

ENHANCING FAMILY LITERACY IN RURAL PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

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to the required standards

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Darcy. I owe him much thanks for his support and encouragement along the way. If it not for his positive attitude and willingness to help when I needed it, I would have never accomplished this thesis. Thank you.

Acknowledgment

I want to sincerely acknowledge and thank Dr. Vianne Timmons for all of her patience, time and effort she spent on me throughout this process. If it not for her wisdom, knowledge and ideas, I would have never succeeded in completing this thesis. I am truly privileged to have her as an employer, advisor, mentor and friend. For this, I thank you Vianne.

Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the impact a family literacy program had on 10 families in the rural community of Alberton, Prince Edward Island. The project builds on the research that was done in a literacy needs assessment in 2002. The results from the assessment helped construct a comprehensive family literacy program for which the families in this study participated in. The study was twofold as it researched both the impact on literacy levels of the children involved, and the impressions it made on the families. Pre and post reading assessment tests were used to measure the literacy levels, and written evaluations and follow up interviews were used to gather the families' perceptions of the program. The reading assessments revealed that all of the children increased in at least one of the three areas tested. The evaluations and interviews disclosed the families' satisfaction with the structure and outcome of the program. The participants reported that they used the strategies taught, and they saw significant improvements in their children as a result of the program. Recommendations are suggested for future research in the field of family literacy at the conclusion of this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Literacy has been a prevalent topic in research and discussion over the past several years. Literacy by today's definition is no longer defined as merely the ability to read. Rather, the concept encompasses written communication, comprehension, and the ability to use information to function in our daily lives. Literacy skills and literacy challenges will be used interchangeably throughout this document, therefore deemed worthy to define this early in the document. The *International Adult Literacy Survey* defines literacy challenges as having difficulties using and processing printed and written information to function in society to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge to their potential (Movement for Canadian Literacy, 2003). Possessing literacy skills is an individual's ability to listen, speak, read, write, view, represent, compute and solve problems at a level of proficiency necessary to function in the family, in the community and on the job (NWT Education, Culture and Employment, 2002). The *International Adult Literacy Survey* (1995) deemed the issue of adult literacy an indicator of a country's success. Literacy skills in our society today are becoming increasingly important as they increase job opportunities and earning power to support oneself, family and community (Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999). Where parents find reading and literacy activities challenging, it will most likely be difficult for children in that family to achieve a high level of literacy (Timmons, 2001). Families who have literacy challenges tend to face social issues which often lead to cycles of poverty and unemployment often prevails (Timmons, 2001). One alternative approach to this problem is family literacy intervention. Family literacy programs may provide a way to effectively change

this cycle of poverty, low literacy rates and unemployment by teaching parents to nurture in their children to achieve the literacy skills needed to gain success in today's society.

Family literacy pertains to the way families develop and use literacy skills in their day-to-day activities (Saint John Learning Exchange, 1999). Practices in the home such as shared reading, reading aloud, having a wide variety of print materials attainable in the home and encouraging positive attitudes toward reading have been found to have a significant impact on children's literacy learning (Morrow and Paratore, 1993). Literacy guides the achievement of daily tasks. Whether these tasks be simply making a grocery list, filing income tax, or helping a child with homework. These daily literacy accounts can be viewed as a filter which the social organization of the everyday lives of the families is accomplished (Taylor, 1983). Parents who participate in these sorts of activities with their children are promoting lifelong learning.

Family literacy programs have proved an effective way of increasing the literacy skills in children (Schwartz, 1999). The Prince Edward Island government released a report *Strategy of Adult Literacy/Education in Prince Edward Island: Tough Challenges: Great Rewards* which identified that low literacy were a problem for 40% of the population. In a follow-up report released in 1999, *Revisiting Tough Challenges: Great Rewards* the government recognized Family Literacy and identified it as an area that required further growth and may have an impact on early literacy intervention. The following study is one approach.

Significance

Literacy challenges have a tremendous impact on families. Many families do not know how to support their child academically due to insufficient educational backgrounds to help

children with homework. With these challenges, it is difficult for families to equip their children with the literacy skills necessary to succeed in school and life. The task of enhancing literacy is then primarily allocated to the school. Willms (2002) states a number of studies worldwide which have consistently shown that family influences on student achievement outweigh the effects of either school or community. This highlights the need for increased family involvement in their children's education. Family literacy is an alternative that enables families to engage parents in the education of their children.

Previous literacy interventions at the school-age level primarily have been school-based and have had little effect on the reduction of low literacy in many rural communities (Timmons, 2001). As well, most of the programs offered are focused on pre-school aged children. Family literacy programs has provided an option for entire families, including adults and older children, to develop literacy skills. This study investigated the impact of a family literacy program on families who live in a rural community of Prince Edward Island. It provides a personal point of view from the families and illustrates how literacy intervention contributes to the improvement of reading levels of the children who were involved.

This study is based on a literacy needs assessment that was conducted in 2001 (Timmons, 2001). The needs assessment identified how literacy challenges affected a group of ten families in rural Prince Edward Island. The assessment involved in-depth interviews of family members and teachers and examined the impact of literacy challenges on their lives. An analysis of the impact of these challenges on the families provided a basis for the development of a comprehensive literacy program that included both a holistic and skills-based approach to literacy. This program was designed based on families' identified literacy needs. The participating families assisted with

the development and piloting of the program. The program was then revised and evaluated based on the families' feedback, and offered to a new group of families who self-selected for the study. The families participated in this program in the fall of 2004. The impact the program had on these families formed the basis for this study.

The site selection was based on numerous factors. On being that there is a distinction between levels of literacy in urban and rural areas, with rural adults achieving lower literacy levels than urban dwellers (Timmons, 2001). Therefore a rural area was targeted. The particular site chosen was based on Statistics Canada information on literacy levels for regions of Prince Edward Island and on the 1995 International Adult Literacy Survey (Timmons, 2001). Data from the survey was analyzed by Dr. Doug Willms, a statistician from the University of New Brunswick. It was found that disadvantaged youth come from areas where socioeconomic levels are lower and this is a potential characteristic for low literacy (Timmons, 2001). One of these areas outlined was the rural community of Alberton. This community was therefore chosen as the site of this study.

There have been few comprehensive family literacy programs designed for and by rural communities. This study is focused on reaching families and increasing family literacy in a way which highlights the strengths families already have. The purpose of conducting this family literacy program is to provide these parents an opportunity contribute more to their children's education and enhance their reading levels as a result.

Research on Family Literacy

The family literacy approach to improving reading and writing builds on family strengths.

Family literacy helps parents appreciate that they have valuable skills to share. It also empowers parents by giving them the additional skills needed to support their children while providing them with the confidence necessary to contribute to their children's literacy development. Family literacy involves the way parents, children and extended family members use literacy in their homes and communities (PEI Family Literacy Advisory Committee, 1998). When parents are involved in their children's education, the children learn more and do better in school (Padak & Rasinski, 1993). Family literacy may be initially introduced by the parent, or it may happen inadvertently as part of daily life.

"Research studies of early readers and investigations of emergent literacy uniformly conclude that parental beliefs, aspirations, and actions critically affect children's literacy growth" (Maiers & Nistler, 1999, p.108). Many parents do not realize that they are their child's first and most important teacher. Children naturally look to their parents as role models. Family literacy intervention allows the children to see that literacy is important in the development of life-long learning skills and illustrates that literacy is deemed important in their family's lives.

Atlantic Canada has the lowest literacy rates in the country (Province of Prince Edward Island, 1996). The *International Adult Literacy Survey* (1995) showed strong links among literacy skills, employment and poverty (Timmons, 2001). Prince Edward Island, which is fundamentally a rural province, has many jobs in the farming and fishing industries. These jobs, however, are primarily seasonal, and the workers seek governmental support for the remainder of the year. Many of the families who work in these areas have been employed in these occupations for generations, and have experienced literacy challenges for generations as many have left school to work (Timmons, 2001). Timmons, 2001 suggests that In today's technological world, reduced

literacy skills translate into reduced opportunity for employment. Improved literacy has the potential to increase job opportunities (The Government of Canada, 1995). The *International Adult Literacy Survey* noted that literate adults and seniors would be better able to maintain their independence and quality of life thus lessening the need for government support (Government of Canada, 1995). There is ample research on the benefits of family literacy programming, but a lack of research on the effect of literacy intervention in school aged children.

This study focused on the impact of family literacy intervention on participating families in a rural community of Prince Edward Island. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were exercised in this twofold approach. Firstly, it explored families' attitudes and beliefs around literacy, and their perspectives on their participation in a family literacy program. The program was designed and developed based on the identified needs of a rural group of families that were part of the larger research project from which this study is based. The program was intended for children in grades 1 - 3. Secondly, the research also measured children's improvement in reading levels through pre- and post-reading assessment tests administered before and after the program. Each session was offered once a week over the course of 10 weeks. The structure of this program involved both parents and children to attend each session. The parents were taught how to help increase their children's literacy through various strategies and reading activities. The children were taught and practiced the same strategies. There was a parent-child component at the end of each session that provided an opportunity for the parent and child to employ the strategies together. The study investigated the following questions to explore this two pronged approach:

- 1) How does family literacy intervention impact on the reading levels of the children in grades 1 - 3?
- 2) What impact does a family literacy program have on families?

Research Approach

The philosophical stance I adopt as a researcher is the social constructivism approach. Khalsa (2000) defines constructivism as a theoretical framework that consists of a perspective on the basis of knowledge, a way of understanding how knowledge is socially constructed, and recommendations for designing a learning environment which nurtures knowledge building. “The reality of this knowledge is that any theory of human behaviour can only be a tentative, partial explanation of any individual or group’s acts or behaviours” (Stringer, 2004). This postmodern theory claims that knowledge begins with the individual’s view on reality. People will interpret both what they see and what it means to them in a variety of ways. What someone says or appears to be true, even scientifically based, cannot be considered to be the absolute truth, just someone’s interpretation on reality. “Any truth of human experience is true only within a given framework of meaning” (Stringer, 2004, p.21). This approach is appropriate as the realities of literacy challenges were reconstructed from the parents’ and children’s perspectives as they individually illustrated the impact and meaning literacy had in each of their lives. This theory does not conform to one single person’s ideas. Multiple claims must be made, and knowledge and meaning are made from the point of view of the person interpreting the data or the study. Conformity to one person’s ideas is not enough for validation. By doing an extensive literature search, a base of knowledge was formulated on family literacy across the country and

internationally. By observation, interviewing, and interacting with the people in the community, I was able to understand what occurs in their everyday lives and construct and formulate my own knowledge from it. Each person gave their point of view on the influence of literacy and from this, it created multiple realities which were all a perception of truth. With everyone's view point, the researchers and participants were able to create a comprehensive literacy program that was of benefit to all. This is then connected to the research methodology of this study.

The research methodology that formed the basis of this study is community-based participatory research. This theory outlined how the whole program was developed. This is a partnership approach to research that involves community members and researchers in all aspects of the research process (Goodman, 2001). The program was originally developed with the help and input of the pilot group of families. Their involvement in the planning and development helped create the program. The comments and suggestions from the families involved in this study will further strengthen the program for future families. This approach enabled the families to have a voice in the process rather than having researchers devise a program and tell them what they needed to learn.

Data Collection

As stated, the research design is participatory in nature. The focus was on one rural community for the purposes of this study. The area decided upon was chosen due to its central location to surrounding rural areas, the ease of locating a facility to house the program, and accessibility to local families who may not have transportation. There were 10 families who showed interest in participating in the 10 week program.

A pre-reading assessment test was given to the child participants. A post-reading assessment test was administered after the program concluded to measure any reading level changes that occurred.

The second component of the researcher's data collection was a written evaluation and a follow-up interview with all of the participants after the program was completed. The quotes and comments from this qualitative data served as the primary focus of this study.

Data Analysis

Data from the reading assessment tests were analyzed and a bar graph was developed for each of the areas tested. This data on reading levels was charted according to grade levels. Pre and post tests were compared to measure changes in reading levels. Data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Responses were categorized, coded and themes were generated corresponding to the questions asked.

Summary

A brief introduction to the research has been presented. The study focused on the impact of family literacy intervention on the participating families, and measured the children's literacy levels before and after the program. The importance of the study, related research, and the research approach were introduced. Chapter Two will provide a more in-depth description of the research on family literacy.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The review of the current literature on family literacy was quite extensive. My task was to narrow down the aspects of family literacy that were relevant to my study. I reviewed hundreds of abstracts and full text articles relating to my topic. After much thought, I refined my search to include the following topics: working with families to enhance children's learning, challenges of family literacy, the impact of family literacy on participants, program considerations, and a review of successful family literacy programs.

Working With Families to Enhance Children's Learning

The evidence is clear and convincing. Family involvement works. Major research studies indicate that the family makes critical contributions to student achievement from the earliest childhood years through high school and attempts to improve children's outcomes are much more productive when the family is actively involved (Henderson, 1994). Teach the parent to reach the child (Kerka, 1991). Families have a strong impact on their children's academic achievement although many families do not realize this. "When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more" (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 7). Parents who show interest in their child's education contribute to the child's school success. "The anecdotal evidence - the stories that teachers and others share about students who succeed with the involvement of their families - is backed by extensive research showing that partnerships between schools, families, and

communities strongly and positively affect student achievement" (Dorfman & Fisher, 2002, p.1).

Family involvement typically includes parental engagement in learning activities at home, supervision of schoolwork, and initiating interaction with teachers (Dorfman & Fisher, 2002).

This can include activities such as helping with homework, engaging in literacy activities around the home, or having a positive and interactive relationship with the child's school. Family involvement has been proven beneficial to student achievement and can be measured on a range of abilities. The most common measures for young children are vocabulary, reading and language skills, and social and motor skills (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Common measures for school aged children are report cards, standardized tests, and enrollment in advanced courses (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

Children benefit from a home structure that supports learning. A home structure that supports learning is more strongly correlated with student achievement than family involvement in school-based activities (Dorfman & Fisher, 2002). Family literacy programs are an excellent way to incorporate school and home learning. Cotton and Wiklund (1989, p.3) found that:

There are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in the working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs that involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results.

When families and schools work together towards their children's learning, children have a greater chance in succeeding in school and life. The San Diego County Office of Education (1997) found that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to: 1) create a home environment that encourages learning; 2) express high expectations for their children's

achievement and; 3) become involved in their children's education at the school and community. A home environment that is academically stimulating is one of the chief determinants of learning and has an average effect on achievement that is twice as large as family socioeconomic status (San Diego County Office of Education, 1997). Having an academically stimulating environment may include everyday events such as encouraging reading, engaging in conversation with the child, and taking an interest in the child's school work. Setting high expectations of children has been proven to be successful. High achieving students typically have parents who set higher standards for children than parents of low achieving students (San Diego County Office of Education, 1997). Parent's involvement in their child's education is of particular importance. When parents are regularly involved in their children's school, it reinforces the child's view that school and home are connected and that school is an important part of the whole family's life (San Diego County Office of Education, 1997). All three of these indicators of student achievement can potentially be attained by participating in family literacy programming.

Some children who enter school have a passion for reading and notable confidence. They are more aware of print, and display an eagerness in reading and writing and almost immediately achieve success. Intelligence might be a contributing factor, but beyond this, these are the children whose parents engaged in reading with them on a regular basis. When parents and children make reading a part of their daily lives, children spend much more of their time reading than other children, and display an equal fascination for, and facility with writing (Holdaway, 1979). Children with a background of book experience develop a complex range of attitudes, concepts, and skills predisposing them to literacy (Holdaway, 1979). This literacy will likely continue throughout their lives. This passion for literacy can be created by working with families

to stress the importance of literacy. Family literacy programs promote this literacy relationship parents and children share. Working with parents to influence their children's school achievement is one of the key elements in a family literacy program.

Research has consistently shown that family influences on student achievement outweigh the effects of either school or community effects (Willms, 2002.). If the child has a supportive home with parents that are engaged in the child's learning, he or she is more likely to succeed than if the parents were not involved. The Canadian National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY) is a study of Canadian children that follows their development and well being from birth to the beginning of adulthood. The study is designed to collect information about factors influencing a child's social, emotional, and behavioural development and to monitor their impact on the children's development over a long period of time (Statistics Canada, 2003). One component of the NLSCY survey included an interview with a family member or caregiver in the child's family. This interview was to gain insight on the child's family life and the effects that the family has on the child. The NLSCY findings have found four aspects of family life which heavily influence children's behavior and achievement: parenting practices or parents "style" of parenting, the cohesiveness of the family unit, the mental health of the mother, and the extent to which parents engage with their children (Willms, 2002). These factors are deemed much more important than the effects family income or other socioeconomic factors (Willms, 2002.). A family literacy program engages the family in learning activities brings the family closer together.

Family involvement also has a protective effect. Students like feeling support from home and it has a positive effect in school. Students say that they have more self confidence and feel school is more important when their parents show a vested interest in it (Henderson and Mapp,

2002). Research also indicates that when parents are involved in their child's education, students are less disruptive, earn higher grades, and are more likely to go to college (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

The family is an important site for learning. Working with families to enhance this learning is therefore beneficial. A great deal of research has validated the benefits of family involvement. It has been shown that when parents are involved in school, it has positive effects on children's educational performances (Brassett-Grundy, 2002). It has also been demonstrated that successful school experiences are influenced by families' positive attitudes towards learning and school; sharing stories throughout the early years and books affects the children's progression in school; and, attention and concentration in the home supports learning in the primary school days (Brassett-Grundy, 2002). These are just some of the benefits that can be achieved from family involvement in a family literacy program. Adults also gain from families working together. The evaluation of the Basic Skills Agency's 'Family Literacy' programme produced some impressive results related to parents in their own reading, through working with their children (Brassett-Grundy, 2002).

A report entitled *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* examined parent and community involvement and its role in impacting student achievement. This report was a summary of 20 studies that examined the common characteristics of high performing schools. Emerging from this research, there is much support for family involvement.

Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational

backgrounds and for students of all ages. Although there is less research on the effects of community involvement, it also suggests benefits for schools, families, and students, including improved achievement and behavior (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 24).

The studies have shown that the benefits to students include:

- higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales;
- enrollment in more challenging academic programs;
- better attendance;
- improved behavior at home and at school; and
- better social skills and adaption to school. (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 24).

These studies make a convincing argument that programs that involve families have positive effects on student achievement. Parents with high involvement ratings, compared with those with low or median ratings, tended to have children with higher grades and scores in families of all income levels and backgrounds (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). The more families were involved and support their children's learning, the better their children did in school.

When we combine all of these studies and review their outcomes, it is clear to see that working with families to improve children's school achievements is a worthwhile effort with positive outcomes. Families not only have the potential to improve academic outcomes, they also have the power to impact behavior, attendance and help their children feel supported and take a bigger interest in their own education. "When families of all backgrounds are engaged in their children's learning, their children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and pursue higher education" (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p.48). Working with families in a family literacy program has the capacity to meet all of the positive outcomes as mentioned above.

Challenges

Parent's literacy skills, along with their attitudes about learning and formal education, have

a huge influence on their children's academic attainment (Schwartz, 1999). This can therefore lead to many challenges associated with working with parents with low literacy levels. Parents who have had few opportunities for education have, or had negative school experiences are often unable to help their children in ways that support and enhance the school's education program (Schwartz, 1999). Undereducated adults and children who are at risk unfortunately go together. Achieving in school is not always a reality for youths who go home each afternoon to families where literacy is neither practised or valued (Hannon, 2000). The types of literacy activities that parents choose are primarily dictated by the circumstances in their lives (Nistler & Maiers, 1999). Parents who are struggling with low literacy may find it difficult to become good academic role models and to read and write with their children on a daily basis. Literacy activities in the home are often superseded by outside circumstances such as financial issues, health concerns, behavioural problems, and other family stresses (Timmons, 2001).

Obstacles for not attending a family literacy program are varied. They can be physical or mental. Nistler and Maiers (1999) found in a two year study that parents repeatedly commented on how family circumstances, issues with jobs, or other such obstacles were the factors for not being involved in a family literacy program. "Not one family indicated they did not want to be there for their child" (Nistler & Maiers, 1999, p. 122). There are sometimes circumstances beyond their control. Parents want their children to succeed. A criticism for many families attending literacy programs is that they do not come because they are simply not interested in helping their children (Nistler & Maiers, 1999). This is not the case for most programs. Even parents who lack the knowledge about the school program do not lack interest in their children's education, or learning how to help their children at home (Nistler & Maiers, 1999). Most families

care about their child's education, but certain circumstances prevent them from giving them the assistance needed. A study by McNicol and Dalton (2002), found that many of the parents who attended a family literacy program already read and did activities with their children, however there was a significant number who did not respond or participate in the reading skills taught. There may be many reasons for this. One being that some parents did not have positive experiences in school and associate literacy education with school. Parents with low levels of education may pose great difficulty for facilitators in developing an effective curriculum and keeping them in the program" (Tao, Khan, Ganse, St. Pierre & Tarr, 1998). A large number of adults with low literacy levels do not feel comfortable participating, and a course lasting a number of weeks represents a serious commitment many are reluctant to make (McNicol and Dalton, 2002).

Program facilitators may face challenges when participating families have different school and reading experiences and educational backgrounds than themselves. Family literacy programs encourage families to try to make reading and literacy a fun activity to be incorporated into their daily routines. The concept of reading as fun may be foreign to adults who have had negative school experiences (Mikulecky, 1996). Parents having low literacy are challenged to make reading enjoyable. Furthermore, when parents try to impart to children the seriousness which they were taught, reading becomes another academic educational experience that children may oppose. Secondly, facilitators gaining mutual trust with participating families are an additional challenge. Families often will lack trust with the literacy program's staff because of unsuccessful school experiences and feelings of intimidation, and are sometimes hesitant to develop partnerships (Tice, 2000). If these feelings are not initially overcome, it may lead to families discontinuing the

program.

Families facing low literacy challenges have additional stresses in their lives. The basis a child needs to develop communication and literacy skills lies in the opportunities to interact in positive ways with the family around them (Healthy Child Development Advisory Committee, 2000). An environment that is filled with literacy supports communication by participating in conversation, reading books aloud, and observing role models reading (Timmons, 2001). All of these activities can enhance literacy development and provide a literacy rich environment. A parent facing literacy challenges might find it difficult to provide their children with such a literacy rich environment. “Where literacy activities are commonplace in the home, children often find reading, writing and social skills easier to learn” (Timmons, 2001, p.16-17). Appositionally when a parent does not often participate in such activities, the child is less likely to see it commonplace to do so.

Self-esteem and behaviour are issues related to literacy and can pose as challenges to attending a literacy program or succeeding in school. A literacy rich environment for a child helps him/her develop self esteem, confidence and social skills and provides strong opportunities for closer parent/child relationships which encourage emotional development (Timmons, 2001). Where an environment with low literacy exists, the children are not being offered enough to develop their self esteem and the parent/child relationship is not as strong as it could be. This can translate into emotional, social or behavioural difficulties for the child, that can turn into disruptive behaviours at home and in school (Timmons, 2001). This makes it challenging for parents to become part of a literacy program as the behaviour and social issues often prevent them from fully participating.

The Impact of Family Literacy

Increasing the literacy achievement of our children has been a high priority for parents, teachers and educators in the past few decades. Most of these efforts have either been at the preschool level, or have been focussed on direct intervention to the child. Instruction involving both the parent and child to enhance the child's academic achievements, or family literacy, has been becoming a more popular method of learning in recent years. Programs that teach parents to teach their children can prevent school failure, break the cycle of under attainment and raise confidence and achievement across the generations (Hannon, 2000).

The family has always been the primary source for learning in past generations. Parents unconsciously teach their children to read and promote literacy by surrounding their children with literacy opportunities. By being their child's role model, and joining their children in incorporating literacy into their families' lives, children learn as a result (Taylor, 1983). "Children use adults as models; they will endeavour to learn and understand anything that adults do, provided the adults demonstrate enjoyment and satisfaction in doing it" (Smith, 1982, p.175). Parents who engage in reading for pleasure educate their children on the importance and value they place in literacy. This in turn may result in the children creating a love of reading and learning. Families are the most important component in a child's early learning development. Family literacy programs seek to enhance this parent as a role model and educator model. "Increased interest and awareness in the 'family as educator', has sparked a proliferation of programs, publications, and public policies, all designed to broaden access to education and to enhance family skills in reading, writing and communication" (Neuman & Caperelli, 1998, p. 244). Family literacy works better than traditional programs focussed on adult education, early

childhood or parent education programs. These other literacy programs either focus on children or adults, but family literacy identifies the family as a whole unit that learns together. "The relationship between children's literacy and children's interaction with their parents has long been recognized as significant" (Mikulecky, 1996, p. 1). Promoting these parent-child literacy interactions have proven to be successful. It is not simply reading a book to a child that supports literacy development, rather it is the ways in which interaction between parent and child that produce significant results (Amstutz, 2000). Parents who ask questions, talk about the pictures, and engage in other interactive strategies as opposed to decoding and phonetics, further their children's literacy by motivating them to persevere through the more difficult stages of reading (Amstutz, 2000). Family literacy focuses on making reading fun. Research constantly associates strong connections between parental reading and interactions with children's later success with literacy.

Family literacy is a unique approach to education that works by bringing together parents and children to learn and create a holistic approach to serving the educational needs of the family (Logan, Payton, Read, McMaster & Botkins, 2002). It is an approach while focuses on prevention that works with the families in their communities. Family literacy is a way that literacy skills and events can be woven into families' everyday routine. It is promoting reading and writing not specifically in an academic way, rather it is literacy that occurs as family members go about their lives (Morrow & Paratore, 1993). This can mean anything from reading a book to your child, following a recipe, playing a board game, or composing an e-mail. These are all examples of family literacy activities. Reading to and with children and having print materials available promotes literacy. Such activities can be carried out even by those parents who have

their own literacy challenges. Parents who participate in these sorts of activities with their children are promoting lifelong learning. Padak and Rasinski (1997) reviewed research from adult literacy, emergent literacy, children development and systems analysis and found the following ways that family literacy has been proven effective:

- 1) children's achievement in school improves as a result of increased parent involvement in education;
- 2) children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their educations;
- 3) children's general knowledge improves, including IQ tests;
- 4) children's oral language development accelerates by parents reading aloud to their children;
- 5) children's overall reading achievement improves;
- 6) children's reading vocabulary, decoding, comprehension and writing improves; and
- 7) children's social skills, self esteem, and attitudes towards school improves.

Family literacy is becoming a popular approach to strengthen the bonds between home and school. It is an opportunity for parents to learn what their children are doing in school and ways they can support them. Often times, teachers make negative assumptions regarding their interpretation of literacy practices carried out in the home without knowing the extent of the parent's literacy. If parents are asked to perform school-like activities they are incapable of, their lack of cooperation may be interpreted as lack of interest (Tett, 2000). Some parents may be embarrassed to reveal their level of literacy to their child's teacher. Parents have an array of expertise they can offer their children. Parents can provide teachers with talent, energy and a huge insight on the strengths of their children. They can, however, often be made to feel

uncomfortable and unwelcomed within the school and their insights may be dismissed as unimportant (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). Family literacy programs are designed to address this situation by building on the families' strengths and literacy activities the families are already familiar with (Tett, 2000). Programs that build on participants' already existing funds of knowledge are far more likely to yield effects than those that approach parents as blank slates to be written upon with new knowledge (Newman, Caperelli & Kee, 1998). Parents who lack literacy skills may have a eminent variety of other talents to offer. Some of these activities might be considered insignificant, however building on everyday literacy they are comfortable with is a prominent starting point. By enabling parents and focussing on their strengths rather than their weaknesses, they can be made aware that they are capable and competent teachers in their children's lives and have valuable skills to share.

Family literacy empowers parents by giving them the additional skills needed to support their children while providing them with the confidence necessary to contribute to their children's school successes. If parents understand what their children are learning in school, they are better equipped to help them attain a higher level of literacy, and have a better relationship with their child's school. The parent will become a stronger advocate for their children at the school and in the community as the parent's comfort level with the school increases (Logan et. al., 2002). School literacy is a much easier task for children from homes that demonstrate parental modelling of literacy, actions to support literacy, and use language that prepare children for classroom discourse (Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000). Children whose literacy practices in the home resemble those in school are generally more successful in school (Kerka, 1991). Such characteristics can be demonstrated and learned in a family literacy program. "Bringing parents

and children together to learn in an educational setting is the core of family literacy and the way to provide parents with firsthand experiences about what their children learn and how they are taught" (Logan et. al., 2002, p.1).

Parents are the first and most important teachers in their children's lives. It is therefore imperative that they are involved in their child's education development. Children's learning in school begins with parents talking and reading to them at home. Literacy development begins at birth and is shaped by his or her experiences in the home (PEI Family Literacy Advisory Committee, 1998). Adults, who need to increase their own literacy skills but who are unwilling to enter traditional adult literacy programs, are more easily persuaded to enter programming for their children's sake (Tice, 2000). A holistic approach to family learning strengthens the family unit and is more successful. "The synergy of reciprocal learning and teaching among family members creates a home environment that both supports and enhances learning" (Hannon, 2000, p.129).

Enhancing family literacy means providing families with a variety of skills, strategies, and resources to promote literacy (Timmons, 2001). By influencing today's children, family literacy helps the parents of tomorrow break the cycle of low literacy and poverty for generations to come (Logan et. al., 2002). Family literacy programs break this vicious cycle where parents pass on poor literacy and numeracy to their children (Hannon, 2000).

Family literacy is a community based initiative designed to break the cycle of low literacy. Family in this context is interpreted in the broadest sense of the term. Implicit in this process is a shared responsibility in the community to provide intergenerational support, education and advocacy. The intention is to empower the individual and establish reading as a valued activity shared within the family. (PEI Family Literacy Advisory Committee, 1998, p.3)

Parents want to offer the best future they can for their children. Promoting education in the form

of family literacy is an outlet for them to do so. The Intergenerational Reading Association claims that children who are raised in literacy rich homes and are read to frequently will reach a higher level of literacy development, more quickly than children in homes where these things are not present (Saint John Learning Exchange, 1999). Given the low literacy levels of some parents, it is difficult to provide their children with such surroundings. Family literacy helps parents realize that a literacy filled environment is important for child development, and they will be taught to do their best to engage in activities that promote literacy. Literacy activities are present in some form in every home. Family literacy is a way to enhance those daily literacy activities for the good of the children.

Evidence from adult basic education, early childhood education, cognitive science, emergent literacy and family systems theory tells the importance of adults in children's early literacy development. Sharing books in family, when appropriately undertaken, sets a pattern for talking together about things and ideas and adds to the pleasure of each other's company. Through shared activities, the social uses of literacy are incorporated along with orientations to concepts about books and print materials, and the cognitive tasks of asking and answering questions which are so important to children's school successes. (PEI Family Literacy Advisory Committee, 1998, p.8-9)

Family literacy has a significant impact on parents. In a study by McNicol and Dalton (2002), teachers saw an improvement in the literacy skills of those children whose parents have been involved. Family literacy assists those who want to become more involved in their children's education and learning, it makes library use less intimidating, it encourages parents to participate in adult learning and widens reading choices (McNicol and Dalton, 2002). Family literacy is a avenue for parents to voice their concerns they have about their children with others in similar situations. It enables parents to take action against the academic challenges their children are experiencing, become more involved in school, and become better able to support their children.

As parents become more aware of what is being taught in schools, they will begin to feel more included and informed and ultimately develop a greater understanding of their child's education (McNicol and Dalton, 2002).

Program Considerations

When developing a family literacy program certain considerations must be regarded. Programs have to be inviting for participants, and families have to be made to feel welcomed in a safe and non-intimidating environment. Kerka (1991), states that family literacy programs should: integrate home and school literacies; build on the strengths of families; assist parents in being advocates for their children and; be holistic and collaborate with community partners. In addition to this, decisions have to be made on the focus, the types of participants the program will serve, and considering the families' perceived needs.

One of the first broad concepts of family literacy programming is addressing family learning as a unit. These types of programs can include parental involvement in schools, pre-school interventions, parenting education, family use of libraries, community development and extensions of adult literacy education to include children (Hannon, 2000). Programs such as these primarily focus on the child and later on the adults. No matter what form the program takes, there should always be a recognition that individual literacy learners are members of families, and that families are affected by individuals' learning (Hannon, 2000). These programs can develop to change how parents interact with their children and support their literacy development (Hannon, 2000). They can also evolve to meet the individual needs of the families involved.

Developing successful family community collaborations is paramount in developing and

implementing a family literacy program. One of the key components to this is developing trust and a relationship with the participants and the community. Mutual trust between the participants and program organizers is essential. Program coordinators have to be wary when developing the family literacy program that they take the perceived needs of the family into consideration. The design of some family literacy programs have been intended to fix families that are assumed to be in need of help (Amstutz, 2000). Caution has to be taken to focus on the families' strengths and on the daily literacy activities they share with their children. Some participants may believe that they have little to give. Parents have much to contribute. Organizers must focus on the idea that each individual involved has valuable resources to bestow to its success (Tice, 2000). The onus is on the facilitator to foster these strengths and convert them into literacy activities they can share with their families. Many families nurture rich contexts for literacy development and they support family literacy with much imagination (Amstutz, 2000). Building on families' existing strengths and knowledge improves the parent's self-confidence and their willingness to attend and participate. Constructing mediation and building community collaborations is also preeminent in building a successful program. Building a relationship with community agencies such as the public school system, a family resource centre and social services agencies is helpful in understanding the issues, priorities, and perspectives of the participants involved (Tice, 2000). This collaboration enables facilitators to gather information about participating families in order to focus on their strengths, and in turn shows families that facilitators have a vested interest in them. Maintaining these collaborations is key in achieving a successful program.

There are numerous goals and objectives that family literacy aspires to achieve, the fundamental goal being to improve literacy achievement in children by encouraging parents'

involvement. Family literacy enhances the lives of parents and children through the joy of reading, in addition to improving their literacy skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors (PEI Family Literacy Advisory Committee, 1998). When developing a family literacy program specifically designed for increasing parental involvement, attention has to be paid to creating appropriate goals for parents to attain. The following are some of the activities facilitators encourage parents to promote to improve their children's literacy: "1) to provide a home environment that supports children's learning needs; 2) to volunteer in the schools; 3) to monitor children's progress and communicate with school personnel; and 4) to tutor children at home to reinforce work done in school" (Simich-Dudgeon, 1986 from Weistein, 1998). Another goal in offering a successful family literacy program is to improve skills, attitudes, values and behaviors linked to reading (Weistein, 1998). Having the children acquire these reading skills and making reading enjoyable is of primary importance. One of the most successful is reading aloud with and to your child and becoming engrossed in reading (Weistein, 1998). Reading time that is considered fun rather than educational is a way parents can involve their children in more reading. In addition, the ways in which parents speak and interact with a child may also have an impact on reading achievement in later life (Mikulecky, 1996). Encouraging parents to read with their children and engage in other literacy skills on a daily basis are the goals most programs set out to achieve for success.

When developing a family literacy program, practitioners must consider the type of program intervention and participants they anticipate. All programs offered should be holistic and family-focussed that are intensive and offer long term educational benefits. The Even Start Family Literacy Center (1998) defines the four types of programs:

- 1) *Direct Adult Education.* Adults are given direct literacy instruction to increase both

their own literacy and instruction on how to improve their children's.

2) *Direct Children's Education.* Programs designed specifically to develop children's reading and literacy skills. Parents are encouraged to participate by providing support to their children.

3) *Direct Adult-Direct Child/ Parent and Child Together Time.* Offers instruction for both parents and children and providing time for interaction to employ the skills taught.

4) *Parent Time.* A less formal setting where parents share their concerns with practitioners and other peers.

Each component offers a different family focus and each is an approach that will be most effective when fully integrated.

There are issues that program coordinators have to contend with when working specifically with rural communities. The Department of Education in New Hampshire (2002) indicates that there are several characteristics inherent to rural communities that may cause problems in program development: isolation, low population, mobility issues, scarcity of financial resources, resistance to change and lack of community services. These issues result in challenges such as poor attendance, difficulty recruiting participants, transportation issues, limited finances for literacy materials, difficulty introducing new strategies that are different from what they were taught, and lack of support from the community. These barriers to implementation have to be considered and discussed with careful planning and consideration prior to application of a program.

After the decision is made as to what type of family literacy program should be offered, the characteristics of the program should be determined. Family literacy programs should contain

several features. First, the program should serve the individual's need so that adults with extremely limited literacy receive more intensive social, educational and training services (Tice, 2000). An adult with low literacy skills does not want the added stress of being overwhelmed with curriculum (Tice, 2000). If the parent had a bad school experience, the same emotions may come flooding back once again if the content is too difficult. Program developers must address the needs and literacy levels of the participants to offer a program contextually appropriate to the intended audience. A plan must be made to establish a variety of ways to involve the families. If this is not considered, facilitators run the risk of declining participation. A second feature that a program must contain is to ensure that the facilitator is efficient at problem solving and is contingent on a trusting relationship with participants (Tice, 2000). The facilitator must take the stance that the participant is there because of a decision they made to commit, and they will achieve what they set out to even if they encounter obstacles. Having the parents become involved is one of the most important indicators of the success of family literacy programs (NCFL).

Success of Family Literacy Programs

There have been many family literacy programs nationally and internationally that have made claims of success. Program coordinators and facilitators have upheld that the impact of participation in a family literacy program has shown many literacy gains to families involved. Some of these successes, however, have been self-proclaimed, and not evidenced based. The following is a snap shot of some of research on family literacy programs that have been shown to be successful.

A research study carried out by a Jordan, Snow and Porche (2000) offers information on the effect of a family literacy intervention program, Project EASE, designed to provide parents with both an understanding of how to help their children in kindergarten to grade three with literacy practices, and how to enhance their children's early literacy development. It found that the impact of participation in a family literacy program significantly increased children's language skills (Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000). This study also showed that there was a considerable increase in book-related activities at home (Jordan et. al., 2000).

Padak, Sapin and Baycich (2002) have identified a wide array of positive outcomes in their research on family literacy programs and practices. The following are some of the gains that they have found in their reviews:

1. adults who have participated in family literacy programs have shown improvement in reading, writing, oral communication, and advanced their educational levels from their interaction with their children;
2. adults experienced personal growth; social development and self-esteem;
3. studies of family literacy programs reveal the influence of parents on their children's reading development and success in school
4. children achieve greater on tests, have an increased understanding of speech, and their interest in literacy activities has gained as a result of family literacy programs;
5. family literacy programming contributes to language development in children;
6. parents interact around print more with their children;
7. children continue to benefit throughout their educational lives;
8. children's social skills are enhanced in the areas of self-esteem and independence;

9. there is an improvement in home literacy environments;
10. parents capitalize on their desire to read to their children and establish more literacy routines in the home (Padak et. al., 2002).

These outcomes are only some of the evidence-based benefits they have found as a result of family literacy programming. Regardless, this evidence indicates that participating in a family literacy program has positive effects on both adults and children.

Morrow (1997) did a study of the effectiveness of family literacy programming in enhancing home and school literacy connections. The study had a treatment and control group and compared the differences between the two groups. Results indicated that the children reported reading more, and wrote and read more often with their parents than those children in the control group (Morrow, 1997). The parents and children also reported in an interview that they spent more time together doing literacy-related activities and parents are taking more of an active role in their children's literacy development (Morrow, 1997).

The outcomes outlined suggest that family literacy programming is beneficial for both adults and children who participate. These are just an overview of the positive effects family literacy has on families. Family literacy programs are built on the premise that the home is a crucial learning environment for children, and literacy learning at the family level increases the children's chances for success in schools (Padak et. al., 2002).

Summary

There is considerable research on family literacy. This chapter focused primarily on working with families to enhance children's learning, the impact of family literacy, the challenges

associated with a family literacy program, program considerations, and success of family literacy programs. From the review of literature, it was found that working with families in a family literacy program is more beneficial than simply working just with the child or the parent. Parents are the first and most important teachers in their child's lives. Families facing low literacy is a challenge in implementing a family literacy program. Addressing the family as a learning unit is important in implementing a family literacy program. Lastly, according to the literature, success in family literacy programs is prevalent both nationally and internationally.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This research approach employed in this study is primarily a qualitative research approach supported by quantitative data. The methodology that guided this study was community based participatory research. In this research study, the intention was to explore the participant's perspectives on the impact of the family literacy program had on their family, and assess their reading levels before and after the program. This segment of the thesis will explore the theory and design of the research and include the research process involved in implementing a family literacy program. This will be achieved by concentrating on the following twelve major topics: 1) the theoretical framework of the research, 2) the research design, 3) site selection, 4) participant selection, 5) demographics, 6) program description, 7) data collection, 8) data management, 9) data analysis, 10) ethics, 11) trustworthiness features, and 12) limitations.

Theoretical Framework

Upon searching for a theoretical position to construct my research inquiry, I visualized the conceptual underpinnings to be the thoughts of several theories. In this section, it is my intent to link myself to the theoretical position I feel my research complies the most with, describe how, and rationalize and connect it to the work I am currently engaged in.

This research is primarily a qualitative study with quantitative data supporting my research with the use of pre and post reading assessment tests. The basis of my research rests on the families' perspectives of the impact the family literacy program had on their lives. The

quantitative data was included to support the claim that family literacy is effective. Descriptive data is the means that predominantly underlies my research. The participant's stories and comments that were a result of the interviews were evidence that family literacy is effective for this particular group of families. The stance that I hold as a researcher therefore is qualitative, and the following theoretical framework supports this claim.

The philosophical position I hold as a researcher is the social constructivism approach. Constructivism theory believes that no true meanings about any aspects of existence are possible, at least not in the absolute sense; they can only be constructed (Patton, 2001). This postmodern theory maintains that knowledge initiates with the individual's view on reality. People construct reality as an ongoing social process in their everyday lives (Stringer, 2004). People learn as they experience everyday events. What someone says or appears to be true, even scientifically based, cannot be considered to be the absolute truth, just someone's interpretation on reality. This research approach is suitable to the research described here as the realities of low literacy were reconstructed from the parents and children's views as they individually interpreted the impact literacy had on each of their lives.

The social constructivist approach is one that I connect with not only in the present research conducted, but also in my epistemology as a researcher. The importance of culture and context is emphasized in the social constructivist approach in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999). This theory does not conform to one single person's ideas. Multiple claims must be made, and knowledge and meaning are made from the point of view of the person interpreting the data or the study. The constructivist paradigm has as its central focus not the abstraction or the approximation of a single

reality but the presentation of multiple, holistic, competing, and often conflictual realities of multiple stakeholders and research participants (Lincoln 1990). It is my belief that research requires a formulation of opinions from various sources. Conformity to one person's ideas is not enough for validation. Nothing is for certain, and all that can be done is to construe meaning the best way known. By observations, interviewing, and interacting with the participants in the program, I was able to understand what occurs in the everyday lives of the families and construct and formulate my own knowledge from it. Each person's outlook on the influence of literacy was noted, and from this multiple realities were created which were all a perceptions of truth.

My reality is the information on the data collected and analysed within the rural communities this research focuses on. Lincoln (1990) supports this by stating that reality is a social, and therefore, multiple construction and it exists as a set of holistic and meaning-bound constructions. The meanings or perceptions of the families' literacy can be constructed to formulate views on the impact of a family literacy program has on the families involved. The research approach is carried out in the natural context of rural communities. This adheres to another axiom of constructivism and supports my social constructivist claim. Constructivism demands that inquiry be moved out of the laboratory and into natural contexts where natural experiences occur and capture holistic realities (Lincoln, 1990). By researching with people in their own environments, it allows me to capture the true realities of their situations experienced first hand. Going into the project, I held some ideas as to what I expected to find. However, these perceptions changed as I advanced. This supports Lincoln's claim that theory must arise from the data rather than preceding it (Lincoln, 1990). Interpretations change as the data is collected and analysed.

Social constructivism allows the participants and researchers not only to interpret their own meanings, but also to represent their own interests. Lincoln (1990) has several points of view that supports this research being socially constructed. He talks about “states of being” for participants and stakeholders to express multiple, socially constructed realities. He states that “states of being” are related to the enhanced ability of participants and stakeholders to take action during and after an inquiry and to negotiate on behalf of themselves and their own interests (Lincoln, 1990). In this research, the families and researchers are taking action to improve the literacy in their families by participating in a family literacy program. Negotiating was ongoing with the families involved in the program. Each time a module was presented, the families gave feedback, and adjustments were made to improve the program. This supports Schwandt’s view on human’s constructing knowledge, rather than discovering it. “We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience” (Schwandt, 2000, p.197). Research can always be revisited and enhanced by new experiences.

The theoretical underpinnings that are the basic premise of this research are examined through the sociocultural lens of Vygotsky’s theory of learning. This theory stresses that human learning is generated within our culture and society from social interaction where the individual first learns through interactions with others, rather from themselves, and takes on what is learned as their own (Scherba de Valenzuela, 2003). Parents want to offer their children opportunities for success. From their parents’ vested interest in their children’s education, the children perceive literacy as a high priority in their lives, and, accordingly, make an effort to improve their literacy skills by attending our program. This is further enhanced by the parents accompanying their

children. The children see literacy as being a priority in their parents' lives, in so far as to their parents' willingness to commit the time to attend with their children. The children have commented on this aspect, and because of this, have made more of an effort to improve their reading and literacy skills. In sum, the children are learning from their parents how important literacy is in their lives, and as a result, internalizing literacy as a value in their own lives.

The theoretical base that would support most of the intervention components used throughout the modules is the holistic approach to teaching reading. Multiple reading strategies were used in the design of the program. It is evident that a multi-faceted approach is necessary to address the various reading needs of children (Iddings, Ortmann, Pride & Pride, 1999). Effective reading instruction involves diverse means to teaching reading. Children learn in a variety of ways, and it is the role of the teacher, parent or facilitator to enable the child by adhering to the best strategy for them. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2005) does not embody one particular approach that is effective in teaching all children to read, rather, many elements are essential to promoting the development of literacy skills with a variety of learners.

Research Design

The research methodology in this study is community-based participatory research (CBPR). In recent years, research methods that involve community engagement and participation in the research process are gaining greater respectability and attention (Lindsey, 1998). CBPR has been becoming a popular method to address research in the community. CBPR is a disciplined inquiry that seeks a focussed effort to create the knowledge that is necessary for people to take action to improve the quality of their lives (Koch, Selim, & Kralik, 2002). This theory outlined

how the whole program was created. It is a research method that is a partnership between the researcher and the subjects. This theory formed the basis for the needs assessment and pilot program that this study is built upon. This approach is relevant to the entire research process of the larger study in two ways. In the pilot project, the participating families were not only the research participants, but also involved in the planning, development, and implementation of the family literacy program. Programs that involve participants in the curriculum planning process engage their interest, respect, and active collaboration (Caperelli, 1998). The participant's ideas and advice informed the program's revision process. This approach enabled the participants to have a voice in the research process rather than the researcher dictating what they believe the participants needed to learn. The premise this segment of the study is grounded on comes from this theory and continues to use the basis of it for further research. The participating families in this study also had a voice in the process as their comments and evaluations of the program will go on to further strengthen the program for future families.

Community-based participatory research engages in a reciprocal exchange, with the people who would otherwise be considered research subjects in traditional methods of inquiry (Ford, 2001). Programs designed by people who have determined what literacy needs the target population has in advance ignores the expertise that families have in identifying their own needs (Neuman, Caperelli & Kee, 1998). The participants in this research study are the experts on their own families and have valuable information to share. Parents have rich histories and experiences that should be honoured and used in developing a program (Caperelli, 1998). A partnership is then developed where both the researcher and the subjects benefit from the research. The researcher gains valuable insight as to what the families perceived needs are, and is able to

evaluate these needs and put the research into practice. The families benefit by having a program designed to suit their needs and the future literacy needs of other families in similar situations. Participants have input in the research design from the identification of key issues through the construction of research instruments (Ford, 2001). Traditional methods of research usually have a hypothesis, and use the findings to assist in future research. Community-based participatory research discovers new findings along the way based on the subject's input and discloses the process and results to the participants. This shows the participants that the information shared is of great value to the researchers as it is used to formulate new ideas and assist in the research process.

Community participation is effective when implementing a literacy program as it suits the needs of the families involved. When properly interpreted, community participation can mean the harnessing of community knowledge and culture, community enthusiasm and community resources toward improved planning and implementation of a program (Corcega, 1992). This however, is sometimes challenging. How can the families involved take responsibility for the improved literacy of others in their community? One way is to empower the people. Empowerment is “the process by which disadvantaged people work together to increase control over the events that determine their lives” (Corcega, 1992, p.185). It is the role of the researcher in this type of research to help people believe in themselves and in their ability to bring about change (Corcega, 1992).

One of my roles in this study was to build the confidence of the families involved in believing that what they had to contribute was worthwhile. Their thoughts and opinions will not only benefit each other in the program, but will assist other families in future programs offered.

Creating opportunities to enable the families to act on their own was an ongoing process in this study. It first happened as part of the needs assessment and pilot, then later in this research study through ongoing comments, suggestions, and in the interviews and evaluations conducted. Their comments and suggestions were used to improve the program for future use. At the end of this study, the families felt as though they really contributed to something worthwhile, and continually asked when it was to be offered again for other families. Their input helped create a program that was successful and represents their communities' needs. These comments will be discussed in-depth when reviewing the evaluations and interviews in the results section of this document.

Site Selection

A report entitled *Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education in Prince Edward Island: Tough Challenges; Great Rewards* was released which identified that low literacy was an issue for 40% of the population on Prince Edward Island (Province of Prince Edward Island, 1996). Prince Edward Island is predominantly a rural province and studies have shown that there is a distinction between levels of literacy in urban and rural areas, with rural adults achieving lower literacy levels than urban dwellers (Timmons, 2001). This is the primary reason a rural site was chosen to implement this research.

The research site was a local community facility in the town of Alberton, Prince Edward Island. The geographical area targeted was based on the results of the needs assessment preceding this program. The site targeted for the needs assessment was based on Statistics

Canada information on literacy levels for regions of Prince Edward Island and on the 1995 International Adult Literacy Survey (Timmons, 2001). Data from the survey was analyzed by Dr. Doug Willms, a statistician from the University of New Brunswick. It was found that disadvantaged youth come from areas where socioeconomic levels are lower and this is a potential characteristic for low literacy (Timmons, 2001). One of the areas outlined was the rural community of Alberton. This community was therefore chosen as the site of this study. Adding to this, Alberton was a central location for other rural communities to gather and was convenient for those families with mobility issues.

Figure B.9
Neighbourhood types for Prince Edward Island



Participant Selection

This qualitative study was based on self-selection by the participants. This was the most effective way to recruit participants as they have self-identified themselves as needing help with improving their children's literacy. An individual or family cannot be forced to attend a program that someone believes will help them. In order to achieve success, the individual must decide on participating in the intervention.

Recruitment started in August of 2003. Recruitment was a sensitive issue due to the nature of the topic. Issues of confidentiality, sensitivity to the nature of the issue of low literacy, and identifying key areas were important in the process of recruitment (Timmons, 2001). Adding to this, many families that may be in the target range of participants may have experienced a lack of success in school, and initial recruitment can be very difficult (Skage, 1995).

Recruiting people in a rural area was a challenge as homes are spread out and it is difficult to find an effective method to reach families in isolated areas. Colored flyers (Appendix A) were developed and posted around the community and outlying regions. These flyers contained information about the program and the phone number of the researcher. The areas targeted were the local library, family resource center, convenience stores, pharmacy, grocery store, gas station, bakery and rink. An announcement in several church bulletins was also printed for a number of weeks. Visits were made to the Family Resource Center in the area to gather names of any interested participants. An advertisement was also placed in the local paper for three consecutive weeks. This paper, "The Penny Saver", is delivered weekly to every household in the Alberton area. The Penny Saver proved to be the most effective means for generating participants. Flyers and book marks were distributed to the schools in the area for the children in grades 1 - 4 to take

home. These flyers and bookmarks contained the program information and a contact number of the researcher (Appendix B). Some families were also recruited through a family member already enrolled in the program. The target number of families was 20.

In early September, 23 families expressed interest in this study. The first 10 families who contacted me were chosen to participate in the first program. The remaining families were offered the program in January of 2004. The reason for recruiting a large number of families was due to the fact that this research was part of a larger study. The families were divided into two groups and their reading assessments were conducted to compare the effectiveness of the program using a treatment and control group. The focus of this study however, is solely on the impact of a family literacy program on the first group of families, and on its influence on the children's reading levels.

Demographics

In total, 10 families participated in the first program. These families were single parent families, two-parent families, and one family with a young single mother living with her mother. Single parent families made up 20% of the participants, and 80 % of the families were married couples. Each family had one parent present. It should be noted that when the word *parent* is used, it refers predominantly to the mothers of the families. Parental involvement in schools has traditionally been carried out by mothers because of the dominant belief that a child's education is a mother's responsibility (Davies, 2003). Nine of the parents were mothers, and one was a single father. Each family, with the exception of one, had more than one child, however, only took the child that had reading challenges to the program. There was one family who took both of her children. The parents ranged in age from early twenty's to mid to late thirty's. Reading

assessment tests were not administered to the parents, so it was difficult to estimate their literacy levels. The majority disclosed that their educational levels ranged from grade 9 to some post secondary education. One parent was completing her GED at the time of the program.

There were 11 children enrolled in the program. The age ranges were five to nine years old. They were in grades one to three. There were six girls and five boys. Ten of the children were enrolled in English programs and one was in French Immersion.

Most of the children involved in the program were below their reading level according to their grade. Some parents had tried other means of getting their children involved in reading programs prior to this one, or were part of a summer tutoring program. Most of these children were only slightly below grade level, and just needed some extra encouragement and assistance increase their reading skills. Some children were actually good readers, however, their parents felt that they needed some strategies to encourage their children to read more. There were two children, TF1 and SP1 just starting grade one at the time of the program and their reading was in the primary stages. One child, TF3 had a learning disability and her reading was delayed and was significantly below grade level in all subjects. One child was part of the French Immersion program and her English reading was in the primary stages. One child was in resource at the time of the program. All others basically just needed some encouragement and assistance with their reading.

Program Description

Needs Assessment

This family literacy program was developed based on the results of a needs assessment that

was funded by the National Literacy Secretariate. It was carried out with 10 families in three rural communities of Prince Edward Island. The assessment had three primary objectives:

- 1) To conduct a family literacy needs assessment with thirty families in rural Prince Edward Island.
- 2) To gather the data needed to develop a comprehensive family literacy program for families in rural Prince Edward Island.
- 3) To assess the impact of low literacy levels on all family members. (Timmons, 2001, p. 4-5)

The assessment consisted of interviewing family members (both parents and children) and the children's teachers. An analysis of the impact of low literacy levels for family members and each community was gathered. Parents, children, and teachers were interviewed using questions which revolved around reading, community support, family support, and health. Three themes emerged from this data: education, health and parenting (Timmons, 2001). The information from the needs assessment provided a basis for the development of a comprehensive family literacy program (Timmons, 2001).

There were a lot of clear messages that came out of the needs assessment. The families were specific in what they wanted to include in a family literacy program. The families defined the program that would be first and foremost community based (Timmons, 2001). They also gave clear and extensive information on the caliber, type and frequency of a family literacy program. The end results was participation by seven families.

Pilot Program

The modules were then developed based on the parent's suggestions, and reading assessment test results. Reading assessments were conducted on both the parents and children in order to determine an appropriate reading level for the modules. Pre and post-reading assessments were done before and after the pilot program was implemented. This phase of the research, and the focus of this study was funded by the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network.

The module development was a collaborative approach of primarily ideas from the families, the literature, and information gathered from the reading assessments. The needs assessment clearly identified the families' visions for the literacy program. Their definition of literacy was expansive and included reading, comprehension, and understanding of meanings and abilities to manage in a literate world beyond the functional level (Timmons, 2001). The parents wanted the curriculum to stress writing skills, reading orally and silently, public speaking and confidence activities, and expressed a need for parenting issues to be offered as well (Timmons, 2001). They wanted the opportunity to assist in the module development. As a result, when the topics of the modules were proposed, each of the families was contacted for their input and suggestions for improvement. Subsequent to the completion of the initial module, and after the topics were agreed upon by the families, the module development commenced. The topics that were agreed upon were:

1. Homework
2. Parenting and Discipline
3. Decoding and Phonics

4. Literacy in and Around the Home
5. Fluency
6. Guided Reading
7. Comprehension
8. Language Experience
9. Word Recognition
10. Working With the Schools

The pilot program was offered for 10 weeks beginning in September of 2002. The design of the program was a comprehensive approach offering three components: direct-adult, direct-child, and parent-and-child-together time. Two facilitators were required for each session. The format was to split up the adults and children for the first portion of each module in order to teach both groups the strategies separately. The second part of each session gave the parents and children the opportunity to come together to participate in the strategies each had been taught. This component strengthens the learning relationship between the parent and the child. According to the results of the reading assessments of the pilot (Timmons, 2002), the program showed significant gains for the children involved in most of the areas tested.

An Advisory Committee was in place to make recommendations and supervise the progression of the evolving program. The committee included two members from the Department of Education, one member from the Literacy Alliance, one member from the Department of Health and Social Services, one from early childhood development community, the principal investigator, and myself, the research coordinator on the project. The advisory committee met approximately every eight weeks for an update on the progression of the project, and to provide

advice when sought.

Program Delivery

The family literacy program began in September, 2003. The location was in two board rooms in the Western Hospital in Alberton, Prince Edward Island. Pre reading assessment tests were carried out on all of the children involved one week prior to starting the program. The design of the program matched that of the pilot with the direct-adult/ direct-child approach with parent and child time at the end of each session. Sessions were held once a week, on a night as decided by the families. One module was presented each night. Each session was 1.5 hours in length. The first hour was spent on the direct-adult/ direct-child approach with the parents and children in separate groups learning the strategies of each topic presented. The remaining half hour, was the parent-and-child together time where the parents were able to come together with their children and practice the strategies learned. There was time at the end of each session for discussion and a preview into the next weeks' topic. The program was ten weeks in duration, and ended in mid November.

Each night focused on one module. The majority of the modules concentrated on various aspects of reading. Some of the strategies employed were: predicting, decoding, shared/paired reading, reader's theater, repeated reading, literature circles, and retelling. Each strategy complemented the topic of each module according to the literature researched. The modules required the children to brainstorm, print, create lists, write stories, oral and silent reading, follow directions, and answer questions. The families practiced the strategies using a variety of books. Most of the literature selected was based on their reading and interest levels. Books that made the

children laugh were the most popular. A selection of Robert Munch books were favorites. In addition to this, the group reading activities implemented required us to borrow book sets from the Educational Resource Centers both at The University of Prince Edward Island, and at the Eastern School District. The methods used in the parent-and-child-together time were a repeat of the strategies taught to each group. This time was used as an opportunity for the parents to practice the strategies just learned with their children. The facilitators during this time wandered around the room answering any questions and helped the parents engage in the strategies with their children. For an example of a module used, see Appendix H.

Attendance was excellent for the entire program. Almost every family had perfect attendance. In the event of a family not attending, they would usually call earlier in the week to notify me. On one occasion, a mother was not able to attend so her husband came in her place.

Data Collection

For this study, two different measurement tools were used to collect the data. The first was a reading assessment test, administered before and after the program to assess if family literacy intervention is a factor which impacts the literacy levels of the children involved. The second were written evaluations for the parents (Appendix E) and a follow up interview (Appendix F) with the parents and children (Appendix G). The children were also interviewed after the program to ensure their voice in the process. The evaluations and interviews were used to assess the impact a family literacy program had on their lives.

WIAT Reading Assessment Test

Each of the children in the program were subjected to pre and post reading assessment tests. These assessments were given before and after the program to measure the impact of the program on the children's literacy levels. After the consent form was signed by the parents, I administered the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) to all 11 children. The WIAT is an individually administered, norm-referenced achievement test designed to be used with students in grades pre-K through 12 who are between the ages of 4 and 19 years old (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). The assessment tests on nine areas of learning: basic reading skills, mathematics reasoning, spelling, reading comprehension, numerical operations, listening comprehension, oral expression, and written expression (Psychological Corporation, 1992). For the purposes of this study, only three areas were tested: basic reading skills, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. These three domains were the applicable areas this study addressed. Grade equivalent scores were chosen to base the results of the areas tested.

The three areas chosen to test the children were selected as they best fit the components of the program. Each module contained activities that involved phonics, decoding, comprehension, and oral and silent reading. Testing the children on basic reading, listening comprehension and reading comprehension therefore was appropriate. The test began by having the child read aloud from a graded word list. Their score on the list corresponded to a place in the test where they would begin. The first subtest, basic reading, assessed the phonological awareness and decoding skills of the children. It had the participants identify beginning and ending sounds of words and match sounds with letters and letter blends. It also had the participants match a written word with its representative picture and read from a word list. The reading comprehension subtest had

participants: read short sentences and passages aloud to answer content and comprehension questions. The last subtest, listening comprehension measures the child's ability in listening for details in a passage that was read to them. It also had the children select the picture that matches the word or sentence and generate a word that matches a picture.

The WIAT was standardized on large sample and results indicated that the test was reliable. The split-half reliability coefficients that are based on grade subtest scores in general exceeded 0.80 (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004). The split-half coefficient for the composites that were tested in this study: reading (subtests: basic reading and reading comprehension) and oral language (subtest: listening comprehension) are all greater than 0.80 with reading exceeding 0.90 in the grade levels (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004). The test and retest reliability in the subtests are all above 0.80 (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004). Interrater agreement was calculated and found that the correlation between raters for Reading and Comprehension ranges from 0.94 to 0.98.

The WIAT has proven to be valid in its content, construct and criterion-referenced validity (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004). The construct validity of the test was documented by an analysis of subtest intercorrelations, correlations with ability measures, and expected developmental differences across grade groups (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004).

In sum, the WIAT achievement test is designed to measure eight areas of learning, three of which are used in this study. The standardization sample in the test has been proven to be both reliable and valid (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004).

Evaluations and Interviews

The interviews and evaluations were important methods of collecting data. Marshall and

Rossmann (1999) state that participant's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and assumptive worlds, are best captured through interaction. The interview provides a situation where the participants' descriptions can be explored, illuminated, and gently probed (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). Written evaluations are a method by which the participant can comfortably write their opinions and give feedback anonymously. The interviews used in this study were to elicit a more detailed account of the impact the program had in the lives of the participants. The parent's perspectives provided vivid descriptions of the influence the family literacy program had on their families. Open ended questions were chosen to obtain the participant's genuine perspectives beyond those of the researcher.

Interviews and evaluation protocol were developed and then brought to the principal investigator and advisory committee for feedback and input. After modifications were made, the evaluation forms were distributed the last evening of the program to the parents. A follow-up phone interview was then conducted. Each child was interviewed in person when the post reading assessment test was administered.

Data Management

Immediately following the ending of the program, post-reading assessment tests were administered and results were placed in a locked filing cabinet. The children's names were coded to protect their identities. Following the evaluations and interviews, data were analyzed and coded. The use of a tape recorder was approved by the participants to ensure that the entire interview was heard and to avoid note-taking. The data from both the evaluations and interviews was categorized into themes. Unfortunately, the tapes of the interviews were accidentally destroyed.

after they were transcribed. All other data is kept in a locked filling cabinet for a year following the approval of this thesis.

Data Analysis

Data from the pre and post tests of the children were analyzed and coded. Bar graphs were developed for each child to compare literacy levels in the pre and post tests. Bar graphs were chosen for ease of reading the data upon quick glance. This data on the reading levels was charted according to grade levels.

Data from the interviews of both the parents and children were transcribed verbatim. Their responses were categorized and coded and themes were then generated corresponding to the questions asked on the impact of the literacy program on the participating families.

Ethics

The University of Prince Edward Island Research Ethics Board approved phase one, A Family Literacy Approach to Improving Children's Literacy Levels, on December 18th, 2001. The second phase of this study, The Impact of Family Literacy in Rural Prince Edward Island, the focus of this research study, is a renewal of the original research study and was approved by the Ethics Board.

All participants were self-selected and contacted me directly. An informed consent form was given to each of the adult and child participants involved (Appendix C & D) to confirm anonymity. This form was an agreement between the researcher and the families to participate in the program. It outlined the program's purpose in plain language. It also indicated that they

would be asked to participate in an interview to evaluate the program. Interviews were tape recorded, and no names were used in the written report. The children's consent form was an agreement to participate and to use any information collected in the research of this study. Each parent agreed to attend the program and gave permission to have their children undergo the reading assessment test. The results from these tests were given to the parents.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, also called intellectual rigor, refers to the credibility of both the data and the person who collects and analyzes the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the basic issues in relation to trustworthiness is simple: it is how an inquirer can persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to and taking account of. The four criteria for trustworthiness according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this segment, these four elements of trustworthiness will be outlined in relation to this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define credibility as how one can establish confidence in the "truth" of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects in the context in which the inquiry was carried out. The credibility of the research was reinforced by exploiting a number of strategies. The reading assessment test that was used on the children was standardized. This ensures reliability and validity. I developed the interview questions, then they were discussed with my advisor and peers to make further changes. The interviews were taped and the transcripts were transcribed verbatim. The purpose of the study was fully revealed to the participants, and their confidentiality was ensured.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that transferability is how one can determine if the findings of an inquiry are applicable in other contexts or to other subjects. This study will be useful to parents, school personnel, the home and school association, provincial school boards, and Departments of Education. A program that engages families and has potential to increase literacy levels of children may eventually become a province-wide initiative.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the third element of trustworthiness is dependability. "How can one determine whether the finding of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects in the same context?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). This was determined somewhat by the implementation of the pilot program. The pilot showed considerable gains in the literacy levels of the children involved. Modifications were then made to improve the program. Detailed accounts of the methods, strategies, and tools employed in this research study were kept. If the same methods and strategies were employed over again, as detailed in this study, with the same research subjects, it would be hoped that the same results would be determined.

The fourth and final construct of trustworthiness, as established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability. One can establish how the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects and the conditions of the inquiry, not by the interests of perspectives of the inquirer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This was addressed by the assessment test outcomes and the transcripts of the interviews.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study is that it deals only with a small sample size in

selected rural areas of the province. If the results prove to be effective, it is not known without further research whether the study would be as effective if duplicated in urban parts of Prince Edward Island. Adding to this, it is not known if this study would have the same outcome in other rural areas of the Island, or other Atlantic Canadian provinces. Also, this study was designed to focus on children in grades 1 - 4, so it is not known if the same model would be applicable to children in other grades.

Another limitation is the newness of the program. This program has just recently been developed. It has not been implemented widely, and therefore any replication of the results would be challenging. Also, it was just developed for a small population size in rural areas.

The self-selection process was another limitation. Self-selection was key in this study to ensure internal validity. This limits recruitment of the program to only those families who have self identified literacy as a concern in their family, not other families with literacy challenges who may also benefit from family literacy intervention.

Lastly, the format chosen for this study was a single subject design. This could be considered a limitation as the results of this study could not be compared to a control group of participants. Time constraints and the focus of this study prevented me from investigating this further.

Summary

Chapter Three presented the methodology used in this study. The research approach and theoretical framework were described and justified. The intention of the study was defined as twofold: to explore the participant's perspectives on the impact of the family literacy program had

on their family, and assess their reading levels before and after the program. This chapter explored the theory and design of the research and included the research process involved in implementing a family literacy program. This was outlined in twelve major topics: 1) the theoretical framework of the research, 2) the research design, 3) site selection, 4) participant selection, 5) demographics, 6) program description, 7) data collection, 8) data management, 9) data analysis, 10) ethics, 11) trustworthiness features, and 12) limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Overview

In the following chapter, the findings are distributed in two sections. Results from the reading assessment tests administered to the children are in the first section. The second section are the findings from the evaluations and interviews conducted with both the parents and children.

The data from the assessments comprise the first section of this chapter in the form of bar graphs. Eleven children from ten families participated in both the pre and post reading assessment test. There were five boys and six girls participating and were between the ages of 5 and 9. There were seven Grade three students, two in Grade two, and two in Grade one.

The second section is data from the interview and evaluation questions organized by the emergent themes discovered. All of the parents completed an evaluation form on the last evening of the program, while only nine participated in a follow-up interview. There were several unsuccessful attempts to contact the tenth parent. All of the children who took part in the program participated in the interview. To support the findings, I have provided verbatim quotes from the participants.

Table 1 shows the children who participated in the study by gender, age, and grade level.

Table 1
Child Participants

Child	Gender	Age	Grade
AP3	Female	9	3
CA2	Female	7	2
CM3	Female	8	3
CP3	Male	8	3
KG3	Female	8	3
MP3	Female	7	3
NP3	Male	7	3
SG2	Male	7	2
SP1	Male	6	1
TF1	Male	5	1
TF3	Female	9	3

The following charts address the first question this thesis investigates: "How does family literacy intervention impact on the reading levels of the children in grades 1 - 3?"

The data from the assessments are presented in 11 bar graphs and two tables, with a corresponding explanation with each one. Each child was tested in three areas: basic reading, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. The first test took place the week prior to beginning the program in August of 2003. The second reading assessment took place the week following the program in November of 2003. The following pages report the findings of the reading assessment tests. Each chart illustrates the child's reading level according to grade level. The pre-and post-reading assessment tests are tabulated.

Table 2 shows the pre- and post-test scores for child participants according to grade levels.

Table 2
Pre- and Post-Test Scores

Child	Basic Reading Pre-Test	Basic Reading Post-Test	Listening Comprehension Pre-Test	Listening Comprehension Post-Test	Reading Comprehension Pre-Test	Reading Comprehension Post-Test
AP3	1.1	2.4	3.1	4.9	1.9	2.8
CA2	0.3	0.5	1.9	2.5	1.2	2.8
CM3	1.9	2	3.1	3.1	1.7	2.8
CP3	2	2.6	0.5	3.5	1.7	2.8
KG3	2	2.9	2.2	6.7	2.8	4
MP3	2.6	4.2	2.2	3.9	2.9	4.1
NP3	1.9	4	3.1	4.9	1.7	3.1
SG2	1.8	2.6	1.3	4.9	1.9	2.9
SP1	0	0.9	0	0.2	1.2	1
TF1	0	0.9	0	0.2	1.2	1.2
TF3	1.6	1.6	0	0.2	1.9	2

The three subtests used to test the reading of the child participants were basic reading, listening comprehension, and listening comprehension. The WIAT defines each as follows:

Basic Reading: This subtest is designed for assessing the ability to decode letters and words (The Psychological Corporation, 1992).

Listening Comprehension: This subtest is designed for assessing the child's understanding

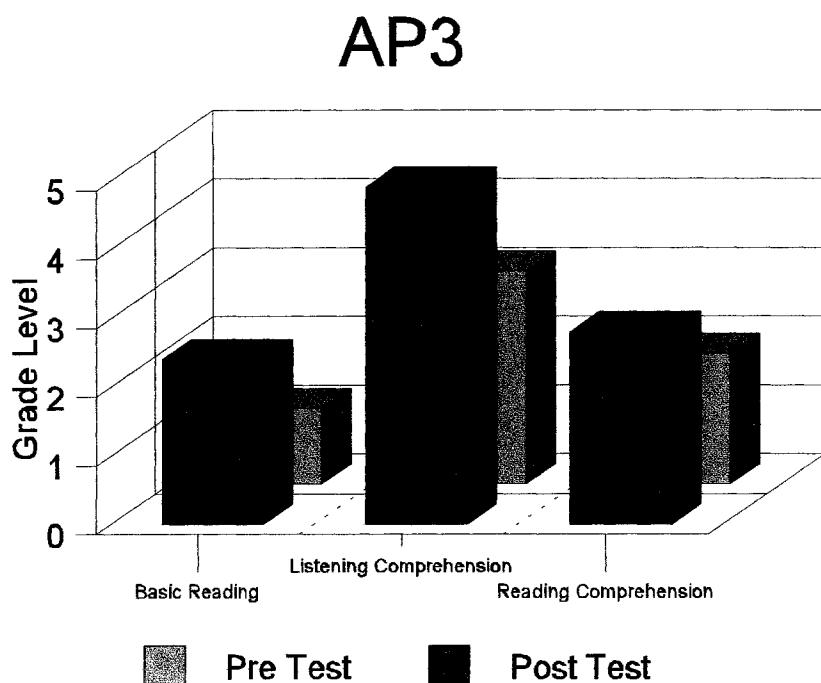
of orally presented words and passages. The passage is read to the child and the child responds orally to the questions asked (The Psychological Corporation, 1992).

Reading Comprehension: This subtest is designed for assessing the child's reading comprehension and is composed of a printed passage and an orally presented question. The child reads each passage, listen to the questions asked about it, and respond (The Psychological Corporation, 1992).

Pre-and Post-Reading Assessment Charts

Figure 1 represents a female child in grade three, age 9. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

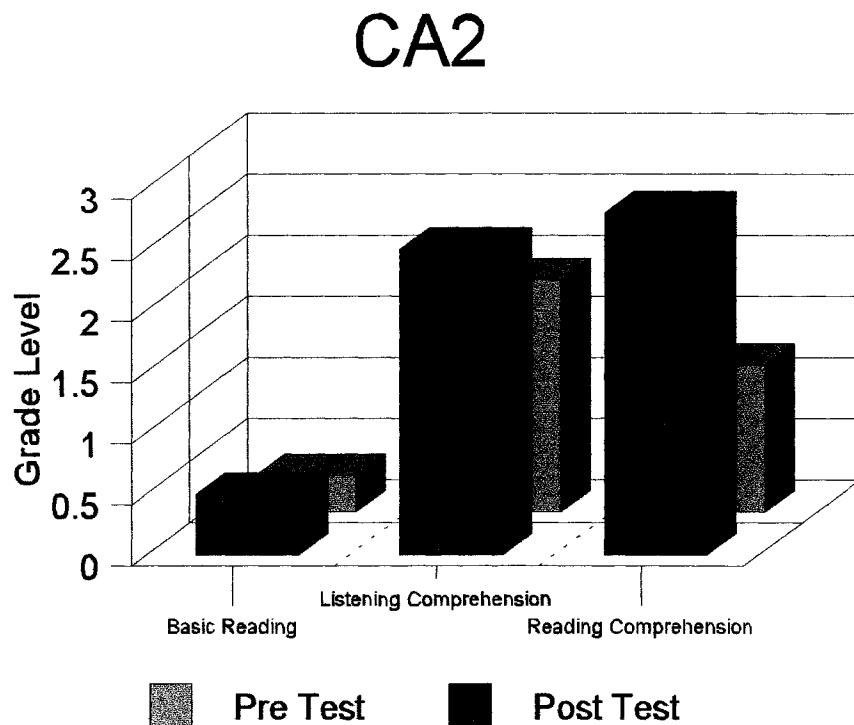
Figure 1



This child was assessed at 1.1 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.4 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at 3.1 grade level in the pre-test, and 4.9 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 1.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.8 in the post-test.

Figure 2 represents a female child in grade 2, age 7. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

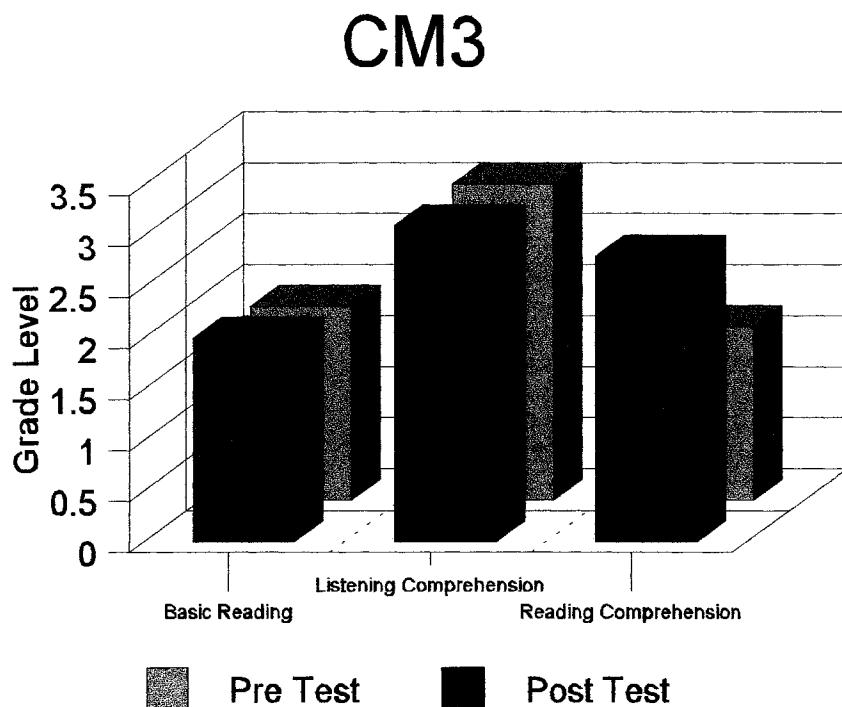
Figure 2



This child was assessed at 0.3 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.5 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at 1.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.5 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 1.2 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.8 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 3 represents a female child in grade 3, age 8. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

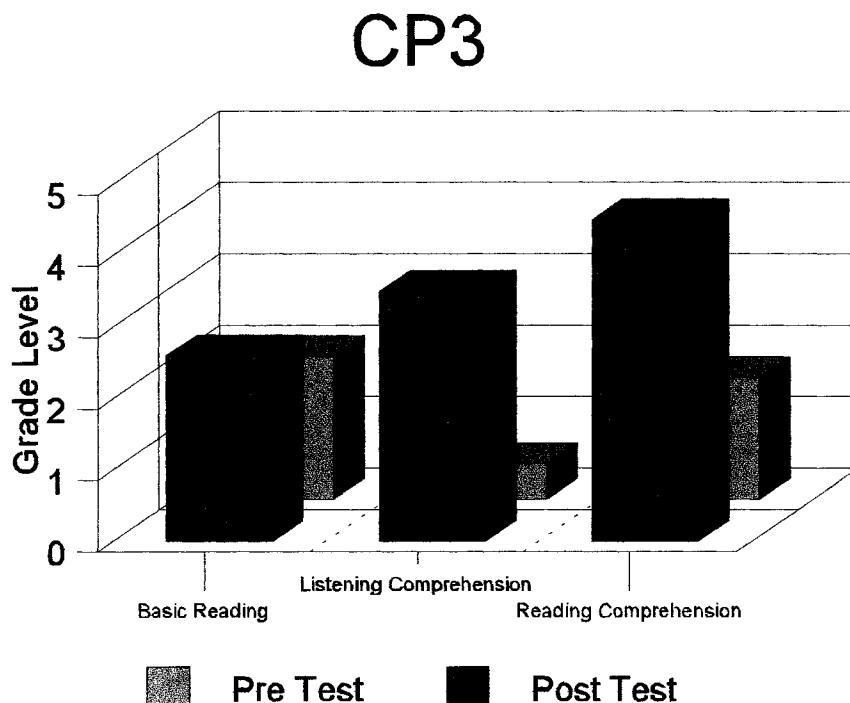
Figure 3



This child was assessed at 1.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at 3.1 grade level in the pre-test, and a 3.1 in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 1.7 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.8 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 4 represents a male child in grade 3, age 8. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

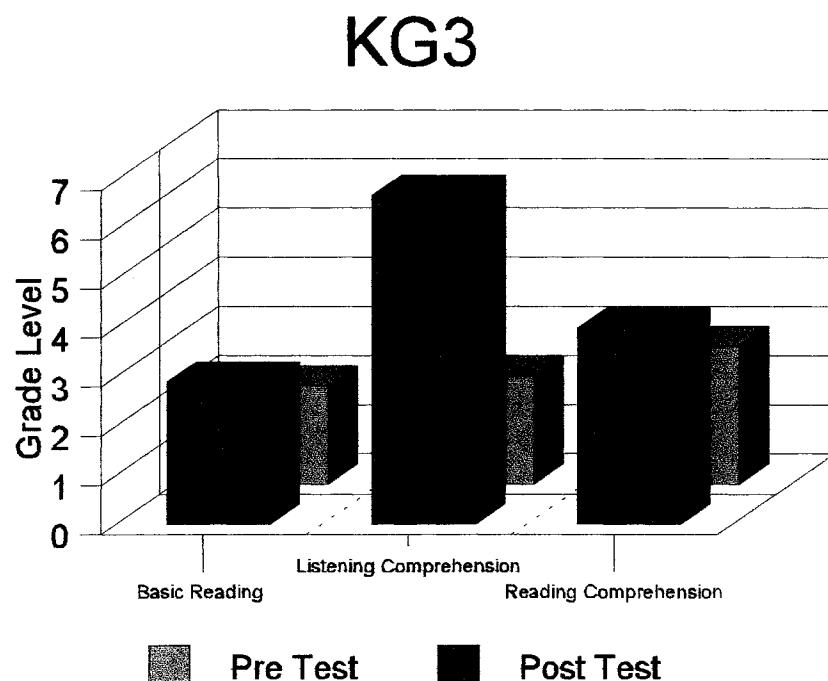
Figure 4



This child was assessed at a grade 2 level in the pre-test, and a 2.6 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 0.5 grade level in the pre-test, and a 3.5 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, he was assessed at a 1.7 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.8 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 5 represents a female child in grade 3, age 8. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

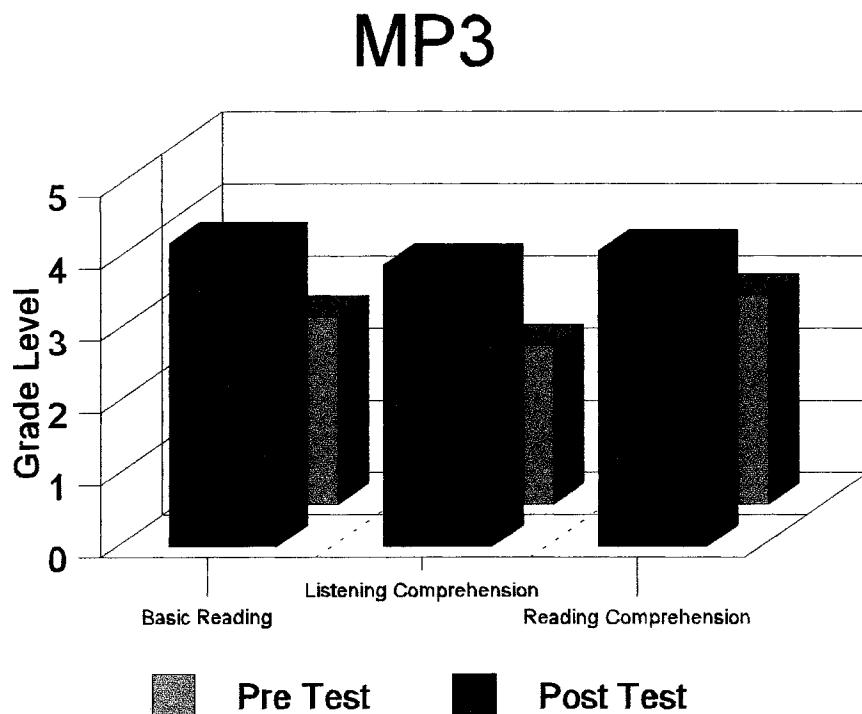
Figure 5



This child was assessed at a grade 2 level in the pre-test, and a 2.9 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 2.2 grade level in the pre-test, and a 6.7 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 2.8 grade level in the pre-test, and a grade 4 level in the post-test.

Figure 6 represents a female child in grade 3, age 7. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

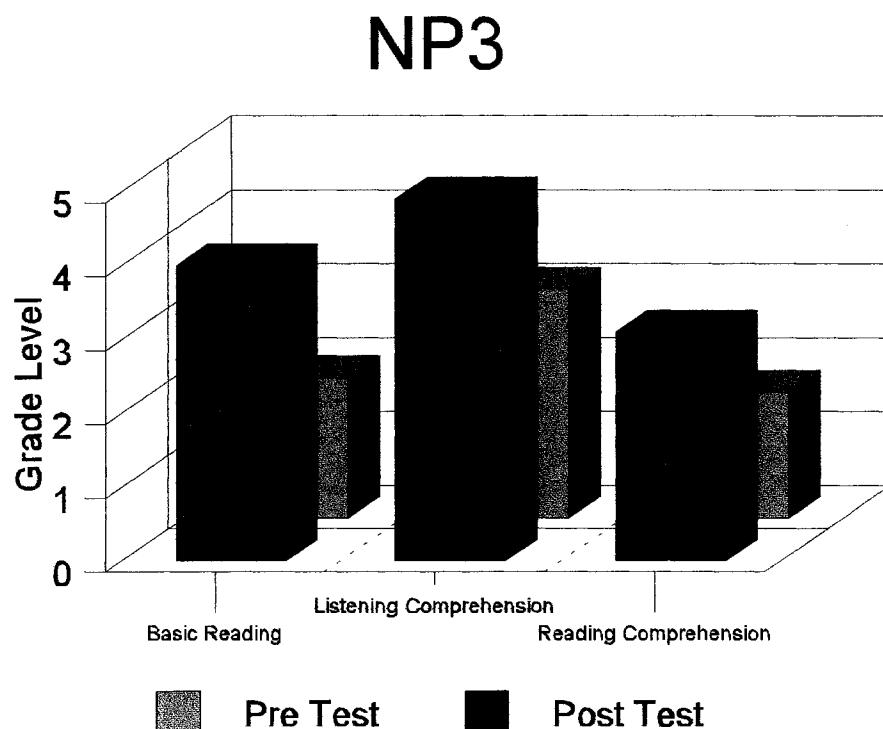
Figure 6



This child was assessed at a 2.6 grade level in the pre-test, and a 4.2 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 2.2 grade level in the pre-test, and a 3.9 grade level in the post-test. On the last area tested, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 2.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a 4.1 in the post-test.

Figure 7 represents a male child in grade 3, age 7. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

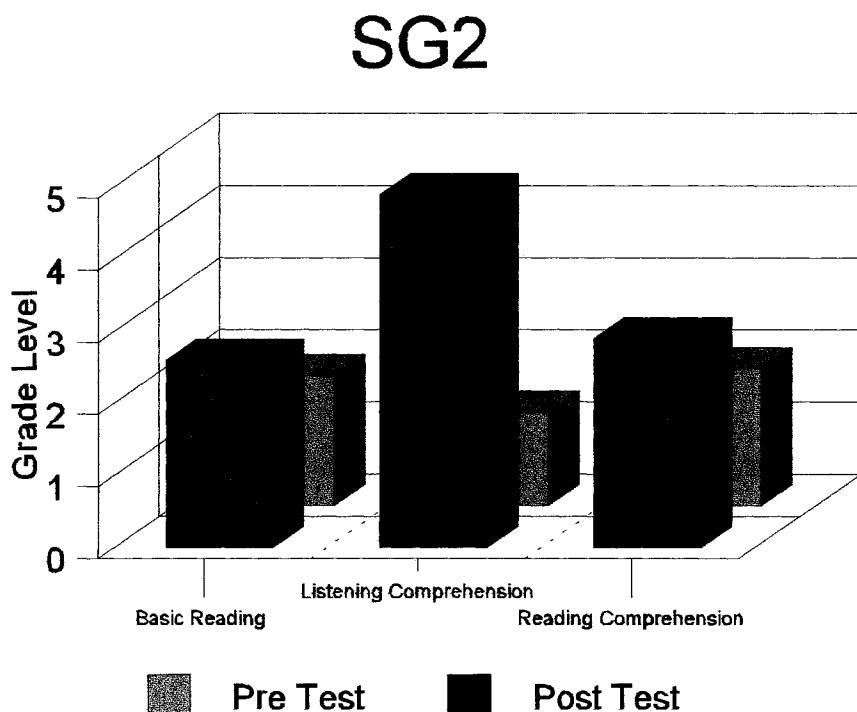
Figure 7



This child was assessed at a 1.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a grade 4 level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 3.1 grade level in the pre-test, and a 4.9 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, he was assessed at a 1.7 grade level in the pre-test, and a 3.1 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 8 represents a male child in grade 2, age 7. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

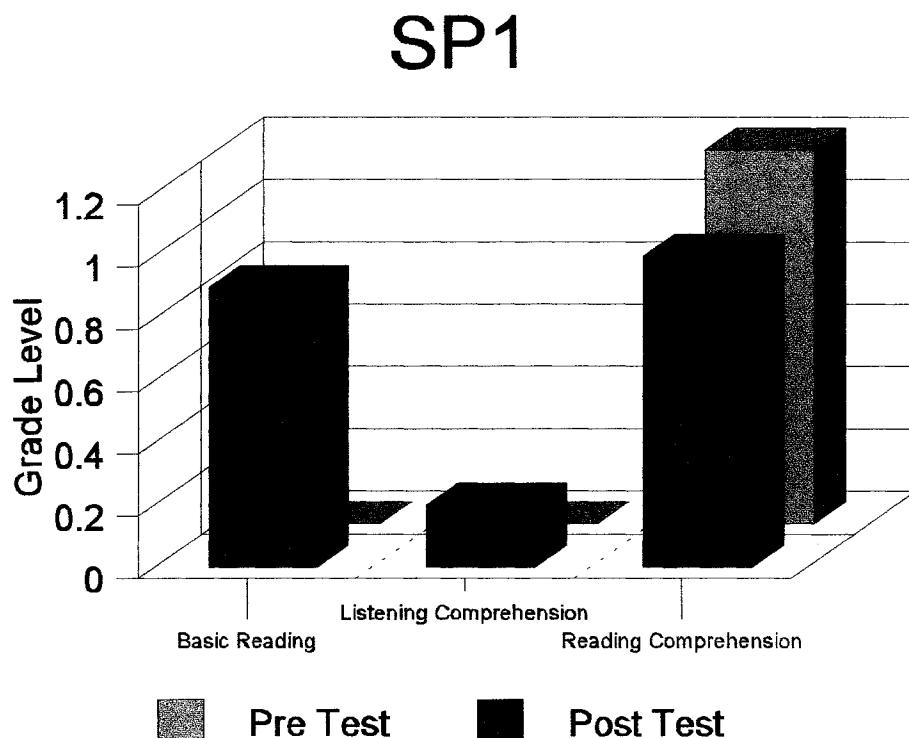
Figure 8



This child was assessed at a 1.8 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.6 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 1.3 grade level in the pre-test, and a 4.9 grade level in the post-test. On the last area tested, reading comprehension, he was assessed at a 1.9 grade level in the pre-test, and a 2.9 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 9 represents a male child in grade 1, age 6. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

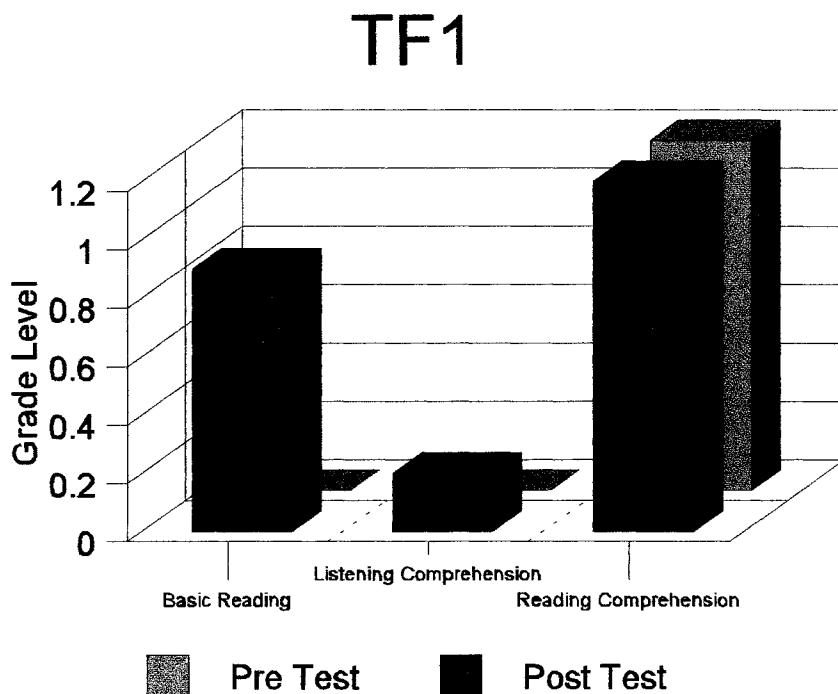
Figure 9



This child was assessed at 0 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.9 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at 0 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.2 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, he was assessed at a 1.2 grade level in the pre-test, and a grade 1 level in the post-test.

Figure 10 represents a male child in grade 1, age 5. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

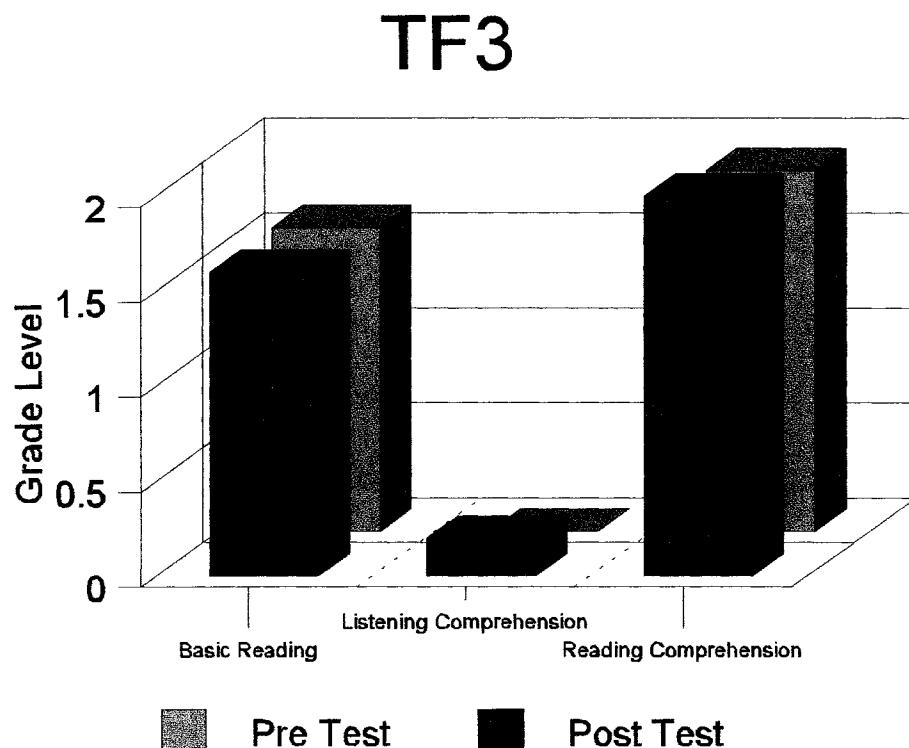
Figure 10



This child was assessed at a 0 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.9 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at 0 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.2 grade level in the post-test. On the last area tested, reading comprehension, he was assessed at a 1.2 grade level in the pre-test, and a 1.2 grade level in the post-test.

Figure 11 represents a female child in grade 3, age 9. It illustrates the results of the pre and post reading assessment tests administered. It exemplifies reading levels before the intervention and after the family literacy program was delivered.

Figure 11



This child was assessed at 1.6 grade level in the pre-test, and a 1.6 grade level in the post-test in the basic reading subtest. In the listening comprehension portion, this child was assessed at a 0 grade level in the pre-test, and a 0.2 grade level in the post-test. On the last area assessed, reading comprehension, she was assessed at a 1.9 in the pre-test, and a grade 2 level in the post-test.

Analysis of Graphs

These quantitative stats were included mainly to support the descriptive data that emerged from the families' interviews and evaluations. The increases in the reading levels validated some of the success the families claimed to have gained by attending. The qualitative data that transpired on the impact the program had on these families was the primary focus of this study.

The charts from the pre- and post-tests did however illustrate some interesting findings that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. What was noteworthy, however, was that three children made little or no gains in the areas tested, and their scores significantly reduced the overall mean scores of the group. Two of these children were just in the beginning stages of reading, and had just started Grade one. It was therefore hard to distinguish if they were weak or strong readers in the first 10 weeks of school. The third child was the child with the learning disability. She has been struggling academically since her first year of school. In determining the mean increase for each subtest, the ranges were therefore varied quite substantially in the post-test. In basic reading, the mean scores ranged from 0.5 - 4.2 grade levels. Listening comprehension scores ranged from 0.2 - 6.7 grade levels. The last subtest, reading comprehension, the scores ranged from 1 - 4.1 grade level increase. Over a ten week period, however, the increases in grade levels were substantial enough to include, and the parents were impressed with the gains their children made.

Themes from the Interviews and Evaluations

The next section of this chapter addresses the second question this thesis investigates: "What impact does a family literacy program have on families?" The evaluation process included

a written evaluation distributed and a follow-up interview conducted with both the parents and the children. Through the transcripts, common themes were identified. In the following, the findings are organized by themes from the interview questions and evaluation comments from the participants. To support the finding, verbatim quotes were provided from the participants to illustrate the emergent themes discussed.

Reasons for Attending

Increase Children's Reading Levels. Parents attended the program for a variety of reasons. The primary motive was to increase their children's reading and literacy levels. One parent commented "I wanted [my daughter] to get some extra help with reading, to help her develop some better reading skills." Several more parents supported this by stating "I just wanted to do anything more extra with reading"; "I thought it would advance [my daughter] as far as her reading went" and; "He needed help with his reading." Other parents felt their children's reading was adequate, but needed some motivational strategies to encourage their children to read more. Three parents affirmed: "I wanted [my son] to be able to enjoy reading"; "He would say things like "Oh can we do it later, can we do it later?" and; "It was just a chore to get him to pick up a book." Another parent was interested in receiving some homework advice. "The homework aspect thing kind of caught my eye too. To try to get some ideas for homework".

Running Out of Options. In support of these reading motives, a number of parents had tried other avenues, and did not know what else to do. These three quotes reflect their lack of options: "I really didn't know what to suggest for her to do"; "The biggest thing was, at the time, anything was worth a try"; and "Where were you guys a year ago? I would have loved to have

him in it before this". Another parent had been having academic challenges with her children for quite some time. "We've been having difficulties with schooling or whatever, and I thought that anything was worth a chance to help me with my kids." This same mother also said, "Someone else had seen it right away and they knew the trouble we were having with [my daughter]. We had been struggling quite hard and they told me about it, and I called immediately."

Tried Other Reading Programs. Some parents had tried other programs in the past, but had little success. One mother enrolled in various programs to demonstrate to her child's teacher and school that she was doing her part to try to improve her child's literacy skills.

I did the drop off part, just basically at the same place where you guys were, but downstairs, and I dropped them off, and I'm not lying, I went back and there was kids jumping from stacks of chairs, they were doing everything. It was like out of control. And I didn't stop from taking my child to it because the school was the one that contacted me for it, and I felt that if I didn't take her, they would say like you are not trying to help. So I did it.

Another parent expressed her frustration with another literacy program.

In the past, I usually got a quick couple of seconds from the tutor, because I mean by the time I picked him up there was another kid standing there waiting, so we didn't really get to talk too much.

Unsure What Strategies to Use. Other parents had attempted to help their children with their literacy challenges, but were unsure as to what strategies to employ. These two comments illustrate parent's uncertainty with helping their children: "I would just sort of give her the word. I knew that it wasn't the right way because that wasn't helping her anyways"; and "She was slower in reading, and I just wanted to try to help her along a little bit with it".

Program Satisfaction

Positive Experience. Throughout the reported findings, it was evident that the

participants had a positive experience with the family literacy program. The following are some of the statements made that support parent's enjoyment in participating: "It was a great program - something myself and my son did together and I really enjoyed the program"; "It was a pleasure for us to be there, it really was"; "Thanks so much for giving us the chance to come" and; "It was fun, definitely well worth it." Parents used these comments to describe their pleasure with the program: "awesome", "excellent, excellent"; and "Definitely like it's an excellent program."

Beneficial. The data indicated that the families involved not only enjoyed attending the program, but also found it beneficial to support their family's literacy challenges. These statements illustrate the families' perceived benefits: "I can't tell you how much the program has helped me"; "We really enjoyed it. Lots of info to use in the future. Thanks so much!"; and "We all got so much out of this". The families also attested that they appreciated the program content and set up: "You guys got a good program there"; "Very informative and well organized"; and "You guys did a very wonderful job."

Encouraging Others to Join. The parents spoke about telling others of the success they experienced with the program and encouraging other families to join. One mother commented:

I'm trying, I'm pushing the best that I can. I've told everybody about it. And the teachers. I am really good friends with a couple of the teachers at [my daughter's] school. And a few of them are really interested in my feedback as far as this went. So I'm trying to get the word out there as best I can.

My discussion with another parent reflected this theme as well. "I will make sure that I tell anyone who asks what a great program it was and we really enjoyed coming." One mother inquired about the program on behalf of other families that were interested.

... there must have been about 15 parents that asked me how they could get into this [program]. Everybody wants help with their children to get into this program to help them be better readers. They just didn't know where to go, or how to go about getting it.

There is a lot of parents that want to enroll their kids in it. People are interested, very much so up here.

Helpful to the Children. Another theme which emerged were the parent's views on how the program helped their children. One parent declared, "Well, I felt it did really good for my kids". Parents felt confident that the program was worthwhile for their struggling readers. "It's a good opportunity to have extra reading time." One mother shared this statement after being asked to describe the program: "It was a great program, and if your kids are struggling with a little bit of reading, definitely take it and you'll learn a lot from it, and you'll enjoy it a lot."

Use of Strategies

Strategies were Helpful. In the follow-up interview with the parents, one of the questions asked was regarding the use of strategies in the home. The parents unanimously agreed the strategies were helpful, and they were applying them at home with their children's reading. The following quotes support this: "I am practicing the strategies at home now always, always, always.;" "We do a lot of the strategies. They are practiced between [my daughter] and I, between [my daughter] and [my son] and myself"; "We've done the reading strategies" and; "I liked all of the little tricks that I can use to help him read better."

Employing Strategies. By employing the various strategies on a regular basis, some parents noticed an improvement in their child's literacy. One parent noted "We use your techniques all of the time. I notice a big difference in her." The following two quotes validate how useful the strategies were to their children: "I am doing a lot of the strategies. And it's helped. He is doing excellent.;" and "It really helps her out a lot, all of those little hints. And we still use them." One parent who took her beginning reader to the program was surprised at how

much he had gained in the elapsed time the program was offered. "It helped with [my son], I mean he is reading better, and I think he did get some strategies from it, for sure." This particular family enrolled because the older child in the family was having difficulties, and the parent took both of her children in hopes that her younger child might gain something from the program as well.

Specific Strategies. When parents spoke about using the reading strategies to help with their children's literacy, some parents brought up some specific strategies they found to be beneficial. The comprehension strategies were of particular use to some of the families: "Like now he's got the reading down, and the comprehension part we are working with, with some of the tactics that we learned from you guys"; and "We've been using a lot of the techniques where we stop and I ask him questions, and get him to look at the pictures etc." Two other families maintained that they now knew how to apply some of the decoding and phonics techniques learned in the program. "When she has a word, and I say, "Now you break it down into pieces", like you know like you guys used to do with chopping up the words, and we do that all of the time now"; and "Now I know what to do to help her when she gets stuck on a word."

Higher Value on Reading. The end result of the program to some of the parents was that they now place a higher value on reading and literacy. Through the program, they have realized the importance literacy holds in the lives of their children. These two quotes illustrate this: "I definitely make an extra effort to read now more than I did"; and "I guess I see now how important it is to read. I did not realize all of the information that was available."

Improvements in Reading

When asked if parents had noticed a change in their child's literacy and reading, all of the parents interviewed confirmed that they had perceived a change. When asked to elaborate upon the change, most of their responses fell into one of three common themes: improvements in reading, motivated and enjoying reading, and reading more often.

Noticed a Change in Reading. Improvements in reading was the most popular response given by parents. Parents said that in some cases they noticed a significant difference. One mother stated:

And really, as far as her reading goes, she really did come a long way with it. Because at night time, she even tries to read to [her brother]. It used to be that she would only read books that had pictures in them, now she is reading chapter books. It really done her a tremendous amount of good. She reads to me and I read to her. I love it!

Other parents noticed overall differences in their children's reading: "I have definitely seen a difference. I do, like I really do. I think it has been a change."; "Her reading has greatly improved"; and "[My daughter] has certainly picked up. She is picking up more and more." One parent noted that her child's teacher saw a change as well: "Her teacher has noticed a big difference in her." This parent was pleased with one particular aspect of reading that had improved. "Her sounding-out-words has improved a lot."

Motivation to Read Increased. Parents also observed that their children were either motivated to read more, or enjoyed reading more than they used to. Two parents said this about their children's new found interest in reading: "She now seems more interested in reading"; and "We couldn't believe when he wanted to read a book to us." These two parents believed that their children had gained an appreciation for reading: "At least now she seems to enjoy reading more. Before we could never get her to read at all"; and "I thought his attitude towards reading

has really changed.”

Reading More. In addition to learning about the perspective changes in improvements and motivation to read, the parents disclosed that their children were actually reading more for the most part. One parent proudly stated that “Before it used to be a struggle to get him to read a book.” She said he would always ask to do it later. But now, that’s the first thing he does when he gets home. It’s great!” A mother was also delighted to say that her daughter has improved and reads more now as a result of the program. “She became a really good reader after the program. She reads anything and everything now. She will read to me. Like pick up stories to read to me. Just lots of different things.” Parents noted that encouraging their children to read used to be a challenge. Now this task is becoming more manageable. The following example illustrates this: “Before she would say that “I don’t want to read that”, but now she will sit down and read more than she used to.”

Increasing Self-confidence

When parents indicated that their children were reading more often and had seen a noticeable difference in their literacy skills, some attributed this positive change to an increase in confidence in their children. Parents also noted that they had received confidence in themselves as a result of the program as well.

Increase in Self-Confidence. A large majority of the parents maintained that their children’s self confidence in reading has improved as a outcome of the program. This was evident with this particular child: “Like when I tell him to come and read, he is kind of almost excited. Sometimes he will even come and ask me to see if he could read me a book. I never had that

before. He is not scared to read now." Other parents commented: "...and all the helpful hints that you guys gave us gave her confidence to go on and keep reading"; "His confidence has greatly improved"; and "[My daughter] reads with a lot more confidence now."

Realization that Others Experienced Similar Challenges

The issue of knowing that children and parents were not alone in their reading challenges was a common thread throughout the interviews. The parents said that their children were pleased to know that other children had similar reading difficulties. A mother said this of her daughter: "It gave her more incentive to read, and more confidence in herself, and when she realized that there were other kids out there like her, she felt she wasn't alone anymore, and it was okay to struggle a little bit." Another parent felt the same of her daughter. "She got to see that there were other kids there like her who were having problems reading. It just wasn't her."

Confidence and Support. Parents also said they received confidence and support as a result of the program. This quote shows the support that one parent felt: "I liked knowing I wasn't the only parent who had a child who found reading difficult. Other parents and children have problems also." These next two statements illustrate the same point: "I enjoyed meeting with the other parents and knowing I wasn't alone. We all seem to have the same problems"; and "I got to see that there were other parents and kids who were struggling the same as we were. Just moral support." Parents also gained confidence in themselves in assisting their children with their literacy: "It helped me a lot too. To know what to do with him if he had a problem and that."

Families Learning Together

An underlying theme that was prevalent throughout the interviews were that the parents and children were learning together as a family. The families liked the program structure where the direct-child, direct-adult, and the parent and child together time was implemented. The parents also made mention of the benefits they received from the program. It offered the parents an opportunity to enhance the children's literacy levels in a holistic manner using hands-on strategies. The families enjoyed the time they spent together learning, and this was evident in the statements they made.

Structure of the Program. Both parents and children responded well with the structure of the program. The aspect they primarily enjoyed was that both parent and child attended. "Like, you are not singled out where it's just the parent going, or just the child going. I really liked that idea." One mother commented on the effectiveness of this design. "He loved that I was involved and we both went every week. I think it was more effective that I went too as opposed to just dropping him off alone." Another parent appreciated that she had the chance to experience what the children were learning first-hand. "I liked the format because I felt that at least I was seeing what they were doing. And have the chance to work with her, too."

Parents were Educated on How to Help. The parents claimed that the program was not only beneficial to their children, it offered them a chance to educate themselves on how to help their children. This was supported by the following statements: "It has taught me as well how to be of better assistance to my kids.;" "It helped me the most. I can understand how to teach her to read better"; and "I really do believe that the help for us was good too."

Learning Together. The most common theme that was depicted was that the families

valued the time they spent learning together. This was stated time and time again by all of the parents involved. These three parents enjoyed that they spent time together: "It was the best thing we could have done. Doing something together"; "I think it was great for us to have something to do together"; and "It is a good opportunity to have involvement with both the parent and the child." These two mothers stated that their children liked having their mothers present and learning with them: "I think he liked the fact that mom was involved"; and "He thought it was so cool that me and mommy got to go to school together." One mother summed up the underlying message that was portrayed: "It was a great learning experience, both for children and parents."

Parent's Perceptions of Children's Enjoyment

Throughout the interviews, parents repeatedly brought up how much their children enjoyed attending and looked forward to each week. This was mentioned without even being asked about their children's opinions. As cited in the last section, the children were pleased that their parents were part of the program, and enjoyed coming to the weekly sessions. The following are the parent's perceptions of their children's responses to the program.

Children's Enjoyment. Numerous parents spoke of their child's enjoyment. The following are some of the typical accounts from parents with regard to this: "My child loved to come to the literacy group and enjoyed every minute"; "It was something that he looked very forward to every week. He enjoyed it"; and "My child enjoyed it and her reading has improved greatly." The parents spoke about other literacy programs their children attended in comparison, and stated that their children enjoyed this one more. "He told me that it's the best one that he's been to yet because he has been to a few, cause he usually has a tutor all summer too." One

mother told me about the resistance she encountered each week taking her to a tutor. It was an accomplishment for her to tell me: "She never once said that "I don't want to go. I felt that she enjoyed it." Another parent who went through a similar encounter felt the same way: "You don't have to fight with the kids to get them to go, and that was a big thing." Other parents just simply stated: "He loved it.;" "He enjoyed every minute of it and so did I"; and "He loved going every week."

Children's Perceptions

The children were also interviewed to address their perception of the impact of the family literacy program. The researcher interviewed each child separately after the program and the general theme from their responses was positive. The themes fell into two categories: what they liked about the program, and what they learned.

Enjoying the Program. The children were asked what they liked about the program, and their responses varied. Numerous children thought it was fun: "It was a lot of fun"; "It was fun and you could make new friends, people from other schools"; and "It's was fun and you learned to read." Others focused on the educational content of the program and said things like: "I liked when we got to learn"; "Reading books"; "Being read to"; and "Learning." Another child was recalling his experiences with other reading and tutoring programs and stated: "There was nothing that I don't like about it. It was the funnest place I went to yet." One child simply described his experience as: "I liked all of it."

Gaining More Confidence. The children were also asked what specifically they learned as a result of the program. Their answers varied from gaining more confidence, to learning specific

strategies, to reading in general. This child describes what the program taught her to do when she is struggling with decoding: "Sometimes there's really hard words in books, and it helped me sound the words out." Adding to this, this child reported an improvement in fluency: "[I learned] to read faster." This next quote represents a child who gained confidence reading in a group: "I learned to read out loud."

Motivation to Read. Children wanting to read more was another theme that prevailed. One child declare "It was very good cause I like reading now." The child who was enrolled in French Immersion was pleased to tell the researcher: "[I learned] how to read in English." Other children simply maintained that they learned: "How to read better", "Hard words" and, "To read".

Challenges

Keeping Group on Task. Although the program was quite well attended and the general attitude was positive, there were some challenges. Some parents were more vocal than others and equal opportunities were not always given for everyone to contribute. Another issue of contention from a facilitator's point of view was keeping the group on task to the module content to carry out the required activities. The parents were quite vocal with their ideas and comments and it was sometimes difficult to keep focused. The parents occasionally had their own agendas as to what concerns they wanted to discuss. This was a strong point as it showed their eagerness to be involved in the process of perfecting the program with their suggestions.

Behavioral Issues. Another challenge both facilitators endured was during the parent and child together time, it was difficult to address behavioral issues with the children with their parents present. Some children would disrupt the entire group, and it was hard to the facilitator to

intervene.

Modifying the Activities. Finally, one of the last challenges the facilitator of the child component faced was modifying the activities to suit all of the age ranges and ability levels of the group. Books of various reading levels were utilized, and some of the older or stronger readers assisted in helping the younger or weaker readers with the outlined activities.

Other Challenges. The participants also faced numerous other challenges. One of the most common complaints from parents was getting the children ready and out the door. This was especially true for families with preschool children. Another complaint was the issue of completing the children's homework prior to attending the session. If it was left to after the session, it was usually too late in the evening to start, and the children were unmotivated to do so at that time.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings from the reading assessment tests and the analysis from the interviews and evaluations were presented. The reading assessments demonstrated that the children made gains in their reading levels in all three areas tested. The analysis from the descriptive data concluded that the parents were positive about the impact the family literacy program had on their families. Through the parent's voices, they reported a difference in the reading levels and motivation of their children, were using the strategies taught, enjoyed the time spent together learning as a family and their families thoroughly enjoyed attending. These findings will be discussed in Chapter Five and links will be made to studies which support the data found.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Overview

The intention of this study was to investigate the impact of a family literacy program on families in rural Prince Edward Island. The research questions that guided to study were:

- 1) How does family literacy intervention impact on the reading levels of the children in grades 1 - 3?
- 2) What impact does a family literacy program have on families?

Reading assessment tests, interviews and written evaluations were the sources of data.

Reading assessments were administered and interviews were conducted with all eleven children involved. Evaluations were completed by all ten parents, and follow up interviews were carried out with nine of the parents. Results from the assessment tests indicated that the children made reading gains in the ten week period. The qualitative data from the interviews and evaluations illustrated that the parents were pleased with the impact the family literacy program had on their families.

In this chapter, the results of this study will be discussed in relation to the literature. The limitations to the study will be reviewed, and recommendations for further research in the area of family literacy will be made.

Family literacy programs offer families opportunity, support and equip them with the literacy strategies they need to help their children succeed. These programs promote change in the accustomed methods of teaching literacy to their children and bring the family closer together as a learning unit. Family literacy is a tool to accomplish everyday activities that families deem important to their lives and to broaden their worlds in new directions (Neuman, Caperelli & Kee, 1998). Evidence from this study suggests that family literacy programing not only enhances the child's literacy, but is a social event that is enjoyed by both parents and children. The following is validation from the literature that supports the claims made in this study.

Enhancing Reading Levels of Children

Findings from this study indicate that this family literacy program has a positive influence on the reading levels of the children involved. Data from the pre-and post-reading assessment tests are discussed and links are made to similar studies from other literature.

Family literacy programs have been proven to increase reading levels in standardized test scores. Saracho (2002) engaged in a study that found important differences in a variety of reading tests between children whose parents participated in a family literacy program and those whose parents do not. The premise of this study was to have parents attend each session with their child. All of the children assessed showed gains in their reading and literacy over the ten week period. This finding is supported in several more research studies.

In a study by Jordan et al. (2000), children whose families engaged in literacy activities learned in a family literacy program made significantly greater gains in language scores as measured on subtests of vocabulary and comprehension. Reading and listening comprehension

and vocabulary were the areas this assessment tested. Without exception, all of the children involved made gains in at least one of these areas tested. In support of this, Tice (2000) conducted a study of school aged children attending family literacy programs and found improved performance in standardized test scores.

The National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, KY (1994) carried out a study on the effectiveness of family literacy programs. It compared literacy programs that focused only on the child or the adult with family literacy programs. It concluded that children in family literacy programs made more literacy gains and learned more than children in child-focused programs. As already alluded to previously in this paper, the parents indicated their pleasure with the program's structure numerous times throughout the program and in the interviews. This emerged through the analysis of the transcripts. The findings from the assessments support this claim that reading gains were made.

The following section will be an analysis of the impact the program had on the children's assessment test results. It will be categorized by subtest.

Analysis of Subtests

Oftentimes an assessment does not fairly determine what skills a student does and does not possess. There may be a variety of reasons for which a student does not achieve their full potential on a reading assessment test. An influence on a test score may be the child's unwillingness to take risks, to trust and cooperate with a relatively unfamiliar adult, and to give substantial effort to tasks (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). Another reason may be differences in skills, characteristics and abilities a student brings to the task may affect the assessment process

(Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). A student's performance could be a result of the environment in which the student is assessed (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). The outcome of the test could be skewed if there were diversions present that distracted the student from fully concentrating. For example, when the pre-tests were administered in the home, competing stimuli such as the television, or the presence of a parent could effect their response. Lastly, the student might be tired or unmotivated to be tested at the time of the assessment, and this could affect the outcome. Every student is different, and a variety of factors could affect the result of the assessment.

Adding to all of these, assessments are not always an accurate measure of achievement. There is also the factor that the children were attending school at the same time the program was being offered. This factor influences the achievement the children incurred during the program. This program might have been one of the reasons the children made reading gains, but the learning and instruction the children encountered on a daily basis in school also may have had an impact on their test scores.

Basic Reading

The basic reading subtest revealed that 91% of the children tested showed an increase in their reading levels. One child out of the 11 children tested stayed at the same level as in the pre test. The range varied from 0.1 - 2.1 grade levels. The total mean increase was 0.9 grade levels over the 10 weeks.

Basic reading strategies were taught in all 10 sessions. Each evening the children engaged in reading and writing activities which involved decoding and phonics strategies. One entire module focused on effective decoding and phonics techniques. The children had to predict, sound

out and decode words independently in each activity of each session. This may have involved simply reading directions, or during silent or oral reading to the group or with their parents. This module was offered early in the program so the children and parents could engage in the strategies throughout the program. This was also to ensure that parents could practice these strategies at home with their children. In a study by Benjamin (1993), it concluded that parental involvement based on a model of children reading to their parents on a regular basis made greater gains than children receiving an equivalent amount of extra reading instruction by reading specialists at the school.

There may be a variety of reasons for the fluctuating test scores. The child NP3 who showed the most significant change, a 2.1 grade level increase, was in resource help at school at the time the program was being offered. A combination of resource help and the reading program may have caused the dramatic increase, or simply that this child was feeling confident on the day the test was administered. This also suggests that a home and school collaboration is effective. The majority of the children, which composed 63% of the sample, showed an average increase of 1 grade level. Most of the parents all stated in their interviews that they practiced the strategies at home on a regular basis. One grade level over a 10 week period can be interpreted as successful.

Not all of the increases were substantial. The child who showed one of the smallest changes, CA2, was in the French immersion program. Prior to the program, she only read a limited amount of English books, and her mother indicated that the books she brought home to read were mostly in French. She was at the beginning stages of decoding and phonics instruction even though she was in grade two. However, her mother thought it was beneficial to attend the program as it gave her a basis of English reading that she will be encountering in school in the

near future. It was also helpful for the mother to attend to obtain the strategies in order to assist her in her reading.

The child TF3, showed no increase. Her pre and post assessment levels were the same. This particular child has a learning disability. A student's performance can be affected by the presence of a disability (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). This might have had some bearing on her assessment score. This child also had auditory and visual problems. Vision and hearing limitations have implications for instruction and assessment (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). Some students with disabilities have sensory limitations that can have a significant impact on test performance (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). A test measures the student's ability to receive a stimulus and respond. A skill cannot be measured if meeting the stimulus and response demands of a question is beyond the capabilities of the student (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). Regardless of the assessment results, her mother felt that she had showed some improvement at home, and she was reading more often with her. When I conducted the interview with her mother, she said: "[My daughter] has certainly picked up. She is picking up more and more."

Listening Comprehension

The listening comprehension subtest established that 91% of the children tested showed an increase in this area. One child out of the 11 children stayed at the same level as in the pre test. The range varied from 0.2 - 4.5 grade levels. The mean increase was 1.6 grade levels.

Listening comprehension was an element in all of the modules taught as well as the focus of one entire module. Each module contained listening instruction to receive direction to advance in further activities. For example, in guided reading activities, the parent and child would read

together and the parent would stop, ask children questions, and employ prediction strategies. The children's facilitator also incorporated oral reading on a regular basis where she would employ comprehension strategies. At the end of each session, if time permitted, the parents and children would engage in a book during the parent/child time. They were also encouraged to make this a part of their everyday routine at home.

This area showed the most substantial increase of the three levels tested. This may be largely due to the increased desire parents had to read to their children. This was one of the key messages the program tried to promote. To have parent and child interactions that enhance reading and literacy and transfer the skills learned to their home environment was of primary importance. The parents talked about reading to their children more often, employing the strategies and realizing the importance of doing so. One parent said, "I definitely make an extra effort to read now more than I did." The parents read to and with the children remembering to pause, ask questions, make predictions and discuss the story. These were not normally strategies they engaged in prior to the program. One parent simply stated, "I guess I see now how important it is to read."

There may have been various reasons for the differentiating test scores. One child, KG3, showed the most improvement of all the children tested. She increased 4.5 grade levels. The reason for this may be due to her mother's determination to enhance her reading levels. She would ensure that she read to and with her daughter religiously everyday using the strategies. She was the parent who was quoted saying, "I am practicing the strategies at home now always, always, always." This parent's sister was also part of the program and she and her sister shared the same determination that had an impact her son's literacy. He showed the second highest

increase of 3.6 grade levels.

The majority of the children, which composed 72% of the sample, showed an average increase of a 0.8 grade level increase. Three of the children, the remaining 28% of the sample, including the child with the learning disability, showed only a slight increase of 0.2 grade levels. For unknown reasons, only one child, CM3, did not show an increase in this area.

Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension subtest demonstrated that 82% of the children tested showed an increase in their reading in this area. The same three children again, showed little or no gains. One child out of the 11 children tested stayed at the same level as in the pre-test. One child showed a decrease. The range varied from 0.1 - 1.6 grade levels. The mean increase was 0.9 grade levels.

Reading comprehension was a component of most of the modules as they all contained an element of independent reading. Reading comprehension was found in activities such as readers's theater, guided reading, shared and paired reading, retelling, story maps, literature circles, and word recognition strategies. As mentioned Reading and listening comprehension strategies coincided with each other. It appeared, however, that listening comprehension showed more of an improvement than reading comprehension. This may validate the notion of the benefits the parents gained from attending the program. An increase in listening comprehension may have been a direct result of parents taking more of an involvement in their children's reading. Reading comprehension is a result of children reading independently. Families may have become more involved in learning and reading together.

Again, there may have been various reasons for the fluctuation in scores. The majority of the children, or 64%, showed an average increase of 1 grade level. The child with the learning disability, TF3, showed an improvement of 0.1 grade levels. One child remained the same, and one child showed a decrease. I do not have any solid explanation for these scores other than all three of these children showed the least amount of change in comparison to the rest of the children consistently in all three subtests. Two of these three, TF1 and SP1 were early readers in grade one, and the youngest in the group, and just being introduced to the concepts of reading.

Impact of the Literacy Program on Families

Voices of the families were heard through the interviews and evaluations conducted. It was made evident that parents were facing challenges with their children's literacy. By attending the program, they found enjoyment in helping their children and their children reciprocated the feeling by wanting to attend. Parents felt supported in their efforts to enhance their children's literacy, and placed a higher value on reading as compared to before the literacy program.

Parents attended the program for a variety of motives. The promise of helping a child succeed in school is the initial reason parents become involved in a family literacy program (Nistler & Maiers, 2000). In this research study, this was the primary intention of the majority of the families. Some of the children in this study were struggling academically, and parents saw this program as an opportunity to provide assistance. In a study by Handel (1999), it was found that parents were concerned for their children's welfare, engaged in literacy practices, and utilized appropriate help. These parents were willing to try something new to help with their children. They also expressed a need for direction on how to support their children with literacy. Ensuring

that parents have the operational skills and an understanding of what reading to children requires, the ways it can be done, and the likely consequences is the primary aim of family literacy programs (Handel, 1999). Parents in this study read to their children, but many did not know what reading entailed. They realized that their children were having trouble with literacy, and knew reading was an important component in the lives of their children, however, they were unsure how to help them. One frustrated mother stated, "Anything was worth a try."

Other families did not see any reading challenges with their children, just lacked motivation to read. In a study by Padak et al. (2002), it was found that children indicated an increased interest in literacy activities as a result of attending a family literacy program. These increased interests in reading were the aspirations of the families in this program. They signed up for the program to learn motivational strategies to encourage their children to read and enjoy reading more. They hoped this program would be a way for them to enhance their children's existing reading skills.

This research project brought enjoyment to the families who participated in the program. In a study by McNicol and Dalton (2002), it was found that one of the most important benefits of family literacy programming was the pleasure the parents gained from attending. It was reported that the parents liked the classes, were enthusiastic about attending, and saw the program as a social event. The families in this study indicated this numerous times throughout the course of the program and, also in the evaluations and interviews, their pleasure in attending the weekly sessions. One mother's comments supports this by stating, "It was fun, definitely well worth it." Morrow (1997) found during post program interviews with parents that they talked about enjoying the work they were doing with their children and learning new ideas for helping them.

Many of the parents in this study stated that they appreciated that the learning strategies assisted their children with reading and literacy. This was supported by this mother's statement, "We really enjoyed it, lots of info to use in the future." Handel (1999) reported that the enjoyment and interest parents felt in attending the sessions in a family literacy program were a subject of frequent comment. The opportunity to interact with other adults and the participatory nature of the sessions were of particular appeal to the parents (Handel, 1999). This study produced similar results with the parents expressing their opinions and interacting with others. The program brought the parents closer together and they were respectful to listen to each other's comments and suggestions. In a study by Nistler and Maiers (2000), they uphold this claim by finding that friendships were built with others and interactions gave parents the opportunity to talk about personal experiences and to express their thoughts and opinions in a nonthreatening and caring environment.

The children also expressed their fondness towards the program. This was not only evident in their interview, or what they indicated to their parents, it was illustrated in their actions. One parent told us that throughout the week if her child was misbehaving, she would forewarn her that if she did not behave, they would not be attending the reading program that week. She said that her daughter loved going so much that she would adhere to her mother's requests. Another child was on the family's potato farm one day during harvesting and an accident occurred. His hand had gotten caught in a piece of machinery and was completely crushed. He still insisted on coming to the reading program even though he was not attending school. At his request, he and his mother were present at our program, with his hand bandaged and his arm in a sling, just three days after the accident occurred.

As an unanticipated result of this study, parents reported an increase in their own self-confidence in their ability to help their children. Adults must have a positive integrated self-image in order to feel confident enough to assist their children with their school work. A study by Seaman and Yoo (2001) found that parent's experiences in a family literacy program enabled them to significantly improve their self confidence. Parents in this study maintained, initially, that they wanted to improve the literacy of their children, but were unsure how to achieve this. After participating in the program, they claimed that they became more involved in their children's reading because the strategies they were shown provided them with confidence to do so. "It helped me a lot too. To know what to do with him if he had a problem and that," one mother stated. Anderson (1994) analyzed various studies conducted by the National Center of Family Literacy and concluded that adults are participating in the education of their children more often and feel better about themselves as a result of engaging in family literacy programs. These are the same results that participants found in this study.

In addition to helping their children, parents appreciated the support they received from others in similar situations in the program. The Even Start Family Literacy program (1998), found that parents are provided with opportunities to connect and bond and to develop mutual support systems with others in a family literacy program. The parents in this study were pleased to know that they were not alone in their struggles with their children's literacy. One parent summed this up by stating, "We all seemed to have the same problems."

Parents in this study disclosed that not only did they learn strategies to read with their children, they also now place a higher value on reading and literacy. In a study by Saracho (2001), children's reading performance was correlated with the value placed on reading by their

parents. By attending the family literacy program, children were able to see the value their parents placed on reading, and made literacy a priority in their lives by attending as a family. As a result, an increased awareness of the importance of books and reading was achieved. One parent commented after the program had ended, "I definitely make extra effort to read now more than I did." Parent participation in family literacy programs leads to a greater respect for children's literacy and a better understanding of the parent's role in a child's education (Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002).

The program had such a strong impact on some of the families that they not only told other families of the positive outcomes they incurred, they also proclaimed they would take it again if offered. This mother stated in the post program interview, "If I was able to do it again, I would have." This mother supported the same claim by stating, "If any other ones come up, call me and let me know." This parent quite simply affirmed at the end of the interview, "I wish we could come again."

Improvements in Reading

As the reading assessment tests indicate, children's reading levels increased in this study. By making reading a priority, the parents noticed a difference in their child's reading as a result of the program. Practices in the home such as shared reading, reading aloud, making a variety of print materials available, and promoting positive attitudes toward literacy, have been found to have a significant impact on children's literacy learning (Morrow & Paratore, 1993). Such practices were encouraged repeatedly in the program through guided reading, oral and silent reading, and shared and paired reading activities.

Parents reported that they used the literacy strategies on a regular basis. They attribute these strategies to the success they identified in their children's reading. The greater the parent involvement with their child, the greater the child's progress (Anderson, 1994). The results of a study by Handel (1999) indicated that parents employ many of the interactive strategies about reading they learned in the family literacy program. This was made apparent in this study as well with the majority of the parents disclosing that they use the literacy strategies at home with their children on a regular basis. The study by Handel (1999) also denoted that as a result of a family literacy program, parents now gain more insight, and interact more with their children during reading than before. Parents in this study also shared the same opinion. Prior to the program, some read to their children for the sake of reading. Now these parents understand how to get the most benefit from reading with and to their children. Amstutz (2000) supports this by claiming that parents who ask questions, stop and talk about the pictures, and use interactive oral strategies in addition to actually reading the words further their children's literacy. Such strategies were the practices taught throughout the program.

Experimental studies to teach parents strategies to help their children with reading have been largely successful (Mikulecky, 1996). Mikulecky (1996) evaluated the impact of family literacy programs in five cities and found that significant gains were documented in parent-child home reading and in children's literacy activities. Parents in this study made similar contentions. The parents revealed during the interviews that their children were not only reading more often and their motivation had increased, but their reading skills were also improving. This parent's account of her daughter's new attitude toward reading illustrates this: "She will pick up the book, and read it to us, and it's not near the struggle as it used to be beforehand." Specific skills such as

decoding and comprehension were mentioned as showing improvements as well. Other parents were pleased that it no longer seemed like a chore for them to read together.

Families Learning Together

Research in the past decade shows that parent-child interactions are important. Relationships between children's developing literacy and adult literacy modeling, oral explanations, and forms of reinforcement are relationships that go significantly beyond mere correlations (Amstutz, 2000). Families working together to learn together is the primary underpinning of this study. Families implied numerous times over the course of the program that they enjoyed the time spent with their children in a learning environment. The following comment represents one of the parent's thoughts on this: "Just even a night out with her, like just to kind of do something to help her."

In a study by Handel (1999), participants consistently talked about how the family literacy program promoted family togetherness. In this study, parents reported that the strategies and skills taught were brought home to practice which brought their families closer. Reading at bedtime became a part of their daily routine that both parents and children looked forward to. Parents were confident that they developed the necessary skills to read with their children properly, and maintained that they did so on a regular basis.

When parents and children spend time together, parents encourage their children to achieve success with their education, and, in turn, renewed their self-confidence in the literacy potential with their children. "The reciprocal learning that takes place during this time offers parents and children a chance to become true partners in education" (Even Start Family Literacy,

1998). Enriching and promoting this relationship are the reasons why families in this program enjoyed their experience. This was made apparent in the many comments made throughout the program, and in the evaluations and interviews. This comment validates one parent's feeling on the program's structure: "We really enjoyed the program and my daughter and I really liked coming each week." Adults' confidence increases as they engage their children in learning, which strengthens the perception of the parents' value of education as viewed by their children (Even Start Family Literacy, 1998). Parents in this study appreciated the opportunity to learn the skills to help their children, and then implemented them immediately following. Anderson (1994) found that parents in family literacy programs report closer bonds with their children and realized how important their role as their child's first teacher really is. Programs which offer a combination of teaching for parents, children and a component for both raises confidence, prevent failure and break the cycle of under-attainment (Hannon, 2000).

Family literacy programs work with two generations to maximize the effects of education for children, therefore, creating a home environment that both supports and enhances learning (Hannon, 2000). Making reading more enjoyable for the children by providing parents with reading strategies to engage children in reading at home was one of the primary aims of the program. Children become more fluent and positive about reading when parent-child dyads perceive reading as fun, provide questions, and cultivate humor during reading (Saracho, 2001). This parent's comment at the end of the program supports this: "The program gives great ideas to make reading fun for children who find it difficult. It has lots of interesting ideas." Encouraging parents to implement the strategies in the home is crucial as the success of family literacy programs lies in the parents' desire to read to their children (Padak, Sapin, & Baycich, 2002).

For more than three decades, studies have shown that children's literacy is developed when family members engage in reading to and with children (Saracho, 2001). Parental involvement is essential in children's learning. Parent/child interactions are what this study encourages to enhance the educational possibilities of the children. Research on family literacy focus on two major concepts on literacy learning in the home: 1) family members need to have knowledge of literacy instruction that encourages the children to acquire, develop and use literacy and; 2) the home environment must provide a positive influence on children's literacy development by providing books, encouraging reading and having positive role models (Saracho, 2001). This study equipped the parents with this literacy instruction on a weekly basis to implement at home with their children. At the beginning of the following week's session, time was spent to discuss with the parents if the strategies were employed, and how effective they perceived them to be. Each week parents were proud to disclose how often the strategies were implemented. This parent's thoughts on this were: "I liked knowing how to go about it learning and reading." Studies indicate significantly higher scores for children whose parents provide and participate in literacy activities than parents who do not (Saracho, 2001). Findings from a study by Padak et al. (2002) indicates that family literacy programs are built on the premise that the home is a crucial learning environment for children and literacy learning at the family level increases the children's chances for success in school. The reason for the increase in literacy levels in the children involved in this study might, therefore, be a repercussion of the parent/child interactions exercised in the home.

Based on the results of the reading assessments, and the parent interviews and evaluations, this program has been a success. The reading assessment tests concluded that in a 10 week

period, the average reading gain was a 1.1 grade level increase. It is duly noted that the children were attending school at the time, however, their reading gains were significant enough to conclude that a family literacy program attained success in the families involved. Through the rich qualitative data drawn from the interviews and evaluations, it was apparent that the parents and children were pleased with the results and impact the family literacy program had on their families. Their pleasure in attending, and their comments on the design, structure and content left a positive impression. Reading gains were important to these families, however, attending a program that enabled them to participate in a learning experience together, and to take that knowledge and apply it at home, was the primary basis of this research study.

As a result of this study, I have learned so much as a researcher. In an attempt to share some of the implications for future family literacy intervention programs, I have developed a set of guiding principles:

- 1) Literacy is a sensitive issue and it should be treated in a tactful way for families who participate in a family literacy program.
- 2) Working with multi generations contributes to a successful family literacy program.
- 3) It is pertinent for parents to come forward on their own to disclose the literacy challenges their families may be facing.
- 4) Activities for a family literacy program must be fun and separate from school-like activities.
- 5) It is important to provide an atmosphere for parents to learn from each other. Giving the parents an opportunity to share experiences is important in a family literacy program.

The success of this program is a combined effort. The activities in the program assisted the parents to help their children practice and enhance their reading skills. Parents and children attending the program together brought them closer together as a family and learning unit. There was a third component that assisted in the success of this program as well, the schools. Even though the schools did not play a large role in the development or implementation of the program, they welcomed us, and assisted us in the process by allowing us access to the students. Beyond this, the strategies and the activities presented throughout the program were a replica of some of the curriculum components they teach to these same children. As a result, as the parents were learning the strategies in the literacy program and employing them at home with their children, these same strategies were being applied to the children in school at the same time. The literacy program together with the school offered reinforcement of the same strategies. The impact of both the school and home therefore may have contributed to the increase in reading scores. This coincides with the underlying theory this study complies with, community-based participatory research. The success of the program was a combined effort that provided a natural bridge between the home and school that had a positive effect on the reading and literacy of the children involved.

Recommendations

This study has answered both of my research questions, however, there still needs to be more research conducted in this area, and there are many questions that remain. The following are recommendations for further study in this area.

Recommendation 1

Further research is required in the field of family literacy effectiveness.

Further investigation on the effectiveness of family literacy in other rural communities in Prince Edward Island needs to be carried out in order to validate the success of this family literacy program. This study proved successful in both the positive impact it made on the families, and in showing an increase in the literacy levels of the children involved.

Recommendation 2

A family literacy program should have some challenging resource materials to accommodate the diversity of literacy levels in the group.

The more advanced children in the program were a definite asset as they acted as peer helpers to the younger children and the ones in need of help more. They formulated relevant examples and contributed greatly to group discussions. The content, however, was not always as challenging to them as it had to be relevant to the younger children and the children with more literacy challenges. Additional components to accommodate the literacy needs of the more advanced children may have to be addressed.

Recommendation 3

A component of a family literacy program should include follow up programming after the program concludes to ensure the strategies learned are still being integrated and to provide additional support to the families.

A session should be offered several months after program completion to measure the ongoing success of the family literacy program. It would also serve as an opportunity for the families to make inquiries or to discuss any concerns they had with other families or the facilitators. It will also serve as a refresher for the strategies used. This could also be achieved by approaching the schools to ask if they had seen any improvement as well.

Recommendation 4

Secured funding needs to be obtained to offer more family literacy programs in rural communities across Prince Edward Island.

The benefits of family literacy programming is evident both in the literature and through the success of this study. Government departments and policy makers should consider the positive benefits family literacy programs have on families when seeking new literacy initiatives for the province.

Recommendation 5

Schools should support families in their efforts to attend family literacy programs.

In-service initiatives should be conducted to educate teachers on the importance of family literacy programs and positive, encouraging feedback to families on their participation in them.

This would allow the schools to understand family literacy and its benefits, and to support families in their ongoing efforts to nurture literacy environments in the critical home setting.

Recommendation 6

Additional community-based programs on parenting and assisting in children's education should be offered.

The main element of this program was comprised of enhancing the literacy of the children involved. There were also some components on parenting, working with your child's school and assisting with homework. The parents appreciated these modules to diversify the program content. This is an area that more time could be devoted to.

Conclusion

Challenges with literacy have a significant impact on families. Family literacy intervention is a proven method of enabling parents to become part of their children's educational experience as it builds on family strengths. It empowers parents by giving them the skills needed to support their children with providing them with the confidence necessary to contribute to their children's literacy development. While parents assist their children in the learning process, they contribute to the enrichment of their child's reading levels. Families in the small rural area of Alberton, Prince Edward Island have maintained that family literacy works for them. It is through their voices and experiences that success was found in this study. Schools, community programers, and government officials alike need to band together to create an awareness of the effectiveness of family literacy to enhance the education for more children across our province.

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Appendix C**Adult Consent Form**

I agree to participate in the ***Families Learning Together*** reading program. As part of the program, I will be asked to fill out an evaluation form at the last session. Any comments I put on this form can be used in any writings or presentations of the research project. The comments I make will not have my name attached, so no one will know what I said. My children will also be asked to evaluate the program, and I give my consent to the researchers to use anything they say or write in the research as well. Anything I say in a class discussion can also be used. In addition to this, I give my permission to use any pictures that are taken of me or my children during the session can be used as part of the research.

Signature:..... **Date:**.....

Name:.....

Address:.....

Appendix D**Child Consent Form**

I **agree to**
participate in the *Families Learning Together* reading program. I
will be asked to fill out a form at the end of the classes, and I give
my permission for the researchers to use anything I say or write as
part of their research project. I also give my permission for the
researchers to take my picture and use it when they write about this
program, or present it to other people.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name:.....

Address:.....

Appendix E
Parent Evaluation
Family Literacy

1) Did the program meet your expectations?

2) What did you like most or find the most helpful about the program?

3) Would you recommend it to other families?

4) How will you use the information learned to help your family with literacy?

5) If someone asked you to describe this program, what would you say?

6) Any other comments?

Appendix F**Parent Phone Interview**

1) Why did you volunteer for this program?

2) How did you find this program to be?

3) What has changed in your life based on the program?

4) Have you seen a difference in your child?

5) Would you recommend it to other families?

6) If you were asked to describe this program, what would you tell them?

7) Other comments?

Appendix G**Children Evaluation Interview of Family Literacy Program**

- 1) What was your favourite part of the reading program?**

- 2) What did you learn from the program?**

- 3) Did you like coming every week?**

- 4) If another child asked you about the program, what would you tell them?**

- 5) Is there anything that you didn't like about it?**

Appendix H

Comprehension - Parent Module

What is reading comprehension? It is reading to learn, understand and remember.

- ◆ read and follow directions
- ◆ predict outcomes
- ◆ summarizing what was read
- ◆ using personal knowledge

A reader may not understand a book because the author uses unfamiliar vocabulary, they know little about the topic, or have no interest in it. Learning to simply recognize words is not what reading is about. Children often times struggle through the words on the page sounding them out one by one. Their comprehension is quite noticeable when the teacher asks them questions about what has been read. They often have problems answering certain questions. They simply do not understand what they have read. This is why comprehension instruction is so important.

Materials Needed:

Age appropriate books are required for each child.

Ice Breaker:

That's Me!

Be sure to include yourself in the ice breaker activity. Ask participants the following questions or create your own. To answer, they can raise their hand or answer aloud: **That's Me!**

Questions:

- ◆ Who knows someone else here?
- ◆ Who is worried about how their kids are doing in school?
- ◆ Who would like to win the lottery?
- ◆ Who thinks they are the perfect parent?
- ◆ Who liked school as a child?
- ◆ Who understands why comprehension is important?
- ◆ Who isn't sure how to help with comprehension?
- ◆ Who wants to know how?

Use the participants' answers to comment on what you will be talking about in the workshop.

Tips for Reading

Activity:

Have facilitator model to the parents how a book should be read using comprehension strategies before, during and after a book is read.

Before Reading:

Discuss the following:

- ▶ title
- ▶ search the cover for clues about the story
- ▶ make predictions about what might happen
- ▶ make a list of questions they want answered
- ▶ share personal experiences related to the story
- ▶ recall any prior knowledge they already have on the topic

Vocabulary is also important. If a reader does not recognize a word, then they may lose sight of what is being read. The reader should go through the book and pick out words that they do not know, and look them up. When vocabulary is taught, comprehension improves.

During Reading

As the facilitator reads to the parents, they should be following along to note the strategies demonstrated. The facilitator should read the text with voice and expression.

The learner should:

- ▶ pay attention to sequence
- ▶ pick out main ideas
- ▶ predict what will happen next
 - plot
 - events
 - outcomes
- ▶ ask when confused

After Reading

The reader may have to go back and review something that does not make sense.

- ▶ Reflect. Identify the main ideas of the story (ie: main character, setting, sequence, plot, problem and climax)
- ▶ Discuss information that might have been implied in the story but not specifically stated. Why do you think this happened?
- ▶ What was the main purpose of the story?

It is important to ask questions to find out information, to understand, or remember something. Ask who what when where, why and how.

Objective:

To get learners to think about comprehension before, during and after reading.

Story Map

A story map is simply the order of events that happened in the story. It allows the reader to think and reflect on the events in order to increase comprehension skills.

Activity:

Show how to do a story map of what happened in the book that shows the sequence of events.

Objective:

This activity will encourage the learners to pay more attention when they are reading and will, therefore, increase their retention of what was read.

Parents and Children Together

Now the children will come into the group and the parents can practice the strategies learned with their children.

Each child will have their own book that they will read with their parents that is at a level appropriate for their reading.

Materials Needed:

Age and/or reading level appropriate books for each child in the group.

Tips for Reading

Activity:

Have the parents and children practice the comprehension strategies learned in their separate groups.

Before Reading:

Have the parents do the following:

- Sit beside their child. Ask him/her how the session was.
- Pick up the book and ask the children what the picture on the front cover makes them think of.
- The parents and children read the title together and have them ask the children what they think might be about.

During Reading:

1. While the parents are reading have the children pick out the mains ideas of the story.
2. Ask the parents to pause during reading so their children can predict what might happen next.
3. Have the parents encourage their children to ask any questions about the story if they seem confused.

After Reading:**Have the parents:**

1. Ask their children their thoughts on the book. Did they like it?
2. Discuss and talk about different parts of the book. What were the children's favorite part? Was there a part that they did not understand?
3. Ask the children to explain the book in their own words. Have them name characters, setting, plot, etc. and write it out in the space provided.

Story Map**Activity:**

Using the story just read, have the parents and children come together as a team, to work on the story maps.

1. The children tell you what the order of events were.
2. The parents fill in the map.
3. The children may want to do the writing as well.

Literature Circles**Activity:**

This is a time when the group comes together as a whole and discusses the story.

This activity is optional as everyone in the group does not have the same book to discuss. If time permits, have everyone who wants to talk and discuss have a chance to do so.

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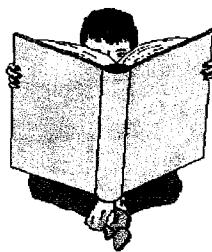
Comprehension

What is reading comprehension? It is understanding and remembering what was read.

- ➊ following directions
- ➋ predicting what will happen
- ➌ summarizing what was read



Children often times struggle through the words on the page sounding them out one by one. Their comprehension of what they read shows when the teacher asks them questions about what has been read.



Comprehension : Parent Guide

Today We Are Going To:

- ✎ Work on building comprehension skills with our children.

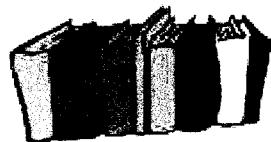


Ice Breaker: That's Me

Activity: Tips For Reading

We will read a book as a group using these comprehension tips before, during and after reading.

Before Reading:



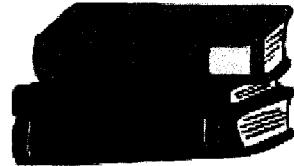
- ✎ talk about the title
- ✎ look at the cover for clues about the story
- ✎ make predictions
- ✎ share personal experiences related to the story



Comprehension : Parent Guide

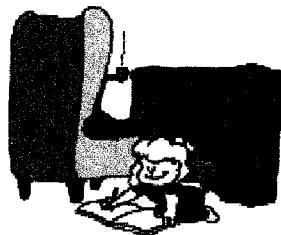
During Reading:

- ☞ pause and pick out main ideas
- ☞ predict what will happen next
- ☞ encourage your children to ask if confused



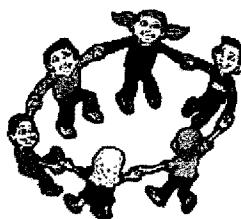
After Reading

- ☞ reflect
- ☞ discuss
- ☞ main purpose



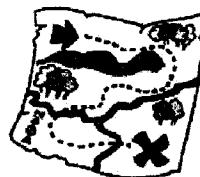
Activity: Story Map

Story map is a sheet where you write down the sequence of events. See work sheet for story map.



Story Map

Characters (who)



Setting (where and when)



Problem



Plot



End

Parents and Children

Now the children will come into the group and you can practice the strategies learned with them.



Tips for Reading:

Before Reading:

- ☞ Sit beside your child. Ask him/her how the session was.

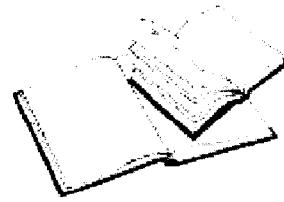
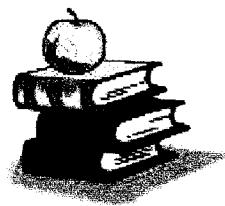
- ☞ Pick up the book and ask your child what the picture on the front cover makes them think of.

- ☞ You and your child read the title together and ask them what they think it might be about.



During Reading:

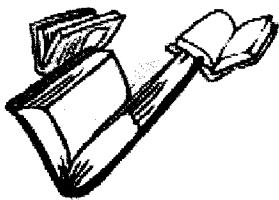
- ✎ While you are reading have your child pick out the mains ideas of the story.
- ✎ Pause during reading so your child can predict what might happen next.
- ✎ Encourage your child to ask any questions about the story if they seem confused.

**After Reading:**

- ✎ Ask your child his/her thoughts on the book. Did they like it? _____
- ✎ Discuss and talk about different parts of the book. What was his/her favorite part? Was there a part that they did not understand? _____



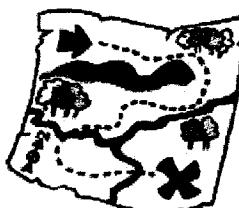
✎ Ask them to explain the book in their own words. Have them name characters, setting, plot, etc. _____



Activity: Story Map



You and your child as a team, work on the story maps. Your child tells you what the order of events are and you fill in the map. Your child may want to do the writing as well.



Comprehension: The Children's Module

Children's Objectives:

To have students effectively learn comprehension strategies in order to improve their comprehension levels.

Ice Breaker:

That's Me!

Explain that an "ice breaker" is a fun way of learning more about each other. Be sure to include yourself in the ice breaker activity. Ask participants the following questions or create your own. To answer, they can raise their hand or answer aloud: **That's Me!**

Questions:

- ⇒ Who knows someone else here?
- ⇒ Who would like to win the lottery?
- ⇒ Who likes school?
- ⇒ Who would like to change something about school?
- ⇒ Who knows what comprehension is?

(Your own questions can be made up as in accordance with the group.)

Use the participants' answers to comment on what you will be talking about in the workshop.

Reading A Book Together

Activity:

Pick out a book, and read it to the children. This can be done verbally as a group, or have the children write in the spaces provided.

Before Reading:

Discuss the following:

- title
- search the cover for clues about the story
- make predictions about what might happen
- make a list of questions they want answered
- share personal experiences related to the story
- recall any prior knowledge they already have on the topic

The reader may not understand a text because the author uses unfamiliar vocabulary that they have no prior knowledge on, or lack of interest in. If a reader does not recognize a word, then they may lose sight of what is being read. Have reader go through the book and pick out words that they do not know, and look them up. When vocabulary is taught, comprehension improves.

During Reading:

As you read to the children, they should be following along to note the strategies demonstrated. You should read the text with voice and expression.

The learner should:

- pay attention to sequence
- pick out main ideas
- predict what will happen next
 - plot
 - events
 - outcomes
- ask when confused

After Reading:

The reader may have to go back and review something that does not make sense.

- Reflect. Identify the main ideas of the story (ie: main character, setting, sequence, plot, problem and climax)
- Discuss information that might have been implied in the story but not specifically stated. Why do you think this happened?
- What was the main purpose of the story?

Facilitator's Notes:

It is important to ask questions to find out information, to understand, or remember something. Ask who what when where, why and how.

Objective:

This activity will encourage the learners to question what they read, predict outcomes and enable them to take a more active role in their reading and learning.

Story Map

Have the children pair up with another child according to their reading level and apply the same principals as just completed. Or have them use the book that was just read with the group and do the following:

Activity:

With the sheets provided, have the learner make a booklet with three pages:

- beginning
- middle
- end

OR

With the sheet provided have the student in a higher grade, give examples found in the book of the following categories:

- characters
- setting
- plot
- solution

Facilitator's Notes:

Make sure the learners fill in the correct information under each heading. They made need examples or a quick explanation to get them started.

Objective:

This activity will encourage the learners to pay more attention when they are reading and will, therefore, increase their retention of what was read.

Literature Circles

Activity:

If the children all did the story map on the story that was read as a group, then have them engage in conversation on what they have read. This enables the students to hear other people's point of view. The facilitator can post discussion questions on the board for discussion to revolve around.

OR

Or if the children read in pairs, then have each pair retell their story to the rest of the group.

Objective:

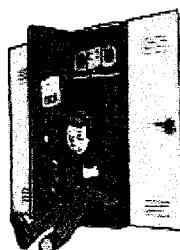
This activity allows the learners to showcase what they have learned as well as increase retention by teaching the others what they have learned.

Have the children and the parents merge at the end of the session to practice strategies just learned.

READING

TO

LEARN



AND

REMEMBER

Reading to Learn

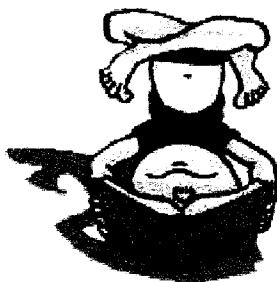
Reading can sometimes be hard to understand and remember. Today we are going to learn some ways to help us remember what we are reading.



Today We Are Going To:

- ✎ Learn some tips to help us remember and understand what we are reading.

Ice Breaker: That's me!



Activity: Reading A Book Together

Before Reading:

✎ Look at the picture on the cover. What



does the picture make you think of? _____

✎ The title of this book is _____. What do you

think this book is about? _____

✎ What does this book remind you of? _____



During Reading:

✎ As we are reading the book, pick out some things you think are important.

✎ What do you think will happen next?

✎ Do you have any questions?



After Reading:

- ☞ What did you think of the story? _____

- ☞ Did you like it? _____
- ☞ What was your favorite part? _____

Now you will get your own book to read. Try to

remember to use the tips we just talked about.

Activity: Story Map

- ☞ Now we are going to tell the story in our own words. You will have to write down things that you remember from the story.
- ☞ You can either use the story map or you can tell the beginning, middle and end on the blank sheets.



Activity: Lit Circles

Now we are going to discuss our books together with the group.



- ☞ Did you like it? _____
- _____
- ☞ What didn't you like? _____
- _____
- ☞ If you could change something, what would it be?

- _____
- ☞ Who was your favorite character? _____
- _____
- ☞ Did you like the end? _____

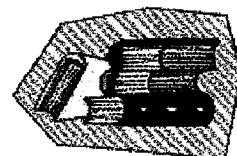
We are now going with our parents and read a book

together with them the way we just read it here.



Story Map

Characters (who)



Setting (where and when)



Problem or Goal



Plot Outline



Resolution