

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

SCHOOLS AND PARENTS ACTIVELY REACHING KIDS FOR LITERACY
EVERYDAY (SPARKLE): PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTAL SELF
PERCEPTIONS THROUGH THE USE OF INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK
TECHNIQUES

A Thesis in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2006

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ABSTRACT

With the current federal educational legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), state and local school districts are required to pass criterion in up to 40 different areas. Reading and mathematics are receiving major emphasis regarding prescribed levels of competency as measured by standardized test scores. As schools strive to meet the prescribed test score percentages in these two areas, schools are looking for analogous and complementary ways of producing positive academic achievement. Parent involvement again comes to the focal point in the educational arena. As was believed in the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties, parental involvement produces positive academic achievement in the child.

Sometimes though, it is difficult for parents to be actively involved in their child's education due to external and internal barriers. External barriers may include different goals set by the school and the parent. Language differences may also play a major role in preventing active involvement. Time constraints set by the parents' work place may cause the parent to be unavailable during school hours. Lack of transportation to attend various functions at the school can be a major factor in parents' involvement. Other family commitments such as elder care, babysitting, or sibling activities are also external barriers that prevent parent involvement.

Internal barriers, personal psychological barriers, also prohibit parents from becoming involved in their child's education. Parents' personal school experiences can influence a parent's involvement level. If a parent had a negative school experience as a child, that may influence the parent's level of involvement. The parents' perceptions of their responsibility toward educating their child can influence the amount of involvement. If a parent believes it is the school's responsibility to educate the child, then the parent may take a much less active role in their child's education. The parents' perceptions as to their capability to affect change with their

child can influence their involvement level. If a parent does not feel qualified, or lacks the skills needed to help their child, then that parent may not be actively involved in their child's education.

The purpose of this research study was to develop and evaluate an intervention program designed to increase parent involvement through the use of interactive storybook read aloud techniques. The **Schools and Parents Actively Reaching Kids for Literacy Everyday** (SPARKLE) program utilized these interactive techniques, along with support as the techniques were applied to target internal barriers to involvement. An underlying purpose was to develop a caring, trusting, and respectful program to help parents perceive themselves as capable and responsible in order for them to be actively involved in their child's education.

A mixed methods research design incorporating a randomly assigned sample was used to answer the following research questions. First, in what ways does an intervention program based on skill development in questioning and interactive techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions affect parental belief, attitudes, and perceptions? Specifically, in what ways does this intervention affect a parent's affective memory perceptions (AMP), capability perceptions (CP), responsibility perceptions (RP), capability perceptions for literacy (CPL) and responsibility perceptions for literacy (RPL)? Second, does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions provide parents with new skills to use during and following the intervention? Third, how does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions change parents' beliefs and attitudes about the importance of reading aloud, children's learning, our school, and education in general?

The data collection process included formative data collection methods as well as

summative data collection methods. The Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (*BAI*) was given as a pre-post test quantitative measure. Summative data were collected through the *BAI*, focus group meeting, and the Parent Improvement Instrument (*PII*). From a qualitative stance, data were generated formatively with open ended discussions during the parent discussion groups, audio/video taping the parent-child reading sessions, coding of reading sessions and journal writing. The formative and summative data were analyzed and interpreted to provide answers to the research questions.

The parents were randomly placed into two groups: treatment or comparison group. The treatment group participated in the intervention program during the first four week session, while the comparison group participated in the intervention program during the second four week session. There were a total of 14 parent participants. The treatment group consisted of 8 parents while the comparison group consisted of 6 parents.

The weekly one hour sessions provided parents with a storybook to read. The parents worked as a group to develop questions to use with their child while they read. The parents then paired up with their child to read and discuss the story. Finally, parents returned to the group to discuss their thoughts, perceptions, and impressions of the read aloud sessions.

Story question development was guided by three main objectives. First, what important ideas did the parents want their child to get from reading the book, such as the themes, vocabulary, or special phrases. Second, questions were developed to stimulate discussion such as recall, prediction, or making connections between the text and the child's personal experiences. Finally, questions were developed to find ways to revisit the book with the child such as extension activities or rereading. The questions developed by the parent group were typed onto 3 X5 cards and placed inside the book to use with the children at home.

The qualitative and quantitative data collected from the *BAI*, *PII*, focus group, journals, interviews, and discussion groups revealed these parents valued several aspects of the SPARKLE program. First, the program provided the parents with a context in which to see their child's ability to learn. This insight provided the parent with a new image of their child as being able to learn. Along with the new context the read aloud sessions provided, the parents also valued the affective side of the read aloud session. Parents discussed the importance of setting aside time to spend with their child reading and related this back to their own childhood memories of reading with their parents.

Second, the treatment group of parents found value in participating in the parent discussion group format. They continued the use of this discussion group technique with eight other texts after the initial four week period. This is evidence of their commitment and value placed on the group format.

Third, the parents also found the variety of the texts used in SPARKLE provided their children with a wider range of reading material. They felt this exposure to different types of text was important for their child to experience and enjoy.

The data collected from the *BAI* suggested these two groups of parents perceived themselves to be active, responsible, and capable parents. The treatment group of parents in particular indicated a change in their responsibility perception levels in regards to the importance of talking with other parents and recognizing their child as a reader. This group of parents also revealed a change in their capability perception levels in identifying their attempts to work with their child as successful. They also expressed an increase in their capability perceptions of their skills in finding the themes and vocabulary in storybooks. This is a significant finding since the SPARKLE program directly targeted theme and vocabulary question development. This

finding was also collaborated through the analysis of the focus group transcription coding and in the analysis of the journal entries.

Data collected from the *PII* suggested these parents found three areas of improvement in their capability and responsibility perceptions for literacy. First, the parents believed their capabilities to make reading fun and to use reading to learn new things was improved. Second, the parents believed their responsibility to help their child read and to use literacy daily had improved. Third, the parents believed their capabilities to motivate and make connections between school and the child's interests had improved.

To conclude, these findings suggest these two groups of parents were able to find value in their participation in the SPARKLE program. The findings suggest that the program was able to provide a different and effective context in which the parents were able to witness their children as able learners as well as providing a positive context in which the affective side of the read aloud could be experienced between parent and child. Moreover, the parent discussion group format proved to be a valuable tool for the parents. The variety of text was also seen as a positive component of the program by these parents. Continued use of the SPARKLE program with a larger parent sample and alternative scheduling is recommended. Further research on this program may provide additional insight into how schools can address internal and external barriers to produce more parent involvement in education, more positive parental perceptions, and more effective parental teaching of their children from the start of their school careers. .

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CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CMM: This is called "The Relatives Came." Look, it has its own medal like the other book had. It must be a really good book. "It was in the summer of the year when the relatives came. They came up from Virginia." Do you remember Virginia? "They left when their grapes were nearly purple enough to pick, but not quite." Look at them packing up all their stuff. "They had an old station wagon that smelled like a real car, and in it they put an ice chest full of soda pop and some boxes of crackers and some bologna sandwiches,"

Child: And some food.

CMM: Yeah, that's all.

Child: Hey, mom look!

CMM: What is that?

Child: A bag coming out.

CMM: Look down here. What do you suppose happened there?

Child: A mailbox broke.

CMM: MMMMM, wonder how it broke?

Child: Maybe there was a storm.

CMM: Maybe, but look. Do you think maybe the car came along the road? Maybe...

Child: Accidentally?

CMM: Accidentally hit it, maybe.

Child: Okay, mom.

The above excerpt taken from a taped reading session between a mother and her five year old daughter exemplifies how dialog in a read aloud session can develop language and literacy skills for the child. Through interactive dialog the child is better able to comprehend text and understand how text connects within her own world.

Interactive dialog illustrates how the parent, being the *expert* concerning her child, is able to make external connections between the child and the text. The parent has the advantage of knowing events that the child has experienced that would relate to the text, something to which other adults or teachers would not have access and therefore would not be able to use to help the child make the external connections. This places the parent in the unique position of *expert* in making literacy connect to the child's life.

Educators and policy makers have long recognized and tried to tap into this parental expertise. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 highlighted the need to address the educational needs of low income children. The Head Start Program, a component outlined in ESEA, recognized that parents needed to be actively involved in their child's education. This involvement includes taking an active role in curriculum development, teaching the child, volunteering in the school, and developing or advising policy for the local program through parent councils. Teacher roles include such activities as home visits, helping parents understand their young child and perform the parenting roles related to schooling, opening communication between parent and teacher, inviting classroom volunteers, and enlisting and encouraging parental involvement in learning at home (Powell, 2005). This active involvement is considered to be one of the foundations cited for Head Start's success.

Criticisms existed though for the early versions of the parental involvement component for Head Start. According to Epstein (2001) "parent councils required by Title I were limited, often perfunctory activities that informed and involved only a few parents" (p. 39). In the beginning the parent councils did not involve a large portion of the parents with currently enrolled children. Head Start has since required at least 51% of the members of the governing body include parents of currently enrolled children (Powell, 2005).

Along with the parent councils, Head Start programs use other techniques to build systems for parents to be actively involved in their child's education. Each year teachers make two visits to the child's home. Teachers also are required to hold two parent-teacher conferences per year. Epstein (2001) explains, "The first frameworks focused mainly on the roles that parents needed to play and not the work that schools needed to do to organize strong programs to

involve all families in their child's education" (p. 39). Newer parent involvement techniques suggested by Epstein focus not only on what parents need to do but also what the teachers need to do in order to build strong, trusting relationships with parents. Therefore, parent involvement is considered to be a two way partnership between parent and teacher that requires input and effort from both sides.

While parent involvement was legislated for low-income parents in the Head Start Program, parent involvement for middle and high-income parents was also increasing during this time frame. These increases in middle and high-income parents' involvement levels were due in part to the higher rates of college educated women; therefore more mothers had equal educational levels as the teachers. According to Epstein (2001) "More-educated parents independently influence their children's growth in reading skills. These would be the parents who usually are involved in their children's education" (p. 231). These parents were aware of the importance of the parent as the child's first teacher. These parents were more informed about ways to promote learning and development for their children in the home.

Educators and policy makers have tried to develop programs, incentives, and encouragement to pull all parents into the full swing of their child's education. In the seventies, the effective schools movement highlighted educators' attention to students who might be at-risk for failure. The parent involvement issue quickly was added to the list of things that would help schools be effective. In the eighties, with the help of the report, *A Nation at Risk*, educators' attention was aimed at helping all schools, not just low-income or poverty schools, become effective. According to Epstein (2001) "all school reform efforts recognize the need to improve the quality of education for all students. Each new initiative has sharpened the focus on

curriculum, instruction, and connections with families” (p. 40). The need for strong school and family connections continues to be a major focus in today’s educational field.

With the current federal educational legislation No Child Left Behind (NCLB), state and local school districts are required to pass criterion in up to 40 different areas (United States Department of Education, 2005). Reading and mathematics are receiving major emphasis regarding prescribed levels of competency as measured by standardized test scores. As schools strive to meet the prescribed test score percentages in these two areas, schools are looking for analogous and complementary ways of producing positive academic achievement. Parent involvement again comes to the focal point in the educational arena. As was believed in the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties, parental involvement produces positive academic achievement in the child.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Getting parents to take an active role in their child’s education has long been a goal of education. Legislated through the Head Start program in the sixties to the present day No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, parent involvement has been a major focus for educators, researchers and policy makers. Parent Involvement programs have been designed to target certain parent populations in order to promote a more active role for the parent to play in their child’s education. But getting some parents to become active participants is very difficult due to external and internal barriers.

External barriers are defined as obligations or situations that parents face that prevent them from becoming involved in their child’s education. According to Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones and Reed (2002) some of the external barriers deal with the different goals that

parents and teachers may have for the child. Language differences may also play a major role in preventing active involvement. Time constraints such as work hours or inflexibility in the parents' work hours to provide accessibility for the parent to be available during school day hours also contribute to the lack of active parent involvement. Lack of transportation to attend various functions at the school can be a major factor in parents' involvement. Other family commitments such as elder care, babysitting, or sibling activities are external barriers that prevent parent involvement.

Parents' internal barriers are defined as personal psychological barriers. Such factors as limited skills in certain academic areas are barriers and can attribute to less parent involvement. Another internal barrier is the parent's memories of their own school experience. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2003) coined the term valence as "the extent to which a parent, based on personal prior experience with schools, is generally attracted to or repelled from school (i.e. general disposition toward school)" (p. 2). The parent's personal memories or valence level can impact the amount of involvement.

Another internal barrier to parent involvement is the parent's responsibility perception. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) labeled parental responsibility perceptions as role construction. Role construction is defined as the ideas or beliefs that parents have concerning their responsibility for their child's education. Since the roles are socially constructed, the roles are defined by what other members of the group expect of the individual (given demands), what the individual expects of himself (personal demands), and what the individual believes is appropriate behavior for that role (role behavior).

In relation to school, parents' beliefs about their role fall into three categories, according

to Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997). First is the parent-focused role. In this role the parent believes that it is his/her responsibility to make decisions about their child in school. In the partnership-focused role, the parent believes that the school and the parent must work together to make decisions concerning the child's education. The third role is called school-focused. In this role, the parent believes that the main responsibility for the child's education belongs to the school. In this role the parent abdicates their responsibility over to the school.

Another internal barrier to parent involvement is the parent's capability perception. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) labeled this internal barrier as parental efficacy. Parental efficacy is defined as the beliefs that parents have concerning their capability to be effective parents. Parental efficacy is based in the self efficacy theory developed by Bandura (1993). According to Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) "Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act." (p. 1206). In terms of parental efficacy in education, unless parents believe they can bring into being positive effects on their child's education, those parents will not be motivated to act. These beliefs are socially constructed.

Parents with lower self efficacy tend to have more trouble managing difficulties. If a parent has a low efficacy toward their ability to help their child in school, then that parent will tend to avoid that circumstance, diminish their efforts, or stop attempting to help their child completely. However, parents with a high sense of efficacy "tend to respond to difficulties or failures in the particular domain with increased effort, partly because they believe failure is due to insufficient effort rather than lack of ability" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, p. 18). Parental beliefs about their ability to have a positive effect on their child's education through

persistent effort also implies that the parent may be open to other helpful ideas that the school might provide through parenting programs or other interventions.

Along with parental barriers that inhibit parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones and Reed (2002), discuss the barriers that teachers exhibit that reduce parental involvement. Teachers may steer away from parent involvement activities because of lack of support by fellow teachers or administrators in providing the extra activities for parents' involvement. Inexperienced teachers may not persevere in getting parents involved if their first attempts are not successful. Experienced teachers may not promote parental involvement due to previous negative experiences with parents. Some teachers may feel inadequate when dealing with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

So why do some parents choose to become actively involved in their child's education and at the same time, why do some parents choose not to become actively involved? There are three conceptual approaches that researchers have used to understand the differences in parents' involvement. First, some researchers attribute the differences in involvement to a "culture of poverty thesis". In this approach, lower-income families do not value education as much as middle class families; therefore, the amount of parent involvement is higher with the middle-income families. The second approach researchers have used to explain these differences accuses the schools of "institutional discrimination". In this explanation, the schools are accused of making middle class families feel more welcome in the school setting. The third approach is based on the work of Bourdieu and his concept of "cultural capital". In this view the "cultural experiences in the home facilitate children's adjustments to school and academic achievement, thereby transforming cultural resources into what he calls cultural capital" (Lareau,

1987, p. 74). Thus, some low-income parents do not possess the “cultural capital” to know what the school expectations are for being “actively involved”. The school’s expectations for parent involvement may be based on “social and economic elites” (Lareau, 1987, p. 74).

These barriers and approaches used to explain the differences between levels of parental involvement are legitimate issues for educators to take into account when planning, designing, or writing intervention programs or policies to promote parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggest that when educators are designing interventions to promote parental involvement it is important to consider highlighting dynamic variables versus status variables.

Dynamic variables or process variables are defined as variables that are able to show growth and change over a certain time period. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, (1997), dynamic variables “are subject to influence and alteration by the primary characters in the involvement process: parents, their children, and school personnel” (p. 7) Status variables such as socioeconomic status or ethnicity are beyond the scope of a school district to change and furthermore, these variables do not explain *why* parents decide to become involved in the educational process. Dynamic variables may better explain *why* parents decide to become involved in their child’s education in the first place and dynamic variables are subject to influence or change. Two such dynamic variables are responsibility perceptions or parental role construction and capability perceptions or parental efficacy.

When school districts are developing programs to promote parental involvement it is important to remember these programs’ success is dependent on the relationship between parent and school (Epstein, 2001). These relationships need to be built on trust and understanding. In order to build trust and understanding, schools need to develop a sense of caring toward the

children and families in their school as individuals.

According to Noddings (2002) in a caring relationship “attention – receptive attention – is an essential characteristic of the caring encounter” (p 17). In other words, when a caring school develops a program aimed at increasing parental involvement, then a caring school must be sensitive to the barriers these parents may encounter. A caring school must also be willing to provide the necessary elements to help parents overcome the barriers to their involvement.

Early Literacy and Home Influences

The emphasis placed by NCLB on academic achievement as measured by standardized tests scores in reading and math has put literacy development in the educational limelight. In particular, the focus is on how young children acquire and maintain literacy skills. Emergent literacy has become a term used in much of the educational research. This term was first used by Teale and Sulzby (1986) to identify the early learning children do in the area of literacy before formal school. According to Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, and Colton (2001) “this new term was necessary to acknowledge that children learn a great deal about literacy before the onset of formal schooling. The new term was also necessary to indicate a clear break from maturational and readiness views of reading” (p. 439). Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) called these learnings “precursors” of subsequent literacy skills. This new view of an emerging literacy is a departure from the previously believed concept that reading was totally dependent on maturational stages.

This idea of emergent literacy also suggests that there is continual movement toward becoming literate. There is not a distinct *place* or *time* where literacy happens. But rather that literacy is something that is developed over long periods of time and should continue throughout a person’s lifetime, not just their school age years. This definition also acknowledges the many

types of literacy skills that are developed when the child is young and still in the home environment. In other words, children come to school with many literacy skills already intact and ready for further development.

One of the major areas that are influenced by the home environment in the early years is in language development. Language development for young children is commonly characterized as the oral language of the child, both receptive and expressive language. Research has shown the connection and reciprocity between language development and literacy skill development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). The parent, as the child's first teacher, contributes tremendously to the child's language and literacy development.

Certain kinds of experiences promote different aspects of a child's language and literacy development. According to Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, and Daley (1998) parents engage in two types of print activities in the home. First, parents and children experience informal or implicit connections with print. Implicit experiences include reading aloud with the child. Through these kinds of informal or implicit experiences, a child is exposed to the written word, and oral language skills were developed. The second type of activity or experience is formal or explicit connections with print. In these types of activities, the parent teaches the child about reading, writing words, and letters. Formal or explicit experiences develop written-language skills in the child.

Oral language skill development is associated with storybook exposure. How a parent and child interact during storybook reading makes a difference in the child's language development: the child needs to be actively involved in the discussion of the story during and after reading (Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, 1994). These discussions

between parent and child include using wh- questions and open-ended questions, repeating and expanding on a child's response, and providing praise and corrective feedback.

Interventions to Engage Parents

Many programs and interventions have been developed over the years to help parents take an active role in their child's education. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, and Reed (2002) developed the Teachers Involving Parents (TIP) in-service program for teachers to help promote parent involvement. This six session program was designed to provide teachers with the skills necessary to invite and encourage parent involvement. The first session was designed to have the teachers discuss their experiences of parent involvement. The second session was designed for teachers to deal with the barriers associated with parent involvement. The third session dealt with the teachers' perceptions of parents in their school. The fourth session discussed ways in which to communicate with parents. The fifth session keyed in on ways to work with hard to reach parents. The sixth session was a wrap up session that directed the teachers to specific plans to encourage parent involvement. Unlike other parent involvement programs, this program keyed in on the teacher as the focus. Teachers have long been the front line between parent, child, and school.

Not only can parent involvement programs focus on specific characters involved in the parent involvement process, but involvement itself can be categorized into different types. According to Epstein (2001), there are six types of parent involvement. Each type of involvement promotes certain kinds of outcomes for students, parents and teachers. The first type is called *Parenting*. This includes helping families with parenting skills, understanding child development, and home support for learning. The second type is called *Communicating*.

This type of involvement includes open dialogue between parent to school and school to parent. The third type is called *Volunteering*. This type of involvement includes recruiting, training, and scheduling families to support their child. The fourth type is called *Learning at Home*. This involvement includes homework or other activities linked to school work. The fifth type of involvement is called *Decision Making*. This includes having parents serve on committees that help the school make sound educational decisions concerning curriculum and even budgetary decisions. The sixth type of involvement is called *Collaborating with the Community*. This type of involvement includes pulling together of all the resources that are available to the school in order to promote learning for the children.

Parent involvement programs are designed to promote certain types of parent involvement. One of the most recognized activities to promote parent involvement in literacy development is reading aloud to children. The National Academy of Education issued a report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1985) which goes so far as to state that “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23). This report provided evidence to the general public, as well as educators, about the importance of parents reading aloud to their children as support for their long term literacy development.

Many researchers have developed interventions to promote reading aloud between parent and child. One such intervention promoted the active process of constructing meaning in a read aloud session, and thereby enhancing language and literacy development in the child (Neuman, 1996). In Neuman’s study, a book club format was used to give parents a chance to socially interact with other parents through group discussion about a selected text, through interactions

with their child as they read aloud a storybook, and then again as they discussed the read aloud session with the other parents.

The book club format allowed the parent to connect thoughtful pre-reading question development to the actual reading session with their child. The parent is shown that preparing questions for discussion ahead of the actual reading session time is useful and productive in initiating a more active role for the child in the story book session. This active interaction of the child leads to language and literacy development (Neuman, 1996; Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, 1994).

Purpose of Present Work

The purpose of this applied research study was to develop an intervention program to increase parental involvement through the use of interactive read aloud sessions between parent and child. A secondary purpose for this study was to develop an outreach program for my school district to the parents and post-kindergarten children. This outreach program was based on care, trust and respect for the parents. These underlying components will be the impetus to promote change in the parents' perceptions about their capabilities and responsibilities to educate their child as these parents develop skills in questioning and interactive techniques.

First, I wanted to find out in what ways an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions with post-kindergarten children could promote change in parents' beliefs and attitudes. More specifically, I wanted to find out if the intervention program would impact these parents' perceptions in five areas or constructs.

Did the intervention impact the parents' perceptions of their own school experiences

which are defined as affective memory perceptions (AMP). Second, did the intervention change the parents' perceptions of their capabilities which are defined as the capability perception (CP). Third, did the intervention change the parents' perceptions of their responsibility toward their child's education which are defined as responsibility perceptions (RP). Fourth, did the intervention change the parents' perceptions about their capabilities to help their child with literacy which are defined as capability perceptions for literacy (CPL). Finally, did the intervention change the parents' perceptions about their responsibility to help their child with literacy which are defined as responsibility perceptions for literacy (RPL).

Second, I wanted to find out whether parents of post-kindergarten children could acquire new skills in questioning techniques to use with storybook read aloud sessions. I also was interested in finding out whether or not these parents would use these newly acquired skills following the intervention period.

Third, I wanted to find out whether these parents' attitudes and beliefs about the importance of reading aloud to their child would change after participating in the intervention. Included in this question was whether or not parents' attitudes and beliefs about their children's learning, our school district and education in general would change.

Research Questions

Therefore, the following questions were used in guiding this research study. In what different ways does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions affect parental beliefs and attitudes? Secondly, does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions provide parents with new skills to use

during and following the intervention? Thirdly, how does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions change parents' beliefs and attitudes about the importance of reading aloud, children's learning, our school, and education in general?

Specially Developed Program: SPARKLE

In February of 2004, I was approached by my assistant principal concerning any ideas I might have on developing a summer reading program. The program would be funded through an Accountability Grant from the state of Pennsylvania. The key components of the program were on early interventions for young learners and reading as the content area focus. While taking a graduate class through The Pennsylvania State University, I had just read a research study by Neuman (1996) that used early intervention, reading, and additionally targeted working with parents. Traditionally, our school district has had difficulty getting parents of at-risk children to participate in programs. The Neuman study provided a framework to design an intervention. A preliminary report was written to the Assistant Superintendent. Then in the spring of 2004, Bermudian Springs School District was awarded an Accountability Grant from the state of Pennsylvania with a summer school component.

The **S**chools and **P**arents **A**ctively **R**eaching **K**ids for **L**iteracy **E**veryday (SPARKLE) is designed with four main objectives. First, the program is specifically designed to increase parental beliefs and attitudes concerning their capabilities and responsibilities to help their child. Second, it is designed to teach questioning and interaction techniques for parents to use during story book read aloud sessions. These questioning and interaction techniques will hopefully be used after the intervention, as well. The third objective was to cultivate parents' attitudes about

the importance of read aloud sessions. Finally, **SPARKLE** was designed to build a caring, respectful and trusting relationship between the school district and parents.

One of the major components of this program is to provide support to parents as they work with their children during storybook read aloud sessions. Storybooks were provided by the school through funding from the Accountability Grant. As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler have substantiated in their research, parents with higher parental role construction (responsibility perceptions) and parental efficacy (capability perceptions) levels are more likely to decide to become active partners in their child's education. Providing parents with specific skills and support as they read aloud a storybook with their child will help the parents to develop more confidence in their own abilities to work with their children and therefore, increase their beliefs about their own part and its effectiveness in their child's education.

The program was designed to provide parents with a setting in which they are able to socially construct, interact and practice using these newly acquired skills. The support while using the questioning techniques increases the likelihood of successful usage of the techniques after the intervention is over. As Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) stated, "Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act." (p. 1206). The successful usage of newly acquired questioning and interaction skills used in a supported setting during storybook read aloud sessions will encourage the usage of these same skills in the home, after the program is over.

Research Plan and Components

The research plan is to use quantitative as well as qualitative research methods to understand the parent involvement intervention program. The major components to be

investigated will focus around the three main research questions. Research by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) provided the quantitative survey instrument to measure parents' beliefs and attitudes about their own school experiences, responsibility and capability perceptions. A second set of questions were developed by the researcher to measure the parents' beliefs and attitudes about their responsibility and capability perceptions for literacy. Informal group discussions, journal entries, and personal interviews will provide qualitative data. Interview questions were written to be used in a focus group to provide qualitative information also. Parents and children will be taped as they read aloud together at the school and in the home setting. These tapes will be transcribed and coded for analysis.

Along with understanding the research questions, the various program features were evaluated as well. The program ran for eight weeks during the summer. The sessions were held in the evening for one hour at the school. Parents were asked to evaluate the time factor. Parents were also asked to evaluate the presenter, the storybooks used, and the school as the setting. Alternative options were discussed on these topics during the focus group.

Significance of Present Work

Parental involvement has been an important educational issue for decades. Educators have long recognized the link between active parent involvement and child outcomes. But getting some parents to take an active role is very difficult to do. The significance of this research is that it seeks to better understand how school districts can build a caring, trusting, and respectful relationship with parents to promote parental involvement in the area of literacy. By taking a close look at the elements that make SPARKLE successful through the eyes of our parents, other school districts may be able to use this knowledge to develop similar programs.

Also, the results of this research and the influences on the development of the program can be compared with previous research findings in the area of parental literacy. Many researchers have documented the importance of storybook read alouds to the language and development of literacy. This intervention program will provide new knowledge to this field through its formative and summative assessments including questionnaire, interviews, and observational measures as well as focus group results. Personal descriptive narratives of the parents as they learn new skills in using storybooks to help build literacy in their children are highlighted.

Many research studies in this field have utilized only qualitative methods. The use of the experimental design for this mixed methods research project also provides new empirical knowledge. This new knowledge emphasizes the changes that occur in the parents' attitudes and beliefs systems concerning perceptions about their capabilities and responsibilities for learning toward their children. Empirically documenting the types of changes that occur in parents' beliefs and attitudes will enable other researchers to incorporate specific successful components into their own programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research review is organized around three major educational topics: parental involvement, literacy development and family influences on literacy development. I review literature relating to the various theoretical models that have been developed to explain and understand parental involvement. Vygotsky's social interactive learning theory and Noddings theory of caring in education are discussed in relation to parent involvement interventions. Selected emergent literacy research is then reviewed including studies showing the importance of oral language and other components of early reading. I also examine select literature on the vital role of the parent as the child's first educator. Finally, studies reporting parental influence on language and literacy development during the early years are reviewed with special attention given to research on the importance of storybook read alouds between parent and child.

Parental Involvement Perspectives and Theoretical Models

Perspectives

According to Epstein (2001), differences in parental involvement programs can be explained by three perspectives held by the researchers and educational practitioners. The first perspective views parents and schools as having separate responsibilities. In this perspective parents and schools hold not only separate but incompatible responsibilities that need to be accomplished autonomously. With this view point each parent and teacher work separately because each one has separate and different responsibilities toward the child.

The second perspective is described as a shared perspective. This perspective views school and parents' responsibilities in the education and socialization of the child to be equally

distributed between family and school. Through the coordinated efforts of both school and family will the child reach their full potential. According to Epstein (2001) “These assumptions are based on models of inter-institutional interactions and ecological designs that emphasize the natural, nested, and necessary connections between individuals and their groups and organizations” (p. 22). Such theorists as Bronfenbrenner, Leichart, Litwak and Meyer advocate a shared perspective.

The third perspective is a sequential perspective. This perspective believes that the child progresses through different stages of development. These different stages include the early years where the parents take the major responsibility for the child’s preparation for school. Then as the child enters formal schooling, the teacher takes over the major responsibility for the child’s education. Such theorists as Bloom, Freud, Piaget, and Inhelder advocate a sequential perspective.

Each of these three perspectives concerning the relationship between parent and teacher reflect the researcher’s or educator’s theoretical standpoint. Programs and interventions developed using one of these three perspectives would have very different program or intervention elements. For example, using a shared perspective, the program or intervention would use a team approach to develop the child’s greatest potential. Using a sequential perspective, the program or intervention would use an approach which delineates the responsibilities that the parent or teacher would do to help the child’s development at a particular time in the child’s life.

Theoretical Models

Bronfenbrenner. One of the first researchers to use a shared perspective is Uri

Bronfenbrenner. According to Bronfenbrenner (1976), researchers must consider three basic requirements in order to study educational systems and processes in a scientific manner. The first is the use of a more naturalistic setting versus a laboratory type setting. The second requirement is to understand the two levels of social ecological systems that influence whether and how a person learns in educational settings. These two levels consist of the person to environment relationship and the interconnections of the various environments of the learner. The third requirement is the choice of whether to investigate the person-environment or the environment-environment relations, known as the “ecological experiment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 5).

Bronfenbrenner (1976) described the ecological structure of the environment as consisting of four main systems that are hierarchically organized. The first system is called the *micro-system* which is composed of the learner’s immediate setting. The next system is called the *meso-system* which is composed of the major interrelationships between the learner’s different settings. The third system is called the *exo-system* which is an extension of the *meso-system* and is composed of the formal and informal social structures that intrude on the learner’s different settings. The fourth system is called the *macro-system* which is composed of the learner’s major institutions of the culture or subculture.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) examined “external forces that affect the capacity of families to foster the healthy development of their children” (p. 723). These external forces include the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem*, and the *chronosystem*. Research paradigms or designs for each of these external systems examine the kinds and degrees of influences that affect the family.

The *mesosystem design* examines the different interdependent settings that developmental

processes occur for the child. For example, the influences from the family can cause influences to occur for the child in the school setting. The influences operate in both directions between these two settings and can exert external influence on the child's development. These settings are not independent of each other.

The *exosystem design* looks at the different influences from the parents' lives that can cause external forces on the child's development. Such things as the parents' work can influence the child's development. For example, if a parent works different hours, such as night shift, that would be an external force from the *exosystem* that influences the child's development. Another example could be the parents' friends can be an external influence on a child's development. Research studies utilizing an *exosystem design* would analyze these types of external forces on the child's development.

The third area is called the *chronosystem design*. According to Bronfenbrenner (1986) "the passage of time has been treated as synonymous with chronological age; that is, as a frame of reference for studying psychological changes within individuals" (p. 724). In a *chronosystem design*, time is measured not only within the individual but also within the environment. This helps to differentiate between longitudinal studies and research studies that examine influences that cause changes in the environment in which the child lives. There are two forms of *chronosystem* change forces. The first is called a life transition. Within this form there are two types: normative, such as entering school or marriage; and nonnormative, such as death or moving. These forms of *chronosystem designs* happen throughout a person's life and are a thrust for change in the child's development. The second form is called a life course. In this type of *chronosystem* change the cumulative effect of the person's sequential development over their

entire life is examined.

Epstein. Another theoretical model designed to explain the complex influences that affect parental involvement, schools, families, and children was designed by Joyce Epstein. She began her research on parent involvement back in 1981. She later established the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University in 1996. This network's main function is to "guide schools, districts, and states to use research-based approaches to build better partnership programs and to study new questions that arise" (Epstein, 2001, p. xv). She also established the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships in 1995.

Epstein (2001) developed a parent involvement theory entitled the *overlapping spheres of influence*. This theory situates parents, schools, and communities in three separate spheres. These spheres form partnerships and work together to the benefit of the child. This theory embraces a shared perspective. In this theoretical model for parental involvement the concept of partnership is extremely important. According to Epstein (2001), "the 'maximum' overlap occurs when schools and families operate as true 'partners,' with frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication" (p. 29). The child is at the center of the spheres, plays a key role in his or her own education, and exerts influence on the family, school and community which influences the amount of overlap between the three spheres.

The overlapping spheres theory recognized three forces that could influence the amount of overlap between the spheres. Force A was time. Depending on the age of the child and historical period when the child was in that grade, time would influence the amount of overlap. But time did not make parents more knowledgeable about how to help their children in school. Force B was the experience, philosophy, and practices of the parents. These three variables were

internal forces of the parent that would influence the overlap between the three spheres. Force C was the experience, philosophy, and practices of the school. Force B and Force C either work together for the benefit of the child or work separately for the child determines the amount of overlap in the spheres. Understanding how these three forces influence each other and the amount of overlap between the spheres enables programs and changes to occur. These are the points of intersection that provided common ground for open communication between the three entities.

When developing partnerships it was important to start with a base of trust and respect. According to Epstein (2001), “good partnerships are able to withstand questions, conflicts, debates, and disagreements; provide structures and processes to solve problems; and are maintained – even strengthened – after differences have been resolved” (p. 406). Epstein also advocated for family-like schools and school-like families. In the family-like school, children are looked at as individuals, made to feel comfortable, and are appreciated for their unique qualities. The families of all children are made to feel a part of a family-like school, not just the families that are easy to connect with. In school-like families, families understand that their child is a student as well as a child. The families need to support the important aspects of the school by helping with homework, showing that school is a valuable commodity, and provide activities that help to ensure success for the child.

According to Epstein (2001) there are six types of parent involvement. Each type of involvement promotes certain kinds of outcomes for students, parents and teachers. The first type is called *Parenting*. This type of involvement includes helping families with parenting skills, understanding child development, and home support for learning. The second type is

called *Communicating*. This type of involvement includes open dialogue between parent to school and school to parent. The third type is called *Volunteering*. This type of involvement includes recruiting, training, and scheduling families to support their child. The fourth type is called *Learning at Home*. This involvement includes homework or other activities linked to school work. The fifth type of involvement is called *Decision Making*. This includes having parents serve on committees that help the school make sound educational decisions concerning curriculum and even budgetary decisions. The sixth type of involvement is called *Collaborating with the Community*. This type of involvement includes the pulling together of all the resources that are available to the school in order to promote learning for the children.

Epstein's overlapping spheres model to understand parental involvement is very comprehensive, intricate and complicated, thus reflecting the complexities involved when working with parent partnerships. This theoretical model looks at parental involvement in a shared perspective and can be used to explain group as well as individual behaviors of parents, teachers, and children.

Hoover-Dempsey. Another theoretical model depicting the process of parental involvement was developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997). This theoretical model depicts the shared perspective as the most optimal way to have positive academic outcomes for the child. This model also recognizes that there are other influences that affect the relationship between the school and parents. The model takes into account the affective influences that temper why and how much a parent becomes actively involved in their child's education. This theoretical model for explaining parent involvement has been developed and revised over eighteen years of research (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Hoover-Dempsey,

Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, & Jones, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1997; Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, Brissie, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey, Wilkins, Sandler, O'Connor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, (in press) Retrieved January 25, 2005).

This theoretical model examines the parent's perspective in the parental involvement process by analyzing the types of influences that help educators to understand why parents become involved and how parents choose certain involvement activities

Hoover-Dempsey's work over the past eighteen years has shown a progression of understanding towards why parents become involved in their children's education. First, the studies began with the teachers' perspective. Then the studies progressed to include the parents' perspectives. This was done through quantitative studies on a large scale first, then through smaller more in-depth qualitative studies. Finally, the studies began to include children's perspectives. The final four studies have used all three sample populations to give a more comprehensively outlined set of data and a clearer understanding as to how and why parents become involved in their children's education and the process of how different variables influence parents decisions.

The second major impact from Hoover-Dempsey's work is the psychological perspective used as the theoretical basis. The theoretical model acknowledges the parents' initial decision to become involved, the parents' decision to choose an activity, and the mediating factors that exert influence on the child because of the parents' involvement. Hoover-Dempsey's perspective uses a more caring, realistic, and judgment-free model for understanding parents' perspectives.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model acknowledges the many influences or barriers that exert pressure on parents while making decisions about actively participating in their child's education.

The third major impact of Hoover-Dempsey's work is the process approach used in the model. The parent involvement process is analyzed and "points of entry" (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987, p. 431) are determined where schools and teachers may make impact on the process in positive ways. The points of entry idea is important to me because I believe that teachers or schools can help make parents feel that they are needed and wanted in the education of their children. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) "even well designed school programs inviting involvement will meet with only limited success if they do not address issues of parental role construction and parental sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school" (p. 3).

Another important influence of Hoover-Dempsey's research describes the child as being the primary link between the home and school. The closer the fit is between home and school, the easier it is for the child to maintain and function in the boundary role. As these two entities, home and a school, become more diverse, the child is placed in the position of having to use much time, energy, and resources in the negotiation process. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) when the fit between parents and school are so poor, the child "may simply give up, accepting the tension under conditions of reduced effectiveness, or simply 'drop-out' of one domain or the other" (p. 325). The parent and the teacher are the two major adult influences in a child's immediate education. The adults need to make the boundary role one in which the child can flourish.

There are three emerging themes throughout Hoover-Dempsey's work. The first major theme is the point of entry. Various places in the parent involvement process interventions could have major impact on getting parents involved in their child's education. One area of impact is through the invitations that parents receive from the school to become involved. Level one and level two of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (1997) emphasizes the importance of general and specific invitations from the teachers to the parents. General invitations influence a parent's decision to become involved; while the specific invitations influence the parent's choice of activity.

The second major theme throughout the research is the perspective of the studies. As the research progresses it moves from different participant's perspectives. At the beginning, teachers were used as the major perspective. Then parents were added along with the teacher perspective. Next, the parents were used to gather the information. Finally, the three perspectives, teacher, parent and child, were combined to give a wider lens and understanding to the parent involvement process.

The third major theme that emerged from the analysis was the importance of level one in the theoretical model. In level one, the parents' decisions as to why they decide to become involved is analyzed. This level is the foundation on which the four levels are based. Hoover-Dempsey has devoted much of her research time and effort in developing a clear understanding of why parents decide or choose to be involved. Seems like such an elementary concept, but as Hoover-Dempsey has pointed out, many assumptions have been made concerning this issue. If schools sincerely want to get parents involved, then the school needs to have a clear understanding of what causes or prevents parents from becoming involved on their own.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) proposed three guiding questions and one clarifying question for their theoretical model: Why do parents choose to be involved in their child's education? How do they choose specific forms of involvement? How does parent involvement make a difference? What goes on in the process that makes it likely to have a positive difference in the child's school outcomes?

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sander (1995), "parental involvement in child and adolescent education conveys the clear assumption that parents' involvement benefits children's learning" (p. 310). This "assumed model" stated that student outcomes were directly influenced by parent involvement which was directly influenced by factors associated with the parents (demographic: SES or parent attitudes). This "assumed model" of parent involvement did not answer the critical questions of why parents become involved or how parent involvement actually affects children's educational outcomes.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model included five layers to the process of parent involvement. The first level was concerned with the "parental involvement decision". It attempted to explain why parents made the decision to become involved in their child's education. In this level there were three basic influences on the parents' decision to become involved: parents' role construction, parents' sense of efficacy, and general invitations from their child and the school for parental involvement. These three constructs will be further discussed in more detail after the general explanation of the theoretical model.

The second level was concerned with the parents' choice of involvement forms. This level looked at factors that explained how parents chose types of involvement activities. This level was also influenced by three factors: specific domains of parent skills and knowledge, the

mix of demands on time and energy, and specific invitations for involvement from child and school.

The third level explained the parental mechanisms that influence children's educational outcomes: modeling, reinforcement, and instruction – open or close ended. The authors acknowledged that these mechanisms of parent involvement were not the only variables that promoted influence on children's educational outcomes. Other such variables included child variables, teacher and school variables, and socio-cultural variables.

The fourth level was “tempered or mediated by two major variables as perceived or experienced by children” (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, p. 322). The first tempered variable was parents' use of developmentally appropriate activities. The child must perceive the parents actions as being developmentally appropriate in order for a positive influence to be exerted on the child's educational outcomes. The second tempered variable was the fit between involvement actions and school expectations. A child assumes what is called the boundary role between home and school. When home and school were closely matched, the child's transition between the two entities was comfortable and performed smoothly. When these two entities were not closely matched, the child was in the position to try to navigate between the two differing entities. This would cause doubt as to whether positive influence would be impacted on the child's educational outcomes.

The fifth level was comprised of the child/student outcomes. The first area was in the skills and knowledge that a child would gain with positive parent involvement. The second more important educational outcome according to the authors' was the child's personal efficacy. When a parent was actively and positively involved in their child's education, this involvement

“offers significant and powerful sources of efficacy development for the child” (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, p. 328).

As was stated earlier, level one of the theoretical model was foundational for the model. In level one three constructs were examined as to how they influence a parent’s decision to become involved in their child’s education. Parental efficacy, parental role construction, and general invitations from the school are the three constructs. Parental efficacy and parental role construction are considered to be the two most influential constructs to be considered when analyzing why parents choose to become involved in their child’s education.

Parental efficacy is based in the self efficacy theory developed by Bandura (1993). According to Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) “Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise comparison over their level of functioning and environmental demands. Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act” (p. 1206). This definition of self efficacy demonstrates the strong motivational perspective of self efficacy. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) continue by explaining that “Such beliefs influence aspirations and strength of goal commitments, level of motivation and perseverance in the face of difficulties and setbacks, resilience to adversity, quality of analytic thinking, causal attributions for successes and failures, and vulnerability to stress and depression” (p. 1206). The impact of one’s self efficacy can produce far reaching ramifications, especially with regard to the parent and child relationship.

Parental efficacy is a subset of self efficacy. Parental efficacy relates to the person’s beliefs as to their capabilities about being a parent. These beliefs are socially constructed.

According to Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1997) parents with a high sense of efficacy “tend to respond to difficulties or failures in the particular domain with increased effort, partly because they believe failure is due to insufficient effort rather than lack of ability” (p. 18). However, parents with lower self efficacy tend to not be able to manage difficulties. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) go on to explain these parents with lower self efficacy “tend to avoid situations in the area, slacken their efforts, or stop trying altogether” (p. 18). If a parent has a low efficacy toward their ability to help their child in school, then that parent will tend to “avoid” that area of difficulty. They do not believe they would be able to affect any kind of positive change.

Schools need to be aware of a parent’s efficacy levels in light of the impact it has on the parent’s decision making concerning school. Helping parents to develop better skills in working with their child will increase their parental efficacy level which would increase their parent involvement which would impact their child’s academic achievement.

The other major construct from level one of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s parent involvement model is parental role construction. The construct of parental role construction is based on role theory developed by Biddle. According to Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) “roles are socially constructed sets of beliefs and expectations held by individuals and groups for the behavior of group members” (p. 3). Since the roles are socially constructed, the roles are defined by what other members of the group expect of the individual (given demands), what the individual expects of himself (personal demands), and what the individual believes is appropriate behavior for that role (role behavior).

In relation to school, parents’ beliefs about their role fall into three categories. First is the parent focused role. In this role the parent believes that it is his/her responsibility to make

decisions about their child in school. In the partnership focused role, the parent believes that the school and the parent must work together to make decisions concerning the child's education. The third role is called school focused. In this role, the parent believes that the main responsibility for the child's education belongs to the school. In this role the parent abdicates their responsibility over to the school, allowing the school to make all major and minor decisions concerning the child's education.

The influence that Hoover-Dempsey's work has had on the present research study is reflected in the use of the quantitative survey instruments but also in the close philosophical likenesses of the two researchers. Many times educators look at parents as a resource for them to use in order to get higher test scores. When these resources do not perform or support as the educator deems appropriate, frustration, misunderstanding, and misconceptions ensue. I like the way Hoover-Dempsey acknowledges the very real, human component to parents that educators have a tendency to disregard. Parents who do not or can not take active roles according to the teacher's or school's judgment may very well be actively supporting their child in other ways. At the same time, using Hoover-Dempsey's idea of "points of entry" there are valid strategies that schools can use to make the partnership a more positive aspect for the child.

Summary

The importance and complexity of parent involvement is apparent as evidenced by the in-depth look at these three parent involvement models. Getting parents involved in their child's education has been a focus of concern for educators for many years. The theoretical perspectives dictate how and why certain parent involvement programs are developed. A great deal of research has focused on the importance of parent involvement in the area of literacy. First, I

will present a review of literature on literacy development.

Literacy Development

Social Interaction Learning Theory

Social Interaction Learning Theory is based on work by Vygotsky and his followers. According to this theory, learning and development is socially constructed between two or more people. According to Bodrova and Leong (2001) learning that leads to development enables children to use mental tools that are acquired through interactions with a more experienced or learned other. Through the acquisition of these mental tools from the learned other, the child is able to develop higher level mental functions such as abstract symbol systems. Vygotsky's work is based on four principles (Vygotsky, 1978).

Principle I: Children Construct Knowledge. The first principle in Vygotsky's framework is that children construct knowledge. According to Bodrova and Leong (1996), Vygotsky believed that in order to build cognitive understanding, a child must first be involved in a social situation with another and that this social interaction was influenced by the present and past social experiences of the child. Vygotsky believed that physical manipulation along with the social interaction was necessary for development. With the importance of the construction of knowledge, it was extremely important to know what the child actually understood. In the Vygotskian framework, learning was thought of as "*appropriation of knowledge*" (Bodrova and Leong, 1996, p. 9).

Principle II: Development can not be Separated from Social Context. The second principle for this framework is development can not be separated from the social context in which it took place. Social context, for Vygotsky, meant everything in the child's social culture;

everything in the environment that was explicitly or implicitly influenced by the culture. This social context applied more influence on learning than attitudes and beliefs according to Vygotsky. Social context not only affected a change in development but it also affected how and what children think. The social context needed to be analyzed at different levels. The first level was the immediate interactive level, the person(s) the child was interacting with now. At the second level, structural level, the social structures such as the family and school that influenced the child. The third level, general cultural or social level, included such influences as language, numerical systems and use of technology as a society at large.

The characteristics of cognition for Vygotsky not only included the acquiring of culturally generated knowledge but also extended to the content and the mental processes. Vygotsky believed that the social context not only influenced what you learned, content; but it also influenced how you acquired this knowledge, process. Vygotsky believed that the actual logic one used to solve a problem was influenced by their cultural world. The mental processes were considered to be internal processes but could also happen between people. Children could learn a mental process by sharing or using it with other people. After this time of shared experience the child was able to use the process independently.

Principle III: Learning Can Lead to Development. The third principle was that learning could lead to development. This concept was different than behaviorists who believed that learning and development was the same thing. Vygotsky believed that learning and development, although complexly connected, were, indeed, two separate processes. According to Bodrova and Leong (1996), Vygotsky believed that a child's thinking would eventually become more ordered and purposeful.

Vygotsky acknowledged that maturation could hinder what a child was able to do but maturation alone did not improve development. He also believed that learning could actually cause development. Vygotsky's point was important here. If development must come first, then teaching becomes something that the child already knows. At the other end of the continuum, teaching something that a child was not developmentally ready for would only breed frustration. Vygotsky stressed the importance of teaching each child as an individual rather than falling into the trap of trying to find the right formula to teach everyone the same thing at the same time.

Principle IV: Importance of Language in Development of Child. The fourth main principle for this framework was how language played an important role in the development of children. Vygotsky labeled language as a mental tool itself. Language permitted a child “to imagine, manipulate, create new ideas, and share those ideas with others” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 13). For Vygotsky, language possessed two roles – it was part of the development of cognition and it was part of the cognitive process itself. In other words, for Vygotsky, the child not only needed language skills to grow cognitively but it was through language as the actual vehicle by which learning promoted cognition. Language was also important since learning was a social act; language was the tool for sharing what had been learned through the social situation.

Mental Tools. In this theoretical framework, the term “mental tools” was used to clarify how children gain advanced mental abilities. With the use of these mental tools, children are able to focus, to remember, and think more clearly. Vygotsky believed that these mental tools went beyond just extending our abilities. He believed that these tools actually “change the very way we attend, remember, and think” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 3).

According to Vygotsky, mental tools were one big difference between man and the lower animals. Mental tools enabled people to problem solve and adapt to their environment. Mental tools could be “used, invented and taught to others” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 17). Mental tools had two forms – external and internal. At the beginning of development, mental tools were concrete, physical, and thus external. At later stages of development, these mental tools became internalized – able to be used independently. Vygotsky discussed how children used external mental tools with others first – interpersonal, between two or more people. Then, as that tool became part of the child’s own thinking process, the mental tool became intrapersonal – individual or internal.

Memory strategies were good examples of the kind of mental tools Vygotsky was referring to. These memory strategies, when used effectively, could help double or triple the amount of information remembered. Vygotsky believed these mental tools were essential in the development of children’s mental capacities. He explored the various ways that children went about acquiring these mental tools. The role of the teacher in this framework became one of enabling or helping children acquire these mental tools. The aim of the teacher was to help until the children were able to use the mental tools independently, creatively, and eventually to invent new tools when needed. The teacher was to present the passage way to independence.

Language was considered by Vygotsky as the universal mental tool (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Language was developed in all cultures. Language was considered to be a cultural tool because it was produced and mutually understood by all members of a culture. Language was considered to be a mental tool because it was used to think. Language was also a primary tool because language enabled the child to acquire other mental tools. Language was used in

constructing other mental functions such as memory, focus, emotions, and problem solving strategies.

Vygotsky believed that the absence of these mental tools would have a profound effect on the child. The absence of these mental tools would restrict the amount of abstraction the child would be able to attain. Without mental tools, the child was left with reciting facts but could not take those facts and use them in new and creative ways. Vygotsky believed this lack of transfer was due to the lack of mental tools. According to Bodrova and Leong (1996), “while abstract problems are the concern of teachers in the upper elementary grades, the tools learned during the early childhood period have a direct bearing on later abilities” (p. 5). A child acquired mental tools continually; it was not a one time event.

Theory of Care in Education

According to Noddings (2002), the importance of the caring relationship first established in the home is of crucial importance in education. The relationship between parent and child is the first caring connection for the child. Noddings confirms that there is no other single factor more important to a child’s success than the child’s home. This first connection can be nurtured further in an educational setting that operates with an ethic of care. As the child attends school, the teacher takes on the role of “carer” as the child continues in the role of “cared for”.

The caring relationship is established through a process of receptivity and reciprocity. Noddings explains that the caring relationship begins with the parent’s response to an anticipated need. The parent provides the child with the perceived need and the child in turn responds to the parent’s response. If the parent consistently responds to the child’s need in a caring manner, the child begins to develop a sense of trust in the parent to provide for their needs. This begins the

process of caring. But the caring relationship is more than just the parent providing for the child's needs. A reciprocal response from the child indicates to the parent that the need has been met. This reciprocal response gives the parent motivation to continue to care. The complexity of the process lies in the relation between the parent as care giver and the child as the one cared for. There are many variables that can affect this complex caring relationship.

Noddings (2002) continues to explain that most of us learn how to care from the home setting. However, when a child does not learn to care through the home, then the school must help to teach children to care. If the school responds to the child's needs consistently, then the child will develop a sense of caring and trust. The caring relationship between teacher and child reflects the same kind of reciprocal process as between the parent and child and is subject to the same kinds of influences that could help or hinder that relationship.

Noddings explains that caring schools respond to the needs of the children. Schools need to have autonomy not rigidity in order to respond to the needs of their children. Noddings (2002) expands on this idea by saying that distrust of teachers has put more emphasis on high-stakes testing. This emphasis on high staking testing as a way to meet our children's needs has weakened the integrity of the teaching profession and made it difficult for caring professionals to provide for children's needs.

One last area of concern for Noddings is the common, identical curriculum for all children. According to Noddings (2002) the combination of an identical curriculum for all children and high stakes testing is a recipe for disaster. Noddings goes on to explain that children are individuals, not interchangeable parts. Children are not identical physically, mentally, or emotionally and these differences should be celebrated not eliminated or ignored.

Noddings recommends a curriculum that teaches vital skills to all children but also a curriculum that is responsive to the individual child's talents and interests. The child would strive for high standards in the areas of his or her own particular interests. This is a caring, responsive, and very complex way of solving educational problems. There is no one right answer for all children.

Emergent Literacy

The term emergent literacy was introduced to the academic world with the publishing of an edited book by Teale and Sulzby in 1986 by the name of *Emergent Literacy*. In this book the editors proceeded to define a new way of conceptualizing how young children became literate citizens. It had previously been believed that children needed to mature and develop readiness skills in order to facilitate their formal reading that began in school. Contrary to this belief, emergent literacy acknowledges the great learning that takes place before formal schooling begins, especially in the area of literacy.

Emergent literacy relies on two main perspectives in child development. First, emergent literacy relies on the Neo-Piagetian belief that as children makes attempts at reading and writing on their own, the children uncover and come to understand about literacy. Secondly, through the social interaction between the child and a learned other, the child makes social constructs about literacy which is solidly based in Vygotsky's learning theory (Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001; Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki, 2005).

Some emergent literacy researchers support the ideal that emergent literacy skills lead directly to the conventional literacy skills taught in formal schooling (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001). Other researchers claimed that emergent literacy was a precursor stage, which was followed by an early literacy stage and finally ends in

the acquisition of the conventional reading stage (Chall, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Hemphill, Goodman, & Jacobs, 1983; Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001).

Many researchers have considered emergent literacy to be a broad construct that includes various behaviors supported by research studies. (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Mason & Stewart, 1990; Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001). Mason and Stewart categorized the emergent literacy behaviors into four components: concepts and functions of literacy; writing and composing; knowledge about letters and words; and listening comprehension and word understanding.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) viewed emergent literacy as including broad behaviors such as in literacy, language, and metalinguistics. These broad behaviors were further categorized into two main components: outside-in processes and inside-out process. Outside-in processes included such behaviors as knowledge about print conventions, emergent reading in context, narrative knowledge, and language - vocabulary. Inside-out processes included such behaviors as phonetic spelling, letter knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, and syntactic awareness. Whitehurst and Lonigan weave different aspects of the broader skills into the two main categories.

Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton (2001), expanded on the ideas of Mason and Stewart along with the ideas from Whitehurst and Lonigan by first analyzing whether or not literacy – primarily written language skills, language – primarily oral language, and metalinguistics – primarily phonological awareness were separate constructs of emergent literacy. Lonigan, Burgess, and Anthony (2000) found that “models that separated oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge captured young children’s performance

better than models that used a single factor” (Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001, p. 445).

Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton (2001) expand the understanding of emergent literacy by comparing “procedural knowledge (knowing how) and conceptual knowledge (knowing why)” (p. 447). Based on the findings from various researchers in the field of emergent literacy, Senechal et al. proposed to separate emergent literacy from language and metalinguistics. They further proposed that emergent literacy is made up of two types of knowledge: procedural and conceptual. Senechal et al. looked at the relations that exist between emergent literacy, oral language, metalinguistic skills, and reading.

Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton (2001) first found that the two components of emergent literacy (procedural and conceptual) were interrelated and had different associations with language and metalinguistics. Children’s conceptual knowledge (print concepts) was associated with vocabulary. Children’s procedural knowledge was associated with phonological awareness. Senechal et al. also found that “conceptual knowledge plays an important role in the acquisition of emergent procedural knowledge about literacy, as children’s understanding of why we read facilitates the acquisition of early literacy skills” (p. 454). In other words, it is important for children to have a foundation built on why a certain skill is necessary before acquisition of that skill can be useful to the learner. Therefore, giving the child a reason to learn to read has a positive effect on their actual acquisition of the skills needed to read.

Korat (2005) expanded the two construct model for emergent literacy. Korat renamed the procedural knowledge category as non-contextual and the conceptual knowledge category as contextual. Phonemic awareness was added to the non-contextual category because of the strong

association to letter knowledge and reading behaviors. The results again confirmed the two constructs for measuring emergent literacy: contextual and non-contextual knowledge.

It was also found that lower-income children were behind their middle-income counterparts in non-contextual knowledge but not behind in contextual knowledge. In other words, lower-income children were behind middle-income children in knowing “how” to read but did not fall behind the middle-income children in knowing “why” we read. This research supports the claims made by other researchers such as Taylor (1998), Heath (1983), Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988) that lower-income children are “exposed to reading and writing activities, both functional and playful, on a daily basis, including book reading. Thus, it would appear that this type of general exposure has a positive impact and may help to explain the lack of difference between LSES and MSES children on contextual measures” (Korat, 2005).

Language

Language was originally considered to be a component of emergent literacy but has since been seen as a separate but related construct to emergent literacy (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Smith, 2003; Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). According to Goodman (1997) “language exists only to express meaning; so we must always see everything in language in its relationship to meaning. And we must understand that listeners and readers can only make sense of language if they bring meaning to it” (p. 44). When analyzing language in relation to reading, language becomes a dual “meaning making” system that exists between author and reader. The author’s expressed idea is dependent on the reader’s receptivity to that idea and the reader’s ability to understand the idea. In other words, there exists a reciprocal relationship between author and reader.

Summary

Emergent literacy is a fairly new term designed to help explain the kinds of learning that occurs before formal schooling. Emergent literacy is made up of two main components: procedural or non-contextual and conceptual or contextual. Procedural or non-contextual refers to “how” literacy works. Conceptual or contextual refers to “why” literacy works. Researchers have found that lower-income children and middle-income children at the beginning of kindergarten do not differ in their conceptual levels about literacy. This implies that lower-income children are being exposed to general literacy in their home settings but do lag behind the middle income children in the procedural or non-contextual area. Different families promote literacy development in their children in various ways. How these various ways influence the literacy development of the child will now be examined in the next section.

Family Influences on Literacy

According to Taylor (1998) literacy is something that occurs in the classroom but it also relates to the child’s life at home before and after school entry. The child’s literacy development is greatly affected by how the child lives his or her daily life and interacts with others. According to Taylor (1998), family literacy encompasses much more than just what enables children to do well in school. Family literacy includes how families use their literacy skills to live their daily lives. Family literacy becomes socially constructed through interactions in the home. Through this social interaction between parent and child, literacy does not have as its main focus just preparation for traditional schooling but rather has its roots in providing daily life skills and usage for literacy for functioning in society (Heath, 1983; Green, Lilly, & Barrett, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Shannon & Labbo, 2002; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Taylor (1998) describes how six families interact with literacy on a daily basis. She chronicles the literacy development from the beginning of language development with toddlers through the formalized learning of reading and writing. This research found that families supported literacy in indirect ways right from the very beginning. In other words a child comes to school already having experienced some literacy development. This literacy development has been influenced by the parent and learned others in the home setting. This role of parent as educator becomes a vital link for educators to tap into to establish trusting and respectful relationships especially in the early childhood years, ages 0-8 years old (Coleman, Rowland, & Hutchins, 1997; Goodling, 1994; Morrow & Young, 1997; Wood, 2002; US Department of Education, 2004).

Role of Parent

The vital role of parent as the child's first teacher elevates the parent beyond just a resource for teachers. But rather this role as first teacher projects the idea that the parent could be seen as an expert along side the teacher. According to Edwards, Pleasant, and Franklin (1999) schools need to appreciate the expertise a parent is able to give concerning the parent's child. Although educators are expertise on pedagogy, curriculum, and child development, teachers do not possess the individual expertise concerning specific children. In this acknowledgement of parent as expert, teachers need to let parents share their expertise about their child and specifically about the child's way of learning.

According to Edwards, Pleasant, and Franklin (1999), the combination of the parents' expertise and the teacher's expertise can provide a stronger possibility for supporting the child's learning. This perspective toward the parent as expert based on their expertise about the

individual child, gives a strong argument for establishing and maintaining close partnerships between parent and teacher. None of us have all the answers, all the time, for all children, but together we come closer to finding these answers that will ultimately benefit the children.

According to Neuman (2000), family literacy has triggered a multitude of “programs, publications, and public policies, all designed to broaden access to education and to enhance family skills in reading, writing, and communication” (p. 153). Many, if not most, of these programs’ underlying assumption is to “transmit the culture of school literacy through the vehicle of the family” (p. 153). But as Taylor and others have documented through their research with families of successful learners, the vast experiences these successful learners have shared through language and literacy practices with their families in their daily lives seems to be the major influencing factor (Heath, 1983; Green, Lilly, & Barrett, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). In other words, the social construction of meaning for the child is enhanced because of the social interactions that occur in the setting of the home between child and caring adult.

In a seminal research study conducted by Heath (1983), families from two different communities were shown to contribute to the educational process for their children. Heath contrasts and compares the ways in which language is used to make meaning and how that relates to the child’s readiness for school. According to Heath (1983), it was the kind of talk that occurred between the parent and child that provided the one group of children to be successful in school. This included specific kind of talk included skill development in labeling items, experiences with narrative as a form of understanding, and exposure to stories. These parents also provided their children with literacy experiences where the child and adult participated in

imaginative interactions and manipulations of the story elements. Then the parent and child would discuss what ramifications might occur regarding the changed elements. Therefore, meaning making is relational. It is through the actions and encounters between parent and child that the child is able to understand and make meaning from the text. These kinds of interactions, manipulations, and discussions provided the child with the skills to do well in school because these activities are very similar to the kinds of literacy tasks children are asked to do at school.

Storybook Read Alouds

Storybook reading is one of the ways in which parents and children interact in order to construct meaning from texts. Storybook reading has been associated with increased language and literacy development (Wood, 2002; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Schwartz, 2004). This association between reading aloud to children and the language development that occurs has influenced many researchers in their studies. For example, Teale and Sulzby, (1986) identified different styles of reading that parents used when reading aloud with their child. Many intervention programs have been designed to examine this connection and to provide a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the encounter between parent and child.

Neuman. Neuman (1996) examined the effects of an intervention that provided access to literacy materials and investigated the types of parent-child “talk” that occurred during storybook reading time. Forty one parents in three Head Start Programs were invited to participate in the book club format. The parents participated for one hour per week for twelve weeks. This intervention was guided by the belief that parents teach more than mechanisms and strategies of reading during storybook time with their children.

This discussion format assumed that parents had rich experiences to share with others and they could be applied to children's literature selections. This book club discussion format also provided a more inclusive, accepting, and caring attitude toward the parents. Placing the parent in the position of "expert" helped the parents to become actively involved in the process of meaning making of text with their child.

Each week the facilitator would provide the parents with the book for the week and a demonstration of reading that book aloud. Key phrases and dramatizations were included during the demonstration. The facilitator would then lead the parents in a discussion and which focused on three key questions: (a) what would you want your child to take away from this book? (b) what kinds of questions or comments would you use to stimulate a discussion of the story? and (c) how would you help your child revisit this book? A recorder listed the common themes, distinctive qualities of the book, descriptive phrases, and unusual vocabulary as parents discussed the first question. Various question types, like recall, prediction, questions that related to other experiences, and other books would be recorded when discussing question two. Parent suggestions like rereading or using activity extensions such as visiting the zoo, making cookies, or going for a walks together were described and recorded when discussing question three.

Parents were then provided practice time to read the story. Of the forty one parents participating, eighteen parents self-reported low reading proficiency. During the practice reading time, the facilitator was available for guidance. The parents were paired with their children to read the story together. As parents read with their child, the read aloud sessions were taped. Then the fourth, eighth, and twelfth tapings were coded for each of the 41 parents.

These three sessions were then transcribed and coded. Eleven types of verbal behavior

categories were coded for the reading sessions. An attentive vocative interaction directed the child's attention to either the print or picture in the story. A bridging interaction made connections between the story and everyday experiences of the child. A chiming interaction was described as the child reading along with the parent and text. A clarifying interaction meant the parent explained a picture or part of the text to the child. For an elaborating interaction the parent provided new information to the child. A feedback interaction the parent would correct or confirm the child's response. Labeling interactions meant the parent identified an object or event for the child. Managing interactions got the child involved in the story. Predicting interactions asked the child to speculate what might happen next. Recall interactions reviewed the story plot, details or themes of the story. For repeating interactions, the child simply echoed the parents' words.

Means and standard deviations were then calculated for each of these types of interactions for three types of text. The first type of text was described as highly predictive (*Henny Penny*), predictable (*Red Hen*), and narrative (*Snowy Day*). Text was viewed as a critical variable in this study. This study also examines the effect that text type plays on the interaction between parent and child. It was found that significantly more chiming and feedback interactions were occurred for highly predictable text. It was found that narrative type text produces more bridging and recalling of text interactions between parent and child. Narrative text therefore, enabled the parent to make connections for the child concerning the text that went beyond the pages of the story and tied into the child's own personal experiences. Neuman concludes that narrative text provides the child with more cognitively challenging interactions because the child makes meaning within and beyond the text.

Whitehurst. In another intervention program based on the importance of storybook read alouds, parents are specifically shown how to engage their child in a more active role rather than just the listener in the read aloud session. According to Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchac, & Caulfield (1988) how parents interact with their children will influence the child's language development. In this study, there were 30 middle class families with children ages 21 to 35 months old. The families were randomly assigned to either the treatment or comparison group. The treatment group participated in a 4-week treatment program aimed at training parents how to change the frequency and timing of the parents' child-directed language interactions during storybook reading time. The comparison group parents were instructed to read with their child, but no intervention as to how to interact during story time was given. Both groups were asked to audio-tape reading sessions with their children at least 3 or 4 times a week.

The treatment group received two 25-30 minute training sessions. These training sessions included watching others role play on how to interact with a child during story book reading. The parents then participated in role playing. Feedback from the instructor was given to the parents during the role playing. These training sessions included questioning and interactive techniques for parents to use with their child during storybook reading sessions. The first and second training sessions were given two weeks apart.

The questions along with parental interactions to the child's responses were found to produce language development in the child as measured on the verbal expression subscale of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (IPTA), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R), and the Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT). The child's

expressive language was tested at the beginning of the study, after the first two weeks, after the fourth week, and after nine months. The main effects of the intervention program were tested using multivariate analysis. It was found that the intervention program produced approximately 8.5 months higher language expression scores on the measures than the comparison group. At the nine month follow-up, the treatment group was still six months ahead of the comparison group children.

This approach to reading aloud with a child is called dialogic reading. The questioning and interaction techniques developed by Whitehurst et al., used a mnemonic device to assist parents. For the interaction process, the acronym PEER was used to aid the parents. The P stood for the parents to use of prompts with their child while reading. The first E stood for the parents' use of evaluating the child's response to the prompting. The second E stood for the parents' use of expanding or rephrasing the child's response. The R stood for the parents' use of repeating the prompt and the child's response to assure the child learned from the expansion.

A mnemonic device was also used for developing the types of prompts to use with the child. The types of prompts used the acronym CROWD. The C stood for using completion type questions, leave a blank at the end of the sentence and let the child complete the sentence. The R stood for recall prompts. This would direct the child to what the details of the story were about. The O stood for open-ended questions. These questions focus on the pictures of the books and help the child with the details of the story as well as expressive language. The W stands for wh-questions such as what, where, when, why and how. These type of questions help teach the child new vocabulary. The D stands for distancing questions. These questions extend the text beyond the page into the child's everyday life.

According to Whitehurst (2004) when most adults share a book with their child, the child is an uninvolved listener. Using a dialogic reading approach, the adult supports the child to become the active story teller. This role reversal is an excellent example of Vygotsky's scaffolding concept. The knowledgeable other, the parent, provides the child with the kind of successive support in order for the child to become the successful story teller.

Whitehurst goes on to explain that in order for children to become good story tellers, and ultimately readers, the child needs to be more than just story listener. In order to obtain more positive results in language development, the child needs to be an active participant in the story book read aloud session. With the parent providing the child with the scaffolding necessary to allow the child to develop a personally constructed understanding of the narrative is what facilitates the child's language development. The inherent connection between parent and child provides a safe, trusting, and caring environment for the child to take risks while trying to understand and develop their own meaning for the written text.

Summary

The various theoretical parent involvement models provide insightful understanding of the complex relationship between parent, child, and school. Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1986) uses an ecological environmental approach to explain the influences that cause change in a child's development. Epstein uses an overlapping spheres of influence model to try to explain the intricate connections between family, school, community, and child. Epstein describes the relationship between family and school as being influenced by such things as time, the parents', schools', and community's experiences, philosophy, and practices. This is similar to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model for parental involvement in that this model also

acknowledges the different forces that influence change in the parent and school relationship.

In Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model the parents' perspective is taken in order to analyze the connections between parent and school. In the first level of the model the decision by the parent on whether or not to become involved is influenced by three components: parental role construction, parental efficacy, and specific invitations by the child or school to the parent. Analyzing the components of the first level provides an insight into why parents decide to become involved in their child's education. This analysis can provide a "point of entry" for schools or other agencies to target as they develop interventions to build partnerships with parents. These interventions can be developed to facilitate or foster a partnership focus for parental role construction and promote higher parental efficacy levels so that the parent will decide to become an active participant.

There are many types of family influences on parent involvement. Literacy is socially constructed through the family unit in the home. Since literacy acquisition happens within the home setting, it begins long before formal schooling. Literacy is a functional part of everyday life and families use it in order to survive in their worlds. These implications are important because they imply to researchers, educators, and policy makers that the parent or caring adult is a vital part of tying the child's home literacy to the more formal literacy found in schools. The parent is an expert about their own individual child, while the teacher is an expert in more general areas of pedagogy, child development, and curriculum.

Research has been very consistent and clear as to the benefits of reading aloud to children. Reading aloud has been shown to develop the child's language skills, vocabulary skills, understanding of the narrative form, and enhances motivation to read. These findings have

significant implications for researchers designing intervention programs to enhance children's emergent literacy and reading skills. Specifically, using a dialogic approach to reading aloud, which is not the way most parents read with their children, helps the child to develop vocabulary, understand story structure, and to find meaning when working with written text. This approach utilizes questioning as the method for making meaning and is facilitated by the adult with the child, again emphasizing the importance of the social interaction learning theory.

SPARKLE

During the development process for the SPARKLE intervention program many aspects of the previous cited research were considered and utilized as cornerstones for this project. First, the work by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler contributed the ideal that schools need to look at parents as individuals with specific types of motivators that influence their decisions to take an active role in their child's education. The school district is not only attempting to increase levels of parental responsibility and capability perceptions in order to increase parental involvement but the school district is also demonstrating a caring attitude toward the families. The school district is providing parents with reading materials, skills and knowledge in relation to reading aloud with children, and support through the SPARKLE program to promote successful read aloud sessions with their children.

The format for the parent discussions, the questions used to lead the discussions, and the coding system from Neuman (1996) helped to lay a foundation for the ways in which data would be collected and analyzed for SPARKLE. Underlying this format is the theoretical belief that learning takes place through interactive social situations. By providing the parent with the necessary questioning techniques and skills to use during a reading aloud session increases the

likelihood that the child will gain knowledge during the read aloud session, too. In other words, it is expected as the parent acquires skills in questioning and interaction techniques during the read aloud session, the child's skill level should increase as well.

Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchac, & Caulfield (1988) used an experimental research design with a randomized sample to provide empirical evidence concerning the integrity of an intervention program to help parents involve their children as active participants in a reading aloud session. This empirical evidence provided a solid base on which to build further inquiry. Using the acronyms Whitehurst et al. developed for prompting and questioning, the SPARKLE program attempted to give parents a valuable tool to use in order to maximize the benefits of a read aloud session. The SPARKLE program also utilizes an experimental research design with a randomized sample to provide empirical evidence as to the integrity of the program. But SPARKLE also elaborates on the empirical evidence through the additional qualitative data collected from observations, journal writing, audio and video taped read aloud sessions, interviews, and focus group session.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This dissertation research project took place in a small rural school district in central Pennsylvania. The school administration was very supportive of this research project. The school district's administration supported the research project financially, as well as providing practical support through the use of school space, recording equipment, and encouraging staff participation to help conduct the research. The administration showed moral support and a keen interest in the progress of the program through discussions between the building administrators and this researcher.

A mixed method research design was used in order to ascertain answers to the pertinent research questions. The data collection process included formative data collection methods as well as summative data collection methods. A pre-post survey instrument was used as the quantitative measure. Summative data were collected through the survey along with the parent interviews during the focus group after the intervention. From a qualitative stance, data were generated formatively with open ended discussions during the parent book club meetings, audio/video taping the parent-child reading sessions, and coding of reading sessions. Parents were asked to write in a journal regarding reading activities that the parent and child had participated in together. Parents were also given time at the end of each session to write down their impressions of how the session was helpful or needed improvement for them. The formative and summative data were analyzed and interpreted to provide answers to the research questions.

Setting

Bermudian Springs School District (BSSD) is a small rural school district situated in Adams County which is located in south central Pennsylvania. Bermudian Springs School District is one of six school districts in Adams County. The school district is comprised of three buildings: elementary school, middle school, and high school. The Administrative Offices are located in an annex to the high school. All three schools are located on the same district campus.

This district has a total student population of 2161 students in grades K-12. Approximately 19% of the student population is categorized as economically disadvantaged. There are 3.4% of the students are English as a second language learners (ESL). There is 7.8% of the student population with disabilities. The racial and ethnicity factors include 92.5% white, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6.2% Hispanic, and 0.4% Black.

When compared to the other school districts in Adams County, BSSD ranks as the fourth largest school district for total enrollment. BSSD also ranks as fourth largest for the percentage of economically disadvantaged students that attend the school district. BSSD ranked lowest among the six school districts in total expenditures per student, meaning the other five school districts spend more money per student than BSSD for operational spending and instructional spending. These financial rankings were based on the 2002 school expenditure reports retrieved from Bermudian Springs Elementary School Profile from www.schoolmatters.com. BSSD ranked third highest in the county with both the percentage of adults with high school educations and adults with a bachelor's degree. As far as student achievement, BSSD is ranked fifth highest in the county for the math proficiency scores but second highest in the county for reading

proficiency scores. (See Table 1).

Table1 Rankings of School Districts in Adams County

	Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Students per Teacher	Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	Total Expenditure per Student	% of Adults with High School Education	% of Adults with Bachelor's Degree
Bermudian Springs	2	5	3	4	4	6	3	3
Conewago	4 & 5	2	1	1	3	5	5	6
Fairfield	6	6	5	6	6	3	1	2
Gettysburg	3	4	6	2	1	1	2	5
Littlestown	1	3	2	3	5	4	4	1
Upper Adams	4 & 5	1	4	5	2	2	6	4

Bermudian Springs Elementary school has a total enrollment of 812 students. The elementary building houses grades kindergarten through fourth grade. The elementary school data reflect the district data in number of students to teachers, the amount of Economically Disadvantaged students in the school, and the ethnic/racial make up of the student population (Table 2). Although the elementary school reflects the district data, both the district and elementary school are significantly different than the state in ethnic and racial make up. The district and school have a much higher white student population than the state average.

Table 2 Comparison of Bermudian Springs Elementary, Bermudian Springs School District and State of PA

	Students per Teacher	Economically Disadvantaged	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaskan Native
Bermudian Springs Elementary	18.2	20.1	90.1	0.2	8.3	1.3	n.a.
Bermudian Springs School District	17.0	19.0	92.5	0.4	6.2	0.9	0.0
Pennsylvania State		31.0	77.1	15.5	5.2	2.2	0.1

In regards to the community demographic information, Bermudian Springs School District reflects similar demographic information with the state for the category of percentage of adults with high school diplomas. The median home value is higher for the district than the state average. The median household income for the district is also higher than the state average. The percentage of bachelor degrees held in the community is higher than the state average. Meanwhile, the single parent household percentages and the average income per person are lower for the district than for the state (Table 3).

Table 3 Comparison of Bermudian Springs School District and State of Pennsylvania
Community Demographics

	Median Household Income	Median Home Value (\$)	Single-Parent Households (%)	Income per Person (\$)	Adults with a High School Diploma (%)	Adults with a bachelor's degree (%)
Bermudian Springs School District	\$49,791	104,717	7.8	19,481	80.7	15.5
State of Pennsylvania	\$43,311	94,651	9.3	22,831	81.9	22.4

Sample

In this research study, a survey was given during an initial meeting to better understand the demographic makeup for this sample population (Appendix A). The demographic makeup was gathered for level of education, age, gender, job classifications, marital status, number of children living in the household, ages of children, parental estimations for hours per week spent on helping with homework, other school work, volunteering in the school, phone calls from the school and number of conferences held during the school year. Table 4 reflects the frequency distributions for the sample of parents as combined group, comparison group, and treatment group.

Compared with the district demographics, the levels of education for the total group reflect that of the district levels of parental educational levels (Table 3 and Table 4). The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the total group reflects that of the district level for economically disadvantaged. In order for a student to be classified as economically disadvantaged, the student must qualify for the federally funded free or reduced lunch

program which is based on family income. The single parent household percentage for the district and the combined group were virtually the same and both were lower than the state average.

Table 4 Frequency Table for Parent Demographics

		Frequency (n=14)	Percent (n=14)	Frequency Compariso n (n=6)	Percent Compariso n (n=6)	Frequency Treatment (n=8)	Percent Treatment (n=8)
Level of Education	less than high school	1	7.1	0	0	1	12.5
	high school/GED	10	71.4	5	83.3	5	62.5
	some college	2	14.3	0	0	2	25
	work master's degree	1	7.1	1	16.7	0	0
# Children in home	2 Children	8	57.1	4	66.7	4	50
	3 Children	5	35.7	2	33.3	3	37.5
	5 Children	1	7.1	0	0	1	12.5
Gender	female	12	85.7	5	83.3	7	87.5
	male	2	14.3	1	16.7	1	12.5
Age	26-30	3	21.4	1	16.7	2	25
	31-35	3	21.4	2	33.3	1	12.5
	36-40	5	35.7			5	62.5
	41-45	1	7.1	1	16.7	0	0
	46-50	1	7.1	1	16.7	0	0
	51-55	1	7.1	1	16.7	0	0
	Economically Disadvantaged		3	21	1	16.7	2
Marital Status	Married	9	64.3	4	66.7	5	62.5
	Single	1	7.1	0	0	1	12.5
	Living with partner	4	28.6	2	33.3	2	25

The demographic data was very similar when comparing the two study groups. In the area of parents' level of education, the comparison group had a higher percentage of parents that were high school graduates and had one parent with a master's degree. The treatment group had one parent that did not finish high school but had two parents that had some college work. Both groups of parents had more families with two children. The gender distribution was

similar in both groups, with a higher percentage of women than men in both groups. The comparison group had an older parent age level. The treatment group had a younger parental age level. Both groups had similar percentages of married parents. As was noted earlier, the percentage of single families in the combined totals virtually matched the district percentages for single families.

The parent sample for the **Schools and Parents Actively Reaching Kids for Literacy Everyday (SPARKLE)** program was initially selected using kindergarten teacher input. The kindergarten teachers were asked to provide a list of children in their classes that might benefit from participating in a summer reading program for the parents as well as the children. The initial list consisted of 48 children's names. These parents were then sent a brochure outlining the **SPARKLE** program (Appendix B). As part of the brochure, the parents were surveyed as to what day and time of day would be the most convenient time to meet. It was determined that Thursday evenings were the best time for most of the parents to attend the program. An initial parent meeting was scheduled on May 26, 2005. Consent forms were signed at the initial meeting and a copy given during the first session.

At this first meeting 22 parents, representing 19 children, attended the meeting. There were five parents who expressed a desire to participate but were going to be absent one week. These five parents were placed in either the comparison or treatment group depending on the date of their absence. Since both groups would receive the intervention, if a parent was going to miss a week during the first four week session, that parent was put in the comparison group. This procedure of assigning parents to groups, although a departure from random assignment, enabled each parent to receive the full four weeks of the intervention program. Three parents

were placed in the treatment group and two were placed in the comparison group. The other 17 names were alphabetized by last name. Then the names were randomly selected to either be in the comparison group or the treatment group. Each participant was given a research number for coding purposes.

Program Evaluation

SPARKLE is a program designed to encourage parental involvement through an interactive approach to developing questioning skills in parents for use with their children during storybook read aloud sessions. This program is designed so as to represent one way in which school districts can respectfully, effectively, efficiently, economically, and in a caring manner reach out to parents. Through the SPARKLE program the school is attempting to help parents develop questioning and interactive skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes.

SPARKLE was evaluated by using both formative and summative data collection techniques. The formative data collection techniques included field notes, observations of read aloud sessions, audio and video taping of read aloud sessions, transcriptions and coding (Appendix C) of the read aloud sessions, and discussions eliciting parents' opinions before and after the read aloud sessions. The summative data collection techniques included the Beliefs and Attitude Instrument (Appendix D), focus group questions (Appendix E), transcriptions and coding of the focus group, and the Parent Improvement Instrument (Appendix F).

The formative collection techniques were used to evaluate the parents' development of questioning and interactive skills, changes in parents' attitudes and beliefs toward the importance of reading aloud to children, attitudes about their school and about education in general. The summative data collection techniques were used to estimate any empirical change in the attitudes

and beliefs concerning the parents' capability and responsibility perceptions, parents' attitudes and beliefs about the importance of reading aloud to children, school, education in general, and the efficacy of the intervention program, SPARKLE.

Research Plan Overview

In the planning stages of this program, it was determined that the intervention would take place over an eight week time frame. The program began with an initial meeting on May 26, 2005. The first session began on June 9, 2005 and ran through June 30, 2005. A week off was given for the July 4th week. The second four week sessions began on July 14, 2005 and ran through August 4, 2005.

The first four weeks was the experimental phase. The Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (*BAI*) was given to all the parents at the initial parent meeting by one of the assistants as the pre-test. I was not in the room while the parents took the initial survey. The parents filled out the demographic information as well. The parents were also asked to give input on what kinds of activities they wanted to do while in the computer lab. The *BAI* post-test was mailed to each participant after the fourth weekly session. A return envelope was enclosed in the mailing for use by the parents. The parents' research number was placed on each survey prior to the mailing.

The parents were randomly placed into two groups: treatment or comparison group. The treatment group participated in the intervention program during the first four week session, while the comparison group participated in the intervention program during the second four week session (See Figure 1). While one group was with me, the other group participated in activities in the computer lab with one of the other assistants.

Figure 1 Research Design

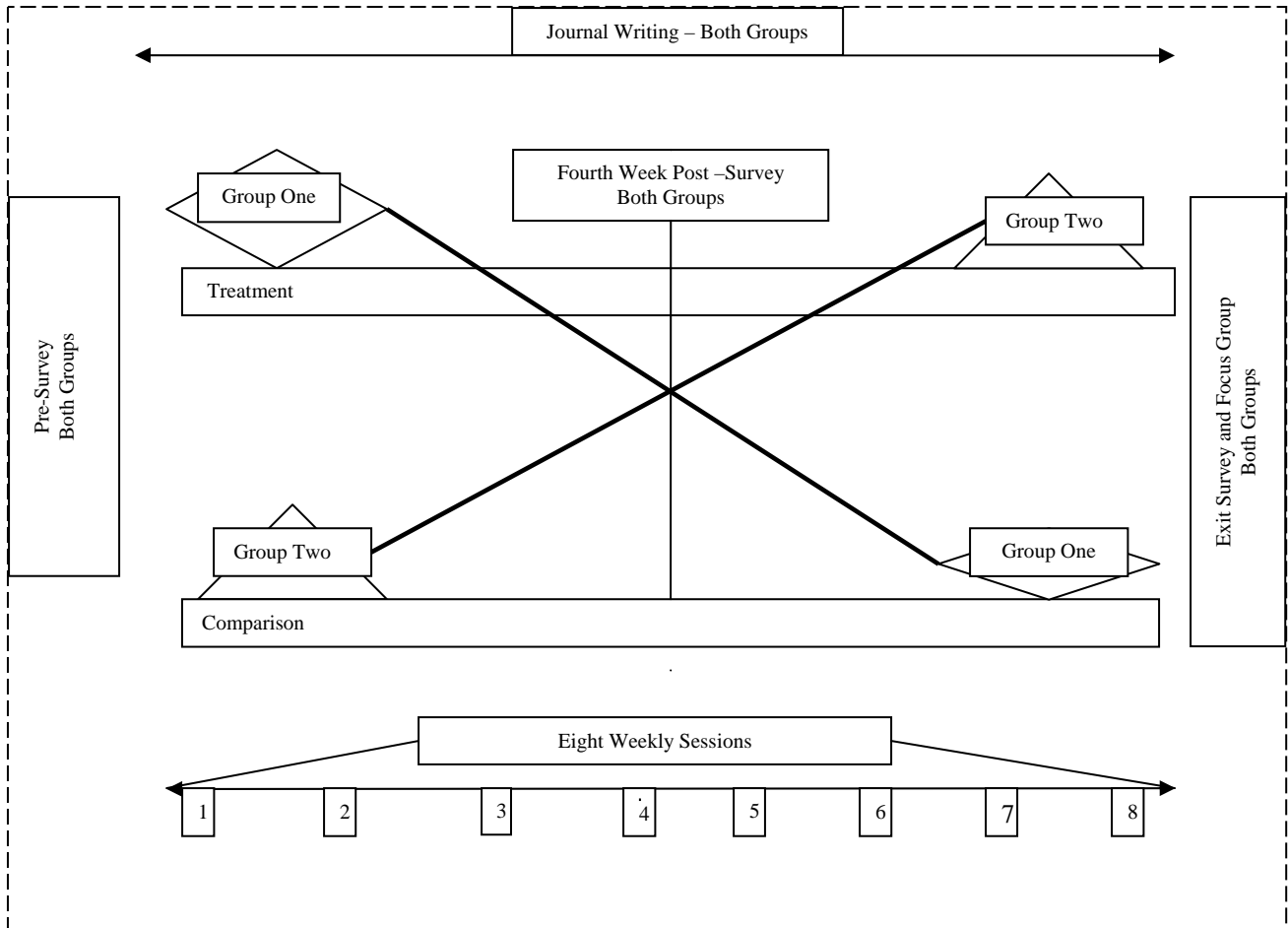


Figure 1 depicts the research design for the eight week SPARKLE Program. The design incorporates a mixed methods approach.

In an effort to accommodate parent preferences, a survey was given to each parent through the SPARKLE brochure that helped to determine the best day and time for the program. After reviewing the returned surveys, Thursday evening was the preferred day and 7:00pm was determined as the best time. Parents were called each week on Wednesday evenings to remind them of the SPARKLE program on the next evening.

The weekly one hour parent sessions were designed to involve the parents in a dialogue about using storybooks to develop language and literacy skills with their children. Parents

were provided a storybook to read and worked as a group to develop questions to use with their child while they read. Parents discussed their attitudes about read aloud sessions, our school, and education in general following their read aloud session with their child. The three part evening session is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure2 Timeframe for Parent Evening Sessions

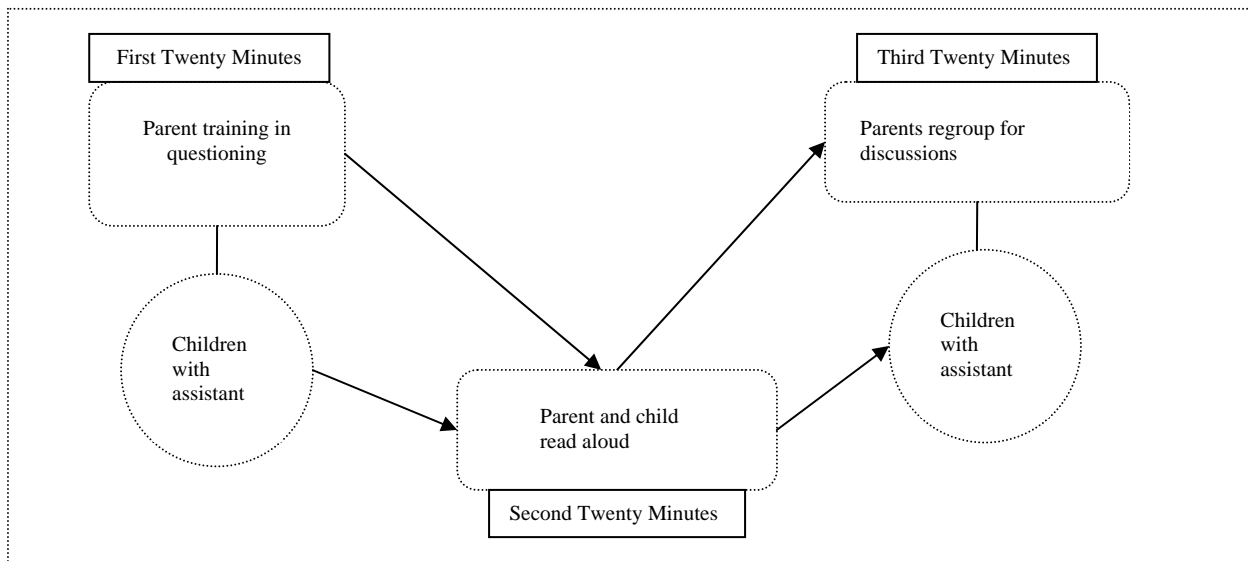


Figure 2 depicts the scheduled activities for the weekly one hour parent and child sessions.

The research plan built in a segment for parents to keep a journal, *Pictorial Journal*, about reading activities they did with their children during the previous week. The data collected from both groups provided some insight into the kinds of literacy type activities parent and child participated in during the week. The parents were told they could use either pictures or words to describe their reading activity from the previous week. Journals, markers, and pencils were provided. Writing seemed to be the preferred method of communication in the journals.

The parents also used a journal at the end of each weekly session to write down any ideas, questions, or concerns about the program. The parents used the *Summing It Up*

journals minimally.

Each read aloud session between parent and child was tape recorded. One parent and child per week volunteered to be video taped during their read aloud session. Each week a different parent-child dyad was video taped. The read aloud sessions lasted approximately twenty minutes. These read aloud sessions were transcribed and coded into the types of interactions that occurred between parent-child (See Table 5).

Table 5 Categories and Definitions of Interactions

Category	Definitions
Attention Vocative	Directing attention to the picture
Bridging	Making connections to everyday experiences
Chiming	Reading along with the text
Clarifying	Explaining the picture/text
Elaborating	Extending previous utterance with new information
Feedback	Correcting or confirming a response
Labeling	Labeling of objects or events
Managing	Getting the child involved
Predicting	Asking for information not yet indicated in text
Recalling	Reviewing story details, plots, and/or theme
Repeating	Copying previous utterances

During the last week of the program, the parents from both groups came together to discuss the intervention program. The session was video taped, transcribed, and coded for attitudinal changes in the parents, value of the program, improvements, and implications for possible future program sessions. The Parent Improvement Instrument (*PII*) was also given at this time. This instrument was developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program concerning parents' capability and responsibility perceptions in literacy. Consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's research, often parents rate themselves very high in capability and responsibility perception levels. Therefore, getting statistically significant change over

time of measurement is difficult. Accordingly, the *PII* (Appendix F) was developed to help evaluate the effectiveness of the program, initial self reported capability, and responsibility levels, notwithstanding.

Description and Operation of SPARKLE

The SPARKLE program is an eight week long summer intervention program. The program has two main components: the child component and the parent component. Results from the data collected from the parent component are reported and interpreted in this dissertation. Data relating to the child component of the program are not included.

Since this was a summer reading program it was felt that there needed to be some kind of outside motivational technique to help stimulate participation by the parents and their children in the program. The Gettysburg Times and the public libraries in the area run a summer reading incentive program to encourage children to read books. This incentive program is part of the *Newspapers in Education (NIE)* program and works in partnership with Hershey Park. On every Tuesday and Thursday over a five week time frame (June 14, 2005 through July 14, 2005), four thematic activities are printed in the newspaper. This past summer's theme was "Dragons, Dreams, and Daring Deeds". Children are given 40 activities to choose from and must participate in 10 of the forty activities. Then the child mails or takes in the ten completed activities to the Gettysburg Times who then submits the child's name and address to Hershey Park. Hershey Park then in turn mails the child a free ticket in August to use to get into the park along with a free parking voucher. The school district purchased newspapers on the Tuesdays and Thursdays for each family to have in order to do the activities printed in the papers and qualify for a free Hershey Park ticket.

SPARKLE used a book club framework following Neuman (1996). Originally, I planned to do a demonstration of a reading aloud for the parents of the selected book title. After the first week, however, the group did not need a demonstration on how to do a read aloud with their child based on the taped reading sessions. Their expression and fluency rates indicated that they were capable readers and did not need to have a demonstration.

After the first week, the parents read silently a storybook selected for that week. Appendix G provides the book titles used in the program. Following the silent reading of the book title, in the group setting, parents were encouraged to discuss and develop questions to use with their child as they read the story. Three guiding questions facilitated this discussion.

First parents were asked to think about what unusual vocabulary, major theme, distinct quality, or descriptive phrases the parents thought would be important for their child to take away from reading the book. The second guiding question was what kind of questions parents could use to discuss the book with their child. These types of questions could include recall, prediction, and other experiences the child had that could be tied to the text. The third guiding question was how parents could revisit the book. This question prompted parents to do rereading and discover activities that occur in their daily lives that would bring the words from the text into the child's world. This guiding question fostered thinking about play activities and encouraged the children and parents to have a playful attitude toward the reading experience.

The questions that were generated by the parents using these three guiding questions were recorded on chart paper during the discussion. The next week parents were given card holders to place inside each book title. A list of the questions generated by the parents was typed on a 3 X 5 card and then placed inside the card holder. This enabled each parent to have access

to the questions to use with their child later at home.

During both four week sessions parents were given a new book title each week. Their children were involved in group activities with the reading specialist and another teacher. The children used eight different book titles during their program. These books were not given to the children until the end of the program. By the end of the program, the parents and children were given a total of twelve different book titles to keep and use at home (See Appendix G). The books were purchased by the school district using funding from an Accountability Grant from the state. The four staff members were also paid through the Accountability Grant.

Along with developing specific questions to ask their children, parents were exposed to dialogic reading techniques. These dialogic reading techniques were retrieved from the Reading Rockets website (Whitehurst, 2004). The dialogic reading techniques provided the parent with concrete acronyms to help them remember how to make the reading session more interactive and thus more meaningful for the child. (Appendix H). The acronym PEER stands for the parent using **p**rompts, **e**valuations of the child's response, **e**xpansions of the child's responses, and **r**epeating the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

The acronym CROWD stands for the types of prompts parents can use with their child to help the child be more interactive with the text. The **C** stands for **c**ompletion prompts where the parent leaves out a word from a sentence and the child completes the sentence. The **R** stands for **r**ecall prompts such as helping the child recall the story plot or the sequence of events from the story. Neuman (1996) also referred to these types of behaviors as recalling. The **O** stands for **o**pen-ended prompts which ask the child to explain a picture in the story book thus expanding the child's expressive language. Neuman referred to this as predicting behaviors or labeling

behaviors. The W stands for **wh**-prompts such as what, where, when, why and how questions. The D stands for **d**istancing prompts such as having the child take the events from the story and relate them to real live situations in the child's life. During these kinds of prompts the parent is an important asset for the child in order to make those personal connections with the text. Neuman referred to these as bridging verbal behaviors and elaborating behaviors. The PEER and CROWD acronyms were typed and placed on 3 X 5 cards for easy reference for the parents to use at home, also.

During the first four-week session the comparison group of parents were also involved in meaningful activity but not directly related to literacy. The comparison group went to the computer lab and used various web sites suited for children. All parents had expressed on a computer survey at the initial parent meeting that they would like to preview various programs appropriate to use with first graders. A program assistant supervised and helped parents as they navigated various child-friendly websites, also. Appendix I provides the websites and programs previewed during the parent sessions.

During the second four-week session the treatment group of parents decided to continue working together using the three guiding questions for the book titles the children were using in their sessions. These questions were then typed on 3 X5 cards and card holders were placed inside each book before books were given to all parents at the end of the program. The treatment group also went to the computer lab to navigate and become familiar with various child-friendly websites.

An attentiveness scale was used by the parent and the facilitator during the read aloud sessions (See Appendix J). Previous research had indicated that sometimes parents do not

experience a positive reading experience with their child if the child does not respond in an attentive or interactive manner. The attentiveness scale used a four point rating. A score of four indicated that the child was highly attentive and interactive with the story. A score of three indicated that the child was attentive and somewhat interactive with the story. A score of two indicated the child was inattentive but interactive with the story. A score of one indicated the child was inattentive and non-interactive with the story. The parent, along with two facilitators rated each child during the read aloud sessions.

Following the read aloud sessions the parents returned to discuss various topics. If further questions were discovered during the read aloud they were added to the charts. If there were issues that occurred between the parent and child, such as a disinterest in the selected title, this was discussed along with possible solutions. The parents were then asked to write in their “*Summing It Up*” journal any suggestions for improvements, questions, ideas, or to simply report things they especially liked during that session.

Data Collection Procedures

As earlier noted, both formative and summative data collection techniques were used. The formative assessment generated qualitative data to describe in some detail the interactions, questioning, and attitudes of the parent participants. Used were field notes based on observations, parent and researcher child attentiveness rating scores, transcriptions and coding of the data from the read aloud sessions, and parent journal entries to create the over all qualitative formative data set.

The *BAI* pre-post questionnaire score comparisons, focus group transcription and coding, and the *PII* provided the summative data set. The pre-test *BAI* was administered to the parents

by an outside person during the initial meeting. The post-test *BAI* was mailed to the participants with a self-addressed stamped envelope. The pre- and post-test *BAI* were labeled using the parents' identification number initially assigned to them to provide anonymous data analysis.

The focus group session was held at the end of the program with all parents to discuss the intervention program, attitude changes of the parents, possible improvements for the program, and future implications for expansion of the program. This session was video- and audio-taped. A transcription of the meeting was made and coded to summarize the merits of the program, attitudes of parents, improvements, and implications. The *PII* given following the focus group discussion was evaluated and used to compare with the *BAI* data.

Data Processing and Analysis

The formative data were processed using qualitative coding techniques. According to the research by Neuman (1996), verbal behaviors between parent and child during a story book reading fall into eleven categories: attentive vocative, bridging, chiming, clarifying, elaborating, feedback, labeling, managing, predicting, recalling, and repeating (See Appendix J). This system was used to analyze the read aloud sessions. The focus group transcriptions were coded to indicate changes in parents' attitudes toward the program, our school and general education, the parents perceived strength of the program; improvements for the program; and future implications for the program.

The summative data were analyzed using quantitative methods. Since the sample number was small, (n=14), inferential data analysis was not used. Descriptive statistics were used giving scores for the frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations on all major measures of the study.

The pre-post test *BAI* consisted of 40 items using a six point Likert scale. Items 1 through 6 of the survey instrument measured the parents Affective Memory Perceptions (AMP). Hoover-Dempsey (2003), defined valence or AMP as the parents' personal experience associated with their own school history. Hoover-Dempsey hypothesized that a parents' AMP score would predict how drawn or deterred a parent would be toward their child's school setting based on their own past experiences as a student themselves. Higher scores signaled how attracted a parent seemed toward a school based on their past school experiences, while lower scores indicated how deterred a parent seemed to a school setting based on past school experiences.

Items number 7 through 16 of the *BAI* was used to measure the parents' responsibility perception levels. Higher scores indicated that the parent believed it was the parents' responsibility to take an active role in their child's education. This is what Hoover-Dempsey described as parent-focused role construction. A lower score indicated that the parent believed it was not their responsibility to take an active part in their child's education. This is what Hoover-Dempsey described as school-focused role construction. A middle score indicated that the parent believed that a partnership-focused role construction was best. This type of parent believed it was the responsibility of the both school and parent to take active roles in the child's education.

Items number 17 through 28 on the *BAI* was used to measure the capability perception levels of the parents. These twelve items measured the parents' perceptions about how effective they felt they were with helping their child. Hoover-Dempsey described these as the parents' efficacy levels.

The final twelve items numbered 29 through 40 were specially created by this researcher. They were designed to measure the capability and responsibility perception levels in the specific

area of literacy. Questions 29 through 33 measured the parents' capability perceptions for literacy. Questions 34 through 40 measured the parents' responsibility perceptions for literacy. These questions were designed to give more specific information regarding how the intervention program might impact how a parent's attitudes and beliefs about their own capabilities and responsibilities might change after participating in the intervention program.

Demographic information was also processed using aforementioned descriptive statistics, as was the *PII* data which were compared with pre-post *BAI* item scores for affective memory perceptions (AMP), capability perceptions (CP), responsibility perceptions (RP), capability perceptions for literacy (CPL), and responsibility perceptions for literacy (RPL).

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study used a mixed method research design that integrated formative and summative data collection methods. A multisectional pre- and post-test questionnaire, Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (BAI), was used to generate quantitative data. Summative data for sections entitled affective memory perceptions, capability perceptions, responsibility perceptions, capability perceptions for literacy and responsibility perceptions for literacy were collected through the questionnaire along with the parent interviews during the focus group conducted after the intervention program.

Qualitative data were generated formatively with open ended discussions during the parent book club meetings, audio/video-taping of the parent-child reading sessions, and the coded reading sessions. Parents were asked to describe any literacy activities they had participated in during the previous week in their *Pictorial Journals*. Parents were also given time at the end of each session to write down their impressions of how the session was helpful to them or was lacking in some way in their *Summing It Up* journal.

The formative and summative data were analyzed and interpreted to support answers to the following research questions. First, in what different ways does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions affect parental beliefs and attitudes? Secondly, does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions provide parents with new skills to use with their children during and following the intervention? Finally, how does an intervention based on skill development in questioning and interaction techniques used during storybook read aloud sessions change parents' beliefs and

attitudes about the importance of reading aloud, children's learning and ability to learn, and education in general?

This chapter is organized using the three basic research questions as the framework. Data analysis and interpretations for each research question follow.

First Research Question

The first research question was concerned with understanding the different ways in which changes occurred in parents' attitudes and beliefs. Data were collected utilizing several data collection methods. First, quantitative data were collected from the Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (*BAI*) using a pre – post testing format. The questions on the *BAI* incorporated a 6 point Likert scale. Data were also collected through individual and group interviews, journals, the focus group meeting, and from the Parent Improvement Instrument (*PII*).

Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument

In the present study five constructs were measured using the *BAI*. The first section measured the parents' affective memory perceptions (AMP). Question items 1 through 6 compose the AMP construct. The construct is defined as the parents' memories of their personal school history or experiences. Parents with positive memories of their school histories are more likely to be attracted to the school setting while parents with negative memories of their school histories are more likely to be repelled from the school setting. Therefore, parents with higher mean scores for the AMP construct would more likely exhibit an active role in their child's education, while parents with lower mean scores would more likely exhibit a passive or disengaged role in their child's education.

The second section of the *BAI* measured the parents' responsibility perceptions (RP).

This construct consisted of questions 7 through 16 on the questionnaire. It was designed to measure the parents' beliefs concerning the level to which a parent is responsible for the child's education. The higher the mean score, the more likely the parent believes it is the parents' responsibility for the child's education. A lower mean score would indicate that the parent did not believe it was their responsibility for the child's education.

The third section on the *BAI* measured the parents' capability perceptions (CP). This construct was comprised of questions 17 through 28 on the questionnaire. The purpose of the CP construct was to determine how the parents perceived their own abilities for working with their child. The parents were asked to rate themselves on knowing how to help their child, on being able to motivate their child, on the amount of parental influence on their child, and about the success of their efforts to help their child.

The fourth section on the *BAI* measured the parents' capability perceptions for literacy (CPL). This section consisted of questions 29 through 33 on the questionnaire. This construct was designed to measure the parents' perceptions as to their abilities to promote literacy development with their child. The questions asked the parent to rate their comfort in reading to their child, asking questions, starting discussions about stories, finding themes or vocabulary words, and their confidence about their ability to make a difference in their child's reading skills.

The final section on the *BAI* measured the parents' responsibility perceptions for literacy (RPL). The RPL section was comprised of questions 34 through 40 on the questionnaire. This construct asked the parents to rate their beliefs about motivating their child to read, their child's ability to read, and the importance of developing positive attitudes toward reading.

The research sample involved 14 parents who were randomly assigned to either the

treatment (N=8) or comparison (N=6) group. All the parents participated in the intervention program after the initial four week experimental period. The *BAI* questionnaire was given as a pre- and post-test to all 14 participants. Specific questions on the *BAI* used a reversed scale or a negatively worded stem. During data input, the scores for these questions were reversed to reflect the same focus as the rest of the questions. In other words, if a participant scored a 1 on a negative question, the score was input as a 6. Similarly for the other numbers on the reversed scale: 5 was recorded as 2; 4 was recorded as 3; 3 was recorded as 4; 2 was recorded as 5; and 1 was recorded as a 6.

Affective Memory Perception (AMP). The means and standard deviations for the treatment and comparison group's affective memory perceptions measurement are displayed in Table 6. The Total AMP mean scores for both groups indicated that these groups of parents had a positive memory of their own personal school histories. Although there was a small decrease in the mean scores between the pre- and post-testing for both groups, the mean scores still indicated that the two groups had positive memories about their personal school experiences. Hoover-Dempsey, (2003) hypothesized that parents who scored high mean scores on the AMP construct indicated an attraction toward the school and were more likely to take an active part in their child's education. Therefore, consistent with Hoover Dempsey's rationale, these parents are more likely to have an attraction toward the school setting and to take an active role in their child's education. This active stance was also suggested through their participation in the SPARKLE program.

Table 6 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Affective Memory Perceptions (AMP)
Treatment (N=8) and Comparison (N=6) Groups

	Treatment		Comparison	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. My school: <i>disliked (1) to liked (6)</i>	3.88 (.81)	4.88 (1.36)	5.17 (.75)	5.00 (.89)
2. My teachers: <i>disliked (1) to liked (6)</i>	5.38 (.92)	5.00 (.92)	5.50 (.55)	5.50 (.54)
3. My teachers: <i>ignored me (1) to cared about me (6)</i>	5.13 (1.13)	4.88 (.99)	5.00 (.63)	5.10 (.89)
4. My school experience: <i>good (1) to bad (6)*</i>	5.25 (.89)	4.25 (1.49)	4.50 (1.51)	3.50 (1.87)
5. I felt like: <i>I did not belong (1) to I belonged (6)</i>	4.50 (1.69)	3.62 (1.92)	4.00 (.89)	4.83 (.75)
6. My overall experience: <i>failure (1) to success (6)</i>	5.50 (.53)	4.50 (1.30)	4.67 (.82)	5.00 (.63)
Total AMP	4.94 (.69)	4.52 (1.03)	4.81 (.50)	4.50 (.31)

Note. Standard deviation scores within parenthesis

Responsibility Perceptions (RP). Table 7 displays the mean and standard deviations for the Responsibility Perceptions (RP) measurement. The 6 point Likert scale for this construct, as well as the next three constructs, used 1 as strongly disagree up to 6 as strongly agree. The Total RP pre- and post-test mean scores for the treatment group were the same. The comparison group increased slightly between the Total RP pre- and post-test mean scores. Based on the Total RP mean scores, these parents believed it was the parents' responsibility to educate their child.

Question number 14 which pertained to the parents' perceptions as to their responsibility to talk to other parents in the child's school, the treatment group had a pre-test mean score of 5.00 while the comparison group had only a 3.50 on the pre-test mean score. Apparently the comparison group did not believe as strongly as did the treatment group that it was their responsibility to talk to other parents from their child's school. On the post-test though, both groups revealed increases in their mean scores for question 14 which would suggest that these parents agreed more strongly that it was their responsibility to talk to other parents from their child's school. The parents in the treatment group used parent discussion groups as a way of talking with other parents. The comparison group was in a parent discussion group setting also in the computer lab as they investigated computer programs and websites appropriate for

their children. Therefore, for these two groups of parents, using group discussion formats apparently increased the parents' perceptions of the importance and value of talking with other parents.

Table 7 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Responsibility Perception (RP)
Treatment (N=8) and Comparison (N=6) Groups

<i>I believe it is my responsibility:</i>	Treatment		Comparison	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
7. to volunteer at the school.	4.88 (.83)	4.63 (.74)	4.50 (.55)	4.66 (.52)
8. to communicate with...teacher.	5.88 (.35)	5.63 (.52)	5.50 (.55)	5.67 (.52)
9. to help ... with homework.	5.50 (.93)	5.50 (.53)	5.67 (.52)	5.83 (.41)
10. ... school has what it needs.	5.25 (.89)	5.00 (.76)	5.00 (.63)	4.83 (.75)
11. to support ...the teacher.	5.25 (.71)	5.00 (.93)	4.67 (1.03)	4.83 (.41)
12. to stay on top of ...at school.	5.75 (.70)	5.75 (.46)	5.50 (.55)	5.50 (.55)
13. to explain ...to my child.	5.88 (.35)	5.88 (.35)	5.50 (.54)	5.33 (.52)
14. to talk with other parents....	5.00 (.76)	5.13 (.35)	3.50 (1.38)	4.33 (.52)
15. to make ...school better.	5.50 (.76)	5.38 (.74)	4.67 (.82)	5.17 (.75)
16. to talk ...about the school day.	6.00 (0)	5.75 (.46)	5.67 (.52)	6.00 (0)
Total RP	5.32 (.28)	5.32 (.34)	5.02 (.39)	5.22 (.20)

Note. Standard deviation scores within parenthesis

Capability Perceptions (CP). The third section of the *BAI* measured the parents' capability perceptions (CP). Table 8 displays the mean and standard deviations for the questions in this section. Questions 17, 19, and 24 reflect the parents' perceptions about their abilities on knowing how to help their child. Questions 20 and 27 indicate the parents' perceptions about their abilities to motivate their child. Questions 22, 23, and 26 measure the parents' perceptions of the amount of influence they have with their child. Finally, questions 18, 21, 25, and 28 signify the parents' perceptions about the success of their efforts in working with their child.

Table 8 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Capability Perception (CP)
Treatment (N=8) and Comparison (N=6) Groups

	Treatment		Comparison	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
17. I know how to help...in school.	4.75 (.71)	4.88 (.64)	4.83 (.41)	5.00 (0)
18. My child is so complex...if I'm getting through...	3.00 (1.51)	4.00 (.93)	3.67 (1.51)	4.67 (1.03)
19. I don't know how...good grades in school.	4.50 (1.20)	4.88 (.99)	4.33 (1.03)	4.67 (.82)
20. A student's motivation...depends on the parents.	4.63 (1.30)	4.50 (.93)	5.17 (.98)	4.83 (.75)
21. I feel successful...to help my child learn.	5.00 (.53)	4.88 (.64)	5.00 (.63)	4.83 (.75)
22. Other children...more influence on child's grades	4.75 (.71)	4.50 (1.07)	4.50 (1.22)	4.67 (.82)
23. ...so I have only limited influence.	4.38 (1.06)	3.75 (1.58)	4.50 (1.22)	4.17 (1.33)
24. I don't know how to help my child learn.	5.13 (.99)	5.25 (.71)	4.67 (1.37)	5.00 (.63)
25. If I try hard, I can...understanding something.	5.13 (.35)	4.83 (.83)	5.17 (.75)	4.33 (1.21)
26. I make a significant...school performance.	4.88 (.64)	5.00 (1.07)	5.17 (.75)	4.83 (.41)
27. Other children...motivation to do well ...than I do.	5.00 (.76)	4.88 (.83)	4.50 (.84)	4.50 (.84)
28. My efforts...are successful.	4.63 (.52)	4.75 (.71)	4.83 (.41)	5.00 (0)
Total CP	4.65 (.51)	4.68 (.58)	4.69 (.54)	4.71 (.34)

Note. Standard deviation scores within parenthesis

Both the treatment and comparison groups reported increases in their mean scores for questions pertaining to knowing how to successfully help their child. These parents believed that they were capable of knowing how to help their child and their efforts were met with success. Although both groups of parents had slight decreases in their mean scores for being able to motivate and the amount of influence the parent had over their child in regards to school success, these parents still rated their perceptions of themselves as being highly capable.

Question 18 was a negatively worded question and therefore the data was input using the reversed scale. Both groups of parents reflected a full point increase for question 18 between their pre- and post-test mean scores. The treatment group had a mean score of 3 and the comparison group had a 3.67 mean score on the pre-test which suggests these parents were slightly disagreeing with the idea that their child was complex and they were unsure if their attempts to get through to their child were successful. But the post-test mean scores indicated that the parents were now agreeing to the statement concerning their child's complexity and being able to know if their attempts got through to their child. The parents had a growing

sense of their child's complexity but also felt they knew when their attempts with their child were successful.

Although the comparison group had not yet participated in the intervention program, the parents were involved in parent group discussions in regards to computer programs and websites available to use with younger children. This parent group dynamic along with exposure to the computer programs and websites may have contributed to their increased awareness of their child's complexity as reflected in their post-test mean scores.

Capability Perceptions for Literacy (CPL). The fourth section of the *BAI* measured the parents' perceptions of their capabilities for literacy (CPL). The means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 9. Both groups of parents indicated an increase between their pre- and post-test mean scores on the total CPL measure. The treatment group had a slightly higher pre-test mean score than the comparison group. The treatment group had an increase in all the questions between the pre- and post-test, except question 29 which had a 6, the highest rating. The comparison group showed an increase in three of the questions. Again, these two groups of parents indicated they perceived themselves as being highly capable of helping their children with literacy development.

Two questions warrant closer examination because they specifically reflect the SPARKLE program's core objectives. Question number 32 measured the parents' perceptions about being comfortable starting a discussion about a story read to their child. Both groups of parents indicated an increase in their perceptions about their abilities to have story book discussions with their child.

Table 9 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Capability Perception for Literacy (CPL)
Treatment (N=8) and Comparison (N=6) Groups

<i>I am ...</i>	Treatment		Comparison	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
29. comfortable reading...with my child	6.00 (0)	6.00 (0)	5.50 (.55)	5.67 (.52)
30. confident ...difference in my child's reading skills.	5.38 (.52)	5.50 (.53)	5.50 (.55)	5.67 (.52)
31. comfortable about asking...my child.	5.38 (.52)	5.63 (.52)	5.33 (.52)	5.33 (.52)
32. comfortable starting a discussion...my child.	5.13 (.83)	5.63 (.52)	5.17 (.75)	5.50 (.55)
33. comfortable finding important themes and vocabulary...	5.00 (.76)	5.50 (.53)	5.17 (.41)	5.17 (.41)
Total CPL	5.38 (.49)	5.65 (.38)	5.33 (.41)	5.47 (.41)

Note. Standard deviation scores within parenthesis

Question 33 asked parents about their perceptions concerning their abilities to find themes and vocabulary in a story read to their children. The comparison group did not indicate any change between their pre- and post-test mean scores. But the treatment group did show an increase in their post-test mean score for this question. This is significant for this study since the intervention program targeted finding the themes and unusual vocabulary words as primary objectives for the program. Therefore, since the comparison group did not show any increase and the treatment group did show an increase of the mean scores for question 33, it is suggested that the SPARKLE program may have promoted an increase in parents' perceptions of their ability to find themes and unusual vocabulary words in stories read with their children.

Responsibility Perceptions for Literacy (RPL). The final section of the *BAI* measured the parents' perceptions of their responsibility for their child's literacy development (RPL). The mean scores and standard deviations are displayed in Table 10. The section consisted of 7 questions which asked parents to rate their perceptions concerning responsibility for motivating their child to read, their child's ability to read, and the importance of positive attitudes toward reading. Both groups of parents reflected a strong agreement about their responsibility for motivating their child to read, believing in their child's ability to read, and for developing a positive attitude toward reading.

For question 38 both groups of parents showed an increase in their mean scores between the pre- and post-test. But the treatment group, all 8 of them, scored this question as a 6 on the post-test, which is the highest rating possible. This indicates that the treatment group of parents not only began to see their children as capable readers but also that the parent had a significant responsibility for the development of their child’s capabilities. In other words, this would suggest that the parents that participated in the SPARKLE program increased their responsibility perceptions and also made a connection between their responsibilities and their child’s capabilities to read.

Table 10 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Responsibility Perception for Literacy (RPL) Treatment (N=8) and Comparison (N=6) Groups

	Treatment		Comparison	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
34. ...motivate my child to read books.	5.13 (.83)	5.25 (.71)	5.17 (.41)	5.50 (.55)
35. ...games with words.	4.62 (.92)	4.50 (.93)	4.33 (.82)	4.33 (.82)
36. ...write notes to each other.	4.37 (.52)	4.38 (1.30)	4.33 (.82)	4.83 (.41)
37. ... see me read daily.	5.38 (.52)	5.38 (.52)	5.00 (.63)	5.33 (.52)
38.my child will be able to learn to read.	5.88 (.35)	6.00 (0)	5.50 (.55)	5.83 (.41)
39. ...positive attitude ... reading books.	5.88 (.35)	5.88 (.35)	5.50 (.55)	5.83 (.41)
40. ...read at home as well as at school.	6.00 (0)	5.87 (.35)	5.83 (.40)	5.83 (.41)
Total RPL	5.32 (.28)	5.32 (.34)	5.10 (.35)	5.36 (.32)

Note. Standard deviation scores within parenthesis

Parent Improvement Instrument (PII)

The Parent Improvement Instrument (*PII*) was designed to measure the perceived improvement in parents’ responsibility perceptions for literacy and the capability perceptions for literacy. The *BAI* reflected high pre-test mean scores which made it difficult to document improvement using the pre- and post-test procedure. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, and Reed (2002) cautioned that when parents self-report their responsibility and capability levels there was a tendency for the parents to inflate their pre-survey data, therefore making it difficult to statistically demonstrate gains in responsibility and capability levels. Therefore, the *PII*

was developed to measure *improvement* as perceived by the parents due to their participation in the SPARKLE program.

The *PII* utilized a scale of 0 to 100 rather than a 6 point Likert scale. A score of 0 indicated no improvement after participating in the program and 100 indicated that the parent felt there was a high degree of improvement since participating in the program. The *PII* consisted of 12 questions. Six of the questions were measuring improvement in parental capability perceptions for literacy (CPL) while the other 6 questions were measuring improvement in parental responsibility perception for literacy (RPL). The *PII* was based on guidelines for constructing self efficacy scales developed by Bandura, (1995).

It should be noted that of the 14 parents that participated in the SPARKLE program, 9 parents completed and returned the *PII* for a 64% overall return rate. Of the 6 comparison group parents only two returned the questionnaire for a 33% return rate. The parents in the comparison group are designated in the tables as CLL and CMM. For the parents in the treatment group, 7 out of the 8 parents returned the questionnaire for an 88% return rate. These seven parents are indicated with a T for treatment as the first initial of their pseudo names. Parents who participated in the program but did not complete a *PII* are designated with an N as part of their pseudo names to indicate the non completed *PII* and either a T or C to indicate treatment or comparison group membership.

Table 11 and 12 reflect the perceived improvement scores for each of the nine parents who returned the *PII*. Both of the total constructs had a 74.6 percent perceived improvement. This would indicate that the parents perceived equal improvement for the CPL and RPL constructs. The improvement scores for RPL had a range of 36.7% as the low up to 100% as the

high. The improvement scores for CPL had a range of 33.3% as the low up to 98.3% as the high. The two low improvement scores were given by parent CMM while the two highest improvement scores were given by parent TBW. Two of the parents, TDW and TCK, used the same percent improvement for all the questions.

**Table 11 Individual Percent Improvement Responses from PII
for Responsibility Perceptions for Literacy**

<i>I can help my child...</i>	CLL	CM M	TD W	TCK	TDJ	TBW	THS	TKS	TMC	Total
1. do well in school.	100	40	80	70	60	100	50	70	50	68.9
4. read.	100	40	80	70	80	100	80	50	100	77.8
6. use literacy everyday.	90	30	80	70	80	100	90	80	80	77.8
7. see me use literacy everyday.	90	20	80	70	50	100	60	60	90	68.9
10. to find out new things.	100	50	80	70	60	100	80	80	90	78.9
11. connect learning ...he/she likes.	100	40	80	70	50	100	70	80	90	75.6
Total	96.7	36.7	80	70	63.3	100	71.7	70	83.3	74.6

**Table 12 Individual Percent Improvement Responses from PII
for Capability Perceptions for Literacy**

<i>I can help my child...</i>	CLL	CMM	TDW	TCK	TDJ	TBW	THS	TKS	TMC	Total
2. value school.	90	30	80	70	80	100	50	70	70	71.1
3. be motivated in school.	100	30	80	70	80	90	60	90	80	75.6
5. read for fun.	50	50	80	70	80	100	100	90	90	78.9
8. apply school learning at home.	100	30	80	70	50	100	70	60	90	72.2
9. apply home learning at school.	100	40	80	70	50	100	90	60	80	74.4
12. expectations ... as they grow up.	90	20	80	70	60	100	80	80	100	75.5
Total	88.3	33.3	80	70	66.7	98.3	75	75	85	74.6

Each question from the CPL and the RPL categories were analyzed. A mean score for each question was calculated to indicate which questions on the *PII* showed the most improvement as reported by the parents. The results of this question analysis indicated three main areas of improvement identified using the *PII*. These areas of improvement were further validated by the data collected through group discussions, interviews, journals, and the focus group. A fourth area of improvement was identified through the data collected in the group discussions, interviews, journals, and the focus group meeting transcripts.

1st Area of Improvement: Reading for fun and learning new things. Question numbers 5 and 10 reflected a 78.9% improvement rating by this group of parents which was the highest percentage of improvement. These questions read as follows: (5) I can help my child read for fun and (10) I can help my child use literacy to find out new things. The high percentage of improvement indicated the parents believed they had benefited from participating in the SPARKLE program especially in the area of providing their child with a more relaxed and

enjoyable context for reading as well as helping their child learn new things through literacy.

Question 5 was part of the CPL and question 10 was part of the RPL measurements. Therefore, the parents reported an improvement in both their CPL and RPL components.

One parent, NTHM, wrote in her *Pictorial Journal* that she and her child had read *Franklin in the Dark* at home. After rereading the story the parent and child reenacted the story. They used laundry baskets as the turtle shells. She also wrote they had “used their imaginations”. NTHM made the suggestion about using the laundry baskets as turtle shells during the parent discussion time prior to reading with the children. She carried over her idea by actually using it at home with her child. This example illustrates how one parent was able to make reading fun with her child. This supports the improvement finding as indicated on the *PII*.

NTHM wrote in her *Summing Up Journal* that she “never thought about children’s books quite like this. Dissecting the story is fun and you truly do remember the small things. Thank You.” This statement indicates NTHM found the techniques used during the SPARKLE program were able to provide a valuable tool for her to help her child learn. The statement also indicates that these tools were also valuable for making reading and learning fun.

The focus group transcripts also substantiate the importance the parents found in the SPARKLE Program in the area of providing a fun context for reading and helping their children learn new ideas. TKS said “I learned to look for different vocabulary that they are not familiar with to explain them more.” TBW shook her head in agreement and said, “I basically used to just read the book straight through till the end. Close the book and off we go.” These two mothers’ comments show how the program was able to provide these parents with techniques to promote new learning, especially in the area of vocabulary development and word meaning.

When the parents were asked what they felt the children were gaining when the parents read aloud to them TBW said, “he’s learning the vocabulary”. This statement substantiates the parents’ belief that the SPARKLE program improved the parents’ abilities to help their children learn new things, specifically in the area of vocabulary. CMM said she felt that reading aloud helped the children “use their imaginations, too, so many possibilities”. This also substantiates the idea that SPARKLE helped parents to teach their children new things and provided a springboard for activating the child’s imagination.

2nd Area of Improvement: Parents can help children read and use literacy daily.

Questions 4 and 6 on the *PII* were ranked next in order of highest percentage of improvement. Question 4 and 6 read as follows: (4) I can help my child read and (6) I can help my child use literacy everyday. Both question 4 and 6 were part of the RPL component. These parents indicated the SPARKLE program improved the parents’ ability to help their child read and to use literacy everyday.

During the discussions after the read aloud sessions many of the parents commented about their child’s awareness of the details of the story after only one reading. TDW noted in her *Pictorial Journal* her growing awareness of her child’s learning and how the mother had been a viable part of this learning process. She wrote, “We discussed the book *Franklin*. Now when (name) feels scared, she tells me about *Franklin*. On the way home last week, I asked her about the book. She was paying attention to me reading it to her! She was telling me what happened in the book.” This statement by TDW illustrates the growing awareness this mother is developing concerning her daughter’s ability to understand the details of a story. The exclamation mark after the statement about the child “paying attention to me reading” also

reflects this mother's growing awareness of her ability to take a vital role in her child's literacy development.

Many of the mothers noted that their children could really relate to the story about *Franklin in the Dark*. TDW further commented that she was able to use *Franklin in the Dark* to help her daughter overcome her fear of the night. TDW said they decided to try the technique Franklin had used in the story with being brave and using a flashlight. In order to overcome her fear, the child needed a strategy to face her own fears so she could "be brave like Franklin". This example illustrates how the parent was able to use the text to make a bridge between the story and the child's life experiences. This bridging allowed the child to use the text to impact her daily life.

TBW noted in her *Pictorial Journal* that she and her child had had long discussions about the major theme in the book *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni. This mother wrote "We sat and read *Swimmy* and talked about how he lost his family and found a new one. We also talked about how Swimmy accepted the changes that went through his life. (name) also said that the fish worked together." The picture she drew was of her son sitting on her lap with the book in front of them. Both parent and child were depicted with smiles on their faces. The read aloud sessions provided a springboard for the parent to use literacy in their daily lives by promoting discussions that prompted values discussions.

The parents in the SPARKLE program were able to concretely see their children interact with the text based on the parents' reading and questioning. Through these interactions the parents were able to witness how a read aloud session can prompt discussions that would facilitate comprehension of text, empower the child to overcome fear, and to use text to prompt

values discussions. These examples confirm the improvement the parents recognized for the role the parent plays in the child's reading development and how reading can impact the child's daily life.

3rd Area of Improvement: Motivation and connections between school and child's interest. Questions 3 and 11 on the *PII* were ranked next in order of highest percentage of improvement. Questions 3 and 11 read as follows: (3) I can help my child be motivated in school and (11) I can help my child connect school learning to something else he/she likes. The parents gave an improvement rating of 75.6% for questions 3 and 11. Question 3 was part of the *CPL* component while question 11 was part of the *RPL* component. The parents indicated an improvement in helping the parents motivate their child and to make connections between school learning and their child's interests.

During the focus group discussion the parents were asked if their children had asked to be read to more after participating in the *SPARKLE* program. *TKS* replied, "Well, sometimes she'll just pick up a book and make up her own story. I guess she never did that before. So, she's got the initiative more." This comment indicates that the parent was aware of how the interaction and questioning techniques presented in the *SPARKLE* program and then later used by the parent in the home were able to help motivate her child to want to read.

4th Area of Improvement: Affective side of reading aloud. Along with the idea of providing a "fun" context for reading, *THS* remarked about the importance of the affective side that reading aloud can provide for families. *THS* was particularly impressed with the vivid memories that rushed back to her during a read aloud session with her daughter. During the focus group meeting, *THS* recalled her own mother reading aloud *Henny Penny* and the fond

memories that reading aloud awakened for her. THS commented, “I have memories of when my mom would read books to me, so I think that’s nice to have certain books you remember. Like when they’re older and they say “Oh, yeah, I remember that book”. All the other parents shook their heads in agreement with THS’s comments. These parents believed that reading aloud provided an opportunity to make intergenerational memories together around the context of the book.

One of the parents, TMC, noted in their *Pictorial Journal* that their reading activity for the week had been “We sat in our family chair and read stories, and we laughed.” This statement helps support the idea that reading aloud can provide parents with a context in which to promote a fun and loving atmosphere. This type of positive affective atmosphere is highly related to fostering a positive attitude about reading in the child.

Another parent, TKS, noted in her *Pictorial Journal* that after reading a book by Cynthia Rylant the father and the child “slept in the living room on couches like in the book *The Relatives Came*.” This statement is another example of how the parents were able to use the books and the discussion ideas from the parent group to provide a fun and positive atmosphere for their child.

The Second Research Question

The second research question was concerned with examining whether the intervention program was able to provide parents with new skills to use during and following the program. In order to analyze the data, the read aloud sessions were taped, transcribed, and then coded. Eleven different verbal behavior categories were used when coding the read aloud session transcriptions (see Appendix C). Each verbal interaction between parent and child were treated

as a set and coded as one encounter.

Separating the text by title allowed observations to be made as to which kinds of verbal interactions were more prevalent for each book title. The frequencies and mean percentages were calculated for each category of verbal interactions for each book title taped in the school setting (see Table 13, Appendix K). There were several interesting findings concerning frequency of verbal interactions and the mean percentages by book titles. Several comments by the parents during parent discussions and the focus group meeting transcriptions provided some qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative findings.

Analysis of Verbal Interactions in the School Setting

First, recall was used more frequently by this group of parents than any other type of verbal interaction. All four book titles had very high percentages of recall interactions. The book *Swimmy* written by Leo Lionni for example had the highest percentage of recall interactions. The following is an excerpt from the taped reading of *Swimmy* that was coded as a recall interaction. The italicized words indicate the words from the text while the quotations around the words indicate the words used by the parent and child.

TDJ: *One bad day a tuna fish, fierce and very hungry, came darting through the waves. In one gulp he swallowed all the little red fish. Only Swimmy escaped.* “How does that make you feel?”

Child: “Sad”

TDJ: “Sad, yes for poor Swimmy.” *He swam away in the deep wet world. He was scared, lonely, and very sad.* “Why was he sad?”

Child: “He was all by himself. I can be lonesome.”

This verbal interaction illustrates how a parent used a recall interaction. The child was asked to recall how Swimmy might feel based on the information she had heard from the story. The text supported the child’s idea about how the character might be feeling after all his brothers

and sisters had been eaten by a larger fish. The parents used recall questions when they asked the children what had just happened after reading a page. This type of recall interaction was a very common occurrence, especially with the book *Swimmy*.

The second most widely used verbal interaction was attention vocative, which is defined as using the pictures in the text to direct the child's attention to the story details. In the book *When the Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant attention vocative was used for 35% of the total verbal interactions. This is an extremely high percentage of total verbal interactions for one book title. When looking at the book itself, the pictures in the book do beckon intense attention due to the amount of detail in the pictures. The pictures helped to define the story for the reader. When the parents were reading the story with the children, many times the parents would call the child's attention to the details of the picture to help the child understand the details of the story.

The following is an excerpt from a reading session tape between a mother and her child while they read the book *When the Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant. The italicized words indicate the book text, while the quotations represent the verbal interchanges between mother and child.

CMM: *It was different, going to sleep with all the new breathing in the house.* "Do you see someone not sleeping? Where? [Child points to the picture] Yeah. Think she wasn't used to all that breathing?"

Child: "Maybe she was tired."

CMM: "You think?"

Child: "But she wouldn't get sleep"

CMM: "You think he's making noise?" [mother points at dog in picture]

Child: [makes snoring noises]

CMM: "Look what this lady is doing. What is she doing that's funny?"

Child: "Coughing"

As the mother calls the child's attention to the pictures, she is using the pictures to help clarify the words and their meanings. Helping the child understand the concept of how

things were “different” was clarified by drawing the child’s attention to the picture which showed several of the relatives lying on the floor, one in the bathtub, and the dog sleeping on his back. The room was crowded with people sprawled out on the floor and the dog was lying on his back with his feet straight up in the air. Most of the people in the room were sleeping but the little girl was sitting up with her hands under her chin. The girl was just sitting with a puzzled look on her face as the rest of the room full of people continued to sleep in various positions. The illustrations in *When the Relatives Came* support the text with rich details as well as help to clarify the story ideas for children visually.

In the case of *Owl Moon* the children were enthralled with the owl calling that the father in this story used to invite the owl to fly into their area. The chiming verbal interaction was the highest recorded interaction for this text. As the parents read the words for the owl sounds in the book, the words became more like real owl calls rather than just reading the words. The children began to echo the owl calls after their parents. The children used very animated and shrill voices as they chimed along with their parents. One of the fathers used such authentic hooting sounds that it began to sound as if an owl was actually in the room. Not only was his child awe struck by his father’s ability to sound like an owl but several other children in the surrounding area turned to look at this father as he performed the owl’s return call.

Bridging was the highest percentage of verbal interactions when the parents were reading the book *Franklin in the Dark* by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark. Since this story’s main theme revolved around the topic of being afraid and learning how to overcome one’s fears, the verbal interactions between parent and child were coded mainly as bridging. This story theme lent itself to parents building connections to the child’s real life situations, especially concerning

connections to the child's own fears. The following is an excerpt from a taped reading aloud session. The italicized words indicate the book text, while the quotations represent the verbal interchanges between mother and child.

TBW: You were afraid? I didn't know mothers were ever afraid said Franklin. "What do you think your mommy is afraid? What's mommy afraid of?"

Child: "Me getting hurt."

TBW: But Franklin was sure that creepy things, slippery things, and monsters live inside his small, dark shell. "Kinda like you, huh?"

Child: [giggles] "It's how I'm afraid of the dark." {then a little later in the story}

TBW: I'm afraid of flying so high that I get dizzy and fall to the ground. "Kinda like mommy, huh?"

Child: [giggles] "Yeah."

These verbal interactions illustrate how the parent used the book text to make connections to the child's real live situation. The first interaction the mother asked the child to make a bridge between what Franklin's mother was afraid of to what the child's own mother was afraid of. In the second interaction the child is asked to bridge between the fears that Franklin felt about his "creepy" shell to the child's own fear of the dark. Then later this same parent asked the child to make a bridge between the bird's fears of flying to the mother's fear of flying. This text was especially easy for parents to build bridges to their child's life since having fears are very prevalent in children of this age group (6 years of age) and even to the parents' fear of flying or fear for their child's safety. All of these are real fears that everyday people have to deal with daily and the text provides a good springboard for parents to address these fears with their children.

Parent Discussion Group Dynamics

Each week the parents were provided a 3 X 5 card with a typed label that had the previous week's parent generated questions. The cards were then placed in a card holder that

was attached to the inside of the book. The parents were able to have easy access to the ideas and questions that they had helped develop in their group. Many of the questions parents used while reading with their child were taken directly from questions generated by the group discussions.

It is also worthy to note that the first group of parents, the treatment group, chose to continue to work as a group to brainstorm questions and activities for the texts the children were using while with the reading specialist. Since the parents were going to be given copies of these book titles to read with their children, the parents decided to continue to work as a group to generate questions to use while they read with their child. This reflects how much value the parents placed on the group discussion, question generation, group interactions, the card reflecting the questions, and the new skills and knowledge they received from participating in the SPARKLE Program.

One of the parents, CLL, noted in the focus group meeting that “talking with other parents helped” him to work with his own child. He also discussed how working with other parents was “more interesting” and that he thought it was the point of the SPARKLE program. He elaborated by saying “Probably, we know a little bit but we don’t really know how, you know”. These statements by CLL show how he came to value the group as a viable means of being able to work with his child more successfully. He acknowledged that he knew a little about helping his son, but through the efforts of the group, it was not only more interesting, but provided him with helpful ideas to work with his son.

Analysis of Verbal Interactions in the Home Setting

In trying to answer the last part of the research question concerning whether the parents

continued to use the interaction and questioning techniques with their children after the intervention program was over, I asked several of the parents if they would mind taping some of their read aloud sessions when they were at home. These sessions were transcribed and coded in the same way as the taped sessions at the school (see Table 14, Appendix K). Although not all the parents were willing and able to do taping at home, some interesting data were collected. It should be noted that three of the parents brought back tapes from home but the tapes were inaudible and could not be used in the transcription and coding process.

As was the case in coding the reading sessions at school, recall was the most frequent verbal interaction coded from the home tapes. The second highest was attentive vocative which was also the case in the school tapes. The number of cases were small (n=6) but the text *The Relatives Came* again produced the most attention vocative verbal interactions. *Swimmy* elicited the most recall verbal interactions while *Franklin in the Dark* produced the most bridging verbal interactions. These replicate the findings from the analysis of the coding from the school setting. These findings also establish that the parents were using the techniques after the intervention program was over in their home setting in similar manners as was used in the school setting.

The following are excerpts from the taped reading sessions at home. The italicized words indicate the book text, while the quotations represent the verbal interchanges between mother and child.

Swimmy – Recall verbal interaction at home

CMM: “*Let’s go and swim and play and see things!*” he said happily. “remember some of the things we saw before?”

Child: “The big fish, the lobster, “

The Relatives Came – Attention Vocative

THS: “What do you see?”

Child: “The gate broke.”

THS: *So they drank up all their pop and ate up all their crackers and traveled up all those miles until finally they pulled into our yard.* “And into our fence”

Child: “Maybe they fixed it.”

THS: “You think? Look at this, the lady lost a shoe. Look at the dog.”

Child: “Oh my.”

Franklin in the Dark – Bridging

TBW: *And then when no one was looking, Franklin the turtle turned on his nightlight.*

“Why do you think he turned on his nightlight? Was it like his security blanket? What do you have in your bedroom at night?”

Child: “A blanket.”

TBW: “What else? Is it completely dark in your bedroom? What do you have?”

Child: “A nightlight.”

TBW: “Yep. A nightlight.”

During the taped sessions at school the book *Owl Moon* had the highest percentage of chiming interactions. But during the home sessions there was only one taped reading for the book *Owl Moon*. During this taped reading there were no chiming verbal interactions.

The taped reading sessions from the school during the intervention and the taped reading sessions at home after the intervention program provided data to help answer the second research question for this study. The parents were able to develop skills in using questioning and verbal interactions both during the intervention and after the intervention program was over. These taped sessions illustrate how the parents were using the different types of verbal interactions and questioning with their children.

This phenomenon was seen with the taped reading sessions at school and was duplicated with the reading sessions taped in the home setting after the intervention. Based on these findings, the SPARKLE Program was able to provide parents with questioning and verbal interaction skills during the program and the parents were able to utilize these skills during and after the program was over in their home setting.

Third Research Question

The third research question was concerned with how the intervention program changed parents' beliefs and attitudes about the importance of reading aloud, children's learning and their ability to learn, and education in general. To answer the third research question, most of the data were gathered during the parent focus group meeting, parent interviews, journal entries, and group discussions.

Beliefs and Attitudes about Importance of Reading Aloud

As was noted earlier, one parent, NTHM, wrote in her *Summing It Up Journal* that she "never thought about children's books quite like this. Dissecting the story is fun and you truly do remember the small things. Thank You." This statement shows that NTHM found the techniques used during the SPARKLE Program to be helpful in expanding the parent's view of reading aloud since she had never "thought about books quite like this". This statement also shows that by "dissecting the story" through asking questions and stimulating discussions helped this mother and child to "truly do remember the small things".

Her expression of thanks also shows a softer attitude toward the school. This particular parent, NTHM, described herself as being very shy. She said she knew she needed to push herself beyond her safety zone so that she could help her child. She was very quiet and did not want to participate during the group discussions. The first week she did not make one verbal interaction with the parent group. When she read with her child that week, her voice was so soft that I was unable to transcribe the tape. The second week she did give some feedback about the book *When the Relatives Came*. Her taped session with her child was barely audible. It took much longer to transcribe than any other tape that week due to her soft voice.

By the third week this mother was actually smiling and gave a wonderfully creative idea to use laundry baskets as turtle shells to reenact the story about *Franklin Afraid of the Dark*. The SPARKLE Program was able to provide this mother a place where she felt safe and was motivated to participate verbally, which was not an easy task for her. The interactions between the parents in the group were also especially helpful to this mother. She noted on her one interview sheet that she did not know many parents from the school district but now knew several of the other mothers with children the same age as her daughter. The children were school friends and now this mother was able to meet her daughter's friends as well as meet their mothers. She considered this to be a positive outcome for participating in the program.

During the focus group meeting one parent, THS, shared that she "learned how to ask questions well." Three other mothers shook their head in agreement. THS went on to explain that "I mean cause usually I just read the story through and that was that and I don't ask a lot of questions." This statement shows that the SPARKLE program did help change parents' attitudes about the importance of reading aloud to their child. Before the program, this parent would just read straight through a story which validates what other researchers such as Whitehurst found to be usual behavior during a parent read aloud session. But after participating in the SPARKLE program, THS now took the time to ask questions with her child while they read rather than just zipping to the end. Another mother, TKS, said, "It was helpful to learn what to look for and what to ask them and how to expand on things."

Beliefs and Attitudes about Child's Ability for Learning

When asked about the importance of reading aloud with their children many of the parents commented on how amazed they were with the amount of information their child was

able to remember from reading the story together. This insight by the parents about their child's ability to learn was reflected in the *BAI* data and was discussed earlier in the chapter. During the focus group meeting CLL said, "Kids really do learn a lot. It's interesting." TDJ said, "Yes, (name) really remembers a lot!" These statements suggest that not only did the SPARKLE program help to change parents' attitudes about the importance of reading aloud with their child but also the parents were becoming more aware of their child's propensity for learning.

The parents were asked why they chose to become involved in the program and all the parents said they chose to become involved because they felt it would help their child be ready for first grade. One parent, TBW, commented that "He's learning the vocabulary and he's reading aloud to me and I tell him a word he struggles on, then the next time he sees it in a book he can read it right off to me, just like that and I don't have to tell him again. So, I think reading aloud, and letting them see the pictures and the words helps him recognize the words." The other parents shook their heads in agreement. The parents cited improvement in vocabulary as the main outcome for their child's learning through the read aloud sessions.

Variety of Texts

Another important component surfaced during the focus group meeting. The parents expressed their delight in having their children being exposed to a variety of different types of books. One parent, TKS, said, "They got a variety of books by coming. And it might not be books they would get by going to the library. It is something different than they would normally read, too. So they kinda got outside their boxes." Another parent, THS, continued by saying, "And they enjoyed it so it shows them too that they don't have to keep with the same Winnie the Pooh things if that's what they're into. The sort of characters they're into." These statements

reflect the parents' positive attitudes toward using various book titles when reading aloud to their children. They expressed that their children were now aware also that they could enjoy all kinds of books rather than just the regular tried and true old favorites.

This is contrary to a comment made by one of the parents, TDW, at an earlier session where she criticized the book titles because she felt the books were not interesting for her child and could not hold her child's interest. Both sides of this issue have their points. From the child's stand point, especially if the intent is to get the child involved, a self selected book may promote more verbal interactions than a pre-selected book by someone else. But the parents did become aware of the importance of exposing their children to new and different reading material.

Attitudes toward School District

While the children came to the school to be given mid-summer academic testing, I was able to sit down with the parents to do individual interviews. One of the questions that I asked each of the parents was how the parent felt the school district valued parents' ideas or input. All of the parents felt that our school district did a good job of valuing their opinions and that the elementary school in particular, actively tried to get parents involved in their child's education. The parents felt the school district was open and welcomed parents' suggestions. One parent, TBW, wrote "I feel that they (the elementary school) are very open, but do all parents feel brave to speak up? Not all parents are assertive – need to be more out spoken." This statement shows that the parents perceive the school district, especially the elementary school, in a positive and open fashion but also realize that a relationship requires both sides to take active parts in the development of that relationship.

The parents were then asked what the school could do to encourage more parents to

become involved. One parent, TBW, wrote “get to know the teachers more on a social basis.” This statement exemplifies the need of the parents to see their child’s teacher in a different context rather than always in school. Another parent, CMM, wrote that she felt the elementary school’s policy on openness to parents was “usually very good but can depend on the teacher’s attitude.” These statements show how important these parents believed the teacher is to making them feel welcomed and needed in their child’s education.

Summary

The data collected through the *BAI*, interviews, discussion groups, and focus group meeting illustrate the different ways in which the SPARKLE program was able to effect changes in parents’ perceptions about their responsibilities and capabilities for helping their child. The *BAI* provided data through mean scores to show that these two groups of parents regarded themselves as highly capable and responsible to help their child. Through the *PII*, interviews, journals, and the focus group meeting, the parents described four areas of improvement since their participation in the SPARKLE program. First, they described an improvement in using reading for fun and to learn new things. Second, the parents expressed an improvement in how they were able to help their child learn to read and to use literacy in their everyday lives. Third, the parents illustrated how they were better able to motivate their child to read and do well in school. Fourth, the parents described how they improved in building the affective side to literacy with their child through the reading aloud.

The data collected to answer the second research question was coded using an eleven verbal interaction coding system. The different text titles uniquely elicited certain types of verbal interactions which were verified in the school and home settings. The parents in the

treatment group continued to use the group discussion format after their four week session to generate questions for other book titles. This continuation validates that the parents valued this technique for question generation, extension activities and acknowledged the benefit of working together as a group.

The data collected to answer the third research question found that the parents' attitudes toward the importance of the read aloud did increase due to their participation in the SPARKLE program. The parents not only saw how important the read aloud session could be but they also became aware of their child's capacity for learning. Many of the parents were amazed at the amount of information the children were able to retain after only one reading. The parents also expressed a positive response to having a variety of texts used during the SPARKLE program which exposed their children to different types of texts. As far as their attitudes toward the school, most of the parents had very positive attitudes toward our school district. One of the parents expressed a need to meet teachers on a more social basis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The present findings, interpretations, and their connections to previous research are discussed in this chapter. Moreover, implications for educational practices, policies, and suggestions for future programs and research are identified at the end of the work.

Changes in Parents' Attitudes and Beliefs

Capacity for Learning

One of the most interesting findings from this study was how the parents gained insight into their child's ability for learning. This was an unexpected outcome for the study. As the parents worked with their children in the read aloud sessions at school and at home, they expressed their growing awareness of their child's ability to listen, understand, ask and answer questions about the books. The parents also became aware of how their children enjoyed the time together reading. The parents were able to see their child in the light as being capable learners.

Bandura et. al. (1997), researched the path of influence that parental efficacy or parents' capability perceptions and aspirations had on the child's academic achievement. It was found that the parent's belief in the child as a capable learner influenced the parent's academic aspirations for the child. When the parent believed their child was capable of learning, then the parent developed higher aspirations for the child. When the parent's aspirations were high for the child, then the child developed higher academic self-efficacy and higher academic achievement. In other words, Bandura et. al. (1997) mapped out a path of influence in which the parent's belief in their child's ability to learn actually influenced the child's academic

achievement. When the child felt the parent believed in their learning capacity, then the child actually performed better academically. Being able to provide parents with concrete evidence of their child's capacity for learning is definitely a solid reason to continue and expand the SPARKLE Program in the future.

Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument

The Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (BAI) provided some insight into the parents' belief systems concerning literacy development. First, these two groups of parents, treatment and comparison, rated themselves as being highly capable and felt it was their responsibility to work with their children. This is documented by the high mean scores on the pre-test and post-test for all of the five constructs. The lowest mean score for either group on any total construct measure was 4.52, which is a high mean score when using a 6 point Likert scale.

The analysis of individual questions revealed that the parents changed their attitudes and beliefs concerning their responsibilities and capabilities. Question 14 suggested that the treatment group changed their attitudes about the importance of talking with other parents. The treatment group apparently came to value working with the other parents. Not only was this appreciation apparent through the quantitative instrument, but it was also documented through parent interviews and the fact that this group continued to use the book club discussion format to develop questions for 8 more books the children read over the summer.

Questions 18, 33, and 38 suggested that the parents were becoming aware and more confident in their abilities to work with their children. Both groups of parents on question 18 scored 1 full point higher on the post-test mean scores. This suggests these parents were acknowledging their child as a complex learner, but also that the parents were able to understand

when their attempts to work with their complex learner were successful.

The analysis for question 33 suggests that the parents in the treatment group increased their perceptions to work with their children specifically in finding themes and vocabulary words in stories. This was documented through the treatment group's increase in their mean scores on the post-test. These two areas, finding themes and vocabulary, were two of the main objectives of the SPARKLE program.

The treatment group rated their children with perfect 6's on question 38 for the post-test. This suggests that these parents were not only aware of their child's ability to learn but the parents had confidence that this phenomenon would happen for their child. Based on the mean scores on the *BAI*, these parents would also take an active part in their child's literacy development.

The implementation of the SPARKLE program was able to provide experiences to foster increases in parental perceptions of their capabilities and responsibilities to educate their child. The SPARKLE program built caring, trusting, and respectful relationships as the leaders of the program and parents in the program worked together in developing skills in questioning and interaction techniques. It is through these caring, trusting, and respectful relationships which acted as conduits for the parents' capability and responsibility perceptions to change.

Parent Improvement Instrument (PII)

The *PII* was designed specifically to measure the parents' perceptions of improvement in their capabilities and responsibilities for literacy development. The parents in this group cited the most improvement in their abilities to help their child read for fun and to learn new things. This improvement rating shows that the parents believed their skills had improved but also reflects

that the parents valued these two aspects of reading. Reading for fun and to learn new things are fundamental reasons people read independently. Good readers read – either for fun or to learn something new.

The parents rated improvement in helping their child read and helping their child use literacy daily as the second highest areas of improvement. These parents had expressed improvement in their capabilities and their responsibilities to help their children in the actual learning process for understanding written language. These beliefs place the parent in the active position as their child's teacher.

Vygotsky's learning theory considered language as a universal mental tool. Not only was language used in every culture, but language was used to think and to acquire other mental tools. The aim of the teacher was to help until the children were able to use the mental tools independently, creatively, and eventually to invent new tools when needed. The teacher was to present the passage way to independence.

Likewise, parents, their child's first teacher, need to help their children until the children are able to function independently and creatively. Reading aloud is an activity that parents can provide for their children to promote independence and creativity in literacy. Through discussions and interactions with the text, the child is able, with support from the parent, to use the text to stimulate thinking, questioning, and personal interactions with the text. The child will become able to read for fun and to learn new things independently and creatively due to this support.

The Parent Improvement Instrument (*PII*) and the focus group data suggested this group of parents realized a positive affective context in reading aloud. These parents recognized that

the read aloud session can provide their child a positive affective context in reading because the parent and child are interacting together. The focus for the interactions is between the parent, child, and the text. These types of focused interactions strengthen the parent - child bond.

One parent spoke of the time she was reading a story with her child and the mother was filled with memories of her own mother reading the same story to her. Building intergenerational memories around the context of reading is a classic way literacy is culturally passed on from one generation to the next. Reading is a socially and culturally constructed way to communicate between individuals; parent, child, and author.

According to Noddings (2002), the importance of a caring relationship first established in the home is of crucial importance in education. The relationship between parent and child is the first caring connection for the child. Through the read aloud sessions the parent is providing the child with a perceived need – the need to learn to read, to understand, to communicate. When the child responds positively through their reactions to the parent’s reading then the caring relationship is completed. This crucial caring relationship between parent and child can be strengthened through a read aloud session.

Again the example of the mother’s memories of her own childhood reading sessions with her mother shows that this type of caring relationship has lasting impacts. This mother remembered fondly her reading aloud with her mother and wanted to provide her own child with these same kinds of intimate, caring interactions. This mother was trying to provide for her child a perceived need – fond memories of reading with her mother but also spending alone time with her mother. As the child reciprocates positively to the mother’s response, the caring relationship is complete.

This reciprocal response gives the parent motivation to continue to care and the complex process of caring has been established. But this caring relationship also motivates the child to continue to respond positively, trusting in the parent to meet their needs, and to establish caring relationships with others. The *PII* showed the parents believed they had improved in motivating their children to read. I believe that the caring relationship between parent and child was strengthened through the read aloud sessions and therefore was the reason parents felt they were better able to motivate their children in reading.

Use of Newly Formed Skills

When analyzing the types of verbal interactions that occurred between parent and child the specific text influenced the types of coded interactions. For example, the book *Swimmy* tended to produce more recall verbal interactions. The book *When the Relatives Came* tended to produce more attentive vocative interactions. The verbal interaction described as bridging was highest with the book *Franklin in the Dark*. When the parents read the book *Owl Moon* during the school setting, chiming was the verbal interaction used most often. Parents that have an understanding that certain types of books will elicit certain types of interactions can help that parent during the book selection with their child.

The audio/video taped sessions between the parent and child dyads provided an interesting observation. Every week one parent and child were video-taped while the other parents and children were audio-taped. The video-taped sessions showed that many of the parents and children used non-verbal interactions during the reading session. Many of the parents would ask questions and the child would point or shake their head. These types of interactions of course could not be noted in the audio-tapes. But on some of the tapes I started

marking down what I called Non-responses, which were questions parents asked and the child did not respond. I reminded the parents that the children needed to verbally respond rather than using non-verbal responses. But this non-verbal interaction between parent and child does spawn some interesting questions for further research.

The *PII* suggested these parents believed their abilities to help their child to learn to read had improved. Since the parents in the treatment group chose to continue to use the parent discussion group format to brainstorm questions and extension activities for other texts suggests the parents regarded the parent group format as a vital part of the improvement process. This validates Vygotsky's social construction learning theory in that the parents wanted to use the support of the group to generate questions to use with their children. The parents liked having the support of the other parents in the group when they were developing the discussion questions and extension activities. This suggests scaffolding techniques used with parents, providing the parent with support until they can use the skill independently, will help the parent internalized the newly acquired skill and then in turn provide support to help their child.

Implications

The findings from this study have some practical implications for school districts attempting to get parents involved in their child's education. Parents found the group discussion format to be helpful by providing them with the support they needed to feel successful. During the focus group some of the parents were asked if they would feel more comfortable with another parent leading the group. Most of the parents did not feel that they would feel more comfortable with a parent leader but they felt some parents might feel more intimidated by the school leader. It might also warrant investigating a different setting rather than using the school setting.

When the parents were asked if they would help lead discussion groups with other parents, they said they would feel a little uncomfortable but would be willing to give it a try. The four parents that agreed to extend their new knowledge to other parents were from the treatment group which had continued to use the group discussion format. This suggests that the parents felt comfortable with the process, were able to use the skills, and that they believed the process was worthwhile. Hence, discussion groups modeled after SPARKLE would appear to be a very useful way to get a school district started in developing a network of trained parent leaders.

One of the parents from the comparison group was a Hispanic father with limited English language skills. He came every week with his three sons. This father said his English was not good enough for him to feel comfortable in leading a discussion group. Then when I asked if he would feel more comfortable leading a group in Spanish, he said he could do that. This could be an excellent way for school districts to reach out to their ESL/ELL populations. The parents could read the books in Spanish and English. They could discuss the books with their children in whichever language they felt most comfortable.

Another aspect school districts could consider would be to develop a book club format for parents but use upper level books, such as chapter books. The school districts could select a book, train parents to develop questions about the chapters, read with their child, and then have the trained parents become the trainers. This not only would build literacy and comprehension skills, but would build a sense of community among the parents.

By using the SPARKLE program format, school districts would have the opportunity to let parents see their children as capable and competent learners. As cited earlier, it is important to

allow parents to see their children as capable learners. The far reaching implications of the parents' belief in their own child's ability are solidly researched by Bandura et.al. (1997). The SPARKLE program provided a noncompetitive context for children to expand and develop while their parents were actively involved in the process. The school district acting in a caring role this enabled parents to provide for the child's literacy needs in a caring manner. This caring relationship among school, parent, and child can encourage caring relationships with others, too.

The SPARKLE program ran on a very limited budget yet was able to provide the parents and children who were involved very important and hopefully lasting outcomes. By providing parents with skills in which they are better able and willing to work with their child reaps benefits for all stakeholders in the educational system. With a small investment for purchasing books and paying the salary of the leaders, the school district was able to provide parents with skills to work with their child.

As the parent works with his or her child and sees the child as a capable learner, the parent's aspirations for their child will increase. The child in turn will develop a stronger self efficacy. A child with a strong sense of efficacy will persevere rather than give up when he or she encounters difficulties. The child's perseverance to overcome difficulty is what leads to higher academic achievement.

Suggestions

The first research question was concerned with finding how skills in questioning and verbal interaction techniques affect parents' affective memory perceptions, responsibility perceptions and capability perceptions. The data collected provided very few statistically significant findings. Sample size was very small for this study (N=14). Larger sample sizes are

needed in order to use statistical analysis effectively. Accordingly, an obvious recommendation would be to try to increase the sample size in future studies.

Second, the wording for some of the questions and scales on the survey instrument, especially on the affective memory perception construct, was not clearly written. Of the six questions pertaining to the affective memory section, only two of them used the same type of scale labeling which indicated one (1) as disliked through six (6) as liked. The other four questions each had completely different scale labels. It would have been better to word the stems or item statements differently and retain the same wording for the scale labels.

The directions for the affective memory perception component asked parents to rate their personal school experiences about their *elementary* school years. Asking parents to recall only their elementary school experiences may have caused some confusion for parents. Some of the parents may have had trouble differentiating between their elementary school experiences versus their high school experiences. The parents' attitudes about their elementary experiences may have influence on the parents' decisions to become involved in their child's elementary education. But if a parent had a very negative experience in high school, that negative experience also could easily influence that parents' decision to become involved in their child's elementary school. Therefore, an improvement would be to word the affective memory perception questions so that the parents can relate their general attitudes about their schooling, both elementary as well as their high school experiences.

Another shortcoming in using this BAI instrument was the tendency for parents to rate themselves very high on the pre-survey for capability perceptions and responsibility perceptions. Using data from different sources would help to validate the parents' self-reporting. Parents

could have kept a reading log of the number of times they read aloud with their child. Data could have been collected from the school or the children's teachers about their perceptions of the parents' involvement. Hoover-Dempsey (2004) began to survey children concerning the child's understanding of their parents' involvement. These different sources of data could have provided a better picture of the parents' involvement with reading aloud to their child.

Another consideration when analyzing and interpreting the parents' high self-reporting for their capability and responsibility perceptions is that both these constructs seem very sensitive to the social norms of the parent's meso - systems. Therefore, when the parent's meso - system counterparts have certain types of parenting perceptions, then that parent would believe this is the normal way parents should behave. Unless the parent is exposed to something different, the parent will continue to do what the parent knows how to do, feels comfortable doing, and what is socially accepted as the correct way to perform as a parent. In the case of the SPARKLE program the parents did not realize until after they were involved in the program that reading aloud to children could be so involved. As the one parent put it she "never thought about children's books quite like this. Dissecting the story is fun and you truly do remember the small things. Thank You." By expanding this mother's meso-system, she learned new ways to help her child.

As was noted earlier by Pajares, Hartley, and Valiante (2001), the more differentiated scale from 0 to 100, produces more discriminating, sensitive, and predictive data on which to base conclusions from the survey instrument. Along with using a zero to 100 scale, of course, a larger sample size would help to evaluate significance of the BAI data. Since this study was not only concerned with collecting data from the BAI but was equally interested in investigating the

program in connection with how the parents were able to use the skills and questioning techniques, a survey instrument alone clearly could not have yielded the kind of informational details necessary. The mixed method approach was definitely the best research design for this researcher's intentions.

Future Directions

One of the first items for future directions would be to expand the SPARKLE program to accommodate a larger sample size. One of the reasons the sample size was so small was because it was done during the summer. Many of the families were not able to attend due to vacations and other summer commitments. Alternative scheduling plans for program delivery need to be considered. Doing SPARKLE during the academic year might help the participation rate and increase the sample size for evaluative research purposes.

Opening the program to include all parents of kindergarten children rather than just parents of children showing literacy difficulties would also help to provide a larger sample size. This would also allow a comparison between the parents of children exhibiting literacy difficulties to parents of children without literacy difficulties. This comparison would add needed information to the research literature on literacy development and parental factors.

Another direction for the future would be to include the development of Parent Leaders. Developing Parent Leaders, especially for ESL, would add a different and important dimension to the research. Not only would there be the data concerning the parent perspective as participant, but also the data would concern the perspective of the Parent Leaders. Would being a Parent Leader change that parent's efficacy or role construction levels? Would a Parent Leader be more likely to use the questioning and interaction skills beyond the duration of the program?

Would the Parent Leaders help with recruitment of other parents?

The development of the SPARKLE program to include working with parents of older children using a Chapter Book Club format would be yet another interesting expansion. It would be very worthwhile and exciting to set up and research the different aspects of working with parents of older children. Many parents stop reading aloud to their children once the children become independent readers, but are there any reasons to continue reading aloud? What benefits do the parents and the older children receive when they are involved in a reading aloud program?

The main reasons I embarked on this research and program development adventure were related to my values and assumptions about how children learn, what motivates people, and the importance of seeing people as individuals-- rather than as abstractions. When the parent group decided to continue their development of questions and extension activities using the other book titles, for example, my desire increased to look into the power of group dynamics, especially with parents or adults. According to Vygotsky, providing support until the child is able to perform that function independently is an important component of learning. Does this hold true for all ages of learners? This is one question.

The data collected during this research project provided rich description in many areas as reported in this dissertation. But there are many areas that have remained areas for analysis for future research. The analyzing the relationship between the self improvement ratings on the PII to observed improvements in the taped and coded transcriptions would be one area. Looking at changes in my own perspectives after leading the SPARKLE program as related to my 25 years of teaching experience would be another area for future research. Analyzing the types of questions parent generated as well as used during the taped and coded reading sessions could

provide some interesting findings. As great professors are wont to say, the true value of research is not the answers you get, but the new additional questions that a research study promotes to spur on further study.

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Demographic Information

Appendix A

1. Gender: Female Male
2. Age
3. Parent of Kinder 1st
4. Please choose the job that best describes your job (Choose only one please)
 Unemployed, retired, student, disabled
 Labor, custodial, maintenance
 Warehouse, factory worker, construction
 Driver (taxi, truck, bus, delivery)
 Food services, restaurant
 Skilled Craftsman (plumber, electrician)
 Retail Sales, clerical, customer service
 Service Technician (appliances, computers)
 Bookkeeping, accounting
 Singer/musician/writer/artist
 Real Estate/Insurance Sales
 Social services, public service, governmental
 Teacher, nurse
 Professional, executive
5. On average, how many hours *per week* do you work?
 0-5 6-20 21-40 41 or more
6. Your level of education (check highest level completed)
 less than high school bachelor's degree
 high school or GED some graduate work
 some college, 2 year master's degree
 college, or some doctoral degree
 vocational
7. Please choose the job that best describes your spouse's or partner's job (Choose only one please)
 No spouse or partner
 Unemployed, retired, student, disabled
 Labor, custodial, maintenance
 Warehouse, factory worker, construction
 Driver (taxi, truck, bus, delivery)
 Food services, restaurant
 Skilled Craftsman (plumber, electrician)
 Retail Sales, clerical, customer service
 Service Technician (appliances, computers)
 Bookkeeping, accounting
 Singer/musician/writer/artist
 Real Estate/Insurance Sales
 Social services, public service, governmental
 Teacher, nurse
 Professional, executive

8. Please indicate your marital status:
 Married Single In a relationship
 Living with my partner.
(If married or living with a partner, please complete questions 9 and 10).
9. On average, how many hours *per week* does your spouse or partner work?
 0-5 6-20 21-40 41 or more
10. Your spouse's or partner's level of education? (check highest level completed)
 less than high school bachelor's degree
 high school or GED some graduate work
 some college, 2 year master's degree
 college, or some doctoral degree
 vocational
11. Number of children living in the home under 19?
 1 2 3 4 5 6/more
12. Please write the first names and ages of each child living in the household.
Name Age Gender

13. Please give an average number of hours *per week* for last school year you spent
 helping with homework
 helping with other school work
 volunteering in the school
14. Please give an average number of phone calls you received from the school or teacher last school year about your child. _____ calls
15. Please give the average times per year you had a conference with your child's teacher last school year. _____ conferences.



Schools and Parents Actively Reaching Kids for Literacy Everyday

Come be involved in a summer reading program that will engage your child in reading activities! Upon completing ten activities, your child will be eligible for a **free ticket to Hershey Park!** This is a research study being conducted by a doctoral candidate in affiliation with The Pennsylvania State University. Each child participant will need to have parental consent. The program will meet for an hour, every week for eight weeks this summer. Parents will be expected to participate in sessions while the students work with a reading specialist on fun learning activities. Please complete the form to the right and return it to your child's teacher.

For further information please contact:
Marcia Nell
717-259-8394
or
717-624-4231



Student Name: _____

Student's Present Grade: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Please circle the times that would work best for your family.

Best time: Day Evening

Best day: Tuesday Thursday

____ I am willing to commit an hour a week for the eight week time frame to help my child increase their literacy.

Signature

Date

Definitions and Examples of Verbal Behavior Categories Coding Sheet*

Parent/Child Dyad _____

Category	Definition	Example				
Attention Vocative	Directing attention to the picture	"Look! See the fox!"				
Bridging	Making connections from story content to everyday experiences	"Did you ever lose a mitten?"				
Chiming	Reading along with the text	Parent: "Cocky Locky and Goosey." Child: "Loosey"				
Clarifying	Explaining the picture/text	"These tracks are made by a stick."				
Elaborating	Extending previous utterance with new information	Child: "A snowman." Parent: "A snow man or snow lady."				
Feedback	Correcting or confirming a response	"Yes, they're going to tell the king."				
Labeling	Labeling of objects or events	"It's snow."				
Managing	Getting the child involved	"Let's look at this together."				
Predicting	Asking for information not yet indicated in text	"What do you think will happen when Cocky Locky meets the fox?"				
Recalling	Reviewing story details, plots, and/or theme	"Why do you think the boy is so sad?"				
Repeating	Copying previous utterances	Parent: "It's a cat." Child: "A cat."				

- Neuman, Susan B. (1996) Children engaging in storybook reading: The influence of access to print resources, opportunity, and parent interaction. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 11, 495-513.

Beliefs and Attitudes Instrument (BAI)

Appendix D

People have different feelings about school. Please circle the number on each line that best describes your feelings about YOUR elementary school experiences.

1. My school:	disliked 1	2	3	4	5	liked 6
2. My teachers:	disliked 1	2	3	4	5	liked 6
3. My teachers:	ignored me 1	2	3	4	5	cared about me 6
4. My school experience:	good 1	2	3	4	5	bad 6
5. I felt like:	I did not belong 1	2	3	4	5	I belonged 6
6. My overall experience:	failure 1	2	3	4	5	success 6

Parents have many beliefs about their level of responsibility in their children's education. Please circle the number that matches your agreement with each of the statements.

I believe it is my responsibility:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree	Strongly agree
7. to volunteer at the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. to communicate with my child's teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. to help my child with homework.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. to make sure the school has what it needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. to support the decisions made by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. to stay on top of things at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. to explain tough assignments to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. to talk with other parents from my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. to make the school better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. to talk with my child about the school day.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please think about your child. Circle the number that most closely matches your response to each of the statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree	Strongly agree
17. I know how to help my child do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. My child is so complex I never know if I'm getting through to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I don't know how to help my child make good grades in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. A student's motivation to do well in school depends on the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Most of a student's success in school depends on the classroom teacher, so I have only limited influence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I don't know how to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. If I try hard, I can get through to my child even when he or she has difficulty understanding something.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Other children have more influence on my child's motivation to do well in school than I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. My efforts to help my child learn are successful.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please think about your child. Circle the number that most closely matches your response to the questions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree	Strongly agree
29. I am very comfortable reading stories with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I am confident that I can make a difference in my child's reading skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. I am comfortable about asking questions during story reading with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I am comfortable starting a discussion about a story I have read with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. I am comfortable finding important themes and vocabulary words in a story I am reading to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. I believe I can motivate my child to read books.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. My child and I like to play games with words.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. My child and I like to write notes to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. I believe it is important for my child to see me read daily.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I believe my child will be able to learn to read.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I believe it is important for my child to develop a positive attitude toward reading books.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. I believe it is important for my child to read at home as well as at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Follow Up Questions for Parent Participants

- 1) How many have older children? _____ Oldest now _____

- 1) Did you find anything from the summer program helpful for you in working with your child this school year?
 - a) Did you pick up any ideas from the summer program you found helpful?
 - b) Where/when did you get your “read aloud” skills?
 - c) Do you feel “read alouds” are important to use?
 - i) What AGE would you say it begins to diminish?
 - ii) What benefits can be gained from “read alouds”?
 - d) When did you begin to read stories with your child?
 - i) Did you ask questions or just read story?
 - e) Have you been able to use any of the strategies from this summer?
 - f) Have you been able to find more time to read with your child?
 - g) Have you read other books aloud with your child and used the questioning techniques we used?
 - h) How would you describe the usefulness of the techniques?
- 2) How would you describe the program components?
 - a) Time – length of sessions, number of sessions
 - b) Place – school vs. other building?
 - c) Books – titles and relateness to child, keeping books?
 - d) Hershey Park incentive?
 - e) Working with other parents to develop questions/discuss 1st
 - f) Thinking about text before reading with child?
 - g) Have you tried the Dialogic Sequence at home? PEER sequence?
 - h) Other benefits from program?
- 3) Did you find anything from the summer program that was not helpful to you?
- 4) Have you noticed any difference in your attitudes or beliefs about reading with your child?
 - a) Have you noticed any change in your ideas about the importance of reading aloud with your child?
 - b) Have you noticed being more relaxed while working with your child?
 - c) Have you notice being more confident while working with your child?
 - d) Have you noticed asking more questions about stories you’ve read together?
 - e) Have you noticed having more discussions about the stories you’ve read?
- 5) Have you noticed any difference in your child’s attitudes or behaviors about reading?
 - a) Has your child asked to be read to more?
 - b) Has your child shown more positive attitudes about reading with you or alone?
 - c) Has your child shown more positive attitudes toward school in general?
- 6) Thinking into the future, would you see this program expanding to work with other parents?
 - a) Small groups?
 - b) Training for parents by other parents? (Volunteers?)
 - i) Comfort level for some parents when other parents vs. teachers doing the workshop.
 - c) Willing to help with future programs?
 - i) Be discussion leader for one of the books?
 - d) Best time to do sessions?
 - e) Grade level possibilities? (K/1st/2nd)

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the summer program or anything you’ve noticed that has changed since participating in the summer reading program?

Parent Improvement Instrument

Since completing the SPARKLE Program, please use the following scale to indicate how much the program has helped you to improve on the following items.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
no					moderate					high
improvement					improvement					improvement

1. I can help my child do well in school. _____
2. I can help my child value school. _____
3. I can help my child be motivated in school. _____
4. I can help my child read. _____
5. I can help my child read for fun. _____
6. I can help my child use literacy everyday. _____
7. I can help my child see me use literacy everyday. _____
8. I can help my child apply school learning at home. _____
9. I can help my child apply home learning at school. _____
10. I can help my child use literacy to find out new things. _____
11. I can help my child connect school learning to something he/she likes. _____
12. I can help my child understand my expectations for him/her as they grow up. _____

Book List for SPARKLE Program

Books used with parents:

Swimmy by Leo Lionni

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Franklin in the Dark by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

Books used with children:

What Do You Do With a Kangaroo? By Mercer Meyer

Over in the Meadow by Ezra Jack Keats

Jamaica's Find by Juanita Havill

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

The Mitten by Jan Brett

Henny Penny by H. Werner Zimmerman

A Bad Case of the Stripes by David Shanno

Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina

Definitions and Examples of Verbal Behavior Categories*

Category	Definition	Example
Attention Vocative	Directing attention to the picture	“Look! See the fox!”
Bridging	Making connections from story content to everyday experiences	“Did you ever lose a mitten?”
Chiming	Reading along with the text	Parent: “Cocky Locky and Goosey.” Child: “Loosey”
Clarifying	Explaining the picture/text	“These tracks are made by a stick.”
Elaborating	Extending previous utterance with new information	Child: “A snowman.” Parent: “A snow man or snow lady.”
Feedback	Correcting or confirming a response	“Yes, they’re going to tell the king.”
Labeling	Labeling of objects or events	“It’s snow.”
Managing	Getting the child involved	“Let’s look at this together.”
Predicting	Asking for information not yet indicated in text	“What do you think will happen when Cocky Locky meets the fox?”
Recalling	Reviewing story details, plots, and/or theme	“Why do you think the boy is so sad?”
Repeating	Copying previous utterances	Parent: “It’s a cat.” Child: “A cat.”

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Dialogic Reading Sequence between adult & child – PEER*

Prompts the child to say something about the book

5 Kinds of Prompts to use with child:

Completion prompts leaving blanks at end of sentence for child to fill in

Recall prompts ?s about what happened in the book already read

Open-ended prompts focus on pictures and require more than yes/no

Wh-prompts ?s begin with what, when, where, why, & how; focuses on pictures and expands vocabulary

Distancing prompts asks child to relate story to experiences outside book

Evaluates the child’s response

Expands the child’s response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and

Repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

*Retrieved from Reading Rockets <http://www.readingrockets.org>.

Computer Programs Overviewed and Websites Used for SPARKLE

Programs overviewed in the computer lab:

Jumpstart First Grade
Jumpstart First Grade Math
Bailey's Book House
Word Munchers
Sammy's Science Center
Mighty Math Number Heroes
Interactive Math Journey
Letterbugs Get Ready to Read
Math Blasters

Internet Websites:

Search Engines:

Alta Vista
Excite
Lycos
Yahoo
Google
WebCrawler
Dogpile
Askjeeves

Sites:

www.starfall.com
www.factmonster.com
www.kidsplanet.org
www.eduplace.com
www.applejuice.org
www.nationalgeographic.com/kids
www.pbs.kids.org
www.whitehouse.gov/kids
www.sesameworkshop.org
www.storylineonline.net/storyline
www.funbrain.com

Dates	1 Inattentive/noninteractive	2 Inattentive/interactive	3 Attentive/somewhat interactive	4 Attentive/interactive	Comments:

Child's name _____

Parent's name _____

Table 13 Frequency and Mean Percentages of Verbal Interactions by Book Title at School

Category	Swimmy (N=7)		The Relatives (N=7)		Franklin (N=5)		Owl Moon (N=5)		Total (N=24)	
	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean
Attention Vocative	26	18%	56	35%	10	13%	8	10%	100	22%
Bridging	6	4%	19	12%	10	13%	5	6%	40	9%
Chiming			1	1%	7	9%	25	32%	33	7%
Clarifying	15	11%	18	11%	8	10%	6	8%	47	10%
Elaborating	2	1%	9	6%	6	8%			17	4%
Feedback	16	11%	4	3%	5	6%			25	5%
Labeling			2	1%					2	0.4%
Managing	12	8%	8	5%	2	3%			22	5%
Predicting	3	2%	13	8%	10	13%	9	11%	35	8%
Recalling	43	30%	24	15%	19	24%	22	28%	108	23%
Repeating	19	13%	5	3%	3	4%	4	5%	31	7%
Total Verbal Interactions	142		159		80		79		460	
Total Interaction Mean	20.29		22.71		16		15.8		19.17	

Table 14 Frequency and Mean Percentages of Verbal Interactions by Book Title at Home

Category	Swimmy (N=1)		The Relatives (N=2)		Franklin (N=2)		Owl Moon (N=1)		Total (N=6)	
	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean	Freq.	Mean
Attention Vocative	2	11%	15	25%	3	6%	4	17%	24	15%
Bridging			3	5%	8	15%	2	8%	13	8%
Chiming										
Clarifying			9	15%	5	9%	4	17%	18	12%
Elaborating			2	3%	7	13%	2	8%	11	7%
Feedback					1	2%	2	8%	3	2%
Labeling										
Managing			1	2%					1	1%
Predicting			5	8%	1	2%			6	4%
Recalling	15	83%	23	39%	28	52%	10	42%	76	49%
Repeating	1	6%	1	2%	1	2%			3	2%
Total Verbal Interactions	18		59		54		24		155	
Total Interaction Mean	18		29.5		27		24		25.83	

Vita

Marcia Nell
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Education:

Doctoral Program	Pennsylvania State University	Curriculum & Instruction Emphasis Early Childhood	2006
Masters of Education	University of South Florida	Educational Leadership	1989
Bachelor of Science	University of Akron	Elementary Education	1979

Professional Experience:

Second, First, Kindergarten, ESL	Bermudian Springs School District	York Springs, PA	1996-2006
Ph. D. Residency	Pennsylvania State University	State College, PA	2004-2005
Graduate Assistant	Pennsylvania State University	State College, PA	2004-2005
		Supervisor for Field Experience	
Program Specialist	Collier County Schools	Naples, FL	1993-1996
Second Grade Teacher	Collier County Schools	Naples, FL	1984-1993
Third/Fourth Grade Teacher	Watertown Elementary School	Watertown, OH	1982-1984

Scholarly Publications:

- Nell, M. (2005). The New Partnership. *JAEPL*, 11, 90-91.
Nell, M. (2005). Roots of reading: a book review. *Connections*, IX (1), 10.
Nell, M. (2004). Roots of reading: a book review. Review for TASP newsletter, fall, 2004.

Presentations:

- Workshop: "Activating the Parent Connection in Early Literacy Development".
Presented at NAEYC Convention, December 8, 2005. Washington, D. C.
Workshop: "A Review of Play: The Roots of Reading". Presented at TASP Convention, February 26, 2005.
Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Workshop: "Teaching literacy by building meaning from diverse cultural student perspectives". Presented at
NCTE Convention for AEPL, November, 2004. Indianapolis, Indiana.
Workshop: "Reaching all students through the use of reader response". Presented to Bermudian Springs School
District. January, 2004.
Workshop: "Expanding the sense of possibilities". Presented at NCTE Convention for AEPL, November, 2003.
San Francisco, CA.
Workshop: "Developmental writing assessment". Presented to Bermudian Springs School District. March, 2002.
Workshop: "Scoring reader responses using PA reader response rubric". Presented to Bermudian Springs School
District. February, 1999.
Workshop: "Writing process, rubric scoring, student instruction and portfolio assessment". Presented to Pinecrest
Elementary Faculty. August, 1993-1996. (Teacher Development).
Workshop: "Writing process". Presented to Santiago Christian School, May, 1993. Provided week long teacher
development on the process of writing. Dominican Republic.

Memberships:

International Reading Association (IRA)	1986
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)	1997
Keystone Reading Association (KRA)	2000
Notary Public Association	2000
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	2004