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EFFICACY OF THE FAST START PARENT TUTORING PROGRAM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS BY FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2001

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Thirty beginning first grade students, representing a wide range of reading abilities, were randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions for a period of 11 weeks.

Parents and students in the experimental group received Fast Start training, weekly materials packets, and weekly telephone support. Control group parents and students received the parent involvement opportunities typical for their family and classroom.

Utilizing a pre-test/post-test with control group design, ANCOVA showed no significant effect of treatment for those students in the top half of the reading ability variable (as measured by pre-test). But significant effects for those students in the lower half of the reading ability variable (as measured by pre-test) were found. Students in the low half ability group, whose parents received the training, materials, and support,
outperformed their counterparts in the control group on measures of letter/word recognition and reading fluency.

ANCOVA revealed no difference in response to the Fast Start program between boys and girls within the experimental group.

Verbal and written survey information collected from the experimental group indicated generally positive perceptions of the program by parents.

Implications of these parent tutoring results were discussed as they pertain to educational practitioners and researchers.
Dedicated to my family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my wife, Alice, for her moral support, encouragement, and helpful spirit as she read and responded to many drafts of this dissertation.

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Finally, acknowledgment is due my colleagues in the public schools who provided much material and professional assistance in the implementation of this research project.
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Studies in: School Psychology
Parent Involvement in Education
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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There is currently a call for more parent involvement in the process of education. This is exemplified at the national level by the addition of an eighth goal to the National Education Goals statement; a goal that calls on schools to adopt policies and practices that actively engage parents and families in partnerships to support the academic work of children at home, and shared educational decision-making at school (National Education Goals Panel, 1995). It states: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (p. 11). One objective under this goal calls on schools to help parents strengthen home learning activities.

In addition, the U. S. Department of Education is promoting the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning.
This Partnership aims to increase family involvement in children's education. The rationale for this Partnership is stated in a paper entitled "Strong Families, Strong Schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). It notes that what the family does is more important than parent income or education. The paper indicates that parents are not giving enough attention to their children's education. Some reasons cited are: employment demands on parents, uncertainty about what to do, cultural barriers, and the lack of a supportive community environment. One of the vital parent activities noted in the paper is reading with children at home.

At the state level, one example of this current interest in parent involvement in reading is the recent passage of Amended Substitute Senate Bill 55 in Ohio (1997). Section 3313.608 of this bill addresses the mandated assessment and intervention program designed to assist students in meeting the "fourth grade guarantee" (that students will read at the fourth grade level or be retained in the fourth grade). This law mandates that each school district in Ohio annually assess the reading skills of each student at the end of first, second and third grade. Based on these assessments, school districts must identify students who perform below grade level.
Upon identification, districts must provide intervention services to each student who is reading below grade level. At the end of third grade, those students who are below level must receive intense remediation services during the summer. After July 1, 2001, those who fail the fourth grade proficiency test shall receive intense remediation services. The law further states that, "For each student required to be offered remediation services under this section, the district shall involve the student's parent or guardian and classroom teacher in developing the intervention strategy and shall offer to the parent or guardian the opportunity to be involved in the intervention services" (p. 16).

Empirically based outcome studies of many diverse parent involvement activities (Henderson and Berla, 1994) were very positive. After an ERIC search and a review of 66 studies, reviews, analyses, reports and books, they concluded that efforts to improve children's outcomes are more effective if the children's families are involved.

Grimm (1992) did a meta-analysis of 57 studies in parent involvement interventions of many types (tutoring, communication, home visits, home interactions, parent training, and general relationships). The study considered research on students from kindergarten through
high school. It looked at the subject areas of math, reading, and general achievement at all grade levels (K-12). An overall effect size of .393 was obtained for Crimm's study by averaging the effect sizes of the 57 studies. Reading was the domain that appeared to obtain the most benefit from parent involvement.

Regarding home reading programs, Topping (1996) posited the following potential advantages:

1. extra practice at home with an encouraging adult may increase reading skill;
2. the child may experience a sense of security and benefit psychologically from the feeling that both their teacher and parents are working together;
3. a home reading program may help create a similar set of attitudes and expectation from both home and school;
4. instituting a program of this type allows teachers to learn about family literacy practices and to incorporate this understanding into the school curriculum.

Finally, there is a specific type of home reading program that involves the provision of direct reading tutoring by parents to their own children. Hannon (1995)
offered the following reasoning to support the use of parent tutoring intervention in reading:

1. parents may be good teachers because the relationships with their children are deeper, more powerful than those with teachers;
2. parents may be better able to find and utilize the teachable moments;
3. teachers are very busy with only a few minutes each day to hear a child read, but many parents can devote longer periods of time;
4. since teachers have knowledge of materials and strategies that can be helpful, the two (parent and teachers) should work together to facilitate child reading.

The common components of home tutoring programs are the selection of teaching materials, parent learning of tutoring strategies, use of an error corrections procedure, and record keeping. Teaching parents how to respond to their child when the child has done a good job can also be a part of the parent tutoring process.

One parental involvement in reading program for primary grade students is called Fast Start (Rasinski, 1995). This program is designed to get children off to a
successful start through intensive and systematic parental involvement that is coordinated through the school.

The empirical data and hypothesized positive outcomes discussed above suggest that parent involvement in the form of parent tutoring in reading should provide a very positive influence on reading achievement. However, Topping (1996) summarized the empirical parent tutoring literature with the term "mixed outcomes". Many studies showed some positive effects for some students. A minority of the reviewed studies had unequivocally positive reading effects from parent tutoring. Some studies did not show a positive effect.

Hypothesized reasons for the lack of consistently positive findings are reported below:

1. Duration of parent tutoring program was too short to effect change;
2. Lack of treatment integrity by parents, sporadic parent attendance at parent meetings, and program attrition;
3. Students who were receiving adequate instruction at school may not benefit from additional exposure outside of school. Thus, parent tutoring may not offer measurable improvement over that which was already occurring.
4. More individualization of the program for each family may be necessary in order to make a measurable impact.

5. The age of the child may be a factor in study outcomes.

Hannon (1987) felt that studies with older elementary students may have more difficulty finding positive effects of parent tutoring. In support of this, Miller (1993) found that the better 2nd and 3rd grade readers preferred to read independently and were reluctant to read with parents;

6. The outcome measures used in the research were too insensitive to the gains that were being made.

**Problem Statement**

The primary problem addressed by this research involves the development of a parent tutoring program in reading that can generate clear documentation of the program's ability to assist the development of children's early reading skills. In trying to identify the variables that facilitate the success of parent tutoring, Neidermeyer (1970) reported the following conclusions:

1. There must be clear specification of objectives and clear communication of those objectives to the parents.
2. There must be the provision of structured teaching materials to the parents.
3. Role playing of teaching procedures during the parent training session is needed along with immediate feedback.
4. Instruction of the parents in the use of positive reinforcement should be a part of the program.
5. There must also be provision of record cards to help parents monitor a child's performance.

Other researchers have added additional insights into the question how of to structure a home tutoring program. Hook (1997) reports her observation that parent tutoring effects in reading seem to occur when there is positive reinforcement (praise), corrective feedback (error correction), and reading practice (repetition). Kemp (1996) reports that success relates to meeting the parent need to understand the reasons for using particular tutoring methods. In a related vein, Topping (1986) states that procedures should be straightforward, sensible, and easy to accommodate. Kemp further indicates that parents must see the relevance of the activity and agree on actions that they need to take to support their child's learning.
Hannon (1995) suggests that parents need encouragement to set up a happy, relaxed and warm atmosphere during the reading tutoring. He encourages the frequent use of praise and little expression of anxiety about lack of interest on the child's part. The purpose and practical details need to be explained to the children and record keeping procedures need to be put in place. Finally, it is deemed essential that the child not be given work that is too difficult. Teacher judgment, student judgment, and tests have been used to determine what materials should be presented to students.

In addition to the problem of developing an effective parent tutoring program, there are other research problems and questions to be addressed in the context of a well designed and administered program. For example, Topping (1996) indicated a need to find inexpensive and effective methods of recruiting, training and supporting parents and children. He also indicated a need for more sensitive, reliable, valid, and less intrusive measures; and a need to tease out aptitude by treatment interactions.

Powell-Smith (1993) suggests that future research attempt to find variables that contribute to the success of particular families. In this regard, there has been considerable speculation and some research regarding the
variables that may impact the parent tutoring effort. For example, those who studied gender differences report conflicting findings regarding whether girls profit more than boys. Some report better performance for girls (Rosenquist, 1972) and some report no difference (Fox, 1982; Nielson, 1991). There is reason to look for gender differences in favor of girls because Stevenson and Baker (1987), in large-scale survey research, found that parents of girls tend to stay more involved and have more influence on child achievement than parents of boys.

Mehren (1988) felt that future research should explore the reasons parents do not participate and whether ways can and should be found to increase that participation. Powell-Smith (1993) said future researchers may want to address the degree of impact that parent attitudes toward involvement have on parent tutoring. She thought some may lack skills or confidence in their ability to impact their child's achievement. Powell-Smith also felt it appropriate to investigate the family's norms about involvement in education, their expectations, and their values.

Related to these questions is a consideration of the effects of the parent-child relationship on parent tutoring effectiveness. Miller (1994) suggests that the
parent-child relationships of those participants who quit the tutoring program may be different than the parent-child interactions of participants who complete the program. The child's responsiveness to the parent may be a factor that affects parent tutoring (Rubert, 1993). In a related vein, Gross (1995) speculated that lower reading achievement on the part of the child might lead to lower involvement on the part of the parent. Conversely, parent responsiveness to the child may be compromised if there is maternal depression, shared custody arrangements making it difficult to maintain regular contact with the child, spousal incarcerations, problems with other children that interfere with proper implementation, a lack of interest on the part of parent or child, or health problems affecting the parent's ability to participate. Gross wonders whether low parent stress levels, parent use of active listening, encouragement, praise, and offers to help are associated with favorable parent tutoring outcomes.

Purpose
It is the goal of this research to develop and present a parent tutoring program that is sensible to the parents, developmentally appropriate for the child, directly relevant to the curriculum, easy to learn and
implement by parents, and not requiring extensive time on the part of the parents. Structure should be provided but with room for individualization based on child and family needs. On-going consultation and family support must be afforded. Reading correction procedures and other intervention processes should be taught to parents along with opportunity for practice and feedback. The tutoring goals should be clearly stated/defined and parents should receive information about basic reinforcement strategies for use in the teaching and learning process at home. To avoid the problems of short duration and assessment, the programming should continue more than 10 weeks and the measurement of outcomes will be directly relevant to the materials used in tutoring and at school. More specifically, the purposes of this study are to:

1. Gather information about the gender effects of parent tutoring. Are there differential effects for boys and girls?
2. Focus on first grade students. Assess beginning readers' responses to tutoring by the child's own parent.
3. Tease out skill level by intervention interactions (covary by pretest skill level).
4. Analyze the relationship between time spent in parent tutoring and outcomes.
5. Assess the parents' reactions to the program and their perceptions of what accounted for relative degrees of success.

In summary, the purpose of this research is to provide parents of beginning readers with a program and procedures deemed likely to increase the reading skills of the children, and to provide information relevant to understanding who most likely profits from parent tutoring intervention and under what circumstances.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are presented in four categories:
1. The main hypothesis to be tested;
2. Related research questions;
3. Descriptive data generated by the research;
4. Exploration via a semi-structured interview process and written survey with participating parents.

Main Hypothesis:

The experimental group that receives parent tutoring assistance in reading will display greater reading skill than those students who do not receive the parent tutoring intervention.
Related Questions:

1. Is the amount of time spent in parent tutoring related to reading improvement in the experimental group?
2. Are reading improvement outcomes in the experimental group different for boys and girls?
3. Are there differential effects of parent tutoring among the high, average and low reading skill groups with regard to reading improvement?

Descriptive Information Desired:

1. What are the distributions of reading scores in the experimental and control groups for pre-test and post-test administrations?
2. What is the relationship between pre-test levels and post-test levels in the experimental and control groups?
3. How do boys and girls differ in pre-test and post-test scores?
4. How do reading skill groups differ in regard to pre-test and post-test scores?
5. What are the participating families like in terms of basic demographic information (e.g., number and ages of family members, parent employment status, parent education levels, race)?
Explorations:

1. What were the questions asked by parents and children as they worked through the tutoring process?
2. What types of concerns and reactions surfaced regarding the parent tutoring process?
3. Did parents feel confident or gain the necessary confidence to assist their children given the information and support provided by the school?
4. Were there concerns about the materials used?
5. Were there concerns about the amount of time required?
6. What were the subjective impressions of the usefulness of the process?
7. Did parents sense that their children were becoming more independent in the reading process as a result of the tutoring?
8. What hindrances were reported?
9. What facilitators were reported?
10. What modifications of the program were needed to accommodate parents and children?
11. What reasons were given by participants who terminated early and had low levels of participation? Could the school have done anything to assist the parents?
12. Do answers to the above questions relate to the skill group, the sex of the child, or other family variables that may be relevant?

Variables

The primary independent variable is a parent tutoring program known as Fast Start (Rasinski, 1995), which provides parents with authentic reading passages selected for their content, predictable nature and appropriate readability. These selections often include rhymes as a way of reinforcing phonemic elements in words. It also involves specified word study activities. Specific directions for child engagement are described. Parent training is a component of this program, and periodic follow-up (written and verbal) is suggested.

A pilot study of the Fast Start Program (Rasinski, 1995) showed a relationship between the amount of student growth and the degree of parent involvement in the program. Rasinski suggests daily reading for 10-15 minutes at a regular, specified, and convenient times. Parents were asked to keep a daily log detailing their work with the child. Variation in the amount of time spent is expected, and the amount of time in tutoring may be relevant to reading outcomes. These variations will be built into the data analysis by assessing the relationship
between the time spent in tutoring and the amount of reading improvement that occurred.

As discussed previously, there have been differing results of parent tutoring efforts for boys and girls. Thus, another variable to be analyzed is the sex of the child in relation to the outcomes of tutoring.

Another variable of interest is the child's reading level prior to intervention. Does pretest skill level relate to the amount of improvement made during the program?

One dependent measure of reading used in this study to assess reading competence and growth is the Primary Literacy Assessment: A Comprehensive Program to Document Growth of Each Child Over Time. This is a survey of reading skills constructed by teachers in the district hosting the research project. This assessment tool is designed to document reading growth over the first few elementary school years. The other reading measure used to assess oral reading performance of subjects in this study is Curriculum-Based Measurement (Shinn, 1989).

A final measure to be used in this research is a survey constructed by this researcher to be completed by the experimental group parents regarding their perceptions of the tutoring experience. It is designed to elicit
responses from parents that may shed light on the 12 exploration questions noted above. Patterns of responses will be analyzed.

Need for the Study

This research effort will add to a growing literature about the efficacy of parent tutoring programs. Does the Fast Start program produce reading gains for participants? With whom does this program have the best effect? How is the amount of tutoring related to outcomes? What reasons seem to account for success or failure of the program for specific families? What are the implications for future research and practice? What modifications can be made to improve the program from the parent perspective?

The answers to these questions will provide a significant contribution to the present body of knowledge and practical guidance to educators involved in reading development through family involvement.

Finally, this research will provide information to the school district about the potential helpfulness of this intervention with students who are in need of reading remediation. Findings can inform the remedial activities required by Ohio's SB 55 legislation (1997). The information may also provide evidence of an effective
early intervention that may preclude the need for more intensive interventions at a later time.

Limitations

One limitation of this study relates to limited generalizability of findings to a larger population. Interpretations may be limited to the group of students and parents being studied. This group has not been randomly selected from a larger population so inference to a larger population is not possible. It may be reasonable, however, to generalize to other beginning first grade populations that are similar to the population being studied.

A second limitation of this study relates to the accuracy of the self-report data provided by parent on the time spent in tutoring. Though parents will be asked to complete a log sheet regarding the amount of time spent, there will not be efforts to verify these estimates with more intrusive procedures, such as observation or tape recordings. Thus, it is possible that some parents will inaccurately report the time spent in tutoring.

A third limitation relates to the fact that about one fourth of the possible participants declined to participate in the study. Thus, the resulting sample was "self-selected" and may be unlike the group from which
they came. Drawing conclusions about the efficacy of the parent tutoring program for the larger group would be difficult if the parents who agreed to participate were those who were most interested and, thus, most likely to make the program effective for their children.

Finally, the group being studied is relatively small. Thirty students from two first grade classes comprised both the experimental and control groups.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Perspectives On Parent Involvement in Education

The current literature in the field of parent participation in education is greatly influenced by the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner posited that human development occurs in an ecological context of several layers of embedded systems. He stated that child development is facilitated when there are linkages between the settings (e.g., home and school) that "encourage the development of mutual trust, a positive orientation, goal consensus between settings, and an evolving balance of power responsive to action in behalf of the developing person" (p. 216). He believed that development was facilitated with two-way communication between the settings, and that information must be continually available to the other setting. Ecological theory posits that two systems (e.g.,
home and school), working together toward a common goal, can accomplish more than either system can accomplish separately. The quality of the interface or communications between the members of the systems is important. A relational focus is implied in Bronfenbrenner's theory.

In a related vein, Vygotsky (1978) concluded that knowledge and understanding are socially constructed; that is, they are influenced by the social, historical and cultural contexts of the participants as they interact. Fitzgerald and Goncu (1993) used the Vygotskian construct of intersubjectivity, or shared understanding, to argue that parents and educators must jointly construct a shared understanding about what children should learn and how they should learn it.

Within a theoretical formulation by Wertsch (1979), based on the work of Vygotsky (1978), parents can serve as supportive, knowledgeable others as children acquire new skills and knowledge. In their interactions of children, adults can provide the "other regulation" needed for the child to perform certain cognitive tasks. From interactions with adults involving "other regulation", children gradually develop the capacity for "self-regulation". Parents who help their children with school
work at home are capable of serving in the capacity described by Vygotsky. Parents can help their children proceed through the zone of proximal development for one capacity after another by actively engaging the limits of their children's zones of proximal development.

A final theoretical perspective of relevance to this study of parent involvement in education is social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Through processes of modeling, observation, and vicarious learning, children add to their behavioral repertoires by seeing or hearing someone else perform a behavior. According to Bandura, children seek to reproduce what they observe. Thus, child development is conceived as a process of the child's gradual expansion of his repertoire of answers or possible actions by means of both observing others and trying the actions himself, and using information from the observed consequences to future decision about when one response will be more appropriate than another to fulfill needs and attain rewards. In the instance of parent involvement with children's learning, this theory suggests that parents can act as powerful role models. According to social learning theory, models who are similar to the observer, are respected, have high status, have demonstrated high competence, or are perceived as powerful
or attractive are more often attended to. Parents usually fit most of the above categories, in the eyes of their children, and are thus appropriately powerful models for their children in the domain of school learning. Social learning theory also encompasses the notion of self-efficacy. That is, it is theoretically important to have models (e.g., involved parents) that feel efficacious in the roles they are assuming.

Self-efficacy, per Bandura (1977), refers to the belief in one's ability to successfully perform a particular behavior. Self-efficacy relates to perceptions of one's behavioral competency or ability to do specific actions in certain situations. Bandura does not see self-efficacy as a fixed personality trait. Rather, it is an integral component of a dynamic system that can be modified in response to the changing demands of the tasks, situations, and individual developmental processes. In general, those who have high levels of self-efficacy are confident in their own abilities to meet demands, perceive problems as challenges, exhibit less negative emotion when challenged, and persevere in the face of difficulty. Individuals with low efficacy experience higher levels of self-doubt and anxiety when challenged, assume more responsibility for failure than success, appraise demands
as threatening, avoid challenge, and cope dysfunctionally (Jerusalem and Mittag, 1995). Some researchers of parent involvement have developed models and intervention programs which are based on ecological theory, social learning theory, or the Vygotskian notions related to adult involvement in child development.

**Specific Parent Involvement Models**

Based on the above theoretical underpinnings, several researchers have offered models of parent involvement in the education of children. Two of the most prominent models are those of Epstein (1987) and Swap (1993). Both note that no one empirically based theory or model exists.

Epstein (1987, 1995), like Bronfenbrenner (1979), recognizes the importance of the many interconnected contexts of children's lives. Epstein (1987) proposed an integrated theory of family-school relations characterized by a set of overlapping spheres of influence that alter interactions of parents, teachers, and students as a function of three forces: changes in ages and grades of students; philosophies, policies, and practices of the family; and philosophies, policies and practices of the school. These forces determine the type of and amount of overlap that occurs between the family and school systems. Epstein believes that when teachers and parents emphasize
their shared responsibilities, their combination of labor pushes the spheres of family and school influence together, increasing interactions between parents and school about the developing child, and creates "school-like families" and "family-like schools". She believes that parents generally share school goals and want an increase in communication and collaboration. She notes that, as the child gets older, the less the two environments will overlap and the less likely parents feel able to help the child in school.

Swap (1993) identified four models based on her work with schools. One is termed the Protective Model, which is exemplified by schools that seek to avoid intensive interactions between the home and the school. There is an effort to keep the roles of teachers and parents apart.

Another model is called the Home-to-School Transmission Model. This model emphasizes the importance of continuity between home and school. It looks to educators to determine what information should be transmitted and which parents should receive it.

A third model is termed Curriculum Enrichment. It emphasizes the importance of continuity in learning between home and school and the importance of reciprocal interaction between parents and teachers. These
interactions are restricted to the development of curriculum and instructional practice. Parents are not involved in school improvement programs or school management.

The final model is the Partnership Model. Swap views this model as a response to the current crisis in American education. This model encompasses long-term commitments, mutual respect, widespread involvement of families and teachers in many types of activities, and the sharing of planning and decision-making. Educators may be the primary initiators of these partnerships. The assumption is that the common mission cannot be accomplished without collaboration and that collaboration can occur at many levels.

Elements of Parent Collaboration with Schools

Epstein discusses six types of school involvement that link families and schools. They are: Type 1: Parenting--basic obligations of families to provide for health, positive home conditions and support for learning; Type 2: Communicating - basic obligations of school to communicate about school programs and children's progress; Type 3: Volunteering--parent involvement at school, such as attending school functions and volunteering; Type 4: Learning at Home--involvement in learning activities at
home like monitoring school work and helping with homework; Type 5: Decision making—parents taking on participatory roles in PTA or advisory councils; Type 6: School collaboration with the community through such activities as business partnership connections. Parents can help establish and maintain these collaborative exchanges within the community.

Swap (1993) built upon Epstein's formulation by postulating specific processes at work within the involvement types: (a) creating two-way communication exemplified by sharing and listening; (b) enhancing learning at home and at school by urging parents to have high expectations, provide a setting for concentrated work, and to support the learning that occurs at school; (c) providing mutual support by having educators be responsive to parent interests and needs; and (d) making joint decisions by participating together on councils, committees, planning and management teams. Joint problem solving is to occur at all levels from the child level to the school system as a whole. The basic ingredients of problem solving are listening, giving and receiving negative information, and conflict resolution. She believes that schools need to “de-label” parents and reach out to the hard to reach (under-involved) as well as the
over-involved parent. Her research shows that parent involvement increases student achievement if the parent involvement is comprehensive, long lasting, and well planned. Swap also states that there is no one parent involvement type that is right for all parents. There are family process variables and situations that must be considered.

**Family Process Variables**

Scott-Jones (1995) contends that family status variables, like socio-economic status (SES), are not as important as family process variables in the prediction of academic success. Family process variables are those things that parents think and do, across status groupings, that are associated with parental decisions about involvement in their children's education. Current interest in family process variables relates to the fact that these process variables are significant to outcomes, and within the scope of school influence. (e.g., Epstein, 1989). Although schools cannot hope to change a student's family status, schools can realistically hope to influence some parental process variables in the direction of increased parental involvement. Scott-Jones hypothesized four levels of parental interactions that may affect
children's school performance: valuing, monitoring, helping, and doing.

Valuing involves the parent conveying the value of an education in general and the value of specific aspects of education. Monitoring of school performance when combined with valuing is presumed to affect students' motivation and engagement in the processes of learning and schooling. Parent participation at these first two levels is believed to foster the development of "academic socialization".

Helping interactions at home are considered to be part of "cognitive socialization" and presumably foster basic intellectual development in children. At the helping level, it is presumed that parental assistance is highly connected to the progression of the child from "other regulation" toward the development of "self-regulation" through a process termed "apprenticeship". The use of "scaffolding" is considered an appropriate technique for parents to use in the helping process. This level of parent-child interaction reflects the Vygotskian concepts noted earlier.

The fourth hypothesized level, doing, has the parents taking a dominant role in the performance of their children's schoolwork. Parent involvement at this level
is negatively viewed in that it is presumed to diminish students' autonomy or initiative.

Throughout these levels, parental warmth and responsiveness are considered important. Peer relations also affect variables in this framework, and this impact becomes greater with age. School policies are considered to complement or conflict with parental behavior.

Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) also studied family process variables and SES to determine their impact on parent participation in their children's education. Using a large and diverse sample of third and fifth graders from the Northeast, they assessed multiple parent, child, family context, and school context variables and their relationships to three types of parent involvement (school, personal, and cognitive). School involvement refers to the parent attending school activities or doing volunteer work. Personal involvement is similar to the Scott-Jones notions of "valuing" and "monitoring". Cognitive involvement is similar to the Scott-Jones (1995) notion of "helping" and relates to Epstein's (1987, 1995) involvement type called "Learning at Home". Family SES was, as expected, found as a strong predictor of involvement, especially school and cognitive involvement. Personal involvement was not associated with
SES, suggesting that this type of involvement may occur equally at all parent occupational and educational levels.

Grolnik et al. (1997) also found that child and parent characteristics had strong relationships with cognitive involvement and, to a lesser extent, personal involvement. The strongest effects of individual characteristics were in parents' provision of exposure to cognitively stimulating activities. Also, when parents saw themselves as efficacious and when they viewed their role as that of teacher, they were more likely to become involved in these stimulating activities. This finding reinforces a study by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987), which found that parent efficacy in the role of tutor was a significant predictor of tutoring in the home and involvement in home instructional activities in grades K through 4.

The above evidence on the relevance of family process variables supports Epstein's contention (Brandt, 1989) that if schools do not work to involve parents in the school, parent education and family social class are important in the determination of who gets involved. But if schools take parent involvement seriously, by working to get all families involved, then parent social class and education wane in importance.
Empirical Documentation of Parent Involvement Effects


In addition, Henderson and Berla (1994) conclude after an ERIC search and an analysis of 66 studies, reviews, analyses, reports and books that "the family makes critical contributions to student achievement, from earliest childhood through high school. Efforts to improve children's outcomes are much more effective if they encompass their families" (p. 14). These reviewed studies tended to be descriptive/correlational in nature.

Grimm (1992) did a meta-analysis of 57 studies in parent involvement interventions of many types (tutoring, communication, home visits, home interactions, parent training, and general relationships). The study considered research on students from kindergarten through high school. It looked at the subject areas of math, reading, and general achievement. For each study, separate effect sizes were calculated, or estimated, by utilizing reported data for each variable determined to
represent academic achievement within each study. An overall effect size of .393 was obtained for the Crimm's study by averaging the overall effect sizes of the 57 studies. Thus, the difference was approximately .4 of one standard deviation between the treatment groups whose parents were involved in their children’s academic endeavor and those students who served as the control groups and had no parental involvement. Elementary students (grades 3-4) received the greatest benefit (ES = .559) followed by primary children (ES = .449). A negative effect size of -.096 indicated that middle/secondary students did not benefit from parent involvement. Reading appeared to obtain the most benefit from parent involvement (ES = .485). The mathematics effect size was .291.

Crimm also analyzed an additional 29 studies that had quantitative data but were not suitable for meta-analysis. Of these, 17 reported significant results and 12 did not report significant results. Parent tutoring studies produced an effect size of .613. It appeared to Crimm that parent involvement could rectify an educational deficit within a short period of time, depending upon the age level of the student; and that parent involvement, if
utilized effectively, could lessen the need for remedial education in our schools.

Christenson (1995) found that when parents are involved in education, teachers are recognized by parents for better interpersonal and teaching skills, evaluated higher on teaching performance by principals, and indicated greater satisfaction with their job, requesting few transfers.

Christenson et al. (1997) came to the conclusion (after a literature review) that the match in message between home and school is critical to the success of the students. Christenson's study also showed that many parents of elementary students want information about what they can do to help their child's learning at home. This finding is consistent with Epstein's (Brandt, 1989) contention that type 4 involvement, learning at home, is the type with which most parents want more help.

**Parent Tutoring as a Way for Parents to Help at Home**

Consistent with ecological theory, one strategy for linking the home and school spheres of influence is through parent tutoring at the child's home. This tutoring must, of course, be a collaborative effort between the family and the school. Social learning theory posits that the parent tutor serves as an influential
literacy model, capable of promoting school learning. As stated by Vygotsky, the parent can guide the child from a point of "other regulation" in the reading process to "self-regulation" in the reading process. Parents can help their children proceed through their zone of proximal development in reading by actively engaging them in literacy activities at their specific levels.

Based on the reviewed models, parent tutoring falls within the broad domain of "helping" (Scott-Jones, 1995), "learning at home" (Epstein, 1995) and "cognitive involvement" (Grolnick et al., 1997). Parent tutoring involves the parent in the process of developing the academic and thinking skills being taught at school.

Hypothesized Advantages of Parent Tutoring

Stearns and Peterson (1973) conceptualized parent tutoring in terms of three possible chains of events that may unfold together during the parent tutoring process (see Figure 1):
Figure 1. Parents as Learners and Tutors of Their Own Children (Stearns and Peterson, 1973, p. 31)
According to this model, the hypothesized advantages of parent tutoring are increased student motivation, increased student skills, and improved parent self-efficacy. Other potential benefits for parents who serve as tutors are an increased opportunity to participate in and monitor their child's education (Brandt, 1989), awareness of their child's skills, and positive interactions with their children. Topping (1996) posited the following potential advantages of home reading programs:

A. extra practice at home with an encouraging adult may increase reading skill;
B. child may experience a sense of security and benefit psychologically from the feeling that both their teacher and parents are working together;
C. may help create a similar set of attitudes and expectations from both home and school;
D. allows a teacher to learn about family literacy practices and to incorporate this understanding into the school curriculum.

Hannon (1995) offered the following reasoning to support the use of parent tutoring intervention:
A. parents may be good teachers because the relationships with their children are deeper, more powerful than those with teachers;

B. parents may be better able to find the teachable moments;

C. teachers are very busy with only a few minutes each day to hear a child read, but many parents can devote longer periods of time;

D. since teachers have knowledge of materials and strategies that can be helpful, the two should work together to facilitate child reading.

Hall, Delquadri, Greenwood and Thurston (1982) have hypothesized that having increased opportunities to respond to the learning material facilitates a child's learning. Since there has been a documented relationship between school-based levels of opportunity to respond and achievement (Delquadri, Greenwood, Stretton, and Hall, 1983; Delquadri, Greenwood, Whorton, Carta, and Hall, 1986; Greenwood, Delquadri, and Hall, 1989), it is reasonable to expect that increased home-based academic responding would also contribute to a child's achievement and provide necessary support for success in the classroom. Parent tutoring can increase the child's "opportunities to respond".
Structure and Elements of Parent Tutoring in Reading

The common components of home tutoring programs are the selection of teaching materials, parent learning of tutoring strategies, use of an error corrections procedure, and record keeping. Knowing how to respond to a good job can also be a part of the parent tutoring process. For example, Berger (1981) suggested the use of a reward system with home tutoring activities. Almost all parent tutoring strategies recommend 10-20 minutes of tutoring, four to seven days per week.

Parent training sessions usually occur prior to the initiating of parent tutoring. Thurston (1989) has found that when parents are trained in specific techniques and appropriate tutoring behaviors, positive parent behaviors (e.g., praise and approval) are increased to a marked degree. Further, Kemp (1996) reports that parents need to understand the reasons for using particular tutoring methods. In this vein, Topping (1985) stated that procedures should be straight-forward, sensible, and easy to accommodate. Kemp further indicated that teachers need to listen to parents, to value and build upon the home culture, and enable the parents' own purposes. He warns against pedagogical imperialism. Parents must see the
relevance and agree on actions that they need to take to support their child's learning.

Hannon (1995) suggested that parents need encouragement to set up a happy, relaxed and warm atmosphere during the reading tutoring. He encouraged the frequent use of praise and little expression of anxiety about lack of interest on the child's part. He also suggests turning off the TV during the sessions. He reports that virtually all parents want to participate in this type of activity and that most families are willing to do this activity 3-5 times a week. Exceptions are rare in his experience. Mash and Johnston (1983) have found that some parents who experience depression and high levels of stress have difficulty maintaining appropriate interactions with their child during tutoring. Thus, there is a potential for parent-child relationship problems to develop during parent tutoring. For these reasons, efforts need to be made to provide on-going support for tutoring parents and willingness to modify tutoring as necessary.

Finally, it is essential that the child not be given work that is too difficult. Teacher judgment, student judgment, and tests have been used to determine what materials should be presented to students. The purpose
and practical details need to be explained to the children and record keeping procedures need to be put in place.

Analysis of Parent Tutoring Studies in Reading

This writer selected 21 studies in parent tutoring in reading for review. Selection was based on evidence of good methodology and analysis. They are reviewed and analyzed along several dimensions relevant to the present effort to develop a parent tutoring intervention: research design; population studied; grade levels studied; duration of parent tutoring program; type of parent training involved; and type of achievement outcome assessment used.

Designs Utilized in Parent Tutoring Research

Seven studies used a Pre-test/Post-test/Control Group design with random assignment of groups: Erion (1994); Fox (1982); Leach & Siddall (1990); Mehren (1988); Miller (1993); Neidermeyer (1970); Nielson (1991). Three studies randomly assigned a self-selected group of students and parents: Powell-Smith (1993); Rosenquist (1972); Vinograd-Bausell et al. (1986). Tizard et al. (1982) randomly assigned complete classrooms resulting in a design that had possible confounding effects related to the teachers (not a full cross-over design). Merkley (1982) used random assignment to parent or school tutoring conditions.

Five studies used single-subject type designs with populations that were relatively small and self-selected: Duvall et al. (1992); Gang and Poche (1982); Hook and DuPaul (1999); Krumrie (1993); Law & Kratochwill (1993); Shapero (1978); Thurston (1977); and Powell-Smith (1993).

Three studies combined Single-Subject and Pre-test/Post-Test Control Group Designs: Shapero (1978); Thurston (1977); and Powell-Smith (1993).

Populations Studied in Parent Tutoring Research

Among the currently reviewed studies, four were conducted with students who were identified as having a disability condition: Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (Hook and DuPaul, 1999) N=4; Learning Disability (Shapero, 1978) N=16 and (Duvall, 1992) N=4; various disabilities (Vinograd-Bausell, 1986) N=64.

Ten of the currently reviewed studies were conducted with students who were identified as, or could be identified as, "at risk" due to below level reading skill or low SES standing: Erion (1994) N=24; Gang and Poche (1982) N=3; Hannon (1987) N=76; Krumrie (1997) N=7; Law
Seven of the reviewed studies were conducted with general populations of students. Merkley (1982) reported that her studied population, N=23, was above the national average in reading skill; Miller (1993), N=61, Rosenquist (1972), N=90, and Neidermeyer (1970), N=68, all reported the study population as being at the higher SES levels; Powell-Smith (1993), N=36, Poliak (1998) and Fox (1982), N=137, reported using general populations.

Grade Levels/Ages Studied in Parent Tutoring Programs

Some researchers made an effort to study a relatively close age range of students in their studies. The following are the studies that did so and the grade levels involved: Kindergarten: Leach (1990); Neidermeyer (1970). First grade: Poliak (1998); Law (1993); Mehren (1988); Miller (1993); Rosenquist (1972).

Second grade: Erion (1994); Hook and DuPaul (1999); Law (1993); Merkley (1982); Powell-Smith (1993); Fox (1982).

Among the studies that focused on specific grade levels, twice as many studies were done with second and third graders than with kindergarten and first graders.

Duration of Parent Tutoring Programs

Sixteen of the 21 parent tutoring studies reviewed were of relatively short duration. The following is a list of study lengths for each researcher: Two weeks (Vinograd-Bausell, 1986); 24 days (Shapero, 1978); five weeks (Powell-Smith, 1993); six weeks (Erion, 1994) and (Law, 1993); seven weeks (Gang and Poche, 1982); 4-8 weeks (Hook and DuPaul, 1999); eight weeks (Krumrie, 1993); 10 weeks (Fox, 1982) and (Leach, 1990); 12 weeks (Duvall, 1992) and (Neidermeyer, 1970); 12-16 weeks (Thurston, 1977); 15 weeks (Miller, 1993); 16 weeks (Merkley, 1982); and 18 weeks (Poliak, 1998)

Five studies continued over a relatively long period of time: seven months (Mehren, 1988); one school year (Rosenquist, 1972) and (Nielson, 1991); two years of intervention with a follow-up a few years later (Tizard et al. and Hewison, 1982) and (Hewison, 1988); three years (Hannon, 1987). These longer studies were relatively unstructured and assessed through the group-administered norm referenced tests normally given at school. The
short-term studies are much more popular in the 90's. The one exception is Nielson's (1991) study.

Parent Training Components

Parent training was a commonly found component of the more structured parent tutoring programs. The training programs often involved the explanation of the curricular materials to be used by the parents and a prescribed error correction strategy for parent use. The following is a synopsis of the parent training components found in the reviewed parent tutoring literature.

Duvall (1992), Erion (1994) and Hook and DuPaul (1999) provided a tutoring procedure suggested by Delquadri (1978) and Greenwood et al. (1989). Thurston (1977) taught parents to use an error correction procedure and to ask "thinking questions" about the passages they read. Modeling and practice were used until parent mastery was observed. Gang and Poche (1982) provided six parent training sessions in elements of a good tutoring environment, learning theory and application, and a sound-symbol and blending program. Mehren (1988) provided two four-hour parent training sessions in Reading Made Easy (phonics/letter and word recognition) and gave help until mastery was achieved. Neidermeyer (1970) provided parents with 90 minutes of training at school in use of 48 highly
structured exercises with sight words and phonics. Instructional procedures were given in a structured role-playing situation. Poliak (1998), Law (1993) and Miller (1993) investigated the "paired reading" tutoring technique. Law (1993) gave parents 90 minutes of training in the "paired reading" technique, showed a video, and provided a training manual. Miller (1993) provided 75 minutes of training for parents, showed videotapes, and provided supervised/guided practice in the "paired reading" procedures; Leach (1990) provided the appropriate parent training for the different treatment conditions ("paired reading", "pause-prompt-praise", "hearing-reading", and "direct instruction" (phonics)). Supervised role-playing was included. In Shapero's (1978) study, parents received five hours of training sessions in direct instruction (sight vocabulary, letter sound, and blending) and charting of reading rates. In Vinograd-Bausell's (1986) study, parents received teaching materials and written instructions in a whole word teaching procedure based on modeling, imitation, and word meaning prompts.

used on passages previously read by the child at school. Merkley (1982) provided parent training in varied reading materials and modeled various techniques in the parents' homes. Powell-Smith's (1993) parent tutors received 60-90 minutes of training in a reading correction procedure that provided the child with guided practice with reading. Some parents used material from their child's basal reader and some used outside literature. Fox (1982) provided 10 weekly written communications for parents that provided tutoring ideas to be used with their children.

Seven of the studies reported the provision of parent training in positive reinforcement strategies for use with their children in the learning situation at home: behavior modification (Hook and DuPaul, 1999); reinforcement strategies (Mehren, 1988); use of "social reinforcement" for effort and correct reading (Leach, 1990); reward/motivation strategies (Neidermeyer, 1970); token economy system (Nielson, 1991); how and when to use praise (Thurston, 1977); and positive reinforcement for correct reading and attending (Shapero, 1978).

Follow-up visits or phone calls were used in 11 studies with trained parents to help insure compliance with and/or understanding of the procedures: ongoing consultation given to parents (Erion, 1994); use of home-
school communication forms (Hook and DuPaul, 1999); repeated assessments of parent tutoring skills (Law, 1993); 12 follow-up meetings with parents after training but during tutoring (Mehren, 1988); several home visits throughout the treatment period (Merkley, 1982); weekly phone contacts with parents and reading progress feedback graph for parents every 2 weeks (Miller, 1993); weekly phone calls to parents and home visits to observe tutoring implementation and integrity (Powell-Smith, 1993); periodic contacts by telephone (Shapero, 1978); monitoring of parent progress in using praise statements, use of the error correction procedure, and provision of encouragement to continue tutoring (Thurston, 1977); follow up home visits to insure program integrity and offer parent reassurance (Gang and Poche, 1982); ongoing recommendations to parents which were compatible with reading instruction in the classrooms (Rosenquist, 1972).

Three studies reported the use of individualization of procedures/methods to accommodate parent or student needs. These studies provided the following types of individualization: adjustments to the tutoring were individualistically done (Erion, 1994); program was adjusted for parent strengths and weaknesses (Merkley,
1982); individualized advice provided to parents (Rosenquist, 1972).

Finally, six studies did not utilize a systematic training process with parents prior to tutoring: Hannon (1987); Rosenquist (1972); Tizard, Schofield, and Hewison (1982) and Hewison (1986); Fox (1982); and Vinograd-Bausell (1986).

Measurement of Reading Outcomes in Parent Tutoring

Eight of the reviewed studies used norm-referenced measures: Fox (1982); Hannon (1987); Leach (1990); Merkley (1982); Nielson (1991); Rosenquist (1972); Thurston (1977); Tizard et al. (1982). A commonly used norm referenced measure was the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test.

Eight studies used criterion-referenced or curriculum-based measures: Erion (1994); Hook and DuPaul (1999); Krumrie (1993); Law (1993); Neidermeyer (1970); Powell-Smith (1993); Vinograd-Bausell (1986). Most of the research done in the 1990's used the more sensitive curriculum-based measures to determine outcomes.

Five studies used both criterion-referenced/curriculum-based assessments and norm-referenced assessments as measures of reading achievement:

Marston (1989) has questioned whether norm-referenced achievement tests used in a pre-test/post-test fashion can measure individual learner outcomes adequately. He argues that these tests were designed to measure inter-individual differences and are not often sensitive to student growth (intra-individual differences). He also argues that the age and grade scores on these norm-referenced tests have poor statistical properties and can misrepresent student performance. Finally, it is reported that little overlap exists between what is taught in class and what is tested when using norm-referenced tests (Shapiro and Derr, 1987). Ultimately, norm-referenced achievement tests provide only summative information about student performance. In contrast, studies have shown that reading assessment which is curricular based will be sensitive to student growth over several weeks, while simultaneously used published achievement tests show little if any growth (Marston, Fuchs, and Deno, 1986; Marston and Magnusson, 1985).

It is also noteworthy that some of the curriculum-based measures used in these studies were based on the actual material used during tutoring and some of the measures were on reading materials that were novel to the
child, but part of the curricular expectations. Erion (1994) pointed out that short-term assessments use the materials actually used by the student during the tutoring process. Long-term assessments involve reading novel passages that are similar to the tutored material, but not the same. Erion believed that his lack of significant findings was due to having the child's progress measured by reading fluency on novel passages, not tutored passages. He believed the tutoring program did not last long enough to generate skill improvements needed to show generalization to novel reading passages.

**Trends, Patterns, and Problems in Parent Tutoring Research**

The lack of uniformity among the studies along the many dimensions (variables) found in the parent tutoring research, makes an analysis of patterns related to success or failure of a given program a very difficult endeavor. Clear patterns of what constituted a successful programs, in terms of improved student reading, are not apparent. There are no trends toward success or failure associated with any particular dimension or combination of dimensions.

The only common finding among these studies is that those with parent rating components found positive perceptions of the program by parents who completed them.
This often included a more positive view of the parents' abilities to help their children with schoolwork.

Topping (1996) summarized his review of parent tutoring literature with the term "mixed outcomes". His analysis concluded that there were generally positive results on objective measures, and subjective parent feedback about the parent tutoring was "ubiquitously positive".

A majority of the studies reviewed here did not show consistent positive effects on reading achievement as had been hypothesized. Many studies showed some positive effects for some students. A minority of the reviewed studies had unequivocally positive reading effects from parent tutoring. Many researchers offered suggested reasons for lack of consistently positive findings:

Short duration of intervention was noted as a concern by Law (1991) who speculated that longer periods of time may be needed to gain statistically significant findings. Powell-Smith (1993) felt that her parent tutoring program was not powerful enough to see results in a five week period. Erion (1993) felt that six weeks was not long enough to see generalized effects to untutored material. Regarding intervention duration, there has been concern among some researchers that parents may not follow-through
on more extensive programs (Vinograd-Bausell, 1986). Other researchers report that many parents are willing to extend the parent tutoring beyond the time of the study (Shapero, 1978; Powell-Smith, 1993). Herman's (1981) findings suggested that 10 weeks of parent tutoring is not enough time to obtain statistically significant differences on standardized tests. She found 20 weeks of parent tutoring was needed to obtain significant results if norm-referenced measures are used.

Lack of treatment integrity by parents and sporadic parent attendance at parent meetings was a concern of some researchers. Miller (1994) reported difficulty in evoking change in adult's daily routine. Simcox (1980) reported that successful parent tutoring seemed to be related to consistent program implementation. More specifically, Miller (1993) reported that other parent obligations interfered with proper implementation. In her study, only half of the parents read with their children on a regular basis. She also reported that parents of good readers noted these students preferred to read independently. Mehren (1988) also had many parents in her sample who did not implement the intended program. Thirty-three percent of the parents in the experimental group tutored one or fewer times per month for an average of only seven minutes
per month. Seven of 36 parents tutored an average of only 44 minutes per month with the goal being 180 minutes per month. Mehren found a strong association between child progress in the experimental group and the degree of parent participation. Fox (1982) also found that there was some difficulty in maintaining daily participation in tutoring.

Miller (1994) found program attrition problems related to: parents having difficulty finding time to read with their children; finding the record keeping to be bothersome; wanting to allow their child to relax at home; behavioral difficulties with managing their children; and shared custody arrangements making it difficult to maintain regular contact with their children. Some parents reported personal problems like depression, spousal incarcerations, or problems with other children that interfered with proper implementation. Some parents believe their children were provided with enough reading support at school. Some of Miller's parents reported a lack of interest on their own part or on the part of their child. A few parents reported their child not liking the method or the change in reading technique at home. Some noted health problems affecting their ability to participate.
Erion (1994) speculated that integrity problems may also relate to the complexity of the procedure being taught to parents. He found good integrity with a program that kept the tutoring techniques simple and teachable in an hour.

Some researchers thought students who were receiving adequate instruction at school might not benefit from additional exposure outside of school. Thus, parent tutoring did not allow for more growth than what was already occurring (Krumrie, 1993). Sharing this concern, Powell-Smith (1993) suggested the use of parent tutoring with students who are not making adequate progress. In a related vein, Hannon (1987) speculated that intense parental involvement may do little beyond that which is achieved by modest parent involvement.

Some researchers thought that better outcomes would be obtained if there had been more individualization of the program for each family. Miller (1993) felt that prescribing the same parent tutoring procedure for all families is inappropriate for some families. Merkley (1982) offered the opinion that the weakness of many programs is the failure to provide sufficient individualized support for parents in the use of techniques and modification of the materials to be used.
with their children. In her study, Merkley noted unique child/parent interactions patterns that required much effort to determine an appropriate and effective approach to use and tone to set with the family. Fulwider (1995), who developed and implemented individual plans for family literacy, noted that families, like children, responded well to individual attention.

Some researchers have suggested that the age of the child may be a factor in study outcomes. Hannon (1987) felt that studies with older elementary students may have more difficulty finding positive effects of parent tutoring. Hannon (1996) later concluded that parent involvement in reading should begin at the pre-school level, if possible. In support of this, Miller (1993) found that the better 2nd and 3rd grade readers preferred to read independently and were reluctant to read with parents. Stevenson and Baker (1987), in a large nationally representative sample of American households, found empirical evidence that the younger the age of the child the greater the likelihood of parent involvement, in general. This is consistent with Epstein's model of parent involvement.

Neidermeyer (1970), one of the few researchers with unequivocally positive results, offered speculations
Regarding the necessary components of a good parent tutoring program. He reported that clear specification of objectives and clear communication of those to the parents is essential. There must be the provision of structured teaching materials to the parents. Inclusion of role-playing of teaching procedures in the training session with immediate feedback is also important to the success of the program. Instruction of the parents in the use of positive reinforcement should be a part of any program, and there must also be provision of record cards to help parents monitor a child's performance. Hook and DuPaul (1999) report their observation that parent tutoring effects in reading seem to occur when there is positive reinforcement (praise), corrective feedback (error correction), and reading practice (repetition).

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research were offered by Topping (1996). He indicated a need to develop better methods of tutoring which are widely acceptable and unlikely to clash with most home cultures; and a need to find inexpensive and effective methods of recruiting, training and supporting parents and children. He also indicated a need for more sensitive, reliable, valid, and
less intrusive measures; and a need to tease out aptitude by treatment interactions.

Regarding aptitude by treatment effects, there is some evidence that lower level readers may do better than higher level readers. Fox (1982) found that the lower half of the second grade sample showed more gain than those ranked in the upper half. Topping (1996) reported that lower SES students tend to show better gains with parent tutoring programs than higher SES students. In general, there appears to be a paucity of research with general populations where all reading skill levels are variables to be studied in the parent tutoring research design.

Miller (1994) suggested that future researchers use single-subject designs with smaller numbers of subjects with more supports and incentives for those involved. She also suggested the possibility of training both parents and children together to help increase the family's investment in the program. In contrast, Erion (1994) calls for more experimental design research in parent tutoring, but agrees with Miller (1994) that there should be individualized parent training sessions with the children present.
Powell-Smith (1993) suggested that future research attempt to find variables that contribute to the success of particular families. In this regard, there has been considerable speculation and some research regarding the variables that may impact the parent tutoring effort. For example, those who studied gender differences report conflicting findings regarding whether girls profit more than boys. Some reported better performance for girls (Rosenquist, 1972, Poliak, 1998), and some found no difference (Fox 1982, Nielson, 1991). There is reason to look for gender differences in favor of girls because Stevenson and Baker (1987), in large-scale survey research, found that parents of girls tend to stay more involved and have more influence on achievement than parents of boys.

Mehren (1988) felt that future research should seek reasons why parents do not participate and whether ways can and should be found to increase that participation. Hook and DuPaul (1999) suggest that future research involve parents in the development of goals and expectations for student performance as a way of increasing investment in the process. Powell-Smith (1993) said future researchers may want to address the issue of parent attitudes toward involvement in their children's
education and the effect these attitudes have on parent tutoring. She speculated some parents may lack skills or confidence in their ability to impact their child's achievement. Powell-Smith felt it appropriate to investigate the family's norms about involvement in education, their expectations, and their values.

Related to these questions is consideration of the effects of the parent-child relationship on parent tutoring effectiveness. Miller (1994) suggested that the parent-child relationship of participants who terminated the tutoring program might be different than the parent-child interactions of participants who complete the program. The child's responsiveness to the parent was thought to be a factor that may affect parent tutoring (Rubert, 1993). Gross (1995) speculated that lower reading achievement on the part of the child leads to lower involvement on the part of the parent. Conversely, parent responsiveness to the child may be compromised if there is maternal depression, shared custody arrangements making it difficult to maintain regular contact with the child, spousal incarcerations, problems with other children that interfere with proper implementation, a lack of interest on the part of parent or child, or health problems affecting the parent's ability to participate.
Is it possible to show that low stress levels, parent use of active listening, encouragement, praise, and offers to help are family characteristics that are associated with favorable parent tutoring outcomes?

Johnson and Jason (1994) point out that parents are likely to possess a wide range of tutoring competencies which will make them differentially effective. They developed a measure designed to assess self-reported parent tutoring practices among parents of students in grades 3-5. The questionnaire also assessed the caregiver's competency and motivation to be supportive and the pattern of parent-child communication in the home. They were able to demonstrate that these parent ratings could well predict end-of-year grades in spelling, reading, and math. This research, however, did not validate the instrument against actual parent tutoring outcomes.

Summary of Literature and Present Research Direction

The above literature review (theoretical and empirical) suggests a call for more parent involvement in the education of their children, in general. There is much written about the nature of the relationship between the family and the school which advocates for positive, goal-oriented relationships between the child and his
family and the school. The relationship between the home and school systems should be marked by two-way communications designed to develop shared understandings about how to approach the teaching and learning process. Trust development, mutual support and respect, and mutual responsiveness are facets of a good partnership. Parent tutoring is a type of family-school partnership that relates to Epstein's (1987, 1995) fourth type of parent involvement (learning at home) and the Scott-Jones parent involvement level called "Helping", and the Grolnick et al. (1997) notion of "Cognitive Involvement". Most often, this involves school-guided learning experiences at home that place parents in a helping role designed to develop their children's cognitive and academic competencies in a developmentally appropriate manner, such that the child is able to independently display those competencies in the child's school environment. Such partnerships need to be sensitive to the individual beliefs and needs of the child and the family. Theory suggests that such a program must be marked by sensitive interaction between the family and school system and flexible procedures to meet individual needs of children and families.

This type of parent involvement holds promise of increasing academic skill by capitalizing on the positive
effects of modeling due to the typically strong parent-child relationship, providing extra skill practice, and sending a message of consistency between home and school expectations by using material and procedures that are agreeable to the school and the family. There is also evidence that the school should endeavor to instill a sense of efficacy in parents regarding their role as teacher of their own children.

Aspects of Swap's Partnership Model, Home-to-School Transmission Model, and Curriculum Enrichment Model all seem to provide elements of interventions that can be helpful in providing effective parent tutoring options. Although the typical parent tutoring program is first implemented as a Home-to-School Transmission Model, it can quickly become an Enrichment Model as parent provide input into the tutoring process. Eventually, as relationships are established between the parent and the teacher, mutual respect and true partnership is possible.

Our present state of knowledge in this area suggests mixed findings regarding the efficacy of parent tutoring in reading, in general, and its relative effectiveness with boys versus girls. It seems warranted to use past research information to develop a parent tutoring intervention that is likely to produce statistically
significant reading outcomes for students and to help answer gender difference questions.

It seems warranted to look at the youngest of the elementary population in that they are unlikely to be independent readers and more likely to see the relevance of doing reading activities with their parents. Miller (1993) found that even second and third graders who were competent readers seemed to dislike reading with parents because they preferred reading independently. There is also less research on the youngest of the elementary students.

Finally, there appears to be a need for additional experimental research with early elementary children and their parents that is designed to tease out skill level by intervention interactions. Do lower-level readers profit more from parent tutoring than do higher-level readers?

The reviewed studies also represent, at times, differing notions about what materials and procedures parents should use in the tutoring of their children in the reading domain. Theory and empirical research suggests that the materials and procedures to be used by parents should be sensible to the parents, developmentally appropriate for the child, directly relevant to the curriculum, easy to learn and implement by parents, and
not requiring extensive time on the part of the parents. There is further evidence suggesting that a relatively structured format is best with room for individualization based on child and family needs. On-going consultation and family support are deemed important during the parent tutoring process. Reading correction procedures or other intervention process should be taught to parents along with opportunity for practice and feedback. The tutoring goals should be clearly stated or defined. Also, there is evidence in the literature to support the training of parents in basic reinforcement strategies for them to use in the teaching and learning process at home. Furthermore, there is evidence that the programming should continue more than 10 weeks if norm-referenced measures are used and that measurement should be directly relevant to the materials used in tutoring and at school.

Finally, the present literature review points to another type of parent tutoring question in need of research. Swap (1993) and others have pointed out that current theory suggests that there is not one type of parent participation that works best for all families. There may well be family dynamics, marital circumstances, child characteristics/self-image variables (Grolnick, 1997), parent characteristics/self-image variables
(Grolnick, 1997), parenting style issues, parent-child relationship factors, health concerns, cultural/philosophical differences between parent and school, and time/priority constraints at home or at school which may make the parent tutoring intervention more challenging for some than others. There is a need at this point to better define the family processes or circumstances that are associated with a positive outcome for a parent tutoring intervention, and those circumstances which correlate with less favorable parent tutoring outcomes. A better understanding of these variables may give insight into the best use of parent tutoring programs by school personnel. This information may also give insight into other types of school interventions that could be helpful to particular families.
CHAPTER 3

THE METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The lessons of previous research studies strongly suggest that an effective parent tutoring program must be sensible to the parents, developmentally appropriate for children, directly relevant to the curriculum, easy to learn and implement by parents, and not requiring extensive time on the part of the parents. The program should be structured but with room for individualization based on child and family needs. On-going consultation and family support is necessary, also. Parent training should provide parents with opportunity to learn a tutoring procedure and have an opportunity for practice and feedback. Parents should also receive information about basic reinforcement strategies for use in the teaching and learning process at home. The programming should begin near the start of the school year and continue for more than ten weeks. The measurement of outcomes should be
relevant to the materials used in tutoring and at school.

The Fast Start Program (Rasinski, 1995) is an appropriate parent-tutoring program to use with a first grade population. This program encourages a parent-tutoring approach that is consistent with the theories and intervention evaluations previously reviewed.

The researcher's role in this study was that of "participant-observer". The researcher served as the school psychologist for the school that hosted this research study, and was involved in both the implementation and evaluation of the program. However, this researcher did not do the actual post-test administration due to an awareness of which students were in the control and experimental groups.

Design of the Study

This study uses a pre-test/post-test with control group design. Student-parent dyads were randomly assigned (randomized block procedure) to groups so as to provide equal subjects in each group. That is, based on pre-test data, the equal numbers of students were placed into one of three reading development categories: high, middle, and low. Accordingly, students in each of these three reading categories were randomly distributed between the treatment and control conditions.

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The parents of the students in the experimental group received instruction in the Fast Start parent-tutoring program, eleven weekly packets of materials and weekly follow-up phone calls. The control group received the normal school program including the form of parent involvement that was typical for the children's classrooms and parents. The control group did not receive the Fast Start training, materials or follow-up. This design allowed for an analysis of main effect of parent tutoring and the relationship between the parent tutoring program efficacy and the pre-test reading categories (high, middle, and low). Thus, an analysis of the interaction between reading skill level and treatment level is possible. It is also possible to determine if males and females responded differentially to the tutoring process in terms of reading achievement outcomes. Finally, the parent records of time spent in tutoring allows for statistical analysis of the amount of time spent in tutoring in relation to achievement outcomes.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The host school district is situated in a suburban central Ohio community with an estimated population of 55,000 people. Census data indicated that approximately 32 percent of district's residents had a college degree with
an additional 17 percent holding a graduate or professional degree. Seven percent held an associate degree, 23 percent had some college (but no degree), and about 16 percent had a high school diploma. Five percent did not have a diploma. Nearly half of the adults employed are in managerial and professional occupations; 37 percent are in technical, sales and administrative support; seven percent in service occupations; four percent in craft and precision production and repair; four percent in manufacturing and labor; and one percent in farming and other natural resource related industries. Multifamily housing accounts for approximately 40 percent of all units; 25 percent are rental units. Approximately 37 percent of the households have children in the school system. District enrollment at the time of this study was approximately 10,330. Approximately 6.4 percent of the district’s students are Asian, 5.5 percent are African-American, 1.4 percent is Hispanic; and .2 percent American Indian. The majority of students are Caucasian.

The population for this study consisted of all first grade students at a K-6 elementary school within the above-described district who were enrolled at the beginning of the school year. This school’s demographics are representative of the district in which it is located.
The researcher served as the school psychologist for this school during this study. This is a convenience sample but may be representative of many suburban schools in the central Ohio area.

Just before the school year began, all parents of soon-to-be first grade students in the school were mailed a letter with information about the study and a request for consent to participate (see Appendix A). Individual follow-up telephone calls were done with parents who did not respond to this letter. At the start of the school year, there were 42 students enrolled in the first grade and all of their parents had received the mailings and phone calls. Of those 42 students and their parents, 30 responded with willingness to participate, two declined to participate and 10 did not respond to the mailings and telephone messages.

Of the 30 first grade students/parents, there were 16 girls and 14 boys. Thirteen students came from one of the first grade classes and 17 students came from the other first grade class. The range of skills represented by this population was extensive. The students with the weakest reading skills knew about half of the letters and no words. The most skilled students were able to read many words and read grade level material fluently.
Instrumentation

Pre-test and post-test data was gathered by using selected parts of *A Primary Literacy Assessment: A Comprehensive Program to Document Growth of Each Child Over Time*. This criterion-referenced instrument includes an upper and lower case alphabet assessment and a word list assessment which combines the Fry Word List for Early Literacy Assessment (Fry, 1980) and Marie Clay's 21 core words, based on reading recovery research of early emergent readers (Clay, 1993). These words comprise the most important words for reading and writing in the English language. The Fry Instant Word List (Fry, 1980) is based on research that shows that half of all written material in English (books, magazines, newspapers) is composed of the first 100 Instant Words and their common variants. The first 300 Instant Words make up 65% of all written material in English. The whole list is not usually mastered until an early third grade reading skill level is achieved. These letter and word lists were administered using a five second time limit per letter or word (see Appendix I).

A curriculum-based measurement (CBM) process was also used to assess connected reading fluency. Materials used
for this assessment were taken from the curricular material being used with these first grade students (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich basal reading program). In consultation with the first grade teachers, three probes were taken from this reading series. Stories named, The Balloon, Can Bear Do It?, and Is This Home?, were selected as the reading material for the assessment of reading fluency (see Appendix I). Curriculum-Based Measurement (Shinn, 1989) was developed for the purpose of assessing reading fluency. It involves counting the number of words read correctly from either a text or word list in a given period of time. The score is reported in correct words read per minute. Initial Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) validity studies were conducted by Deno, Mirkin, and Chiang (1982). They found that listening to children read from their basal reader for one minute was a valid measure of reading skill. Correlation coefficients ranged from .73 to .91 with most coefficients above .8. The correlations reported are between CBM measures and tests like the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test. Subsequent validity studies have shown similar results. When CBM reading measures are compared to elementary teachers' global ratings of student reading proficiency, the median correlation was .86.
Construct and discriminant validity studies have also been indicative of good validity. Test-retest reliability estimates (using 1 to 10 week intervals) showed coefficients ranging from .82 to .97 with most estimates above .9. Inter-rater agreement coefficients were examined and found to be outstanding at .99. There are standardized administration and scoring procedures for CBM and they were followed in this research study.

**Treatment**

All 30 consenting students were pre-tested and then randomly assigned to treatment and control groups by reading skill level blocks (high, average, and low). The parents of the treatment group students were contacted by mail and telephone, given more detailed information about the nature of the study, and invited to attend a sixty-minute training session at school. Two training sessions were held on the same day, one right after school and another in the evening. All 15 parents were able to attend one of these training sessions. Baby-sitting was provided at the site of the training (the host elementary school) and parents were encouraged to bring their first grade children to the session so they could take part in the last half of the presentation. All parents brought
their first grade children and all children participated in the second half of their respective training program.

As the parents entered the training session, they were asked to complete a brief survey (see Appendix B) of demographic information (e.g., name, marital status, numbers and ages of children, work situation, experience with teaching). They were also given a Fast Start Parent Manual which had the agenda (see Appendix B), a newsletter written by Tim Rasinski (see Appendix C) which outlined his Fast Start Program, a high frequency word list, and sample poems and rhyming activities (see Appendix D). Four letter/word identification games were also included in the packet that parents could make and play with their children (see Appendix F). Finally, the packet also contained reading log sheets for parents to use in record keeping (see Appendix E).

The training session began with a statement designed to empower parents to continue their work with children in those roles and doing those activities that complemented their children's school performance. Also, a challenge was issued to the parents to consider new ways of helping their children with the reading process. The Fast-Start program components were presented through a multi-media presentation. The presentation also included information
about the use of positive reinforcement in regard to home reading activities and literacy, in general. Parents were assured that they would be contacted weekly by the researcher to gather information about their tutoring experiences and that individual adjustments were acceptable. They were told to contact the researcher/school psychologist at other times if questions arose about the tutoring process.

Parents were then given the first of 11 weekly packets of materials. The packets contained inspirational and practical ideas about how they can help establish good literacy habits in their children (see Appendix G). The packets also contained several poems (see Appendix H) by Tim Rasinski (Rasinski & Zimmerman, 2001) and Marcia Ardis (Ardis, 1996). Finally, the child’s basal reader was included in the packet if the child was currently in a basal at the time of the meeting.

At this point in the training, the children joined the meeting and the Fast Start approach to tutoring was modeled by the researcher with a first grade child according to the following recommended procedures:

1. Parent and child are to sit together. The parent draws the child’s attention to the text by pointing to the appropriate lines and words.
2. Parent reads the text to the child several times until the child is familiar with the passage. Parent and child discuss the content of the passage.

3. Parent and child simultaneously read the passage together. The passage is read several times until the child feels comfortable with reading the passage alone.

4. The child reads the text alone with the parent providing backup or shadow reading support. The text is again read several times.

Having followed these procedures with a child, the parents were then shown the word study activities requiring the parent and child to choose words from the text that are of interest; or choose words from the word lists in their packets. The words are printed on cards and added to word cards from previous days. This word bank could be used for word practice, sentence building, word sorts, and other informal word games and activities. These activities were also demonstrated for the parents with a student and reinforced in writing through handouts in their packets. Selected words are also used for rhyming activities (see Appendix D).
It was emphasized to the parents that the Fast Start program asks parents to work with their children for 10-15 minutes at regular, specified and convenient times each day. Parents may work with one passage over several days and may return to previously read passages throughout the duration of the project.

While the oral reading and word study activities were being demonstrated for the parents, the use of positive reinforcement was modeled throughout the procedures. After modeling the Fast Start technique with a student, the parents tried the procedures with their own children. Feedback was provided and a discussion was held with all present.

The training session also included a brief discussion of Fast Start's encouragement of parents to read to their children as much as possible, to write with their children, and to create a home environment conducive to literacy learning. Specific reminders and suggestions for accomplishing these activities were provided to parents in their weekly packets.

The parents were reminded that reading materials would be sent home with their children every Monday for 11 weeks. The packets contained poetry from the book, Phonics Poetry: Teaching Word Families by Rasinski &
Zimmerman (2001). The poetry is designed to teach specific types of common word configurations. Some of the poetry used in this program was written by Marcia Ardis and is found in her Resource Handbook of the Home and School Connections: Increasing Home and School Literacy Experiences with Primary Age Children (Ardis, 1996). Other literacy development ideas were included in each weekly packet in the form of a newsletter based on Rasinski’s (1995) research and handouts from Marcia Ardis’s Parent Handbook for Grade One (Ardis, 1996).

Data Collection

Pre-test data were collected on all 30 of the first graders whose parents gave written consent to participate in the experiment. This researcher/school psychologist conducted assessments before the students were assigned to groups and levels. Post-testing with the same materials was conducted at the end of the 11-week program. Selected portions of the Primary Literacy Assessment (PLA) and three Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) probes were administered as the pre-test and post-test. The median score of the three CBM probes was the score given to the child for the CBM portion of the assessment. The raw score of total items correct was used as the numerical indicator of progress on the PLA. The PLA consisted of all
upper and low case letters (52 letters) and 12 word lists with 25 words per level (300 words). The letter/word identification test was discontinued when the student missed more than half of the items at a particular level or completed all lists without missing more than half of the words on any one list. A time limit of five seconds per letter or word was enforced during the assessments. The post-test scores for the PLA and CBM assessments were obtained by another school psychologist who had familiarity with the assessment procedures, but who was blind to the composition of the experimental and control groups and the students’ pre-test reading levels.

This pre-test and post-test information was used in the data analysis. The scores on the PLA (total correct letters and words read) and the median score of the three CBM probes were converted to z-scores and averaged together to create a composite z-score for each student.

The researcher/school psychologist contacted by telephone the 15 child/parent dyads in the experimental group weekly and information was gathered regarding the amount of time spent in Fast Start activities. This information was recorded and later used in the data analysis. During the weekly phone contacts, occasional
inquiries of parents were made about the following areas of research interest:

1. Spontaneous questions or comments made by parents or their children regarding any aspect of the program.
2. Specific concerns about any aspect of the program.
3. Parent confidence level in helping their child with the reading process.
4. Appropriateness of the materials.
5. Time required for completing the activities.
6. Perceived usefulness of the activities.
7. Child's level of independence in reading.
8. Perceived hindrances and facilitators to the parent tutoring process.
11. Reasons for low levels of participation in the program.
12. Suggestions for the school regarding parent involvement in reading.

Parent reactions and comments were recorded and used to answer the exploratory questions noted in Chapter One. In addition, all experimental group parents were asked to
provide in-depth information regarding their experiences with the program in order to help understand the parent perspective of the program and factors that may have helped or hindered the program implementation. This was done through a written survey mailed to their homes (see Appendix K).

Finally, all parents in the control group were sent a survey to assess the home-based reading activities they were using with their children (see Appendix J). This information was collected as a way to determine what the control group parents were doing with their children at home in the area of reading. These activities and efforts were then compared with the experimental group activities made available through Fast Start. Of the 15 control group parents, eight returned the survey. Nine of 15 experimental group parents returned the survey.

Data Analysis

The PLA raw scores were recorded as total items correct for each student. The maximum score on this instrument was 352. A test for differences between control and treatment groups on the PLA pre-test was conducted with a t-test. The p-value was .41 which did not reach the .05 criterion.
The CBM raw score (correct words per minute) was determined using the procedures suggested by Shinn (1989) in which the median score of three probes is used as the best estimate of reading fluency for each student. A t-test was conducted on CBM pre-test data to determine if there were differences between treatment and control groups on this measure. The p-value was .31 which also failed to indicate significant difference.

The correlation between the two pre-test components (letter/word identification and reading fluency) was also computed. As a preliminary step to using the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) procedure, a test for homogeneity of regression was conducted to determine if the regression lines for the two treatment conditions (experimental and control) were statistically parallel and appropriate for the ANCOVA procedure. Student scores were then subjected to an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine if there were differences between those students who received the Fast Start intervention and those who did not.

The ANCOVA was also used to determine if there was an interaction between pre-test reading level (high, medium, and low) and membership in the treatment or control conditions. That is, there was a test of significant difference between groups and levels to determine if
different pre-test skill level groups responded differentially to the intervention. If the omnibus assessment proved significant (p < .05) the follow-up ANCOVA was used to determine where the interaction was significant.

Another ANCOVA was conducted to assess the differential effects of treatment between the highest half of the student population (based on combined pre-test scores) and the lowest half of the student population (based on combined pre-tests scores).

Also, the ANCOVA was used to see if there was an interaction between sex of the student and reading outcomes. That is, did boys and girls respond differentially to the intervention?

The final quantitative assessment involved exploring the relationship between the time spent in tutoring (data was aggregated as a total minutes of tutoring for each child) and the amount of improvement on the PLA and CBM measures. All statistical procedures were done using the SAS (1989-1996) computer program.

The exploratory questions were addressed through three sources of information:

1. an informal evaluation of demographic information gathered at the training session from those in the
2. information obtained from the experimental group during weekly phone calls;
3. the in-depth survey information obtained from both the control and experimental groups.

Summary

In summary, the Fast Start program was introduced via a training program to a group of 15 parents who subsequently engaged in the Fast Start reading tutoring process. Data were collected to address the quantitative questions regarding the efficacy of the tutoring program in developing reading skills (word/letter identification and oral reading fluency). Questions of program efficacy relative to group membership (treatment vs. control), initial reading skill level, and sex of the students were statistically addressed.

Assessments of the parent responses to the exploratory topics and questions were used to help elucidate possible influence of family variables on the outcomes. Finally, the parent surveys were also used to gain direction for changes in the Fast Start program that may make it a better program for parents and students.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Thirty beginning first grade students were randomly assigned (randomized block procedure) to the experimental or control group based on three levels of pre-test reading skill. The experimental group received the Fast Start training and materials. The control group received the normal parent involvement requested by their teachers and typical for their families.

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of the Fast Start program in the context of an intervention that involved components such as formal parent training, weekly telephone conferences, and individualization. As designed, this study allowed for a comparison of gender and skill differences among the
groups and levels of students. Further assessment was done of the association between tutoring time and reading improvement among the experimental group students.

This study also examined informally collected data regarding the families in the study, their reactions to the tutoring process during the study, and their evaluations of several program components at the end of the study.

**Demographic Information on the Experimental Group Families**

The 15 experimental group families completed a family information questionnaire (see Appendix B) before the Fast Start training sessions began. Twelve of the parents indicated being married. Three reported their marital status as divorced. Of the students who had divorced parents, two resided with the mother and one resided with the father. Five of the families had four children, seven of the families had three children, two of the families had two children, and one family had one child. All 15 fathers had full-time employment (40 or more hours per week). Five of the mothers worked full-time, five worked part-time, and five did not have work outside the home. One family was black, 12 were white, and two were Indian (Asian). Regarding educational background, two of the 15 primary parent/tutors had some training in education and
13 had none.

When asked about special concerns on the demographic survey, four parents referenced special concerns. Two of the concerns related to recent divorces and new relationships, one referenced a traumatic event for parent and child, one expressed concern with a behavior problem of another child in the family.

A post-study survey of the 15 families found that, of the nine respondents, all nine indicated the primary tutor was the mother. Six noted that the father helped. Two reported participation from older siblings. One reported involvement of a grandmother.

Quantitative Information

The primarily quantitative data will be presented in the following order:

1. The results of the statistical test of main effect of the primary hypothesis regarding the efficacy of the Fast Start Program. Other statistical information regarding the ANCOVA, homogeneity of regression, correlation between the two components of the dependent variable, and a comparison of treatment and control groups will also be presented.

2. An analysis of the correlation between the rankings of the amount of time spent in parent tutoring and the change
rankings of students who were part of the experimental group.

3. An analysis of differential effects of the Fast Start program for boys and girls who were part of the experimental group.

4. The differential effects of the Fast Start program for students at different reading skill levels (based on pre-test measures).

5. Descriptive information regarding the performance of the experimental and control groups on the pre- and post-test measures of reading skill. The relationship between and among the groups will be discussed.

Main Hypothesis and Statement of Outcome

Hypothesis: The experimental group that receives parent-tutoring assistance in reading will display greater reading skill than those students who do not receive the parent tutoring intervention (when post-test scores are adjusted for pre-test scores).

The ANCOVA is an appropriate statistical procedure for increasing the efficiency of an analysis of group differences in a pre-test/post-test with control group design, when there has been random assignment to groups and the regression lines of the treatment conditions are statistically parallel. ANCOVA allows for an evaluation of main effect of treatment and interactions of other variables when the covariate is not affected by the
administration of the treatment. In the ANCOVA, the dependent variable (post-test scores) is adjusted for differences in the covariate (pre-test scores). Also, the error term is adjusted by the relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate. Thus, ANCOVA uses a combination of the methods of regression and ANOVA. Prior to using the analysis of covariance procedure, a test for homogeneity of regression was conducted and resulted in an F value of .14 and did not achieve statistical significance. Thus, the regression lines of the two treatment conditions are not significantly different and the use of ANCOVA is appropriate.

Also, t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-test scores of the control and treatment groups on the PLA and the CBM measure of reading fluency. As reported earlier, neither t-test indicated statistical difference between the experimental and control groups.

The correlation between the letter/word identification score and the reading fluency measure (CBM) was .97 for all student pre-test scores (N=30).

For the analyses presented below, the two reading scores for each student (letter word identification and reading fluency) were transformed into z-scores (mean = 0; standard deviation = 1) and combined into a unitary
reading measure for each student. Thus, for the analyses reported below, each student's data consisted of a single pre-test measure and a single post-test measure.

Using an ANCOVA model that assessed two levels of treatment by three levels of reading skill by two levels of gender, the main effect of the treatment variable (Fast Start) on the dependent measure yielded an F Value of .02 (p = .8812). Statistical significance was not achieved (p > .05). The main hypothesis is rejected.

Effect of Time Spent in Tutoring on Reading Improvement

Is the amount of time spent in parent tutoring related to reading improvement in the experimental group?

The average amount of time spent per day (7 day week) for the 15 experimental group participants was 11.3 minutes. There were, of course, variations among the time spent in tutoring reported by parents. The amount of time ranged from an average of about six minutes per day to about 25 minutes per day. The majority of parents were tutoring an average of approximately 10 minutes per day. It was also observed that the amount of time spent in tutoring during the first five weeks and the second five weeks were essentially the same. There was no evidence of parents doing significantly less tutoring, as a group, from the first half of the study to the second half.
During the first five weeks, the combined minutes tutoring were 6,170. During the second five-week period, the combined tutoring minutes were 5,695.

Using the Spearman rank correlation procedure, the student/parent groups were ranked according to the amount of time spent in tutoring during the study (as self-reported by parents) and the amount of gain as indicated by change in z-scores from pre-test to post-test. Z-scores changes were then ranked hierarchically (the greater the positive change, the higher the rank). The computed correlation between rankings of time spent in tutoring and change rankings was .125 (p = .66); and did not achieve the designated level of statistical significance (p > .05).

The Interaction of Gender and Treatment

Are reading improvement outcomes in the experimental group different for boys and girls?

Within the experimental group, there were eight boys and seven girls. Using the ANCOVA model described above, Treatment by Gender effect was analyzed. The obtained F value was .11 (p = .40) and did not achieve statistical significance (p > .05). Boys and girls in the Fast Start program did not respond differently from each other on post-test measures (when adjusted for pre-test measures).
See Figure 2 for comparison scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean L/W*</th>
<th>Mean CW/M**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>153.86</td>
<td>58.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>140.75</td>
<td>46.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 2. Post-Test Raw Scores for Girls and Boys on Measures of Reading Skill

Interaction of Treatment and Pre-Test Reading Skill Levels

Were there differential effects of parent tutoring among the high, average and low reading skill groups with regard to reading skill?

Using the ANCOVA model described above, an F value of 4.03 (p = .0371) was obtained (treatment by reading skill interaction). Having achieved statistical significance (p < .05), a follow-up ANCOVA was done to evaluate the treatment effect for each of the three skill groups by treatment condition. The students in the low skill group (control) were compared with the low skill group (experimental). The obtained F value was 14.84 (p = .0063). Thus, the lower one third of the sample whose parents received the Fast Start training and materials earned significantly higher post-test scores, when adjusted for pre-test scores, than did the control group.
The middle skill groups were compared, and earned an F value of .92 (p= .37), which did not achieve statistical significance. The high skill groups were also compared and an F value of .97 (p= .36) was obtained which did not achieve statistical significance. Thus, the upper (higher skilled) two thirds of the sample did not show statistically significant group differences in post-test scores (when adjusted for pre-test scores).

A post hoc analysis was done to examine the treatment by skill effects when the students were placed into two skill groups according to combined pre-test score (high half and low half). Using another ANCOVA model, treatment (two levels) by reading skill (two levels) by gender (two levels), a significant treatment by skill interaction was observed. The F value was 6.00 (p < .02). The follow-up ANCOVA showed a significant difference between the lower half of the control group and the lower half of the experimental group (F= 19.41; p < .0009).

The higher half of the control group and experimental group were compared and produced an F value of .22 (p= .65), which did not achieve statistical significance.

Thus, the Fast Start program had a positive impact on those students with the lowest skills levels at the time the program began when the experimental group was compared
with the control group (with post-test scores being adjusted for pre-test scores).

**Description of Reading Skill Groups and Treatment Effect**

1) What were the distributions of reading scores in the experimental and control groups for pre-test and post-test administrations?

2) What was the relationship between pre-test levels and post-test levels in the experimental and control groups?

At the time of pre-test (beginning of the first grade year), the students in the low third of the population (N=10) had the ability to recognize most upper and lower case letters, but were not consistently able to identify several of the lower case letters. These students' sight word skills were minimal (could identify 0-6 words). Furthermore, these students had no reading fluency on connected reading activities.

At the time of pre-testing the middle third of the population (N=10) had some minor confusion with letter names or knew them perfectly. The middle group could decode between five and 30 sight words and could read an average of about four correct words per minute on grade level passages with teacher support.
At the time of pre-testing, the upper third of the population (N=10) was the most diverse group. Five of the students were somewhat more skilled than the middle group as evidenced by their ability to decode a few more words and read about eight correct words per minute on the fluency measures. Five of the students in the upper third of the population were quite advanced for their grade level. These students could read a hundred or more sight words and 40-130 correct words per minute on grade level material.

When the skill groups were based on high half and low half of the population, the low half was largely comprised of students with minimal sight word skills and no real reading fluency skill (three or fewer correct words per minute). The upper half, again diverse, was comprised of five students with very well developed reading skills and 10 students who were skilled enough to read several sight words had some ability to read orally from text with teacher support.

In the experimental group, pre-test scores ranged from 27 correct items to 318 correct items on the Primary Literacy Assessment (PLA). On the reading fluency measure (CBM), the pre-test scores ranged from 0 to 122. In the control group, pre-test scores ranged from 24 correct
items to 350 correct items on the PLA. On the CBM (reading fluency), the pre-test scores ranged from 0 to 133.

The control and experimental groups had similarly distributed scores with similar means and standard deviations at the time of pre-test and at the time of post-test. See Figures 3 and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group (N=15)</td>
<td>90.06 (83.42)</td>
<td>15.33 (31.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group (N=5)</td>
<td>98.13 (98.36)</td>
<td>22.33 (40.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)  
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 3. Pre-Test Raw Scores and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd.Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>149.73 (80.23)</td>
<td>Experimental Group (N=15)</td>
<td>51.67 (46.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138.87 (106.27)</td>
<td>Control Group (N=15)</td>
<td>50.53 (51.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)  
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 4. Post-Test Raw Scores and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups

98
Figure 5 shows the control and experimental groups to have very similar means and standard deviations for pre-test scores at all three reading levels. Figure 6 shows large differences between post-test scores for those students in the lower third of the experimental group in comparison with the low third of the control group. Gains over the experimental group were evident on both the PLA and the CBM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low 1/3 Experimental Group (N=5)</td>
<td>46.2 (10.26)</td>
<td>.6 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low 1/3 Control Group (N=5)</td>
<td>43.8 (10.46)</td>
<td>1 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 1/3 Experimental Group (N=5)</td>
<td>60 (3.46)</td>
<td>4 (1.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 1/3 Control Group (N=5)</td>
<td>59.2 (6.04)</td>
<td>4.4 (1.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 1/3 Experimental Group (N=5)</td>
<td>164 (111.65)</td>
<td>41.4 (44.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 1/3 Control Group (N=5)</td>
<td>191.4 (125.34)</td>
<td>61.6 (50.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 5: Pre-Test Raw Scores for Treatment Groups and Three Reading Levels
### Groups and Levels Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.) Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low 1/3 Experimental</td>
<td>100.6 (20.91)</td>
<td>26.4 (9.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low 1/3 Control</td>
<td>77 (6.10)</td>
<td>13.4 (6.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 1/3 Experimental</td>
<td>129 (31.43)</td>
<td>39 (14.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 1/3 Control</td>
<td>99.2 (31.39)</td>
<td>31.4 (25.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 1/3 Experimental</td>
<td>219.6 (94.21)</td>
<td>89.4 (59.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 1/3 Control</td>
<td>275.8 (69.14)</td>
<td>112.2 (43.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 6: Post-Test Raw Scores for Treatment Groups and Three Reading Levels

Figures 7 and 8 show pre-test score comparisons between the experimental and control groups when divided into upper and lower halves. They are quite similar.

### Group and Levels Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.) Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Half Experimental</td>
<td>50.88 (10.39)</td>
<td>1.38 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Half Control</td>
<td>46.9 (10.25)</td>
<td>1.43 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 7. Pre-Test Raw Scores for Lower Halves of the Treatment Groups
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Half Experimental Group (N=8)</td>
<td>134.9 (105.01)</td>
<td>31.29 (40.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Half Control Group (N=7)</td>
<td>143 (117.19)</td>
<td>40.63 (48.31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 8. Pre-Test Raw Scores for Upper Halves of the Treatment Groups

Figure 9 shows the large difference between the experimental and control groups in the lower skilled half of the population. The experimental group clearly outperformed the control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Half Experimental Group (N=8)</td>
<td>116.38 (29.15)</td>
<td>35.38 (11.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Half Control Group (N=7)</td>
<td>79.71 (7.32)</td>
<td>14.43 (6.25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 9. Post-Test Raw Scores for Lower Halves of the Treatment Groups

101
Figure 10 shows similar performances between the upper halves of the experimental and control groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group and Levels</th>
<th>Mean L/W* (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
<th>Mean CW/M** (Stnd. Dev.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Half Experimental</td>
<td>187.86 (95.81)</td>
<td>73.86 (56.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Half Control</td>
<td>212.75 (100.77)</td>
<td>80.50 (52.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (N=7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correct items on Letter/Word Identification Test (PLA)
**Correct Words Read/Minute on Reading Fluency Test (CBM)

Figure 10. Post-Test Raw Scores for Upper Halves of the Treatment Groups

Descriptive Information Regarding Gender Differences

How did boys and girls differ on pre-test and post-test scores?

Based on all thirty subjects, 16 girls and 14 boys, the following pre- and post-test scores were obtained for boys and girls:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PLA Pre-test Raw Score</th>
<th>PLA Post-test Raw Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>153.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>140.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. PLA Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Boys and Girls
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBM Pre-test Raw Score</th>
<th>CBM Post-test Raw Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>58.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td>46.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. CBM Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Boys and Girls

Thus, boys and girls, regardless of treatment condition, scored very similarly on the pre-test and post-test measures. As noted previously, the ANCOVA did not reveal any gender differences ($F = .11; p= .40$) between the nine males and six females in their response to the experimental condition (when post-test was adjusted for pre-test).

Survey and Interview Data

The exploration questions noted in Chapter one were addressed informally by detecting trends. The first two questions were answered through the 10 weekly telephone consultations with the parents in the experimental group during the study.

1. What were the questions asked by the 15 experimental group parents and children as they worked through the tutoring process?

Questions about how to maintain the child’s interest in the program were posed by a few parents. Related to this question was a question regarding the proper response
to a small number (N=2) of children who wanted to do independent reading. These students did not want their parents to read to them, as suggested by the Fast Start program.

2. What types of concerns/reactions surfaced regarding the parent tutoring process?

No consistent trends were noted. One parent thought the material was initially too hard for her child. One parent expressed concern about possible dyslexia. One expressed concern that the child did not like to point to the words as part of the reading. One parent expressed concern about the moodiness of the child regarding the activities. One parent noted family stress related to a sibling that diminished her available time to work with the child in this study. One parent did not like using flash cards. One parent noted that the child did not like to be told the unknown words while reading. One parent was concerned about the effects of a custody dispute on the child’s performance. One parent expressed a general concern about not having enough time to do the activities. One parent expressed a concern about lost tutoring time due to the child’s illness. One parent noted a loss of time due to the death of the child’s grandparent. Two parents reported that they were saving the materials that
were sent home each week for use with younger siblings when they get older.

Exploration questions 3 through 9 were answered from the survey of experimental group parents at the end of the study. It is noteworthy that 9 of 15 parents returned the survey. One of the 9 responding parents had a student in the low third of the pre-test distribution, four had children in the middle third of the distribution, and four had children in the upper third of the pre-test distribution. When the respondents were categorized according to the upper half and lower half of the pre-test distribution, four of the survey respondents had children in the lower half of the pre-test distribution (from a total of 8 students). The upper half of the distribution had five respondents (from a total of seven students).

It was also noted that seven of the nine parents who responded to the survey had children who were among the top eight gainers among the experimental students (N=15), as determined by the amount of growth from pre-test to post-test (based on z-score changes from pre-test to post-test using composites of the two pre-test and post-test measures). Thus, the survey responders were primarily comprised of those parents who experienced the largest positive changes in reading skill during the study (among
the experimental group). This may mean that the survey results are skewed toward those who might feel more positive about the Fast Start program.

3. Did parents feel confident, or gain the necessary confidence, to assist their children with the information and support provided by the school?

Of the nine parents responding, six felt more confident assisting their child as a result of the program. Two parents did not notice a change in their confidence and one parent did not think confidence was a problem.

4. Were there concerns about the materials used?

Six parents reported good child interest in the poems. One noted that the interest in the poems waned after the first few weeks. One parent did not see interest in the child regarding poems. One parent noted that the poems became too long and difficult; another parent noted that there were too many poems each week. One parent noted that some of the words in the poems were too hard, and one parent noted that their child liked the silly and funny poems. Overall, five parents rated the poems as being of the right difficulty and three of the parents thought that some of the poems were too difficult. One parent thought it would be more helpful to have more
stories and fewer poems.

All nine responding parents reported that use of word lists were helpful. Parents reported the following comments regarding the word lists: "enjoyed"; "excited"; "used with spelling lists"; "used more often after the first few weeks". One parent said the most benefit was derived from use of the word lists.

Regarding the sending home of the child's school books, seven of the parents thought the books were helpful, one stated they were somewhat helpful, and one parent wanted more books to be sent home.

Regarding the handouts that were sent home weekly, seven parents said they were helpful; one parent said some were helpful. Comments regarding the handouts were as follows: "good ideas" and "enjoyed reading and applying".

5. Were there concerns about the amount of time required?

Parents reported concerns with time because of "personal issues" which interfered (e.g., piano lessons; holiday activities; family activities; health issues; soccer; visits to the non-custodial parent). One parent noted a general difficulty juggling time among four children.

6. What were the subjective impressions of the usefulness of the process?
All nine of the participants who returned the survey stated that the Fast Start Parent Manual was helpful. Six reported that the sequential procedure was helpful. The other three respondents reported that the sequential procedure was inconsistently helpful. Eight of nine respondents reported using the sequential procedure on other reading materials than the ones sent home (e.g., books at home, library books, church books). The sequential procedure was not helpful for one child who could read independently and did not want the parent to read to him. One parent commented that Fast Start was appreciated because it is an "exact way" to help.

Reports of the most favored activities varied from parent to parent. Some parents liked the poetry activities most; two parents most appreciated the game ideas in the back of the manual. Some parents thought the word study ideas gave them the most help in supporting their child. One parent specifically mentioned the rhyming activities. One parent thought the greatest benefit was derived from the use of the word lists. Some parents noted appreciation of the classroom books that were sent home.

The list of the least favored activities is virtually identical to the list of the most favored activities. One
parent found the poems least useful; another did not like the word bank/flash card activities; one did not like the word games; one found the parent modeling of reading the poems to be least useful. Also, no parents accessed the web site for parents using the Fast Start program.

When parents were asked if the Fast Start Program helped their child get a good start in reading, six strongly agreed, two agreed, and one neither agreed nor disagreed.

The parent survey also asked parents to comment on the specific aspects of the program. Regarding the rhyming activities (finding word families) all nine respondents said these activities were helpful and one parent said it took a while for the child to get the idea of how to do it. Regarding the use of flash cards of selected words in passages and the common sight word lists, eight said they thought this was helpful and one parent reported a lack of time to try this part of the program.

When asked about the most helpful components of the entire reading program, one reported that the training program and the poems were the most helpful components, one parent liked the word lists and “shadow” reading technique, one parent reported the ideas and tips that
came in the newsletter and handouts were very helpful. One parent thought the best component was the weekly reading material; one parent thought the rhyming activities were the most helpful; one parent reported the sequential procedure when used with the reader from school was most helpful. One parent commented that the use of the "word window" was very helpful. Two parents reported that setting aside a time each night was very helpful.

When asked if they would recommend Fast Start to other first grade parents (see item below), 5 parents strongly agreed and 4 agreed.

I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree Nor Disagree
Strongly Disagree
Disagree

One parent described the overall program as "excellent" and said the program was enjoyed by the family. One parent stated she "loved the program" because her child could now read. One parent termed the program a "great concept". One described it as a "great program". One reported that the program was enjoyable to both parent and child.

7. Did parents sense that their children were becoming more independent in the reading process as a result of the tutoring?
All nine parents reported that their children were more independent in reading activities since the program began.

8. What hindrances were reported?

As noted above, some parents reported inconsistent interest by the child. One reported little interest in being read to or with because he was able to read independently and wanted to read to the parent or silently. One parent reported that time away with the non-custodial parent and the divorce situation, in general, became worse during the study and had an adverse effect. This parent thought that, without the traumatic home life, the child would have done better. Two parents noted a general difficulty with time management.

9. What facilitators were reported?

Six parents reported that the sequential Fast Start procedure was helpful. One reported that it helped, but not always. One said it was helpful at first. One reported using the Fast Start procedure with books at home. One tried it with library books. One tried it with church materials. One parent reported not trying it with other materials.
Information Regarding Accommodations and Low Participation

10. What modifications of the program were needed to accommodate parents and children?

When parents reported that their children were not very interested in some aspect of the program, the parent was encouraged to downplay that aspect. For example, if a parent reported that his/her child did not like the poetry, then the parent was encouraged to use the Fast Start process with books of interest from school and home.

One parent expressed an interest in using material that paired a word with a picture. Materials fitting this description were sent to the parent for use.

One parent said the materials sent home were too difficult, so specific suggestions were made for the parent to work on specific letter/sound combinations and specific sight words before using the connected reading material that was being sent home.

11. What reasons were given for early termination and low levels of participation? Could the school have done anything to assist the parents?

None of the parents asked to be withdrawn from the program. Regarding low levels of participation, the reasons were diverse and seemingly out of the control of the school (e.g., health issues, time constraints; family problems).
Relationship of Survey Responses to Skill, Gender, and Family Variables

12. Do answers to the above questions relate to the skill group that the child is in, the sex of the child, or other family variables that may be relevant?

Regarding skill grouping, all four responding parents of students in the low half of the pre-test distribution “strongly agreed” with both Likert items:

A. The Fast Start program helped me help my child get off to a good start in reading; and

B. I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.

In contrast, the five responding parents of students in the upper half of the distribution gave more varied responses to these two survey items. Two of the five parents “strongly agreed” with both items, two parents “agreed” with both items and one parent “agreed” that they would recommend it and “neither agreed nor disagreed” that the program helped her child get off to a good start.

The low third of the pre-test distribution is poorly represented in that only one in five families returned the survey. That one responder “strongly agreed” that the program helped the child get off to a good start in reading. The responder also “agreed” with the item about recommending the Fast Start program to other first grade
parents. Four parents from the middle third of the pre-test distribution responded to the survey. Three of the respondents “strongly agreed” with both Likert items. One responder “agreed” with both Likert items. Among the four responders from the high third of the pre-test distribution, two strongly agreed with both Likert items, one “agreed” with both Likert items, and one “neither agreed nor disagreed” with the items related to getting the child off to a good start in reading and agreed with recommending it to other first grade parents.

When the surveys were evaluated from the perspective of the sex of the child, six responding parents had boys and three responding parents had girls. All three surveys completed by parents of girls “strongly agreed” with both Likert items. The six surveys completed by parents of boys gave more mixed reactions: two responders “strongly agreed” with both Likert items and one “agreed” with both Likert items. One responder “strongly agreed” that the program helped the child get off to a good start in reading, and “agreed” that they would recommend Fast Start to other first grade parents. One responder “neither agreed nor disagreed” with the statement that Fast Start helped the child get off to a good start in reading and “agreed” that they would recommend Fast Start to others.
Regarding the four families that reported significant stressors affecting their children, only one of these families returned the survey, so survey response patterns are not discernable. That one responder "neither agreed nor disagree" with the statement that Fast Start helped get the child off to a good start in reading and "agreed" that they would recommend Fast Start to other first grade parents. It is noteworthy that two of those four students made impressive gains in change scores and two made relatively poor gains.

Regarding the relationship between parent/tutor work hours and survey responses, four of five part time working parents, two of five full time working parents, and three of five parents with no outside employment completed the survey. Two of the three parents with no outside employment rated both Likert items as "strongly agree". One parent/tutor "strongly agreed" that Fast Start helped get the child off to a good start in reading and "agreed" that she would recommend Fast Start to other parents of first grade students.

Among the four survey responders who worked part-time, two "strongly agreed" with both Likert items:

1. The Fast Start program helped me help my child get off to a good start in reading; and
2. I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.
One parent/tutor in the part-time employment group “agreed” with both items above. One parent/tutor in this category “neither agreed nor disagreed” with the first item and “agreed” with the second item.

Among the two survey responders who worked full time, one strongly agreed with both items and one “agreed” with both items. Thus, there is evidence that a full range of work parent/tutor work schedules is not an obvious detractor from positive parent perception of the program.

When positive changes from pre-test to post-test were evaluated relative to work status, tutoring parents with full time work schedules had 1 student in the top third of the change rankings, one student in the middle third, and three students in the lowest third. Tutoring parents who worked part-time had three students in the top third, one in the middle third, and one in the lowest third. Tutoring parents who did not have outside employment had one student in the top third, three in the middle third, and one in the lowest third of the change rankings.

As previously noted, the responders to the survey were primarily those parents whose children had responded relatively well to the program in comparison with others from the experimental group.
Did the activities reported by the control group differ substantially from the Fast Start program as implemented in this research study?

All 15 parents from the control group were asked to anonymously respond to a survey regarding the types of literacy activities they do with their children. Eight of the 15 parents responded to this survey. Parent responses showed that their children engaged in a wide variety of home-based literacy activities: playing traditional board games and educational computer games; watching educational TV programs; reading environmental print and Sunday school materials; writing activities such as e-mail communications and writing "letters" to family members and writing simple sentences; practicing assigned spelling words; use of flash card lists for vocabulary words provided by the teacher; parent-to-child reading, child-to-parent reading, silent independent reading by child; silent reading by child as the parent reads aloud.

None of the parents reported using a sequential process program like Fast Start. None mentioned the use of poetry, and none mentioned the activity of finding word families after reading a text. Fast Start appears to be a unique reading intervention when compared with typical home and homework type literacy activities.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Fast Start (Rasinski, 1995) appears to be a parent-child reading system that is, in some ways, different from typical parent-child reading activities, but easy enough to teach parents in about an hour. The Fast Start program is also responsive to the current call for parent involvement in education (National Education Goals Panel, 1995; Amended Substitute Senate Bill 55 in Ohio, 1997), in a very practical way.

Previous research in this area has been mixed (Topping, 1996) and questions have been raised regarding the need to tease out aptitude by treatment interactions (Topping, 1996) and possible gender differences in response to parent tutoring (Rosenquist, 1972; Fox, 1982; Nielson, 1991). Finally, there have been questions
regarding how to increase parent participation in parent tutoring activities (Powell-Smith, 1993).

This discussion section will review the quantitative data and then the survey and interview data that address these research questions. This section will conclude with recommendations for educators and researchers.

Research Question and Context

The primary purpose of this research effort was to answer the following question: Will the group that receives parent tutoring assistance in reading display greater reading skill than those students who do not receive the parent tutoring assistance?

The answer to this question will be prefaced with a restatement of the context within which the Fast Start program was implemented, so the reader can interpret the findings within a contextual framework.

The students in the study were generally from White, middle class backgrounds, which is representative of the host school system. The host elementary school is a traditional elementary school with two first grade classes with teachers who use a traditional basal reading program. The students in each class numbered in the low twenties during the study. Thirty of 42 possible families agreed to participate in the study. The 30 students in the study
represented a wide range of reading abilities and a
typical range of family structures. The 30 students were
randomly assigned to treatment and control conditions
based on a randomized block procedure.

The Fast Start program was imbedded in an
intervention context that reflected the current
understandings of how to administer a home-based reading
program. Specifically, this study of the Fast Start
reading program was constructed so that it would be:
relevant to the curriculum, structured but with room for
individualization, able to provide consultation and family
support through the process on a weekly basis, started
near the beginning of the school year, continued for 11
weeks, able to provide parent training which included
practice and feedback, able to provide parents with
reinforcement strategies relevant to the teaching and
learning process, and using measurement techniques
relevant to the material used in tutoring and at school.
The materials sent home with the 15 experimental students
were quite varied in that poetry, word lists, and school
readers were used. Because this study of the Fast Start
program occurred in the above context, the results are
reflective of a broader intervention strategy than just
the Fast Start program.
Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

Treatment by Skill Interaction

Although a main effect for treatment was not verified when all students in the control group (N=15) and the experimental group (N=15) were compared with the ANCOVA, it was found that those students/parents in the lower half of the population that received Fast Start training, materials appropriate for first grade students, and ongoing support through the 11 week process, showed significantly greater reading skill at post-test than those in the control group. For those in the top half of the population being studied, there was not a significant difference in performance between the experimental and control groups when evaluated with the ANCOVA.

The population that tended to respond well to this intervention was comprised of beginning first grade students with minimal sight word skills and no real reading fluency skill (3 or fewer correct words per minute). Their skills were measured by letter/word identification measures and oral reading fluency measures. Due to the small sample size, the results are not as compelling as they would be if more subjects were involved.
Gender Differences

It was also learned that boys and girls responded similarly to the assessment tools, and did not appear to respond differentially to this intervention context and program. The ANCOVA did not detect treatment by gender differences. Thus, it appears that this program is equally suitable for boys and girls.

Parent Tutoring Time and Change Scores

The question of tutoring time and outcome is difficult to answer authoritatively because parents were asked to keep track of the amount of time they spent in the Fast Start procedures and activities. There was no effort to assess program integrity. It is likely that parent responses regarding the time spent on Fast Start activities were less than completely accurate, and that parents did not consistently follow the Fast Start methods during the reported tutoring time.

The low positive correlation between rankings of time spent in tutoring and the amount of change from pre-test to post-test may reflect measurement (parent reports of time) and treatment integrity difficulties. Also, it is possible that a linear correlation is not the best way to conceptualize the effect of parent tutoring on reading achievement. It is possible that the relationship between
time spent in parent tutoring and positive effect is heavily influenced by the attainment of a minimal level of time in tutoring that is needed to make a difference on post-test measures. Once this minimal time level for efficacy is achieved, it may be followed by a point of diminishing returns for the time spent in tutoring. It is also possible that the minimal amount of time needed to effect a measurable change will vary from parent/child dyad to parent/child dyad.

It is further speculated that the amount of time needed to make a difference was achieved in this study for the lower half of the population. Thus, an average of 10 to 12 minutes per day (7 day week) seemed to make a difference for most students who have reading skill levels similar to those described above and who are part of a milieu similar to the one described above.

Interpretation of Survey and Interview Findings

Interview information was gathered from the weekly telephone consultations with the experimental group parents. Written survey information was also collected from the experimental group parents at the end of the study.
Treatment by Skill Interaction

Parent feedback suggested that some parents found a lack of interest in the materials because the child could read independently and did not need or want parent assistance to read the materials being sent home. This finding helps to explain why the higher readers did not make as much progress relative to their control group. Perhaps the higher skill readers did not need Fast Start but a more advanced program of reading that challenged their skills more appropriately. Thus, materials designed to be read independently and silently may have been more appropriate for some members of this high reading skill group.

It is also possible that the students who are doing well in the reading process at the start of first grade are functioning at their capability level and would not be able to show gains beyond their high ability peers in the control group, regardless of the intervention. In other words, the higher functioning students may have been performing at a level that did not allow for major improvements in a relatively short period of time.

It may also be significant that the five responding parents of students in the upper half of the distribution gave more varied and negative responses to the Likert
items than did parents of students in the lower half. The more favorable response of the lower skill group may reflect a better match of the materials and procedures to the needs of the students. Although one parent of a lower skill student thought the material was initially too hard for her child, simple suggestions solved the problem. Also, all four responding parents of students in the low half of the pre-test distribution "strongly agreed" with both Likert items:

1. The Fast Start program helped me help my child get off to a good start in reading; and

2. I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.

Of concern in this analysis is the fact that the low third of the pre-test distribution is poorly represented in that only one in five families returned the survey. That one responder, however, "strongly agreed" that the program helps the child get off to a good start in reading. In general, less positive ratings were received from parents of the higher skill level students.

**Gender Differences**

Though only three of six parents of girls in the experimental group returned the written survey, all three parents of girls "strongly agreed" with both Likert items:

1) The Fast Start program helped me help my child get
off to a good start in reading; and

2) I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.

The six surveys completed by parents of boys gave more mixed reactions, but none of the comments made by telephone or on the written survey referenced a concern about the program that could be related to the sex of the child. Thus, Fast Start seems to have perceived usefulness to both boys and girls.

**Parent Tutoring Time, Survey Responses, and Change Scores**

The amount of time a parent can devote to tutoring her/his first grade child is dependent on many variables. It was not the purpose of this study to make this question a primary focus. Rather, an effort was made to look at information that can help educators understand how some variables may affect parental attitude toward engaging in this particular home tutoring activity and the extent to which parent efforts can make a positive difference. Some variables relevant to this question are the parent/tutor work schedule, personal and family commitments and circumstances, parent-child conflict, level of child cooperation with the tutoring process, parental sense of efficacy as a tutor, and the presence or absence of family crises.
Regarding the relationship between parent/tutor work hours and survey responses, four of five part time working parents, two of five full time working parents, and three of five parents with no outside employment completed the survey.

Among the four survey responders who worked part-time, two "strongly agreed" with both Likert items:

1. The Fast Start program helped me help my child get off to a good start in reading; and

2. I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents.

Two of the three parents with no outside employment rated both Likert items as "strongly agree". One parent/tutor "strongly agreed" that Fast Start helped get their child off to a good start in reading and "agreed" that she would recommend Fast Start to other parents of first grade students.

One parent/tutor in the part-time employment group "agreed" with both items above. One parent/tutor in this category "neither agreed nor disagreed" with the first item and "agreed" with the second item. Among the two survey responders who worked full time, one strongly agreed with both items and one "agreed" with both items. Thus, there is evidence that a full range of parent/tutor
work schedules is not an obvious detractor from positive parent perception of the program.

When positive changes from pre-test to post-test were evaluated relative to work status, tutoring parents with full time work schedules had 1 student in the top third of the change rankings, 1 student in the middle third, and 3 students in the lowest third. Tutoring parents who worked part-time had 3 students in the top third, 1 in the middle third, and one in the lowest third. Tutoring parents who did not have outside employment had one student in the top third, 3 in the middle third, and one in the lowest third of the change rankings.

Parents reported concerns with time because of "personal issues" which interfered (e.g., piano lessons; holiday activities; family activities; health issues; soccer; visits to the non-custodial parent). One parent noted a general difficulty juggling time among four children.

Some parents who reported sporadic interest and resistance to some activities may have been observing a frustration response to the difficulty level of the materials. For example, one parent noted that the poems became too long and difficult; another parent observed that some of the words in the poems were too hard.
Although five parents rated the poems as being of the right difficulty, three of the parents thought that some of the poems were too difficult. If the parent was experiencing frustration reactions to the materials, it can diminish the motivation to do reading activities with one’s child (Gross, 1995). This may highlight the need to provide parents with materials that are not frustrating for the child.

Of the nine parents responding, six felt more confident to assist their child as a result of the program. Two parents did not notice a change in their confidence and one parent did not think confidence was a problem. These ratings suggest that there was good attainment of a training goal related to building parent efficacy as a tutor of their own child. It also suggests that these parents are more likely to engage in the tutoring activities than parents who did not feel confident to help their children.

Regarding the four families that reported significant stressors affecting their children, only one of these families returned the survey, so survey response trends are not discernable. That one responder “neither agreed nor disagreed” with the statement that Fast Start helped get the child off to a good start in reading and “agreed”
that they would recommend Fast Start to other first grade parents. It is noteworthy that two of those four students made impressive gains in change scores and two made relatively poor gains. It appears from this limited sample that parents and students in challenging family situations are not destined to a poor outcome. The parents continued to work with their children and good improvements were attained in half of these families with stressful situations. What accounts for the successes is not discernable from the data collected.

Suggestions for Educators

In general, the Fast Start procedure was well received by the nine parents who completed the survey. Comments from all 15 parents during the weekly telephone conferences indicated very little negative feeling toward the program. Most comments were quite positive or reflected minor concerns that were easily rectified. Therefore, based on this limited population, it appears that Fast Start is likely to be a well-received home tutoring option for many parents and students at the beginning of the first grade year.

For educators wishing to use the Fast Start procedure, it is suggested that they focus their efforts on those students who have minimal sight word skills and
no real reading fluency skill (three or fewer correct words per minute). It does not appear to be well suited for students who begin first grade with relatively high reading skills or a pretty good command of sight words.

Starting this program at the beginning of the first grade year worked well in this study because it seemed to capture the enthusiasm and hopefulness of the parents and their students who were trying to learn to read. For this reason, it is suggested that programs like this be done at the beginning of the first grade year. It may also be appropriate to initiate this program during the kindergarten year for those students who are showing indications of knowing most letters/sounds and reading a few sight words.

It is suggested that a training program be implemented with a focus on building parent efficacy in tutoring and instruction in ways to use positive reinforcement in the tutoring process. Also, parents and students enjoyed the practice tutoring during the training. Parents said they valued the opportunity to see the procedure modeled by this researcher/school psychologist before they began. Thus, it is suggested that students be part of the training program.
Because there was much diversity in the perception of the materials and procedures, it is suggested that there be ample choice for parents regarding the use of materials. Offering many poems, books, games, and word lists seemed to be helpful in that there was always something of interest from which parents and student could choose. The use of handouts is also suggested since several parents reported favorably on them. The use of the internet access option is not recommended at this time since parents did not use this option. As children develop better fluency and confidence, it is suggested that educators encourage parents to discontinue parent-to-child reading of the passages if the child wants to read independently.

Regarding the issue of motivating parents to take the time to do Fast Start, it appears that most parents are very busy or stressed with issues that are beyond the control of school personnel. It was the subjective opinion of this researcher that parents needed the weekly contact by telephone in order to develop a trust relationship with the contact educator, to be accountable, to be encouraged, and to have questions and concerns dealt with in an expeditious manner. Minor modifications were sometimes needed to accommodate a student or parent. This
weekly telephone conference strategy appeared to be successful in helping parents continue using the Fast Start procedure because the amount of tutoring time reported by parents did not decrease during the last half of the study. In fact, it increased slightly. The amount of time spent with parents on the telephone was not logged, but most parents needed a five minute call or less each week. Some needed more time, but this was fairly rare. If a teacher had five students who needed this type of support, it might mean an additional 30 minutes of work per week. In addition to the positive effect this can have on student performance, it appeared to be a nice public relations strategy with parents that may create a higher level of respect for and trust in educators, and a better working relationship between parents and educators. The practitioner could even follow-up with home visits as a way of better monitoring implementation.

Since this intervention seems quite effective for those students most at risk for reading failure, its use in kindergarten or first grade may alleviate more serious and more costly reading failure at higher grades. It may also help a school district comply with parent involvement mandates.
Finally, it is necessary to remember that this particular parent involvement activity may not be appropriate for certain parents. In this instance, other parent involvement options could be explored.

Suggestions for Researchers

From a theoretical perspective, the current research strategy was consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory that emphasizes the importance of linkages between settings (home and school) in the development of children. It was perceived that connections made with parents facilitated the development of two-way communication, mutual trust, a positive orientation and a shared understanding of our goals.

Also, Fast Start’s sequential process of parent modeling of reading before the child reads captures important theoretical considerations related to Bandura’s notion of modeling and feedback to help students adjust their behaviors to get positive feedback. The training of parents in the Fast Start process, taps into the importance of building self-efficacy of the parent as a reading tutor. The weekly phone conferences supported and encouraged the parents’ efficacy as tutors.

Regarding the issue of intervention model, the procedure used in this study is best described, at its
inception, as a School-to-Home Transmission model in that materials and procedures were directed from the school toward the home. However, as the 11 weeks continued, that uni-directional process took on two-way attributes through the telephone conference process. As time passed, it developed into more of a Curriculum Enrichment model as parent questions and needs were addressed. These phone conferences encouraged reciprocal interactions relative to materials and instructional practice. This procedure was very effective and is recommended to present and future researchers in the field of parent tutoring.

As reported in the literature review section, there is other evidence that lower level readers may do better than higher level readers with parent tutoring programs. Fox (1982) found that the lower half of the second grade sample showed more gain than those ranked in the upper half. Topping (1996) reported that lower SES students tend to show better gains with parent tutoring programs than higher SES students. The aptitude by treatment effects of this study supported the above view that lower skilled students at the start of first grade responded better to Fast Start than did the higher skilled students. Since the sample size of this study was small, it is suggested that larger scale research be done to replicate
these findings.

In addition to larger sample size, it would be of interest to do a follow-up study of the students to determine how they perform on norm referenced measures of reading; specifically on measures of comprehension. If long-term studies can support the current findings, efforts should be made to institutionalize this intervention within school systems. A large-scale effort to implement this program may require the services of a coordinator to help manage the communications between parents and teachers and facilitate the movement of materials between home and school.

It is also suggested that higher skill students in any future research population be provided a program that is more suited to their developmental levels. Fast Start does not appear to be appropriate for the students who are at the high end of the reading skill spectrum. These students may need a program of reading that requires more independent reading with materials that require skills above a typical beginning first grade level. The parent role could be one of monitoring the child's reading and facilitating parent-child discussions of the reading that has been done.
Further, it is suggested that future research continue with first grade students and be expanded to kindergarten students. There are students in kindergarten performing at reading levels found appropriate for the Fast Start procedure. If Fast Start is found efficacious for kindergarten students, regular parent training program could be offered to both kindergarten and first grade parents who have children in the skill range associated with positive outcomes.

Regarding research methodology, it is the opinion of this researcher that the use of random assignment to treatment and control groups is highly desirable, if not critical, to the validity of any future findings. The pre-test/post-test assessment strategy proved helpful in that pre-test data provided helpful information as weekly parent contacts were made. It is suggested that future researchers retain this assessment strategy.

Finally, as pointed out by Hall, Delquadri, Greenwood and Thurston (1982), providing students with increased opportunities to respond to the learning materials at school is known to facilitate learning. Thus, researchers may want to determine if it is simply the act of tutoring that makes a difference, or whether it is the person who tutors that makes a difference. Researchers could conduct
experiments designed to determine if parents as tutors are more effective than adult or high school volunteers as tutors. This would help address the question that is left unanswered by this research: Is there more benefit in the parent tutoring her/his own child as opposed to other people who are appropriately trained?
LIST OF REFERENCES


Fulwider, N. A. (1995). Encouraging the participation of families of elementary-age children in home-school literacy activities through staff development, parent workshops, and individual family plans. Practicum II report, Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.


Appendix A

Letters of Parent Invitation and Explanation
Dear Parents of First Grade Students at Brookside,

My name is Bruce Stevenson. I am the school psychologist at your child's school and I am a doctoral student at Ohio State University. In my role as a doctoral student, I am conducting research this year which is designed to assess the usefulness of a specific parent involvement program known as Fast Start. Fast Start was developed by Tim Rasinsky of Kent State University. Fast Start requires parent training and the provision of materials which can be used by parents to help their first grade children learn to read. I am conducting research which will allow us to help determine if this program is effective in improving reading skills.

In order to test this program, we will be dividing all consenting first grade students/parents into two equal groups. The division will be done at random. One group will be asked to participate in the training and will receive weekly packets of reading activities. The program also includes weekly phone calls from me to participating parents to gather some information about the materials, the techniques, and the amount of time you spent doing the activities. The program will last for 12 weeks during the fall.

The other half of the consenting first grade students and their parents will not be offered the training or materials during this 12 week period. These children will receive the normal materials that come from the child's teacher. However, you will be asked, by phone, to respond to a series of questions about your home literacy activities during the 12 week period. You will be called once during the 12 week period.

Students in both groups will be assessed on their reading and reading readiness skills prior to the study. The assessment will take about 5
minutes and will involve a brief letter and word recognition activity and an opportunity to read for about three minutes from some early- and mid-first grade materials. Either your child’s teacher or I will be doing the assessment. It will either be done in the classroom or in a quiet room in the school office. All participating students will, again, be assessed about 13-14 weeks later to determine the amount of improvement they have made from the pre-test.

If you are interested in participating in the research, you will find another enclosed letter which gives you an opportunity to give your consent for participation. Please return your consent form to the school within a week. You may address it to Bruce Stevenson. Your child’s teacher or the school secretary will see that it is given to me.

If you have questions or concerns about this research you may contact me or the school principal, Mr. Monroe, at the Brookside number: 883-2750. The Ohio State University professor who is advising me on this project, Dr. Antoinette Miranda, can be reached at 292-5909.

Sincerely,

Bruce Stevenson
School Psychologist

Fritz Monroe
Principal
Dear Parents of First Graders at Brookside,

We want to thank you again for your interest in participating in the parent involvement research we are doing with first graders at Brookside.

As noted in the first letter, the interested parents were to be randomly assigned to one of two groups. One group, the experimental group, gets the training and materials associated with the Fast Start Program. The other group does not get the training and materials at this time.

You have been randomly assigned to the experimental group. Thus, we need to arrange a time for you to receive the training program at Brookside. We are planning one training session right after school (2:40 pm) and another session in the evening at 7:00 pm. Each session will last about an hour. We would like you to bring your first grade child to the session that best fits your schedule. If you choose the after-school session, your child can be held at school until needed in the training session.

Child care will be provided during both sessions. Your first grade child will join the meeting at the half way point so you can practice the procedures with your own child. If you need child care for children other than your first grade child, we need to know that in advance.

We would like to have the training sessions at the following times:

Tuesday, October 3rd at 2:40 pm  
Tuesday, October 3rd at 7:00 pm

Mr. Stevenson will be calling you this weekend to find out your availability for either of these sessions and your need for child care. If you prefer, you may call Mr. Stevenson at home this weekend and state you preferences. Mr. Stevenson’s home phone number is 891-7188.

Thanks again for your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Fritz Monroe  
Principal

Bruce Stevenson  
School Psychologist
Dear Parents of First Grade Students at Brookside,

We want to thank you for your willingness to participate in the research we are doing on the Fast Start parent involvement program.

As stated in the first letter, we are randomly dividing the interested parents into two equal groups. One group gets the training and materials and the other group is contacted periodically to help us assess the types of literacy activities that are occurring in your home.

Based on the random assignment, you were assigned to the control group which means you will not be asked to attend the training session and will not receive the materials. You will be contacted at least once over the next several weeks to help us determine the types of literacy activities that are occurring in your home which could benefit your first grade child.

Activities like reading to your child, taking trips to the library, playing educational games designed to promote reading or writing, direct teaching of reading or writing skills, pointing out words in the environment, doing activities suggested by your child's teacher, and many other activities are of interest to us.

As stated before, if the Fast Start program is found to be more effective than these above-mentioned activities, it will be offered to you at a later time in the school year.

Again, thank you for your assistance and please feel free to call if you have questions.

Fritz Monroe
Brookside Principal

Bruce Stevenson
School Psychologist
Dear Parents of First Graders at Brookside,

We want to thank you again for your interest in participating in the parent involvement research we are doing with first graders at Brookside.

As noted in the first letter, the interested parents were to be randomly assigned to one of two groups. One group, the experimental group, gets the training and materials associated with the Fast Start Program. The other group does not get the training and materials at this time.

You have been randomly assigned to the experimental group. Thus, we need to arrange a time for you to receive the training program at Brookside. We are planning one training session right after school (2:40 pm) and another session in the evening at 7:00 pm. Each session will last about an hour. We would like you to bring your first grade child to the session that best fits your schedule. If you choose the after-school session, your child can be held at school until needed in the training session.

Child care will be provided during both sessions. Your first grade child will join the meeting at the half way point so you can practice the procedures with your own child. If you need child care for children other than your first grade child, we need to know that in advance.

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Mr. Stevenson will be calling you this weekend to find out your availability for either of these sessions and your need for child care. If you prefer, you may call Mr. Stevenson at home this weekend and state your preferences. Mr. Stevenson's home phone number is 891-7188.

Thanks again for your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Fritz Monroe  
Principal

Bruce Stevenson  
School Psychologist
Appendix B

Fast Start Training Meeting Agenda
And
Family Information Data Sheet
FAST START TRAINING MEETING AGENDA

I. KIDS TO PLAY AREA AND PARENTS TO MEETING ROOM TO COMPLETE THE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

II. OPENING REMARKS ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND THE PRESENT RESEARCH STUDY

III. COMPONENTS OF THE FAST START PROGRAM

A. READING TO CHILD; READING WITH CHILD; CHILD READING ALONE
   1. SCHOOL TEXT MATERIAL
   2. POETRY

B. WORD STUDY ACTIVITIES
   1. WORDS FROM BASAL READERS AND POETRY
   2. USE OF THE "WORD BANK" (FRY WORD LIST)
   3. USE OF WORD GAMES

C. RELATED LITERACY PRACTICES IN THE HOME
   1. MODELING
   2. BOOKS AVAILABLE
   3. LIBRARY

D. USE OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT WHILE TUTORING

IV. WEEKLY HANDOUTS AND PASSAGES

A. HANDOUTS AND POETRY ARE THE SAME FOR ALL
   B. READING PASSAGES FROM SCHOOL ARE THOSE BEING USED BY YOUR CHILD IN THE CLASSROOM.

V. WEEKLY PHONE CONTACTS

A. INFORMATION DESIRED FROM PARENTS
   1. TIME SPENT IN TUTORING (REPORT FROM LOG)
   2. PARENT QUESTIONS ABOUT OR REACTIONS TO MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES
   3. PARENT CONFIDENCE IN WORKING WITH CHILD
   4. PERCEIVED USEFULNESS
   5. SUGGESTIONS
   6. CHILD'S LEVEL OF INDEPENDENCE

B. INFORMATION DESIRED BY PARENTS
VI. CHILDREN ARE BROUGHT INTO THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.
ONE STUDENT WILL BE WORKED WITH BY THE RESEARCHER TO DEMONSTRATE THE FAST START PROCEDURE

A. COMMENTS AND REACTIONS BY PARENTS
B. PARENTS TRY A PASSAGE WITH THEIR OWN CHILD
C. QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

VII. CLOSING COMMENTS

A. POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS AT THE END OF THE STUDY

B. HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE RESEARCHER (BRUCE STEVENSON)
1. WEB SITE:
   <www.schoolnotes.com/43235/brucestevenson.html>
2. PHONE:
   883-2750 - BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY
   883-3600 - PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL
3. E-MAIL: - stevenson.53@osu.edu

C. MAY RETRACT CONSENT AT ANY TIME
FAMILY INFORMATION FROM FAST START PARTICIPANTS
FALL, 2000

Name of Child in First Grade: _____________________________

Names of Parents: ____________________________________

Marital Status of Parents: ____________________________________

With which parent does the child reside?: _____________________________

Number and ages of siblings in the home where the child resides: ____________________________________

Parent Phone Numbers:
Mother (H) (W)
Father (H) (W)

Number of hours per week engaged in work outside of the home:
Father
Mother

What is the most convenient place, time, and day for the researcher, Mr. Stevenson, to call and gather information each week? (For example: Mondays at 7:00 p.m. at the mother’s home number).

Who will be doing the home tutoring? Circle all that apply:
Mother    Father    Other (explain):

Do any of the people doing the tutoring have any formal training in education?

Are there any family situations of which the researcher should be aware?
Appendix C

Fast Start Newsletter #1
Fast Start in Reading
Newsletter #1

Welcome to the Fast Start in Reading program developed by Timothy Rasinski of Kent State University. Fast Start is a simple yet effective way for parents to help their children get off to a fast start in reading. Together with the instruction in reading your child receives at school, the Fast Start program helps to lay a solid foundation for continual growth and enjoyment in reading for your child. Parents are important and in Fast Start parents are asked to work with their children a few minutes each day in a way that is enjoyable for both parents and children.

Fast Start employs short, highly readable passages that children will learn easily. Familiar rhymes, poetry, and other fun-to-read short passages form the core of materials that parents and children read in Fast Start.

The key activity in Fast Start is actually quite simple and easy to follow. We ask that you follow these four steps in every lesson:

1. **Read the passage to your child**
2. **Read the passage with your child**
3. **Listen to your child read to you**
4. **Choose and practice words from the passage**

This four-step procedure has been found to be effective, in conjunction with regular classroom instruction, in helping children learn to read at an accelerated pace and diminishing the need for corrective or remedial instruction. Children who have been in the Fast Start program for as little as 4 weeks have demonstrated marked improvements in their reading as measured by various reading tests.

Moreover, parents who have tried Fast Start have indicated that they have enjoyed the opportunity to work with their children in a way that is fun and effective in helping children become readers.
**General Plan for Fast Start**

In the Fast Start program, parents are asked to work with their children for about 10 minutes per day, every day. We realize that it isn't possible to work every single day with your child. Nevertheless, we want to set this as a goal and hope that all parents involved in the project will be able to work with their first-grade children as much as possible.

All reading passages for Fast Start will be provided. The only thing parents will have to supply are a couple of decks of 3 by 5 file cards that will be used as word bank cards. The file cards can be purchased at any drug store, Kmart, or similar type of store.

We ask that you work with your child every day for about 10 minutes. The schedule for introducing new passages is as follows:

**Monday:** Introduce and read new reading passage or rhyme.
**Tuesday:** Introduce and read a second new passage.
**Wednesday:** Review and reread passages from Monday and Tuesday.
**Thursday:** Introduce and read a third new passage.
**Friday:** Introduce and read a fourth new passage.
**Saturday and Sunday:** Review all passages introduced during the week.

We hope you will be able to keep as close to this schedule as possible throughout the year. Although you are asked to work each day with your child, the amount of time you need to devote to the Fast Start readings is only about 10 minutes. Remember, one of the most important aspects of this program -- one that accounts for children's great progress in reading -- is the consistent, daily interaction between parent and child in reading.

In addition to doing the Fast Start program with your child throughout the school year, it is imperative that parents encourage and invite their children into reading in other ways as well. These other ways include reading interesting books to your child every day, making regular visits to the library to allow your child to choose books, having plenty of books and other reading materials around your home for your child to read, allowing your child to write by keeping a journal or diary, composing letters and notes to others, writing his or her own stories, providing your child with interesting experiences and discussing them with your child, and allowing your
child to dictate stories to you that you then write down and read together. Above all, make sure your child know that you think reading is important and fun and the best way to share your enthusiasm is to read to your child every day and talk about what you read together.

**Daily Plan for Fast Start**

The Fast Start program is based on proven techniques and principles for effective reading instruction. Provided below is a general format for working with your child each day in Fast Start:

**Step 1.** Quickly review any previous passages with your child by having him or her read them to you or by reading them together. **Remember to always point to the text as you read in order to draw your child's attention to the words.**

**Step 2.** Introduce and read a new poem or passage (Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.). If a new passage is not introduced, go to step 3.
   a. Read the passage to your child 2 or 3 times.
   b. Discuss the content of the passage.
   c. Read the passage together with your child 2 or 3 times.
   d. Invite you child to read the passage on his or her own once or twice.

**Step 3.** Work on individual words, letters, and sounds from the passage.
   a. Say a word and have your child find it in the passage by pointing to it or circling it.
   b. Use a word window to have your child identify individual words.

   **A word window is simply a 3 by 5 card in which a small rectangle has been cut out that allows you to expose one word at a time in a passage.**

   c. For each passage allow your child to choose 1 or 2 words for the word bank (parents may also choose a word or two). Write the words on 3 by 5 cards in large print.

   **Parents should choose words which are common (e.g. “the”) or that can be rhymed or expanded into a familiar word family (e.g. “bat” can be expanded into “cat, sat, hat etc.”).**

   d. Practice and play games with word bank cards. Fast Start isn’t a miracle way of teacher reading. Learning to read takes
time and effort. But, by combining the instruction in reading your child receives at school with a few minutes of extra help at home every night, you will insure that your child is getting off to the best possible start in reading. A few minutes each evening is a small price to pay for helping your child get off to a Fast Start in reading.
Appendix D

Word Family Activities
After reading the poems, find a couple of common word families and brainstorm other words.

hot          old

Pease-porridge hot,  
Pease-porridge cold,  
Pease-porridge in the pot,  
Nine days old.  
Some like it hot,  
Some like it cold,  
Some like it in the pot,  
Nine days old.
After reading the poems, find a couple of common word families and brainstorm other words.

- all
- men

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men Couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty together again.
Appendix E

Fast Start Reading Log Sheet
FAST START
READING LOG

Name: _______________________

Activities Engaged In (FAST START and others)

Date: ___________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

COMMENTS FOR RESEARCHER:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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Appendix F

Games to Develop Letter/Word Identification Skills
GAMES TO DEVELOP WORD IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

Game 1  MAKING PAIRS

Make about 25 word or letter card pairs on 3 X 5 cards. Note that you will be making 2 of each card. You will end up with a 50 card deck. Choose words or letters for the cards which are likely to be recognized by the child.

Five cards are dealt to each player and the remainder of the deck is placed face down in the center of the table.

The player to the left of the dealer, or the person who did not deal (if a two player game) begins by asking another player for a specific card that will match one in his/her hand. If the person asked has the card asked for, he/she must give it up to the one who asked for it. If the one who is asked does not have the requested card, the one who asked for the card draws one card from the pile.

The player who gets the card for which he/she asked (either from another player or from the pile, gets a second turn. As soon as a player has a pair, the player gets to keep it, putting it in his or her pile on the table. The player with the most pairs wins.

Game 2  ODD CARD LOSES

Print words likely to be recognized by the child on 3 X 5 cards. Make about 20 to 25 cards and then make another set just like the first so you end up with 20 to 25 pairs of identical cards. Make one “odd card”. This card could be a picture of something the child has selected (e.g. monster, favorite toy, cartoon character). The same cards you used for MAKING PAIRS can be used for this game.

Deal out the cards and begin with the person to the left of the dealer. The game starts by drawing a card from the person to the right (or the other person if there are only two players).

As pairs are formed, the words are repeated out loud and then placed on the table. This continues until all pairs are matched and one person is “stuck” with the ODD card.
Game 3  MEMORY

You can use the same cards that you made up for Games 1 or 2. All cards are tuned face down.

The first person to play turns over two cards and reads what is printed on both cards. If the cards match and the child can read them, the child keeps the pair and gets another turn. If the cards do not match (or the child cannot read them) the cards are returned to their original position.

At this point, be sure to tell your child how to read or say those cards which are missed.

The second player now gets a turn.

The object of the game is to get as many matched pairs as possible.

Game 4  FLASHO

Write the words or letters you wish your child to learn on 3 X 5 cards. One card is needed for each item.

"Flash" the card quickly in front of the child requiring that he/she read the word or letter.

Work at a rapid pace. Tell the child the answer to any cards that are missed. It is suggested that you keep a ratio of about 7 known words or letters to 3 unknown words or letters.

See if your child can beat the clock. Can he do ten cards correctly within a certain time limit? Is so, can he/she try for twelve in the same time limit?
Appendix G

Examples of Weekly Handouts to Parents
Reading Together:
Adult and Child

Echo Reading

Touch the words as you read ... Your child can touch the words also.

Read together and DROP YOUR VOICE when your child is able to read alone. Join in with your child when he needs help.

Since YOU are reading WITH your child, you are helping your child keep a steady pace and helping him HEAR himself reading smoothly. This develops fluency (smoothness) and CONFIDENCE.
Finding Time

Set aside the same time each night for reading and writing (before bed, after dinner). When we establish a routine, we continue to have time for that routine without feeling stressed out.

Involve other adults. Use your spouse, grandparents, sitters, neighbors, older children. You can't do it all yourself.

Trade in a TV show for a daily reading and writing time.

Think of ways that you can "kill two birds with one stone." Have your child read or write at the table while you are preparing a meal or cleaning up. Use the "waiting time" in stores, at an appointment, in the car, etc.

Have books and a box of writing paper, markers and pencils available for your child to use. Your child might begin a reading or writing activity without your direct attention.

Remember that there will be a "pay off" for time spent NOW. Yes, helping your children get on the right road to reading and writing takes time. But once children become independent readers and confident writers, they will be able to spend time alone enjoying reading and writing.
Writing Activities

You can write your child's ideas
AND
your child can write.

Make books.
* Follow the pattern of books that your child has read.
* Make books about topics that your child is interested in.

Keep a journal or diary, writing down special events and feelings.

After drawing a picture, help your child write about it.

Make sentence puzzles: Help your child write a sentence about a favorite topic. Cut the words apart, mix them up, and have your child put the sentence back together.

Have a family mailbox: Write notes to each other and place in the family mailbox. Ask your child to "deliver the mail" every day. (great for reading and writing)

Write a short note to your child asking a question. Have your child read and answer the note.
Write a short note to your child and tuck it in your child's lunch box or book bag, or post it on the refrigerator for your child to read and answer.

Have your child help you with lists: Grocery lists, lists of presents, people to call, things to do, errands to run, etc.

Have your child make a mini telephone directory with names and phone numbers of friends and relatives.

Write captions or sentences to place next to photos in a photo album or write a sentence on the back of each photo.

Have your child write a letter to a friend or relative. Each day, add a sentence or two to the letter. At the end of the week, mail the letter. (Before mailing the original letter, make copies of it and send the copies to several other people. Doing this will help your child receive several letters in return.) When writing letters, have your child include a few questions.

Make A-B-C lists: Write the alphabet on a piece of paper, A to Z. Give your child a topic and ask him to think of a word in that category for each letter of the alphabet. (favorite topics: animals, people’s first names, places, toys)
Appendix H

Examples of Weekly Children’s Poetry Handouts
The Choo Choo Train

The choo choo train
does chug and chug,
up the hill like a little bug.
If it stops,
it will need a tug,
that choo choo train
that chugs and chugs.

- Timothy Rasinski
The Possum

The possum sat on a rail
eating apples she found in a pail
If she should trip
or lose her grip
she'll simply hold on with her tail.

- Karen McGuigan Brothers
A Duck Named Chuck

There once was a duck named Chuck
who wanted to drive a truck.
I wished him good luck,
but he got stuck in the muck.
Now poor Chuck is the
duck with no luck.

- Lisa M. Dimling
Appendix I

Examples of Assessment Materials
List #1

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</tbody>
</table>

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List #2

was for are
as with his
they be have
from or one
had by word
but not what
all were when
your can said
there
Is This Home?

"Come and play!" said the little dog.
"I can't play now," said the big dog. "I have to go home."
"What is home?" asked the little dog.
"Home is where you get food," said the big dog.
"Look," said the little dog. "You can get food here. Is this home?"
"No," said the big dog. "Home is a thing you go in."
"You can go in this," said the little dog. "You can get food here. Is this home?"
"No, it isn't," said the big dog. "That is just a little box. Home is big. You can run and play in it. Boys and girls are there."
"Oh, I see," said the little dog. "Come on! Come on! Come down here with me."
"Look at that," said the little dog. "That is big. You can run and play in it. Boys and girls are there. Is that home?"
"No! No!" said the big dog. "That is not home. You can't get food there. Now you come with me. You will see what home is."
"This is a home!" said the big dog.
"The boys and girls like me," said the little dog. "I like them, too. I am happy here. I want a home like this."
"I think you have a home now!" said the big dog. "You will be happy here with us."
"Good!" said the little dog. "Now I have a home. Can we play?"
Appendix J

Survey of Control Group Parents' Literacy Activities
October, 2000

Dear Parents of Brookside First Graders,

As part of our research project on parent involvement in reading, we are asking participants to give us information about the literacy activities that are happening in their homes.

Please take a few minutes to let us know the types of activities you are doing in your home. Please list the activities and make an estimate as to the average amount of time you are now spending on reading and/or writing activities.

Examples of literacy activities are: reading letters/words to your child, your child reading letters/words to you, getting books at the library, writing letters or words, playing games that require reading, and any other activity which promotes reading and/or writing such as use of a computer for educational purposes.

Please list the activities that have occurred in your home during a typical week since school started.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Now, please estimate the amount of time you spend in a typical week doing the activities listed above. You don't need to estimate the time of each activity, just the total time for all activities. If you would like to monitor the amount of time for a given week and then respond, that would be fine.

________________________________________________________________________

Finally, put this completed sheet in the enclosed envelope and put it in the mail. Just a reminder, all information is confidential and is not a part of any school record that is kept on your child.

Thanks for your help,

Fritz Monroe, Principal

Bruce Stevenson
Brookside Elementary School (883-2750)
Appendix K

Survey of Experimental Group Parents’
Perceptions of Program Components
Dear Fast Start Parent,

Since we are near the end of the study, I'm asking for written feedback related to the Fast Start program. Please respond to each question and return this survey via the US mail system in the enclosed envelope. Please return it by December 15th. As always, your responses are confidential and not a part of any school record.

Thanks,
Bruce Stevenson

Name of child _________________________________
Name of person completing this questionnaire ________________________________

Training

Was the Fast Start Parent Manual helpful? _______________________________________
Which components of the Fast Start Training were most helpful? Least helpful?
(See the Fast Start Training Agenda for ideas)
Most- _______________________________________
Least- _______________________________________

Did you ever use the Fast Start website mentioned in the training material? ___________
If so, was it helpful? ___________________________________________________________

Who

How many different people helped your child with the reading activities described in the Fast Start training. Please identify those who did Fast Start activities with the student (e.g. father, mother, grandparent, sibling).

Who did most of the Fast Start activities with your child? __________________________

Fast Start Procedure

Was the sequential procedure described in training (read to child, read with child, child reads to you) helpful? _______________________________________________________

Did you apply this procedure to the materials sent home and/or to materials other than those provided (e.g. library books, environmental print, other available books).

If this procedure was not helpful, why do you think it was not helpful?

Were the rhyming activities (finding word families like hat, cat, sat, mat.....) helpful?

Were the word study activities (sight word lists/home-made flash cards/selected words from passages) helpful?

Other Comments?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Materials Sent Home

Were the weekly poems of interest to your child? _________________________________
Comments about the poems: _________________________________________________
Were the word lists helpful? ____________________________________________
Comments about the word lists: ________________________________________

If your child received books from school, were they helpful? ________________
Comments about books sent home: ______________________________________

Were the weekly parent handouts helpful to you? ____________________________

General Assessments

I felt that the Fast Start program helped me help my child get off to a good start in
reading (please circle one):
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Which components of the program seemed most helpful?

Are you feeling more confident in working with your child since the program began?

Is your child more independent in reading activities since the program began?

I would recommend the Fast Start program to other first grade parents: (circle one)
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

General Concerns:

Were any of the materials too difficult or too easy for your child? Which ones.

Have you found any need to modify any of the materials or procedures for your child?
How? _________________________________________________________________

Do time constraints limit what you are able to do with the program? What activities or
circumstances tended to reduce the time you could allot to reading activities? ______

Please state any other general concerns you may have with the any aspect of the
program. ________________________________________________________________

If you have found it difficult to do the Fast Start activities, what are the reasons for the
difficulty? __________________________________________________________________

Other Comments?
________________________________________________________________________