BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL:
AN OVERVIEW OF READING PRACTICES IN FIRST GRADE HOMES

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore the communication between home and school in regards to children’s literacy. This study explored first graders and their parents and their family literacy habits in an attempt to help create a strong bridge of communication between home and school. The first graders were from six local elementary schools in a rural Northwest Ohio town. Surveys regarding parent attitudes towards literacy were distributed to parents at each school. Following the return of the surveys, 10 parents and 10 children participated in follow up active interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of family literacy practices in this rural Northwest Ohio town.
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I would like to dedicate this Master Thesis to my Aunt Eleanor McMahon. Former Commissioner of Education for the state of Rhode Island. She was truly an inspiration. She spent her life as a teacher and had a pure love for teaching children to read. I remember her reading me my favorite book over and over again on the Bonnet Shores Beach as a child. It is only appropriate that a Master’s Thesis on Reading be dedicated in her memory.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Reading Skills</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading in the Home</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy Program Weaknesses</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy Program Suggestions</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Literacy Developed in the Classroom</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers in schools today are faced with the immense challenge of successfully teaching all children so that their literacy develops to its fullest potential. The reason this is such a challenge is because classrooms today consist of children with very diverse abilities, backgrounds, personalities, and interests. With such diversity among children, sometimes it is hard for the teacher to evaluate exactly what are the children’s literacy development needs. One area that increases the challenge for teachers is the enormous pressure for children to do well on state tests, which are predominantly reading comprehension tests. Regardless of the content area, children are expected to engage in a tremendous amount of reading, and then make choices in response to that reading. If children underachieve on the test, then teachers are expected to monitor progress closely, change programs, supply special help, or seek assistance if students fail to make progress (Gunning, 2005). However, achievement tests are not the only important issues facing teachers, and with all of the demands put on teachers, it is important for the teacher to be equipped with as much knowledge of each student as possible, including how reading and language acquisition develop in the home environment. Understanding the nature of this early literacy acquisition phase, and understanding how best to work with parents during this time, is increasingly important to teachers in the early grades.

While children develop language at a young age, it is the social nature of this language acquisition process that parents and K-3 teachers need to understand. For instance, researchers suggest that the most intensive period of language development for humans is the first three years of life (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2003). They also argue the importance of human interaction for language development. Vygotsky’s (1978) research, for instance, demonstrated not only that language was central to intellectual
development, but that children’s internalization of language and thinking skills developed from the social language interaction with adults and more capable peers. In his work, he demonstrated how an infant’s reaching for a desired object—a cookie, for instance, or a bottle—evolves into pointing when an adult interprets the grasping as pointing. Pointing becomes a mediated activity that takes the place of the immediate physical act of grasping. Later, children learn to use words to accomplish their desired outcomes. Words function like stools or sticks; they become tools through which children reach their goals. Most importantly, Vygotsky demonstrated the importance of human interaction in this language development. The meaning of words takes shape in the social contexts in which these words are used. What children learn, how they learn it, and how prepared they are to succeed in school learning are shaped by the language interactions they encounter early in life (Heath, 1984). Risley (2003) reminds us that the most important thing parents and others can do for their children is to talk to them. Children’s success in school and verbal ability are strongly related to the amount of talk they experience as infants and toddlers.

This premise—that literacy learning is intimately grounded in the social interaction of human beings—is also central to our understanding of how children learn to read. Children’s reading is directly affected by their language acquisition. For instance, if a child has a word in his or her spoken language, then he or she is more likely to read it and understand it in print. Without language, there would be no reading; and without a rich literacy environment in the home, children arrive at school without the solid reading skills necessary to succeed. Cline (2001) states that parents influence the level of exposure to print-rich language enhanced environment, which will determine literacy foundation children bring to school. Gunning (2005) also reminds us that the amount of talk to which children are exposed is correlated to their
vocabulary and their later language and cognitive development. It is not possible for a child to read something if that child doesn’t understand the language.

Like language learning, children’s reading ability also develops in a social setting. Children learn to speak by hearing people around them speak. Likewise, interest in reading develops in children from seeing and hearing others around them read. As with language acquisition, families also contribute to reading development. Children listen to adults as they read aloud to them and then they begin in turn to imitate these actions to begin reading.

As early as 1908 in the United States, Huey (1908) suggested that children’s learning in school begins with parents reading to them at home. Shared book reading is the single most important act for developing knowledge required for eventual success (Yarosz & Barnett, 2001). Sharing books with children opens many opportunities that some children may never experience in their lives. When family members read certain stories to children repeatedly and respond to their questions in relation to their reading, children conclude that print is meaningful (Saracho, 2002). Children interact with reading while interacting with their parents long before formal schooling begins. From birth, family members contribute to children’s literacy (Cairney, 2002). These family literacy experiences are known as shared literacy activities.

Given this connection between language acquisition and reading development, it is important for parents to be aware of what goes on at school because they are involved in many language and reading experiences within the school setting. However, it is perhaps more important for teachers be aware of what goes on in the home environment. According to Spielman (2001), schools need to know what learning goes on in the homes so that teachers can build on this learning. Children experience many things outside of the school setting. Graves reminds us that children not only attend “public school,” but are also immersed in “life school”
Life school refers to happenings in the lives of children outside of any given school day. Children are involved in many family literacy activities at home like trips to the library, writing activities, oral reading, and educational television programs, which are helpful in creating successful readers.

Teachers need to become educated about the many different family literacy activities in which children are engaged at home so they can build upon these experiences once the child reaches the classroom. Spielman (2001) reminds us that the home/school partnership goes to the core of how successful schools can be with the increasingly diverse population. If parents and teachers are going to help children become successful readers, they need to work as a team. Everyone involved plays a reciprocal role in this process of developing successful readers.

Researchers are finding that families demonstrate numerous and diverse modes of involvement in shared language and literacy (Taylor, 1995). These shared literacy activities should be communicated within the parent/teacher relationship, because doing so gives the teacher the opportunity to incorporate or build upon the child’s experiences. A teacher can achieve this goal through many different avenues, such as home reading journals, family story sharing or reflection by the child on how he/she learned to read or write. This will allow the teacher to fully understand each student and his/her reading experiences.

Statement of the Problem

In a parent/teacher relationship where both are trying to develop a successful reader, problems can occur from the school, the home or any combination of the two. Uhlman (2000) describes a bridge metaphor that addresses the home/school relationship. In the metaphor, all movement on the bridge flows in one direction, from school to home. Such a scenario portrays the relationship between home/school as one sided—a one-way street. Information dictated from
the school comes to the home, but home knowledge, values, practices, etc. don’t usually get a chance to be articulated back to the school.

This one-way bridge metaphor raises an important question. Are teachers aware of the child’s experiences outside of school? This discussion has led researchers to further investigate the role of family literacy in building the bridge, especially if all planks on the bridge are laid by the school (Uhlman, 2000). It is important to not only give parents information, but also to take the opportunity to use parents as a resource. Morrow (1982) noticed that after reviewing existing ideas and programs, families are too often viewed in their deficits and dilemmas rather than in the richness of their heritages and experiences. Morrow also mentions that schools seem to strongly emphasize how parents can learn from schools but give little attention to how schools might learn from parents (Morrow & Paratore, 1993). Schools need to begin to explore, through a broader lens, what parents and children do together at home. Schools need to look not only for common actions and practices, but beyond, to actions and events that extend children’s literate lives in less common but no less important ways (Paratore, 2002).

Research Questions/Hypotheses

To help in the process of making schools aware of what practices occur in the home and to help teachers develop a better understanding of children’s literacy development, this study addressed this central question:

1) How can teachers build a bridge between home literacy and school literacy?

However in order to address this question, four sub-questions emerged:

2) What are parents’ attitudes towards reading?

3) What shared literacy activities can be identified in homes?

4) Why do parents choose certain literacy activities?
5) Where do parents/guardians get their ideas for literacy activities?

Question one addresses the key purpose of this study, which is to create a strong bridge between home and school that shares knowledge, information, and practices in both directions. Question two addresses a broad understanding of first grade parents’ view of reading. This question will help teachers understand parents’ feelings and intentions when it comes to their child’s reading. Question three will inform teachers on whether there are reading practices occurring in the home. If there are reading practices occurring, then it will also inform teachers regarding the types of shared literacy activities in which the child participates at home. By asking question four, teachers will better understand what purposes parents have for the literacy activities that occur in the home. This will help teachers understand parents’ views of reading and the impact parents think it will have on their child. Question five will inform teachers of what type of resources parents are using when it comes to enhancing their child’s reading. Also it will tell the teachers and schools if the parents believe they have adequate resources to use when it comes to further developing reading at home.

When all of the driving questions in this study have been answered, then teachers and schools will have a better understanding of home literacy activities. This will create a bridge where knowledge, information, and practices are being passed in both directions to develop a strong relationship between home/school.

Rationale

The relationship between home and school is one of the strongest factors in a child’s success (Parator, 2002; Spielman, 2001; Taylor, 1995). As a teacher and a parent, the investigator believes there is a need for strengthening of this relationship. Many research studies (Cairney, 2002, Uhlman, 2000 & Vance, 2002) investigate what the parents aren’t doing and
design a plan to help parents. This study is different in that it will not tell parents what they should be doing but will assess what parents already do and use the findings to help teachers build upon each child’s learning. One way to do this is to be aware of the child as a whole person. When teachers know parents’ intentions for reading and the resources they utilize, teachers will be able to get a clearer picture of the child and his/her reading experiences.

Children’s literacy develops in many different environments. One of these key environments is the child’s home. When teachers and schools learn all they can about what literacy activities occur in the home, they will be able to build upon each child’s prior knowledge to make learning more successful. Knowing what, why, and where parents are doing literacy activities in the home will greatly help meet the goal of creating successful readers.

After examining this information, teachers and parents may discuss how they are doing in creating good readers. If there is little reading occurring, then a plan for how to increase reading can be discussed. On the other hand, once teachers know what techniques are being used at home, they can incorporate or build on them by bringing other strategies into their classrooms to further enhance reading instruction. This can be very helpful, especially in a situation where there is a student who is struggling in reading and there is a need to better help this child. Research (Cairney, 2002, Cook, 2005, Pahl & Kelly, 2005, Saracho, 2002.) shows that bringing in literacy from the home will allow students to see how their literacy skills are a part of everyday life.

Definition of Terms

The terms defined below are key words that are discussed within the text of the paper.
Understanding their meaning will increase the understanding of the text.

*Family Literacy:* the rich literacy practices that pervade in the home and community.

*Formal Literacy Activities:* structured or planned activities to enhance reading literacy.

*Informal Literacy Activities:* situations where literacy just happens in everyday life.

*Lap Reading:* lap reading is a reading style in which parents take their child onto their laps and read to and with them.

*Lifelong readers:* Children or adults who choose to read because they enjoy it.

*Life School:* Meaningful life experiences in a child’s life outside of any given school day.

*Literacy:* The ability to solve problems, think critically and creatively, and communicate effectively.

*Shared book reading:* When a book is being read by one person to another person.

*Family literacy activities:* Literacy activities where the child is experiencing literacy activities with a person in their family.

*Parent involvement:* Parent involvement in their child’s education on a daily basis and routine contact with his/her teacher.

**Delimitations**

This study did not include an investigation of what parents are lacking in the home. It also did not involve teaching reading strategies to parents. Many previous studies (Edwards, 1995, Vance & Schreck, 2002) have addressed this subject. This study examined the home/school connection from a different angle. It sought to identify what shared literacy activities are already occurring in the home. This study explored why parents are using these activities and where they are getting the ideas for these shared literacy activities. Learning this information should provide teachers with a preview of what is occurring in the home when it
comes to reading. When teachers have an understanding of the reading practices in the home, they can build upon each child’s experiences to make learning more successful.

Limitations

This study may strengthen the home/school connection by helping teachers be aware of literacy activities in the home. However, there were factors that influenced the study. Parents were asked to complete a survey regarding their literacy habits. If parents did not accurately represent their literacy habits then this may have skewed the information. To prevent this from happening, this study also relied on interview results to obtain a fuller understanding of family literacy habits. However, parents may not have been truthful during the interview portion of the investigation. Some parents may have been intimidated by the thought of having someone ask them about their literacy habits.

Another factor that may affect this study would be if the study was done in an area where the race or socioeconomic status was different. These factors would most likely affect the results of the study. The environment around us affects our reading motivation and reading development.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To help in the process of making schools aware of what practices occur in the home and to help teachers develop a better understanding of children’s literacy development, this study addressed this central question:

1) How can teachers build a bridge between home literacy and school literacy?

However in order to address this question, four sub-questions emerged:

2) What are parents’ attitudes towards reading?

3) What shared literacy activities can be identified in homes?

4) Why do parents choose certain literacy activities?

5) Where do parents/guardians get their ideas for literacy activities?

Included in this chapter is supporting evidence that building a bridge between home and school helps ensure that parents are informed about the classroom and teachers are aware how literacy functions outside of school specifically in the home. This is an important step in developing a bridge where knowledge, information and practices are being shared in both directions, to develop a two sided relationship. This type of relationship between home and school will enhance the reading development of every child (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990b).

To develop readers, it is important to be aware of the developmental process children experience when they learn to read. A child’s first major intellectual accomplishment is the acquisition of language, which begins at a young age (Gunning, 2005). Both home and school play a key role in the development of a child’s language. School instruction normally is more formal and structured than home learning.

One of the key components for home learning is to create an environment that fosters language. Parents can do this by talking to their children. Researchers (Gunning, 2002; Hart &
Risley, 1995; Risley, 2003) suggest engaging children in conversation as much as possible. Children interact with their parents and listen to the words they speak and then try to repeat those words. Children can’t speak a language if they don’t experience what it sounds like. Risley informs us that the amount of talk that infants and toddlers encounter is strongly related to their verbal ability and success in school.

By the age of three, most of what a child says can be understood by adults (Gunning, 2005). Hart and Risley (1995) found that, at age four, some children have heard more than 50,000,000 words, while others have only heard 10,000,000 words. In the families where the child experienced 50,000,000 words by age four, the talk goes beyond just giving directions. Much of the talk consists of descriptions and explanations that contain a lot of complex vocabulary (Gunning); for example, a parent may explain to his or her four-year-old how the moon rotates around the earth, along with a connection to the different phases of the moon. Such findings reinforce the importance of parents and teachers having conversations with children. Conversation will enhance each child’s language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) demonstrated that the language that surrounds children is internalized and becomes the language of thought and learning as well as communication.

Development of Reading Skills

When discussing language acquisition, it is also important to realize that the acquisition of language has a direct connection to the development of reading. Gunning (2005) explains that reading is very much a language activity and, ultimately, our ability to read is limited by our language skills. If children are not exposed to language, then it will be hard for them to read the language. Reading develops in children much the same way as language. Chall (1995) views reading as a complex of abilities that change with development. The tasks set by school and
parents differ at various stages of reading, and the abilities and skills needed by readers to meet these tasks also differ. Researchers (Ehri, Goodman & Chall) have developed stages they use to describe reading development. The reading stages described by Jeanne S. Chall (1995) were chosen to give insight into reading development for this research study and are described below:

Stage 0. Pre-reading: Birth to Age 6.

The pre-reading stage is where the learner grows in control of their language. The child is beginning to understand the world around them. The learner at this stage relies on the pictures and memorization of happenings in text. It is important for the learner at this stage need to be encouraged to make connection between nonvisual information and visual information of the text.

Stage 1. Initial Reading, or Decoding Stages: Grades 1-2.5, Ages 6-7.

Once the reader has become more aware of letter/sound relationships the learner now progresses to Stage 1. The reader begins sounding out words. The Stage 1 reader realizes there are letter combinations that represent sounds. They become aware of vowels and vowel sounds.

Stage 2. Confirmation, Fluency, Ungluing from Print: Grades 2-3, Ages 7-8.

At this stage the learner needs the opportunity to hone the skills of reading in comfortable texts and comfortable reading situations. This stage is to help readers gain control of reading so when they progress to stage 3 they will be able to use the tool of reading to successfully gain knowledge. Through practice the reader gains confirmation of their ability to read. The learner now has developed a new level in word recognition automaticity which enables the learner to become more fluent. By doing this the learner becomes immersed in the text which begins to allow students to unglue from the text and
think about more than just the words on the page and discover the meaning behind the words.

Stage 3. Reading for Learning the New: Grades 4-8, Ages 8-14.

Stages 0-2 are considered the developmental stages of reading. Stage 3, however, is associated with content area reading, or reading to learn. Now the reader uses reading as a tool.


The stage 4 reader begins dealing with learning from multiple viewpoints. These readers are able to deal with layers of facts and concepts. At this stage the learner is able to consider different ideas and views and evaluate them on their own. In the earlier stages it was harder for the learner to do this because of other skills being developed.

Stage 5. Constructing and Reconstructing: College, Age 18 and above.

A stage 5 reader has learned to read certain books and articles in the degree of detail and completeness that one needs for one’s purpose. During stage 5 the reader has developed the ability to construct knowledge on a high level and create their own truth from reading the truths of others.

These stages show that readers have different skills and abilities at different reading levels. Most important to remember is that children’s reading development begins when parents read aloud to them and slowly children begin to realize that print has meaning. Reading aloud is one shared literacy activity that helps children learn to read. Reading is a process in which we construct meaning from print (Gunning, 2005). Sharing literacy activities, such as reading aloud, results in children wanting to construct the meaning of the print on their own. At this point they begin showing a strong interest in letters, sounds and words.
During the initial learning to read stage, grades 1-2.5, the student may feel overwhelmed. Reading involves three basic processes: decoding, comprehension, and attention (Gunning, 2005). When decoding, the student will come to a word he/she doesn’t know and try to decode it by looking at the parts of the word. If he/she recognizes patterns of letters within the word, then he/she is able to use phonics skills to identify the word. Once a reader is able to read and understand words, then he/she can focus on comprehending the story.

According to Gunning (2005), comprehension is the ability to read a story and afterwards be able to explain the happenings in the story. Van Den Broek and Kremer (2000) explains that in comprehension, the reader creates a mental model of the textual information and its interpretation. According to Searfross and Readance (1994), comprehension is the process of building a connection between what we know, or the new and the old. When looking at comprehension it is important to explore Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of “zone of proximal development,” that place between the learner’s current understanding and the place where progress can be made. Comprehension for children develops as they build background knowledge. For this reason it is important to make comprehension explicit and concrete. One good way to do this is to ask open-ended questions to reveal the child’s thinking and level of understanding (Gunning).

Beginning readers have difficulty decoding and comprehending at the same time and so they divide the larger tasks into smaller tasks (Van Den Broek & Kremer). First the beginner reader decodes the word by sounding out the words. Next, the student switches attention to comprehension and tries to understand what is printed on the page. Attention is an important component in comprehension. When a child is not reading actively and purposefully, then the ability to construct meaning suffers (Van Den Broek & Kremer, 2000). Progress is slow when
switching back and forth from decoding to comprehension, and puts a heavy burden on memory (Farstrup, 2002). Therefore, the more the child is involved in reading, the easier decoding and comprehension will become.

*Parent Involvement*

When parents take an active role in their children’s reading growth, reading performance improves, as well as children’s attitudes towards reading. Parent involvement can dramatically affect the total reading development of every child (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990c, Saracho, 2002). At least 22 out of the 50 states in the U.S. and the District of Columbia now require teacher candidates to understand and engage family involvement as a requirement for teacher certification (Spielman). Five states require family involvement training for early childhood certification (Spielman, 2001). As demonstrated by statistics, parent involvement is viewed as a very important part of each child’s development. Rasinski and Fawcett (1996) believe that research over the last decade has clearly stated that when parents are involved, their children’s learning improves. They also feel that if there is one thing that could be done to improve the overall quality of education in their schools it would be to involve parents (Rasinski & Fawcett).

*Reading in the Home*

For reading to flourish, children need to be read to at home. As early as 1908, Huey stated, “The secret of it all lies in the parents reading aloud to and with the child” (p.#332). The value of parents reading to their children has been recognized and strongly supported. Manset-Williamson, St. John, Hu, Shouping, and Gordon (2002) found that reading programs that included a parent-child reading feature were associated with both lower rates of referral and grade retention. Gunning (2005) explains that one of the main benefits of reading books to children is that it offers an opportunity for the parent and child to have a conversation. Through
a conversation, children can express their thoughts and understanding of a story. Such conversations give parents insight into their child’s comprehension and thinking. Reading aloud is one shared literacy activity in the home that accompanies many others (Morrow & Paratore, 1993).

Through these different activities in the home, children are engaged in numerous varied literacy experiences. Saracho (2002) confirms that family members and their young children participate in informal and formal literacy activities with materials and activities that are divergent, motivating and of interest to families. All of these activities help to engage and develop successful readers. Cline (2001) states that parents influence the level of exposure to print-rich language enhanced environment, which will determine literacy foundation children bring to school. This often happens with no conscious thought; it is natural for families to interact with materials and activities that enhance learning (Saracho). The following paragraphs will describe some literacy activities that occur in the home and help in the development of reading.

Exposure to Books

Most parents are aware that exposing their child to books and reading from the beginning will help their child see reading as a natural activity. Creating an environment where books are in abundance and reading is observed everywhere helps a child develop good reading habits (Morrow & Paratore). For example, some children observe their parents reading the newspaper every morning. Many parents, from the time that their child is very young, engage in story telling and reading stories (Morrow & Paratore, 1993). Parents begin to do this before the child can correctly hold a book. More access to books is associated with more free voluntary reading (Houle & Montmarquette, 1984; Morrow, 1982). By doing this, parents are instilling in their
children the importance and pleasure of reading. Edwards (2001) states that recent research has concluded that failure to learn to read may be related to the fact that many of these children come from homes where their parents have never read a book to them.

_Lap Reading_

As a child grows older, one of the most widely used shared literacy activities is Lap Reading. Lap reading involves oral reading where the child is sitting and listening to a story. A National Family Literacy survey that was released by Visa and Yankelovich Partners (1997) reveals parents of young children in the United States rank reading aloud as one of the most important activities they can do to help their children’s growth and development.

Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) reported over a decade ago that shared book reading was the “single most important activity for developing the knowledge required for eventual success in reading” (p. 23). Lap reading involves specific techniques such as methods of questioning, the oral cloze technique (adult reads a line and deletes a word for the child to fill in), and use of context clues (Gregory & Morrison, 1998). Questioning involves asking the children questions about the story. Oral cloze technique involves the adult deleting words and asking the child to fill in the correct word. This technique begins to allow children to begin to read words on their own. Using context clues asks children to discover the meaning of an unknown word by looking at the other words in the sentence that may give clues to the unknown words meaning. Using context clues gives children a strategy they can use when reading on their own and come to a word they don’t know. Children learn a great deal from lap reading experiences including new understandings about the world, new strategies for gaining meaning from stories, a larger and better developed vocabulary and a great deal about books and print (Gregory & Morrison). McGee and Richgels (1996) found that one of the best predictors of children’s reading
achievement in school is the number of hours they were read to as preschoolers.

**Family Reading Time**

Family reading is an important step in children’s reading development. McCrackin (1995) describes how the United States has established a National Family Reading Week to enhance family reading. McCrackin also discusses a program developed by libraries with family theme nights to help increase family reading. Another way families enhance reading development is through establishing a family reading time (Anderson, 2002). Parents set aside time for family reading consisting of 15-30 minutes each evening. With younger children, this consists of selecting picture books or traditional folktales and reading them to their child. With older students, this time may consist of reading a novel together by reading a chapter or two a night. Also, as children age, they could engage in repeated readings, alternating reading, silent reading, and paired reading with siblings during this time. The advantages of a family reading time are many. Family reading time fosters positive habits in students (Anderson). It also demonstrates an appreciation for reading, a model of effective and proficient reading, while also connecting with the child through common literature.

**Repeated Readings**

Repeated Readings are a type of shared literacy activity used to enhance a child’s reading development. Samuels developed repeated readings based on his automaticity theory, which suggests fluent readers are those that decode text automatically, leaving attention free for comprehension (Dowhower, 1987). Saracho (2002) tells us that reading certain stories to children repeatedly helps children conclude that print is meaningful. Repeated readings help students achieve accuracy and rapid recognition of high-frequency words (Gunning, 2005). In one study, slow reading seven-year-old children doubled their reading speed after doing repeated
readings for only seven weeks. Repeated readings involve explaining to the child that he/she will be reading the same story over and over again. The child should also be told this may help him/her read faster and better. Next, the child should choose short, interesting selections of about 100 words. Following this step, the child should read the story orally to obtain a baseline reading and accuracy rate. Next, the parent should review mistakes with the child and help correct the mistakes. The child should be asked to reread the story until he/she believes the story can read faster and more smoothly (Gunning). The National Reading Panel (2000) showed that repeated reading facilitates growth in reading fluency and other aspects of reading achievement.

Research has demonstrated that repeated readings resulted in increased reading fluency and comprehension for children (Herman, 1985; Homan et al., 1993). In addition, Dowhower (1987) found that repeated readings increased oral reading speed and comprehension for slow but accurate readers.

Partner Reading

Partner reading is another research based activity that has been demonstrated as being effective in boosting students’ reading fluency (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simon, 1997; Greenwood, Terry, Delquardri, Elliott, & Atteaga-Mayer, 1995). Vaughn (2000) describes partner reading in this way, when a fluent reader (Partner 1) is paired with a less capable reader (Partner 2). During partner reading the listening partner provides feedback to the reader. Vaughn also explains how partner reading is inherently flexible and can be individualized according to reading performance. This gives the child practice in developing fluency. When reading to the partner, the child may seek guidance on certain words pronunciation or meaning. Such readers might be more willing to read on their own if given a running start that gets them solidly into the book (Castle, 1994). MacGillivray and Hawes (1994) reports that partner reading
helps both partners further develop their reading abilities through practice. This technique can easily be used with siblings reading to each other.

Family Literacy

Engaging in literacy activities explained in the previous paragraphs enhances family literacy. Taylor (1995) first used family literacy to describe the rich literacy practices that pervade in the home and community. The focus of much discussion on building effective relationship between home, school and community has centered on family literacy (Cairney, 2002). Morrow and Paratore (1993) feel it is clear that if we do not attend to home when we discuss literacy development, whatever strategies carried out in school will never be completely successful. Now, research in the area of family literacy is reviewed in three broad areas: home/school programs, intergenerational programs, and partnership initiatives (Cairney).

Home/School Programs

According to Cairney (2002), home/school programs are initiatives that attempt to strengthen the relationship between home and school. These programs are working under the concept that, from birth, family members contribute to children’s literacy. These programs usually offer parents information about literacy, stressing the importance of reading to and with them, and suggested strategies for supporting literacy. Many of these initiatives don’t directly involve children, while others encourage their participation. The early programs use specific literacy practices with the main purpose of enhancing the school literacy success as the core of the program. Some of the most significant programs occurred in the United Kingdom. The Plowden report from the Department of Education and Science, 1967, argued strongly that the concept of partnership between home and school was a significant stimulus to a number of early programs (Cairney). One of the most commonly used strategies was the paired reading
technique described earlier (Cairney, 2002). The use of this technique was encouraged and parents were taught how to apply it. While such programs were effective at teaching such a strategy, evidence shows that the program’s long-term impact on children’s literacy was limited. A considerable amount of money and effort was been put into these programs but their effectiveness was inconclusive (Cairney).

**Intergenerational Programs**

The second type of home literacy program, intergenerational programs, attempts to bring about change in families by strengthening the literacy of the adults and children (Cairney, 2002). Intergenerational programs focus on providing literacy instruction to adults while also teaching parents how to help their children with literacy skills. These programs may or may not include child participation in literacy activities with parents. Partnership for Family Reading is an example of such a program. This program was developed through the collaboration of Montclair State College and Newark, New Jersey public schools. Partnership for Family Reading was designed to help parents support the literacy development of their children and improve their literacy at the same time (Handel, 1992). The development of these types of programs has not been without problems. First, they have been criticized by Neuman and Daly (1996) because they make assumptions about the strategies that should be used to enhance literacy development. Secondly, these programs have been known to fail to acknowledge cultural differences and not meet the needs of all. Thirdly these programs are criticized for imposing specific cultural practices on families with their own practices and traditions (Cairney).

**Partnership Initiatives**

The third type of home literacy program, partnership initiatives, deals with attempts to devise a method for developing a more effective partnership (Cairney, 2002). This involves
programs that have sought to use home and school literacy to build more effective partnerships between schools, families and communities. One such program that was developed is the Goodling Institute at Penn State University (Goodling Institute, 2001).

The Goodling Institute was developed at the end of 2000 to improve family literacy through research and apply it to practice and professional development (Goodling Institute, 2001). The institute describes family literacy as consisting of four components: adult literacy instruction, child emergent or developmental instruction, parental education, and parent-child interaction. The institute believes that the combined effect of the four components is greater than that of each component separately (Goodling Institute). The Goodling Institute noted that one reason it is difficult to conduct research on family literacy is because there are so many confounding variables so closely related to other issues such as psychological, social, and economic factors. To identify research issues in consultation with practitioners and researchers. This has resulted in a National Family Research Agenda. This agenda brings focus to the work of the Goodling Institute and guides research nationally. This institution has done much research; one relevant study included interactive parent child literacy activities. This study explored the question about what is going on with family literacy.

Family Literacy Program Weaknesses

Family literacy programs are being reviewed constantly to evaluate their effectiveness (Cairney, 2002). An effective parental assessment program does not happen overnight, but doesn’t need to be an elaborate array of tasks that overwhelm the parents (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990a). There are no national standards or guidelines that exist for family literacy programs, so there is a wide variability across states in how quality is determined (Goodling Institute, 2001). This is seen as a weakness of these programs.
Identifying weaknesses in programs is the first attempt to begin to create more effective programs. Auerbach (1998) criticizes family literacy programs that do nothing more than teach parents to do school-like activities in the home and to assist children with homework. Families are too often viewed in their deficits and dilemmas rather than in the richness of their heritages and experiences (Morrow & Paratore, 1993). Schools strongly emphasize how parents can learn from schools but give little attention to how schools might learn from parents (Gaber, Harrison, & Tracey, 1993). This is referred to as the “deficit model.” Parents continue to be kept at a distance in most schools (Swap, 1993).

Cairney (2002) believes schools need to examine what they are doing in the name of family literacy or their home and school initiatives. Cairney explains that children experience language and literacy in many forms, and are enculturated into literacy practices which may or may not match those of their teachers. Teachers need to examine the matches and mismatches of literacy practices in home and school. The teacher/parent relationship begins by bridging the gap between two places where students spend their time (Edwards, 2001).

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990a) report that many programs begin with the best intentions but start to fall apart due to the fact that consistent lines of communication have not been established. A sense of distrust arises when parents believe that decisions are being made for them, rather than with them (Fredericks & Rasinski). Once uneasiness evolves between home and school, it is difficult to reverse. It is unfortunate when outreach programs are viewed by the community as something done for parents, rather than with parents. Cairney, Ruge, Buchhanan, Lowe and Munsie (1995) believe most parent programs reviewed were not well conceptualized, and were limited in scope. Cairney (2002) adds that the effectiveness of family literacy programs is limited and inconclusive. Most of the programs have been school centered and have done little
to acknowledge the language and literacy and cultural diversity in communities (Cairney, 2002).

Cairney, Ruge, Buchhanan, Lowe and Munsie (1995) promote further development of family literacy programs in the hope to more successfully enhance reading development. The Goodling Institute (2001) believes that research is needed to guide practitioners to construct and implement effective family literacy programs. Auerbach (1998) suggests that what is needed is a broader definition of family literacy that acknowledges the family’s social reality and focuses on the family strengths. Saracho (2002) thinks the best approach is to use the “wealth model” where literacy instruction is grounded on parental strengths. Similarly, the Home and School Institute in Washington, DC (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990b) urges society to explore all possibilities for helping every family contribute to individual and community excellence in reading, which has previously been referred to as the non-deficit policy. This policy reminds educators to be more concerned with what the family has, than with that it doesn’t have.

Family Literacy Program Suggestions

The previous statement provides insight into parent participation programs as well. Fredericks and Rasinski (1990a) suggest there is a need to design home and school programs on the actual wishes of the parents instead of on what they assume parents need. If designed on educators’ perceptions instead of parental desires, the program typically has a greater likelihood of failure. Spielman (2001) states that the way school personnel construct their relationship with families goes to the core of what they believe about teaching and learning. Educators must relinquish some of their traditional roles and share them with parents (Fredericks & Rasinski).

There is a tremendous interest from educators at every level to create a partnership between educators and parents. These partnerships affect the continuous literacy growth of each and every student (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990a). When schools work to involve parents in the
life of schools and children, great things can happen. By working closely with families, educators can further understand parents’ beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the roles they play in the literacy development of their children (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). There is a high level of interest in creating a positive parent outreach program. Parents and teachers must be willing to work hand in hand with teachers to develop programs to benefit all youngsters. Parents and educators can do this by creating strong communication lines.

Family Literacy programs that are of high quality are in existence today. The Goodling Institute (2001) believes programs where family literacy is well implemented with high quality need to be studied. The institute also claims that a common framework for family literacy programs is needed. The components should be researched to determine the essential elements, while remembering that every family literacy program is different in the clientele it is serving.

One key component of these programs needs to be encouraging parents instead of discouraging parents. Gasden (1995) reminds us that families need to be inspired to continue their life style and desist from becoming a clone of the teacher. They should be discouraged from refusing to continue their home social interactions and culture to meet the literacy and schooling requirements. Taylor (1995) also suggests that literacy is deeply imbedded in the social processes of family life and not in some specific list of activities added to that family agenda.

In talking with parents, Rasinski and Fawcett (1996) found that exemplary parent involvement programs exist in a wide variety of forms. They believe it is not the form that is important, but the commitment by school personnel and parents to meaningful and sustaining involvement in schools. The one common thing they found among all these programs was willingness on the part of the parents and educators to work together and to develop a sense of trust and support for one another (p. 21, Rasinski & Fawcett).
When educators and parents work together to share responsibilities of a program or outreach, then the program can blossom (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990a). One family literacy program that was discussed that effectively involved parents using the non-deficit policy or the wealth model was Dutrow Elementary in Newport News Virginia (Fredericks & Rasinski). They achieved this through some key efforts:

1. Making parent participation a school wide effort.
2. Making the classrooms and school a comfortable place.
3. Presentations to families to make them familiar with program expectations.
4. Having parents give input into school goals by promoting an open door policy.
5. All parents are aggressively recruited and involved in the reading curriculum.

Another family literacy program, which was found effective, focuses on children age 0-12 and tries to develop a more open and interactive relationship between home and school (Cairney, 2002). It is called The Talk to a Literacy Learner (TTALL) program. The TTALL program consists of sixteen interactive workshops, included in each one is observation of literacy learners, classroom visits, practice of strategies and home tasks (Cairney). Due to the positive results of the TTALL program, The Effective Partners in Secondary Literacy Learning (EPISLL) was developed. This program consists of eleven sessions that cover topics as diverse as reading and writing across the curriculum, learning, study, coping with teenagers, research work and using resources. This was developed at the request of parents involved in the TTALL program who wanted help with the support of their secondary school children (Cairney). As a result of its effectiveness, numerous other programs are trying to focus on the creation of partnership with families and communities such as Project Flame (Cairney).

Project FLAME was designed for Mexican American and Puerto Rican families and
involves components in “parents as teachers,” adult learning, summer institutes and community experiences (Cairney, 2002). This program was designed to easily adapt to specific cultural and educational characteristics of the families. These programs have realized that the relationship between home and school is complex and began doing more than just offering parent’s information (Cairney).

After investigating family literacy programs and determining what works and what doesn’t work, researchers have some suggestions. Fredericks and Rasinski (1990a) suggest four key areas that need to be addressed to create a lasting and long-term program. First, they discuss needs assessment. They believe it is important that the programs be built upon the needs of the parents through formal or informal assessment (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, telephone contacts, and face to face meetings). Second, they discuss shared responsibility and the importance of the educators and the parents working together. A third key area identified by Fredericks and Rasinski is decision making and the importance of allowing parents to help guide the direction of the scheduled activities. Fourth, they discuss constant communication and the importance of creating consistent lines of communication which are maintained. Finally, they discuss continuous participation and the importance of educators and parents to be committed for the long term (Fredericks & Rasinski).

It is believed that teachers can develop school lessons based on children and their home experiences. Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) believe qualitative research offers a range of methodological alternatives that can imagine the array of cultural and intellectual resources available to students and teachers within the household. They believe it would be useful for teachers to visit households for research purposes. This type of research will give the teacher a fuller picture of each student. Teachers can assume the role of a learner and in doing so, they
establish a fundamentally deeper relationship with the parents of their students. Moll et al. believe by doing this, educators can capitalize on households and communities and create classroom instruction that exceeds in quality.

Home Literacy Developed in the Classroom

There are many ways in which teachers can incorporate home literacy into their classrooms. Through doing this, teachers create parallel literacy practices that occur at school and home (Shockley & Michalove, 1995). As a result of creating a strong connection, children will see an impact on achievement and motivation (Shockley & Michalove).

One recent notion regarding how teachers can incorporate home literacy into classrooms involves the idea of a third space (Cook, 2005). This theory involves creating a space at school where children can use their knowledge from home. This can happen through the child and the teacher sharing experiences with each other (Cook). This third space can also be seen as offering a threshold where parents can enter the school on different terms and children can enter their parents’ domain within the school setting, and the two very different environments can mix (Pahl & Kelly, 2005).

Cook (2005) suggests one way teachers can create this space is by allowing a role-play area. In this area, the students and teacher would participate in role-playing. This model has worked exceptionally well throughout the primary age range. Cook reported that teachers noticed an increase in confidence and in children’s attitudes towards writing. Parents have shown interest in helping provide resources for the area. Also within these third space environments teachers are observing students unexpected range of knowledge and skills, especially their ability to use appropriate vocabulary, and to identify and solve problems (Cook).

Another recent research study also discusses the theory of a third space. Pahl and Kelly
(2005) discussed creating a space where parents and children collaborated on joint projects, including book making, storytelling, reading and writing activities. It is believed that by creating such a space, teachers are listening to parent voices to create a shared curriculum.

Another less-involved technique, which is used to create a strong bridge between home and school, is the use of the home reading journal or log (Shockley & Michalove, 1995). Parents keep track of books that the child is reading and their child’s reading ability and understanding. This allows parents the opportunity to communicate with the teacher about their child’s literacy and any strengths or weaknesses that they see. This creates an open channel of communication on a daily basis, which allows parents and teachers to work together to further enhance their child’s literacy development (Shockley & Michalove).

Summary

Parents play an important role in a child’s reading development. Parents engage their children in many shared literacy activities at home. Knowing these two things makes it important for teachers and parents to create a strong relationship. If teachers are able to connect school to children’s home experiences, then learning is more plentiful. There have been many programs directed at achieving this goal. Some have been successful, while others are still in the process of trying. There also is research that is giving some very helpful suggestions in creating a successful program. After examining the literature, the importance of the home and school relationship where a child’s school and home experiences are both used to enhance reading development is very clear.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Researchers suggest that children can acquire school literacy when their home literacy is recognized and developed in their classrooms (Spielman, 2001). Schools can better enhance learning in the classroom when they have an understanding of what is going on at home. This study was designed to help schools better understand their students, by helping them learn more about the literacy activities children are involved in at home. To help in the process of making schools aware of what practices occur in the home and to help teachers develop a better understanding of children’s literacy development, this study addressed this central question:

1) How can teachers build a bridge between home literacy and school literacy?

However, in order to address this question, four sub-questions emerged:

2) What are parents’ attitudes towards reading?

3) What shared literacy activities can be identified in homes?

4) Why do parents choose certain literacy activities?

5) Where do parents/guardians get their ideas for literacy activities?

Research Design

The research enacted in this investigation was a mixed method design. First, surveys were distributed to parents. Secondly, the study involved interviews with parents who completed the survey and first grade students. Phase 1 of this investigation consisted of a survey sent home to first grade parents. The data collected were quantitative (relying on numerical data) in nature. Phase 2 involved interviewing parents who completed the survey and first grade students; qualitative data were collected. Qualitative research is described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) as “an approach that demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive
understanding of what is being studied” (p. 5) Qualitative research is descriptive, allowing results to take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen). The qualitative data collected through interviews was used in Phase 2 of the study to gain a deeper understanding of reading practices in the home. Knowing what, why, and where reading activities were developed in the homes will enable teachers to strengthen the home/school connection.

Participants

When choosing participants for this study, the process described by Mertler and Charles (2005) known as convenience sampling was used. This type of sampling utilizes groups who are available (Mertler & Charles). The sample chosen for this study was first grade classrooms from six local elementary schools. First grade was chosen as the grade to study because this was the grade where reading was a major academic focus within the classroom. First grade is a key time to help each child develop successful reading habits. Two hundred and thirty surveys were distributed to the first grade teachers. Eighty six parents returned completed surveys. From these 86 respondents, there were 25 parent and children volunteers for follow up interviews, but due to time restraints 10 parent and 10 children interviews were conducted. All of the parents interviewed were mothers; there were no fathers interviewed. It just happened that only the mothers volunteered to be interviewed. Parents and children studied in this research come from middle class families with children attending urban schools in Northwest Ohio.

Instrumentation

Survey

First there was a 19-item survey sent home to parents of first graders at six local elementary schools (See Appendix A). The 19 questions on this survey were developed by the
principal investigator of the study to gain insight into parent’s attitudes towards reading. This survey utilized a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Mertler (2005) describes the Likert scale as “an instrument composed of statements that permit responses along an “agree….disagree” continuum, such as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree” (p. # 156). Along with Likert-scale statements, the survey included one open-ended question to allow parents to elaborate on reading practices in the home.

Teachers sent the survey home with the students and the students returned the survey. Parents were given two weeks to return the survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine first grade parents’ attitudes towards reading and how they enhance reading in the home. At the bottom of the survey, parents were asked to volunteer (if interested) to participate in a follow-up interview (See Appendix B). Once surveys were returned, they were evaluated. Surveying is an effective tool for sampling a broad number of individuals. The 19 questions on the survey were very effective in determining parent’s attitudes towards reading. By using the survey technique the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the broad view of literacy within this rural, Northwest Ohio town.

Active Interviewing

The surveys were designed to briefly describe the shared literacy activities occurring in homes. Active interviews were conducted with parents and their child to gain a deeper understanding of the reading practices outside of school. Active interviewing is described by Holstein and Gubrium (1997) as a social encounter in which knowledge is being constructed. This approach where the interview is an active means of exploring the ways in which knowledge is assembled is not usually the case in traditional approaches. In traditional interviewing, the researcher asks the exact same controlled set of questions to every interviewee, who is seen
merely as a passive conduit of information (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). In active interviewing, however, the research asks questions from a pool of questions, but not necessarily in the same format for each interview, and follow up questions arise out of the dialogue that emerges. As a result, interviews are shaped and determined by the responses interviewees give; in this sense, the interviewee or respondent is actively engaged in shaping the data, and the meaning of the data. Holstein and Gubrium (1997) believe the interviewer’s job is to direct and harness the respondent’s constructive storytelling to the research task at hand. Active interviewing was chosen as opposed to traditional interviewing because this study was designed to gain a full understanding of home literacy, which involves exploring many vast literacy resources. Some questions used in the active interview were developed in advance, and some were developed as the interview progressed. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Through this active interviewing technique, a deeper understanding of family literacy and shared literacy activities in the home unfolded. Six broad questions were asked of the parents during each interview and 5 broad questions were asked to the children participants (See Appendix C). These five broad interview questions were developed by the principal investigator of the study. All the questions developed were asked in order to gain deeper knowledge of each child’s family literacy habits.

Procedures

To begin the study, a Likert survey was developed that could be sent home to the parents of the first grade children (See Appendix A.). The principal investigator created 19 questions that would explore parents’ attitudes towards reading. The 19 questions on this survey were developed by the principal investigator of the study to gain insight into parents, attitudes towards reading. The survey, along with an informational letter (See Appendix D) and interview consent form, were sent home to parents (See Appendix B). Teachers were given a brown envelope to
collect all the completed surveys. Parents were given two weeks to return the surveys. Two hundred and thirty surveys were given to the first grade parents in the local schools. Eighty six parents returned completed surveys. Twenty five of those parents volunteered to participate in follow up interviews with their children. Due to time constraints of the study, 10 parents and 10 children were interviewed. The parents and children chosen for interviews consisted of two parents and their children from each school involved in the study. From each school two parents and children were randomly chosen to be interviewed. This was done in order to gain an overall perspective of family literacy in the area involved in the study. After it was determined which parents would be interviewed, the interviews were scheduled. The researcher conducted interviews with 10 parents and 10 children, with the interviews lasting between 10 and 15 minutes. During the 10 adult and 10 children active interviews, one parent and one child were interviewed in each family. Some children interviewed with their parents present and others interviewed without parents in the room. The data were analyzed after being collected from the surveys and the interviews.

Data Collection

Two hundred and thirty surveys were sent out to first grade parents and 86 were completed and returned (37% return rate). Twenty-five people completed interview consent forms. Due to time constraints, 10 parents were randomly selected for interviews with the intention of interviewing two parents and children from each school in the area. During the interviews, parents and children were asked questions relating to their literacy habits. Interviews were conducted in participants’ homes in a quiet setting. These interviews were audio recorded for verification purposes.
Data Analysis

Data from the surveys were put into percentages in two categories: disagree and agree. The strongly agree and agree were grouped together while the strongly disagree and disagree were grouped together. This was done to find the overall attitudes and opinions towards reading. This analysis compared and contrasted parents’ attitudes towards reading. In analyzing the survey data, no references were made to names, gender, race, ethnicity or religion.

Data from the interviews were analyzed by comparing results of six broad questions asked to the parents and five broad questions asked to the children and other information that presented itself in the active interview process. In this analysis, participants were assigned pseudo names to maintain anonymity.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methods and procedures that were used in this investigation. The instrumentation used and procedures followed were included to identify the steps that were taken in the creation of data collection instruments as well as those that were taken on collecting date. The results of data analysis can be found in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

To help in the process of making schools aware of what practices occur in the home and to help teachers develop a better understanding of children’s literacy development, this study addressed this central question:

1) How can teachers build a bridge between home literacy and school literacy?

However in order to address this question, four sub-questions emerged:

2) What are parents’ attitudes towards reading?

3) What shared literacy activities can be identified in homes?

4) Why do parents choose certain literacy activities?

5) Where do parents/guardians get their ideas for literacy activities?

An initial survey with 19 questions was designed and administered to 230 first grade parents in six different area elementary schools. This survey was distributed to gain knowledge about parent’s attitudes towards reading.

Data Analysis

Survey Results

This survey found parents’ overall attitudes towards literacy while also looking more specifically at parents’ attitudes towards home literacy and school literacy. The surveys (See Appendix A) showed that all the parents (100%) either agreed or strongly agreed that reading is important. Parents who completed the survey unanimously agreed or strongly agreed with question one, stating that they believe reading is developed at home and school (See Table 1). Along with this belief parents also showed that 85 out of the 86 (99 %) believe children should practice reading at home. The results of the the survey showed that only 77 out of 86 (90%) parents believe that children’s reading is affected by their language development. The survey
also found that 77 out of 86 (90%) parents feel children’s success in school is affected by their reading ability. Another interesting finding was that 72 out of the 86 (84%) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the more children read the more they will enjoy it, while 14 parents disagreed with this statement. Results showed that 83 out of the 86 (97%) felt that reading aloud to children helps develop their reading. Along with oral reading the surveyed showed that 82 out of 86 (95%) parents believed that children learn to read through interacting with the story. Through answering these questions about literacy we found that parents feel reading is important and something nurtured at home and school. Parents shared that they do believe language development is connected to reading ability. Parents also feel students should be reading everyday especially listening and interacting with stories. Described above are some of the things parents feel will affect their children’s success in school.

The survey explored parents’ attitudes towards home literacy. Parents strongly agree that children should practice reading every day (question 2). Not only does the survey show that parents believe it is important, but also that parents (97%) reinforce this by using many different ways to encourage reading outside of school. Parents also agreed or strongly agreed with question nine unanimously: children are engaged in literacy activities at home (See Table 1). Parents’ responses to question five showed that 83 out of 86 parents (96.5%) use many different ways to practice reading. After examining the responses to this question, it is apparent that parents are further developing children’s reading outside of school. Parents also overwhelmingly agreed/strongly agreed (97.7%) that oral reading is very important to do at home. Parents reported that 77 out of 86 (90%) children read at least 15 minutes per day (See Table 1). Parents surveyed reported that only 53 out of 86 (62%) get ideas for reading activities from magazines. Parents believe reading at home is important and they report that they engage
their children in different types of literacy. Along with this parents report that the majority of their children are reading at least fifteen minutes a day. Oral reading is one strategy they find important.

This survey also found out parent attitudes towards school literacy. Parents agreed or strongly agreed (100%) that a strong home/school relationship is important. Parents (94%) believed that the reading programs should know what reading goes on at home. Parents also agreed or strongly agreed (99%) that teachers should be aware of reading that goes on outside of school to further enhance their children’s literacy development. When parents were asked if their children’s teacher were informed about reading that goes on outside of school 75 out of 86 (87%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 10 (12%) disagreed. These questions directed towards school literacy indicate that parents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is necessary to create a bridge between home and school where knowledge is being passed in both directions.
Table 1

Frequencies of Response to Home Reading Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>TD</th>
<th>TA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading is developed at home and school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Children should practice reading at home everyday.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers should be aware of reading in the home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reading programs should know what reading goes on at home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents have many different ways of practicing reading.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents share reading activities with each other.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The more children read the more they will enjoy it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Success in school is affected by reading ability.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My child experiences reading activities at home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents get reading activity ideas from magazines.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
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(table continues)
Table 1 (continued)

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>TD</th>
<th>TA</th>
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</thead>
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<td>11. Oral reading is important to do at home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. My child's teacher knows what reading goes on at home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>13. Reading aloud to children helps develop their reading.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Children learn to read through interactions with stories.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>15. Children's reading is affected by their language development.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>16. My child reads at least 15 minutes a day.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>17. Strong home and school relationship is important.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Reading is important.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SD=Strongly Agree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA Strongly Agree, NA=Not answered, TD=Total Disagree, TA=Total Agree
On the survey, parents were asked one open-ended question: Why do parents read to their children? This question resulted in a variety of responses. The 10 reasons parents said they read to their children (and their reported frequencies) are:

- to spend time, relax and have fun with children (30)
- to create reading as a lifelong habit (14)
- to help them become better readers (14)
- to reinforce vocabulary, phonics, word recognition and fluency (12)
- to help strengthen their love of reading (10)
- because children love being read to (7)
- to foster creativity and imagination (6)
- to help them learn about life through stories (4)
- to expose them to a world outside their own (3)
- because the benefits are innumerable.

Parents’ Interview Results

After the surveys were collected, 10 parents and 10 children were selected for interviews. Six broad questions were asked to all of the adult participants and five broad questions to the children participants (See Appendix B) along with others that developed as a result of the discussions during the active interview process. Active interviewing allowed the parents and children the opportunity to share any information that they believed was important to further describe their family literacy activities. Discussed in the following paragraphs are the questions and answers from the active interviewing process.

*What Shared Literacy Activities Can Be Identified In Homes?*

Parents had many different answers to what family literacy activities they were doing
outside of school. All of the parents interviewed reported reading to their children once a day or at least every other day. The study found that 33% of the parents (3) also pointed out that they have done this since their children were very young. They believed this was a great way to get their children familiar with books and reading; it also provided children a model of what reading was supposed to sound like.

To make time to read to their children every day, 5 of the 10 parents interviewed stated that they set aside a family reading time. Parents (5) commented that this time was not only for them to read to their children, but also for their children to read to them or each other. Parents (5) explained that children could also choose to read to themselves. One parent mentioned that even if her son chose to read to himself every night, she had him read to her at least once a week to keep track of his reading progress. The parents (5) interviewed believed this time really helped their family stop and take the time to read in their hectic schedules.

Parents were not only reading out loud to their children, but as their children progressed as readers they were using oral reading and alternate reading. All 10 of the parents mentioned that they used oral reading and alternate reading. Some (5) parents chose alternate reading because they saw it as a way to slowly let their children begin to read on their own. When their children were ready, they had them read orally on their own. Others (3) mentioned that they used alternate reading because sometimes the books were so long it would take too long to read one story orally to them and they don’t have the time. Although there are many different reasons parents are using oral reading and alternate reading, parents (8) believed both strategies were very effective.

Another way in which parents were reading at home was through partner reading. Fifty percent of the parents interviewed stated that they had their children read together as partners.
Parents (5) liked this technique because their children seemed to like it and also it saved time for them. The children seemed to like it because they had a peer to help them or they felt good about reading to a younger sibling. One parent mentioned that when her son read to his younger sister, he had to read with expression and enthusiasm because if he didn’t, then his sister wouldn’t listen to the story. Which the parent thought was a great practice in using expression when reading.

Parents (3) also mentioned other family literacy activities. Brianna mentioned that her children engage in many learning games such as leap pad, leap pad globe, computer activities and active reading on the television. Lane mentioned that in their family they play word games, bingo and matching to enhance literacy development. Another parent named Debbie who was interviewed described her daughter Sandy as having a learning disability and was having trouble learning the sounds of the letters. So, every day on the way to physical therapy visits which was a half hour in the car, the mother focused on a letter a day. Debbie talked about that letter, the sound it made and words that begin with that sound while they were driving in the car. Using this strategy, Sandy was able to learn her letters and sounds. Debbie reported that Sandy was now reading on her own. Another mother named Mel described how, when her son Ron was very little, she labeled everything around the house. Everywhere Ron looked, there were words. This helped Ron associate letters with sounds and sounds with words. Mel reported that Ron was now in the first grade reading at a fourth grade reading level. Due to many literacy activities Ron was able to achieve to his fullest reading ability. As discussed in this paragraph parents are engaging their children in many different literacy activities outside of school. Parents do believ that having their children participate in literacy activities will enhance their reading.

*Why Do Parents Choose Certain Literacy Activities?*
All the parents who were interviewed agreed that the main reason they selected certain activities over others was because their children enjoy certain activities more than others. Parents (4) mentioned that when their children were enjoying the activity, learning was fun, not stressful. Some parents (2) mentioned that they chose certain literacy activities because they were familiar with them. Brianna, the mother of Danny said she turns everyday activities into learning activities for her son. Some parents discussed how certain literacy activities were easier to incorporate into their everyday than others. Ramon, mother of Alex, mentioned that she incorporates reading when they are singing at church by having Alex read the words to her. Laura, mother of Damon mentioned that she has Damon create stories with his brother and together they create their own story books.

*Where Do Parents Get Ideas For Family Literacy Activities?*

A majority of the parents (7) got their literacy activity ideas from family or friends. A couple of the parents (4) had teacher backgrounds so they generated ideas on their own. Lane mentioned getting literacy activity ideas from the internet. The majority of the parents (7) got their ideas through discussions with others. Whether it be from family members or friends that they interact with socially.

*What Do You Hope Doing These Activities Will Do For Your Child?*

Laura explained that the reason she does these literacy activities with Damon is to enhance and expand his knowledge of words and their meanings. Laura believed by doing this Damon will progress easily in his reading development. Mel explained the importance of education in their house and how this is their motivation behind the activities they do. Mel also mentioned that schoolwork and education always come before any sport or extracurricular activities. Lane mentioned that the reason she does literacy activities is she believes reading is
the key to children’s success in school and reading is her biggest focus at home. Lane also
mentioned that she puts more focus on the importance of reading than other subjects. Amanda
and Alyssa explain the reason they engage their children in literacy activities because they want
them to enjoy reading. They don’t want their children to see reading as something they have to
do but something they want to do because they enjoy it.

Has Your Child Ever Participated In A Supplemental Reading Program?

Of the parents and children interviewed 6 out of 10 (60%) have ever participated in a
supplemental reading program. Reading hour at the library was mentioned by two parents as a
resource they have used to help develop their children’s reading. Three parents mentioned that
their children are involved in reading program through their school. Laura shared that Damon
goes and reads to the principal everyday for 30 minutes. Amanda and Hanah discussed how their
children are involved in the Title 1 reading at school. Both parents believe that this reading
program has greatly enhanced their children’s reading development.

Are Children’s Teachers Aware Of Literacy Activities That Go On?

Parents were split 50/50 on this issue. Half of the parents (5) interviewed believed their
children’s teachers were aware of children’s literacy activities outside of school, while the other
half of the parents did not. These parents believed better communication should be established
between the teachers and the parents regarding their children’s literacy development. Parents
who believed teachers were aware of family literacy activities had some similarities. These
families were parents of children with special needs, where the parents made a concerted effort
to communicate with the teachers or the families consisted of mothers who were teachers who
interacted with their children’s teachers on a regular basis. The parents of students who did not
have special needs believed teachers were not aware of family literacy practices.
Parent Concerns

While involved in the active interview process with parents, some (5) discussed issues of concern related to their children’s literacy development. Three of the parents verbalized their frustration with children sight word reading instead of reading phonetically. Three of the parents mentioned they noticed their children were struggling to use phonics to decode words they didn’t know. Parents (3) believed this was hindering their children’s reading ability. These three parents believed teachers should focus on teaching children to read phonetically, not just by sight words. One parent mentioned that phonics was the way they learned how to read, and if it worked for them, then it would work for their children.

Children’s Interview Results

Ten children were interviewed using active interviewing. The children were interviewed separate of the parents. Five broad questions were asked to all of the child participants (See Appendix B) along with others that developed as a result of the discussions during the active interview process. Discussed in the following paragraphs are the questions and answers from the active interviewing process with the children.

Do you like reading outside of school?

All 10 children interviewed said they like to read outside of school. They also said they liked reading at home better than at school. Danny mentioned that the reason he likes reading better at home is because he gets to choose his own book. He said he doesn’t get a chance to do this at school. Ron mentioned that the reason he feels this way is because he has more time to read at home. Andy mentioned that the reason he likes reading at home better is because he has more books to choose from at home and more time to read.

What reading activities do you do outside of school?
The children interviewed mention that they read with their parents (10), siblings (5) and by themselves (7). The children mentioned different things they read such as picture books (3), magazines (4), cookbooks (1), and chapter books (8).

*Which reading activity that you do outside of school do you think is the most fun? Why?*

Some (4) of the children interviewed liked their parents reading to them best, while the others (2) liked reading to their parents best. Three of the children explained that they enjoy being able to read to themselves the most.

*Do you think these activities help you with reading?*

Alex mentioned that she feels the reading she does at home helps her do better at reading.

*Would you like it if your teacher did one of the reading activities at school?*

Only 2 of 10 (20%) children interviewed said they discussed books and literacy activities completed outside of school with the teacher; therefore, 80% of the children said the teacher was not aware of the literacy activities they were involved in outside of school. All 10 children mentioned that they wished they could spend more time reading on their own, from books they choose at school.

**Data Analysis**

This study attempts to answer one central question: How can teachers build a bridge between home literacy and school literacy?

However in order to address this question, four sub-questions emerged:

*What are parents’ attitudes towards reading?*

Through the surveys and interview portions of this study we became aware that the parents involved in the study from Northwest Ohio view reading as important to the children. It was very clear also through the surveys and interviews that parents feel that reading needs to
occur inside and outside of school. Parents displayed through this study that they are involving their children in reading on a routine basis.

**What shared literacy activities can be identified in homes?**

Through the interviews the study gained insight into the literacy activities children experience outside of school. These literacy activities included: oral reading, partner reading, alternate reading, silent reading, reading games and other educational games. Parents involved in the study explained the different techniques they use and explained that certain strategies work better for their children than others.

**Why do parents choose certain literacy activities?**

All the parents who were interviewed agreed that the main reason they selected certain activities over others was because their children enjoyed certain activities more than others. Parents (4) mentioned that when their children were enjoying the activity, learning was fun, not stressful. Some parents (2) mentioned that they chose certain literacy activities because they were familiar with them. Brianna, the mother of Danny said she turns everyday activities into a learning activity for her son. Some parents discussed how certain literacy activities were easier to incorporate into their everyday than others. Ramon, mother of Alex, mentioned that she incorporates reading when they are singing at church by having Alex read the words to her. Laura, mother of Damon mentioned that she has Damon create stories with his brother and together they create their own story books.

**Where do parents/guardians get their ideas for literacy activities?**

A majority of the parents (7) acquired their literacy activity ideas from family or friends. A couple of the parents (4) had teacher backgrounds so they generated ideas on their own. Lane mentioned getting literacy activity ideas from the internet. The majority of the parents (7) got
their ideas through discussions with others. This brings us back to the importance of social interaction not only for language and reading development but also for adults.

By investigating these four sub-questions and other questions that developed during the active interviewing process it important for teachers to create a strong bridge between home and school. Parents in this study mentioned the need for more communication with parents discussing children’s literacy development. By doing this teachers will strengthen the home and school relationship. One parent also mentioned the interest in creating parent groups that can come together to discuss literacy development in their children. This parent believed that the creation of a parent group would be a helpful resource in helping parents enhance their children’s literacy development.

Summary

This chapter outlined the findings of the study and presented further discussion of these findings. The data collected were shared in an attempt to connect the research questions with the findings from the survey and interviews. This was done to present the overall findings in regards to the research questions of the study from a rural town in Northwest Ohio.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to emphasize the importance of building a strong bridge between home and school where knowledge is being shared equally in both directions. To help in the process of teachers knowing what practices go on at home, this study specifically asks these questions: What are parents’ attitudes towards literacy?, What family literacy activities are parents doing?, Why are parents choosing certain literacy activities?, and Where parents are getting their ideas. Along with these questions, this study examined whether parents believe teachers are aware of their children’s literacy activities outside of school. The study was designed to survey and interview first grade parents and children in rural Northwest, Ohio to identify attitudes towards literacy and literacy practices.

Summary

The method for surveying students included choosing schools containing the elementary grades, specifically first grade. The research participants involved were first grade parents and first grade students. Parents completed a 19 question survey to gain knowledge on their attitudes towards reading. Following filling out the survey, parents and children were given the opportunity to participate in a short 15 minute follow up interview. Active interviewing was used during the interview process. There were some broad questions asked of the participants and then additional questions were asked based on the course of the discussion.

The findings from the survey indicated that parents find reading very important. Parents also believe that reading is developed at school and home and, because of this, they believe it is important to create a strong bridge between home and school. The survey also found that parents strongly believe children should be engaged in reading on a daily basis. Most importantly, this study found that 5 out of 10 (50%) parents and 8 out of 10 (80%) children believed that their
teachers were not aware of literacy practices outside of school, and as result, parents didn’t believe there was a strong bridge between home and school where knowledge was being passed in both directions.

Conclusions

Though all the parents and students surveyed and interviewed were from different schools there were definite themes that arose during the interview process. These themes consisted of literacy activities parents find important and parents opinions towards home and school communication. Parents expressed their feelings towards the importance of reading, how they acquire ideas through social interaction, and concerns about children literacy skills and the lack of communication between home and school. When asked if they believed their teachers were aware of literacy practices, there was an indication of dissatisfaction of the communication between home and school in regards to their children’s literacy development.

When asking first grade students if their teacher asked them about reading they do outside of school, 8 out of 10 (80%) of the children said, “No, the teacher doesn’t know what I do at home with literacy.” This response indicates that students are not engaging in a school literacy environment where home literacy practices are incorporated into school. This partnership affects the continuous literacy growth of each and every student (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990). By working closely with families, educators can further understand parents’ beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of roles they play in the literacy development of their children (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). According to the findings of this study, there is a need for a stronger bridge between home and school where better communication is achieved.

Through this study, we became aware of two types of parents when dealing with communication between parents and teachers. One group of parents we will call the seekers.
These are the parents who have the teaching backgrounds who seek out their children’s teachers to discuss their children’s literacy development. The seekers believe there is a strong bridge of communication between school and home. This is in result of the communication initiated by these parents. The other group that emerged during this study we will call the non-seekers. This group consists of the average parent, not teachers. These parents clearly stated that they don’t feel there is strong communication between school and home. They didn’t feel they were informed about their child’s literacy development. In order to better serve the parents so they feel informed about their child’s literacy, communication between parents and teachers needs to increase. However, the responsibility for strengthening this communication rests with the teacher. The teacher needs to develop a plan to help non-seekers feel comfortable communicating with them without any hesitation. Parents are more likely to feel comfortable communicating with the teacher if they feel involved in their child’s literacy. Teachers are the key to making this happen.

In order to address this problem, this study found that parents get many of their ideas through interacting in a social setting with family or friends. When parents were asked where they get their ideas, all of the 10 parents said they get ideas from other parents. Interaction with other parents is a key resource to parents in the literacy development. Not only are social settings beneficial to first grade students and their development, but social settings are also benefiting parents in their search for family literacy activities. Non-seekers need the peer support that they receive from these social interactions, so they can further develop their skills and comfort with communicating with teachers. However, this will never happen unless teachers create an opportunity for parents to interact with each other and themselves. Teachers can do this by taking the key information found by this study and develop a social event for communication to
occur between parents and parents and teachers which will further strengthen the bridge between home and school. If parents feel comfortable in social setting, which was evident through data shared during this study, then parents will participate and feel more comfortable attending a social occasion in order to discuss literacy. Through this type of social setting the teacher has an opportunity to talk to the parents in a relaxed environment that will not intimidate parents. Other benefits this social situation would be the opportunity for parents to discuss literacy together and share ideas.

Not only did parents think the communication was lacking, but two of the ten parents interviewed during this study expressed some concern about the fact that they believed their children’s reading practices were more advanced at home than at school. These were non-seekers who felt there was a disconnect in their children’s academic level at home and teachings going on in the school environment. This type of relationship between home and school could adversely affect their children’s reading development. If a kindergarten student is able to read words and in school they have him working on letter sounds the student will become bored and disinterested. This may also cause the student to act out and be disruptive in class. One way to address this issue would be for the teacher and the parent to create a strong bridge of knowledge, ideas and communication. Here is one instance where the teacher needs to be more proactive, grounded in knowledge of home literacy practices. Teachers can do this by creating some sort of opportunity for parent’s to get to know their child’s teacher and feel comfortable discussing their literacy.

The involvement of parents in their children’s literacy development was very apparent in the findings of this study when asking the parents what family literacy practices they engage in with their children. This question revealed a wide variety of family literacy activities outside of
school. This was consistent with parent responses on the survey showing 97% parents said they use many different ways to practice reading. All of the 10 families responded that they engage in oral reading, either the parent reading to the child or the child reading to the parent. This is consistent with the findings of the survey which reported that 98% of parents believe oral reading is important to do at home. Each parent described how they participate in oral reading daily at home with their children. Gunning (2005) tells us that oral reading focuses the reader’s attention on pronouncing words correctly. This study showed that oral reading is a key activity in the reading development of these first grade students.

The study showed that parents have a concern about the reliance on sight words instead of using phonemic skills to sound out the words. The parents interviewed would like to see their children using their phonemic skills more than they are currently. Parents believe it is very important for their children to be able to use phonics to decode unknown words. Parents believe that their children are being taught by teachers to rely heavily on sight words instead of using their phonics skills. Parents want children to see a word they are unfamiliar and begin to sound out the phonemes in the word. If a child sees the word “Cat”, they want their to sound out each phoneme, not to say “I don’t know this word.” Parents believe their children need to be taught to develop phonemic awareness skills and the ability to recognize sight words, not one or the other. Parents believe that they learned how to read unknown words through practicing phonics skills and feel it worked for them and will work for their children.

Results showed that first grade students mentioned that one thing they enjoy most about reading is choosing their own books and reading silently. Silent reading is recommended at all levels to build fluency. As students read books in which they know nearly all the words, students’ ability to recognize the words faster should increase (Gunning, 2005). One comment
made by all ten of the first grade students was that they wish that they were given an opportunity to do this more at school. Children stated that they do a lot of reading out loud but not so much reading to themselves. This may be due to the recent discussions about Sustained Silent Reading and whether it is beneficial to student’s literacy development. This study believes that if children are given the opportunity to read for enjoyment they will begin to build a love for reading.

Recommendations

This study clearly found that there is a need to strengthen the bridge between home and school through better communication of knowledge and ideas. In order to create such a situation, this study has suggestions that could help achieve this goal while looking at the information collected during this study. The following recommendations are for teachers and parents since these are the key people involved in creating a strong bridge of communication between home and school.

For Teachers

A commonality among much research suggests that creating a strong bridge between home and school in order to enhance literacy development is crucial. The relationship between home and school is one of the strongest factors in a child’s success (Parator, 2002; Spielman, 2001; Taylor, 1995). In the findings of this study, it can be assumed that the bridge between home and school can use a great deal of strengthening. Teachers can create an open line of communication with parents to discuss their children’s literacy development. Parents need to know that the teacher is listening and developing responsive classroom practice. This could be done through a parent social hours, home reading journals, home visits, beginning of the year surveys or interviews or something that is sent from home to school and school to home on a regular basis. Such a relationship would ensure parallel reading practices being practiced at
home and at school to further enhance children’s reading development.

One suggestion on how to do this would be to organize a social literacy club for parents to come together and have coffee. This could be developed by teachers for the parents in the classroom, by grade level or by a broader scope. Meetings could occur once a month. This group would be organized by the teacher. Maybe the teacher would place certain parents together that they feel will be helpful to each other. These groups could come together initially to meet and then they could meet on their own time and a place of their choosing. Teachers could attend a different groups meeting each month to better understand parents needs and wants. This type of group would allow parents to discuss things together whether it be concerns or ideas, while also giving them an opportunity to communicate more with the teacher about their children’s literacy. The bottom line is teachers need to develop systematic responses to home literacy.

In addition, teachers can incorporate discussions of home literacy into the classroom, creating parallel literacy techniques between home and school. This study found that students did not believe that their teachers were aware of their literacy practices outside of school. When children can see a connection between what they do in home and school it can bring literacy development to new level. It is believed that teachers can develop school skills based on children and their home experiences. Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) believe that qualitative research offers a range of methodological alternatives that can fathom the array of cultural and intellectual resources available to students and teachers within the household. It could also be useful to teachers to visit households for research purposes and to gain more knowledge of family literacy.

Another technique suggested by Pahl & Kelly (2005) is to create a space within the
classroom where school and home literacy come together. Pahl and Kelly explain a space where parents and children collaborated on joint project, including book making, storytelling, reading and writing activities. It is believed that by creating such a space teachers are listening to parent voices to create a shared curriculum. According to this study it is clear that parents would be interested in the development of a space like this. Creating a space like this would be beneficial to teachers, parents and children.

Parents

Most importantly, parents need to let their teachers know that they don’t believe there is a strong enough bridge between home and school. They need to ask for a little more communication about their child’s literacy development. They could do this through a note that they send to school, email or some other form of communication. If a parent is not comfortable with that, then they need to make suggestions of things they think would be good for the classroom and then offer to help implement them. More than anything, parents should not be afraid to go and discuss any concerns they have with the teacher. This could be made easier for parents if teachers make their students parents feel comfortable with them. Non-seekers need to figure out how to advocate for their children. Maybe discussion with other peers will help them feel more affirmed in their ideas and then give them the motivation to communicate with the teacher. When parents get to know teachers they view them as another person just like themselves. By getting to know the teacher parents feel less intimidated and in turn become more comfortable communicating with the teacher about their child’s development. Their child’s literacy development is very important and if it isn’t being nurtured, then it will not develop.
**Teacher Educators**

Professors need discuss the issue of home and school communication and allow their students to fully understand how important this issue is. Telling future teachers very quickly and without much discussion that they need to involve the parents will not make this problem any better. That would be the equivalent of asking someone to dig a hole, but never giving them a shovel. Giving them the shovel will make the job a lot easier. Future teachers need to be equipped with ideas, whether developed on their own or with a group of other future teachers that will provide them with a resource of information to reference when they are in the schools dealing with these issues.

**Further Study**

This investigation suggests that parents believe sometimes as if there is not a strong bridge between home and school discussing their literacy development. There are further studies that could be done in this area to explore this concern. One area that could be further investigated could be the location from which the students originate. This study focused on families from a very small Northwest, Ohio town. Other studies could focus on families from a suburban or even an urban setting where socioeconomic status may be lower or higher than the families that participated in this study. Another study could increase the number of families chosen to interview. If the researcher has more time, then they can look at a wider spectrum for a better understanding of parents’ literacy practices and concerns. Another area could be to interview teachers, parents and children to see if all three have the same opinions on literacy development. This will give another angle to the study where you can evaluate which party may need to increase their knowledge of literacy development.

Finally, a further study could be done to create and evaluate social meetings between
parents and teacher and parents discussed previously. A school could implement such a program and it could be evaluated to see if it is an effective way to increase parent and school communication. If it is found to be successful then it could be developed in other schools.

Summary

This chapter presented the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Conclusions from the data were presented including a desire for a stronger bridge between home and school literacy by some parents. According to the survey, parents find reading very important and strive to help enhance their children’s literacy development in many different literacy activities. Parents seem to receive their best literacy ideas from interactions with friends or family. This study found that parents choose certain literacy activities based on their children’s interests. By doing this the children are having fun and not seeing the literacy activity as something they have to do. When school and home create a strong bridge where knowledge of literacy development is being passed in both directions, then the benefits to children’s literacy will be innumerable.

In conclusion, this study illustrates that students are engaged in literacy at home and that in order for children to develop their literacy there needs to be a connection between what goes on at home and school. Teachers need to remember to create an environment that makes parents feel comfortable discussing their child’s literacy. If parents don’t feel comfortable doing this then they will not engage in communication with teachers which will weaken communication between home and school. This will in turn hinder children’s literacy development. Teachers need to make sure that parent’s are given an opportunity to share knowledge and ideas about their child’s literacy. Building a strong bridge between home and school where knowledge is being passed in both directions is essential in the development of children’s literacy.
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# Reading in the Home Survey

Directions: This survey asks for your opinion on reading. Since an opinion is neither right nor wrong, there is no right or wrong answer. Your answers will be anonymous. Your honest reactions will be appreciated. By completing this survey you are giving your consent.

Answer each of the following items by placing a check in the box to the left of the choice that best represents your opinion. The choices are:

SD = Strongly Disagree  D = Disagree  A = Agree  SA = Strongly Agree

Mark only one choice per item. Please respond to all items!!

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<tr>
<td>2. Children should practice reading at home everyday.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teachers should be aware of reading in the home.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Reading programs should know what reading goes on at home.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Parents have many different ways of practicing reading.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Parents share reading activities with each other.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The more children read the more they will enjoy it.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Success in school is affected by reading ability.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My child experiences reading activities at home.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<td>10. Parents get reading activity ideas from magazines.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<td>11. Oral reading is important to do at home.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<td>12. My child’s teacher knows what reading goes on at home.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Reading aloud to children helps develop their reading.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Children learn to read through interactions with stories.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Children’s reading is affected by their language development.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. My child reads at least 15 minutes a day.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Strong home and school relationship is important.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Reading is important.</td>
<td>☐ SD  ☐ D  ☐ A  ☐ SA</td>
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</table>

19. Why do parents read to their children?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
Follow Up Interview

Please fill out below if interested in a short follow up interview and return to school:

Parents Name_____________________________  Phone# ______________________

                         Email ______________________

Child’s Name ______________________________
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Building a Bridge between Home and School: An Overview of Reading Practices in Rural First Grade Homes.

The Active Interviewing technique will be used to allow the person being interviewed to be an active participant in the direction of the interview. The following are seven questions that will serve as a question pool for the interviewing process.

Interview Questions for parents:

1) What family literacy activities do you use in your home?
2) Why do you pick certain literacy activities?
3) Where do you get your ideas for these activities?
4) What do you hope doing these activities will do for your child?
5) Is your child’s teacher aware of the reading activities your child is involved in outside of school?
6) Has your child ever participated in a supplemental reading program?

Interview Questions for children:

1) Do you like reading outside of school?
2) What reading activities do you do outside of school?
3) Which reading activity that you do outside of school do you think is the most fun? Why?
4) Do you think these activities help you with reading?
5) Would you like it if your teacher did one of the reading activities at school?
APPENDIX D

PARENT INFORMATIONAL LETTER
First Grade Parents
Parental Permission Form
Title of Experiment:
Building a Bridge Between Home and School: An Overview of Reading Practices in Rural First Grade Homes.

Principal Investigator:
Eileen Pasquarette, Graduate Student
Reading Department, Bowling Green State University
Home: (419) 352-6108                    Cell: (419) 308-8766
Email: pasquam@bgnet.bgsu.edu

My name is Eileen Pasquarette and I am currently working towards a master’s degree at BGSU. I am conducting a thesis research study about reading in the home. I am interested in finding out all the different ways parents are practicing reading outside of school. Knowing this information will allow teachers to build upon or incorporate these activities into their teaching which will enhance each child’s reading development. I am looking for parents to participate by filling out a quick five minute survey. The surveys will be numbered so that your answers will be anonymous.

Along with completing the survey I am also asking parents and children to volunteer to participate in a short fifteen minute interview in order to gain a deeper understanding of the wonderful things parents are doing with reading.

Please return your survey as soon as possible to your child’s first grade teacher. If you are interested in participating or just finding out more about the short fifteen minute interview please have you and your child sign the follow up interview form and return it to school. Interviews will be audio recorded. I will contact you to discuss the specifics of the interview and to set up a time. Pseudonyms will be given to participants in the interviews to further protect your confidentiality.

Participation in the survey and/or interview is completely voluntary and any participant may withdraw at any time. Whether you participate or not will have no impact on your child’s grade or class standing. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me at either of the two phone number provided at the top of this letter or my advisor Dr. Murnen at 419-372-7983. If you have any questions regarding the conduct of the study or concerns regarding the rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University at 419-372-7716.

Sincerely,

Eileen Pasquarette
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROFILES
Danny, first grade student.

- He likes basketball
- He likes to read at home more than school probably because he gets to choose the book.
- Only thing he thinks he needs help with is the words sometimes and his teacher will help him.
- He reads magic tree house series
- He reads mostly by himself
- Sometimes he reads to parents.
- He reads everyday not some times on really busy days
- He doesn’t do any other activities that he could think of.
- He reads sports illustrated for kids but mainly looks at pictures.
- He reads at night time probably fifteen minutes.
- He doesn’t talk to teacher about home reading very much.

Brianna, parent of first grade student Danny.

- She herself is a teacher
- Reads to children
- Her children read to each other and read to themselves.
- They have a family reading time.
- She really feels that the letter people helped her son learn to read. He is able to sound out words.
- She is happy with communication back and forth with the teacher.
- She explained that reading homework involves parents noticing miscues and comprehension.
- She really feels she knows what her child is doing at school with reading and how well he can read.
- She doesn’t recall with other children their being as much accountability with parents and reading with other children.
- She feels teacher is aware of child’s reading at home and enjoys interactions with teacher.
- She does high frequency words with her son. At the beginning of the year she wasn’t sure he would be able to learn all the words looked like a lot. Now doing great and likes to read.
- She really likes the accountability aspect because it makes parents take the time in their busy schedule to practice reading.
- She didn’t have anything that she does that she wishes the teacher would do.
- She mentioned that Danny read a commercial to his dad which he had never done before.
- She mentioned that her oldest son was a good reader, middle boy not the greatest struggled with letter people, youngest son is a good reader. Middle child had reading tutor. He seemed to struggle but then one day something clicked and now he reads fine.
- She wants her children to enjoy reading.
Damon, first grade student.

- Yes he reads at home. He likes books about animals like cats.
- If he finds five words that are too hard for him in a book then he knows the book is too hard.
- He practices sight words with flash cards.
- He likes reading books to his mom the most and he does it everyday.
- He likes chapter books.
- His mom reads out loud sometimes but he likes reading to mom best.
- He said his teacher doesn’t know books he is reading at home.

Laura- mother of first grade student Damon.

- She said her son engages in all the following literacy activities: Leap Pad, leap pad globe, computer activities, active reading on television, reads out loud and he reads out loud to her.
- She gets ideas from people she knows from her job at University. Family night at library and from school.
- She incorporates words into story books and has damons brother help him create books.
- She does these literacy activities to enhance and expand his knowledge of words and their meaning. Children start out needing to do more than years age. She starts reading with them at age 1 or 2 so they become more familiar with reading.
- She feels the teacher is not really aware of activities that they do at home. The only time is at conferences and they only do that if a child is struggling.
- Her son does participate in a supplemental reading program at school. Feels they aren’t keeping his attention that they needs to be active. Her son reads to the principal everyday.
- She thinks it would be good if they did more interactive stuff at school. She feels they are more advanced at home than at school. She said her son can understand books his brother is reading and he is two years older.
- Her son reads with his brother and sometimes reads by himself.
Ron, first grade student.

♦ He likes to read, he is reading Junie B Jones.
♦ He could read chapter books in kindergarten.
♦ He likes to read at home because you have more time to read at home.
♦ He uses the magnets on the refrigerator tot can make words.
♦ He reads out loud to mom. He likes reading by himself best.
♦ He reads with his brother.
♦ He reads 15 minutes a day at least.
♦ He said he reads recipes sometimes and magazines.
♦ He would like more time to read at school.
♦ He feels his teacher does know what he is reading at home.

Mel, parent of first grade student Ron.

♦ She read to him since day one. She labeled everything around the house. Gifts are always books. She reads and he asks questions about words.
♦ She said she started literacy activities earlier with Ron than her other children.
♦ They have a family reading time where they spend 15-30 minutes and evening all reading.
♦ She said her son comes home with books at his level. Her son was tested at beginning of year to find DRA.
♦ Her ideas come from teaching background. She has a family history of teachers.
♦ She does all of these literacy activities because education is a priority.
♦ She feels the teacher is aware of activities because of his good reading. Needs to talk to teacher to keep him on track. Gets special privilege of getting books from library because of accelerated level.
Andy, first grade student.

♦ Yes he reads at home, he reads at night.
♦ He reads by himself. His mom reads to him. He likes when his mom reads to him.
♦ He likes reading at home better than at school because he has more books at home to read and he gets more time to read at home.

Lane, parent of first grader Andy.

♦ She does literacy activities such as: word games, bingo, and matching.
♦ She chooses these activities because Andy enjoys them.
♦ Right now she is focusing on him reading out loud to her for 20 min a day. She does this to check on reading progress. She is working on getting him reading with expression.
♦ She said they used games more for sight word recognition. The games made it more fun to help learn sight words.
♦ She gets ideas from internet. Also some ideas from home schooling curriculum.
♦ She feels the teacher knows what he is doing as far as what she sends home but she emails with the teacher through email a lot to discuss his reading. Reading log allows her to tell books he is reading at home.
♦ They have family reading time at night. During this Andy reads a lot to his sister. When he does this he has to work on expression to keep sisters interest. Sometimes during this his brother will read to him.
♦ She feels reading is the key to children’s success in school. Her biggest focus at home is reading.
♦ Her boys need her to tell them it is time to read. That’s why family reading time was established.
♦ They do reading 20 minutes a day except on weekends.
Mandy, first grade student.

♦ Yes she reads at home. She likes to read Junie B Jones.
♦ She likes to have mom read to her. Sometimes she reads by herself. She likes it best when her mom reads to her. She likes her mom to read to her because she can understand what the story is about better because she has trouble with words.
♦ She practices words with flashcards. She feels sight words are hard and easy.
♦ She reads every night.
♦ She wishes she could read books on her own more at school. At school she does guided reading.
♦ She said she doesn’t talk to her teacher about books she reads at home.

Hanah, mother of first grade student Mandy

♦ She feels books in the bag sent home from school have helped her daughter to read. She likes these books because they are appropriate reading level for her daughter.
♦ She said she doesn’t do things at home.
♦ She said the reading log let’s the teacher know what they are reading at home and it is an incentive to read more.
♦ She said they read every night.
♦ She said she doesn’t like reading but she does it because she knows it’s good for her daughter.
♦ Her daughter is in a supplemental reading program at school that she goes to for 30 minutes a day. Her teacher did a reading assessment on every child at the beginning of the year and then they put child in program. She feels the supplemental reading program has really helped her daughter.
♦ She said they do oral reading and sight words with flash cards.
♦ She feels parents need to be responsible to do the reading with their children even if they hate it.
♦ She will read newspaper. But doesn’t find reading to be fun. She just does it if she sees something there in front of her.
Kyle, first grade student

♦ Yes he likes to read at home.
♦ He said he reads out loud, alternate reading, sustained silent reading.
♦ He said they practice sight words by posting them on the refrigerator.
♦ He likes reading by himself the most because he can read as much as he wants.
♦ He would like to read more at school by himself.
♦ He said he tells his teacher about books he reads at home.

Amanda, parent of first grade student Kyle

♦ She said they read books, magazines, play computer, and more.
♦ They choose these activities because Kyle enjoys them.
♦ She chooses certain activities because the children enjoy them.
♦ They have a family reading time every night for 15-20 minutes.
♦ She reads aloud because that’s what her mother did and she thinks it works. Reading is a major part of their day.
♦ She hopes to help them to enjoy reading
♦ She said the teacher has no idea of the extra things they do at home that enhance reading.
♦ She said he participates in a Title 1 reading program which has been wonderful. He goes everyday.
♦ She would like to see the computer used more in the classroom with reading to enhance her child’s reading development.
Alex, first grade student

♦ Yes she reads at home. She likes reading by herself to practice reading.
♦ She would like to read her own books at school
♦ She said her teacher doesn’t know what she is reading but she gets ideas from teacher for books to read.
♦ She likes reading at home because it’s quieter.
♦ She feels practicing reading helps her the most.

Ramon, parent of first grade student Alex

♦ She has a teaching background
♦ She reads out loud to her. She reads words in church in songs to her daughter.
♦ Her daughter knows sight word cards.
♦ She does alternate reading
♦ She used to take Alex to reading hour at the library.
♦ She has her daughter do partner reading with her siblings sometimes.
♦ She said the teacher doesn’t really know what she is reading at home unless mom happens to run into teacher and mention it.
♦ She would like her daughter to have better phonics skills as opposed to just reading by sight words.
♦ She reads by herself
♦ She would like to see more reading in school of books of interest.
♦ She literacy ideas from friends and family.
Sid, first grade student

- He likes to read. He reads at home. He reads Frog and Toad and Dr. Seuss
- He reads book for fun and other book every day
- He likes reading with mom the best. He said they do alternate reading at home
- He doesn’t do anything special with practicing words
- He wishes he could read chapter books at school- more challenging books
- Sometimes he tells teacher what he’s reading if he remembers
- He likes reading at home better because you can read more.

Alyssa, parent of first grade student Sid

- She said in Kindergarten her son was interested in reading.
- She began reading “Bob” the beginner reader books she came across at the library
- She said Sam’s brother reads with him and helps him with words.
- She feels reading aloud helps his reading a lot.
- She said her son learned quickly
- She looked a lot on her own for literacy activities. She taught developmental reading at Owens
- She wants reading to be fun not something they have to do.
- She gets ideas from other parents
- She said the teacher knows a little bit about what he is reading.
- Her son did story time at the library.
- She wishes they would have some way for parents to communicate with each other.
- She said if her son is tired they will just read to him
- She said they do alternate reading.
- She said every week her son brings home 6 to 7 pages of activities for spelling words.
- She is interested in developing a group of parents to discuss reading development and reading. Didn’t like students having to read certain books and take tests. She doesn’t want reading to become a chore.
- She said her boys like informational books.
- She said she is very interested in how they handle differences between boys and girls reading interests in school.
- She said her son reads 100 minutes a week easy.
- She wonders were parents role is in reading and helping with reading in the classroom.
- She would be interested in parents helping with reading differences between students.
- She has read a lot about Boy/Girl split in different classes to accommodate learning style.
Amy, first grade student

♦ She reads at home
♦ She reads almost every day
♦ She likes chapter books- Junie B Jones
♦ She likes best when mom reads to her
♦ She doesn’t talk to her teacher about stories she is reading at home.
♦ She would like more time to read in school on own

Jane, parent of first grade student Amy

♦ She feels her daughter learned to read by being read to every day.
♦ They have established a family reading time everyday for 15-30 minutes a day. Children really enjoy this time and it reminds them to read everyday.
♦ Sometimes she reads out loud and other times her daughter reads to her.
♦ Her daughter likes to listen to chapter books
♦ Her daughters school sends home vocabulary and spelling words each week
♦ She said there is nothing at home that she would like at school
♦ Her daughter has not been in a supplemental reading program
♦ She said her daughters’ teacher doesn’t know of books that the child is reading unless child happens to mention it.
♦ She is happy with her daughters development
♦ She is not sure exactly what goes on at school as far as reading is concerned.
♦ She would like more knowledge about what they are working on in the class.
♦ She would like more communication.
♦ She does alternate reading with her daughter.
♦ She gets a lot of ideas from sister who is a reading specialist.
♦ Her daughter mostly reads to her.
♦ She would like to see where her daughter is in her reading development. Would like to know where strengths and weaknesses are.
Sandy, first grade student

♦ She likes to read with parents.
♦ She just started reading on her own
♦ She reads twenty minutes everyday
♦ Her teacher knows what she is reading.

Debbie, parent of first grade student Sandy.

♦ Her daughter Sandy is a special needs child.
♦ Her daughter began speech at 18 months and she would work on sounds of each letter in the car everyday until they did all the letters of the alphabet.
♦ After consonant sounds she went to vowel sounds
♦ She said when her daughter entered kindergarten she wasn’t happy with sight word reading.
♦ She said Sandy was able to phonically sound out words but then would sight read and now she is beginning to sound out words again.
♦ She reads to her 20 minutes a day
♦ Her daughter goes to the reading center for a supplemental reading program.
♦ She suggests puppet pals at the library as a resource for parents.
♦ She said she has a lot of communication with teacher due to special needs and IEP goals for her daughter.
♦ She would like to see schools doing more phonics instead of sight reading.
♦ Her literacy ideas have come from praying about Sandy.
♦ She feels children need a solid foundation of reading to be successful.