Early reading success: Parents make a difference

Sandra Jean Schwinn

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EARLY READING SUCCESS: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in
Education: Reading

by

Sandra Jean Schwinn
June 1995
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ABSTRACT

Beginning reading is a developmental process that begins at a different time for each child. Some children begin reading before they enter school, while others do not begin the transition into becoming a reader until they have spent time in formal instruction. It is important that parents understand their role in their child's emerging literacy. By educating parents about the various developmental levels of reading, they are able to take their child from where they are developmentally, and help them move toward literacy. A child's chances for success in later life are maximized when both the home and the school are involved in the child's education.

"Improving parent involvement, particularly among at-risk populations, is one of the most challenging tasks facing educators today" (Vandegrift, & Greene, 1992). Many educators and administrators are unsure how to improve parents' involvement in their children's education. A program that addresses the needs of parents as well as students will be the most successful.

Children learn to talk, "...gradually, naturally, with a minimum of direct instruction" (Weaver, 1988). This same understanding of the development of reading is vital for parents. When they understand that children learn to read through reading, the process of literacy
will become more meaningful and successful.

This project is designed to provide information to parents that will allow them to have a positive role in their child's emerging literacy process. This project develops a program for parent instruction and involvement that includes four workshops and a parent handbook. The workshops will show the value of parent involvement in students' reading success. The handbook will give parents information about reading development and appropriate quality literature for each developmental stage of reading. The information gained from this project will assist parents in supporting a whole language environment at home and school.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my friends--for always believing in me.

To my family--for your understanding, patience, and encouragement.

To my first and second grade teachers--who fostered my love for reading that will last a lifetime.
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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Beginning reading is a developmental process that begins at a different time for each child. Some children begin reading before they enter school, while others do not begin the transition into becoming a reader until they have spent time in formal instruction. It is important that parents understand their role in their child's emerging literacy. By educating parents about the various developmental levels of reading, they are able to take their child from where they are developmentally, and help them move toward literacy. A child's chances for success in later life are maximized when both the home and the school are involved in the child's education.

"Improving parent involvement, particularly among at-risk populations, is one of the most challenging tasks facing educators today" (Vandegrift, & Greene, 1992, p. 57). Many educators and administrators are unsure how to improve parents' involvement in their children's education. Educators gaining a better understanding of families is a starting point. The roles and responsibilities of parents have been changing. Adults other than a child's parents are also taking on significant child-rearing roles. Years ago mothers worked in the home. Now in many families both parents are working. Due to a higher divorce rate other families have only one parent.
That parent must fill the role of mother, father, and money earner. In each instance, parents may have little time to help with school work. Children are left to do their homework alone and are unable to read with their parents.

The best method of communication between parents and school is another factor to be considered. Busy parents must be aware of any parent participation programs at their child's school. Students already bring home a large quantity of paper work on a regular basis. So another flyer or newsletter may not be appropriate. Parents also need to fully understand that they can contribute to the educational system. Non-English speaking families present another difficulty in regards to communication. It is difficult to provide information in all languages spoken by parents. Illiterate parents will also require communication other than written.

Another challenge is parents' previous knowledge of the teaching of reading. They may remember skill and phonic based instruction which involved basal readers and work sheets. Some parents have an inaccurate picture of whole language due to its complexity. They do not think it is an effective teaching philosophy because it is different than how they learned to read. Many parents remember being taught through phonics. They see phonics as the only way to teach reading. When their child is unsure
of a word while reading, parent ask them to "sound it out." Other reading strategies are rarely used or suggested by parents.

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. They understand and support their child's oral language development from utterances through standard communication. Without realizing it, they allow their child to develop at their own speed. Children learn to talk, "...gradually, naturally, with a minimum of direct instruction" (Weaver, 1988, p. 45). This same understanding of the development of reading and written communication is vital for parents. When they realize that children learn to read through reading, the process of literacy will become more meaningful and successful.

Students are usually reading environmental print; signs, labels, and packages, long before entering school. Children move on to memorizing and reading a familiar story. Many parents do not consider this reading. An awareness that any and all reading is meaningful and important needs to be communicated to parents.

Once children enter school and begin formalized reading instruction, parents wait for their child to sound out and read each word correctly. They are quick to tell the child to sound it out. Phonics is an approach they understand and feel able to show their children. The
teacher, on the other hand, is asking students to read for meaning and use context and picture clues to determine unknown words. Students may feel confused and torn between the two approaches at home and school. If parents are informed of whole language strategies, they can make the transition between learning at home and school easier.

Sometimes what may be viewed by educators as parents not wanting to be involved, is actually parents not knowing how to get involved. According to Kennedy (1991), "All parents, no matter their socioeconomic status, want their children to succeed. But they need the support of the school and teachers to know what to do to help their children" (p. 26). Parent involvement will make a significant difference in the lives of their children. A program that addresses the needs of parents as well as students will be the most successful.

Many parents understand the importance of reading aloud to their children. But there is a need to provide parents with more information on their role with helping their emergent reader with oral reading. For parents of kindergarten through second grade children, this project will introduce various ways to help their beginning reader be successful. Through a series of workshops and a handbook, parents will understand the importance of their role in their child's reading success. Schools, community,
and parents must work collaboratively to ensure children's future success.
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Whole language is an approach to teaching reading and language arts in which there is "...a shift in the way in which teachers think about and practice their art" (Rich, 1985, p. 717). Since it is not a defined program, the term "whole language" has produced controversy in many circles. Parents may ask the question, what is whole language? Rich (1985) states that "it is an attitude of mind which provides a shape for the classroom" (p. 719).

In the whole language approach, the learner is the center of the curriculum. Student's literacy is built by beginning with concepts they already know and expanding through new information. By starting with the interests of the child, language arts instruction can be meaningful in everyday life. Children see reading as a way to discover information. Materials such as books, signs and class made stories are used to fit the needs of children.

In the learning process, the teacher's role is as a guide, not a speaker of knowledge. Each student's own desire to understand the written world will be more motivating than a teacher instructing on how to read. "Reading and writing are human activities, and children learn in the course of engaging in them" (Smith, 1981, p. 637). Students are active participants in their learning. They should be encouraged to use their emerging
reading skills whenever possible. After a teacher engages
the students in an initiating activity to establish the
purpose of reading, students are encouraged to make choices
about the direction of their learning experiences. All
activities involve some form of meaningful reading.

Quality literature is the main textual material used
in a whole language classroom. According to Smith (1985),
"Children learn to read by reading" (p. 88). Students
enjoy reading books that have interesting stories and
illustrations. When good literature, rich in meaning,
is used, children will want to read them again and again.
Books that are patterned and predictable provide success
for early readers. But books should not contain contrived
and controlled vocabulary even if the vocabulary is intended
for an emerging reader because it does not contain normal
speech patterns and flow. Children will quickly recognize
the patterns of books they encountered while being read
to by an adult. Well chosen literature is an essential
ingredient and will be readily accessible in the whole
language experience. Books at various reading levels
provide all children with a book they can read. Students
also will be able to bring books home to read with their
parents. A print rich and literate family environment
(many books, printed materials, literate parents and
siblings, etc.) will promote a young child's emerging
literacy. Through meaningful reading activities at home and school, children will see reading as a useful, everyday activity.

One purpose of reading is to acquire and understand information. Through the expressive arts: writing, music, drama, dance and visual art, children can respond and demonstrate their understanding of a piece of literature. This creative opportunity accounts for each individual child's strengths in regards to learning and comprehension. Integrating visual and performing arts into language arts allows for diversity in responses and also increases the students' understanding of a piece of literature.

Parent involvement is a vital component of a whole language program. Parents are a child's first and life-long teacher. They helped and encouraged their child through speech development, one of their primary means of communication. The involvement of parents can also strengthen children's development of reading. Literacy also follows a developmental pattern. Through reading experiences a child will begin to read. It may begin by parents reading bedtime stories. But it needs to carry over into a child's school years. Parents providing reading experiences which encourage reading while providing support can become an anticipated ritual. Involving parents in the reading process can create a positive bond between
home and school. This project will teach parents whole language strategies to encourage a positive and productive reading experience with their child. By providing parents this information, it will hopefully instill the desire to take an active role in their child's reading education.
"Children will have many teachers in their lives, but only one family. It must be the family who helps to maintain the continuity of the child's education" (Potter, 1989, p. 28). Even though the message of research in this field is that parents are a crucial part of the education system, many parents are not actively involved in their child's education. The reasons for this passivity are beginning to be addressed by educators. Parent support is needed because as Olmsted (1991) found, a child's chances for success in later life are much greater when both home and school are involved in a child's education. In the area of literacy, collaboration is also important. Learning to become literate should be a community effort. Whole families, teachers, and children must work together toward the goal of literacy (Glazer & Burke, 1994). In reviewing the literature relative to this project, five key areas emerge. They include the importance of whole language, the process of emergent and early literacy, the impact of reading aloud to young children, the positive effects of parent involvement in the learning process, and successful parent/child literacy programs.

**Whole Language**

What is whole language? People have many different ways to define whole language. Rich (1985) states, "It
is an attitude of mind which provides a shape for the classroom" (p. 719). Goodman (1986) explains, "Whole language learning builds around whole learners learning whole language in whole situations" (p. 40). One central belief in whole language is that the learner should always work from the whole to the part. The classroom is learner-focused and problem-focused. All of the reading and writing is integrated within a social context and fulfills some important function (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). The term whole language has been used indiscriminately. Much of what is called whole language is a generic program of some specific teaching and learning strategies which are presented according to a whole language formula (Rich, 1985). Whole language can never be a prepackaged program because everything in a whole language classroom is in process. It is ever-changing. Whole language is "...a shift in the way in which teachers think about and practice their art" (Rich, 1985, p. 717). Although publishers want to market whole language programs, whole language is not a program but a professional theory in practice. Whole language is a philosophy, so no two whole language classrooms are alike. Each one is different from all others in the same way theory is realized in day-to-day practice. "There simply is no uniform set of practices prescribed by whole language theory" (Edelsky,
Altwerger, & Flores, 1991, p. 27). The classroom is very child-centered. Materials are used to fit the needs of children. There are also plenty of opportunities for the children to share in the decision making and incorporate their own personal experiences into the curriculum (Rich, 1985). An underlying principle of whole language is that teachers and learners are seen as capable of deciding their own educational activities. "The whole language teacher trusts the child's desire to learn" (Rich, 1985, p. 721).

Teachers believe learning is best achieved through direct involvement and experience. Also, learning, process, product and content are all inter-related (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). Most children have already learned literacy concepts through experiences at home before entering school. So parent involvement should be a component of any whole language program to provide continuity. Parents are already familiar with the concept of learning by doing. One whole language principle is that language learning is profoundly social. Teachers strive to help students enter the literacy community where language events have some purpose and meaning. Language is best learned through actual use where it is predictable and meaningful. While every whole language classroom is different, there are some elements which tend to be present in most classrooms. Clear, functional meaningful,
appropriate print is everywhere. The room is child oriented; made, written, owned and arranged by children (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). Children read and write daily in a whole language classroom. There are frequent opportunities for children to interact with other students and their environment. Children's literature is present in a classroom library. Both students and teachers keep writing journals (Rich, 1985). In a whole language classroom reading is treated as a natural meaning activity. Reading is a matter of readers using the cues that print provides and the knowledge they themselves bring with them to make an interpretation and gain meaning (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991).

Goodman (1986) described three whole language principles. Readers construct meaning during reading through three language systems that interact in written language: the graphophonic (sound and letter patterns), the syntactic (sentence patterns), and the semantic (meanings). Readers also predict, select, confirm and self-correct as they seek to make sense of print.

Many administrators are reluctant to allow the degree of curricular freedom necessary to facilitate a whole language classroom. A true whole language notion returns power to the children and teacher in the classroom. "The decision to be made is whether responsibility for teaching
children to write and read should rest with people or programs" (Smith, 1981, p. 634).

**Emergent Literacy**

Emergent literacy is a difficult process to describe. For many people literacy is a complex and multi-faceted concept (McLane & McNamee, 1990). Emergent literacy begins early in a child's life. The process takes place from birth until the child begins formal reading and writing instruction. Literacy is a social process. Parents directly influence the development of literacy by being models of literate behavior. "It's the home where a child should be first exposed to the joy of the written word" (Bush, 1989, p. 11). Parents help make a child's first experiences with language and print pleasurable and satisfying (Glazer & Burke, 1994). "Young children stand the best chance of developing a good foundation for writing and reading if their learning about literacy is anchored in their relationship with caretakers, peers, and other community members,...and activities that have personal meaning and value for them" (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 143). Parents usually support early literacy naturally. Holdaway (1979) defines emergent literacy as the reading and writing behaviors that take place before conventional literacy. The activities involve using print and oral language. A child may engage in pretend play, drawing,
conversations about the words on signs or labels, and reciting a story while looking at the pictures (McLane & McNamee, 1990).

Reading development is only one part of early literacy. "Beginning reading is a passage from language heard to language seen" (Bissex, 1980, p. 119). As with all literacy, learning to read begins early and involves both the child and the other adults and siblings in their homes. But "...early literacy does not just happen" (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 7). A close look at a child's early literacy activities show that a child is more likely to become interested in reading and writing when she sees and is involved in literacy activities with more competent readers and writers such as her parents, grandparents, or older brothers and sisters (McLane & McNamee, 1990). The best way for a child to begin to read is to discover and play with the world of print and words. After much exposure, Bissex (1980) found that early reading is locating words in print and making the connection that a printed word has one spoken equivalent. Once a child begins reading from the environment parents need to establish the attitude that reading is something that normal people use everyday to learn, to communicate, and for enjoyment. McLane and McNamee (1990) state, "Literacy is the notion that writing and reading are ways of making, interpreting and
communicating meaning" (p. 2). Long before they can decode print, children will give accurate readings of their favorite story. Once children begin to try to read words, they will come upon many obstacles. They will be solving print problems many times a day. What kind of help do children need from parents? According to Johnson and Louis (1987) "What they need is help in getting started, gentle feedback on their attempts to do so, and kind tolerance of their errors" (p. 2). Through extensive play and real experiences with reading, children will begin to see the patterns of language. Long before formalized reading instruction, children discover their own strategies for reading. Bissex (1980) found that her own son's earliest reading strategies involved using previous knowledge of the reading material and using picture clues. Later in his literacy development he improved his decoding skills and tried various pronunciations aloud to check for recognition and meaning. Later he used strategies based on both contextual and graphic cues. The use of reading strategies will vary not only with the level of development but also by the type of material being read. Context and phonics will be more essential in the absence of picture clues. Integration and consolidation of key strategies such as sight words, nonverbal and verbal context cues, and phonics is a key to reading success. "Multiple
strategies seem essential for reading" (Bissex, 1980, p. 124). As the mechanics of the reading process become easier and more fluent, children are less often practicing reading and more often reading for enjoyment. Greaney (1986) described the long term impact of the emergent literacy experience as "the child's ability to read and willingness to read for information and leisure may depend to a great extent on the degree of success and sheer pleasure experienced in previous encounters with the printed word" (p. 817).

Read-Aloud

"Possibly the most important reading activity for young children is being read to" (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 6). Many parents read aloud to their young children but are not aware of its importance in literacy development. Reading to children has many benefits. When participating in reading a book with an adult, children develop print awareness. They also come to understand that the print tells a story. From an early age children are able to learn what books are, what you do with them, and how you talk about them (McLane & McNamee, 1990). Reading aloud to children establishes a foundation that will be built upon in their years of reading and writing. When children are read to in a natural environment like the home, they create frameworks for stories in their minds. A sense
of story structure important in reading and writing is beginning to develop (Glazer & Burke, 1994). Even wordless picture books are beneficial to reading development. The child or any family member can create original stories for the books. This will show the importance of picture clues to a story. Creating a text will also help foster the sense of story with children. Beyond the elements of a story, reading aloud gives parents and children a wonderful opportunity to be together in a close and personal way (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991). The enjoyment and love of reading is usually present after children have successfully learned the mechanics of reading. Through read-aloud, that love can be fostered much earlier. According to Johnson and Louis (1987) "...the fact that parent and child sit close together, their attention focused on the print as it is read aloud, is one reason why bedtime stories are so important in the development of literacy" (p. 9). Reading to children helps children make the transition from oral to written language. Through reading varied types of quality literature, children learn that the language used in storybooks is different from the language they use in everyday conversations (McLane & McNamee, 1990). Most parents can read to their children because it is an easy activity. All that is needed is a book, a child, and time. The parents' own ability to
read is the one factor that may hinder reading to their child. But all parents can read to their children using wordless picture books. The parent and child can create their own story to accompany the pictures. But if parent literacy is a concern, the parent can seek out an adult literacy program through the school district or library. Then as the parent learns to read, he or she can read to the child. But any family member or care giver can make read-aloud a positive experience. Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) offer read aloud advice to parents. They should try to make read-aloud part of a routine. Whenever possible, use good reading materials. The library is a good source. Parents can try to connect the story being read to family experiences. It will make reading more meaningful. Parents can talk with their child about what is read to improve comprehension and oral language development. Finally parents could be a good model of reading. The story will be more enjoyable if read with expression. "Reading books to young children is a powerful way of introducing them to literacy, and it is the one early experience that has been identified as making a difference in later success in learning to read in school" (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 67).

Parent Participation in Education

Parents are a child's first teacher. They teach every
time they interact with their child (Olmsted, 1991). Even before their child enters school, the parents' role is a teacher at home. As the child enters the school setting, parents should continue their role and be a partner in the learning process because parents participation in their child's education makes a child see the connection between home and school. In 1981 the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) published *The Evidence Grows* which stated parent involvement in almost any form appears to produce measurable gains in student achievement. Parents connection with education has a long history. According to Berger (1991) parents were teachers of their children as long ago as prehistoric time. The emphasis and purpose of parent education has changed, though. In early Greek society, parent's educated their children for the benefit of the state. Now the emphasis is for the benefit of the child. The current focus can be seen in the writings of Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi (1747-1847) (Berger, 1991). The child-parent-teacher relationship has not remained constant either. Over time it has fluctuated as social expectations and environmental demands on people have varied. In colonial America, the parents' role in the education of their children seemed predominant. But increases in population, and technological advancements led to a professionalization of schools (Burke, 1984).
Today, parents who help their children learn at home promote attitudes and practices that will lead to school success. "The most effective educational program would be one in which the home and school work together on behalf of the child" (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991, p. 287). But any successful parent participation program requires a commitment of time and energy on the part of both teacher and parent. Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) state that accepting and working with parents and sharing the same goals for their child is an important first step in helping a child achieve reading success. Whatever the education level or socioeconomic status of a family, a parent's participation in education will benefit the child.

There are various levels of parent participation from passive acceptance of the importance of education, to the active role as partner and decision maker. There are also different types of parent involvement including; teaching their own child, helping in the classroom, and being a learner themselves. Any parent involvement will make positive difference in the lives of children and their whole families (Lovelady, 1988). People whose participation can have a positive effect goes beyond just parents to include other family members and the broader community. Members of the community can contribute to education by helping parents and children. The old African saying puts
it simply; the whole village educates the child. Berger (1991) spoke of the importance of participation to increase student success. "Schools, community, and parents must join hands in a commitment to their children's future" (p. 218).

Although it is known that family involvement in children's education increases achievement, differences in values and expectations between families and schools have sometimes made collaboration difficult (Swap, 1993). In order to implement a parent participation program and have it be successful, educators must seek to understand the many barriers and obstacles that may be encountered. Family situations can be quite varied. As Edwards and Jones-Young (1992) explained, "Until schools acknowledge the range in dispositions, backgrounds, experiences, and strengths among families, efforts to establish sound home/school communication and partnerships will continue to falter" (p. 74). Most parents want to help their child with education as much as they can, so the barriers need to be addressed and overcome. Swap (1993) found common barriers to parent involvement to include changing school demographics. More mothers are in the work force. There are many single parent homes. Step-parents are becoming a part of families. Poverty is increasing. There is also an increase in racial, language and ethnic diversity in
the homes and schools. But differences in family situations
do not mean a parent participation program can not be
successful. Schools will need to be more open to diversity
and be willing to work to overcome any barriers. Within
the schools, a barrier may be that there are limited
resources of time and money to support parent involvement.
A lack of information about how to establish a partnership
may also slow or delay the implementation of a parent
program.

Obstacles from parents may also be from a more personal
level such as a heavy work load, poor health, lack of child
care and transportation (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Lack
of parent involvement can be basic. "In many cases, the
reasons stem from the fact that the parent's own problems
take precedence over his or her child's education"
(Vandergrift & Greene, 1992, p. 58). Educators need to
realize that parents remember their own school experiences.
Not until they are able to deal with their own feelings
about learning will they be able to take a new look at
their child's education. Parents may have fears about
being involved in school because of their own past
experiences with school and failure (Darling, 1992).
Because school and education has changed quite dramatically
since the influence of computers and technology, parents
may also feel they have nothing to offer the learning
environment. As unfounded as it may sound, some parents worry that because they are untrained, they may interfere in today's sophisticated teaching techniques (Henderson, 1988). Better communication of how parents can participate and contribute would help dispel those myths. The amount of parent participation varies between certain groups. The families most at risk appear to be the least involved in their child's education. "The lowest parent involvement was among minority, single-parent, and step-family home situations" (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991, p. 282). As these populations continue to increase, the schools are searching for an answer. Vandergrift and Greene (1992) stated that improving parent involvement among these at-risk populations is one of the most challenging tasks facing today's educators. Parent's needs and circumstances must then be considered. It is important to reach the parents before you can teach the child. Adult literacy is one common concern. "How can parents with low proficiency in English and literacy, provide a context for literacy development in their children's lives?" (Auerbach, 1989, p. 166). Many school districts now offer parent literacy classes in addition to or along with child literacy programs. "A family literacy program can break the cycle of undereducation and poverty" (Darling, 1992, p. 11). Schools and educators themselves may be contributing
to the lack of parent involvement in children's education. Some schools do not want parents to be present in the classroom and be partners in education. Other schools may give lip service to parent involvement but then do not give parents the opportunity to play meaningful roles in the life of the school (Comer, 1985). There are many ways to overcome the many barriers encountered in the area of parent participation. The educators and schools themselves must be the first step. The role of the administrators will be a model for other teachers. The principal needs to show parents that they will always be treated with respect and as equals (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Parents must be welcomed into the school to better understand the learning that is taking place and see how important their contribution is to their children's academic success.

Educators are looking for a way to make a parent involvement program successful. "Parent involvement is neither a quick fix nor a luxury: it is absolutely fundamental to a healthy system of public education..." (Henderson, 1988, p. 152). Studies have shown that active teacher participation is the determining factor in home-school relationships (Lovelady, 1992). Many teachers are unsure how best to involve parents and others are not sure they want parents in their classrooms. One explanation
for lack of teacher enthusiasm may be teacher insecurity. Greenwood and Hickman (1991) found that teacher efficacy, or teachers' beliefs in their own teaching style and effectiveness was the strongest predictor of teacher implementation of parent involvement programs in their classroom. Teacher efficacy was found to be even a better predictor than socioeconomic status of the students in the school. Administrators valuing or helping improve a teacher's techniques and style may be the answer to negative teacher efficacy. Once teachers are ready and willing to involve parents, they need to assess the parent's needs. "The success of any one parent involvement strategy depends on how well it matches up with an individual parent's needs" (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992, p. 59). Parents needs will vary from school to school and possibly between classrooms. If parent's needs are being met, they will continue to be involved. When parents are ready to be participants in their child's education, they need to know how best to help their child. Improving communication with parents is one way to elicit support. Parents must understand that there is always an open line of communication between home and school. "All parents, no matter their socioeconomic status, want their children to succeed. But they need the support of the school and teachers to know what to do to help their children"
Educators and administrators have the education and background to help guide parents in the best educational activities to do with their children both at school and at home. Edwards and Jones-Young (1992) found that the first step should be creating a process for parents to become confident and integral partners in their children's education. Parents have already successfully fostered their child's oral language. Many have also contributed to positive self-esteem and a love of reading through reading aloud to their child. The partnership process could include instruction and directions on valuable learning experiences to do with their child. The California State Department adopted a policy on parent involvement which included "...providing parents with the knowledge of techniques designed to assist children in learning at home" (Solomon, 1991, p. 361). Through programs or individual conferences, teachers should provide parents with concrete methods and materials to use at home with children. Many times providing quality reading material for use at home will develop a great love for reading among the whole family. Teachers can also assist parents to promote good reading habits. An important element is educating parents in how to read to children or listen to children read (Auerbach, 1989). This paper has used the term "parent" participation almost exclusively. But
with today's changing times, educators need to extend the normal meaning of family to include single parents, grandparents, and others having significant responsibility for children. All caregivers should feel they play a crucial role in children's education. Auerbach's (1989) definition of family literacy includes parent and child interacting with literacy tasks, reading with and listening to their child read, giving and receiving support with teachers for homework and school concerns, and engaging in other activities with their child that involve literacy. While helping children with their developing literacy, the whole family can benefit from the experience.

Considerable research documents that parent involvement produces positive outcomes including higher academic achievement and positive student attitudes and behavior (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Parent participation programs also promote student outcomes such as improved self-esteem and attendance. In the area of parents reading with their children, findings "...provide evidence for a causal relationship between parents hearing children read and reading attainment" (Johnston, 1989, p. 354). Parental interest and attitudes to education even outweigh the effects of social class on educational success. In the research and literature read for this project, never was there mentioned a negative effect of parent participation.
Parent involvement can only benefit the child and their family.

**Parent Participation Programs**

There are many different types and levels of parent participation. Due to parents' current work and home situation, they may only be willing and able to be supportive of the educational setting. They may also be able and committed to being very active both in developing and expanding their own literacy while encouraging their child's literacy development. According to Becker and Epstein (1982), "...of all types of parent involvement, supervision of learning activities at home may be the most educationally significant" (p. 101). One type of parent participation program involves parents improving their own literacy while fostering their child's reading.

"Studies have shown that poor reading skills are an intergenerational problem. That is why it is not only important to teach the child to read but the parent as well" (Bush, 1989, p. 11). To keep enthusiasm and attendance up, it is important to provide meaningful experiences for the adults as well as the children. Meaning making activities focus on demonstration and interaction rather than mere telling.

Other programs involve parents attending workshops to better understand early literacy and the stages of
reading development. Parents are exposed to quality literature and participate and practice whole language reading strategies. A quality program provides tools that will enable adults to foster children's literacy and to develop their own as well (Handel & Goldsmith, 1994).

The program focuses on book reading, encouraging the development of active reading strategies, and discussion about the books. Parents and children use children's literature to promote reading development and integrate the practice of reading strategies into demonstrations and discussions of the books. Parents also develop new attitudes and aspirations and learn the pleasure of reading through children's literature (Handel & Goldsmith, 1994).

One of the program's goals is to develop home learning activities that complement classroom learning. When parents are asked to practice specific teaching behaviors with their children, whole language principles and strategies are carried over from the classroom to the home. Therefore there is more continuity in a child's reading education. These parent programs have demonstrated the effectiveness of two basic teaching components; direct teaching of specific reading and interaction techniques to parents, and providing the tools of literacy in books for parents and children to enjoy (Handel & Goldsmith, 1994).

Research was conducted on the success of particular
parent participation programs in the areas of reading and literacy. Segal's (1994) project involved giving parents of one year old children free books to read with their child. Applications for library cards were also given at that time. After four years the parents who were given the books provided more literacy experiences and reading material in the home for their children, and also visited the library more often than the control group who were not given books. Findings went on to show that kindergarten teachers found the book group children to have significantly higher reading and language ability than the control group. In Handel and Goldsmith's (1994) study of the Family Reading Program, the participants reported increased amounts of reading in the home, students increased use of reading strategies, and enhanced relationships with their children. These are only two programs which have produced great results. There are many more parent programs that have had similar success. According to Henderson (1988) the major benefits of a well conducted parent involvement program are higher grades and test scores, better long-term academic achievement and positive student attitudes and behavior. "Added support on the home front promotes positive student attitudes toward learning throughout the entire elementary curriculum" (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990, p. 692). Many parent/child reading programs create the
conditions that enable adults to develop the knowledge and disposition to enrich their home literacy environment for all family members. "Family literacy programs are creating two generations of lifelong learners" (Darling, 1992, p. 12). Parents' participation in their children's literacy development is very valuable. Their efforts may produce children who appreciate and use reading throughout their personal and academic lives. "Parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to read. Parents have an obligation to support their children's continued growth as readers" (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 53).

Summary

The research studied has shown the importance of teaching children to read using whole language principles. A child will learn best when reading is meaningful and serves a purpose. Parents begin teaching children about language using natural methods long before they enter school. Parents involvement and encouragement of early literacy activities also contributes to successful reading. Reading to children from birth has immeasurable benefits to the child's reading development. Hearing a story read promotes the sense of story and shows the child what a book is all about. Parent involvement in a child's learning leads to academic gains. Parents can be encouraged
to participate in their child's education in whatever way they can. Barriers that are encountered should be addressed and overcome. Programs to assist parents can be offered at each school. Some successful parent programs have involved showing parents whole language reading strategies which can be used while reading with their children at home.

In conclusion, parent participation is a vital element in a child's academic success. Parents want to help their child in whatever way they can. In regards to literacy development, teachers need to provide parents with the information and guidance necessary to making reading with their child an enjoyable learning experience.
GOALS

The goal of this project is to provide information to parents that will allow them to have a positive role in their child's emerging literacy process. This project develops a program for parent instruction and involvement that includes four workshops and a parent handbook. The workshops will show the value of parent involvement in students' reading success. The handbook will give parents information about reading development and appropriate quality literature for each developmental stage of reading. The information gained from this project will assist parents in supporting a whole language environment at home and school.
OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives for the program include:

° Parents will understand the value of their involvement in regards to their child's success in education. Therefore parents will become more involved with their child's learning.

° Parents will be introduced to the whole language philosophy and will learn strategies and everyday activities that can be implemented at home.

° Parents will understand the stages of reading development and learn ways to help their child at each stage.

° Parents will learn how to select appropriate reading materials for their child at all stages of emerging and developing reading.

° Parents will bring their understanding of whole language strategies into the classroom to assist a small group of students.
LIMITATIONS

Various factors will effect the implementation of this project:

1. Due to time constraints this project will not be field tested with parents or students. It will be implemented during the 1995-1996 school year with kindergarten and first grade students and parents.

2. Only kindergarten and first grade parents will be involved in the program. A similar program may be needed with parents of second grade emergent reading students.

3. The support of administrators and specific teachers will effect the outcome of this project. According to research, support of the entire school community is important for an effective program. The support of administrators and staff will also vary from year to year.

4. Working parents may be unable to attend the workshops even if times are varied. The handbook will need to be distributed to all interested parents who are unable to attend the workshops.

5. A lack of sufficient translators for the non-English speaking population may limit the application of this project. Whole language strategies can be adapted to any language. Due to the special language needs of non-English speakers, the project must be adapted to their needs.
6. Budgetary constraints will also limit the ability to provide multiple copies of books for parents to use during the workshops and with their children at home.

7. The parents' own level of literacy will effect their willingness and ability to participate in the program. Some parents will be unable to read the handbook. Adult reading classes should be offered at the district level.
EVALUATION

The evaluation of this project will be based on its five broad goals: (1) to encourage parental involvement, (2) introduce parents to the whole language philosophy, (3) learn a variety of ways to help children with reading, (4) learn how to select appropriate reading materials, (5) and bring their new experience into the classroom to help other students.

To design an effective program the first step must be to survey the needs and interests of the parents. This will be accomplished through a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire will be considered effective if there is a response from 50% of the parents.

The first goal of the program is to ensure that parents understand the value of their involvement in regards to their child's success in education. Therefore parents will become more involved with their child's learning. To determine how well this goal is met, a self-evaluation scale will be used as a pre and post assessment. To determine long term commitment, the scale can also be administered at the end of the school year. This program will be considered productive if there is an increase of 50% in parent participation.

The second goal of this program is to introduce parents to the whole language philosophy. They will learn
strategies and everyday activities that can be implemented at home. During the workshops, the interactions of parents will be observed as they practice whole language reading strategies. The parent and child will be asked to complete an evaluation sheet after each reading session and they will participate in a reading contract.

The third goal is to increase the variety of reading strategies that parents use with their children. This goal will be measured through another pre and post self evaluation scale. Informal individual interviews and observations will also provide information.

The fourth goal is to introduce parents to appropriate reading materials for children. This will be evaluated in two ways. The parent and child reading contract will provide the names of the books read. From this list the appropriateness can be determined. Informal sharing sessions in which parents discuss books that they read successfully with their child will also be considered.

The fifth goal is for parents to bring their understanding of whole language strategies into the classroom to assist small groups of students. At the last session, parents will be recognized for their achievements and participation. They will be asked to sign up and volunteer their time in the classroom. This component of the program will be considered successful if 50% of
the parents volunteer in the classroom.

The evaluation of this project will not be complete until the results are discussed with the parents. The project will need to be modified to benefit each group of students and their parents.
REFERENCES


EARLY READING SUCCESS: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A PARENT READING EDUCATION PROGRAM
EARLY READING SUCCESS: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE
INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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PARENTS' ROLE IN THEIR CHILD'S READING SUCCESS

SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Beginning in infancy and through childhood, parents respond positively to their child's attempts at speaking. Parents naturally foster oral language development through modeling and encouraging their child's attempts. This process will lead to a standard form of communication. Reading is another form of language and will also follow a natural development with parent guidance being beneficial.

When parents become involved with their child's education, wonderful things can happen. Research has widely shown that parental involvement is very successful. Many parents naturally provide a nurturing reading environment beginning when they read aloud to their young child. Parents need to be reassured that they are continuing to provide that supportive environment and shown additional methods to help while their child is learning to read.

The purpose of this project is to support and educate the parents of early readers. A series of workshops will introduce whole language and the stages of reading development. Parents will learn to identify each stage and will learn ways to support their child's reading during
each stage. The parents will also receive a handbook that will introduce many ways to help young readers. Parents will be asked to respond to and evaluate the activities. The workshops will introduce, demonstrate, and practice the strategies of reading aloud, guided reading, and shared reading. Parents will also learn how to help their child predict and read for meaning as well as learn other reading strategies.
WORKSHOP #1
GOALS

1. The purpose of this workshop is for parents to learn ways to help their child with reading. It is also a time for parents to get to know each other and the teacher/leader. The Parent Handbook will be given to each parent to use and refer to throughout the workshops.

2. The leader will read the book Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox. After reading the story, the leader will talk about her memories of being read to and early reading. Parents will then be asked to think about their own early reading memories. They will complete the handbook page READING MEMORIES. Parents will share their memories in a small group. The leader will ask some parents to share their memories with the whole group.

3. The leader will discuss how the whole language philosophy lends itself to promoting positive reading experiences for their children. Parents may refer to the page WHAT IS WHOLE LANGUAGE? in their handbooks.

4. The leader will explain how important parents are to the reading development of children. Parents will be reminded that they already successfully encourage oral language, one form of communication. The leader will show parents that reading is just another aspect of their child's literacy development.

5. The first strategy, "Read Aloud", will be introduced.

6. The leader tells the parents that she will be reading a children's book, Ira sleeps over by Bernard Waber to the group. They are encouraged to play the role of children with appropriate responses. The leader then reads the book quickly with little or no expression. Parents can respond. The book is then read with story introduction (discussing the cover, author and illustrations, and making predictions), expression, and additional stops for prediction as the story is read. The parents will then be asked to respond to the second reading of the story. The group should point out what made the second reading more enjoyable and why.
7. The leader refers parents to the handbook page STORY INTRODUCTION GUIDELINES.

8. Appropriate read aloud books will be distributed to parents. They will work in pairs to practice the techniques taught in the "Read Aloud" demonstration. The leader should encourage parents to relax, play the child role when appropriate and have fun.

9. A discussion will follow as to why reading aloud to children is so important. Leader will refer parents to READ ALOUD GUIDELINES in handbook.

10. Any parent questions will be answered and discussed in the group. The leader will speak to commonly asked questions by parents such as, "When will my child learn to read?" Parents are encouraged to bring any addition questions with them to the following session.

11. Parents will take a break. Refreshments will be made available.

12. The leader will bring the group back together. Parents will be asked to fill out "PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SELF EVALUATION and the PRE-WORKSHOP CHECKLIST. The leader will point out that the parent's feedback is important to evaluating and improving the program. They will be encouraged to be completely honest and reminded their name is not required.

13. A volunteer is asked to review the techniques and strategies learned for read aloud. The leader will help clarify all strategies. Parents are again asked if they have any questions.

14. The leader will introduce extension activities that can follow reading a story. Parents will be asked to refer to READING EXTENSION ACTIVITIES in their handbook. The leader will suggest visiting a nursing home after reading a book like Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge and the child planning to have a friend sleep over after reading Ira
sleeps over.

15. Appropriate read aloud books are set out for display. Parents are asked to sign out a book to bring home to read aloud to their child. They are to complete the READING CONTRACT, READING LOG, and PARENT CHILD EVALUATION after reading to their child. The leader will encourage parents to refer to the list of RECOMMENDED READ ALOUD BOOKS in their handbooks to choose other books to read to their children. They will be reminded to write down any additional comments or questions and bring their handbooks to the next session.

16. The leader will hand out library card applications for the local library. Parents will be encouraged to fill them out and return them to the leader so she can process their cards. Parents may also return the applications later to their classroom teacher.

17. Parents will be reminded of the date and time of the next session. A small reminder note will also be sent home.

18. This session is completed but the leader is available to talk with parents.

19. Parents are encouraged to enjoy the refreshments and get to know each other better.
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Below you will find ideas that help parents become more involved in their child's education. In order to design and provide a program that will fit your needs and interests, please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Circle the degree of your interest.

As the parent of a young reader, I am interested in more information in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>1. How all children learn to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>2. How to help my child with reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3. How reading is taught in my child's school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>4. Ways to encourage my child to read.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>5. Ways to develop effective skills in comprehending.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6. How to choose books for my child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>7. How to help my child develop positive attitudes toward reading.</td>
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Please circle your choice: (Yes or No)

8. I would attend parent meetings to learn new ways to help my child with reading. YES NO
9. I would like to receive newsletters with tips on ways to help my child with reading. YES NO

10. I would like to borrow books to use at home with my child. YES NO

<table>
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<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Please think about your answers to questions 1-10. Write the number of the three ideas that are most important to you.

This area is not listed but I believe that this topic should also be addressed ____________________________

What times are most convenient for you to attend workshops at school? (Please specify 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice.) Morning Afternoon Evening

Will you need free baby-sitting? YES NO

Now many children will you bring for baby-sitting and what are the ages?

Thank you for your help. Please return this to your child's teacher or to the school office.

PARENT CHECKLIST

PRE-WORKSHOP

Please check the items in each section which best describes your family. Your name is optional.

My Child:

____ 1. enjoys reading.

____ 2. reads everyday.

____ 3. understands what he/she reads.

____ 4. is able to figure out unknown words or phrases.

____ 5. asks someone to read to him/her.

____ 6. likes to go to the library.

____ 7. enjoys receiving books as gifts.

As a parent I:

____ 8. read to my child everyday.

____ 9. provide many reading materials at home.

____ 10. feel able to help my child with reading.

____ 11. believe my child will be a successful reader.

____ 12. read myself everyday.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SELF EVALUATION

Please check the items that you do with your child. If you do this everyday, put two checks next to the item.

HOME

_____ 1. I read to my child.
_____ 2. My child reads to me.
_____ 3. I take my child to the library.
_____ 4. I help my child with homework.
_____ 5. I talk to my child about school.

SCHOOL

_____ 6. I belong to the PTA.
_____ 7. I read the school newsletter.
_____ 8. I attend Back to School Night and Open House.
_____ 9. I volunteer to work in my child's classroom.
_____10. I attend Parent Teacher Conferences.
_____11. I assist the teacher on field trips.
_____12. I serve on the School Site Council.
_____13. I attend PTA meetings.
_____15. I help with class parties and projects.

PARENT AND CHILD EVALUATION FORM

TELL WHAT YOU THINK?

1. Did you like the story? YES NO
2. Did you enjoy having your parent read to you? YES NO
3. Did you like reading the story to your parents? YES NO
4. Do you think you are learning more ways to discover the parts of the story that are difficult to read? YES NO

EVALUATION

1. Do you think your child enjoyed the story? YES NO
2. Do you use different ways to help your child discover parts of the story that are difficult to read? YES NO
3. Do you plan to use the same strategy again? YES NO
4. Do you have any suggestions or thoughts to share with me?

PARENT AND CHILD READING CONTRACT

I promise to listen to (or read with) my child everyday for 15 minutes during the month of _____________.

X
Parent's signature

I promise to listen to (or read with) a parent everyday for 15 minutes during the month of _____________.

X
Child's printed name
READING LOG
BOOKS THAT I HAVE READ

Please write in the box the title and author of every book read this month. Also note any reactions (good or bad) to the story or strategy used in reading.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Sun</th>
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Reactions to books read and strategies used

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
WORKSHOP #2

GOALS

1. The first goal of this session is to introduce the stages of reading development. Parents will learn the characteristics of their child's reading stage. The second goal is to introduce the strategy of Shared Reading.

2. The leader will ask parents to share their experiences with Read Aloud with their children. Any questions and comments will be addressed.

3. The leader will read David McPhail's book Fix it. This book shows the early reading development of the child in the story. It shows the child wanting to hear the story again and again. It ends with the child reading the book to herself. This story shows good examples of prereading characteristics.

4. Beginning with the prereading stage introduced in the previous story, the stages of reading development will be discussed. That children will naturally progress through these stages will be emphasized. Parents will be encouraged to support their child at all stages. The leader will explain that it is normal for a child to be between two stages.

5. Parents will be asked to fill out the STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT survey to determine the stage in which their child is reading. The leader will be available to answer any questions and confirm a child's stage.

6. The group will take a break. Refreshments will be made available.

7. The leader will introduce the reading strategy "Shared Reading". This strategy can be used with children at all reading stages, but is especially beneficial with children in the prereading and beginning reading stages. The leader will use Just like Daddy, by Frank Asch. A big book or the story on an overhead is helpful for parents to follow along. A parent will be asked to play the role of the child.
The leader will:

- Looking at the cover of the book, ask the parent volunteer to predict what the story will be about.

- Complete the book introduction (see STORY INTRODUCTION GUIDELINES in parent handbook).

- Read the book with expression, tracing the print in a continuous flow.

- Stop at appropriate times to confirm and make new predictions.

- After reading the story, discuss it.

- Read the story again, asking the parent volunteer to read along during familiar parts.

- During the third reading, stop and allow the parent volunteer to read the familiar or repeating parts alone. Try to choose phrases that are known to promote confidence in the child's reading skill.

8. The leader will conduct a discussion about the Shared Reading strategy.

9. A display of children's book for each stage of reading will be shown to parents. The leader will briefly review characteristics of each stage and talk about a few books from each category. Parents will be told they can also refer to the book lists, for each stage of development, in their handbooks.

10. The leader will remind parents to do extension activities that go along with a book that's been read as often as possible to increase comprehension and interest in reading. A suggested activity to go along with Just like Daddy would be a story innovation. The child and parent could write Just like Mommy or Just like Grandpa.

11. Parents will be encouraged to check out a book from one of the reading stages that most closely matched their child. They will be asked to first read the book to their child and then use the Shared Reading strategy.
Parents and children are reminded to continue filling out the "PARENT AND CHILD EVALUATION form and READING LOG.

12. The second session is completed but parents are again encouraged to enjoy the refreshments and socialize with other parents. The leader is available for questions and discussion.
WORKSHOP #3
GOALS

Note: Children will be asked to participate in this session. They will do other activities with an adult until they join their parents.

1. Discuss parent reactions to the book read from last session and the Shared Reading strategy used with their child. The leader will answer any questions.

2. Parents are told that the purpose of this session is to provide them with more ways to help their children with reading. The strategy of Guided Reading will be introduced.

3. The leader will conduct the activity, "Reading for Meaning" (see READING FOR MEANING). Write the passage on a chart or put it on an overhead to allow for everyone to view it. The leader will also pass out a copy to parents. Give parents a few minutes to look over the passage. Then ask for volunteers to try to read it aloud to the group.

4. The group will discuss what was missing from the passage, and why they were still able to read it (context clues and familiar text).

5. The leader will explain that they were able to read the text because they read for meaning. To determine the passage they used the letters available, context clues, and past experience with the rhyme. The leader will then explain that it is important that their children also are encouraged to read for meaning and not to put too much focus on individual letters or words.

6. Parent will be asked to refer to "WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE READER? in handbook. Leader reminds parents that a good reader does a lot more than determine the individual words.

7. The group will take a break. Refreshments will be made available.
8. The leader will introduce the strategy "Guided Reading". It will be explained that this strategy is most appropriate for readers in the emergent and developing stages of reading. The book *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* by Bill Martin Jr. will be used. Ask a parent to play the role of a child. Use a big book to allow all parents to follow along.

- The leader will introduce the story.

- The book will be read with expression, tracing the words.

- Ask the parent volunteer to act like a beginning reader and stumble over some of the words. They should make guesses that don't make sense.

- The leader will guide the parent through several reading strategies (see READING STRATEGIES in handbook).

- Discuss the reading strategies that were demonstrated. Explain how these strategies can help a child become a confident and successful reader.

9. Ask parents to refer to READING STRATEGIES in their handbook.

10. The leader will briefly mention that a good extension activity to go along with *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* would be a trip to the zoo.

11. The children will now join their parents. The parents and children together will choose a book from their reading stage. The parent will practice Guided Reading using the strategies learned. Parents to refer to their handbook as needed. The leader will move among the groups observing.

12. When all groups are done, some parents and children are asked to share their experience with Guided Reading. The leader may wish to further explain strategies that she observed parents having difficulty with.
13. The children will be asked to share with the group what they might do if you come to something they do not know. Being able to verbalize the strategies helps students use them naturally as they read.

14. Parents and children are encouraged to check out a book to take home. Remind parents and children to continue filling out the READING LOG and PARENT AND CHILD EVALUATION.

15. The session is complete. Ask both parents and children to attend the final session: A Celebration of Reading. Ask parents to bring along a favorite book to share and also ask how they'd like to make the night special, a potluck dinner, or a dessert night.
Please look at, and then read the following passages.

Note: A space may indicate more than one letter.

H_mpty D_mpty s_t _n _ w_ll, H_mpty D_mpty h_d _ gr_t f_ll. _ll th_ k_ngs h_rs_s _nd _ll th_ K_ngs m_n, c_lnd n_t p_t H_mpty D_mpty b_ck t_g th_r _g_n.

_ nc_ _p_n _ t_m_ th_r_ w_r_ thr_ l_ttl_ p_g s. Th_y _ch b_lt _ h_s_. Th_ f_rst l_ttl_ p_g b_lt _ h_s_ m_d_ t_f str_w. Th_ s_c_nd p_g b_lt h_s h_s_ t_f st_cks. Th_ th_rd l_ttl_ p_g b_lt h_s h_s_ t_f br_cks.

65
WORKSHOP #4
GOALS

A CELEBRATION OF READING

1. Parents and their children will break into small groups to read and share their favorite books that were brought from home. Ask parents to share with their group what they enjoy most about the book.

2. Bring the parents and children back into a large group. Encourage parents and children to share their best experience of the program.

3. This last session may be a pot luck dinner, or a dessert night.

4. Certificates and other forms of recognition should be given out to parents and children.

5. Each child will be given a free book of their choice to take home.

6. The parents are asked to complete the final evaluations, PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SELF EVALUATION, and the PARENT CHECKLIST: POST WORKSHOP.

7. The leader will ask parents if they would like to use their new skills helping students in the classroom. A sign-up sheet will be available.

7. A family field trip will be arranged for a later date to go to the local public library. Those with library cards will check out books. If needed, a school or charter bus will be arranged for transportation.

8. The leader will thank parents for attending the workshops and taking the extra time to help their children become successful and confident readers.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SELF EVALUATION

Please check the items that you do with your child. If you do this everyday, put two checks next to the item.

HOME

____ 1. I read to my child.
____ 2. My child reads to me.
____ 3. I take my child to the library.
____ 4. I help my child with homework.
____ 5. I talk to my child about school.

SCHOOL

____ 6. I belong to the PTA.
____ 7. I read the school newsletter.
____ 8. I attend Back to School Night and Open House.
____ 9. I volunteer to work in my child's classroom.
____10. I attend Parent Teacher Conferences.
____11. I assist the teacher on field trips.
____12. I serve on the School Site Council.
____13. I attend PTA meetings.
____15. I help with class parties and projects.

PARENT CHECKLIST

POST WORKSHOP

Please check the items in each section which best describes the changes in your behavior or attitude that may have occurred as a result of these workshops.

____ Working with my child has become more enjoyable.
____ Our family reads more books together.
____ We visit the library more often.
____ As a parent, I understand more about how reading develops.
____ I am more confident about helping my child with oral reading.
____ I understand the importance of reading in my child's life.

My child:
____ finds reading more enjoyable.
____ enjoys reading more with me and other adults.
____ brings more books home to read.
____ reads more frequently.
____ knows several ways to figure out parts of the story that may be difficult to read.
____ considers him/herself a good reader.

Adapted from: Prehoda, J.M. (1993). Bridging the gap between parents and schools: A parent education model. Master's project, California State University, San Bernardino, San
EARLY READING SUCCESS: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE
PARENT HANDBOOK
# PARENT'S ROLE IN THEIR CHILD'S READING SUCCESS

## PARENT HANDBOOK

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READING MEMORIES ACTIVITY

Think back to a time in your childhood when you were read to. If you have no memories of being read to, remember a time you read to your own children. Think about how you felt and what you remember most about those times.

In the space below write or draw something that shows what you remember about this time. How did you feel? Was it a positive experience?
WHAT IS WHOLE LANGUAGE?

Many parents ask, "What is whole language?" In the whole language approach, the learner is the center of the curriculum. By starting with the interests of the child, language arts instruction can be meaningful in everyday life. Materials are used to fit the needs of your child.

In the learning process, your role is as a guide, not a speaker of knowledge. Your child is an active participant in his/her learning. He/she should be encouraged to use the emerging reading skills whenever possible.

Quality literature is the main material used in whole language reading rather than books with controlled vocabulary. The whole language perspective is based on the belief that children learn to read by reading. Children enjoy reading books that have interesting stories and illustrations. Good literature will be rich in meaning so that your child will want to read them again and again. Books that are patterned and predictable provide success for early readers. Books should not contain artificial or fixed vocabulary. Well chosen literature is an essential ingredient and should be readily accessible to promote meaningful reading experiences.

A print rich and literate family environment (many
books, printed materials, literate parents and siblings, etc.) will promote a young child's emerging literacy. Children will see reading as a useful, everyday activity.

One purpose of reading is to acquire and understand information. Providing activities in the visual and performing arts (art, drama, and dance) that go along with a book will allow your child to respond to the story and it also increases your child's understanding of a piece of literature.

Your involvement is a vital component of a whole language program. You are your child's first teacher. You helped and encouraged your child through speech development, one of their primary means of communication. Your involvement can also strengthen your child's development of reading. It may begin by your reading bedtime stories. But it needs to carry over into your child's school years. Involving you in the reading process can create a positive bond between home and school. This project will teach you whole language strategies to encourage a positive and productive reading experience with your child. By providing you with this information, it will hopefully instill confidence and the desire to take an active role in your child's reading education.
BENEFITS OF READ ALOUD

One of the easiest ways for you to help with reading is to read to your child. It is not only an enjoyable activity but children also learn so much from it.

BENEFITS OF READ ALOUD AT HOME

* children enjoy reading
* children learn how to handle books
* children learn how to read a book and the parts of a book
* reading time helps build a positive relationship between parent and child
* children are motivated to learn to read themselves

BENEFITS OF READ ALOUD IN SCHOOL

Reading aloud:

* builds children's vocabulary
* improves listening skills and comprehension
* expands a child's imagination
* provides information about the world around them
READ ALOUD GUIDELINES

Reading with your child is an important part of literacy development. Below are a few suggestions to help you and your child get the most from reading aloud together.


2. Enjoy a special time with your child. Sit together in a comfortable, quiet place.

3. Before reading the book, use the pictures to predict or guess what the story may be about. Talk about the title and author.

4. Read slowly and with expression. This will help your child to understand the story and make it more enjoyable.

5. After reading several pages, stop and talk about what has happened in the story. Predict what may happen next.
6. At the end of the story see if your predictions were correct. Talk about the story. What did you like about the story? What parts were the most exciting, interesting, or surprising? Does it remind you of something you've done or seen? Who was your favorite character and why?

7. If your child chooses, you may read it again. The book can also be chosen and read again at another time.

8. Make reading with your child a part of your daily routine: read before bedtime, right after dinner, or anytime that is convenient for your family.

9. Include your whole family in the reading aloud time. Dad, grandparents and older siblings can take turns reading to the family.

10. First and most importantly, relax and have fun.
READING EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Extending the experience of a book past reading the story, helps your child better comprehend the meaning of the story and how it applies to his/her own life. These activities can make the story come alive.

The activities below can be modified to accompany any story that is read. It is best to vary the activities to keep them enjoyable.

Create a new ending for the story.

Act out the story in play form, and design props.

Do one of the activities from the story (a picnic, sleep-over, hike, etc.).

Rewrite the story from a different characters point of view.

Read more books by the same author.

Create an artistic product that is in response to feelings that the story creates.

Write a letter to the author and share your feelings about the book. Send it to the author in care of the publisher.

Create a dance that represents the story.

Write a new story using the same pattern of the original story ("Just Like Mommy" after the story Just Like Daddy).

Design a book jacket/cover.

Create a book about a similar experience you've had.

Write a book review stating your reactions to the book.

Share the book with another adult or child.
RECOMMENDED READ ALOUD BOOKS


STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT:

PREREADING

Please think about your child's reading behavior and answer the questions below.

Does your child read a book by YES NO telling the story from the pictures and ignoring the print?

If you read a familiar book, does YES NO your child say some of the parts as you read?

If you answered yes to both questions, your child is probably in the first stage of reading development that can be called the Prereading Stage. Your child is becoming aware of books and is developing a love of reading. Make reading a part of your everyday routine. Read books yourself because children like to imitate their parents.
THE BEGINNING READER

Think about your child's reading behavior and answer the questions below.

Does your child ask to hear the same story over and over? YES NO

Does your child correct you if you do not read the story exactly as it is written? YES NO

Is your child able to pick out some letters or words? YES NO

If you answered yes to most of these questions, your child is probably in the beginning reader stage of reading. During this stage, your child usually knows all the words to favorite stories. Children enjoy reading the book themselves and have memorized the story. Many parents worry that this is not reading. But this is a natural stage of reading and parents can be proud and encourage their child to continue enjoying books.
THE EMERGENT READER

Think about your child's reading behavior and the answer the questions below.

Does your child frequently YES NO ask someone to listen to them read?

Does your child have an YES NO awareness of the print and try to follow along?

If you answered yes to both questions, your child is probably an emergent reader. Your child is learning more about the process of reading. Reading vocabulary is building. Children at this stage continue to need books which have good illustrations and a predictable story.
THE DEVELOPING READER

Think about your child's reading behavior and answer the questions below.

Is your child able to read more books without your help? 

YES  NO

Does your child think of themselves as a reader? 

YES  NO

Is your child's reading knowledge increasing, allowing him/her to be more independent? 

YES  NO

During this stage of reading children are becoming more confident with their reading. They are more independent but still need support from illustrations and predictable text. Praise your child for making great progress.

STORY INTRODUCTION GUIDELINES

An effective story introduction helps your child understand that many times the pictures alone can tell a story. By going through the pictures first, your child will already have an idea what the words will say before starting to read. As your child becomes a beginning reader, using this technique will help your child read the story alone because the vocabulary has already been exposed through oral discussion. When your child becomes a more independent reader, he/she can be encouraged to do a story introduction themselves before beginning to read a new book.

*Read the title of the story.
*Show and discuss the picture on the front cover.
*Have the child predict what the story might be about.
*Look at each picture page by page. Your child can say what he/she sees on each page.
*After a few pages stop and make new predictions.
*Refer back to predictions made from the cover and see if they are still possible.
*Parent and child discussed any similar situations they've experienced.
*Parent goes back and reads the text of the story using good read aloud techniques (see Read Aloud Hints).
BOOKLIST FOR PRE-READING STAGE

WORDLESS PICTURE BOOKS

During this stage children enjoy telling stories using wordless picture books.


BOOKLIST FOR THE BEGINNING READER

During this stage children need books which are enjoyable, have good illustrations, and have repeated phrases. The story should also be predictable.


BOOKLIST FOR THE EMERGENT READER

These books have fun and interesting stories. They continue to have predictable stories with repeating patterned words and phrases.


During this stage of reading, the child is becoming a more independent reader. These books are more challenging with more words on a page and a longer story. There are still many pictures and a predictable story.


WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE READER?

Good readers always read for meaning rather than focusing on determining the individual words.

If a part of the story is unclear to the reader, he/she tries a number of ways to understand and read the section.

1. Read it again.

2. Good readers look for clues in the pictures and in the story.

3. Leave out the unclear section and read the phrase or sentence again.

4. The reader makes a guess (a prediction) and sees if it makes sense in the story.

5. The reader thinks about what he/she knows about the subject.

6. Looks to see if the letters/sounds will make it clear.

7. Asks if they've seen it before.

8. Good readers will ask for help.
READING STRATEGIES

As children learn to read, it is important to help them develop into independent readers. Just as you encourage your child to grow into a self-sufficient adult, you can guide your child to become a self-sufficient reader. Here are some ways to help a young reader when they come to something unknown.

*Ask the child to start the section again. ("Try it again.")

*After the child reads the section, ask if what was just read makes sense. (Does that sound right to you?)

*Tell the child to skip the part that is unknown and read on to the end of the passage. Then ask ("Do you know what it is now?", "What do you think it could be?")

*If the child has not discovered it by this point, you can then tell the child.

Your goal is to always encourage the child to first try it by themselves. By doing this you are helping them to become independent readers.

PARENT RESOURCES

Note: The leader will need to complete and update this information for the local area.

Public Library: Name, location and phone number, Programs available for families

Children's Book Stores: Names, locations and phone numbers, Story Hour Schedules

School District Family/Parent Resources: Name of contact, Programs Offered

Adult Literacy Programs: Public Libraries, Community Colleges, Universities, Community Organizations

School Library: Extended hours, family programs
REFERENCES


