Thank you so much for allowing me in your classroom. While I am in your classroom, I will be interacting, observing, and communicating with you about your role as a teacher in your students' early literacy development. You will see me recording notes and at times interacting with you and your students. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you would like to end the classroom observation. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

Appendix H

Home Visits Protocol

Hello again! Thank you so much for allowing me into your home. During the home visits, I will be interacting, observing, and communicating with you and your family. I am here to learn more about your home experiences and how they support your child's early literacy development. You will see me recording notes and at times interacting with you and your family. I will ask a few questions which I will audio record. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you would like to end the home visit. Do you have any questions? OK, let's get started.

Field Notes Recording Sheets

Semi Structured Home Visit Questions

- What does your child enjoy doing with all of you?
- What is your first grader's favorite activity, toy, book, etc?
- What do you and your first grader do when they get home from school?
- Additional questions will be developed after initial analysis of the first individual interview, home visit, and documents collection.

Families' Name_____	
Date of Home Visit_____ Time_____	
Setting_____ First Grade Child's Name_____	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix I

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (Family)

Title of Project: Early Literacy Development: A Teacher and Families' Experiences

Introduction

Greetings! My name is Gray Jack. I am a doctoral candidate in the Education Specialties Department at Salisbury University. I am conducting research on the experiences of an early childhood teacher and families regarding first graders' early literacy development.

Purpose

Knowing the importance of both the teacher and the families in a child's education, specifically literacy development, this study focuses on the experiences of a first grade teacher and families regarding first graders' early literacy development. To better understand the teacher's and families' experiences, my dissertation will explore more in depth the teacher's and families' beliefs, expectations, and roles in a child's early literacy development.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, below are the different steps.

Step 1: I will ask you to participate in group and individual interviews. Each interview will take about 45 minutes. We can talk at Buckingham Elementary School or a place of your choice such as the local library or restaurant. I will record the interview with a digital recorder. The questions I will ask are only about what you think regarding your child in first grade. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

Step 2: I will also complete two home visits to learn more about your interaction with your child's early literacy development. I will audio record during the home visits as well as take notes. If you do not feel comfortable having me come to your home, you can choose a place for us to meet such as the local library.

Step 3: I will also ask you to share any documents or artifacts such as books, letters, home assignments and I will make copies of them with your permission by borrowing them and returning them once copies have been made. Your name and anyone else's name will be crossed out on the documents so that no one will know the documents came from you. I will not collect any artifacts on the other students not participating in the study.

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants when transcribing the audio recording. Families may choose to participate in some of the research activities, but not all. If a family decides not to participate in a particular activity, I will find other interested family participants within the classroom to complete that particular activity.

Benefits

The benefits that are reasonable to expect are that you will help me and educators understand more about your experiences as a family in regards to early literacy development and how your needs as a family can be supported. By participating in this study, you may learn about yourself in regards to your role in literacy interactions, which could have a positive impact on your children's early literacy development. Also, I will share the findings based on the interview sessions with you which can provide teaching and learning implications regarding your child's

early literacy development. Another benefit will be a children's book given to you after each event, which you can add to your library.

Risks/Discomforts

Participating in this study will have minimal risk. As for the group and individual interviews, you may be uncomfortable answering some of the questions especially in a group setting or with the researcher present. I will do everything to minimize all the risks. If at any time you are uncomfortable in answering any of the questions or participating in the group interview, individual interviews, and home visits, you can communicate to me that you feel uncomfortable or do not care to answer a particular question or discontinue with the study. You may decide you no longer want to participate in the study due to lack of interest and/or time. You may find the time commitment is too much for your schedule. If you do not have the time to participate in all the interactions such as the interviews, home visits, and/or document collection, it is ok to only do what you have time to do. Throughout the study, you will be reminded that you have the opportunity to discontinue at each interaction you have with me and doing so in no way changes your relationship to the classroom teacher at Buckingham Elementary, administration, or researcher. Also, if you decide not to participate in the study, this will not impact your child's standing or grade in the class. You may feel the loss of confidentiality when meeting in a group or in a public place due to others being present. In order to minimize the loss of anonymity, pseudonyms will be used throughout the study, data collection, and data analysis.

Confidentiality

Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants and will be used in all data collection and analysis. Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. I cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. Only the researcher and the PI will have access to the interview audio files, transcripts and logs. All of files will be kept on my computer with password protection for three years, after which time they will be destroyed. The audio files, transcripts, and field notes will not be used for any additional purposes without permission. There is a loss of confidentiality during the group interview as other participants will be involved. I will not include personal information of a participant disclosed during an interview.

Rights

Your cooperation and participation are strictly voluntary and your choice to participate or not to participate will in no way affect the study. You may choose not to answer a particular question or may choose not to complete the interview. You can choose not to participate in a specific data collection interaction and continue with the other ones. Your participation is very valuable and will help me know more in depth information about how the families' experiences supports their child's early literacy development as well as the types of early literacy interaction that occur in your daily routines.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study or would be interested in the results, please contact Gray Jack, Doctoral Candidate, telephone 410-726-8643 or email at cgjack@salisbury.edu. You may also contact Buckingham Elementary principal, Karen Marx at 410-632-5300 who supports this research endeavor.

You may also contact Salisbury University's Office of Graduate Studies & Research, at 410-677-0047.

Thank you for your cooperation.

****

Consent

A copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

Your name:_____

Your signature:_____ Date _____

Relationship to the child: _____

Your printed name: _____

Your child's name: _____

Appendix J
Reflective Journal for the Teacher

Day:

Approximate Start time: Approximate End time:

Whole class, small group, or individual?

What materials were used during the lesson?

What were the early literacy goals and expectations for the early literacy activity/lesson/interaction?

Standards

Describe the early literacy activity/lesson/interaction in detail?

What literacy strategies did you use during the activity/lesson/interaction?

What was your role in the early literacy activity/lesson/interaction?

Overall reflection on the early literacy activity/lesson/interaction (how did you feel; successes; challenges, what would you do different etc.):

How did you communicate with the family?