Literacy: Parent Training in the Elementary Educational System

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LITERACY: PARENT TRAINING IN THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

by

Mattie Darlene Mathis Hill

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

May 2012
ABSTRACT

LITERACY: PARENT TRAINING IN THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

by Mattie Darlene Mathis Hill

May 2012

Over several years, second grade parents have expressed concerns about not understanding the curriculum in the area of phonetic coding. The purpose of this study was to give second grade parents the skills they lacked in understanding phonetic coding so they could better help their children with homework and thus see if a significant difference in the children’s Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills® (DIBELS) Oral Reading Fluency test performance was observed. Parents were offered training in the mornings and evenings for 15 weeks using the Saxon Phonics Program – the same program used to teach the children. The parents stayed a week ahead of the children’s lessons. Childcare was provided to help make the training more convenient for the parents.

Forty-five children’s DIBELS scores were used in the study. Twenty-three children’s parents were in the Trained Parents group, and twenty-two children’s parents were in the Not Trained Parents group. Students were pre-tested before the training began and post-tested after the training concluded using the Oral Reading Fluency section of the DIBELS assessment.

The analysis for the study was performed using Analysis of Covariance controlling for the pre-test. There was not a significant difference in Oral Reading Fluency scores of children whose parents were trained as compared to students whose
parents were not trained. Even though the results of the study did not prove to be statistically significant, the Trained Parents group’s students’ scores still went up more than the Untrained Parents group’s students’. While again, the results were not statistically significant, they did indicate to at least some degree that parent training may be more beneficial than not training the parents. With this being stated, the resource of parents should continue to be researched and used within schools.
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A Dissertation
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of The University of Southern Mississippi
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Approved:

Rose McNeese
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May 2012
DEDICATION

My parents chose to give me the name of my grandmother, Mattie Jane Mowdy Holt, without whom this study would not have even been attempted. My grandmother was born in Leake County, Mississippi on March 30, 1903. She was born in Sebastopol, Mississippi where she lived until she was six years old. She then moved with her parents to Madden, Mississippi where she lived until she was 22 years old and married a man named Jesse Holt. She was a courageous woman who believed in doing what was right according to the Bible. Grandma was the kind of woman that never met a stranger and always seemed to have a smile on her face. She was left alone to raise seven children with the help of God. Grandma was truly a God fearing, determined woman from whom I am proud to inherit my name. Grandma passed from this life on June 8, 1965. I wish she could have seen her name on the title this degree will afford. In my mind she and I will always share this title, as with her name, because she accomplished more with her determination, love for her family, and God than most people will ever accomplish in a lifetime. I will be proud to attach the title doctor to our name.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the administrators of The Lamar County School District for allowing me to pursue this study in one of their schools. The second grade teachers at the school used in the study also helped tremendously: Mrs. Nancy Munn, Mrs. Sonja Herrington, Mrs. Faye Casanova, Ms. Jodi Broome, and Ms. Amy Pickering. The teachers along with second grade parents, second grade students, tutors, and assistants made this study possible.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, My chair, Dr. Rose McNeese, encouraged me a great deal along the way; Dr. James T. Johnson, my statistician, explained statistics in words that I could actually understand. Dr. Johnson, I thank you for being so plain spoken. You are definitely a man who loves his job and does it well. Thank you for not retiring before I finished my dissertation. I can think of no one that will be able to fill your shoes when you retire. A thank you also goes to committee members, Dr. David Lee, who also served as my advisor and knew how to act so calmly when I was struggling; and Dr. Ronald Styron, for agreeing to serve on my committee when a previously chosen committee member retired from the university.

First and foremost, I want to thank God, the Father; and Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, without whom ALL of my education would not have been possible. Many prayers have been answered.

An enormous thank you goes to my husband, Jeff, for making school one of the priorities in our marriage and family schedule. He had to play the role of Mama and Daddy many times over throughout this process. Also, this study would not have been possible without the help and patience of my two daughters, Jessica Dianne and Emily
Nicole. Jessica played the role of editor for me and continued to show me how God had blessed her with such wonderful talents. Emily always seemed to think it normal for Mama to be buried in school work. Jessica and Emily, I thank you for understanding and being patient with me. Both of my girls have given up precious, valuable time to help make this endeavor a success. All of my degrees were a family effort that will be remembered and appreciated as long as I live.

My education would not have been possible without the determination given to me by my dear mother, Mallie Kay Holt Mathis. My mother always told me that I needed to learn to be content as it states in the Bible. Mama, I think that I have now reached that point.

My sister, Debra Mathis Griffis, has always inspired me to push forward with my education. Thank you, Debbie, for believing in me.

All of the people mentioned above will hold a special place in my heart as I begin to move on in my life. I have been truly blessed!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

During the last seventeen years of my teaching second grade, many parents have conveyed that their lack of phonetic skills has hindered their ability to tutor their children with homework. The purpose of this study was to give parents the skills lacked and thus see if a significant difference in the children’s test performance was observed. Parents were trained with the Saxon Phonics Program that was in use during the time of the study. According to Lorna Simmons (2006), Saxon Phonics is a successful reading program that enables most children to develop a solid foundation in phonics which enhances fluency that helps lead to better reading comprehension and thus become successful readers. The main emphasis is placed on coding phonetically.

As emphasized by Simmons (2006), coding is a tool used to help children become successful readers. By marking common vowel patterns and letter clusters, children are taught how to code words. This helps the children identify the sound of each letter/letter cluster and thus have the ability to read the words. This method gives children the capability to approach new words confidently and familiarizes them with dictionary pronunciation and phonetic coding so that they will understand many of the pronunciation symbols used in dictionaries (Simmons, 2006). The overall goal of this study was to teach children how to read. Coding is simply a tool that helps children read successfully. To become successful, independent readers, children must acquire not only basic decoding skills but also reading fluency. Being able to decode quickly and correctly helps children read more fluently and will thus lead to better reading comprehension.
This study was to teach parents how to use this tool of coding. The goal was to see if parent usage of this tool significantly increased children’s Oral Reading Fluency. A parent is a child’s first teacher (Morris et al., 1995). Recently, parents have been recognized for the important role they play in establishing the foundation of their children’s education, facilitating their development and success, andremedying educational and developmental issues (Becher, 1986). It is a widespread public misconception that children learn to read when they enter first grade. Research has indicated that the primary focus of the first-grade teacher should definitely be provided before the child enters first grade. In 1980, Masons stated that parents provide the original foundations for later literacy success, and they should provide experiences to insure an increase in their children’s knowledge of reading. A problem arises when the parents do not have the confidence or skills to help the child with reading. While uncertainty about what to do in this situation can deter parent involvement, research has indicated when given the skills and opportunity to be involved in early intervention and school activities, many parents become active and resourceful (Powell, 1989). The purpose of Powell’s study was to determine if parental training and involvement in selected reading lessons increases the reading levels of first-grade children.

Early literacy development was supported by a multitude of experiences in many types of settings and surroundings (Juel, 1991). A major component of the process, the development and maturation of oral language, in emergent literacy occurs in the home (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). Research suggests that literacy learning starts in the home rather than the school and the instruction at school should build on the foundation for literacy learning that is established in the home (Becher, 1986). Faires et al. (2000)
indicated that even before entering preschool or kindergarten, children can and usually do have many experiences with print that can provide the foundation for further growth in reading and even writing. Children brought up in environments such as a talkative dinner table or bedtime story where oral language is encouraged and where their parents foster a love for literature by exposing them to nursery rhymes and simple stories, provide the building blocks for becoming lifelong readers and successful learners (Faires et al., 2000).

The concept of early literacy suggests that all children come to the school atmosphere with certain experiences and interests in reading (Au, 1993). Parents are, and must be, viewed as partners in the learning process because their role in their child’s early learning is crucial. This involvement ranges from meeting basic needs of their child to involvement in school committees and decision-making processes. All forms of involvement can motivate a child’s interest in learning and facilitate the development of partnership relationships between parents and teachers that ultimately lead to gains in student achievement in literacy (Cairney & Munsic, 1995).

Parents and teachers, eager to foster growth of early literacy skills, need the encouragement to challenge children by exposing them to a variety of experiences with print (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). There are many American educators that are offering parents hands-on opportunities to become actively involved in the literacy programs of their child’s school. Large numbers of parents, though particularly those in low-income, urban environments, are not being actively recruited or actively engaged in school-wide literacy efforts. This distancing of low-income families from schools is frequently perceived by educators to be caused by a lack of parental interest (Come & Fredericks,
1995; Jenkins, 1981). However, in 1987, Goldenberg suggests that these parents often make a consistent effort to help their children with homework and are very willing to work hard to foster their children’s reading and writing. Epstein’s research in 1993 suggested that low-income families, like all other families, desire for their children to succeed in school.

The impact of poor reading abilities in a child’s early life is not short-lived, and it significantly contributes to the widening of the achievement gap between poor readers and those who read well. A study by Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander, and Conway (1997) found an almost 80% chance that a reader who reads poorly at the end of first grade will still read poorly at the end of fourth grade. Similarly in 1998, Fletcher and Lyon (1998) reported that 75% of students who read poorly at the end of third grade will continue to read poorly in ninth grade.

According to Wagner et al., (1994), Stanovich (1988), and Wagner and Torgesen (1987), poor readers lack the understanding of core reading skills. Their studies have found that children who have difficulty reading lack the ability to structure words phonetically and lack the ability to recognize and transfer words from print to speech (Wagner et al., 1994; Stanovich, 1988; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Lyon, 1998) reported that for 90% to 95% of poor readers, early prevention programs that combine instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling and reading comprehension can increase these children’s reading skills to average levels. Simmons et al. (2002) has also shown that an extra 30 to 40 minutes of reading instruction and practice per day, a technique called double-dosing, can improve the abilities of below-level readers and help close the achievement gap. A
study by Simmons et al. in 2002 found that providing an extra 30 minutes of daily reading instruction and practice on phonological awareness, alphabet understanding, and spelling—taught in an explicit manner, was highly effective. The Simmons study also provides evidence that children who begin a double-dosing program in kindergarten will be much less likely to leave first grade as a below-level reader (Simmons et al., 2002).

National education committees also support programs that give children more or extra reading instruction that focuses on phonological awareness and alphabet understanding. The American Federation of Teachers (2001) has encouraged school districts to use double-dosing to try to help students become better readers. As well, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) has stressed the necessity of providing quality reading instruction on phonological awareness and alphabetic understanding to a child as early as possible to prevent later reading problems.

It has been found that many schools use double-dosing to decrease the number of below-level readers and increase reading test scores on standardized tests. The Bethel School District in Eugene, Oregon, for example, implemented a double-dosing program providing at-risk kindergartners with 30 extra minutes of phonics instruction every day, as well as bimonthly reading assessments. Before the district implemented the instruction, 15% of students left the first grade without the ability to read. Since the implementation only two percent have left as nonreaders (Paglin, 2003). A school official attributed student success to the addition of different instructional materials that are used for both normal and double-dosing reading instruction.
Parents of every socioeconomic class and educational level have expectations for their children to be successful in school, but these parents often do not know how to assist with school work to foster a positive attitude in their children toward learning (Epstein, 1988). Schools need to work with families to improve the home learning environment and educators need to initiate this involvement (Christenson, 1990). In 1992, an extensive literature review by Christenson, Rounds, and Gorney identified five malleable family and home environmental factors that impact student achievement: parent expectations and attributions, structure for learning, home affective environment, discipline, and parent involvement. The latter was broadly defined including a variety of activities involving parents in the education process in both the home and school.

Traditionally, the first method for schools to directly involve parents in the development of their children’s academic skills is through monitoring a child’s homework. In this capacity, the family’s role is passive (e.g., arranging for a suitable place to work, reducing distractions, and enforcing starting time). When parents use specific tutoring skills and are given appropriate materials and feedback, they can have a much more active and positive impact on their children’s academic success (Fantuzzo et al., 1995; Gang & Poche, 1982; Koven & LeBow, 1973). Research on parent tutoring such as this has been reported for at least 35 years (Regal & Elliot, 1971; Ryback & Statts, 1970).

According to Erion (2006), the research that is being done on parent tutoring has reached the point where parent tutoring use is justified and there are some indications as to how treatment should be developed and implemented. Though more work still needs to be done before specific guidelines can be put in place, components of parent tutoring
should include teaching parents the tutoring skills to a mastery level, quantifiable follow-up implementation checks, and quantifiable checks on the amount of tutoring being administered to children (Erion, 2006).

A recently published longitudinal study by Foster and Miller (2007) of kindergarten through third grade students supports the development of the literacy gap in achievement in reading. The main goal of this study was to specify the developmental trajectories for phonics and early text comprehension skills of children from kindergarten through the third grade. Students in the average and high literacy readiness groups achieved high scores in decoding (phonics) by the end of the first grade year. Students in the low readiness group did not match these scores until the third grade year. Although the phonics gap was essentially closed in the third grade, a second gap, that of text comprehension, was exposed. The three readiness groups were analyzed to assess the contributions of parent education, income, and kindergarten literacy scores to third grade literacy achievement (Foster & Miller, 2007).

One of the purposes of Foster and Miller’s study was to derive and further explain the developmental trajectory for phonics and comprehension skill development for children in kindergarten through children in third grade. Implicit in the developmental stages of literacy was the notion that each state of development overlaps with the ensuing stage, of development, along the lines of Vygotsk’s zone of proximal development (1978). The purpose of this study was to delineate further the overlapping pattern in literacy development.

A second purpose of the Foster and Miller (2007) study was to more specifically map the development trajectory for phonics and reading comprehension for three groups
of students: (a) students who enter kindergarten with a high literacy readiness; (b) students who enter kindergarten with few literacy skill; and (c) the larger group of students who enter the school environment with more average or typical skill levels. The authors hypothesized that students who enter kindergarten with few literacy skills would make gains but they would not completely close the phonics achievement gap by the end of the third grade. Moreover, it was hypothesized that, by the time significant closure in the phonics skill gap was reached, a second performance gap would be exposed—the comprehension gap. In effect, they believed that an overlapping, wave pattern of development would be found. Students who entered kindergarten with the highest literacy scores in phonics were expected to attain performance asymptotes in phonics at a much earlier grade than the other two groups and they were to show earlier and more rapid gains in comprehension than students with few literacy skills at the time of enrollment into kindergarten. The same pattern was expected to be revealed for the group of students with the average skill level compared to those who came in to school less prepared.

Statement of the Problem

This study was to potentially show if training parents to decode in phonics could make a significant difference in student academia.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question was, *Does training parents in the skill of decoding phonics make a significant difference in second grade children's academic achievement in the area of Oral Reading Fluency?* The hypothesis was, *Students whose parents participate in the Saxon Phonics training will have a significantly higher increase in reading fluency scores than students whose parents do not receive the training.*
Definition of Terms

*Accent* – stress placed on a syllable in a given word where the syllable sounds louder or longer

*Affix* – prefixes or suffixes added to root words

*Blend* – two consonants that come close to each other and you bear both of the sounds

*Bossy r* – when r comes right after a vowel and makes a different sound then makes a unique sound

*Breve* – the code placed over a short vowel sound

*Code* – s symbol used to let the reader know the pronunciation

*Combination* – a vowel and a consonant that when placed together makes sounds not expected

*Consonant suffix* – a suffix that begins with a consonant

*Digraph* – one sound that comes from either two consonants together or two vowels together in a word

*Diphthong* – two vowel sounds that come together and are considered one syllable and makes an unusual sound

*Dropping rule* – drop the silent e before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel

*Final* – the end sound of a word or letter

*Final, Stable Syllable* – a syllable found at the end of a word that stays the same most of the time

*Ghost Letters* – letters that produce no sound

*Initial* – the beginning of a word

*Macron* – the symbol for long sounds produced by vowels when the vowels are long
Medial – the middle part of a word

Possessive S – showing ownership with an apostrophe s being added to a word

Prefix – letters that change the meaning of the original word and added to the beginning

Quadrigraph – combining four letters that make one sound when put together

Root Word – a word without any prefixes or suffixes

Schwa – an upside-down e that gives the short u sound in a word

Sight Word – words that do not follow phonetic rules and are considered basic words for children that are memorized

Silent e – an e that makes no sound at the end of a word

Sneaky e – vowel consonant e where the e is silent

Suffix – one or more letters that change the meaning of the original word and added to the end of the word

Syllable – a whole or part of a word that has only one vowel sound

Syllable Division – dividing a word into parts where each part has only one vowel sound

Trigraph – one sound produced by three letters together in a word

Voiced Sound – vocal chords producing the sound

Vowel Suffix – vowels that begin suffixes

The Definition of Terms was provided by Simmons (2006) and was used to teach phonics in the training sessions.

Delimitations

Only students that had had the Saxon Phonics Program in first grade could be used in the study. The parent being trained must have been the same parent working with the child at home on Phonics homework throughout the training. Training was not
allowed to be interchangeable from one parent to the other. Since the program being used in the training built on previous lessons taught, the same parent had to attend the training sessions throughout the entire study.

Assumptions

Parents would transfer their training to the students through helping them with homework. Parents turned in a record sheet each week explaining their tutoring sessions with their children. Since there was no observation time in the homes of the students by the administrator of this study, the assumption was made that parents were being truthful on the record sheets that were submitted each week.

Justifications

This study made a contribution to the field of education by experimenting with a cost-effective resource available to children. Schools were able to see the importance of training parents to assist in increasing student learning without extra cost. This study was needed so parents could have an opportunity to provide needed help for their own children’s academics. Parents wished to help with homework but felt inadequate when it came to phonics. This training provided parents with the skills necessary to feel successful in helping to educate their children.

This study was needed so schools can appropriately use their resources. This study will make a contribution to the field of education by experimenting with a cost-effective resource available to children. Schools will see the importance of training parents to assist in increasing student learning without extra cost. According to the National Report Card, schools need help in teaching children to read. What better source than with the children’s parents?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Parent Involvement

The phrase, *Parent Involvement*, generally refers to the significant participation of caregivers (parents, grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, etc.) in the educational process of their children or grandchildren to promote their academic and social well-being (Wolfendale, 1983). With American schools considered solely responsible for the education of children for most of the twentieth century, parent involvement was both downplayed and ignored by both educators and researchers (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Limited success came from reforms (Christenson et al., 1997). The possibility that educational deficits were related to factors in the home environment was only made more evident by the declines in the educational outcomes of students in combination with significant changes in the social demographics of the home and/or family. Looking from this perspective has allowed parent involvement to become a top priority in the current national educational and social policy (Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

According to Chrispeels (1996) and Zellman (1998), the definition of parent involvement has changed extensively throughout the years. Parent involvement is stated as an exclusive focus on specific roles played by caregivers and has changed to an inclusive emphasis on many parent activities that not only support learning in the classroom, but at home as well, and in other areas than just academics. Activities defined as parental involvement in early studies included support with homework, school-home notes, school-based parental workshops, as well as encouragement for parents to “join the PTA, provide merchandise for the bake sale, and show up at times specified by the
school” (Zellman, 1998, p. 370). The most widely-cited definition of parent involvement now is based on a typology proposed by Joyce Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, 1987, 1995). There are six categories in this classification. They include: (a) parenting (basic needs: food, shelter, emotional support); (b) communicating (i.e. school-parent contact); (c) home learning (practices occurring at home in which parents interact, monitor, or assist children in education activities); (d) volunteering and/or attending (i.e. school activity support); (e) decision making (i.e. parent-teacher groups, advisory committees, school governance); and (f) community connections (parental collaboration with community agencies to facilitate student education).

Although many studies continue to use Epstein’s categories, there are also rival perspectives. One views parental involvement as a system such as a home-school-community partnership that implies reciprocal interaction between the family, the school community, and the community (Smith et al., 1997). In contrast, Christenson (1995) views parent involvement and home-school relationship differently. Whereas goals of parents and school are mutually agreed upon and are mutually shared in a partnership, in parent involvement, the roles are often unequal in working toward the goal because the school initiates and directs parent participation. So, according to Christenson, parent involvement and participation is a one-way flow of information going from the schools to the parents. There has also been another challenge to Epstein’s typology-based definition; Parent involvement is also seen as a multidimensional variable (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). This argument includes a varying number of behavioral, personal, and intellectual components. As these components are listed, they may have a direct or moderating effect on student outcomes. Obviously, the definition of parent involvement continues to
evolve, but there is a consistent agreement in most studies on effects of parent involvement programs, in the use of Epstein’s (1987, 1995) proposed definition.

Reviews of the evidence supporting the effectiveness of parent involvement enhancing the performance of children in the academic realm are inconclusive. It is paramount that evidence supporting the beneficial impact of parental involvement programs be clarified considering its financial and social importance (Mattingly et al., 2002).

In 2007, the Report Card that is put out by the United States Department of Education revealed that only 33% of fourth graders are performing at or above the proficient reading level (U.S. Dept. of Education, NCES, 2008). The most frequent reason children are referred to special education is reading problems (Learning First Alliance, 1998). This is also the most frequently reported reason for being retained (Learning First Alliance, 1998). In 2001 U.S. fourth graders averaged lower in reading literacy than those in England, the Netherlands, and Sweden (PIRLS, 2003). Parent involvement can be a cost-effective and time-efficient method in student instruction. Public schools typically have limited resources for the small group teaching that some children with reading difficulties may require (Fitton & Gredler, 1996; LFA, 1998, 2000). A solution to problems such as this could be additional instruction at home. Hewison (1988) found that increased parental involvement was more effective bettering reading performance than small group reading instruction at school by a reading specialist. After three years, students whose parents had increased school involvement, made significant gains, while the children who received help from the reading specialist rather than parents showed no significant gains compared to a control group. Meta
analytic research demonstrating the importance of book reading by parents with preschoolers in supporting reading achievement, emergent literacy, and language growth is consistent with the findings above as well (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995).

One way to increase parent involvement in reading instruction is for educators to teach parents how to tutor their children and in doing this use effective reading interventions. The research literature in this area, however, has not converged on clear or consistent recommendations regarding what parents should do or should not do with their children (more specifically than read) or which type of training for parents is most practical and/or productive (Bus et al., 1995; Edwards & Panofsky, 1989; Fitton & Gredlet, 1996; Toomey, 1993). Toomey (1993) suggests that past studies have built a case that parents of low-performing readers are less likely to use methods of reading instruction (such as praise and allowing for self-correction) that have evidence supporting their efficacy than are the parents of proficient readers who theoretically are more likely to use these methods. Toomey argues that the low-performer’s parents would benefit from specific training regarding what to do with their children when they read with and to them.

According to research done by Cooper et al., 1998, parental involvement in their child(ren)’s homework is a leading factor for improving academic performance both for students who have the ability to work independently and for students who have good parental support to help with homework assignments. Although, the same study reported insignificant correlations between homework and academic achievement for elementary students (Cooper et al., 1998). The study attributed this insignificant correlation to elementary students’ inability to focus on homework assignments for long periods of time
without parental support (Cooper et al., 1998). Even though some elementary students desired to complete their homework assignments, their underdeveloped homework habits and parental disinterest served to impede academic progress (Cooper, et al., 1998). Research shows that if parents fail to emphasize the relevance of homework, then children’s ability to successfully complete homework is hampered. Cooper, et al., 1998, reported that students were more apt to finish homework when parents showed interest. This research demonstrates that assigning homework parents will help their children with, thus homework that attracts the interest of parents may help with the completion of homework by elementary students. This completion may increase academic performance (Cooper, et al., 1998).

Researchers agree: increased parent involvement for homework is important. However, the fact remains that it can be difficult to involve parents in their children’s homework on the regular basis. Maybe using homework assignments that are interesting and interactive for both students and parents is a missing element that needs to be formed (Bailey, et al., 2004).

Parental involvement in students’ homework seems to influence positive results because it provides modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. This instruction can support the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors that are usually associated with being successful in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). When parents are involved in homework activities, children gain access to multiple opportunities to observe and learn from their parents’ modeling (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001). This modeling can encompass the learning of attitudes, knowledge, and various skills that are pertinent to learning (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001). Parental modeling can help students receive
reinforcement and feedback on personal performance and capability. Therefore, modeling can help engage in instructional interactions that are related to homework content and learning processes (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001).

Parent involvement has also been found to support positive student perceptions of task difficulty and manageability. These are found to be especially supported when parents have adequate knowledge of homework tasks and related work strategies (Frome & Eccles, 1998). As parents offer instrumental help and model task appropriate skills, reasonably informed parental help may also function to increase student understanding of the task (Okagaki, et al., 1995). Effective student work habits have also been linked to strong parental involvement (Cooper, et al., 1998).

Parent Interventions

In 1990, Leach and Siddall conducted a study comparing four commonly used parent-implemented reading interventions. They include (a) hearing the child read; (b) paired reading; (c) pause, prompt, and praise; and (d) direct instruction. Each group, except for the first one and a half, had an hour training session in which the procedures were explained and demonstrated. The first group, hearing the child read, was given only written suggestions and guidelines. Each condition required parents to implement the intervention for 10 to 15 minutes per day on school days for ten weeks. The analyses showed significant differences between groups based on post-test scores obtained from the Neale Analysis of Reading ability measure. The pause, prompt, and praise group as well as the direct instruction group showed significantly greater increases in reading performance. Thus the conclusion was that the difference in effectiveness of these conditions could be attributed to the specific instructions and correction procedures used.
by these interventions. This study suggests that structured, specific procedures may well be important features of effective parent-implemented reading interventions for students.

Leach and Siddall (1990) employed a parent tutoring intervention based on the Noell et al. (1998, 2001) Progressive Reading Practice procedures. Two additional items were added to this intervention that were based on the research syntheses of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) and Learning First Alliance (1998, 2000). Additionally, the components go along with the requirements for reading instruction outlined by the No Child Left Behind policy that has been adopted by the U.S. government: phonics, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (United States Department of Education, NCLB, 2002). The items added to the Progressive Reading Practice were phonics instruction and comprehension assessment. Earlier research of parent reading interventions has not examined a highly structured procedure that includes all of the following: modeling, fluency building, phonics instruction, comprehension assessment, and reinforcement. The above study also built upon earlier research by integrating the curriculum-based measurement (CBM) of participants’ fluency in oral reading into the intervention. Although CBM oral reading fluency has a substantial literature supporting its desirable technical characteristics for the assessment of growth in reading skills (Shinn et al., 1992), it has not been integrated into studies involving parent tutoring.

This study is built upon the previous literature by examining parental implementation of a detailed reading intervention that is composed of elements whose effectiveness has previously been demonstrated individually and as a package. The study focuses on the extent that parents would implement the procedure in their homes.
following training and the extent that the intervention would be beneficial to participants in this systematic replication of previous research using the measurement tool of DIBELS (Noell & Pellegrin, 2006).

This study was similar to earlier research because it aimed to train parents in how to tutor their children in reading. As in several past studies, it was shown that parents could and would implement the learned reading tutoring procedures (Hook & DuPaul, 1999; Taverne & Sheridan, 1995; Thurston & Dasta, 1990). Also, like past research, it was found that children increased their reading fluency on tutored passages compared to non-tutored passages (Hook & DePaul, 1999).

Effectiveness of an intervention is not solely dependent on proper implementation of an evidence based intervention by a parent (Persampieri et al., 2006). Empirically supported interventions do not guarantee success. A direct demonstration by the child’s behavior must be noticed (Persampieri et al., 2006).

Dickinson and Tabors (1991) completed a study using the School-Home Early Language and Literacy Battery. They found that both the school and home make important contributions in the emergence of early language and literacy skills. Their results of the study suggest that early literacy development is supported by experiences of many types that occur in various settings.

Research indicates a significant positive relationship between the child’s attitude toward reading, based on experiences at home, and achievement in schools with reading (Teal & Sulzby, 1986). Reutzel and Cooter (1996), suggested that, in order to train parents in effective tutoring strategies, periodic seminars need to be conducted. These seminars need to be conducted by teachers. Teachers should introduce effective strategies
used in classroom reading instruction. These training sessions can be completed during the evening or done during designated open house periods at the school. Newsletters are effective means of communication to inform parents about how their children are learning to read and to write.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) suggested several ideas for parents and teachers to support home learning: (a) for parents to work with their children in keeping a family journal; (b) for parents to make audio or videotapes of their children reading; (c) for parents to obtain wordless picture books; (d) for teachers to send home activities for parents and students to finish with books that they are reading in the classroom; (e) for teachers to send home holiday reading and writing projects that go beyond what is being done in the classroom; and (f) extend an invitation to parents for them to read to or with the class. It is highly important that teachers and teaching institutions stress the crucial role of parents in the development and education of their children. Research indicates that having an involved parent positively affects children’s development and education (Becher, 1986).

Parent Tutoring Procedures

Research suggests that possibly the most effective parent tutoring procedures use instruction, reinforcement, modeling, and/or correction methods (Duvall et al., 1997; Hook & DuPaul, 1999; Leach & Siddall, 1990; Love & Biervliet, 1984; Thurston & Dasta, 1990). Noell and colleagues demonstrated a brief, yet highly structured procedural routine that included modeling, error correction, and reinforcement, whose effectiveness was subsequently replicated (Noell et al., 2001). These included oral passage preview, repeated readings, goal setting, and performance feedback, were the
specific procedures used within that tutoring method. These procedures were previously demonstrated to be effective instructional strategies for reading; however, research staff at the participating school implemented this tutoring procedure rather than parents leaving Progressive Reading Practice untested with parents (Gatti, 2004).

The parent training literature regarding reading tutoring clearly suggests that some training is better than none and that training that includes modeling is much more effective than training that does not include this modeling (Edwards & Panofsky, 1989; Wilks & Clarke, 1988). Based on earlier research, it appears that a mixture of several different training methods used during hour-long sessions over several weeks may be most effective for parents (Faires, Nichols, & Rickelman, 2000; Love & van Biervliet, 1984; Mehran & White, 1988; Taverne & Sheridan, 1995; Thurston & Dasta, 1990; Wilks & Clarke, 1988). Finally, many articles have suggested that more specific and simple methods of training that include written checklists or instructions may be the most beneficial for parents to learn in order for them to be able to pass knowledge to their children (Edwards & Panofsky, 1989; Love & Biervliet, 1984).

Parents have listened to their children read since the era of McGuffey readers (Hayden, 1996). Elementary schools still use the practice of sending books home with children so that parents may hear them read (Hayden, 1996). Poor readers are especially encouraged to continue this practice as one avenue for improving their literacy abilities (Hayden, 1996). The premise on which the children read to parents procedure is focused is the assumption that with practice comes with perfection (Hayden, 1996). This approach has some merit as an approach for extending the literacy abilities (Hayden, 1996).
Toomey completed a review of over 40 studies in which parents listen to their children read at home. This review indicates that this practice may not result in literacy gains. This short coming of literacy gains appear to be especially true for at-risk readers, that is, unless parents have received some training in specific procedures to assist their children during the reading sessions (Toomey, 1993).

An example of a parent learning materials to better teach her son on homework is a parent of a kindergartner who lagged behind his twin brother (Kindervater, 2010). During a midyear conference with the parents, they noted that the lagging twin’s DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2002) score showed that he only knew three letters and sounds. The kindergarten teacher had been using a motion program to teach the sounds and letters to the children. This program was demonstrated by the twin that was not lagging behind (Kindervater, 2010). The mother asked about learning the motions to help her other son at home. The teacher responded to this request by providing the parent with a take-home production that provided the motions linked with a picture of an object and the letter. The mother learned the motions along with her son as they watched the video daily as a home project. The students DIBELS scores increased from 3 to 25 within three weeks (Kindervater, 2010). This learning helped the parent better help her child at home to learn what was being taught at school.

According to research done by Vinograd-Bausell and Bausell (1987), there are four basic models for parent instruction. These models include: (a) professionally supervised tutoring; (b) professionally administered parental training; (c) televised instruction; and (d) materials only. The professionally supervised tutoring is where parents are both trained and monitored by professional educators known as teachers. The
professionals are to provide feedback to the parent concerning actual tutoring performance by direct observation. The direct observation would be that of the parent and child working together. This model would require extensive amounts of time for professionals (Vinograd-Bausell & Bausell, 1987).

Professionally administered parental training begins with an initial group meeting. Parents not being able to attend should have a professional meeting in their home to be trained. This training should be a one-time session. Professionals are to provide brief training to the parents on how to use the instructional materials. Once this session of training is concluded, parents are then allowed one on one parent to student tutoring throughout the duration of the child’s tutoring. This means that the parents receive no more tutoring help from the professionals and are essentially left on their own to tutor their children after only a brief training session (Vinograd-Bausell & Bausell, 1987).

Televised instruction models provide television programs that may serve either the exclusive purpose of teaching skills to parents or training parents while presenting stimuli to children with the parents being the assistants. This model requires minimum teacher time but requires great expense to produce. Parents could attend various meetings to have their questions answered about this method (Vinograd-Bausell & Bausell, 1987). The materials only model would provide written instructions for parents to use with their children. This model consists of either supplying parents with everything they need to teach their children or just providing directions for parents to construct their own teaching material (Vinograd-Bausell & Bausell, 1987).
Federal Initiatives

One of the deepest passions to numerous federal initiatives is championing parent involvement. This began with the Head Start program and continues today with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Head Start includes a vast parent element when providing educational interventions during the early years. Other projects such as the Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 and the Project Follow Through in 1968 were also done by the federal government and encouraged parent involvement (Doernberger & Zigler, 1993). Title I broadened the parental role by mandating increased consultation and collaboration between teachers and parents (Arroyo & Zigler, 1993). Project Follow Through was also effective in increasing parent participation. The parents were tutoring, volunteering, governing the schools, and getting more education themselves, but funding cuts threatened the success of the program (Zigler & Styfco, 1993).

Government support for parental involvement came in the 1970s and 1980s with the passage of Public Law (PL) 94-142, also known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, and the Education of the Handicapped Amendment of 1986 (PL99-457). We have observed, more recently, a consensus in policies on all levels regarding the benefits of parental involvement in education (Chrispeels, 1996; Mattingly et al., 2002). The reauthorization of Title I in 1994, by Congress, makes it clear that involvement in education is seen as important to success at the state, district, and school levels. To show further opinions of the government, recognized as one of the objectives included in Goals 2000: Educate America Act, is parental involvement in promoting children’s academic, social, and emotional development (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1996).
Most recently, Section 1118 of the NCLB Act of 2001 requires each district that receives Title I funds to implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents of participating children. Altogether, based on the assumption that parents are important contributors to children’s academic success and social well-being, numerous federal legislative initiatives have mandated the implementation of programs that stress parental involvement (Christenson et al., 1995; Wolfendale, 1983).

In part, responsibility for parent involvement lies in two areas: state governments that are to implement the No Child Left Behind Act, and the federal government. The federal government has not sufficiently monitored and stressed the importance of parent involvement according to a study completed by Darden in 2007. Without governments showing the importance of needed parental involvement, parents will always take a back seat to conversations on testing, standards, adequate yearly progress, persistently dangerous schools, and choice (Darden, 2007).

According to the NCLB Act, districts and Title I schools are required to have a parent-involvement policy, which includes having parents serve as advisors to school leaders as well as parents being involved in their own children’s education (Jacobson, 2008). Research that involved 1,400 schools in the Midwest region found that more than 90 percent included at least one potentially effective parent-involvement activity (N.S., 2011). Darden (2007) reports that the framework of the NCLB Act is to boost learning in public schools. Schools are to be transparent concerning parent involvement. This transparency must include reports of academic results of individual students as well as overall building performance (Darden, 2007). Parents are to be notified about the qualifications of the teachers in the school. If a school is not reaching expected academic
benchmarks then the school must let the parents know and provide parents a chance to change to another public school. The offer could also provide subject-matter tutoring paid for by the school district (Darden, 2007).

According to Al-Hazz and Gupta (2006), the No Child Left Behind Act helped bring about the America Reads Challenge (ARC) program which is one federally funded program that has gained popularity since 1997 in the school systems nationwide. The aim of this federally funded program is to recruit university students to work as literacy volunteers in the schools across America to tutor children in grades K-3. This program began on the research supported premise that children who do not learn to read well in the early years will continue to do poorly in school (Juel, 1988). The America Reads Challenge program in the Al-Hazza and Gupta study involved a partnership between a university and local public schools. There were two schools that were offered the tutoring services. Both schools were in the lowest quartile in the school district (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006). Both of the schools were Title I schools that were located in urban areas of considerable poverty. According to Al-Hazza and Gupta (2006), twenty-four students from the university who had received federal work-study grant awards were hired to serve as the tutors. These college students were provided three hours of training on basic reading theory. As well, guided reading techniques were taught to the university students. The university students were also taught how to use a Tutor Checklist for their tutor sessions. The checklist was originally conceived as a way to help remind tutors of their repertoire of strategies and techniques they were taught (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006).

Tutors were instructed to keep in mind that motivation and a positive experience of reading are the keys to being successful (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006). Sessions had to be
student centered and build around the student's needs and interests. Also, success of one activity with one learner does not guarantee its success with another learner. Reviews of the evidence supporting the effectiveness of parent involvement enhancing the performance of children in the academic realm are inconclusive. It is paramount that evidence supporting the beneficial impact of parental involvement programs be clarified considering its financial and social importance (Mattingly et al., 2002).

Reading Outline Plan

The Learning First Alliance, consisting of national education associations, has developed a researched supported reading outline plan that is in current practice. Among the changes are phonics instruction, comprehension teaching, class size, curriculum based measurements, and student gap strategies. Along with these are suggestions that include tutoring and home reading as two crucial components that must be in place to produce the optimal effective environment for reading development. Parents are, therefore, critical partners in reading growth and support (LFA, 1998, 2000).

A longitudinal study of in-home reading practices done by Weinberger (1996) found that children whose parents contributed more reading support and time were more likely to have less reading problems in school. Increasing parental involvement in Title I programs has been encouraged through U.S. federal governmental policy (Boston, 2000), and parental involvement in Title I reading programs has also been found to be related to reading achievement (Shaver & Walls, 1998).

An extensive literature review done by Fawcet, Rasinski, and Linek, (1997), Senechal and LeFevre (2002), Shaver and Walls (1998) and Weinberger (1996) suggests that parental involvement in reading can have a positive influence on children’s academic
outcomes. Through a five-year longitudinal study, Senechal and LeFevere (2002) found that parent involvement in reading instruction is correlated to emergent literacy. In another longitudinal study of in-home reading practices, Weinberger (1996) found that children whose parents contributed more reading support and time devoted to reading were more likely to have less reading problems in school. Increasing parental involvement in Title I programs has been encouraged through U.S. federal governmental policy (Boston, 2000), and parental involvement in Title I reading programs has also been found to be related to reading achievement (Shaver & Walls, 1998).

National tests of students’ reading skill levels reveal that the number of students who have poor reading skills is overwhelming. Based on a recent, large national sample, less than one-third of fourth grade students read proficiently at their grade level (National Center for Education Statistics; NCES, 2007). If they fail to read on grade level by fourth grade, children have a future of diminished success (US Department of Education, 2001). Poor reading skills will not only have a detrimental effect on students’ academic trajectory; they have also been associated with behavioral and emotional problems such as aggressive behavior and poor self-concept (Good et al., 1998), as well as high dropout rates (Juel, 1988). According to one source, over 40 million adults in America are illiterate and the economic impact of this represents millions of lost dollars due to low productivity, accidents, and errors (Adult Literacy Service, 2004). Therefore it appears that America’s literacy landscape will not be getting better any time soon without broad and effective intervention of some kind.

Although the ultimate goal of reading instruction is comprehension, students with reading problems typically have difficulties with reading fluency as well, which is a
prerequisite to independent comprehension (Chard et al., 2002). Reading fluency has
been characterized by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000)
as a neglected reading skill in the classrooms of America (p.31). Since poor readers and
those identified with a learning disability automatically start out with slower reading
rates, their skills increase at a slower rate (Good et al., 1998). Deficiencies in oral reading
fluency will adversely affect comprehension and therefore slow down mastery of content
areas such as science and social studies.

The benefits of parent involvement through reading with their child are
undisputed (Epstein, 1996). As noted, home support for reading has been researched
extensively. It has yielded highly consistent findings. Regardless of economic, racial,
ethnic and educational backgrounds, educational benefits are enhanced when parents
engage in reading activities with their child (Epstein, 1996). Conversely, poor readers
have few early reading-related experiences. Despite these benefits of parent help, the
effectiveness of parents’ involvement in actively teaching their child reading skills has
unfortunately not been researched extensively (Persampieri et al., 2004).

Parents are major stakeholders in their children’s education (Christenson &
Buerkle, 1999) and have a great potential for contributing to the academic success of
their children (Hook & DuPaul, 1999). Parent-directed interventions provide almost
endless opportunities to extend the learning environment (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001),
since parents can offer one-on-one attention and make immediate modifications when
needed (Leach & Siddal, 1990). With adequate support (including training), parents have
been shown to be effective participants in the academic intervention process (Duvall &
Ward, 1997; Galloway & Sheridan, 1994; Weiner et al., 1998). Parents, however, do not
know how to help their child academically and may feel inadequate in doing so (Wolfendale et al., 1986). Therefore, specific, structured interventions need to be learned by the parents.

Parent-tutoring with reading strategies has yielded higher in reading fluency and comprehension (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003; Hook & DuPaul, 1999; Wilks & Clarke, 1988). Parents have effectively used a plethora of methods, including modeling, performance feedback, error correction, repeated reading, and direct instruction. For instance, in 1999, Hook and DuPaul trained parents to use repeated readings, and error correction, as well as a reward system to tutor children with ADHD. Reading fluency increased in both the home and the school settings. Both parents and students reported that the lessons were quite enjoyable and easily manageable. In parent tutoring, procedural checklists, audio taping, videotaping, and phone calls have been used to support parents in the correct process and implementation of tutoring procedures (Hook & DuPaul, 1999; Powell-Smith et al., 2000; Wilks & Clarke, 1988). Monitoring procedures alone though is probably not sufficient to achieve high treatment integrity. Parents must learn how to use the tutoring procedures correctly. Direct training methods like modeling and feedback are typically good candidates for teaching parents to do interventions correctly (Sterling-Turner et al., 2000). With adequate training and support, the confidence of parents increases and they are more likely to implement the prescribed treatment correctly (Wolfendale et al., 1986).

A particular useful dimension of behavior to measure is fluency. Fluency has proven to be a valid and sensitive indicator of instructional outcomes that reflect a combination of accuracy and speed (Binder, 1996). In its own right, because of its critical role in reading acquisition, oral reading fluency has been established as a legitimate
instructional target (National Reading Panel, 2000). Research does support the relationship between reading fluency and overall reading ability. This overall reading ability includes comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). A prerequisite to independent comprehension is oral reading fluency (Daly, et al., 2006). When children’s decoding competes with comprehension efforts and impairs their ability later to give a verbal report of what they read, children have to laboriously decipher words in text (Daly, et al., 2006).

According to Rasinski (2004), successful reading requires readers to process the text which is surface-level of reading. This success also includes getting the deeper meaning, or comprehending the text. Reading fluency refers to the reader’s ability to obtain control over surface-level text processing so that the reader can focus on understanding the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text (Rasinski, 2004). This is where decoding of words comes into play. A bridge to comprehension is reading fluency that has three important dimensions (Rasinski, 2004).

The first of these dimensions is being accurate in word decoding. Students need to be able to sound out the words in a text with few errors. Phonics and other strategies are used for decoding the words (Rasinski, 2004).

The second dimension is being able to automatically process the written text. According to LaBerge an Samuels (1974), as little mental effort as possible needs to be given when decoding in the aspect of reading so readers can use their finite cognitive resources for comprehending (Schreiber, 1980, 1991; Schreiber & Read, 1980). The third dimension is called prosodic reading where the reader must place the text into syntactically and appropriate units to read (Schreiber, 1980, 1991; Schreiber & Read,
Readers need to use expression in their voices. If they place equal emphasis on every word then they are showing that there is no sense of phrasing. If students do not use most punctuation correctly, it will be unlikely that they will fully understand what the text is concerning (Rasinski, 2004).

To determine proficiency in decoding connected text, calculate the percentage of words a student can correctly decode that are on on-grade level material. Having an accuracy level of 90 to 95% is usually considered adequate for on-grade level readers (Rasinski, 2004). Teachers can usually determine automaticity in being able to decode words by observing the students’ reading rate. Usually reading rates increase as students mature (Rasinski, 2004).

Stages of Literacy Development

In 1983, Chall explicated the major stages of literacy development – research that is still relied on by both educators and researchers. Chall’s Stage Zero is the prereading stage. It spans from zero to six years of age. It is some point during this stage that children learn that speech is made up of individual sounds and that some words have beginning or ending sounds as other words. The focus is on emergent literacy skills. In this state of development Stage one is referred to as the initial reading period. The emphasis during this stage is on phonetically skill development. In the literacy development stage, children link sounds to letters and they actively try to break the code of print. Most children go through this stage between the ages of six and seven.

In Stage Two, the student has become more fluent in decoding words and is therefore freer to attend to comprehension and meaning. The age range for this stage is usually seven to eight years. Finally, in Stage Three – children ages 8 to 14 – the focus
changes from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* (Chall, 1983). In all of the stages, children are enhancing their lexicon, however, Stage Three; the proportion of new words learned through reading either matches or exceeds the learning of new words via audition (Nagy & Herman, 1987; West et al., 1993).

Students entering kindergarten are expected to have many Stage Zero literacy skills and should be on the path toward developing Stage One Phonetic skills (Lyon et al., 2003). Students who enter school rich in literacy or who have the tools to develop literacy skills early in their development are more likely to access the general curriculum effectively than those who are poor in literacy. Once children are on a normal developmental trajectory for reading, they tend to enjoy many opportunities to engage in reading with success, gain general knowledge, and access a rich vocabulary. Children who are not on a normal developmental trajectory experience failure and fall behind in their acquisition of general knowledge and vocabulary. This *Rich get richer – Poor get poorer* issue has been termed the Matthew effect (Lyon et al., 2003). Research indicates that, after the fourth grade year, literacy intervention and remediation programs are only beneficial for around 13% of students who are struggling with reading (Wren, 2003).

Are the efforts to support students with reading problems effective in closing the development? A number of studies have shown that early, targeted intervention is able to ameliorate achievement gaps (Erhi et al., 2001; Stuart, 1999). At the 2001 White House Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development, G. Reid Lyon of the National Institutes of Health reported that between eight-five and ninety percent of students who receive early, targeted support can feasibly develop average reading skills.
Schneider, Ennemoser, Roth, and Kuspert (1999) systematically taught phonological awareness skills to a group of low-income tested kindergarten students who were showing reading weaknesses and then compared the students’ skill levels with a control group and a group of students who were not exhibiting any literacy deficits. By the end of the study, the students in the tested group nearly closed the performance gap with the more typically developing students while they significantly outperformed the control group of students. The positive effects of training were still evident in the second grade year. Other studies as well confirm the positive effects of training in the area of emergent literacy (e.g., Wagner et al., 1993; Lundberg et al., 1988).

Students enter the school environment with differing levels of literacy readiness, and these initial literacy performance levels have great impact on their-grade reading performance. Learning to read requires students to move through not only hierarchical stages, but also overlapping developmental stages as well. The stages can be divided into emergent literacy, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. The data in the nationwide longitudinal study suggests that students with average readiness attain a high level of phonics proficiency by the end of the first grade and, to a large degree, approximate the scores of the high readiness group. This puts these two groups in the position to transition into the next phases of literacy development in the first grade. The results of this study indicate that by the end of the first grade year, students who entered school prepared to engage in phonics at the kindergarten level possess the decoding skills necessary to begin to easily transition into subsequent phases of literacy development. They will spend the next two years becoming more fluent in their ability to decode and
they will significantly improve their ability to comprehend age – or grade – appropriate text.

It was not until the end of the students’ third grade year, though, that those in the low readiness group attained the decoding proficiency level that the other two groups experienced by the end of the first grade year. This delayed decoding skill development comes at a great cost. The other groups have already made significant gains in the comprehension. For the lower readiness group, one performance gap is traded for another performing gap which confirms their hypothesis (Foster & Miller, 2007).

Foster and Miller’s 2007 study supports the idea that there intact, is overlap in the literacy developmental stages. Literacy skill development is required to meet certain levels before students can fully access subsequent stages. Foster & Miller’s results support and extend Chall’s 1983 framework for development. Strength of this study is that it uses a large amount of data that is representative of public school students across the entire United States.

This research, Foster and Miller, (2007), adds weight to the notion that effective treatment of literacy deficits has to be initiated at the earliest possible time. The results of this study show that decoding development is on a fast track in elementary or primary schools. Students who enter the schooling system without the necessary emergent literacy skills will quickly fall behind their more advantaged peers. Schools cannot wait until later to initiate aggressive support for literacy development. Closing the phonics/decoding gap in the third grade does not answer the needs of those children because by that time, a text comprehension gap has developed. In effect, we are trading one gap for another, and in doing that, we are putting these students at additional risk for years of possible poor
academic achievement. Educators must actively seek out children who are at risk for reading problems and initiate support quickly (Foster & Miller, 2007).

Summary

Parents want to help their children to be successful in learning. The amount of help that parents can give depends on the knowledge of the parents. Schools have a wonderful free resource of parents. These parents are available to the schools to help children become more successful. Parents can bring motivation unlike any other that can help their children succeed in life. Parents send schools the best they have – their children. Parents and schools can be partnered to make the children’s achievements increase by leaps and bounds. Schools need to nourish this parent/school relationship by making skill knowledge available to parents. With knowledge, parents can help transfer this knowledge to their children. This in turn not only helps increase the academic knowledge of the children, but the school and community alike.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This was an experimental, quantitative study. The Saxon Phonics program is a highly researched reading program that has been proven successful across the nation in helping children learn to read. The Saxon Phonics Program was taught to students throughout the year as a supplemental program which was used to enhance the regular basal reading program taught. This study incorporated the supplemental materials of the Saxon Phonics Program. The study was an attempt to see if training parents in phonics could transfer phonetic knowledge to their children to make a difference in oral reading fluency so it could therefore help reading comprehension. After receiving permission through the Letter of Consent (see Appendix A), the parents were given the opportunity to attend the training sessions. The Saxon Phonics Program was then taught to the parents attending the sessions using the phonics curriculum. The training was done once a week for 15 weeks, and was offered in the morning as well as in the evening to make the sessions convenient. The trainees consistently learned the skills one week prior to their children. This training provided parents the proper method of working successfully with their children on homework. After the determination of the number of sessions that each parent attended, the parents were grouped into either the Trained Parents group or the Not Trained Parents group.

Saxon Phonics is a program that helps most children to cultivate a solid foundation in phonics and thus become outstanding readers. The phonics series, in keeping with the Saxon principles of step-by-step development and continual review,
builds on previous learning: new learning was presented in small steps which were reviewed daily for the entire year. This method of reinforcement provides children with the practice they need to achieve success (Simmons, 2006).

The area that was most emphasized using the Saxon Phonics Program (see Appendix B) in the parent training was the area of Coding. Coding is one tool used to help create successful readers. Parents were taught how to code words by making common vowel patterns and letter clusters to help them identify the sound of each letter/letter cluster and thus read the words. This reading program gives children the avenue to attempt new words confidently and become acquainted with dictionary pronunciation and phonetic coding so that children will understand many of the pronunciation symbols used in dictionaries. With this program, most worksheets and assessments contained lists of words for children to code and read. As children review and master phonetic concepts, it may not be necessary for the children to code every word in order to read it. Therefore, coding should be used as a tool only until the phonetic principles become automatic for children. The overall goal is to teach children how to read; coding is simply a tool that helps children achieve that end” (Simmons, 2006, p. 11). Parents were taught how to use this tool.

Research Design

Using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS® is a registered trademark of Dynamic Measurement Group, Inc.) as the tool of measurement (see Appendix C), all second grade students at the sample elementary school were given the DIBELS test at the beginning of the school year in August. DIBELS was designed to be given three times a year. Therefore, these scores were the pre-test scores used in the
study. The area of DIBELS examined for this study was that of the Oral Reading Fluency. All second grade students were tested again in December—the post-test. An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) test was used to compare the post-test scores of DIBELS controlling for the pre-test scores to see if there was a significant difference.

Participants

Having been granted permission from The Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D), the school district (see Appendix E), and building principal (see Appendix F) containing the sample school, all parents of approximately 130 second grade students from the sample school were offered the training opportunity to learn the Saxon Phonics decoding skills that were taught to their children during the regular school day. Parents were given an oral presentation along with a letter (see Appendix G) attached to the Consent Form at Meet the Teacher, held shortly prior to the beginning of school explaining the training along with the incentives offered. The oral presentation explained the purpose, description of the study, benefits, risks, confidentiality, alternative procedures, and participants’ assurance. Those parents not attending Meet the Teacher had access to the letter when it was sent home with their second grade children (the first day of school). Another oral presentation of the same format explained the training and was held on Monday evening (the second day of school). The overall experience of the study was explained to parents. The explanation explained how the study was experimental. The benefits of the study for the parents along with the benefits for the children were explained. The possible benefits of academic growth for their children were explained. The risk of being trained to help their child with decoding in phonics was explained as actual time given for the training as opposed to being spent a different way.
The risk of not being trained would have been the missed opportunity to help their child be more successful with reading at home; therefore the opportunity cost of academic growth. Another risk of the study was time spent without academic growth for the children and/or the parents. All of the parents were offered this training opportunity even if their children did not have Saxon Phonics the prior year as stated in the delimitation section. These particular parents may also have benefitted from the training even though they were not considered part of the study. Door prizes were explained as incentives to encourage the parents to come to the training each week. The cost of the training was explained as free to all participants along with free child care as needed during the training time. The childcare was provided by a school employee.

The Confidentiality of the children’s DIBELS pre-test and post-test scores are being held in confidence. The students’ test scores were numbered such that their names, school’s name, or school district’s name were not identifiable to anyone except the person conducting the study and the school’s tutors administering the DIBELS test. Parents were reminded that the teacher and tutor are held to a confidentiality policy by the said school district as employees of the school district. No assurances were or will be made to the participants concerning results that were obtained, and the researcher has and will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Parents were told that this project was completely voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits with the exception of having a chance to win the door prize at each training session. Parents were asked for permission to use their children’s test scores for this study. The parents were given the opportunity to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate as a research
subject. Questions concerning the research should be directed to the teacher who conducted the research at the said elementary school or with the given phone number provided. Parents were told that this project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at the university involved.

Parents were encouraged to enroll in the training during the first week of school. The training began toward the end of the first week of school. All parents of second grade students at the sample school were allowed the opportunity to participate in the training, however all parents participating were not necessarily included in the tested sample. The DIBELS test was administered during the first week of school before the parents began the training. The students were given the DIBELS test again after parents had been trained for fifteen weeks which was toward the middle of the year.

Instrumentation

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS, is an achievement test that tests children’s fluency and comprehension levels. The overall use of DIBELS can begin in Kindergarten and go through the sixth grade; however, the Oral Reading Fluency testing does not begin until the middle of first grade. For the second grade Oral Reading Fluency portion of the test that I used, the students are only tested for three minutes, which is a very short time period. The three-minute testing period is broken up into three one-minute segments involving the child reading different passages. It is also important to note that the pre-test and post-test required different passages for
the children to read, such that the students were not required to read the same passage more than once.

The entire DIBELS test contains seven sections that can be used to measure student’s skills in literacy. The seven sections are said to be indicative of phonemic and alphabetic awareness, alphabetic principle, as well as accuracy and fluency with connected text, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (University of Oregon, 2008).

The designers of DIBELS wanted it to be such that children experiencing academic difficulties in the area of reading could be identified through the use of the test. The hopes were that by identifying the children who may be struggling, potential later reading difficulties could be prevented (University of Oregon, 2008).

The first steps of research for the DIBELS test were completed in the 1980s at the University of Oregon. After the initial research,

An ongoing series of studies on DIBELS has documented the reliability and validity of the measures as well as their sensitivity to student change. The DIBELS authors were motivated then, as now, by the desire to improve educational outcome for children, especially those from poor and diverse backgrounds. (University of Oregon, 2008, p. 1)

It is also noted that,

DIBELS were developed based on measurement procedures for Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), which were created by Deno and colleagues through the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota in the 1970s-80 (e.g., Deno & Mirkin, 1977; Deno, 1985; Deno & Fuchs, 1987; Shin, 1989). Like CBM, DIBELS were developed to be economical and efficient.
indicators of a student’s progress toward achieving a general outcome.

(University of Oregon, 2008, p. 1)

Procedures

Parents were trained with the Saxon Phonics Program at the sample elementary. The training was done once a week for 15 weeks, and was offered in the morning as well as in the evening to make the sessions convenient. Trainees consistently learned the skills one week prior to their children. This training was to provide parents the proper method of working successfully with their children on homework.

All students in second grade at the sample elementary were tested with DIBELS in August and then in December. The test was administered by trained tutors employed by the district. The tutors of the school, having been trained in DIBELS administration, administered the DIBELS test for the pre-test and post-test for all (approximately) 130 second graders as they have done in the past. The parent training was explained to parents, and they were given the opportunity to enroll. The training was held at the sample elementary school. Incentives such as door prizes for each session were provided to encourage attendance. Parents who attended 10 or more of the 15 sessions along with returning their completed Weekly Record Forms (see Appendix H) verifying their homework time and skills taught with their children at home were considered to be in the Trained Parents group. Parents who attended less than three sessions were considered to be in the Not Trained Parent group. All of the students’ DIBELS scores were placed according to the group in which their parent was placed. Dependent on the number of parents trained, around the same number of students’ scores were selected to do the comparison using the ANCOVA. The Not Trained Parent group needed to consist of the
highest number possible of parents that did not receive any training. The students were again given the DIBELS test after all 15 weeks of training ended. The data was run and compared using ANCOVA on SPSS controlling for the pre-test. Students’ scores were used to observe if the influence of parental training in phonics made a significant difference in their children’s oral reading fluency versus those students’ parents that were not trained.

I trained the parents, which consisted of about an hour long session each week to teach the next week’s skills. The skills were taught using the Saxon Phonics Program materials. Parents had the option of coming during the school day or in the evening for their training session. The training day each week was selected based on school/community events. Since the training times and dates had to be scheduled around community events, all parents were given reminder letters each week verifying the times and dates for each session (see Appendix I). Childcare was provided at the school to make the training more convenient. The parent training consisted of the same lessons that the children were taught using the Saxon Phonics Program schedule found in the Appendix of the program (see Appendix J) (Saxon Publisher, Inc., & Simmons, 2006).

Limitations

The instrument DIBELS, at the time of the study, did not provide a fluency test for children until the middle of first grade. Saxon Phonics decoding skills were taught at the beginning of the school year. The pre-test and the Saxon Phonics program needed to begin at the same time of the year. Parents needed to start at the beginning of the year so they were not missing the beginning skills of decoding. Parents needed to start at the beginning instead of starting in the middle of the year. Since DIBELS had a fluency test
for second grade that started at the beginning of the year, this study needed to be done at
the beginning of the year so parents could be trained from the beginning of the program
instead of from the middle of the year.

Data Analysis

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) test was used to compare the post-test
scores controlling for the pre-test scores to see if there was a significant difference. If
training parents made a positive significant difference in student achievement for Oral
Reading Fluency, then parents need to be trained on the regular basis to help increase
student learning.

Summary

Schools use tested theories – this is a simple fact. Parent training is a great
resource value for schools to take advantage of within their school community. Research
that supports this is valuable. Training done over an extended period of time helps
prevent the overwhelming feeling parents can get when they are not sure how to help
their children with skills taught at school. What better way for schools to show they care
about the potential of their students than to incorporate tested theories such as providing
training for parents? Helping make parents successful in skill knowledge helps make
students more successful in their academics.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if it is statistically significant, in relation to student pre-test and post-test scores, to teach parents phonetic knowledge which may better prepare them to tutor and/or assist their children with homework and other methods of learning and retaining phonetic skills using the tool of special coding. Parents were trained over a 15 week period with the Saxon Phonics Program that was currently in use at the elementary school of study at the time in which the study was performed. The main emphasis of the training was placed on phonetic coding. This study was to teach parents how to use the tool of coding much like their children were taught to use it. The goal was to see if parent usage of this tool could significantly increase children’s reading fluency - thereby closing the gap between reading fluency and comprehension, leading to better comprehension.

The study details were presented to parents in a large group gathering at Meet the Teacher - a day which was held during the morning at the elementary two days before the students began the 2011–2012 school year in August. This presentation was also given to parents at a later night meeting for those who could not attend the session held during Meet the Teacher. The night time session was presented the night of the students’ first second day of school for the year.

This study was presented to approximately 131 students/parents. All parents were given the consent forms for the study along with a more personalized letter explaining the study. There were 61 consent forms returned. All 131 parents were offered the
opportunity to receive the training. The 61 returned consent forms included two parents of students who were not taught the phonics program during the previous year at the school. These students’ scores could not be used in the study; however, these parents were still provided, and took advantage of, the opportunity of attending the training. There were also five of the 61 returned forms that were not completely filled out. This made the five corresponding students’ scores unusable for the study. There was also one student’s parent that attended Meet the Teacher and consented to the study, but the child came to school a week late which was after the training had already begun. Because this child had been reported as having moved, and was never pre-tested, there were no scores to include for this child in the study. Also, since the parent training had already begun, the student’s scores could not have become part of the study even if he had been pre-tested when arriving to school. Even so, the parent of this particular child did attend most of the sessions.

Eight of the 61 returned consent forms represented parents that attended more than two sessions; this withheld them from being allowed to be placed in the Not Trained Parents group. However, the same eight parents also attended less than ten sessions withholding them from being placed in the Trained Parent group. The corresponding student scores were thus unusable, and neither the students’ scores nor the attendance of the parents were included in the statistical analysis of the study.

There were a total of 130 students pre-tested using the DIBELS test that was administered by tutors and assistants at the elementary school in the study. The post-test was administered after the fifteen weeks of parent training had been completed. There were 132 students who were tested using the post-test. These number included new
students that came throughout the semester to whom pre-test were not administered. There were a total of five second grade students that transferred out and away from the school since the beginning of the study.

Since the training was to be scheduled around community events, a letter was sent home at the beginning of each week reminding the parents of the training and giving the times for that particular week. All students in the entire grade received this letter to take home each week. These letters also reminded parents, who normally attended training or not, of the opportunity to still participate throughout the training. A reminder of door prizes was also given in the letters that were sent out each week.

This study consisted of a total of 45 students’ DIBELS scores for Oral Reading Fluency. Twenty-three students’ scores were in the Trained Parents group while 22 students’ scores were in the Not Trained Parent group.

Descriptive

Does training parents in the skill of phonetically decoding words, with special coding, make a significant difference in second grade children’s academic achievement in the area of reading fluency? Students whose parents participated in the Saxon Phonics training did not have a significantly higher increase in reading fluency scores compared to the students whose parents did not receive the training.

Students whose parents that were not trained began with a mean score that was lower on the pre-test (m=49.14, sd=23.21) than the students whose parents that were trained (m=66.09, sd=29.43). The post-test scores for the Not Trained Parents group (m=84.05, s =28.91) were also lower than those whose parents were in the Trained Parents group (m=105.87, sd=33.58). Even though the scores of the Trained Parents
group of students stayed higher from the beginning of the study to the end of the study, they did not get high enough to be considered to be significantly higher.

Statistical

The one-way between-subjects Analysis Covariance was calculated to examine the effect of parent training on student post-test Oral Reading Fluency scores using DIBELS, co-varying out the effect of pre-test scores. The pre-test was significantly related to the post-test (F(1,42) = 184.81, p ≤ .001). The post-test scores of the groups (trained or not trained) were not significantly different (F (1,42) = .767, p = .386).

Trained parents’ children’s Oral Reading Fluency scores not being significantly different (m = 105.87, sd =33.58) than untrained parents’ children’s Oral Reading Fluency scores (m = 84.05, sd= 28.91), even after co-varying out the effect of the pre-test. The adjusted mean for the trained group was 97.04 while that for the not trained group was 93.28.

Table 1

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>34512.301</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34512.301</td>
<td>184.810</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.815</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>143.225</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143.225</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>7843.263</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>186.744</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .836 (Adjusted Squared = .828)
Table 2

*Group Statistics*

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>66.09</td>
<td>29.429</td>
<td>6.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Not Trained</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49.14</td>
<td>23.212</td>
<td>4.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>1 Trained</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>105.87</td>
<td>33.575</td>
<td>7.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Not Trained</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>84.05</td>
<td>28.913</td>
<td>6.164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative

After the study was completed, students began to talk about how they thought it was cool that their parents knew how to code words like them. There were also some children that commented about how their parents came to the training but did not actually sit down and help them with phonics homework. In-home observations were not part of this study; however, parents did have to submit forms each week describing the skills they helped their children with.

Parents continuously expressed their feelings of being able to understand their children’s homework better. The parents also expressed their thoughts about how they thought having this training done in first grade would help even more so than in second only since first grade is where the actual coding starts in the Saxon Phonics program.
Parents were pleased that this type of training was being offered to themselves as well as other parents. Some of the parents also asked if the school could provide training for the other subject areas such as math and language. This request was directed to the school administration for consideration.

Ancillary Findings

The number of community events in a small town can be extreme and can make scheduling of school after-school events very difficult. Parents of elementary children often participate with other children of middle school and high school ages, so events involving other schools should be taken into consideration when planning an after-school event. Not only do after-school schedules and events make scheduling difficult, but elementary children can also be involved in a plethora of other after-school activities which can include football, cheerleading, dance, karate, ballet, soccer, and church activities and events. I did not realize the extent to which elementary children’s creative play time is not given to small children anymore. As well, much time is limited in relation to their homework. There is very little time to focus on homework because of the number of activities in which these children participate. Not only are the children busy, but parents seem busier than ever before with work and planned sporting event schedules which makes it difficult to find time for parents to train. With these kinds of busy schedules, time is very limited for parents to actually sit and work with their children on homework. Children’s lives seem more stressed and busier than ever before. I am afraid that if this level of stress continues to be the trend for parents, and especially children, then we will see more health issues surrounding children in society as a whole.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was an opportunity for parents to receive training in the area of phonetic coding so they could help their children to be more successful in reading. As well, for school administrators, this study was an opportunity to examine the potential benefits of using the free resource of parents.

The research by Foster and Miller (2007) showed that the reading fluency gap of children in kindergarten through third grade does affect children’s comprehension levels. The data revealed in the Hewison (1988) research reported that benefits from parent involvement were still clearly apparent three years after an initial study involving parental help for students. The Hewison (1988) study also showed that there was no clear benefit for those children who had received only extra teacher help rather than extra parental help. Using this information, superintendents and principals can see that the use of parents can make a difference in areas where teachers fail to show a difference.

The study done by Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, and Greathouse (1998), showed that there may not be immediate evidence of the benefits of homework for young children; however, homework helps young students develop effective study habits that parents can use to build upon. These effective study habits can have a long-term developmental effect for reading. As with Cooper et al. (1998), improved parent attitudes are most likely to come from the clear communication of homework goals and clear parental understanding of how to help their child with homework.
The Foster and Miller (2007) research showed that students with lower comprehension abilities at the end of third grade have reading difficulties continuously throughout life. This study on parental help for children in phonics, involving parent training, was to give parents the tool of phonetic coding using the Saxon Phonics program that was used every day in the regular class for their second grade children. This study was to train parents to help their children build fluency levels and thus help close the gap between fluency and comprehension (Foster & Miller, 2007) to lessen reading difficulties.

Parents were trained for 15 weeks using the same phonics program with which students were taught. Parents were then better able to help their children with phonics homework. This help should have increased reading fluency of the children so as to help close the fluency and comprehension gap researched by Foster and Miller (2007). It was concluded the study was not statistically significant; however, it is also notable that there was a difference of scores in favor of the Trained Parent group of students. This difference was simply not enough of a difference to be considered statistically significant.

Conclusions and Discussions

Does training parents in the skill of decoding phonics make a significant difference in second grade children’s academic achievement in the area of Oral Reading Fluency? The results of this study provide evidence that there is a difference, but not a statistically significant difference, if the parents are trained in coding for phonics. These results can be used by superintendents, principals, and teachers to demonstrate to parents directly and indirectly the importance of the parental role in their children’s education. Even though the results of the study did not prove to be statistically significant, the
Trained Parents group’s student scores still went up more than the Untrained Parents group’s student scores. While again, the results were not statistically significant, they did indicate to at least some degree that parent training may be more beneficial than not training the parents. With this being stated, the resource of parents should continue to be researched and used within schools.

The parents that participated in the training for this study were likely the parents that have helped their children all along in their academics thus far in school. These were probably the parents that were already motivated to work with their children on homework. Parents that were unable to find time to attend the training may have also been the parents that could not find time after school to assist with homework. Parents may have chosen not to participate in this training because the exposure to coding experienced when their children were in first grade may have overwhelmed them.

Parents did express their thoughts of the training that was provided to them. Many parents said that this training helped them to help their child and were extremely glad that the training was provided. Outsiders, separate and apart from the school community, but yet within the community as a whole, also expressed their thoughts on how well the school was responding to the needs of the parents and students.

Limitations

The sample size of the study was small, being under 25 participants in each group. Finding a significant difference is difficult when having a small sample size such as this. As well, it should be noted that the Trained Parents group started out with a higher score before the training than those who were in the Not Trained Parents group.
The state department of education has mandated a new Common Core curriculum this year for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students. Parents and teachers have been discussing all of the many changes that may be coming with this new way of teaching. Administrators, teachers, and parents are unsure of how this change will affect the way children will be taught. Parents attending the training had many questions about how this new curriculum will be taught to their children. Some parents discussed the conversations they had with third grade teachers that were involved with the Common Core training at the district level for the Language Arts area. Parents were told that the school would probably discontinue the use of the Saxon Phonics program due to the changes for Common Core. Parents were questioning whether or not this was going to happen and if so, how this training could help them with their younger children in earlier grades or preschool. This discussion made some of the parents verbally question how this training would affect their children as well as whether it would be beneficial for the parents to give up the time to be trained using a program that may not be continued in their children’s classrooms.

Another limitation was the scheduling of the training sessions. The sessions were intended to be held on Thursday mornings and evenings. The sessions had to be changed almost every week due to other community events scheduled by schools, sports, or churches.

Recommendations for Policy or Practice

School boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers continue to need help in finding affordable resources to help teach children to read. Principals need to provide opportunities for parents to provide good help for their children. Providing training for
parents at minimal cost to the district is a good resource avenue. Budgets continue to be pinched in the areas of resources, but parents are a resource at every administrator’s disposal. Parents need to help schools teach the children as much as possible. Schools also need to take advantage of the free resource of parents as much as possible. Parents are a free resource that school boards, superintendents, principals and teachers need to tap into and not simply forget just because it does not show up on a written budget.

Persampieri, Gortmaker, Daly III, Sheridan, and McCurdy (2006) reported that parents often feel ill-equipped as they attempt to help their children with homework. This study supports Persampieri et al.’s (2006) findings about the necessity of parent training. Schools could possibly benefit from training their teachers in ways to better work with parents. This training might be provided through professional development programs. It is suggested that teachers who train parents have a clear understanding of the expectations of the students so those expectations can be passed on to the parents. Administrators also should try to ensure that teachers and others training parents understand the curriculum well enough to transfer the knowledge in terms that parents can understand. As well, it is beneficial that trainers bear in mind the amount of time that the parents have been away from the educational setting as well as the amount of changes that have occurred in that setting since the parents’ days as students. Parents may ask many questions concerning teaching strategies, and schools would be at an advantage to be prepared for this type of questioning. Superintendents, principals, and teachers can embrace the help that parents want to give, and they can help arm those parents with the training needed to provide help for the children.
Recommendations for Future Research

First grade is a year in which students really begin to learn phonetic coding. If parents were trained in or before their child’s first grade year, the parents would then be exposed to the coding process earlier and could possibly better see how the coding helps children to read. As such, a study might be beneficial starting at the beginning of both the parents’ and students’ coding journeys. Finding a test to measure students’ reading fluency at the beginning of the first grade year would be a must if a study were to be done following the same pattern as this one. This would be a change from the DIBELS test in that DIBELS only begins testing reading fluency at the middle of the first grade year, which would only be after the initial training period of the parents, and there would be no pre-test score. The DIBELS test would be a wonderful test to use for a study like this if and when the test is designed for those students entering first grade. One might inquire as to why another test should be furnished when the parents could simply wait until the middle of the year to start their coding training. It is important to note that the children would start learning coding in the first half of the first grade year, and because of this fact, parents would benefit more from starting at the beginning and building on their skills rather than jumping in in the middle of the year and having to catch up in their learning in order to help their children.

Parents’ helping to teach their children seems to be the key in childhood development that school administrators cannot afford to overlook; however, the key must fit the lock just right. Finding the best fit for training parents in this area is a direction in which future research needs to go so the door for childhood reading can be unlocked for children’s brighter futures.
APPENDIX A

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled:

LITERACY: PARENT TRAINING IN THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

**Purpose:** This study will be an attempt to see if training parents in phonics coding can result in a transfer of phonetic knowledge to children to make a difference in children’s reading fluency and comprehension levels. It will incorporate the supplemental materials of the Saxon Phonics Program that is used in second grade. Parents are being asked to consent to the use of their children’s pre-test and post-test scores for the purpose of this study. This study seeks to compare the scores of children whose parents have and have not been trained in The Saxon Phonics Program.

**Description of Study:** Students will be given the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test the first week of school. DIBELS is a test that teachers have used to assess children’s oral reading fluency and comprehension levels. This test is administered to students three times a year.

This study provides an opportunity for parents to have the same Saxon Phonics Program taught to them that is taught to their children in the regular classroom. The training is offered free of charge to all parent participants along with free child care (by a second grade teacher) as needed during the training time. The training will be provided by a National Board Certified Teacher who teaches second grade at the school. The training will be offered one day a week in the morning as well as one night a week in the evening to make the sessions convenient for parents’ schedules. Parents being trained need to attend only one session each week as the morning and evening class each week are to cover the same material. The weekly sessions will last for fifteen weeks. Each session will last about one hour. Parents will consistently learn the skills one week prior to their children.

Parents will transfer their training to the students through helping them with homework. Parents will complete a brief record sheet each week providing an overview of homework sessions with their child. The record sheets will be requested as there will be no observations made for the study in the homes of the students.

Participant’s Initials ______
The parent being trained must be the same parent working with the child at home on Phonics homework throughout the training. Therefore training cannot be interchangeable from one parent to the other parent. Since the program being used in the training builds upon previous lessons taught, the same parent must attend the training sessions throughout the entire study.

**Benefits:** The ultimate benefit of this study will be the possible benefit of academic growth for the students. Another benefit will be to see the value of training parents using the same phonics curriculum that is taught to their children in the regular classroom on the daily basis.

To help encourage parents to come to a training session each week, a door prize drawing will be held at the end of each session for participants in attendance. Participants will have a chance to win the door prize of one hundred dollars. Participants in attendance ten or more times will have a chance to win the overall door prize of five hundred dollars to be given at the end of the study.

**Risks:** The risk of providing permission to use the children’s test scores is minimal. The opportunity to make a contribution to the field of education could be missed by not allowing test scores to help measure the success of the training of parents. The risk of not being trained would be the missed opportunity to help children be more successful with reading homework and therefore the opportunity cost of academic growth. Another risk will be the time needed to attend the training sessions and to complete the homework sessions.

**Confidentiality:** Student test scores will be placed in the cumulative records in the office as done in the past. For the results of the study, the students’ test scores will be numbered such that their names, school’s name, or school district’s name will not be identifiable to anyone except the person conducting the study and the school’s tutors administering the DIBELS test. The test scores for the study will be kept on file at the school for seven years after which they will be destroyed by the teacher administering the study. Teachers and tutors are held to a confidentiality policy by the school district as employees of the school district.

**Alternative Procedures:** The Saxon Phonics Program will continue to be taught to all second grade students as it is part of the curriculum. Parents have the liberty to enroll in the training if they so choose. Parents that choose not to receive training will continue as parents have in the past.

**Participant’s Assurance:** Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice.

Participant’s Initials _______
Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits with the exception of having a chance to win the door prize at each training session and the final door prize for the study. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Darlene Hill at 601-758-4289. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

**Signatures:** In conformance with the federal guidelines, the signature of the participant or parent or guardian must appear on all written consent documents. The University also requires that the date and the signature of the person explaining the study to the subject appear on the consent form.

Signature of the Research Participant  Date

Signature of the Person Explaining the Study  Date

In the instances where the participant is a minor (under the age of eighteen years), signature line for the minor’s assent and a signature line for the parents/guardians’ consent is required:

Signature of the Minor Research Participant  Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian  Date

Participant’s Initials ______
APPENDIX B

PERMISSION FROM SAXON PHONICS TO USE THEIR PROGRAM

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
9400 South Park Center Loop
Orlando, Florida 32819
January 27, 2011

Ms. Darlene Hill
Sumrall Elementary
198 Todd Road
Sumrall, MS 39482

Dear Ms. Hill:

Thank you for your inquiry requesting permission to teach phonics lessons to parents of students attending Sumrall Elementary from our SAXON PHONICS AND SPELLING 2, Teacher Edition and to reference results in your dissertation for submission to University of Southern Mississippi.

We have no objection to your request as stated. We understand that you will include the comparison results of your study in your dissertation and will not publish any actual Houghton Mifflin Harcourt content. You agree not to portray Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company material in a negative manner.

Thank you for your interest in our publications.

Sincerely,

Mary Rodriguez
Contracts Associate
APPENDIX C

PERMISSION FROM DIBELS TO ASSESS

February 28, 2011

Mattie Darlene Hill
23 Hill Road
Hattiesburg, MI 39402

Dear Mattie,

We received your request to use DIBELS as a part of your Dissertation. You really do not need our permission to use DIBELS within your doctoral research, using our materials in this way is an acceptable use. As for reprinting within your dissertation, because DIBELS is readily available by download and or published versions, there is not usually a need to include it in the appendix. Samples in appendices should be materials that are not readily available. You may include the website address in your dissertation if so desired.

You are, however, welcome to include brief excerpts of the materials within your paper. We also ask that you include the statement “DIBELS® is a registered trademark of Dynamic Measurement Group, Inc.” on the page where the first use of the name “DIBELS” appears.

This permission does not include any of the materials printed by Sopris West/Cambium or any of the electronic products offered by Wireless Generation. The only materials included in this statement are those available for download on our website, www.dibels.org.

Sincerely,

Michele E. Hecke
Director of Finance and Business Operations

Michele Hecke [Signature]
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL TO PERFORM STUDY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
Institutional Review Board
118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11071104
PROJECT TITLE: Literacy: Parent Training in the Elementary Educational System
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 08/03/2011 to 12/15/2011
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Mattie Darlene Mathis Hill
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 07/21/2011 to 07/20/2012

Lawrence A. Hoeman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair
APPENDIX E

PERMISSION FROM SUPERINTENDENT TO PERFORM STUDY

March 8, 2011

Ms. Darlene Hill
23 Hill Road
Hattiesburg, MS 39402

Dear Ms. Hill:

This letter is to officially acknowledge permission for you to complete your dissertation study with 2nd grade students and parents at Sumrall Elementary School. You and I have had multiple conversations about this topic over the last year or two as you have begun the process to complete your doctoral work. I fully support your using our students and parents who consent to be included in this study. I understand you will be working with parents to give them instruction on the Saxon Phonics Program. I not only give you permission for this study, but also greatly support this being a need to help our parents be better equipped to help their children at home. I look forward to seeing the results of this study and hopefully using the data to improve things in our school district.

I want to congratulate you for staying with this program and now getting to the end of not only your doctoral research but your doctoral degree. The school district and I are very proud to have a teacher who will further her education to the fullest such as you have done. I look forward to supporting you in this project and if you need anything in the future please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Ben Burnett
Superintendent of Education
BB/Md

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - 424 MARTIN LUTHER KING DR. - PURVIS, MS 39475
APPENDIX F

PERMISSION FROM PRINCIPAL TO PERFORM STUDY

August 2, 2011

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this letter in support of Darlene Hill’s research plans for her dissertation. I understand Mrs. Hill will be providing voluntary phonics training for the parents of 2nd graders here at Sumrall Elementary. I also understand this study will require the pre and post testing of our 2nd graders, whose parents have given consent, using the DIBELS assessment.

As the principal here at Sumrall Elementary, I not only support Mrs. Hill’s efforts to complete her degree, but I believe this project will greatly benefit our 2nd grade students. Any effort to train parents will give them the knowledge and skills needed to work with their children at home. Therefore, that extra support at home will result in improved academics at school.

It is without reservation that I support this project. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call 601-758-4289 or email danny.sumrall@lamarcountyschools.org.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sumrall
APPENDIX G

PARENT LETTER ATTACHED TO PARENT CONSENT FORM

The University of Southern Mississippi
Authorization to Participate in a Field Study Project

August 3, 2011

Dear Parent:

Would you like to better help your child with his or her phonics homework—along with the opportunity to win cash door-prize drawings of $100 per week and $500 for attending 10 or more training sessions?

Don’t worry! If you’d like to attend sessions but need childcare, childcare will be provided by 2nd grade teachers for all sessions.

Hello, my name is Darlene Hill. I am a second grade teacher at Sumrall Elementary as well as a Doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi. With 24 years of teaching experience, I am currently working on my dissertation study of second grade students’ ability to read with parental help. The title of my study is Literacy: Parent Training in the Elementary Educational System. The study will involve training parents to understand coding with the Saxon Phonics Program so that parents will be able to better help their children with phonics homework.

You will find a Letter of Consent attached explaining the study. By signing the Letter of Consent, you will be allowing me to train you and to use your child’s DIBELS test scores in the study. There will be multiple places on the consent form for the parent’s signature: one to allow use of the student’s scores and one to allow the parent to be trained. Parents may opt in to have their child’s scores used without consenting to be trained. As per this study, student scores that are directly identifiable to each individual student will only be seen by me as the conductor of the research study, school tutors, and your child’s homeroom teacher. As you probably already know, all Lamar County School District Faculty and Staff must sign a confidentiality statement each year.

The times that have been chosen for the parent training session are as follows:
- Thursday Mornings from 9:30-10:15.
- Thursday Nights from 6:00-6:45.
Community Events may push some training sessions back to Tuesdays (both morning and night) such as “Meet the Bobcats” and the high school football game on Aug. 18, 2011.
(ONLY ONE TRAINING SESSION MAY BE ATTENDED EACH WEEK-Parents may choose the time that best fits their schedule and may alternate between morning and night as needed.)
NOTE: Each student may have one parent/guardian at the sessions, HOWEVER; the parent/guardian attending the session must be the same (i.e. Mom and Grandma cannot take turns going to sessions. This is necessary because of the way in which the phonics program builds on itself.)
Sessions will start August 11, 2011.

This study can only be possible with your help. Please read the attached papers and give your permission allowing the use of your child’s test scores. Permission to perform this study has been given by the Lamar County School District; the principal, Mr. Sumrall; and The University of Southern Mississippi’s Office of Research.

Remember, our school motto is “Learning Takes Three: Parent, Teacher, and Me (student)” . Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Mattie Darlene Hill
APPENDIX H

PARENT TRAINING WEEKLY RECORD SHEET
APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE OF WEEKLY REMINDER LETTER SENT

2nd Grade Parent Training

RESCHEDULED

Due to OPEN HOUSE at the elementary, scheduled for 6:00 PM on Thursday, our training time for Phonics will begin at 5:30 PM. The training session will be over in time for Open House which begins in the gym at 6:00 PM. The Thursday morning session will continue to be on Thursday morning at 9:30 AM.

It is not too late to still sign up to be trained. Also, very important, PLEASE sign the forms allowing your child’s assessment scores to be used in the study. All student names will be kept confidential along with school name and district name.

Don’t miss out on the chance to win the cash door prize of $100 that is given away at each session. Parents attending ten or more sessions have the opportunity of winning the door prize drawing of $500 that will be given the week before Thanksgiving.
The training will cover fifteen weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Short Vowels and Long Vowels</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Review of Vowels</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Consonants</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Long Vowel Rules</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Long Vowel Rule</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Blends</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>IEY Rule</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Vowel Patterns</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Combination using er</td>
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<td>Lesson 24</td>
<td>Combination using another ar sound</td>
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<td>Lesson 32</td>
<td>Special Long Vowel Words</td>
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<td>Lesson 33</td>
<td>Adding Suffixes using –ed, -ing, -less, and -s</td>
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<td>Lesson 34</td>
<td>Using Double Consonants</td>
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<td>Lesson 38</td>
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<td>Lesson 42</td>
<td>Final Syllable –ble</td>
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<td>Lesson 43</td>
<td>Final Syllables –dle, -fle, -gle, -ple, -tle</td>
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<td>Diphthong using ou; digraph using ou</td>
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<td>Diphthong using ow; Digraph using ow</td>
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<td>Adding Suffixes–er, -est, -y</td>
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<td>Adding Suffixes –let, -ly</td>
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