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Improving student achievement through parent involvement

Bridget Anderson Hardesty

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IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Reading/Language Arts

by
Bridget Anderson Hardesty
March 2005
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PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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March 2005

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to examine and strengthen the home-school connection and improve student achievement at Banks Elementary. The specific research questions are: 1) How can a home-school connection improve student literacy? 2) What role do parents play at home and in the educational setting? 3) What role do teachers and schools play in facilitating parent involvement programs? 4) Do parents and teachers work as a team to improve student achievement? 5) What successful family literacy programs currently exist in the United States? 6) What are the benefits of parent involvement programs?

The strategies described may help parent educators design effective parent involvement programs for improving student literacy achievement. The project consisted of four parent workshops based on the interests of parents as evidenced by their responses on the needs assessment. The workshops focused on informing parents about No Child Left Behind 2001, state mandated testing, parent conferences, reading strategies, student study-teams, and homework. The goals of the workshops were to improve parent-teacher relations, increase parent usage of school resources, and increase parent student interaction in the home. This study has implications for school districts, parent
educators, and parents alike. Evidence in this project suggests when all involved work together children benefit.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength to finish this project. I truly believe that the one who kneels to the Lord can stand up to anything. I would also like to thank my husband Craig and friend Patricia. Thank you for your encouragement.
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CHAPTER ONE
HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Introduction

From the moment of birth, children are loved and raised by their parents. Long before children enter the classroom, they engage in language building activities in the home. Whether through parent-child interaction, print-rich environments, and books in the home, children learn a lot about the world they live in. While many children enter school well prepared, many do not. Many children encounter failure for the first time, upon entering school.

When a child struggles academically the blame is usually placed on the parents or the teacher. Teachers complain that children come to school unprepared. Parents complain that teachers do not show them how to help their children. “Education results from the dynamic interaction between home and school. It is not the sum of fixed parts: parents + students + teachers. No one is to blame if a child falls behind, but we are all responsible. The question is not whose fault it is, but what can we do about it together” (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986 p. 55).
How do parents know what their responsibility is regarding their child’s education? Do teachers explain what they expect the parents to do? If parents do not understand what they are suppose to do, do teachers show them?

Teachers regularly participate in professional development workshops to learn new ideas and strategies to help their students become better readers and writers. Are teachers trained to assist parents in helping their children? What opportunities are available for parents?

Purpose Statement

I teach at Banks Elementary School, in Woodland, California. Banks Elementary is a school that faces many challenges. It is an Intermediate Intervention Under Performing School (II/USP), an overflow school and has a high transient rate. Teachers at Banks Elementary believe parent participation is low due to student busing. The purpose of this project was to examine and strengthen the home-school connection and improve student achievement at Banks Elementary. The specific research questions are:

1. How can a home-school connection improve student literacy?
2. What role do parents play at home and in the educational setting?

3. What role do teachers and schools play in facilitating parent involvement programs?

4. Do parents and teachers work as a team to improve student achievement?

5. If not, what barriers exist?

6. What successful family literacy programs currently exist in the United States?

7. What are the benefits of parent involvement programs?

Importance of the Study

The information presented in this paper will provide elementary teachers with a plan to work collaboratively with parents to increase student achievement. After reviewing the research, my approach was to develop a series of family workshops that any teacher could implement at school.

My main objective was to study the effects of parent involvement on student achievement in literacy while also developing a research-based family literacy program that encourages parent-teacher collaboration. Many parent involvement programs have been developed and implemented
by community-based programs. Parents have received literacy assistance from nonprofit organizations such as Reading Is Fundamental (RIF). Many studies have been conducted in the past on community-based programs. Studies show that schools have neglected the role of developing successful problem-solving practices that involve parents as collaborators (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

I discuss here two main factors that differentiate the present study from previous ones addressing the same problem.

**School Based Model Programs**

Prestigious universities have created parent involvement model programs in low-income schools. These models operate with a large graduate staff as well as other paid para-professionals. Cooperation from the entire school staff is often required.

**Parent-centered Approach**

Many programs have agendas that were created prior to parent invitations. My approach was to assess the needs of the parents and the classroom teacher prior to creating an agenda. Parent and teacher input determined the focus of each workshop. Parent workshops have been held in the past at my school. The difference with this program was that parents provided input in creating the workshops for the
first time in my school's history. Requesting parent input was an important first step in building a collaborative relationship between parents and teachers. In addition to seeking parent input prior to the start of the workshops, my approach was to continually seek parent input through an evaluative process during the workshops.

I chose to limit my sample to students who were struggling academically per parent observations. By training the parents of students who were struggling academically, I could easily identify the effectiveness of the workshops. This study reviews successful programs and the positive effects of parent involvement. The goal of this study, was to improve student achievement in literacy in and outside the classroom, parent confidence in the area of literacy.

Chapter Two reviews current and past research and programs. Chapters Three through Four present the family literacy workshops and their results. Chapter Five summarizes the major findings and conclusions together with recommendations for parents and teachers.

"There are two major factors in the learning process: student motivation and good teaching. We get into trouble when we ascribe all the responsibility for one to the
family and the other to the school" (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986, p. 55).

Scope

The project consisted of four parent workshops. The workshops focused on informing parents about No Child Left Behind 2001, state mandated testing, parent conferences, reading strategies, student study teams, and homework. The goals of the workshops were to improve parent-teacher relations, increase parent usage of school resources, and increase parent-student interaction in the home. Edwards and Danridge (2001), assert one important reason for teachers' inability to create collaborative relationships with parents from diverse backgrounds is their strong reliance on traditional methods of parent-teacher interactions. Open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and special school events should not be the only way that teachers communicate with parents from diverse backgrounds.

Definitions of Terms

Cognition - the process or result of recognizing, interpreting, judging, and reasoning; knowing (Harris & Hodges, 1995).
Collaborate Learning - learning by working together in small groups (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Home-school Connection - relationship between parents and school.

Inter-generational - literacy based on the premises that as parents improve their own literacy, the skills and knowledge they gain will promote literacy learning among their children (Paratore, 2001).

Literacy - the quality or state of being literate, esp. the ability to read and write

Needs Assessment - an evaluation in which information about the current status of the school literacy program is collected and examined (Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

Qualitative Research - research that is conducted in naturalistic settings in order to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Quantitative Research - research that measures and describes in numerical terms (Harris & Hodges, 1995).
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this literature review I examine past and current parent involvement programs. I analyze the various roles parents play at home and in the educational setting. I also analyze the role teachers and schools play in facilitating parent involvement programs. Finally, I review family literacy, and its definition, and research a list of successful family literacy programs in the United States.

Home Literacy

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), many families are actively involved in helping their young children learn. Parents engage their children in literacy long before formal education. "At best, formal instruction accounts for only a fraction of the education that takes place in families" (Leichter, 1975, p. 38).

Parents are the first teachers. Many children enter kindergarten and the first grade reading and writing. Parents read books to their children, share Bible Stories, and teach nursery rhymes, as well as the alphabet. "In
addition to the print that comes into the home from outside, there is the writing created in the home, which ranges from neatly organized messages to scrawls found on scraps of paper, pieces of cardboard, or napkins" (Leichter, 1975, p. 40).

Parents support their children's literacy by assisting with homework assignments and projects. Parents may also ask teachers for more challenging work to complete at home. Families facilitate their children's learning through direct teaching. Some parents teach their children skills they believe are crucial to school achievement and skills that are not adequately taught (Snow et al., 2000).

Are parents considered "teachers" in the school setting? Do parents and teachers work as a team to improve student achievement? What roles do parents play in their children's education once the children enroll in school?

Parental Roles in Education

It is important to examine the various parent educational roles. Parents are the first "teachers." "Parents or other caregivers are potentially the most important people in the education of their children. Research supports a strong link between the home environment and children's acquisition of school-based
literacy” (Morrow, 1995, p. 6). Attempting to help struggling readers without parent support is futile. Research has shown that teachers must get parents involved.

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1986), defines five basic parent roles in education: partners, collaborators and problem solvers, audience, supporters, and advisors and/or co-decision makers.

As partners, parents make it possible for educators to teach their children. Parents are expected to purchase necessary supplies, assist with homework, and respond to phone calls and written communications from teachers. Within this role parents are viewed as essential to the educational process.

As collaborators and problem solvers, parents help school personnel resolve problems that arise with a child’s behavior or learning. “Research has indicated that positive parent involvement plays a large role in determining whether children do well in school. Parents can encourage and reward satisfactory achievement and behavior and show interest in what happens during the school day” (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986, p. 5).

As an audience, parents participate in school-sponsored activities. Parents attend “Open House”
and "Back-to-School" nights, concerts, plays, and athletic events. During these events, parents generally observe and listen, and therefore take on a more passive role in the educational process.

As supporters, parents serve as "room parents," participate in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and sponsor additional fund-raising activities. In this role parents not only support their own child but become actively engaged in the school community.

As advisors and co-decision makers, parents serve on special committees or advisory councils. "Real power-sharing with parents occurs when parents become elected to school governing boards or are equal members on "school sit councils," consisting of representatives from the teachers, parents, and administrators, which make decisions about the expenditure of discretionary school funds" (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986, p. 10). Within this role, parents assume a position of power within the school system, further empowering them in the process of educating their children.

Research has shown that parents play various roles in the educational community but they also play a significant role in the literacy acquisition of their children both before and during their children's years of formal
schooling. What is family literacy? What is the role of parents in the area of family literacy?

Family Literacy Programs

There are two major types of family literacy programs, intergenerational and parent involvement.

Defining Family Literacy

"In its broadest sense, family literacy encompasses both the research and the implementation of programs involving parents, children, and extended family members and the ways in which they support and use literacy in their homes and in their communities" (Strickland, 1996, p. 89). As a classroom teacher, I define family literacy as reading that takes place in the home. Parents reading and sharing stories with their children. I believe family literacy increase student achievement in reading. I encourage parents to read to their children everyday as well as have their children read to them.

Intergenerational Programs

In intergenerational programs, parents and children are viewed as co-learners. Parents learn new strategies to help improve their children’s literacy, then practice the strategies with their children under the supervision of the literacy coach. Instruction takes place in either a
collaborative or parallel setting. In a collaborative setting, parents sit and work with their children while being coached. In a parallel setting, parents first learn literacy strategies modeled by a coach and then practice the strategies their children in a separate classroom (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).

Parent Involvement Programs

The purpose of parent involvement programs are to assist parents in improving their children’s literacy development (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995). Parent involvement programs are organized by educators, nonprofit organizations, and/or social service agencies. Parents receive literacy training and materials to work with their children at home. Parents apply the strategies at home with their children. The parent involvement programs take place at schools, designated centers, and in the parents home.

Parent Involvement Benefits

What are the benefits of parent involvement programs? Who benefits from these types of programs? Next, I examine various types of research that document the positive effects of parent involvement programs.
Studies indicate parent involvement in almost any form improves student achievement. Positive attitudes that promote achievement are facilitated when parents show interest in their children’s schooling (Henderson, 1981). This further supports the important role parent’s play in the education of their children.

The research on parent involvement varies in both form and context. Research has been conducted on preschool programs, elementary grades, high school students, and compensatory education. Most researchers examine the effect a parent involvement program has on a school or certain groups of students. Some researchers study the groups of high and low achieving students and examine the differences in how their schools and families have behaved (Henderson, 1981).

Because the focus of this study is on elementary school students, in this literature review, I probe the success of preschool and elementary programs.

Preschool Programs

Research has indicated significant, long-term effects on children when parent intervention programs for preschool students are in place (Gordon, 1978). These programs impact children’s cognitive development,
self-concept and social adjustment along with building their readiness for school.

Cognitive Growth

David J. Irvine, (1979), documented parent involvement in an experimental pre-kindergarten program in New York state had a highly significant effect on reasoning, verbal concepts, and school-related skills. Parent involvement included school visits, home visits by school personnel, meetings, employment in the program, and incidental contacts. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) was used to measure the children’s knowledge of verbal concepts and expressive vocabulary levels. Results showed a highly significant relationship between parent involvement and achievement.

Head Start Programs

Another successful preschool program is Head Start. Researcher Charles Mowry, (1972), observed that Head Start centers with high levels of parent involvement consistently had children who performed higher on standardized tests than centers with low parent involvement. Parent involvement is a mandatory component of all Head Start programs. The 1972 study focused on twenty Head Start centers across the United States. Five of the centers were considered to have a high level of
parent involvement opportunities. Five with a low level, and ten mixed in types of opportunities. Twenty parent-child pairs were studied at each center.

Effects of the programs were measured with self-report parent questionnaires, standardized test measuring cognitive and intellectual development, school readiness, self-concept and social adjustment. Centers with high levels of parent involvement had better results on the children's achievement. Results indicated that the extent of parent involvement had the greatest impact.

Delaware Longitudinal Study

In the mid-1990s, Delaware began to provide Early Childhood Assistance Programs (ECAP) for all children aged four who were living in poverty. The Early Childhood Programs are federally funded, use the Head Start Performance Standards, and are modeled after the federal Head Start program. Program participants were required to be in a family with an income below the federal poverty level. Parent involvement is a mandatory component of all Head Start programs.

The University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies is conducting a study that follows 42 former Head Start participants. Findings currently indicate 69 percent meeting the standards on state achievement tests.
Forty-eight point seven percent in a comparison group of poor children who did not attend Head Start are meeting those standards (Fuetsch, 2003).

**Bright Beginnings**

Bright Beginnings is a full-day, literacy-based initiative for four-year-olds identified as having educational needs. The program was created by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, located in southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. Strong parent/family participation and involvement is a required component of the program. Program eligibility is determined based on a formal screening process. A study compared 1,382 students from the 1997-98 Bright Beginnings class to a group of 184 eligible students who did not participate in Bright Beginnings and to all other 7,149 children in the first grade class.

Children who participated had higher scores than non-participants in both kindergarten and first grade. Sixty-six point one percent of kindergarten program participants performed at or above grade level on end-of-year literacy assessments compared to 53.1 percent of eligible non-participants. Sixty-five point nine percent of first grade program participants performed at
or above grade level on end-of-year literacy assessments compared to 55.4 eligible non-participants.

African-American students and students of low socioeconomic status outperformed all segments of their respective peer groups. Sixty-four point one percent of first grade African-American program participants performed at or above grade level on end-of-year literacy assessments compared to 53.2 percent of eligible non-participants, and 61.3 percent of other non-participants. Sixty-one point nine percent of first grade low socioeconomic program participants performed at or above grade level on end-of-year literacy assessments compared to 49.6 eligible non-participants and 53.2 other non-participants (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2004).

Research has indicated the positive effects of preschool parent involvement programs. Have parent involvement programs created similar effects in elementary schools?

Elementary Schools

Wheatley Elementary School, in Washington, D.C., serves a large black and disadvantaged neighborhood. Wheatley School implemented a comprehensive parent involvement program. The program consisted of informal
parent group discussions, parent-teacher mini-workshops, an after-school parent program, home visited, written notes, and telephone calls.

Eight hundred students in grade first through sixth were tested in reading and mathematics at the end of the school year and their scores were compared with the test scores from the previous year. All grades showed a significant increase in both reading and math scores. The most significant gains were noted in the elementary grades. First grade students showed a 20% increase in the number of first grade students' reading at grade level. A 5.5% increase in sixth grade student's reading at grade level was also noted (Gross, 1974).

Researcher Carol Woods, (1974), studied the effectiveness of a parent involvement program in the Mesa, Arizona public schools designed to raise the reading readiness levels of disadvantaged kindergarten children. The participants in the program included 269 children and 105 parents from Title I schools. A random sample from the five schools of 40 students whose parents did attend (experimental group) and 40 whose parents did not attend (control group) was selected. Each group was pre- and post-tested on the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis Test. This test measures early reading ability.
Program aides telephoned parents and invited them to attend the program. Twice a week parents participated in activities such as word games, teaching skills, and classroom interaction with the children.

The experimental group attained a 90% gain, while the control group attained an 85% gain. Woods noted that the presence of parents in the classroom increased the achievement of all students. All the children scored in the top quartile by the end of the year whether or not their parents participated.

Successful Parent Involvement Programs

Successful Parent Involvement models can be classified into two main categories, home-based and center based.

Successful Home-based Programs

In home-based programs, trained personnel model reading activities and provide free books to families. During home visits, parents learn about child development, the importance of reading to children, and various language and literacy building skills.

Reading Is Fundamental

Operating at more than 25,000 sites a year through a network of 450,000 volunteers; Reading Is Fundamental,
Inc. (RIF), is the oldest and largest children’s and family nonprofit literacy organization in the United States. RIF combines family and community involvement, reading motivation, and free books to foster children’s literacy (RIF, 2004). RIF offers a variety of family literacy programs: intergenerational, parent involvement, home-based, and center-based.

A 2002 annual report profiled a participating school, O’Hearn Elementary, in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Parents signed contracts promising their children would read or are read to at homes a certain amount each week. Once ranked in the bottom ten percent of schools in Boston, O’Hearn students’ scores have been at or near the top for Boston schools for several years. O’Hearn Elementary has participated in the RIF program for years.

**Family Reading Initiative**

Located in Chicago, Illinois, Family Reading Initiative, was conducted by RIF in partnership with the Chicago Commons Association. Staff home visitors and social workers made house calls to participants. Participants were provided with information on childcare, the importance of reading, and homemaking skills. Participants in the program had been invited to participate based on their involvement and commitment to
previous activities at the Mile Square Community Center. Records show that reading became an important part of the lives of the young parents. Records also indicated the children expressed interest and excitement toward home visits (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).

**Knox County Head Start**

In Mount Vernon, Ohio, Knox County Head Start is RIF Program that sends trained parent educators into the homes of 100 low-income families. The parent educators model reading out loud and questioning strategies. Books are left in the home to encourage parent participation. Results show that parents learn how to be actively involved in literacy activities (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).

**Project Home Base**

In Yakima, Washington, Project Home Base sends 180 parent educators into homes each week. Parents learn about childhood development, and health care. RIF provides each family with books three times a year. Results indicate that parents are involved later on in their children's school activities, promoting the children's academic success (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).
Successful Center-based Programs

**Parents as Partners in Reading**

Set in an elementary school library in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, the Parents as Partners in Reading Program teaches parents of socioeconomically deprived families how to read to their children. For two hours a week throughout the school year, parents view videotapes modeling appropriate reading behavior, and learn story comprehension strategies. Parents are allowed to borrow books for at-home reading. Teachers of participating children report improved student achievement and teacher morale (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).

**Dog Gone Good Reading Project**

Currently used in Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the Dog Gone Good Reading project was developed to assist teachers in facing the growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse beginning readers. Participating teachers send home books daily with audiotapes and tape recorders. Each day students listen to English language storybooks at home. In addition to providing access to literacy materials, teachers regularly communicate with parents. Teachers and parents report an increase in student interest in books, fluency, and independence (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).
Shared Beginnings

In 1991, Shared Beginnings was developed and field-tested by RIF at 11 sites across the United States. Shared Beginnings provides teen parents with hands-on activities to help develop their children’s emergent literacy skills. Parents also receive a book filled with activities and parent tips. Pilot coordinators report an improved quality of nurturing received by participant children (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995).

What are the dynamics of home-school relationships? Are parents and teachers involved in a collaborative effort to improve student achievement, or are the school and home viewed as separate?

Parent Involvement Models

Susan McAllister Swap, (1993) maintains four models describe relationships between parents and educators: Protective, School-To-Home Transmission, Curriculum Enrichment, and the Partnership Model. Each model will be detailed below in order to provide a framework for the model developed for this research project.

The Protective model is the dominant model for home-school relationships. The goal of the Protective model is to reduce conflict between parents and educators,
primarily through the separation of parents’ and educators’ functions. McAllister Swap asserts that the model is driven by three assumptions:

1. Parents delegate to the school the responsibility of educating their children.
2. Parents hold school personnel accountable for the results.
3. Educators accept this delegation of responsibility.

The Protective model disregards the potential of home-school collaboration for ameliorating student achievement. Schools limit parent interference to a minimum by hosting “Open Houses” and “Back-to-School” nights once a year. During these events, parents play a passive role. They listen, observe, applaud, and occasionally ask questions. Teachers and parents are discouraged from having conferences during these times (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

The School-To-Home Transmission model enlists parents in supporting the objectives of the school.

It assumes that:

1. Children’s achievement is fostered by continuity of expectations and values between and home and school.
2. School personnel should identify the values and practices outside school that contribute to school success.

3. Parents should endorse the importance of schooling, reinforce school expectations at home, provide conditions at home that nurture development and support school success, and ensure that the child meets minimum academic and social requirements. (McAllister Swap, 1993, p. 29)

In School-To-Home Transmission models the goals and programs are defined by school personnel. Educators inform parents about their children's progress, school policies and programs, provide opportunities for involvement, and parent training (McAllister Swap, 1993). Again, this model puts the parents in a passive role thus decreasing their level of involvement in the day-to-day functioning of the school.

McAllister Swap (1993) explains that the goal of the Curriculum Enrichment model is to expand and extend the school's curriculum by incorporating into it the contributions of families. It assumes that:

1. Continuity of learning between home and school is of critical importance in encouraging children's learning.

2. The values and cultural histories of many children are omitted from the standard school curriculum, leading to a disruption of this
continuity between home and school, and often to less motivation, status, and achievement for these children in school.

3. These omissions distort the curriculum, leading to a less accurate and less comprehensive understanding of events and achievements and to a perpetuation of damaging beliefs and attitudes about immigrant and oppressed minorities.

Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of parents, the Curriculum Enrichment model incorporates parent involvement into their children's learning. The strength of families from diverse backgrounds are recognized and built upon. This model values the cultures of the school's community members (McAllister Swap, 1993).

McAllister Swap, (1993), defines the partnership model as an alliance between parents and educators to encourage the creation of better schools and the success of all children in school. McAllister Swap, further argues that the Partnership model is the model of choice when:

a) most children are not doing well in school; b) the population of children and families is heterogeneous; c) and there is a lack of agreement between families and educators about the definition of success in school and
the characteristics of children and schools that contribute to success.

The Partnership model assumes that:

1. Accomplishing the joint mission requires a re-visioning of the school environment and a need to discover new policies and practices, structures, roles, relationships, and attitudes in order to realize the vision.

2. Accomplishing the joint mission demands collaboration among parents, community representatives, and educators. Because the task is very challenging and requires many resources, none of these groups acting alone can accomplish it.

The Comer Process exemplifies the Partnership model. The Parent Team is one of three structures in the Comer Process. The Parent Team develops activities that allow parents to support the school's social and academic programs. An invitation is extended to all parents to participate. Initially the program encountered disbelief and hostility. Eventually, the parents who were opposed to the program developed a great investment in the program outcome. Through the Parent Team parents support the school's social and academic programs. This program was
developed by Dr. James P. Comer, a professor of child psychiatry at Yale University (Yale Child Study Center, 2002).

In addition to the Parent Team, the Comer Process includes a School Planning and Management Team. The School Planning and Management Team develops a comprehensive school plan, sets academic, social and community relations goals and coordinates all school activities, including staff development programs. Members of the team include administrators, teachers, support staff and parents.

The final team in the Comer Process is the Student and Staff Support Team. The Student and Staff Support Team promotes desirable social conditions and relationships. It connects all of the school’s student services, facilitates the sharing of information and advice, addresses individual student needs, accesses resources outside the school and develops prevention programs. Parents are members of the Parent Team and School Planning and Management Team.

The guiding principles of all three teams include: collaboration between the principals and teams, team focus remains on problem-solving, and building a consensus through dialogue.
The Accelerated Schools Model was established at Stanford University by Dr. Henry Levin, in 1986. Accelerated schools use a philosophy based on three democratic principles and a commitment to providing powerful learning to all students. The principles are:

Unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths:

1. Unity of purpose relates to a consensus by school staff, parents, and students on common goals, a search for strategies for reaching them, and accountability for results.

2. Empowerment with Responsibility refers to establishment of capacity of the participants to make key decisions in the school and home to implement change and to be accountable for results.

3. Building on Strengths refers to the identification and utilization of the strengths of all of the participants in addressing school needs and creating powerful learning strategies (Yale Child Study Center, 2002).

McAllister Swap, (1993), concedes that the Partnership model is hard to implement. Both the Comer and Accelerated Schools programs demand a commitment to
continual reflection, inquiry, and evaluation in the context of jobs with multiple moment-to-moment responsibilities.

It is the purpose of this research project to develop a simplified model that can be implemented in any school setting. In order to develop a successful parent involvement program in the school setting, it is important to identify and address any existing barriers.

Overcoming Barriers to Parent Involvement

Several barriers must be overcome in order to establish any successful parent involvement program. School culture, school districts, principals, and teachers play a crucial role in facilitating a successful family literacy program.

The culture of a school does not promote parents as decision makers. Parents are expected to attend parent conferences and school functions such as Open House and Back-To-School Night. Back-To-School Night and Open House maintain tradition. Teachers and parents are discouraged from conferencing. McAllister Swap (1993) argues that parents introduce conflict into schools, creating distress and defensiveness. Over time schools have developed a
range of ritualized strategies to lessen parent contact and conflict.

Patricia A. Edwards (2004) asserts schools often make assumptions about parents, which cause them to be distrustful of their involvement. When left unexplored, this lack of understanding of and acceptance for the families and communities of the students, act to further substantiate parents' own mistrust of the educational system.

Although some teachers may not support high levels of parent involvement, school districts do not necessarily hold the same view: Superintendents and school board members, who set the district wide policy, rate parent decision making at the school more highly than teachers and principals (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986). School districts have the authority to set the standard for family literacy programs: "District policies, especially, can create the basic framework that facilitates collaboration and provides the opportunities for parent-school partnerships to flourish" (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986, p. 96). This has been done quite successfully in the San Diego City School District.

In San Diego, California, the San Diego City Schools District created several parent involvement programs; The
Parent Involvement Task Force, Superintendent’s Parent Congress, and the Parent Communications and Involvement Workgroup.

The Parent Involvement Task Force consists of parents, educators and community members. The task force was established to:

- Promote district practices, programs;
- Promote activities which allow parents to participate in their children’s education;
- Oversee the implementation of the district’s Parent Involvement Policy;
- Serve as a forum for discussion of district, state, and national parent involvement issues;
- Provide guidance and information to the district regarding parent involvement issues;
- Serve as the advisory group to the district’s Parent Involvement Department. (San Diego City Schools, 2002, Parent Involvement Task Force, ¶)

The Superintendent’s Parent Congress is another example of district-directed parent involvement. The Parent Congress involves parents in the district’s effort to better student achievement. Meetings are held four times a year. At each meeting parents collaborate with
district leaders on reform efforts (San Diego City Schools, 2002).

The Parent Communications and Involvement Workgroup is the final program worth noting. Established in January 2003, it encourages parental participation in the education process. It consists of representatives from each parent committee and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), teachers, principals, school-based Parent Academic Liaisons (PAL), and instructional leaders. The Parent Communications and Involvement Workgroup gathers ideas, strategies, and techniques to create a comprehensive set of district-wide standards for parent communications and involvement (San Diego City Schools, 2002).

The San Diego City Schools District has set the standard for promoting parent involvement. With the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the district published a portfolio that showcases a collection of parent involvement activities at the schools. Each page lists a contact person for easy accessibility and information sharing (San Diego City Schools, 2002).

It is available at their website: www.sandi.net. Principals also play an important role in barring family literacy. Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, (1986), recommend principals share their daily and long-term
decisions with their faculty, parents, the community, and students, in order to create a more effective school. Principals have the opportunity to challenge their teachers to increase parent-teacher interaction.

Developing a home-school connection is a challenge. In order to develop a successful program, both parents and teachers must work together. Teacher training programs do not prepare teachers for establishing home-school connections. Teachers are expected to address parents at conferences and Back-To-School Night and Open House. "Information about creating effective parent involvement program is rarely incorporated in preservice professional programs, and in-service programs tend to be single-session experiences with no opportunity for supervised trial in schools" (McAllister Swap, 1993, p. 26).

Teachers are the link between the school and the home. Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1986) recommend teachers begin looking at how people communicate, and how, through communicating effectively, parents and teachers overcome their fears and begin to trust each other.
Summary

In the past, parents have blamed teachers and schools for their children’s lack of progress. Teachers in return have blamed parents for the student’s lack of progress. Research clearly indicates that parents, teachers, and administrators must work together to improve the literacy of all children. Research proves that schools are in trouble and in need of improvement. Teachers can no longer continue to be the scapegoats. Parents, teacher-training institutions, administrators and boards of education must also be held accountable (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

Putting Theory into Action

After reviewing the research on family literacy and parent involvement programs, I decided to build a home-school connection at Banks Elementary School, in Woodland, California. In the next chapter, I discuss in detail a series of parent literacy workshops I conducted at Banks School that were based on the successful components of several of the models and programs reviewed in this chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
BUILDING HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Introduction

After reviewing the literature on family literacy there is little doubt that active parent involvement inside and outside of school improves student achievement. In this chapter I describe in detail four parent literacy workshops I conducted at Banks Elementary School in Woodland, California. I also paint a picture of the students, parents and educators at Banks Elementary.

School Demographics

Student Population

Banks Elementary School is a K-5 school located in Woodland, California. The student population (see Table 1) consists of 30 percent African-American, 64 percent Hispanic, five percent Caucasian, and one percent Pacific Islander. Twenty-six percent students are English Language

Table 1. Student Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
Learners. Eighty-three percent of students participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program (see Table 2).

Parent Education Level

The parent education level varies. Thirty-seven percent of parents did not graduate high school. Twenty-two percent of parents are high school graduates. Twenty-five percent of parents reported some college education. Nine percent graduated from college. Seven percent of parents completed graduate school.

Table 3. Parent Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not graduate high school</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School graduate</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported some college</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transportation

More than half of the student population is bused across town to Banks School. The students are bused from
two low-income apartment complexes, Woodland Views, and Park Terrace Apartments.

Banks Elementary posed several challenges. What steps did I take to meet the needs of its population?

Methodology

The project started with a teacher-needs assessment. A needs assessment allows the collection and examination of information in order to meet actual needs of the school's population. It takes into account school demographics, resources, an analysis of school literacy programs, and parent and community factors (Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

Teacher Needs Assessment

The needs assessment consisted of four questions: What do you think most of your parents are already doing to support their children's learning? What would you like the parents to do at home? How can you support your parent's efforts? Is the school doing enough to help parents? The teacher-needs assessments generated the areas I wanted to address with the parents of Banks Elementary (see Appendix A). Banks School has a staff of thirty-seven teachers. Twenty-seven out of forty teachers completed needs' assessments. Nine of the assessments were completed
through the interviews and eighteen were completed independently (see Table 4). I received the largest response from second grade teachers. I received the lowest response from fourth grade teachers.

Table 4. Grades Taught by Participating Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>SDC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Teacher’s Assessment of Parent Involvement

In response to the first question (see Figure 1), "What do you think most of your parents are already doing to support their children’s learning, teachers reported as follows: Twenty-three out of twenty-seven teachers reported that parents were supporting their children’s learning at home. Seventeen teachers reported parents helping their children with homework assignments. Fourteen teachers reported parents read to their children, as well as practice sight words and alphabetic skills. Two teachers reported parents helped with math and regularly conferencing with the teacher."
Figure 1. What Parents Presently Do to Assist Their Children

**Teacher Expectations of Parents**

In response to the second question: What would you like the parents to do at home (see Figure 2)? Twenty-three teachers stated they wanted parents to assist their children in reading (i.e., practice sight words, read aloud, listen to their children read). Eleven teachers requested parents help with homework (i.e., explain concepts, check for understanding, check completed work, provide a quiet place for completing homework). Five teachers requested parents help with writing (i.e., check spelling, complete sentences). Two teachers requested that parents hold children accountable for their homework (i.e., check the student’s backpack daily for work, have
consequences for not completing homework). One teacher requested parents take the children to the library on a regular basis. All of the teachers wanted the parents to do something at home. What are the teachers doing to help the parents succeed?

Figure 2. What Teachers Want Parents to Assist With

Teachers Supporting Parents

In response to the third question: How can you support your parent’s efforts (see Figure 3)? Eleven teachers reported supporting parents by sending home newsletters filled with ideas and activities for building literacy at home. Ten teachers reported they supported parents by communicating their expectations (i.e., how the parent needed to help their child, what objectives the
students needed to master). Nine teachers reported sending home materials to develop literacy (i.e., flash cards containing sight words, guided reading books, practice worksheets). Four teachers stated they support parents by encouraging them to help their children (i.e., encourage participation in parent workshops and programs). Only one teacher reported providing literacy training for parents in her classroom.

![Figure 3. What Teachers Presently Do to Assist Parents](image)

**School Efforts**

In response to the fourth and final question: Is the school doing enough to help parents (see Figure 4)? Sixteen teachers stated the school was doing enough to assist parents. Seven teachers also added that parents do
not take advantage of what the school offers (i.e., parents do not attend conferences, Back-To-School Night, Open House, and parent workshops). Eleven teachers stated that the school is not doing enough to help parents (i.e., parents need training on how to help their kids, more workshops should be offered).

![Diagram of Parental Engagement](image)

**Figure 4. Teachers Rate the School's Support of Parents**

I agreed with many of the teachers who felt that the school needed to offer training to the parents. I believed student achievement would increase if parents were given the tools to help their children.

After reviewing the teacher-needs assessments, I decided to create a parent-needs assessment that focused
on teaching the parents reading, writing, and homework strategies. I wanted my workshops to build a bridge between the school and the parents. I felt it was important to not only meet the needs of the teachers, but to meet the needs of the parents as well. After understanding the needs of the teachers, I needed to uncover the needs of the parents.

**Parent-Needs Assessment**

I developed a parent-needs assessment to guide the parent workshops (see Appendix B). Edwards and Danridge (2001) suggest that teachers think about the specific goals and expectations for parents. It would be helpful for teachers to connect these goals and expectations to curricular and instructional practices. Parents were instructed to select and rank five topics of interest out of a list of twelve. The needs assessments were sent home in Spanish and English with the 774 students that attend the school. Out of the 774 needs assessments sent home, I received 138 completed needs' assessments (see Figure 5).
Reading Strategies

Parents overwhelmingly chose reading strategies as the topic of interest. Parents were interested in helping their children become better readers.

Homework

Parents clearly indicated they wanted assistance in helping their children with homework. Many parents do not always understand homework assignments.

Accelerated Reader

The Lincoln School District implemented a new computer software program during the school year called Accelerated Reader. Accelerated Reader (AR) is a
kindergarten through twelve grades reading management software program. It allows teachers to personalize and monitor student reading instruction. Students take a reading assessment that determines their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Next, the teacher gives each student an index card with their ZPD range, allowing them to select AR books from the library. After reading their books, students take a quiz on the computer. The students receive a detailed report on their performance. Teachers use the reports to guide reading instruction. Parents listed this as their third area of need.

Parent Conferences

Many of the parents wanted to know how to get more out of parent conferences. This was listed among their areas of need.

Discipline with Dignity

Discipline with Dignity was listed among the areas of need. It is a classroom management program that teaches responsible thinking, cooperation, mutual respect, and shared decision making.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind) was also listed among the parent areas of need. No Child Left Behind is a landmark in education reform
designed to improve student achievement and change the
culture of America’s schools (United States Department of
Education, 2001, No Child Left Behind, ¶ 1).

**Houghton Mifflin Reading Program**

Parents listed the Houghton Mifflin Reading Program
as an area of need. The Lincoln School District uses the
Houghton Mifflin standards-based reading program. The
Houghton Mifflin Reading Program stresses six strategies:
predict/infer, monitor/clarify, questioning, summarizing,
evaluating, and phonics/decoding strategies.

**Attention Deficit Disorder**

Many parents were concerned with helping children
with attention deficit disorder succeed in school.

**California State Tests**

Each spring the students are required to take two
standardized assessments, the Standardized Testing and
Reporting (STAR), and California Achievement Test, Sixth
Edition (CAT/6). Parents indicated that state tests were
an area of interest.

**California State Standards**

California State Standards were listed among the
areas of parent interest. The California State Board of
Education adopted content standards to raise student
achievement. The state standards set the concepts and skills student must master at each grade.

Guided School Visitations

During guided school visitations, parents are taught what to look for when visiting the classroom. 4.2 percent of parents indicated guided school visitations as an area of interest.

Kindergarten Readiness

Two point one percent of parents listed kindergarten readiness as an area of interest. Parents want to know how to prepare their children for kindergarten.

Other Topics of Interest

Seven parents wrote an area of interest that was not listed on the needs assessment. Areas of interest included: computers, math and English classes, college preparation, Gifted and Talented Enrichment (GATE), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and coping with the death of a parent.

Planning the Workshops

After compiling the results of the parent-needs assessments, I decided to focus on nine of the areas listed. I determined which topics I would address and the time that would be allotted for each during the workshop.
Parents were invited to attend a series of four 90-minute workshops (see Appendix C). The workshops took place one evening per week over a one month time period. Snacks were provided along with free childcare. Of the 138 parents who completed the needs assessments, I received 40 RSVPs for the workshops.

**Workshop One**

In an attempt to encourage parents to return, I raffled Target gift cards, and gave the parents free children’s books. Parents received a three-ring binder with a welcome bookmark and pencil. In order to make the parents feel at ease, I introduced an icebreaker activity; a person bingo activity. Each parent had to obtain 25 signatures in order too win.

The workshop focused on two major parent concerns: homework and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Using strategies taken from Lee Cantor’s *Parents on Your Side* (1991), the parents interactively addressed their major homework concerns (see Appendix D). I did not want to stand and lecture at the parents for 90-minutes. “...Treat parents as parents, not as instructors; parents are enlisted to encourage reading and guide children in activities, not to teach them to read” (Graves & Wendorf, 1995, p. 130). Parents addressed the following homework
issues: Children who refuse to complete homework, refusing to complete independently, sloppiness, refusing to bring homework home. I pasted the heading of each concern on construction paper. I asked the parents to work with the parents at their table. A set of strategies were distributed along with construction paper to each group. I instructed the parents to match the strategies to the correct headings. I chose this activity to involve the parents in finding solutions. The parents worked together to read and match the strategies to the appropriate headings.

I reviewed the homework strategies after the parents complete their activity. I had planned to show a thirty-minute video, Clues to Good Reading (1992), to demonstrate reading strategies. Clues to Good Reading is a thirty minute video that models four main reading clues. Originally, I planned to provide the parents with a handout listing the major points of the video (see Appendix E) in order to allow them to take notes during the viewing.

Sound Out Clues (Phonics). In the video, a child reads aloud while a parent listens. The video narrator encouraged parents to have their children sound out
unfamiliar words. The narrator also encouraged parents to say the word if the children continue to struggle.

**Story Sense Clues.** The second clue the video focused on story sense. The narrator explained that when students use story sense clues, they find the meaning of an unknown word by reading more of the story. The narrator encouraged the parents to let their children skip an unfamiliar word and continue reading to gather clues from the story to decode the unknown word.

**Word Type Clues (Noun, Verb, Adjective).** The third portion of the video focused on word type clues. Word type clues help children figure out the unknown word. The narrator told the parents to use their built in knowledge of grammar. The narrator suggested using predictable books to facilitate the word type clue strategy.

**Picture Clues.** In the last portion of the video, the narrator encouraged parents to tell their children to look at the pictures for clues to help decode unknown words. The video also showed parents reading to their children, listening to their children read, and posting index cards on items throughout the home.

My Elementary Administrator, Mary Washington provided the parents with an overview of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Finally, I raffled two Target gift cards.
Workshop Two

I focused on writing and reading strategies during the second workshop. Delgado-Gaitan states that schools have a responsibility to teach parents what they need to know to support their children in school (as cited in Paratore, 1995). I decided the best approach was to keep the strategies simple. It is important that parents become familiar with the strategies used in the classroom. Parents received a bookmark that explained the reading strategies used in the classroom (see Appendix F). I explained and modeled the Houghton Mifflin Reading strategies used in the reading program. I concentrated on the predicting, inferring, and questioning strategies.

Predicting. I modeled the predicting strategy by reading the title of a book and studying the cover of the book. I told the parents that they should encourage their children to use the pictures and title to guess about what the story will be about.

Inferring. I explained that inferring is similar to predicting. Using clues from the text, inferring involves making an educated guess.

Questioning. The questioning strategy was my final focus of the evening. Parents received a handout (see Appendix G) that listed the five W’s: Who? What? When?
Where? Why? And How? I told the parents to teach their children to ask questions before, during, and after they read.

I distributed Houghton Mifflin Anthologies grades one through five to parents. I instructed the parents to look at the pages I marked in advance of the workshop. This allowed the parents to examine the strategy focus at the beginning of each chapter.

Writing Strategies. Simple writing strategies were the focus of the second half of the second workshop. From my daily experiences students, I am well aware that many students are reluctant to write. I introduced two simple and fun writing strategies. First, I introduced Interactive Dialogue Journal, developed by Dr. Barbara M. Flores (1990). Using a transparency displaying writing of a kindergarten Interactive Dialogue Journal, I explained the steps in the activity. Each parent received a writing journal to use at home. Using the following the guidelines established by Dr. Flores (1990), I encouraged parents to: Avoid correcting their children’s writing, write with their children daily, allow their children to choose their own topics, and to let the children invent their spelling. The parent encourages their child to write something he wants to share. Then, the parent will ask their child to
read it to them. After the child reads their writing, the parent responds by writing a response. The parent reads the response while writing it.

The second writing strategy targeted intermediate students. Written conversation (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1988), gears writing toward student’s level of reading and writing proficiency, takes into account each student’s interests into consideration, has a positive effect on reading and is nonthreatening. During written conversation, a pen and paper are used in place of talking. I explained the process step by step using an overhead transparency of a mock conversation between a parent and a child (see Appendix H).

Finally, I raffled two Target gift cards during the workshop. I encouraged parents to pick two free books for their children.

Workshop Three

The third workshop continued to focus on the Houghton Mifflin Reading strategies and reading aloud. Summarizing was the focus of the third workshop. Summarizing involves identifying the main ideas and important details of a story, and restating them in your own words. I informed parents that all students are expected to summarize a story after reading it. Parents received graphic
organizers to assist their children in summarizing (see Appendix I). I encouraged the parents to allow their children to summarize stories using pictures if necessary. While discussing the importance of students being able to summarize their readings, I urged parents to have their children go back and reread the story if necessary.

After discussing the importance of summarizing, I stressed the importance of reading to their children. Parents received a handout (see Appendix J) on the do’s and don’ts of read alouds (Trelease, 2001). Jim Trelease, author of The Read-Aloud Handbook, 2001, recommends parents limit television viewing time, establish a daily reading time, and read books that they enjoy. I asked the parents to read to their children above all else. I explained that when parents read to their children, they help them become better readers. I informed the parents that reading aloud helps model appropriate tone and fluency, helps build vocabulary, and show their children that reading is important.

Next, I raffled two Stater Bros. gift cards. I also encouraged parents to pick two free books for their children.

At the end of the evening, parents viewed the video How to Spend Quality Reading Time with your Child in Just
15-Minutes a Day (1997). The video featured a reading specialist working with a three-year-old girl. The reading specialist modeled reading aloud and highlighting concepts about print (CAP). Concept about print refers to how print is organized and used in reading and writing. To end the third session, I asked parents to complete a feedback form that informed the final workshop.

**Workshop Four**

The fourth and final workshop focused on the Accelerated Reader Program and California State Standards. At the beginning of the workshop, I distributed state standards to each parent, according to their child's grade level. Lisa Swanson, a district Accelerated Reader administrator, presented the program at the workshop. Mrs. Swanson provided parents with an overview of the Accelerated Reader program.

**Student Study Teams and Parent Conferences.** I planned to cover parent conferences and student study teams (SST) during the final workshop. I intended to explain the SST process, and answer any individual question parents may have. Each parent was suppose receive a handout detailing the SST process (see Appendix K). I provided an overview of parent conferences. Next, I planned to ask parents to
share their concerns and questions. I intended to address each question accordingly.

At the end of the workshop, I passed out workshop evaluations and surveys. Finally I raffled two Stater Brothers Gift cards and a child’s dictionary.

Workshop Logistics

Finally, I addressed three areas to insure successful workshops: Refreshments, childcare, and translation.

Refreshments

The 90-minute workshops took place during dinnertime. I believed providing refreshments helped the parents feel comfortable. My Elementary Administrator, Mrs. Washington pre-ordered refreshments for the workshops from the district nutrition services. The district nutrition services provided refreshments for each workshop. Parents eat, finger sandwiches, chips and salsa, vegetables and cookies.

Childcare

It was imperative that parents had access too childcare during the workshops. I believed many parents will not attend if they could not bring their children. It was also crucial that parents were able to hear and participate in the workshops. Childcare was provided
during each workshop. All children were supervised by two paid school aides. The children eat refreshments and watched a movie in a separate classroom.

Translation

The final area I addressed was translation. Many of the parents did not speak English. Therefore, a paid teacher’s aide attended each workshop to provide translation for the Spanish-speaking parents.

Summary

Using teacher and parent needs assessments, I identified concerns I addressed. After careful planning, I presented the information, suggestions and strategies on parent conferences, homework, reading, and writing to the parents. I modeled strategies and allowed time for parents to practice the strategies. Parents also viewed literacy videos of parent-child interaction. I also took additional steps to provide, childcare, refreshments, translation for the parents.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the results of the four workshops I planned in chapter three. I give a brief synopsis of each workshop that took place, and focus in detail on the parent evaluations of each workshop. Parents were invited to attend a series of four 90-minute workshops. Of the 138 parents who completed the needs assessments, I received 40 RSVPs for the workshops.

Workshop One

A total of 23 parents attended the first workshop. When parents first arrived, they signed in and filled out a raffle ticket. Parents received a three-ring binder with a welcome bookmark and pencil. Parents completed a home literacy survey while enjoying refreshments.

Next, I introduced the icebreaker activity. Each parent had to obtain 25 signatures in order to win. The parents interacted well and really enjoyed the icebreaker. I had originally planned to spend no more than ten minutes on the icebreaker. However, the parents were having so much fun, I decided to allow the activity to run late. Next, my elementary administrator (EA), Mrs. Washington,
addressed the parents before formally introducing me. I thanked the parents for coming and provided a brief overview of the night’s agenda. Mrs. Washington gave an overview of the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 (NCLB).

The next focus was on homework. Using strategies taken from Lee Cantor’s *Parents on Your Side* (1991), the parents interactively addressed their major homework concerns (see Appendix D). Parents addressed the following homework issues: Children who refuse to complete homework, refusing to complete homework independently, sloppiness, and refusing to bring homework home. I asked the parents to work with the parents at their table. I distributed a set of strategies for each area of concern and construction paper to each group. I instructed the parents to match the strategies to the correct headings. The parents worked together to read and match the strategies to the appropriate headings. Some of the parents finished their activity early, so I encouraged them to pick two free books for their children. The parents were pleased to receive free books for their children.

I reviewed the homework strategies (see Appendix D) after the parents completed their activity. I asked the parents if they wanted to share what they had learned. Most of the parents did not feel comfortable sharing their
experiences out loud. Two parents asked to keep the homework activity.

I had originally planned to show a thirty-minute video, *Clues to Good Reading* (1992), to demonstrate reading strategies. However, I spent too much time on the icebreaker and I did not want to keep the parents too late. I promised the parents I would show the video the following week. At the end of the evening, I raffled the Target gift cards and thanked the parents for coming. I forgot to have the parents complete a workshop evaluation.

**Home Literacy Surveys**

All twenty-one parents completed a pre-survey (see Appendix L) at the beginning of the workshops. The survey focused on children’s attitudes toward reading and school, the frequency of parent-teacher communication, and family literacy activities.

Twenty parents reported their children enjoyed school (see Table 5). One parent reported their child did not enjoy school. Six parents reported their children did not consistently enjoy school.
Table 5. Parental Perception of Student Enjoyment of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My child</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys school</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not like school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes my child likes school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixteen parents reported their children enjoy reading (see Table 6). Two parents reported their children do not like to read. Five parents reported their children read occasionally.

Table 6. Enjoyment of Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My child</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys reading</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not like to read</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to question three, five parents indicated they communicate with their child's teacher daily (see Table 7). Three parents reported communicating with the teacher three times a week. Five parents reported communicating with the teacher a few times a year, while two indicated no communication at all.
Table 7. Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I communicate with my child’s teacher:</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to question four (see Tables 8 & 9), ten parents communicate by writing notes, six make telephone calls, eleven parents conference with the teacher, and one parent communicates through before and after school conversations.

Table 8. Method of Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I communicate by:</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing notes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations before or after school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. Parent-Teacher Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic of Discussion</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work habits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any pressing concerns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight parents reported taking their child to the library once a week (see Table 10). Nine parents reported taking their children to the library once a month, and one parent reported twice a year. Three parents reported they do not take their children to the library.

Table 10. Family Trips to the Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to question four (see Table 11), all parents reported reading to their children. Ten parents read daily to their children. Five parents read two to three times a week, while four parents read to their children once a month.
Table 11. Frequency of Parental Readings to Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All parents reported inquiring about homework (see Table 12). Eighteen parents reported asking their children daily. Two parents reported asking homework two to three times a week.

Table 12. Parent Supervision of Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of times parents check homework</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to question nine, all parents reported providing some type of homework assistance (see Table 13). Seventeen parents reported helping with homework each day. Three parents help with homework two to three times a
week. One parent helps once a week and one parent helps once a month.

Table 13. Parent Involvement with Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When helping with homework, ten parents reported consistently understanding homework assignments (see Table 14). Seven parents indicated they usually understood assignments. Three parents indicated occasionally understanding while one parent indicated they never understood homework assignments.

Table 14. Parents Understanding of Homework Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of understanding</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always understand what to do</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually understand what to do</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes understand what to do</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never understand what to do</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The surveys were very rich. They provided a window into the variety of literacy activities taking place at home along with an idea of how school is supported within the home. I felt at ease going into the second workshop.

Workshop Two

A total of 19 parents attended the second workshop. The focus of the second workshop was writing and reading strategies. Parents received a bookmark that explained the reading strategies used in the classroom. I explained and modeled the predicting, inferring, and questioning strategies from the Houghton Mifflin reading series.

First, I modeled the predicting strategy by reading the title of a big book and studying the cover of the book using the think-aloud strategy. I told parents to encourage their children to use the pictures and title to guess what the story would be about. I distributed Houghton Mifflin Anthologies for grades one through five to the parents. I instructed the parents to look at the pages I had marked in advance of the workshop. The parents examined the predicting strategy at the beginning of each chapter. The parents talked amongst themselves after reviewing the texts. None of the parents wanted to share their thoughts with the group.
Next, I explained that inferring was very similar to predicting. Using clues from the text, the inferring strategy involves making an educated guess about a book. None of the parents had any questions regarding the inferring strategy.

The questioning strategy was my final strategy focus of the evening. Parents received a handout that listed the five W’s: Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How? I told the parents to teach their children to ask questions before, during, and after they read as a means of checking their comprehension.


Each parent received a writing journal to use at home. Using the guidelines established by Dr. Flores (1990), I encouraged parents to: Avoid correcting their children’s writing, write with their children daily, allow their children to choose their own topics, and to let the children invent their spelling. I used an overhead
transparency to explain the strategy. One parent commented that she would try the strategy with her child.

Next, I modeled written conversation using an overhead transparency. The parents were excited about using the strategy with their children. Many of the parents commented that they would try writing to their children.

I raffled two Target gift cards during a break. Due to a delivery problem, I was unable to give out free books. Finally, the parents watched Clues to Good Reading, (1992), thirty-minute video that modeled the following four main reading clues: Sound out, story sense, word type, and picture clues. I distributed a handout listing the major points of the video, so the parents could take notes during the viewing.

At the end of the evening, I distributed workshop evaluation forms to the parents. I encouraged the parents to be honest. I explained that honest answers would help me improve the following workshop.

---

Parent Evaluations of Workshop Two

A total of fourteen parents completed evaluations at the end of the second workshop. A copy of the evaluation can be found in (see Appendix M). Ten parents reported learning a reading strategy (see Table 15).
Table 15. Strategies Learned by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Number Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialoging skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive journal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing to your child helps them learn to write</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A different way of teaching my child to write</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing my child to skip words while reading</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven parents reported learning a writing strategy. In response to the second question on the survey (see Table 16), eight parents reported they would try a reading strategy from the video shown during the workshop. Six parents reported they would try the written conversation strategy. Two parents reported some confusion about the

Table 16. Strategies Parents Will Utilize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have my child write about his difficulties in school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant use of all reading cues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skip ahead reading strategy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label items in my home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clues to good reading strategies</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
predict/infer reading strategy (see Table 17). I readdressed the predict/infer strategy at the following workshop.

Table 17. Strategies and Information Parents Did Not Understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies/information</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predict/infer strategy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the parents shared positive comments about the workshop:

- "I learned that writing to your child helps them learn to write."
- "I learned a different way of teaching my child to write. I will try the interactive dialogue."
- "I learned how to allow my child to read a story to me."
- "I understood everything and I am grateful that I am part of this workshop. Great ideas and helpful strategies for reading."

Workshop Three

A total of 17 parents attended the third workshop. The third workshop focused on the Houghton Mifflin Reading strategies and reading aloud. First, I reviewed the
predict/infer strategy per parent evaluations from workshop two. Then, I explained summarizing to the parents. Parents received graphic organizers to assist their children in summarizing. I encouraged the parents to allow their children to summarize stories using pictures if necessary. The parents did not practice summarizing during the workshop.

Next, parents received a handout on the do’s and don’ts of read alouds (Trelease, 2001). I encouraged the parents to limit television-viewing time, establish a daily reading time, and read books that they enjoy. I asked the parents to read to their children each day. I explained to the parents that when they read to their children, they help them become better readers.

Next, I raffled two Stater Bros. gift cards. I also encouraged parents to pick two free books for their children.

At the end of the evening, the parents viewed the video *How to Spend Quality Reading Time with your Child in Just 15 Minutes a Day* (1997). Several parents commented that they enjoyed the video. After viewing the video, parents filled out workshop evaluation forms (see Appendix N). Before dismissing the parents, I thanked them for coming. Several of the parents stayed and shared ideas.
Parent Evaluations of Workshop Three

A total of thirteen parents completed evaluations at the end of the third workshop. Six parents reported learning how to encourage better reading habits in their children (see Table 18). Five parents reported learning individual reading and writing strategies. In response to the second question on the survey (see Table 19), one parent reported a desire to try all of the strategies.

Table 18. Strategies Learned by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies Learned</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to encourage better reading habits</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw pictures to tell a story</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List difficult words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize a book</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find key words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19. Strategies Parents Will Utilize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the strategies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The picture story</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The word card strategy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read more to my child</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find key words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Strategies and Information Parents Did Not Understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies/information</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Accelerated Reader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the parents shared positive comments about the workshop:

- "I learned different ways to encourage better reading habits."
- "I learned how to allow my child to draw pictures to tell the story."
- "I will try to use the writing the word you don’t know and look it up in the dictionary."
- "Read more with all my kids."
• "To set aside a special time for reading only that does not compete with T.V. time."

Workshop Four

A total of 15 parents attended the fourth workshop. The fourth and final workshop focused on the Accelerated Reader Program and California State Language Arts Standards were the focus of the fourth workshop. At the beginning of the workshop, I distributed state standards to each parent, according to their child’s grade level. I informed the parents that the curriculum focused on standards-based instruction. Teachers teach to the standards set for their grade level.

Next, Mrs. Swanson, the district Accelerated Reader (AR) administrator, presented the Accelerated Reader Program to the parents.

Mrs. Swanson had originally planned to allow parents to take an AR quiz on the computers, but the network system was not working. Mrs. Swanson had prepared a quiz on transparency prior to the start of the workshop. She read a short book to the parents and displayed the quiz. She read the questions and choices out loud and parents called out the answers to each question. The parents did
not ask any questions about Accelerated Reader after the activity.

During the third workshop, I promised the parents I would cover parent conferences and student study teams during the final workshop. However, Mrs. Swanson used most of the time presenting the Accelerated Reader program, so I was unable to keep my promise. I used the remaining 20 minutes to pass out workshop evaluations and surveys and raffle two Stater Bros. gift cards and a children's dictionary. The parents completed the evaluations and thanked me for my help.

I enjoyed reading the positive comments the parents wrote about the workshop:

- "We now have homework and reading time only set aside each day."

- "I have only attended two workshops. The information is very helpful. I would like to attend more. It is also encouraging to know there are more ways to help my child become a better reader."

- "I enjoyed how the teacher presented the material to the parents. It was well done, and greatly appreciated."
• "I think this was a great idea having the workshop. It taught me a great deal. Thanks!"
• "The enthusiasm of the class motivated me to be consistent with my children."
• "This was great, instructional and informative."

Cumulative Evaluations

Ten parents completed final evaluations (see Appendix 0). The final evaluation consisted of six questions and a section for comments. Nine out of ten parents reported improvement in their children. All parents reported making changes in their daily routines regarding homework. All parents reported interest in attending additional workshops (see Table 21).

Table 21. Parents Interested in Attending Additional Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents Interested</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the cumulative evaluations, parents reported making changes at home (see Table 22). Five parents indicated spending more time reading with their children. Three parents indicated helping with homework. Seven
Parents reported implementing a strategy taught during the workshops.

Table 22. Changes Implemented by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes Implemented by Parents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending more time reading</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with homework</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with spelling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with math</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am trying to do things differently</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give my child more praise</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I approach my child with his or her studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents were asked what they enjoyed most about the workshops (see Table 23). Nine parents enjoyed the new ideas and information. One parent felt the most enjoyable aspect of the workshop was the food.

Table 23. Enjoyable Aspects of the Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyable Aspects of the Workshops</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The enthusiasm of the teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information, practical ideas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The simple format</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The parents were asked to make suggestions for improving future workshops (see Table 24). Five parents indicated the program was educational and helpful. One parent suggested additional workshops. Three parents suggested an open discussion to address individual issues.

Table 24. Parent Suggestions for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Suggestions for Improvement</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The program was great</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program was educational</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering information from parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more workshops</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The translation makes the information unclear</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an open discussion session</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven out of ten parents responded when asked if they would make any changes to the workshops (see Table 25). Five parents indicated the instruction and information was great and they would not make any changes. One parent suggested improving the Spanish translation. One parent requested more workshops more often.
Table 25. Changes Parents Would Make

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there anything you would change?</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The translating</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More workshops more often</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight out of ten parents reported observing progress in their children (see Table 26). Two parents noted their children read more. One parent noted their child is now interested in homework. Two parents had not seen improvement in their children. One parent admitted that she had not had a chance to try the strategies.

Table 26. Improvements Parents Observed in Their Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements observed by Parents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child reads more</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I see an improvement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child is more interested in homework</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the first workshop, parents completed a family literacy survey. The purpose of the first survey was to assess the children's attitudes toward reading and school, the frequency of parent-teacher communication, and family literacy activities. The second survey was intended to
show improvement. However, only twelve parents completed a post-survey (see Appendix P), compared to twenty-one who completed pre-surveys. To further complicate matters, five parents did not complete the backside of their post-surveys.

A slight improvement was noted in the areas of parent-teacher communication and library visits (see Tables 27 and 28). In the pre-survey, one parent reported communicating with the teacher before and/or after school. Eight parents reported communicating with their child's teacher before and/or after school in the post survey. In the pre-survey, no parents reported taking their children to the library two to three times a week. Two parents reported taking their children to the library two to three times a week in the post survey.

Table 27. Method of Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I communicate by:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing notes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations before or after school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 28. Family Trips to the Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

All four workshops were a success. Each workshop involved meaningful parent-teacher discussions, and strategies the majority of parents implemented and enjoyed. Parents shared ideas with each other during and after each workshop. The parent-needs assessment, home literacy survey and workshop evaluations guided the workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to improve student achievement and parent-teacher communication. The parents implemented the strategies, and observed improvement in their children. At the end of the fourth workshop, several parents expressed disappointment that the workshops were over.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction
In this final chapter, I will summarize the entire project. I discuss my conclusions and recommendations for future projects, as well as the implications for schools interested in developing family literacy programs.

Summary
To begin with I examined past and current parent involvement programs. I analyzed the various roles parents play at home and in the educational setting.

I also analyzed the role teachers and schools play in facilitating successful parent involvement programs. Finally, I examined family literacy, its definition, and listed successful parent involvement programs in the United States.

I conducted four parent literacy workshops at Banks Elementary School in Woodland, California. An average of eighteen parents attended each 90-minute workshop. Parents learned about No Child Left Behind 2001 and useful homework strategies during the first workshop. During the second workshop, parents learned reading and writing strategies they could use at home with their children.
During the third workshop parents learned about doing successful read alouds as well as additional reading strategies. Parents learned about Accelerated Reader and California State Standards during the fourth and final workshop.

Results

Parents completed individual evaluations of workshops two and three. Parents completed a cumulative evaluation at the end of workshop four. Fifteen parents implemented strategies learned with their children. Eight out of ten parents reported observing progress in their children. Evidence in this project stresses the necessity of strong parent-teacher collaboration in order to improve student achievement.

Conclusions

Involving parents in their children’s learning can increase student achievement. In this study I have shown that student achievement may increase when parents and teachers work collaboratively in implementing reading and writing strategies.
I came to the following conclusions regarding parent involvement programs:

1. Parent involvement programs are most effective when parent-directed.
2. Parents want guidance in improving their children's academics.
3. Parents are not always sure how to effectively communicate with teachers.
4. When teachers and parents make assumptions about one another, they limit their ability to help struggling students.
5. Offering more opportunities for parent training and involvement helps teachers meet the needs of all students.
6. Providing parents with additional assistance and encouragement empowers parents to increase their children's academic success.

What implications are applicable to educators and parents?

Implications

This study has implications for school districts, parent educators, and parents alike. Evidence in this
project suggests when all involved work together children benefit.

School districts set aside time for Back-to-School Night, Open House, and parent conferences each year to support home-school communication. By providing additional time for parents and teachers to collaborate regarding concerns, school districts can strengthen the home-school connection. Allocating additional funds in the annual budget can further support the home-school connection.

Working collaboratively with parents will help parent educators improve the education of all students. Children must not experience family and school as worlds apart, nor find themselves in the battle zone between two warring factions (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986). Through strategy modeling and parent workshops parent educators can empower parents to help their children succeed. Regularly assessing the needs of parents will increase the effectiveness of parent involvement programs.

True parent-teacher collaboration takes place when parents and teachers work together. When families and schools interlock in a cooperative way the child’s learning and maturing as a social being are encouraged (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986). Learning other
methods of assistance will help parents develop the full potential of their children.

Parents who wait for teachers to initiate communication can inadvertently hinder their child’s academic success. Parents who expect schools to take the major responsibility are likely to have children who struggle academically. Encouraging parents to take a more active role in collaborating with their child’s teacher can improve academic success (Clark, 1983).

Evidence in this project suggests:

1. By regularly communicating their needs to each other, both parents and teachers can build and strengthen their parent-teacher relationship.

2. Utilizing parent needs assessments increases the effectiveness of parent involvement programs and shows parents their opinions are valued.

Frequent parent-teacher communication can increase student learning. What recommendations can be made for future projects based on the evidence?

Recommendations Based on the information collected here, I recommend the following:

1. Longitudinal studies can strengthen the argument for parent involvement by illustrating evidence of student achievement over a period of time.
2. Using a standardized assessment in conjunction with parent evaluations will provide parent educators with quantitative and qualitative data.

Limitations of the Study

Although I considered the project an overall success, there was room for improvement. I would improve the following areas: Translation, number of workshops, and workshop presenters.

The first area I would improve is translation by including a bilingual teacher as a translator. It is also worth considering having two workshops, one for English-speaking parents, and one for Spanish-speaking parents. This will allow a smooth flow of information and prevent parents from getting lost in translation.

The second area I would improve is increasing the number of workshops. I recommend having a series of five to six workshops. I did not have enough time to cover all of the information. Also, many parents frequently arrived late. I made the mistake of waiting to start for the late parents. Additionally, several parents requested time for open discussions.
The final area of improvement would be to limit the number of workshop presenters. I recommend using one presenter for the entire series of workshops. I developed a rapport with the parents. I was also very careful to limit the amount of time I spoke as well as simplifying the information to remove "teacher language." I regretted not presenting the AR program to the parents myself. I think the presentation should have been shorter. I would have allowed time for parent questions and concerns.

Final Thoughts

This research has provided me valuable information in determining the effectiveness of parent involvement programs in the educational setting. I encountered earnest and enthusiastic parents during this project.
APPENDIX A

FAMILY LITERACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW FORM
What do you think most of your parents are already doing to support their children's learning?

What would you like the parents to do at home?

How can you support your parents' efforts?

Is the school doing enough to help parents?
APPENDIX B

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Banks Elementary School
Parent Needs Assessment

Name ______________________________ Telephone Number ________________

Your child's name ______________________________________________________

Teacher ________________________ Track __________________________

Banks Elementary is planning a series of parent workshops. In order to meet the needs of our parents, we would like you to rank the following workshop topics in order of interest from 1-5. If you have a topic of special interest that is not listed, please write it on the line provided marked "Other".

I would be interested in attending a workshop on the following topic(s):

*Please choose only 5 topics that are of interest to you and rank them from 1-5.

___ Houghton Mifflin Reading Program (District adopted K-5 standards based reading program)
___ Accelerated Reader (K-12 Computer based software program)
___ Reading Strategies (How to help your child become a better reader)
___ No Child Left Behind (What does this new federal law mean?)
___ Discipline with Dignity
___ Homework (Ideas on how to help children get through homework)
___ Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (How can I best help my child in school?)
___ Guided School Visitations (Come and see what your child is doing during Language Arts)
___ Parent Conferences (Questions to ask about progress and the report card)
___ Kindergarten Readiness (What can I do before my child enters Kindergarten?)
___ Standards (Explanation of California Grade Level State Standards)
___ State Tests (All you want to know about CAT6 and the California Standards Test)
___ Other ______________________________

What time is best? 5:30  6:00  6:30  Other ______

What day I most convenient?
(Circle one)  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday

Please return the office.
APPENDIX C

WORKSHOP FLYER
Banks Elementary School

JUST FOR PARENTS!
Attend a workshop series that helps parents with:
Reading Strategies
Homework
Parent Conferences
State Testing and Standards
No Child Left Behind
Accelerated Reader
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

January 27, 2004
Banks Elementary School, Room H-2

Refreshments and childcare will be provided.

Yes, I will attend the parent workshops.
Name ______________________ Telephone Number ____________

Your child's name ____________________________________________

Teacher __________________ Track ____________________________

Please return this portion to your child's teacher by Thursday, January 22, 2004.
APPENDIX D

HOMEWORK STRATEGIES
Homework Strategies

• Work with the teacher to take action at school for homework not completed.
  Loss of recess lets your child know that you and the school are working together to ensure that he or she behaves responsibly.

• Always provide praise.
  Make sure your child knows that you appreciate his or her hard work.

• Schedule daily homework time.
  Set aside time each day during which your child must do homework.
  All other activities must stop during this time.

• Back up your words with action.
  Be prepared for your child to use anger, tears, or indifference to manipulate you into backing down.

• Provide additional incentives.
  Give a reward or point toward a prize each time homework is completed. For instance, each night he or she does a good job on homework, one point is earned. When five points are earned reward your child with an extra privilege.

Notes

Lee Canter and Marlene Canter
APPENDIX E

CLUES TO GOOD READING
1. **SOUND OUT CLUES (phonics)**
   When your child comes to an unfamiliar word, have him sound it out. Help your child sound out simple words.

2. **STORY SENSE CLUES (Find meaning by reading more of the story)**
   Let your child skip the word and gather story clues.

3. **WORD TYPE CLUES (Noun, adjective or verb)**
   Read predictable books to help build this strategy. Predictable books repeat the same phrase over and over again.

4. **PICTURE CLUES**
   Tell your child to look at the pictures for clues.

If your child still cannot figure out the word, tell him the word and move on.
APPENDIX F

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING STRATEGIES
Before Reading
Predict/Infer:
Look for important words.
Look at the pictures.
Try to figure out what will happen.

During Reading
Monitor:
Check to see if you understand what you are reading
(have a grown-up ask you).

Question:
Ask questions as you read.

After Reading
Summarize:
Think about the important parts of the story.
Retell the story in your own words.

Evaluate:
 Decide if you like what you have read.

Phonics/Decoding Strategy
1. Look at the letters from left to right.
2. Think about the sounds for the letters, and look for word parts you know.
3. Blend the sounds to read the word.
4. Ask yourself: Is it a word I know? Does it make sense in what I am reading?
5. If not, ask yourself: What else can I try?
APPENDIX G

SAMPLE WRITTEN CONVERSATION
Written Conversation:
You and your child talk to each other on paper. Instead of speaking words to each other, write them.

Parent: How was school today?

Child: Fine.

Parent: What did you do today?

Child: Nothing.

Parent: What story did you read in class today?

Child: Grandfather's Journey.

Parent: What happened in the story?

Child: He took a ship from Japan to America when he was a little boy.
APPENDIX H

SUMMARIZING GRAPHIC ORGANIZER
Writing About What Happened

Title ____________________________________________________________

In the beginning
On (date)
To begin with
The start of
It started when
It began on (date)

Not long after
Second
Next
Then
The Second thing
And then

Next
Third...fourth...fifth
Now
Then
As
And then

After
Finally
Last
At the end
And the last thing
After everything
In conclusion

50 Graphic Organizers For Reading, Writing, and More
Scholastic Professional Books, 1999
APPENDIX I

DO'S AND DON'TS OF READ ALOUDS
Dos
Read as often as you and the child have time for.

Set aside at least one traditional time each day for a story.

If the chapters are long or if you don't have enough time each day to
finish an entire chapter, find a suspenseful spot at which to stop.

Reluctant readers or unusually active children frequently find it difficult
to just sit and listen. Paper, crayons, and pencils allow them to keep their
**hands busy while listening.

Encourage older children to read to younger ones, but make this a
part-time, not a full-time substitution for you.

Regulate the amount of time children spend in front of the television.
Research shows that after about eleven TV hours a week, a child's school
**scores begin to drop.

Don'ts
Don't read stories that you don't enjoy yourself.

Don't continue reading a book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice.

Don't use the book as a threat--"If you don't pick up your room, no story
tonight!" As soon as your child sees that you've turned the book into a
weapon, they'll change their attitude about books from positive to
negative.

Don't try to compete with television. If you say, "Which do you want, a
story or TV?" they will usually choose TV. That is like saying to a
nine-year-old, "Which do you want, vegetables or a doughnut?" Since you
are the adult, you choose.

Don't let books appear to be responsible for depriving the children of
viewing time.

By, Jim Trelease 1995
APPENDIX J

HOME LITERACY SURVEY
1. **My child:**
   ____ enjoys school
   ____ does not like school
   ____ sometimes my child likes school
   ____ other ________________________________

2. **My child:**
   ____ enjoys reading
   ____ does not like to read
   ____ read sometimes
   ____ other ________________________________

3. **I communicate with my child's teacher:**
   ____ daily
   ____ once a week
   ____ monthly
   ____ a few times a year
   ____ never
   ____ other ________________________________

4. **I communicate by:**
   ____ writing notes
   ____ telephone calls
   ____ conferences
   ____ conversations before or after school
   ____ other ________________________________

5. **What do you discuss with your child's teacher?**

   _________________________________________
   _________________________________________
6. I take my child to the library:
   ( ) 2-3 times a week
   ( ) once a week
   ( ) once a month
   ( ) twice a year
   ( ) never
   ( ) other ____________________________

7. I read to my child:
   ( ) daily
   ( ) 2-3 times a week
   ( ) once a month
   ( ) never
   ( ) other ____________________________

8. I ask about my child's homework:
   ( ) daily
   ( ) 2-3 times a week
   ( ) once a month
   ( ) never
   ( ) other ____________________________

9. I help my child with homework:
   ( ) daily
   ( ) 2-3 times a week
   ( ) once a week
   ( ) once a month
   ( ) never
   ( ) other ____________________________

10. When helping my child with homework:
    ( ) I always understand what to do
        ( ) I usually understand what to do
        ( ) I sometimes understand what to do
        ( ) I never understand what to do
        ( ) other ____________________________

Comments: Adapted from Jeanne R. Paratore.
APPENDIX K

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM
Evaluation of Workshop

Please write one thing you learned tonight.

Please write one strategy you will try.

Was there anything you did not understand?
APPENDIX L

CUMULATIVE EVALUATION FORM
Cumulative Workshop Evaluation

What did you enjoy most about the workshops?

Are you doing anything differently at home?

How can we improve?

Is there anything you would change?

Have you noticed any improvements in your child?

Are you interested in attending more workshops?

Comments:
APPENDIX M

QUESTIONS FORM
Questions

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?
APPENDIX N

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESPONSES
How parents are supporting their children’s learning:
“Reading with their children.”
“Listening to their children read.”
“Helping with homework.”
“Practicing sight words.”
“Reviewing the alphabet and numbers.”
“Telling them to do their homework.”
“Some are going to the library and getting books.”

What teachers want parents to do:
“Have their children complete their homework.”
“Read daily with their children for 10 to 15 minutes.”
“Practice sight words.”
“Play reading and spelling games.”
“Listen to them read and ask them questions.”
“Provide a space and time to do homework.”
“Assist with homework, make sure it’s done correctly.”
“Set aside a reading time.”
“Check backpacks for notes and books.”
“Help their children become more responsible.”
“Take their children to different places in the community.”
“Take children to the public library.”
“Work on concepts about print (CAP) skills.”
“Practice letters and sounds.”
“Read for fun.”
“Read for fluency.”
“Connect sight words to sentence structure.”
“Practice blending sounds (with training) and give them answers (need training).”

How teachers support parents efforts:
“Send notes home.”
“Give parents ideas.”
“Send books home.”
“Explain how parents can help during conferences.”
“Always have my door open to parents.”
“Parent workshops.”
"Informing parents of class expectations."
"Informing parents of events in the community."
"Telling them cost-effective ideas for reading."
"Send newsletters with hints."
"One-to-one conferences."
"Provide books at their kids reading levels."
"Provide comprehension questions to stimulate higher level thinking."
"Give ideas on how I can help."
"I gave training workshops, but a lot (parents) didn't show up."

Is the school doing enough?:
Yes
"I think the school has enough materials for the parents."
"When they offer tutoring for parents, or the CBET classes, after school family workshops."
"I think the school tries, but it's hard to get transportation for our parents to come past a certain time."
"I've seen a few attempts on the part of our school, although it hasn't been very successful."
"I think so. They set up meetings, even gone to the apartment houses. But you can't push a rope."

No
"Not at this point."
"There is no consistency."
"We need to reach out a little more. Let them know they can use the library."
"I would like to see more parent workshops."
"I think it is mostly left to the teacher to be after the parents, try to get them to help their kids at home more."
"For my ELL students I don't think they are helping."
"Parents were motivated when they came to school for the English classes."
"They do a lot on the surface that looks good. But not really when you get down to it. "I think parents are intimidated."
"No, we need more parent workshops."
Table 4.23 Analysis of Post-Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My child</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys school</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not like school</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes my child likes school</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My child</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys reading</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not like to read</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads sometimes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.25 Frequency of Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.26 Method of Parent-Teacher Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing notes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations before or after school</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.27 Parent-Teacher Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic of Discussion</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work habits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any pressing concerns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I take my child to the library:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a year</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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### Table 4.29 Parent Read Alouds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I read to my child:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.30 Parent Supervision of Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of times parents check homework</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
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Table 4.31 Parent Involvement with Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-three times a week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.32 Parents Understanding of Homework Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When helping my child with homework:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always understand what to do</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually understand what to do</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes understand what to do</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never understand what to do</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX O

UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT INTERVENTION TEAM
AND STUDENT STUDY TEAMS
Who can request an SIT?
Parents
Classroom Teacher
Other school personnel
Reasons:
Attendance
Academics
Behavior
Study Skills/Homework
Other Needs

Student Intervention Team (SIT)
School-based, problem-solving groups
Develop interventions and
strategies to improve student learning
Parents work with school staff to develop an intervention plan

Interventions are implemented
while student progress is monitored
Team meets to review student progress
Participants:
Parents
Classroom Teacher
Elementary Administrator

Student Study Teams (SST)
Team meets to consider further action beyond the recommendations of
the SIT team
Considerations usually include psycho-educational assessment
Recommend a program to help the child find success

Participants:
Parents/Student
School Psychologist
Speech-Language Specialist
Classroom Teacher
Resource Specialist
Principal


Televisionaries Video Production (Producer). (1997). *How to spend quality reading time with your child in just 15 minutes a day* [Videotape]. (Available from Televisionaries Video Production, 625 Hillcrest Street, Orlando, FL 32803)


