

Improving Kindergarten Student Reading Scores at Adams
Elementary School Through Increased Parent Involvement

A Special Project

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Miguel V. Alvarez

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FACUTLY APPROVAL

Improving Kindergarten Student Reading Scores at Adams
Elementary School Through Increased Parent Involvement

Approved for the Faculty

_____, Faculty Advisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent to which increased parent involvement improved Kindergarten student reading scores at Adams Elementary School (AES), as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted. Additionally, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed from which related conclusions and recommendations were formulated. An analysis of data obtained supported the hypothesis that students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments will earn significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests (HMLTST).

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

According to the Washington State Office of Public Instruction (OSPI), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was a reform plan that redefined the federal role in K-12 education. This plan focused on closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged and minority students and was based on four basic principles: Strong accountability for records; increased flexibility and local control; expanded options for parents; and, an emphasis on teaching methods that were proven to work. Some schools across the country provided reading instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), while others provided reading instruction in the student's native language.

Reading was identified as one of the areas in need of improvement according to the NCLB Act. Reading was a necessary subject to master and it was a process where practice made perfect. Sometimes, the

school day was not long enough for students to practice how to read proficiently and fluently. The OSPI published a literature review where high levels of parent involvement was identified as one of the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. Teachers were now required to be highly qualified for the subjects they taught and were trained in all the new teaching methods and needed professional development. However, on most occasions students needed only more practice and instruction to succeed academically (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

Parent involvement offered another opportunity for helping students succeed. That is, parents could serve as the teacher at home or, as an extra teacher. Parents could help with student homework, read to students, ask students what they learned each day, motivate them to go on to college, and to check their child's progress reports. As long as the parents were involved with their child's education, that was a way

to foster their academic achievement (Flouri, E. 2006).

Statement of the Problem

With increased academic requirements being mandated by the federal government, public school districts have been directed to fulfill those requirements to receive federal funds. Parents have become a crucial factor in helping to improve student academic performance. If parents did not get involved, then students may not receive extra practice needed to improve performance. Further, schools failing to meet federal academic mandates have been placed on probation for not demonstrating Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

Phrased as a question, the problem which represented the focus of the present study may be stated as follows: To what extent did students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments earn higher reading

scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Selection Tests?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent to which increased parent involvement improved Kindergarten student reading scores at Adams Elementary School (AES), as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted. Additionally, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed from which related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Delimitations

Twenty students were involved in the present study throughout 2006-2007. All participants were Hispanic whose native language was Spanish. All students received reading instruction in the Spanish language. There were seven males and thirteen females ranging in ages from five to seven years. The

students had taken nine Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests and had been enrolled continuously at AES from August 2006, through June 2007.

Students who communicated more effectively with their teacher in the Spanish language were assigned reading homework in Spanish, attended teacher conferences in Spanish, and had notes sent home in Spanish. Daily homework was created and organized by the teacher and researcher (Miguel V. Alvarez). Reading tests administered to assess student performance included from 17-20 comprehension, reading, and phonics questions contained in Houghton Mifflin Lectura.

Assumptions

The assumption was made that parents who approved and signed off on the reading homework wanted the very best for their child and spent the necessary time needed to help their son or daughter complete homework assignments. A further assumption was made that the reading homework assignments were aligned with the

HMLTST reading tests. Finally, the assumption was made that students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments would earn significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests (HMLTST).

Hypothesis

Students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments will earn significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests (HMLTST).

Null Hypothesis

Students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework would not earn significantly higher HMLTST reading scores. Significance for p_{\geq} was determined at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

Significance of the Project

The project was intended to provide teachers, faculty, administration, and most importantly, parents with research data that would motivate them to become more involved with their child's education. Further, professional staff at AES could work together more effectively with parents to instruct them in helping their child, such as listening to them read and giving them spelling tests, and other reading exercises. Parents at AES wanted to be involved, but they sometimes feared they could not make a difference or were not capable.

Another objective of the project was to continue providing instruction in the students' native or dominant language which in the present study was Spanish. Accordingly, information/data emanating from this study could support the belief that instruction in Spanish language could play an important role in the classroom and, students learn to read better if they are taught in their native language.

Procedure

During the Summer of 2007, the researcher (Miguel V. Alvarez) obtained permission from the AES principal to undertake the present study and, to contact parents of the participating students. The researcher had to make certain that only those students who met the following criteria were selected (i.e. students attended AES for the entire 2006-2007 school year and students completed all nine HMLTST). The researcher then collected results from the nine reading tests and calculated a final average score for each student. Additionally, the researcher collected data detailing the amount of reading homework returned with the parent's signature. A percentage total was calculated by dividing the number of homework pieces returned by the total number of reading homework assignments given throughout the school year for each student. Finally, average reading scores and percentages of returned homework assignments were calculated, using Pearson r

statistical analysis. A correlational value was calculated to determine significance.

Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of the present study have been defined as follows:

homework assignments. A collection of reading homework sheets that allowed students to practice reading, spelling, phonics, writing, and comprehension.

Houghton Mifflin Lectura tests. The reading tests given by the teacher as a whole group, as prescribed by the reading curriculum.

parent. The definition of parents was a single father, a single mother, a mother and father, or other caretakers.

Pearson r . A measure of correlation appropriate when both variables are expressed as continuous (i.e., ratio or interval) data.

quantitative research. The collection of numerical data in order to explain, predict and/or control phenomena of interest.

Acronyms

AES. Adams Elementary School

AYP. Annual Yearly Progress

ELL. English Language Learners

ESL. English as a Second Language

HM. Houghton Mifflin

HMLTST. Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills
Test

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

OSPI. Office of the Superintendent of Public
Instruction

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

The review of literature and research summarized in Chapter 2 has been organized to address:

Parent Reading and Verbal Conversations with
Children.

Parental Involvement with Student Homework.

Influence of Parental Education on School.

Involvement

Summary.

Data current primarily within the last five (5) years were identified through an online computerized literature search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), the internet, and Proquest. Parent Reading and Verbal Conversations with Children

According to the National Children's Reading Foundation, reading aloud was the single most important activity for building knowledge required for

eventual success in reading (Russ et al., 2007). Cotton & Wikelund (2001) alluded to the importance of allowing students to receive reading instruction in their native language to enhance literacy skills. This practice also placed non-English speaking parents in a position to promote their child's reading growth without a language barrier that existed in other schools, while encouraging parents to become active in helping their children. Considerably greater achievement benefits were noted when parent involvement was active.

Sometimes, parents assumed their child received enough reading time or practice at school. With so many requirements from other subjects, students could not receive extra opportunities to read during the school day. Therefore, schools with practices that encouraged parents to read to their children at home affected a student's reading achievement. Reading to children also allowed parents to more closely monitor time spent in this activity. There has been

widespread agreement in the literature that encouraging students to engage in wide, independent, silent reading increases reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2006).

According to Deplantey et al. (2007), students were affected positively when there was a relationship between the home and school environments. Involvement at home, especially parent discussion of school activities and helping children plan their school programs had the strongest impact on academic achievement. Parents who were involved in their children's education in ways that created or reinforced direct experiences of educational success were able to offer verbal persuasion which then developed into attitudes, behaviors, and efforts consistent with school success. Along with improving academic achievement, researchers also found that parent-child discussion about school helped reduce problematic behavior.

The environmental variable of parental encouragement and involvement was one of the best predictors of post-secondary educational aspirations. When parents talked to their children about school, expected them to do well, helped them plan for college, and made sure that out-of-school activities were constructive, their children performed better in school (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

Parental Involvement with Student Homework

The amount of time parents spent with their child completing their homework also affected academic achievement. With homework, parents were able to monitor their child's academic grades and hold students accountable, which in turn motivated them to want to do better academically in school (Sirvani, 2007). Though students in elementary grades needed more assistance with their homework, students in middle and high schools did benefit from parental help. Furthermore, parent involvement, with homework, could be perceived as a cost-effective and time-

efficient method for teaching children (Resetar, et al., 2006).

National surveys conducted throughout the United States found that parent involvement on the home front, as manifested in assisting with homework, was relatively frequent, with about 70% of parents helping children at least once a week, regardless of parents' socioeconomic status, educational attainment, or ethnicity (Pomerantz, et al., 2007). According to this research, there were strong indications the most effective forms of parent involvement were those which engaged parents in working directly with their children in learning activities at home such as supporting homework assignments (Cotton et al., 2001).

Influence of Parental Education on School Involvement

Parents that were more involved in school activities, such as the Parent-Teacher Association, tended to have acquired more years of educational experience. There was a positive correlation between the mother's education and the degree of parent

involvement in school activities (DePlantley, 2007). When parents were better educated, they more likely taught their children certain strategies that enhanced the child's skills and therefore helped the child to feel competent and in control of their education (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Less educated parents may have been less effective in developing their children's human capital (Flouri, 2006). Some schools have provided workshops to train parents to help their children at home, particularly with reading and mathematics (Henderson et al., 2002).

Cotton & Wikelund (2001) also noted that parent involvement was important and effective in increasing academic achievement no matter what the level of parental education. Involvement of parents who were well-educated, well-to-do, or had larger amounts of time to be involved have not been shown to be more beneficial than the involvement of less advantaged parents.

Parents in the United States most commonly became involved in the schools through their presence at general school meetings and parent-teacher conferences, which national surveys indicated were attended by approximately two-thirds of parents regardless of their ethnicity (Pomerantz et al., 2007). Parents may have used the knowledge gained at parent-teacher conferences in assisting children with their homework. Also, teacher outreach to parents was related to strong and consistent gains in student performance in both reading and mathematics. When parents attended parent-teacher conferences, they were able to better learn how to help their child at home (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parent-teacher conferences allowed parents to ask questions, to review their child's work, and to discuss their child's progress. The teacher could also gain valuable information about the goals that parents have for their children, how parents help them

learn, or how parents would like to be involved (Epstein & Sanders (2000)).

Summary

The review of selected literature and related investigation reported in Chapter 2 supported the following research themes:

1. Parents reading aloud and discussing school activities with their children had a strong impact on success in reading and related academic achievement.

2. The most effective forms of parent involvement were those that engaged parents working directly with their children in learning activities at home such as supporting their work in homework assignments.

3. The level of parental education may have a beneficial effect on student success in school as well as involvement in school activities.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent to which increased parent involvement improved Kindergarten student reading scores at Adams Elementary School, as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted. Additionally, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed from which related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Chapter 3 contains a description of the methodology used in this study. Additionally, the researcher included details concerning participants, instruments, design, procedure, treatment of the data, and summary.

Methodology

The researcher used a quantitative research design to determine the extent to which increased parent involvement improved Kindergarten student reading scores at Adams Elementary School, as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. A Pearson r test was used to calculate the correlation of parent involvement with student reading test scores. Significance for $p \geq$ was determined at .05, .01, and .001 levels. An average was determined for the amount of reading homework assignment returned and signed-off by parents and an average student score was calculated for the nine HMLTST reading tests.

Participants

Twenty ELL students were involved in the present study throughout 2006-2007. All participants were Hispanic whose native language was Spanish. All students received reading instruction in the Spanish language. There were seven males and thirteen females ranging in ages from five to seven years. The

students completed nine HMLTST and had been enrolled continuously at AES from August 2006, through June 2007.

Instruments

The Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests (HMLTST) was adopted and used as the preferred instrument to assess Kindergarten reading achievement at AES. The HMLTST provided baseline data used to calculate the correlation of parental involvement with reading homework and student reading scores.

Design

The Pearson r correlational coefficient was used to compare an average of parental involvement in reading homework assignments with the average student reading tests score for the nine HMLTST.

Procedure

Procedures employed in the present study evolved in several stages, as follows.

1. During the Summer of 2007, the researcher obtained permission from the AES principal to

undertake the present study and, to contact parents of the participating students.

2. Students were selected to participate in the study upon completion of the nine Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. Selection criteria also required attendance at AES for the entire 2006-2007 school year. All participants were enrolled in the Kindergarten classroom where the researcher taught at AES in the Yakima School District.
3. The tests were administered every three to four weeks, throughout the 2006-2007 school year.
4. Spanish reading homework was distributed every Monday and returned on Fridays with parental sign-off.
5. The average scores of the reading tests were then aligned with the average number of homework assignments returned and signed by parents, to determine a correlational value.

Treatment of Data

The Pearson r correlational coefficient was used in conjunction with the Windows STATPAK statistical software program that accompanied the Education Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications, Sixth edition text (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2006). This allowed the researcher to determine a correlational value for the average number of homework assignments returned and the average reading test score. Significance for $p >$ was determined at .05, .01, and .001 levels. The following formula was used to test for significance.

$$r = \frac{\sum XY - \frac{\sum X \sum Y}{N}}{\sqrt{(\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{N})(\sum Y^2 - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{N})}}$$

Summary

Chapter 3 provided a description of the research methodology employed in the study, participants, instruments used, research design, and procedure utilized. Details concerning treatment of the data obtained and analyzed were also presented.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The present study sought to determine the extent to which students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments earned higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Test. Chapter 4 has been organized around the following topics: (a) description of environment, (b) hypothesis, (c) results of the study, (d) findings, and (e) summary.

Description of the Environment

Twenty ELL students were involved in the present study throughout 2006-2007. All participants were Hispanic whose native language was Spanish. All students received reading instruction in the Spanish language. There were seven males and thirteen females ranging in ages from five to seven years. The students completed nine HMLTST and had been enrolled

continuously at AES from August 2006, through June 2007.

Hypothesis

Students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments will earn significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests (HMLTST).

Null Hypothesis

Students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework would not earn significantly higher HMLTST reading scores. Significance for p_{\geq} was determined at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

Results of the Study

Table 1 has detailed the correlation of parent involvement in homework assignments with student reading test scores. Each participating student was assigned a student number from #1 to #20. The average amount of parental involvement in their child's

Table 1.

A Comparison of Parent Involvement with Student

Reading Scores

Student Number	Average of Parent Involvement With Reading Homework	Average Student Reading Test Score
#1	80%	84%
#2	80%	95%
#3	26%	83%
#4	29%	82%
#5	23%	69%
#6	29%	62%
#7	29%	78%
#8	54%	80%
#9	37%	83%
#10	94%	91%
#11	34%	90%
#12	31%	79%
#13	14%	70%
#14	29%	77%
#15	49%	83%
#16	80%	91%
#17	29%	58%
#18	80%	89%
#19	71%	84%
#20	29%	81%

reading homework, was validated by parent signatures, ranged from a high of 94% to a low of 14%. Seven parents (35%) averaged from 54-94% in time devoted to helping their child with reading homework assignments. Thirteen parents (65%) devoted an average of 14-49% in helping their child with reading homework assignments.

Table 1 also shows that thirteen students (65%) earned reading tests scores ranging from 80% to 95%. A score of 80 was needed to pass all nine tests. It was noted that all students whose parents averaged from 54-94% of time involved with their child's reading homework achieved a passing score of 80 or higher on the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests.

Findings

According to the results of Pearson r calculations derived from using the STATPAK, the correlational value of .64 was derived with eighteen degrees of freedom. Major findings included:

1. Significance was found at .05 and .01 levels, but not at .001.
2. The null hypothesis was rejected at .05, .01, but was accepted at .001.
3. The hypothesis was supported at .05, .01, but was not supported at .001.

This analysis of data supports the hypothesis that students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments earned significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the environment, hypothesis, null hypothesis, results of the study, and major findings.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent to which increased parent involvement improved Kindergarten student reading scores at Adams Elementary School (AES), as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted. Additionally, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed from which related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Conclusions

From the review of selected literature presented in chapter 2 and the analysis of data in chapter 4, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Parents reading aloud and discussing school activities with their children had a strong impact on success in reading and related academic achievement.

2. The most effective forms of parent involvement were those that engaged parents working directly with their children in learning activities at home such as supporting their work in homework assignments.

3. The level of parental education may have a beneficial effect on student success in school as well as involvement in school activities.

4. Students whose parents were more involved in helping their child with reading homework assignments earned significantly higher reading scores as measured by the Houghton Mifflin Lectura Theme Skills Tests.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions cited above, the following recommendation has been suggested:

1. To strengthen the impact on student success in reading and related academic achievement, parents should read aloud and discuss school activities with their children.
2. To support students with their homework assignments, parents should become actively

engaged in working with their children's learning activities at home.

3. Educators should understand that parental involvement in school activities and student success in school may be related to the level of parental education.
4. To help students earn significantly higher reading scores, educators should encourage parents to become more involved in helping their child with related homework activities.
5. School district personnel seeking information related to improving student reading scores through increased parent involvement may wish to utilize information contained in this study or, they may wish to undertake further study more suited for their unique needs.

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