

THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN READING

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Abstract

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p.2). The key to parent involvement is demonstrating to parents that the school wants them involved. All parental involvement is important, whether it is at home supporting their child's academic progress, in the classroom assisting groups, or serving through a membership on an advisory council.

At the beginning of the 1st nine weeks subjects took the Star reading assessment to establish a baseline scaled score for reading. Students took the Star reading test four times within the school year. After the initial baseline test, subsequent scaled test scores were evaluated for growth or regression.

Several measures were used to examine the data to answer the research question directing this study. Pearson's correlation was used to assess the linear association between the independent variable (time spent reading during treatment period) and the dependent variable (change in Star scaled score). The change in Star scaled score measured after the fourth nine-week period evaluated the impact of removing the treatment.

Quantitative data was obtained via the parental involvement survey using a set of thirteen Likert scale questions. The parents of each student were assigned a parental involvement score that was derived by taking an average of their response to each of the thirteen questions. These parental involvement scores were used to evaluate potential relationships between parental involvement and student achievement in reading.

Student's academic success was based on Star reading assessment scaled scores. Parental involvement was based on the time spent reading with the subject. Pearson's product-moment correlation test was used to test the two variables, parental involvement and student achievement, and to determine whether or not there was a linear correlation between the time parents spent reading with their child and the subjects scaled score. The p value was found in order to determine if there was a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The p value showed medium statistical significance in both parental involvement and student achievement and parental perception of involvement and reading scaled scores.

The implications of this study suggest that parents may take a more prominent role in their child's education since it was shown that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. Student achievement through parental involvement may cause parents to view school as a positive experience and may increase the value parents place upon education. The connections between positivity and value could help build lasting partnerships between parents and schools. The final implication from the study might be that teachers more closely examine their core beliefs about parental involvement in education. Examination of core beliefs by the educator allows them to open themselves up to building authentic teacher-parent relationships.

Key Words: *parental involvement, achievement*

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Dedication

My parents taught me honesty, truth, compassion, kindness, and how to care for people. Also, they encouraged me to take risks, to boldly go. I dedicate this dissertation to them. Without the involvement, love, and support they have shown me throughout my lifetime I would not be the person I am today. I am thankful for their determination, dedication, and devotion. I'm thankful for their love.

“Have enough courage to trust love one more time and always one more time.” Maya Angelou

I also dedicate this dissertation to Peter. The love of my life. It can be hard to trust in love but with you there was never a doubt.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Parents are becoming more vocal about becoming involved in educational decision making. Fege (2000) discussed the growing concern held by parents and the community towards public education. With the growing rise in concern over public education it is necessary to take a closer look at the significant advantages parental and community involvement have on the educational system and the academic achievement of students. In the 41st Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, the public was asked what issues they felt were most important in guiding schools in the right direction. Eighty five percent of those polled identified ‘more parental support’ as the most important issue. The National PTA’s Chief Executive Officer Byron V. Garrett’s stated that, “Parents play a key role in providing support and encouragement to their children, but they can’t do it alone. They need to work with educators to create an environment that welcomes meaningful parent involvement to foster student success” (Bushaw & McNee, 2009).

Statement of the problem

In order to improve American education and address low student achievement educational reforms have begun to focus on establishing better school-home connections, more specifically, parental involvement in learning (Ames & Khoju, 1993, p. 1). Education is changing and many educators are beginning to realize there is a direct link between the quality of education in a school and the extent of the parental involvement (Donovan, 2013, p. 159). This study will examine the relationship between parental involvement and students’ achievement in reading. If a positive relationship is found, it is crucial and imperative to encourage and perpetuate parental involvement in the education

of children to show academic growth and achievement. In the passing of the No Child Left Behind law, Congress and the president made a promise to our children that all will have an equal opportunity to get a high-quality education. Consequently, our public schools need all the help they can get – from parents, family members, community residents, local organizations, and anyone else who can engage children’s learning (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the correlation between parental involvement in children’s education and the Star reading scaled scores of second graders at an East Tennessee elementary school.

A major factor in determining the level of parental involvement is parental socio-economic status. Levels of parental involvement are positively related to social class and to maternal levels of education. Single parent status and problems with maternal psychosocial health have a negative effect on involvement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, pg. 41). Ames, Khoju & Watkins (1993) noted in research that parental involvement tends to be higher among parents with higher levels of income and education. Parent involvement may also be related to parents’ beliefs and perceptions of school, their child’s teacher, and beliefs about their own ability to make a difference in their child’s learning (Ames, Khouju & Watkins, 1993, p. 2). Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) contributed parental involvement to the degree that parents see that supporting and enhancing their child’s school achievement is part of their job as a parent. Parents will also become involved to the degree that they feel they can make a difference. Jeynes (2007) reported that a parent

who believes diligence in school is important is more likely than most to be highly educated and is more likely than most to support their child academically.

There is a consensus among American educators that when parents become involved in their child's education they do better in school (Donavan, 2013). Cotton & Wikelund (n.d.) stated that the research demonstrates that parental involvement in children's learning is positively related to student achievement. Hara & Burke (1998) found that parental involvement was a significant factor in both accelerated and sustained student academic achievement. Clark (2007) stated in regards to reading achievement specifically that, "Parental involvement in reading has been found to be the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy, and involvement with reading activities at home having significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills, but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom" (p. 1). Evidence stated that parents who promote the view that reading is a valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure (Clark, 2007, p.1). Mirazchiyski & Klemencic (2014) reported through examination of the 2011 PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) that on average in almost all countries, students in schools with high levels of parental involvement had higher scores than those students attending schools with medium or low levels of parental involvement. The overall results from this research showed the association between reading achievement and parental involvement was positive and statistically significant (Mirazchiyski & Klemencic, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical models of family/parental involvement are based on the idea that teachers have the knowledge and skills to empower families to be wholly engaged in their child's learning - both at home and at school (Tambyraja, Schmitt, Farquharson, & Justice, 2016). Parental involvement involves helping students construct and interrupt their learning through involvement and interaction. Constructivism is a theory of learning, which posits that students learn by actively constructing their own knowledge. Vygotsky, the pioneer of Social Constructivism, believed psychological phenomena emerge from social interaction, and therefore, anyone who interacts with the learner under learning circumstances can be taken into account in the social world of the learner (Liu and Chen, 2010). Knowledge under constructivism is not seen as a commodity to be transferred from expert to learner, but rather a construct to be pieced together through an active process of involvement and interaction with the environment (Scholnik, Kol and Abaranel, 2006). Learners developing knowledge is shaped by the activities by which they are engaged, the context of the activities, and the enveloping culture (Scholnik, Kol and Abaranel, 2006). Social-constructivist theory may help to understand the marked and particular influence of family in a child's literacy acquisition. Social-Constructivist Theory and parental involvement is an ongoing process involving the reciprocal interplay among the learner, other individuals, social systems, and culture. For constructivists, each factor plays a role in the content, process, and organization of knowledge. Within this context, the learner's brain functions like an ontogenetic landscape in which the processing of new experiences and the creation of new knowledge depend on the nature of the landscape formed by past experiences. In part, individual learning is shaped by

others, who function as mentors giving structure, order, and accessibility to knowledge (Cook-Cottone, 2004).

Research question and null hypotheses

By forming well-established and organized programs schools can promote parental involvement within the parents of their students. By strengthening the ties between school and parent schools become less threatening and parents become empowered by the knowledge that they are helping make a difference in the education of their child. It is important to point out that the positive effects gained through parental involvement do not stop with the students. Parents and teachers are positively affected by the relationship, as well.

The research question seeking to be answered is whether there was a correlation between (variable a) time with parental engagement and (variable b) reading achievement scores. The null hypotheses of the research is that there is no statistically significant relationship between time with parental engagement and reading achievement scores.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Parental Involvement: Parent behaviors related to a child's school or schooling that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to their child's educational affairs. Parents who show these behaviors in a larger extent, can be regarded as higher involved than a parent who shows these behaviors in a lesser degree (Baker and Denessen, 2007).

Family Engagement: developing and fostering effective partnerships between teachers and parents (Prior, 2011).

Early literacy: refers to the development of skills students need in order to transition from learning to read, to reading to learn (Early Literacy, n.d.).

Achievement: indicates whether a student is below, above, or on par with grade level expectations (Renaissance Flow 360, 2017).

Several terms in this report are used interchangeably both in the field and in research. For instance, “involvement” and “engagement” are both used but convey the same meaning. And while it is recognized that many individuals in a family may play important roles in a child’s learning at home and at school, most studies examine parents or caregivers; therefore, the words “family” and “parent” are used interchangeably. Finally, “children” and “students” are used synonymously.

Limitations

A one-group time-series design will be used in the research to collect data. In a time-series design no control group or comparison group is needed. A time-series design typically involves only one group for which multiple observations of data have been gathered both prior to and after the intervention (Group experimental design, n.d.). The major weakness to the one-group time series design is that you cannot rule out the possibility that something other than the independent variable is producing an observed change in assessment scores. The external validity of the one-group time series design is a concern that could restrict the findings of the research. Incidences outside of the study could affect the subjects’ performance on the assessments. For example, parental involvement occurred before the assessment taken during the first nine-week period. In

addition, parental involvement will continue during the fourth nine-week period. In the absence of the prescribed treatment the study will not quantify this involvement.

As part of the research parents will be asked to complete a reading log. Limitation lies in the extent to which parents fill out and implement the log with integrity. It will be impossible to ensure trustworthiness with the completion of the reading logs. The validity of measures can also be seen as a limitation with the parental survey. There is possibility of a systematic bias of results of ratings of items of questionnaires by parents themselves

Delimitations

The population for this study consisted of second grade students within the same second grade classroom setting. Students will range in age from seven to nine years old. Subjects will vary in gender, race/ethnicity, academic ability, socio-economic status, and family structure. Due to the large number of potential participants in the study and the research design, the current study focused only on Second Graders at an East Tennessee elementary school. The small sample size in the study serves as a delimitation to the study, however, due to time limitations of the study and the research design method, sample size is small. In order to assure manageability of the data collected, survey instruments use only multiple-choice items and do not include open-ended response items.

Assumptions

The limitations of the study could likely affect the outcome of the study. It could be assumed that the small sample size and time limitation of the study could deter generalizations regarding parental involvement and student achievement in reading. A

linear association can be made in regards to the research data from this study, in that it is determined that there is a correlation between the two variables, parental involvement and student achievement. The linear association does not imply that one variable causes the other variable, but that there is some significant association between the two variables.

Organization

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research question, significance of the study, definition of terms, and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of related literature and research related to parental involvement and student achievement. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for the study are presented in Chapter 3. The results of analyses and findings to emerge from the study will be contained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will contain a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a discussion and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

American Education Week is celebrated each year during the week right before Thanksgiving. American Education Week was founded by the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Legions in 1921, with the Department of Education joining in 1922. Today, American Education Week is co-sponsored by National PTA and 11 other national education organizations. November 18 has been designated “Parents Day” to encourage parents to visit their child’s school and spotlight the importance of family engagement in education (Garcia & Thornton, 2014).

Parents and families want their children to succeed. Believing that parents are not invested in their child’s future because they do not seem to engage with the school could not be further from the truth. In the book, *Powerful Partnerships*, author Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot is quoted:

“I believe that all parents hold big expectations for the role that schools will play in the chances of their children. They all harbor a wish list of dreams and aspirations for their youngsters. All families care deeply about their children’s education and hope that their progeny will be happier, more productive, and more successful than they have been in their lives”

Mapp, Carver, and Lander (2017) presented four essential core beliefs all parents hold for their children: all families have dreams for their children and want the best for them, all families have the capacity to support their children’s learning, families and school staff are equal partners, and the responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships

among school, home, and community rests primarily with the school staff, especially school leaders (p. 20).

The ‘No Child Left Behind Act’ and Title I

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and provided a framework for which families, educators, and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defined the term ‘parental involvement’ for the first time in ESEA history. The act defined parental involvement as, “The participation of parents in two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.” Including the idea that parents play a key role in helping children learn and act as full partners in their child’s education. (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg. 7). Parents, however, had no recourse if school districts did not follow through with implementation. The four principles that guide the framework are: accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research (Ferguson, 2009, pg. 1). The new Title I, Part A was designed to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students among their peers, but also to change the culture of America’s schools so that success is defined in terms of student achievement. As indicated in Title I, Part A, the involvement of parents is critical to the process (Ferguson, 2009, pg.1). In 1994 an amendment was made to the act and included funding through the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs). Each state has one or more PIRC. The overall purpose of PIRC is to help implement parent involvement policies and programs for improving children’s achievement to strengthen partnerships between parents and educators, to

further Title I children's development under NCLB (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg. 8). In 2008-2009, large majorities of educators who received PIRC services reported changing their practices on family engagement, as did majorities of families on supporting children's learning. Sixty percent of Title I schools and 73% of Title I districts reported receiving PIRC services (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg.8). Under the guidelines of NCLB to support parent involvement in reading and literacy every state department should (Ferguson, 2009, pg. 89):

1. Develop policy that connects local public libraries to school sites staffed by credentialed librarians.
2. Assure that policy is created and that every school site, commencing with Title I schools, has a family centered organized by a coordinator.
3. Assure that Title I funds and other funds are directed to school districts to provide parent-student workshops in reading/literacy and payment for costs to low-income parents.
4. Allocate Title I and other funds for the purchase of electronic devices for student use in reading, writing and information gathering.
5. Develop policy that connects parent involvement activities with regular school staff and programs that involve reading and literacy development

The Title I parent and family engagement policy must describe how the district will involve parents in the district plan, provide necessary support, conduct annual evaluations

on effectiveness of programs, and involve families in school activities (Strong families, 2017).

Literacy development

Parent involvement is the number one predictor of early literacy success and future academic achievement (Burton, 2013). Traditionally literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write (National Literacy Trust, 2011). Only a few definitions of literacy limit the term to simply meaning to be able to read and write. Most definitions include oral, visual, electronic multimedia, and other media of communication, and broaden the concept to encompass a wide range of communicative abilities (National Literacy Trust, 2011). In the mid-eighties the term emergent literacy gained prominence as a theory that explains the origin of reading and writing in the youngest children. Emergent literacy comprises the skills of understandings, and attitudes that young children demonstrate before they are able to control conventional forms of reading and writing (FACE Scholastic, 2013, pg. 13). In general, skilled reading and writing in elementary school is shaped by early literacy experiences long before a child encounters formal reading instruction. Providing children with strong literacy education in the early years leads to better academic outcomes and reading success later on (FACE Scholastic, 2011, pg. 14). Early literacy begins at home with parents serving as the role models and language mentors. A semi-longitudinal research study conducted by Hart and Risely examined parents' talk to children among families from varying socioeconomic levels (FACE, Scholastic, 2011). Their study of parent-child talk was conducted in Kansas and was conducted over a decade. Follow-up studies of those same children at age nine showed that there was a very tight link between the academic success of a child and the

number of words the child's parents spoke to the child at age three. The research can be summarized by three key findings (FACE, Scholastic, pg.18):

1. The variation of children's IQs and language abilities is relative to the amount parents speak to their children.
2. Children's academic success at ages nine and ten are attributable to the amount talk and involvement they hear from birth to age three.
3. Parents of advanced children take significantly more to their children than do parents of children who are not as advanced.

Parents and other primary caregivers are instrumental in fostering language, reading, and literacy skills so essential for school success (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg. 81).

Research provides overwhelming evidence of the connections between literacy resources at home and students' literacy development. A report from the U.S. Department of Education confirms the historic finding that children from homes with more books and more reading by parents perform higher on reading achievement tests than do children from less reading-rich environments (Epstein, 2009, p.41). Children need parents to be their reading role models with daily reading practice in order to successfully navigate beginning literacy skills (Burton, 2013). Many studies indicate that children's early literacy experiences, such as reading books with adults, are associated with students' skills in school and higher scores on tests in vocabulary, print knowledge, and letter-sounds. The results from these studies are consistent with other studies indicating that parental involvement with children on various reading-related activities helps students develop a number of literacy skills that are important for later reading achievement

(Epstein, 2009, p.43). The findings also suggests that schools can guide parents to enjoy a variety of literacy activities with their young children, including reading aloud with their children, listening to stories, and learning letters and words.

Prior (2011) stated that a growing body of research has focused on the benefits of family involvement in early education. In particular, there are benefits to children when their families participate in literacy activities with them. In an examination of the results of 70 studies about parental involvement the following themes were found:

1. When parents are involved in their children's education, their children typically do well in school.
2. When parents assist children with school projects at home, they positively reinforce and strengthen learning.
3. Mathematics and literacy skills improve when parents participate in the education experience.
4. Variations in student achievement exist in relation to culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds. When parents are involved with their children's education, this gap decreases.

Family involvement in education has many benefits related to specific subject areas – particularly in reading. A study of struggling first-grade readers provided parents with training sessions. These sessions helped parents participate in reading lessons with their children. The study indicated that children of the participating parents experiences significant gains in reading assessments (Prior, 2011, p.9). A study referenced by Prior (2011) reported increased reading achievement for children whose parents read to them five minutes a day, three days a week.

Research has shown that it is beneficial for children to share “book time” with caregivers and parents in the years prior to formal schooling. Benefits to the child include language development, cognitive benefits, phonological awareness, concepts of print and comprehension skills (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013). Children who have been read to at home demonstrate higher levels of early literacy skills and reap academic advantages throughout their school years (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013). According to research parents should focus on the following reading skills and strategies in order to foster early literacy success (Burton, 2013):

1. Point to each word on the page
2. Read the title and ask children to make predictions
3. Take “picture walks” before reading the book
4. Model fluency while reading, and bring energy and excitement to the reading activity
5. Ask children questions after reading the book
6. Connect reading and writing if possible

The process of building lifelong readers is transformative and constantly changing and growing. The reading process must begin when children are initially beginning to read and are in the early stages of literacy development. Parents can promote and aid in the literacy development process by incorporating repetition, proper skills, and modeling (Burton, 2013).

Home literacy environment

Parents are the first teachers and role models for their children and have a strong influence on their learning. Garcia & Thornton (2014) suggested that the most significant involvement is what parents do at home. By monitoring, supporting, and advocating, parents can be engaged in ways that ensure children have every opportunity for success. According to several strands of research conducted by the National Literacy Trust (2011), they have produced evidence for justifying a focus on the family and the role they play in literacy and raising literacy standards. The National Literacy Trust's (2011) key research findings showed that parental involvement in a child's literacy practices positively affects academic performance and is a more powerful source for academic success than other family background variables such as social class, family size, and level of parental education. Specifically, parent involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension, and expressive language skills, but also on students' interest in reading, attitude towards reading, and attentiveness in the classroom (National Literacy Trust, 2011). Research suggested that parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of children through supporting their learning at home rather than supporting school activities. The research supported that the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting effects.

Families vary widely in the way that they provide a supportive environment for literacy development. Snow, Burn & Griffin (1998) referred to five areas of family functioning that might influence reading development. The five areas referenced are value placed on literacy, press for achievement, availability, and instrumental use of

reading materials, and reading with children. The value placed on literacy refers to the importance parents take in reading themselves and in turn encouraging children to read. The press for achievement refers to the importance parents are placing on expectations for reading achievement, providing reading instruction and responding to children's interest and curiosities about reading. Literacy experiences are more likely to occur in homes that contain children's books and other reading and writing materials. Reading with children can influence reading development at home and can involve parents reading to children and parents listening to the oral reading of children and providing assistance when needed (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

A study published in *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* (FACE Scholastic, 2013) showed that just the presence of books profoundly impacts a child's academic achievement. The study was conducted over 20 years, and surveyed over 70,000 people across 27 countries and found the following: children raised in home with more than 500 books spend three years longer in school, children whose parents have lots of books are nearly 20% more likely to finish college, regardless of how many books the family has, each addition to the home library helps children get a little further in school, and in general, the books help establish a reading or scholarly culture in the home that persist through generations (FACE Scholastic, 2013, pg. 55). Research conducted from the Progress in International Reading Study of 215,000 students across 40 countries, helped substantiate research findings and showed similar impact of books in the home and the benefits of a home library and reading culture (FACE Scholastic, 2013).

Results of parent involvement in reading

Studies show that, although practices of involvement differ in preschools, elementary, middle and high schools age appropriate family and community involvement activities help students improve reading and literacy skills at every grade level (Toso, 2013). In preschool and early elementary grades, almost every study conducted over the past 10 years indicates that students benefit when families engage with young children on reading and literacy readiness and early reading skills. Results from these studies were strongest from shared-reading approaches. Studies revealed that shared-reading with storybooks increased students' vocabulary and listening and comprehension skills (Toso, 2013). Research points to the positive literacy effects of family engagement at home, at school, and even in out-of-school time. Family engagement at home is perhaps the most influential to literacy outcomes and academic achievement – including ample books, frequent and interactive share reading between parents and children and rich and frequent discussions with children – predicts literacy and language gains in the early years and the early grades (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg. 81). In later elementary grades, research studies revealed that family and community involvement positively influences student achievement and other measures of success. At a secondary level fewer studies have been conducted to determine the impact of parental involvement on student achievement and reading skills. New research beginning to emerge suggests that when middle and high school teachers, counselors, administration, and partnership teams communicated frequently and clearly with parents, teens were more likely to increase reading achievement scores than when educators did not communicate with parents (Toso, 2013, p. 18).

It is imperative that all teachers know that students' parents, family members and community allies are important partners in supporting and advancing students' reading and literacy skills. Studies on family and community involvement with children reading across the grades yield six immediate and actionable implications for policy and practice (Toso, 2013, pg. 21):

1. Parent at all grade levels and in all socioeconomic and cultural groups can support and encourage their children's reading, writing and other literacy learning.
2. All pre-schools, elementary, middle and high schools could develop school-based, goal-linked partnership programs, and grade-specific practices that engage families with their children on reading, writing, and other literacy skills.
3. At the school level teachers need guidance and encouragement from principals, district administrators, and/or reading coaches to engage all parents with children on useful reading activities.
4. District curriculum coaches and specialists in reading and language arts need professional development, to remain and become up-to-date on strategies for conducting family and community engagement in reading, writing and other literacy skills in pre-school, elementary, middle, and high schools.
5. Pre-service and advanced courses at the college level are needed to prepare future teachers and administrators to understand and be able to

develop effective and equitable programs of family and community involvement linked to improving reading.

Family engagement in reading is strongly related to student achievement. Parents effect students' interest and reading ability in many ways. Parental expectations, speaking and reading to children, number of books in the home, parental interest in oral and written communication, parental knowledge of language arts development, and parental enjoyment of reading foster student achievement in reading (Redding, Murphy, & Sheley, 2011, pg. 87).

Heather Weiss (n.d.) and her colleagues from the Harvard Family Research Project conducted a ten-year longitudinal study of 300 low-income, ethnically diverse children and the school, family and community factors that promote their successful development. The study measured different family involvement processes, including involvement at home, in school, in the neighborhood and community, and through home-school connection. The research emerged with five major findings. The first finding was that family and parental involvement relates to low-income elementary students' literacy outcomes over time. High levels of family involvement from kindergarten through fifth grade on average showed to predict children's gains in literacy. The second finding was that family involvement is a dynamic process. Research showed that changes in family dynamics had an impact of children's literacy attainment. Increase involvement showed an increase in children's literacy performance. The third finding showed that family involvement had positive impact on low-income students literacy attainment, high levels involvement were more strongly associated with average literacy performance. The fourth finding of the study showed that parental involvement influenced literacy

performance and children's feeling about literacy, which in turn improved their literacy performance. In other words, "Children start feeling better about literacy and like literacy more when parents are involved in their education" (Weiss, n.d.). The fifth finding of the study was that because family involvement is dynamic it is never too late for parents to become involved.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 was the first piece of legislation that requires schools to involve parents in their children's education achievement in a manner that is beyond serving on committees, although some researchers argue that family involvement should be an "integral" component of any school reform that is proposed (Toso, 2013). In a Gallop Poll survey when asked what one thing could be done to improve public schools, the most common answer reported by 361 teachers was increasing parent involvement in schools (Toso, 2013). Decades of research prove, more often than not, strong families yield strong successful students. A strong family partnership can make a huge difference in student success as illustrated through a study conducted by Burke et. al in their study of the Chicago schools (FACE Scholastic, 2013). The study that student performance is not only influenced by the home, school, and community environments in which students live, but also by the relationships among these settings (FACE Scholastic, 2013). The study demonstrated that when home, school, and community join forces in a framework of support, student motivation and participation increases.

The parent, family and community engagement framework began by the Office of Head Start in order to help educators seeking to build effective engagement strategies.

This framework outlines three areas: Program environment, teaching and learning, and family and community partnerships. The framework highlights a set of desired family outcomes and examples of strategies to achieve them. The outcomes are: family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, families as life-long educators, families as learners, family engagement in transition, family connections to peers and the community and families as advocates and leaders (Parent, family and community engagement framework, 2011). The framework is a research-based approach to program change that shows how an agency (school) can work together as a whole to promote family and parent engagement and children's learning and development. Programs and schools are more likely to achieve family engagement outcomes when the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework foundations are in place. The parent and family engagement outcomes include examples of program strategies that are informed by research and performance standards (Parent, family and community engagement framework, 2011). The family engagement outcomes seek to promote a positive culture where parents and families are safe and healthy, parents participate in the everyday learning of their child at home, parents and families advance their own learning interests through education and support, parents and families advocate for their child's learning and development, parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal and informal networks that are supportive, and parents and families participate in leadership development and decision making in order to improve their child's development and learning experiences (Parent, family and community engagement framework, 2011). The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework was created to lay the groundwork for parent and family engagement for Head Start and Early

Head Start Programs. The principles of this framework can be applied regardless of the program or agency. The framework serves as a model for schools and institutions wanting to implement parent and family engagement goals and programs. The necessary ingredients for program success must include a commitment toward goal-directed, positive, culturally responsive and respectful relationships with families and a system-wide, integrated and comprehensive parent, family, and community engagement approach (Parent, family and community engagement framework, 2011).

Types of parental involvement

Research has identified lack of planning and lack of mutual understanding as the two greatest barriers to effective parental involvement. It has also been established that parental involvement programs that are successful have defined roles for parents and are well organized (Cotton & Wikeland, n.d.). Joyce Epstein, Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University, has created a framework to help the educational community better understand parental involvement and how to make it work. Studies indicate that more and different families get involved when schools implement a comprehensive partnership program with activities that represent six types of involvement, identified in a research-based framework (Toso, 2013). Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement consists of: Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. In Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement, parenting is defined as "Helping all families establish home environments to support children as students" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.). Epstein's next category provides a way to help parents accomplish this through communication with one another. Communicating is defined by Epstein as, "Designing effective forms of school-

to-home communications about school programs and children's progress" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.) Through effective communication, schools enable parents to provide the support needed for students to become successful. Epstein's third type of involvement focuses on volunteering and is defined as, "Recruiting and organizing parent help and support" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.). Marzano (2013) found that involved parents sense that the school values and welcomes not only their ideas but also their physical participation. A parent sensing their value demonstrates the importance of finding ways to involve parents and the community in day-to-day school activities. The fourth category of Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement, learning at home, "Provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.). Information can be provided to parents about homework policies, ways to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home, and the value of setting a regular, scheduled homework time, through open house presentations or letters sent home at the beginning of the year. Epstein's fifth type of involvement focuses on decision making. Decision making includes parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders and representatives. Finally, collaborating with community is defined as, "Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.). Epstein re-defines community as, "All who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools" (Parent Engagement through Privatization, n.d.). Edwards (2016) warned that

although recommendations can be drawn from Epstein's work, there is no "cookie cutter" set of programs or approaches that will work for all schools or for all families. This means that parental involvement would look different in different schools, as individual schools tailor their practices to meet the specific needs of students and their families.

Hara & Burke (1998) implemented Epstein's framework into their inner-city parental involvement program. Also implemented into the program were Epstein's five steps for a parental program implementation process: create an action team, obtain funds and other support, identify starting points, develop a three-year plan, and continue planning and working to improve the program (Hara & Burke, 1998, p. 221). All of these elements combined provided the fundamentals for a successful family involvement program. Cotton & Wikelund (n.d.) noted that the schools with the most successful parent involvement programs are those which offer a variety of ways parents can participate. Recognizing that parents differ greatly in their willingness, ability, and available time for involvement in school activities, these schools provide a continuum of options for parent participation.

Parenting styles and involvement

A primary aim of many early childhood intervention programs is to facilitate parent engagement to enhance child development and school success. Promoting meaningful parent engagement through intervention requires understanding the relationship of different types of caregiver behaviors and attitudes to learning and development. (Toso, 2013, p.7). Parenting styles play a major factor in determining the well-being of children across a wide range of environments. Parenting styles capture two important elements in parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness.

Parental responsiveness refers to, “the extent to which parents intentionally fosters individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion, by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children’s special needs and demands” (Darling, 1999, p.2) Parental demandingness refers to, “the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts, and willingness to confront the child who disobeys.” (Darling, 199, p.2) Categorizing parents as to whether they are high or low on parental responsiveness and parental demandingness creates a framework of four parenting styles. According to researcher, Diana Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist and creator of the four types of parenting styles, each parenting style reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parents’ values, practices, and behaviors and a distinct balance of responsiveness and demandingness (Darling, 1991, p.2). It is important to examine parenting styles when looking at parental involvement and student achievement due to the fact that certain parenting styles lend themselves to having higher achieving children. Different parenting styles are associated with different child outcomes. Several studies have found that parenting style or parental behavior has a statistically significant relationship with developmental outcomes like performance, achievement strategies, self-regulated learning, achievement goals, self-efficacy, and well-being of students (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). In studies conducted by Taller et al and Fakaye (2008) researchers revealed a significant relationship between parenting styles and students’ achievement in reading (Rena, Abedalaziz, & Leng, 2013).

Authoritarian

One of the three major parent styles identified by Baumrind is the authoritarian style of parenting. In this style of parenting children are expected to follow strict rules established by the parents. Failure to follow these rules usually results in punishment. Authoritarian parents do not explain the reasoning behind their rules (Cherry, 2017). According to Gafoor & Kurukkan (2014) authoritarian parents are firm in their control and practices, expect strict, unquestioned obedience to parental authority, are not receptive to the individuality of the child, relatively neglectful of the child's needs, and allow little communication between themselves and the child. Authoritarian parents may choose extracurricular activities, class schedules and social events for their child with no input from the child at all (Hoang, 2007). Baumrind's study of preschool children found that this type of parenting and family interaction was associated with low levels of independence and social responsibility (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987). Children and adolescents from authoritarian families tend to perform at moderate levels in school, have few behavior problems, but have poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression (Darling, 1999)

Authoritative

Parents with an authoritative style have established rules and guidelines, however, are more democratic than the authoritarian style. When children fail to meet their expectations, the authoritative parent is more nurturing and forgiving than punishing. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children and willing to listen to their questions (Cherry, 2017). Gafoor & Kurukkan (2014) described the authoritative parent style as firm and consistent control, monitoring and imparting clear standards for

their child's conduct, give priority to child's needs and abilities, encourage children to be independent, are forgiving and offer autonomy. The authoritative parenting style nurtures individuality and open communication with their children. Authoritative parents may allow their child to express their individuality through extracurricular activities and elective choices in school. An authoritative parent may truly communicate with their child and show respect for their opinion (Hoang, 2007). Cherry (2017) referenced Baumrind suggesting that authoritative parents monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. According to Darling (1999, p.3) the consequences for children from authoritative parents is that they, "Rate themselves and are rated by objective measures as more socially and instrumentally competent than those whose parents are non-authoritative."

Permissive

The permissive parenting style makes very few demands upon their children. Permissive parents rarely discipline their children because they have low expectations for maturity and self-control (Cherry, 2017). Parents are tolerant and accepting towards their child's impulses, use little punishment, make few demands for mature behavior, and allow self-regulation to take place by the child. Children of permissive parents are found to be immature, impulsive, and lack social responsibility and independence (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). Gafoor & Kurukkan (2014) described the permissive parent as showing frequent expressions of warmth and affection, low enforcement of rules and authority, high acceptance for the child, taking the role of friend rather than parent, and allowing the child to make their own decisions with little

punishment. Students from families with a permissive parent style are more likely to have behavior problems in school, perform less well in school, but still have high self-esteem, high social skills, and low levels of depression (Darling, 1999).

Parents as barriers to involvement

Some parents believe that the school holds the main responsibility for their children's education. They often feel they do not have the ability to help their children at home and may have negative attitudes about school from their own experiences or their children's previous experiences (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013). A number of barriers hinder parents' ability to be involved. One barrier noted by parents/guardians in a study referenced by Baker, Wise, Kelley & Skiba (2016) is the lack of poor timing of communication between the school and home, so that parents are unaware of school events and activities. The study also noted that barriers can also arise when parents' negative experiences in schools, either their own or their child's, as well as parents' level of education, lead to feelings of being unable to help their children academically, which may cause parents to feel inferior to school personnel. Families are diverse and bring their own set of expectations and perceptions to building relationships with schools. For some parents their own perceptions of class, level of education, and availability and flexibility of time because of work schedules and family responsibilities may prevent them from being involved in schools (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013). Kathleen Hoover Dempsey and Howard Sandler found that three key concepts influence the choices parents make about being involved in their children's education (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, pgs.33-34):

1. How parents develop their job description as a parent – what parents think they are supposed to do to help their children and what friends and family say about what's important and acceptable deeply affect what parents decide to do.
2. How confident parents feel about their ability to help their children – parents are more likely to become involved in they feel like they have skills, their children can learn what they have to share and teach, they can find other sources of skill or knowledge if needed, and what they will make a positive difference in their children's learning.
3. Whether parents feel invited – both by their children and by the school – the “sense of invitation” is strongly influenced by signals that parents receive from their children and school staff.

Edwards (2016) noted five differences in parents that can serve as barriers to their involvement (pg.85). These five categories are:

1. Parental dynamics – recognize that all parents are different and cannot be lumped into a group labeled “parents.”
2. Parents feelings regarding school – Parents respond to schools based upon their past experiences
3. Parent relationships with their children – Some parents are better at relationships than others. Some are warm and supportive and some are rejecting and even neglecting.
4. Parent values and goals – Values differ among parents. Goals and values among families will differ and may be quite different from our own.

5. Parent attitudes toward involvement with the school – The school has a responsibility to acknowledge and accept that parents bring individuality to parent-involvement efforts.

Educators as barriers to involvement

Joyce Epstein (2009) concluded from her research the important role that parents play in helping student academically achieve. However, classroom teachers can be either stepping-stones or stumbling blocks to meaningful parent involvement. Educating students is a shared responsibility, therefore, it is essential that educators find ways to involve parents (Boult, 2016). When the reality of students' family life conflicts with educators' visions of the ideal classroom, educators must endeavor to understand, accept, and respect their students' home environment and actively support parents/caregivers in making school and literacy priorities in their homes (Bradbury & Busch, 2015). Families and schools must work together to ensure academic success and when schools and families collaborate children's learning and school experiences are enhanced (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013). In a national survey, however, both in-service and pre-service teachers report there is little or no attention given to working with families in their teacher education programs, and that working with families is rarely a part of school district's professional development (Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013, pg. 119). Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael presented research that showed many teachers are unprepared and reluctant to fully engage families as part of their teaching roles, however, teachers who learn about the resources available to their students, especially in their homes, are in a better position to design intervention/instructional plans for them. Educators need to broaden their definition of parent involvement to not only encompass

involvement at school, but also involvement at home, teacher-family partnerships, and classroom-based involvement. Mapp, Carver, and Lander (2017) suggested that while educators might not always recognize it, many past experiences, shape interactions with families. The educators own family experiences with their elementary teacher, memories of how welcoming school was as a child, previous conversations with parents, strained or relaxed, all subtly affect how the educator will approach parental involvement. Beliefs and values about family engagement are especially important when the educator is from different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds from the families that their school serves (pg.18). Blazer (2005) noted several reasons parental involvement programs are not often implemented: school staff has not been trained to work with families, educators were concerned that closer relationships with families would mean giving up power and decision, administrators worried that increase parental involvement would add to their already busy schedules, and families were not sure how far they could go making suggestions and asking questions (pg. 4).

Strategies for parental involvement

Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss (Ferguson, 2009) summarize the 2006 findings of their longitudinal, correlational study of 300 K-5 students and their families. Family involvement activities included open house events, family-teacher conferences, and other school meetings, and opportunities to volunteer in the classroom. The research results showed:

1. Increasing family involvement at the early grades predicts literacy achievement and most, importantly, is a stronger indicator for literacy development than family income, maternal level, or ethnicity.

2. Providing processes and structures to increase family involvement at the early grades matter most for children who are at risk due to factors such as low-income families and mother with low educational levels.

Communication is the key to developing effective partnerships with parents, and there are many ways teachers can establish positive connections through communication. Examples of effective involvement are creating a classroom environment that is engaging and welcoming, making positive connections, back-to-school presentations, open houses, phone calls, weekly newsletters, and conferencing (Prior, 2011). The American Association of School Administrators (1998) has identified six roles that parents like play and suggests that educators consider the possible activities suited for each role, then customize the involvement of each parent by fitting his or her strengths and interests with the needs of the school The six roles identified are: change agent, communicator, tutor, program coordinator, front-line assistant, and community liaison. Effective strategies for involving parents differ from school to school and should be tailored to meet the needs and interests, time and talents, and ages and grade levels of students and families (Association of School Administrators, 1998).

Extensive research has found that the level of parent involvement is directly related to the practices schools and teachers have set in place and does not depend on race, ethnicity, size of family, martial statues, or the education of parents (Boult, 2016). The key to parent involvement is demonstrating to parents that the school wants them to be involved (Boult, 2016, pg.5) The program's emphasis should focus on families helping children learn at school, at home, and in the community (Funkhouse &Gonzalez, 1997). Blazer (2005) noted the following strategies for reducing the barriers to parent

involvement and implementing a successful parental involvement program: start with a needs assessment to be filled out by the parents, redefine the definition of parent involvement based on the needs assessment inventory, tailor programs to the school's specific needs, clarify how parents can be involved, and use every opportunity to promote parent involvement, and foster a school environment of respect and trust.

Public agenda research demonstrates that parents fall into three categories. The three categories identified are (Strong families, 2017):

1. Help seekers – Parents who are concerned about their children's learning and need help.
2. School helpers – Parents who want to help out in more traditional ways at their children's schools.
3. Potential transformers – Parents who would like more say in their children's school and are poised to take action.

Programs need to be designed to engage each group with evidence-based strategies. The National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (2017) defined strategies for 'high-impact' family engagement. Examples of 'high impact' engagement are building personal relationships, sharing data, modeling effective teaching practices, listening to families about their children's interests, incorporating family culture into classroom lessons, and aligning family engagement activities with school improvement goals. Bradbury and Busch (2015) suggested literacy specific activities to support and encourage parental involvement through the implementation of Literacy Booster Meetings and Family Literacy Events. Literacy Booster Meetings aim to impact literacy and strengthen the home-school connection. Booster meetings offer

parents a, “supportive environment in which to develop and expand knowledge, abilities, and interest in impacting literacy. Simple effective strategies are share” (Bradbury & Busch, 2015, pg. 3). Family literacy events are defined as, “Programs that take place outside of the academic day and are literacy events for families that offer engaging, entertaining opportunities for learning and building positive home-school connections” (Bradbury & Busch, 2015, pg.3).

District and school goals

Redding, Murphy & Sheley (2011) noted that, “Parent leadership must begin somewhere, and the most likely somewhere is with superintendents and principals. District and school leaders establish the importance of parent leadership. The district and school leaders should convey the importance of parent leadership to the school board, faculty and parents” (pg. 107). All schools are part of a larger school district. What happens, or doesn’t happen, at schools often depends a great deal on how much the district explicitly expects and supports family (and community) involvement (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). Districts need to develop system-wide policies and practices that support families to enhance their children’s experience in school. Districts need to take action in three key areas:

1. Creating a culture of partnership throughout the district by setting consistently high standards for family-friendly schools, and expecting district and school staff to meet those standards.
2. Connecting family-school partnerships to the district school improvement initiative and to meeting performance goals for students.

3. Organizing district resources to create a structure of support so that all schools can and will establish and sustain strong partnerships (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p220).

It is the goal of the district studied as well as the elementary school within the district studied to build strong family partnerships. Parental involvement is an integral part of the district that is being studied strategic plan. Parental involvement is listed under goal three of the district's strategic plan. The objective states that the district should, "Maximize parental involvement by cultivating a family-friendly environment throughout the school community" (MARYVILLE CITY SCHOOLS, n.d.). Parental involvement and family engagement is also an essential element to the elementary school being studied. The action step for effective parental involvement is that parents will be provided with grade level information that can assist them with helping their child at home with their schoolwork. "There must be someone at the top of the district in charge of this endeavor to engage families, and someone at the school level who can organize the people to get the job done" (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p.237).

District beliefs and operational principles must not only set policy for the school in the district, but also set an example. Policy needs to center around offering sound educational programs and services to students in collaboration and consultation with parents (Boult, 2016, pg.127). The school district being studied is actively engaging in the creation of K-3 Literacy Initiative. It is the goal of the district that all students will be 100 percent proficient and at grade level in reading by the end of third grade. As stated in the Kids Count Report (FACE Scholastic, 2011), "Reading proficiency by the end of third grade can be a make-or-break benchmark in child's educational development.

Academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not a modestly skilled reader at that point is unlikely to graduate." Mike Winstead (personal communication, July 26, 2017), superintendent of the district being studied, noted that as part of the literacy initiative the system is using data from the STAR reading assessment and its correlation to predict mastery levels on the Tennessee Ready test as a gauge for success for the initiative. He noted that there is a strong correlation between third graders standardized tests scores and their STAR reading assessment scores. If a positive relationship is found between parental involvement and student achievement the district can use this relationship to bolster and support opportunities for parental involvement in an effort to meet literacy initiative goals.

Fostering parental involvement is a learning process. The teacher and parent must be able to conceptualize their role in the process. Both teacher and parent need to ask themselves what level of communication they are comfortable with, what type of communication do they prefer (written, face-to-face, digital, at home activities, etc.), what is realistic for time and frequency of parental involvement and are the literacy goals of the district reasonable for students, the school and the district.

The goal of this study is to determine the impact parental involvement has on achievement in reading. If a positive relationship is found the study will help support the district and school's goal to establish effective family partnerships, and further the literacy initiative for 100% reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The research shows that engagement between teachers and families is a powerful mechanism for boosting children's academic success. Children who receive positive and consistent

support at home and school are well positioned to be high achievers (Tambyraja, Schmitt, Farquharson, & Justice, 2016). The best way to prevent failure to thrive as a reader is to gain support of all involved: families, schools and communities. When all work together to surround children with meaningful literacy experiences and closely monitor progress, children are more likely to enter the third-grade pivotal point as proficient readers, thus, making it more likely they will continue to excel in school and graduate from high school (FACE Scholastic, 2011, pg. 33).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact parental involvement in reading would have on the scaled scores of second graders at an East Tennessee elementary school, on the Star Reading Assessment. Parental involvement was assessed by measuring the time parents spent reading with their child. In addition, the parents' perception of their own parental involvement was measured to examine further impacts.

The East Tennessee elementary school studied educates children kindergarten through third grade, serving approximately 500 students. Parental involvement is welcomed as an integral part of the school environment. The elementary school has a parent volunteer program that provides services throughout the school. The Family Teacher Organization (FTO) actively engages parent volunteers and the business community through various programs and opportunities. The school has a volunteer program set into place specifically for fathers called Watch Dogs. The professional staff consists of 2 administrators and 45 certified teachers teaching within their areas of certification. One hundred percent of the professional and support staff are highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Program. Seventy percent of these teachers have Masters degrees or above.

Participants and Setting for the Study

The population for this study consisted of second grade students within the same second grade classroom setting in an East Tennessee elementary school. Students ranged in age from seven to nine years old. Subjects varied in gender, race/ethnicity, academic ability, socio-economic status, and family structure. All students received reading

instruction from the same teacher throughout the year. Students were assigned an identification number in the study in order to maintain anonymity.

The study sample could not be considered representative of all elementary school students and generalizability was not the goal. The main purpose of this study was to determine the impact parental involvement has on reading scaled scores of second grade students at a particular East Tennessee elementary school.

Measures

Data from the study was collected through the Star reading assessment in order to measure student progress based on scaled score. The Star reading assessment assesses reading comprehension and skills for independent readers. The Star reading assessment took place four times, once within each of four nine-week periods, during the school year. The scaled score is based on the difficulty of the questions and the number of correct answers. Scaled scores are useful for comparing growth over time and across grades. The Star reading assessments is computer adaptive and uses calibration and psychometrics to adjust to students' responses. The Star assessment is easy to administer and yields valid, reliable, and actionable data. The first assessment established a baseline scaled score before the treatment was introduced to the dependent variable. Students were tested the second and third nine weeks after the home literacy project (experimental treatment) was implemented. Subjects were tested the fourth nine weeks after the treatment was stopped. Star reading assessment scaled scores were compared before and after the introduction of the independent variable (parental involvement) to determine any impact to the dependent variable (student achievement).

At the end of the study parents were given a parent involvement survey. This survey was a Likert scale survey adapted from educational researcher Joyce Epstein. Parents were asked to rate their perceived level of involvement in their child's education by indicating their agreement with thirteen statements designed based on Epstein's six types of parental involvement. Parents rated their involvement 1- 5 with "1" indicating strongly disagree with the statement and "5" indicating that they strongly agree with the statement. This survey was used to determine parents' perceptions of involvement in their child's education and was then compared to students' Star reading assessment scaled scores.

Research Design

A one-group time series study was conducted to determine the correlation of parental involvement on student reading achievement among subjects. A one-group time series design is a quasi-experimental design that involves periodic measurement on one group and the introduction of treatment into the time series measurements. The independent variable was parent involvement, as measured by time spent reading during the experimental treatment, and the dependent variable was student achievement, as measured by growth in Star reading scaled scores. The null hypothesis for research is that there is no significant relationship between time with parental involvement and reading achievement scores. The hypothesis for research was that parental involvement would show a positive correlation on scaled scores.

The one-group time series design used before-and-after measures and lacked a control group. The repeated testing, however, provided checks to common threats to internal validity. Maturation, testing, and regression could be ruled out as a cause for

shifts occurring among variables. There was no change in measuring instruments in this design and that helped to eliminate changes in instrumentation as an explanation for differences in assessment scaled score and growth percentile score.

The major weakness to the one-group time series design was that you cannot rule out the possibility that something other than the independent variable was producing an observed change in assessment scores. The external validity of the one-group time series design was a concern that could restrict the findings of the research. Incidences outside of the study could also affect the subjects' performance on the assessments.

Procedure

At the beginning of the 1st nine weeks subjects took the Star reading assessment to establish a baseline scaled score for reading. Students took the Star reading test four times within the school year. After the initial baseline test, subsequent scaled test scores were evaluated for growth or regression.

The second nine weeks included the implementation of a home literacy project (experimental treatment) into the existing second grade reading program. In order to encourage parental involvement, the subjects in this research participated in a reading project focusing on improving reading comprehension, reading fluency, and independent reading skills. A letter was sent home to families explaining the family literacy project and procedures. An information sheet, "Building a Reader at Home" was also sent explaining to parents how to effectively engage in the reading process with their child, questions to ask while reading, and strategies for parents to employ for all levels of readers. The reading program allowed students to check out books daily. Students

checked out books from the classroom library and school library, took the books home, and read them to parents. Parents recorded the books that were read on a family reading log. Parents recorded the date, book title, total amount of time spent reading, and indicated whom the child read to. After books had been read they were returned to school and new books were taken home. Reading logs were sent home each Friday in the students' Friday folders. Completed reading logs were sent back to school on Thursday, and a new reading log was sent home on Friday. Reading logs were kept in order to track parental involvement in reading. The family literacy project (experimental treatment) extended from the start of the second nine weeks to the end of the third nine weeks. Subjects took the Star reading assessment at the beginning of the first nine weeks, beginning of the second nine weeks, end of the third nine weeks, and end of the fourth nine weeks. Scaled scores were recorded for each of the four nine-week periods. The reading project began at the beginning of the second nine weeks and stopped at the end of the third nine weeks. Scaled scores were examined for growth and regression during the second nine weeks and the third nine weeks, and from the end of the third nine weeks to the fourth nine weeks. The number hours parents spent reading with their child were recorded and correlated with measured Star reading assessment scaled scores growth in order to determine the impact of parental involvement on student achievement in reading.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed in order to evaluate the correlation between parental involvement and student achievement in reading. The Star reading scaled score from the first nine-week period provided a baseline for each student. Parental involvement was measured as the number of hours spent reading with their child during

the prescribed treatment period. Thus, time spent in hours is the independent variable. The change, growth or regression, in Star scaled scores for each student as compared to the initial baseline scaled score is the dependent variable.

Pearson's correlation was used to assess the linear association between the independent variable (time spent reading during treatment period) and the dependent variable (change in Star scaled score). The change in Star scaled score measured after the fourth nine-week period was used to evaluate the impact of removing the treatment.

Quantitative data was obtained via the parental involvement survey using a set of thirteen Likert scale questions. The parents of each student were assigned a parental involvement score that was derived by taking an average of their response to each of the thirteen questions. These parental involvement scores were used to evaluate potential relationships between parental involvement and student achievement in reading.

Participants' Rights and Ethical Protection

All consideration to participants' rights, and ethical concerns were addressed and prioritized in three ways. Attention was first given to protecting the identity of the subjects. This issue was addressed by assigning each subject a number to represent their data in any public documentation. Release documentation will include surveys, student assessment data, dissertation, and presentations. Next, parent participants signed off on a consent form stating their approval for survey use. Further, access to information and data was restricted to the researcher and the dissertation committee members. Any data collected will be purged after completion of the study. This study met approval with the district, site, and Internal Review Board for Human Subjects before participants consent

was obtained or student assessment data was collected. This included, but was not limited to, all data obtained in the course of the study as parent self-reported surveys and student assessment data.

CHAPTER FOUR

Parental Involvement Survey Data

In order to calculate a single parental involvement score for each parent the Likert scale responses from the thirteen questions were averaged. Thus, it was possible to examine a potential correlation between perceived parental involvement and student scaled score on the Star reading assessment. It was assumed that the results of the parental involvement survey were independent of the experimental intervention. Therefore, to ensure that the experimental intervention did not influence evaluation of a correlation between perceived parental involvement and scaled scores, the scaled scores taken before the experimental intervention were used. Figure 4.1 illustrates the scaled scores from each student at the beginning of the second nine-week period relative to the perceived parental involvement of each parent.

A linear trend line was added to the Figure 4.1 graph using the function in Microsoft Excel©. The trend line indicated a positive correlation between the two variables. In order to statistically evaluate the correlation, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. The results were as follows:

$$r(20) = 0.41, p = 0.092$$

The r -value of 0.41 indicated a medium strength positive correlation between the variables, which was consistent with the Microsoft Excel© trend line shown in Figure 4.1. However, the p -value of 0.092 indicated that the correlation was not statistically significant. Typically, the p -value needs to be less than 0.05 to demonstrate statistical significance (Pearson's product-moment correlation, 2018).

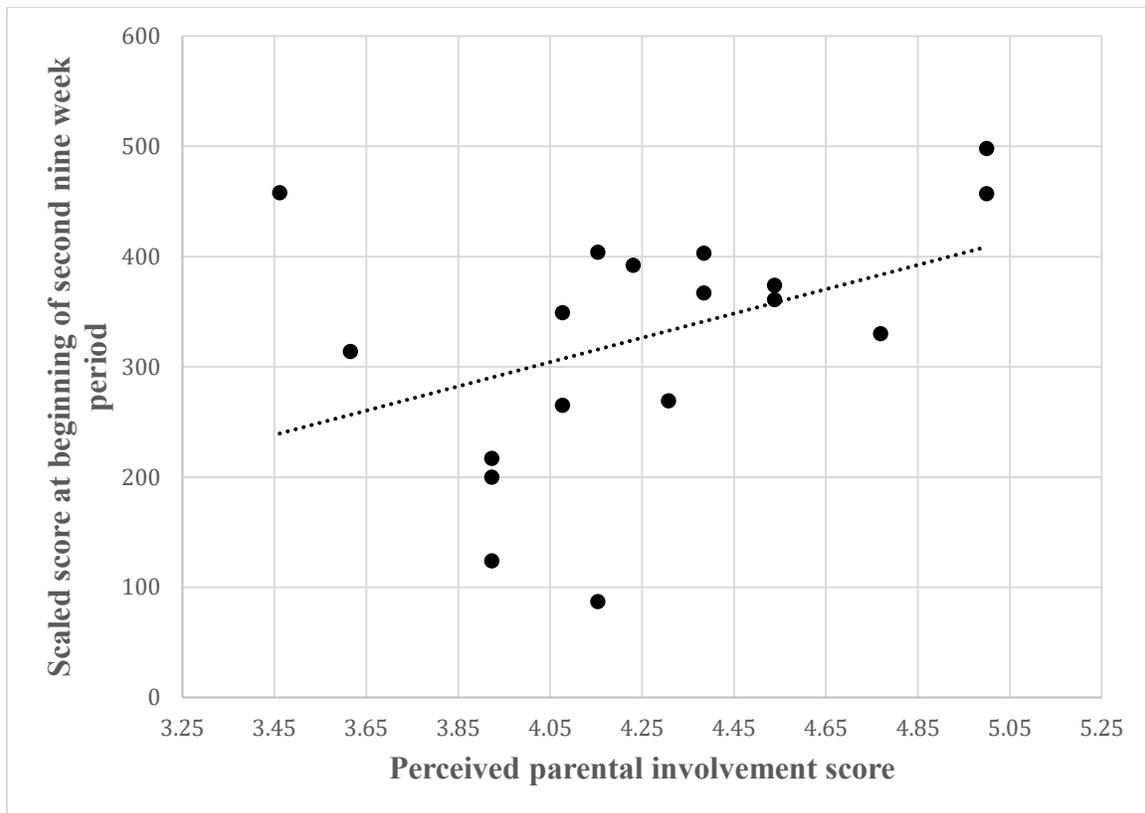


Figure 4.1. Graph of scaled score at the beginning of the second nine weeks for each student relative to the perceived parental involvement score for each student.

Note that the degrees of freedom for this correlation (20) was different from the one group time series correlation (18) above. This was due to varying participation in data collection within the subject group. A small number of students filled out reading logs but did not return parental involvement surveys. There were also students who returned reading logs but did not submit parental involvement surveys. Some students returned neither.

The correlation between perceived parental involvement and scaled scores was also tested after the third nine weeks, as shown in Figure 4.2. Visually, the trend line in this data set did not indicate less of a correlation than shown in Figure 4.1. This was confirmed by the Pearson product-moment correlation with the following results:

$$r(20) = 0.10, p = 0.68$$

Thus, the correlation was weak. Furthermore, the p -value is high indicating that the weak positive correlation was far from statistically significant for this data set.

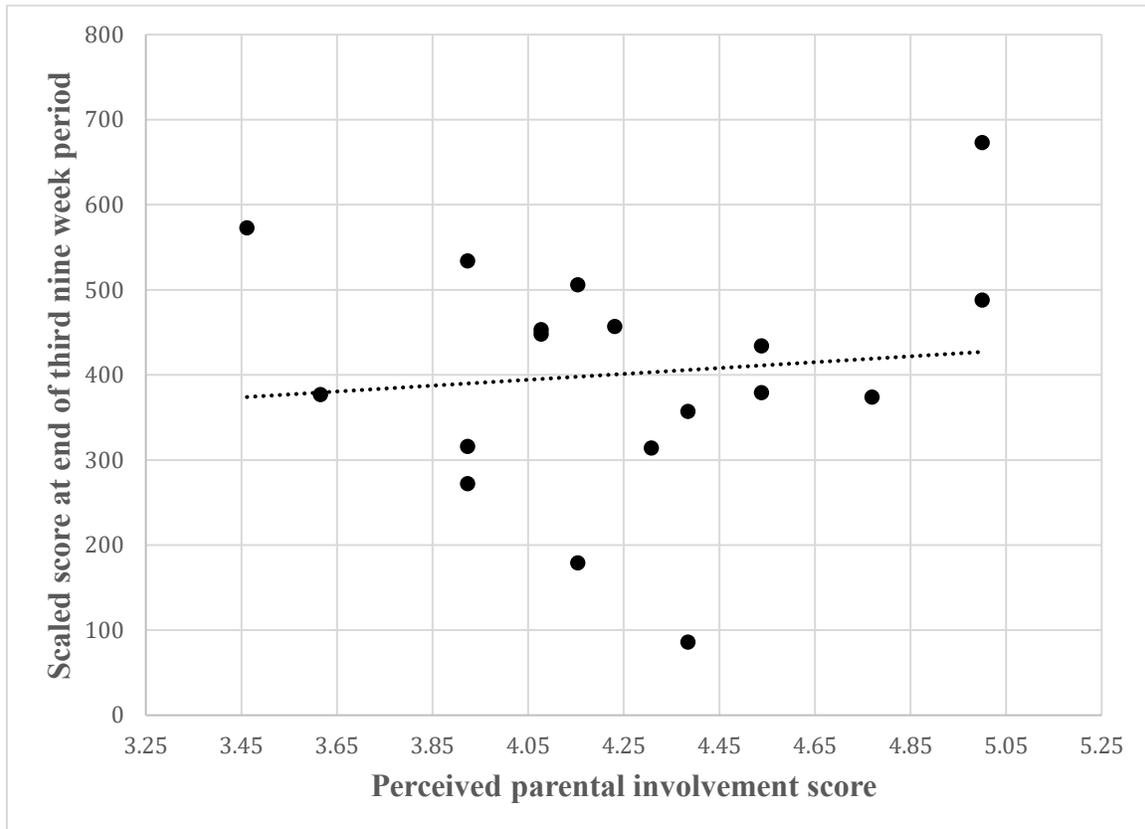


Figure 4.2.

One group time series design data

Table 4.1 illustrates the average scaled scores for the subjects throughout the study. Mean scaled scores grew for the class during each period leading up to the fourth nine-week period. However, the class mean score decreased slightly during the fourth nine-week period. The experimental treatment was applied between the second and third tests shown in the table.

Table 4.1

Average Scaled Scores for Each Test

| Test Date | Average Scaled Score | Growth From Prior Test | Cumulative Growth From 1st nine weeks |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Beginning of first nine week period | 257.1 | -- | -- |
| Beginning of second nine week period | 312.8 | 55.7 | 55.7 |
| End of third nine week period | 387.9 | 75.1 | 130.8 |
| End of fourth nine week period | 386.6 | -1.3 | 129.4 |

In order to assess the statistical significance of the growth in mean scaled score before, during, and after treatment, a *t*-test was performed on the paired data. The *t*-test results comparing the growth during the first nine weeks (no treatment) to the growth during the second and third nine weeks (treatment) were as follows:

$$t(18) = -0.82, p = 0.43$$

Since the *p*-value is greater than 0.05, the increased mean growth during the second and third nine weeks was not statistically different from the mean growth during the first nine-week period and the null hypothesis of no change could not be disproven with this data set. However, using a *t*-test to compare growth between the second and third nine-week periods to growth during the fourth nine-week period yielded the following result:

$$t(18) = 3.94, p = 0.001$$

This indicated a statistically significant difference in growth between the treatment period and the fourth nine weeks, when the treatment was removed. This data set disproved the null hypothesis and showed that parental involvement had a positive effect on student achievement.

Figure 4.3 displays the growth of each student's scaled score relative to the number of hours spent reading with a parent during the experimental treatment period. A

linear trend line was added to the graph using the function in Microsoft Excel©. The trend line indicated a positive correlation between the two variables. In order to statistically evaluate the correlation, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. The results were as follows:

$$r(18) = 0.32, p = 0.16$$

The r -value of 0.32 indicated a medium strength positive correlation between the variables, which was consistent with the Microsoft Excel© trend line shown in Figure 4.3 (Pearson's product-moment correlation, 2018). However, the p -value of 0.16 indicated that the correlation was not statistically significant. Typically, the p -value needs to be less than 0.05 to demonstrate statistical significance.

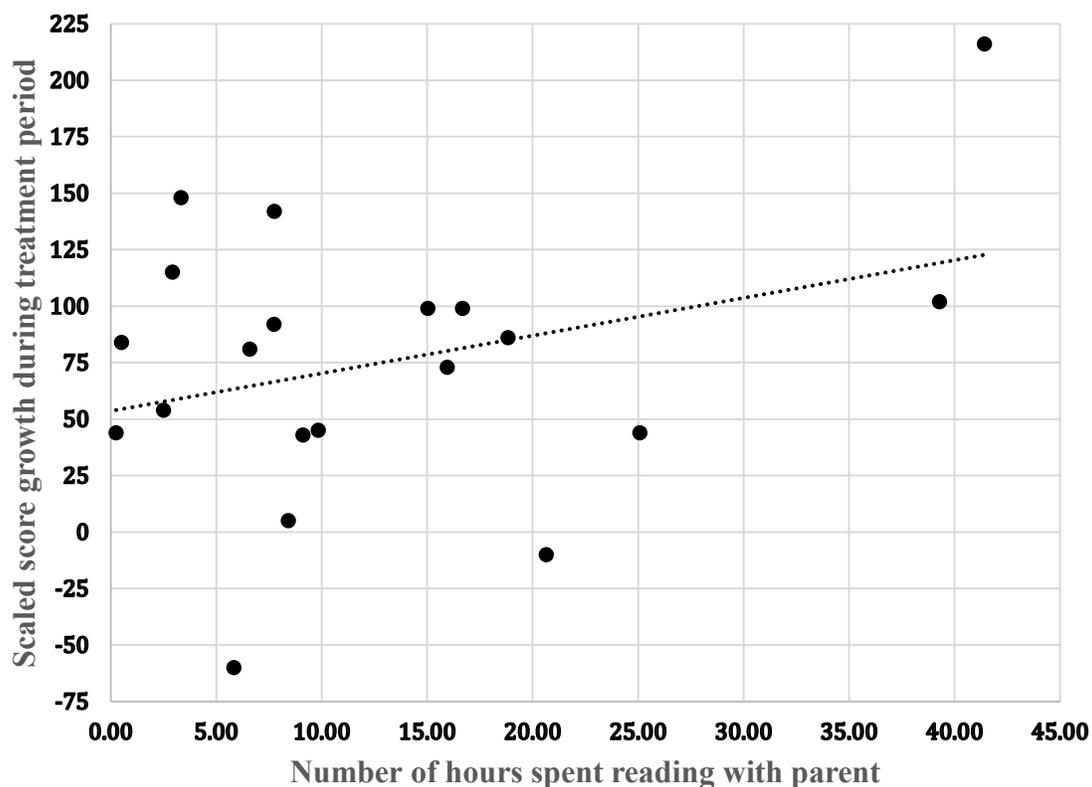


Figure 4.3. Graph of scaled score growth for each student relative to the number of hours spent reading with a parent during the second and third nine weeks.

Conclusions

This study examined the correlation between parental involvement and student achievement in reading. In this study data were collected for second grade students attending an East Tennessee elementary school. The research question seeking to be answered was whether there was a correlation between (variable a) time with parental engagement and (variable b) reading achievement scores. The data were collected using a Pearson's product-moment correlation test on scaled scores during the first, second, third and fourth nine-week periods. The data were also collected in the form of a Likert survey consisting of thirteen questions based upon Epstein's six types of parental involvement. In order to calculate a single parental involvement score for each parent, the Likert scale responses from the thirteen questions were averaged. A Pearson's product-moment correlation test was also performed on this set of data to determine a correlation between perceived parental involvement and scaled scores.

Student's academic success was based on Star reading assessment scaled scores. Parental involvement was based on the time spent reading with the subject. Pearson's product-moment correlation test was used to test the two variables, parental involvement and student achievement, and to determine whether or not there was a linear correlation between the time parents spent reading with their child and the subjects scaled score. The *p*-value was found in order to determine whether or not there was a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The *p*-value showed medium statistical significance.

In order to assess the statistical significance of the growth in mean scaled score before, during, and after treatment, a *t*-test was performed on the paired data. The *t*-test

results comparing the growth during the first nine weeks (no treatment) to the growth during the second and third nine weeks did not show statistical significance. After the treatment was removed data showed a statistically significant difference in growth between the treatment period and the fourth nine weeks.

The next chapter will summarize the conclusions drawn in regards to the hypotheses and research questions as stated in Chapter 1, summarize the findings of the study, and discuss the implications and make recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to determine the correlation between parental involvement in children's education and the Star reading scaled scores of second graders at an East Tennessee elementary school. A one-group time series design study was conducted to determine the correlation of parental involvement on student reading achievement among subjects. The first assessment established a baseline scaled score before the treatment was introduced to the dependent variable. Students were tested the second and third nine weeks after the home literacy project (experimental treatment) was implemented. Subjects were tested the fourth nine weeks after the treatment was stopped. Star reading assessment scaled scores were compared before and after the introduction of the independent variable (parental involvement) to determine any impact to the dependent variable (student achievement).

At the end of the study parents were given a parent involvement survey. This survey was a Likert scale survey adapted from educational researcher Joyce Epstein. Parents were asked to rate their perceived level of involvement in their child's education by indicating their agreement with thirteen statements designed based on Epstein's six types of parental involvement. Parents rated their involvement 1- 5 with "1" indicating strongly disagree with the statement and "5" indicating that they strongly agree with the statement. This survey was used to determine parents' perceptions of involvement in their child's education and was then compared to students' Star reading assessment scaled scores.

The one group time series design data indicated that there was a medium strength positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. However, the p value indicated that the correlation was not statistically significant.

The parental involvement survey data indicated that there was a medium strength positive correlation between perceived parental involvement and scaled scores. The p value indicated that the correlation was not statistically significant.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive linear correlation between parental involvement and student achievement, however the correlations is not statistically significant. The results from this study also indicate that there is a positive linear correlation between perceived parental involvement and scaled scores, however not statistically significant. The research question seeking to be answered was whether there is a correlation between (variable a) time with parental engagement and (variable b) reading achievement scores. The null hypotheses of the research was that there is no statistically significant relationship between time with parental engagement and reading scaled scores. The results from research support the hypothesis in showing that there is a positive linear correlation between parental involvement and student achievement in reading scaled scores. The null hypothesis is supported by the fact that when the p value was calculated it showed medium statistical significance. The small sample size could serve as an explanation for the medium statistical significance.

One implication from this study is that since students' achievement in scaled scores is positively correlated to parental involvement parents may see the benefit in taking an even more prominent position in their child's education through volunteering in

the school, joining the school's parent teacher organization, connecting school and community, and becoming an advocate for their child's education. Thus, becoming more involved the parent increases the potential for student achievement.

Another implication of this study is that if parents and students view increased achievement as a positive school experience, in turn the value of school is viewed as positive. Parents often have pre-conceived ideas of what school is and how schools operate. The small connections of positivity and value can provide an opportunity for conversations between parents and teachers and the beginnings of lasting partnerships between the parents and the school (Prior, 2011).

A third implication of the study might be that educators examine their own core beliefs about parental involvement and family engagement in education. Mapp, Carver, & Lander (2017) noted that, "The biases and assumptions that we may have about the families of our children, left unexamined can hamper our ability to create effective partnerships with them." Examination of core beliefs by the educator allows them to open themselves up to building authentic teacher-parent relationships. Research proves that authentic teacher-parent relationships lead to increased student achievement and strong family engagement is essential for success of students, the success of schools, and the success of individual practice as teachers (Mapp, Carver & Lander, 2017, p.121).

Recommendations for Future Study

This research only considered second grade students at an East Tennessee elementary school and the sample size was small. The following limitations were inherent in the study. The sample size was small and the study was restricted to second grade students in one classroom. Generalizations from the study cannot be made for other

grade levels or other elementary schools. The major weakness to the one-group time series design is that you cannot rule out the possibility that something other than the independent variable is producing an observed change in scaled scores. Suggestions for future study:

1. The research might be repeated using a larger sample size such as an entire school and multiple grade levels.
2. A more detailed study might be conducted to determine exactly what type of impact a parental involvement program has on a particular group of students over an extended period of time.
3. The research might be repeated using a large sample size to determine the impact race and socio-economic level have upon student achievement.
4. A more detailed study focusing on the how different types of parent involvement relate to specific student outcomes and determining how different types of involvement may affect children's learning and development.

Further research needs to be conducted using a larger sample size focusing on the outcome of parental involvement across different grade levels. Studies are needed that identify which involvement practices and which parent-school communications have a direct impact on reading skills and also increase the number of literacy practices that parents conduct with confidence. Further studies need to be conducted to determine which practices and communications are most effective for child outcomes. Research also needs to examine how these practices, communications, and strategies are implemented effectively. A more detailed study is needed centering on the different types of parental

involvement and how each relates to specific student outcomes in literacy and other subjects.

Concluding Statements

Parent involvement is the number one predictor of early literacy success and future academic achievement (Burton, 2013). Research provides overwhelming evidence of connections between literacy resources at home and students' literacy development. Students' entry into formal schooling marks an important transition in learning and development. The transition to elementary school also has important consequences for parents' roles in their children's literacy development (Epstein, 2009, p.43). Schools and teachers play an important role and have significant influence on children's learning to read in elementary grades, however, parents remain influential in children's reading and literacy development (Epstein, 2009). Parents and caregivers naturally want their children to succeed in school. Decades of research conducted in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the country has shown that parents/caregivers absolutely can positively impact their children's academic achievement simply by engaging in reading with them on a daily basis (Bradbury & Busch, 2015, p. 37). The purpose of this study was to determine a correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. This study examined parental involvement through time parents spent reading with their child and through parents' perception of their involvement as indicated on a Likert scale survey. The findings illustrated that increased parental involvement can play an important role in student achievement. While the data indicated a positive correlation, it was not shown to be statistically significant. If the study were expanded to include a larger population the positive correlation and statistical significance might be greater.

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literacy](https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/08/05/family-involvement-and-childrens-literacy)

APPENDICES

Appendix A
District Approval for Research

From: Mike Winstead
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2018 3:41:31 PM
To: Jessica Q. King
Subject: RE: permission to conduct research

Jessica,

You are granted permission to conduct your study on parental involvement and student achievement in reading.

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office.

Good luck with your study. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance or clarification.

Sincerely,
 Mike

Mike Winstead, Ph.D.
Director of Schools
Maryville City Schools
 865-982-7121

-----Original Message-----

From: Jessica Q. King
 Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2018 4:19 PM
 To: Mike Winstead <mike.winstead@maryville-schools.org>
 Subject: permission to conduct research

Dr. Winstead -

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a quantitative study with my students looking at parental involvement and student achievement in reading. I will be using students' Star Reading scaled score to determine growth or regression based on parental engagement time through a weekly reading log.

I need your permission to conduct this study in our school system. All data is quantitative and all participants' identities will be confidential and coded to report results.

An email stating permission will be efficient to send to the IRB, if you approve.

Thank you,

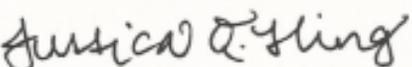
Jessica

Appendix B
IRB Approval Form

IX. SIGNATURES – must be on a separate page; provide two (2) copies: one (1) electronically submitted with full request and one (1) original paper copy sent to university IRB committee chair

When you submit this application for review please note that all signatures must be original. As your application moves through the review process, you should prepare two identical applications, both of which contain original signatures. As primary investigator, you should keep one copy and submit the other application with original signatures for review.

Project Principal Investigator: Jessica Q. King

Signature: 

1/21/18
(Date)

Project Co-Principal Investigator: Click here to enter text.:

Signature:

(Date)

Project Committee Chair: Dr. Steve A. Davidson

Signature: 

1/21/18
(Date)

PROGRAM/DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

NOTE: This is needed if the program or department requires a review.

I have read and reviewed this research application and recommend its approval.

Director/Chair/Research Committee Chair: Dr. Kimberly Hawkins

Signature:

(Date)

UNIVERSITY IRB COMMITTEE REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The IRB Committee has read and reviewed this application for research and approves the application.

IRB Committee Chair: Gregory A. Casalenuovo, PhD

Signature:

(Date)

Appendix C
Parental Involvement Survey

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Name _____ Student name _____

Please rate your involvement in your child's education. Rate 1-5 as follows:

Circle 5 if you **strongly agree** with the statement
 Circle 4 if you **agree** with the statement
 Circle 3 if you are **neutral** regarding the statement
 Circle 2 if you **disagree** with the statement
 Circle 1 if you **strongly disagree** with the statement

| | strongly disagree <-----> strongly agree | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| I know my child's class schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I attend scheduled conferences that provide information about my child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I initiate contact with the teacher about my child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I follow up on messages which the teacher sends me about my child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I attend school functions which involve my child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I attend FTO or other parent meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I read with my child on a daily basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I speak up for the school in my community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to help my child in a positive way with his/her homework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I read over and express concern for my child's work which he/she brings home. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I send my child to school clean, rested, and fed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I volunteer in my child's classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to portray to my child a positive attitude towards education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

This form is adapted from education researcher Joyce Epstein