

The Effects of Pre-literacy on Kindergarten Students

A Special Project

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FACULTY APPROVAL

The Effects of Pre-literacy on Kindergarten Students

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

This research project focused on pre-literacy skills that were part of young children's experience prior to their entrance to kindergarten. The researcher believed that there was a connection between early literacy skills and the ability to have a successful kindergarten experience. Steps were taken to develop and distribute a survey to incoming kindergarten parents. Surveys were brought together and formulated by each question. The data was gathered and evaluated by the researcher upon completion of the first trimester assessment. The researcher determined pre-literacy exposure in the home influenced a positive first year of school for children. The conclusion was made that, based on the finding, pre-literacy experiences correlated with the child's knowledge of reading and writing in kindergarten.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Background for the Project

The researcher of this project believed that students entered kindergarten lacking the skills needed to begin the academic process. The researcher also believed that exposing children to pre-literacy experiences was essential in having success when entering kindergarten. Increased attention has been given over the past twenty years to the importance of emergent and early literacy, or the knowledge and skills that children acquired about the process of reading and writing before formal schooling (Sulzby, 1985; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Identifying upper and lower case letters, acknowledging letter sounds, and recognizing environmental print were ineffective. Many kindergarten students, who entered school in the fall, demonstrated difficulty holding a pencil correctly and were reluctant writing in everyday activities. The researcher believed that poor motor skills coincided with inadequate writing supplies at home. Kindergartners from limited pre-literate backgrounds had shorter attentions spans and sat impatiently while being read a story aloud. When numerous opportunities were provided to talk, tell stories, read storybooks, draw, and write, children were generally successful in learning to read and write (Braunger et al., 1997). Exposure to age appropriate literature was important. Reading prior to entering school offered enriched vocabulary and enjoyment. Literacy structures or “book language” were deposited in children’s minds. Students needed these structures to eventually help decode and understand a page of print (Wood-Walters, 2002).

The likelihood a child would succeed in school depended on knowledge the child already learned about reading before getting into a classroom atmosphere (Adams, 1990). A child's literacy development was affected by the amount of language and literacy experiences in a home environment. Beginning at birth, children had the ability to absorb literacy skills through language. Sharing books with infants and promoting interaction through pictures created an enjoyable desire to learn. Brain research revealed synapses, the connections between neurons, were twice as plentiful at twenty-four months as in adulthood. Reading to babies helped "wire in" synapses, so a baby received an early intellectual boost (Honig, 2000). Literacy occurred with children between the ages of two to three years old. Understanding to read and write was attempted without letter knowledge. Emergent literacy was seen in children ages four to five years old when the meaning of written language became more apparent.

Technology has been a constant competitor for the interests of young children. Research has indicated children spend an average of thirty two hours a week watching television. The interaction and literacy with television was minimal. Television contributed by developing language and reoccurring words, but did not provide the tools to read. Genetically, humans were not given the innate knowledge of how to read and write. Oral language was the gift from our heritage. For thousands of years, speech has been the tool used by people to communicate and learn. Compared to speech, the written language has been a far more recent development. Primary language was developed by children in environment.

Statement of the Problem

Children needed to be taught pre-literacy skills before the entrance of kindergarten. A lack of fundamental skills affected the positive experience in kindergarten and the ability of children to learn to read, write, and communicate.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to validate that exposing children to pre-literacy experiences was essential in having success when entering kindergarten. Studies have found that there were three critically important factors when developing early and emerging literacy. First, a strong foundation in oral language helped children understand the structures and meaning of language. Second, the realization of phonological awareness was the understanding that language carried word structures, syllables, and sounds. Third, children needed to have exposure and experience to print to visualize words and manipulate written symbols to develop an awareness of print.

Awareness of the positive impact and the expectations for preschool programs has increased. Families expected preschool programs to prepare children for school, but children benefited most through direct observation of adult role models engaging in literacy activities. Pre-literacy skills prior to kindergarten were essential for success in reading, writing, and communication.

Delimitations

The study included 70 half day kindergarten students at a Washington State school. The elementary school where the research was conducted had approximately 429 students with demographics of 76.0% Caucasian, 12.8% Hispanic, 3.7% Black, and 2.3% American Indian. There were 53% of students on free and reduced lunch. The percentage

indicated a high population of low socioeconomic status students. Special education students at 12.7%, and transitional bilinguals at 11.8%, completed the demographics. The time period of the project was three months long, from September through December in the year 2006. The project included kindergarten teachers, principal, and parents of the kindergarten students. The researcher designed a survey, outlining pre-literacy experiences, in August 2006. The survey was distributed to each kindergarten parent at school during the child's pre-literacy screening, in September 2006. Permission was granted for the survey to be distributed by the school.

Assumptions

The greatest activity done at home to promote literacy success was reading stories aloud to children. Reading aloud had an undeniable effect on young children's vocabulary acquisition, oral language development and attitudes toward reading, and was among the finest ways families could support early literacy (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Trelease, 2001). Modeling reading to children provided the impression of enjoyment and purpose.

Asking questions and re-reading stories provided that opportunities for children to make inferences increased literacy skills. Looking at the pictures in books and promoting conversation expanded vocabulary and developed language skills. A child needed to hear a word fourteen times before a word became a part of the child's vocabulary (Colburn, 2005).

The amount of pre-literary exposure directly correlated to the students' successful ability to learn when beginning formal schooling. Research has found that each dimension of the family literacy environment was associated with children's academic

performance, as measured by school readiness and language tests (Wilson & Brooks-Gunn 2001). Teaching pre-literacy skills before the entrance of kindergarten gave children the encouragement and confidence to overcome academic challenges.

The researcher accepted the extensive body of research that supported pre-literacy experiences upon entering kindergarten. The researcher also believed that some parents were not taking responsibility for exposing children to a literacy environment and that students entering kindergarten with delays in literacy had deprived or limited literacy experiences.

Hypothesis

Kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences had higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experiences as measured by the kindergarten placement test and parental surveys.

Null Hypothesis

Kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences did not have higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experiences as measured by the kindergarten placement test and parental surveys.

Significance of the Project

In the Washington School District where the study took place, 85% of 739 fourth-grade students tested met the standard for reading on the Washington Assessment Student Learning (WASL) in 2005-2006, while 15% were below the standard. Of the 739 students assessed in writing, 66% met the standard and 33% were below the standard (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bergeson, 2005). Reading scores had shown a remarkable increase in the Washington School District over the past three years while

writing scores were significantly lower than the level needed to succeed. Success on the fourth-grade WASL was dependent on the teaching and learning that took place prior to fourth grade, including kindergarten. This research had the potential to validate the importance of children entering kindergarten with pre-literacy skills. Emergent and early literacy should lead to greater success in learning to read and write and that success should be demonstrated on assessment tools such as the WASL.

Procedure

The first step initiated for the project was to seek permission from the principal of the elementary school to distribute a survey to the parents of seventy kindergarten students. The researcher and principal developed the survey. The second step was to explain the purpose of the survey to the parent of the child. The third step was to hand each parent a copy of the survey to fill out while the student was being assessed by the researcher. Steps two and three were initiated during the first week of September. The fourth step was to collect the completed surveys. The fifth step was to analyze the data by comparing the scores of the student's exam to the literacy environment gathered by the survey. Steps three through five were conducted during the first week of March.

Definition of Terms

literacy. The ability to read and write; quality of reading.

motor skills. Controlling impulses of motion through kinesthetic activities.

phonemic awareness. An understanding about the smallest units of sound that make up the speech stream: phonemes.

pre-literacy. Reading, writing, and language experiences prior to entering school.

phonics. Building associations between letters and speech phonemes.

Chapter 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

Pre-literacy skills were a necessity for children entering kindergarten. The foundation to achieve in academics began with a solid background in pre-literacy. Literacy knowledge and oral language skills were lacking upon entrance into kindergarten. The majority of kindergartners continued onto the next level, yet, out of the number moving on, a portion of the children were not prepared for the literacy expectations of the first grade.

The importance of exposing children to literacy materials did not pertain to just literature. Writing utensils, gross motor skill projects, and games to create interaction, contributed to a quality enriched experience. Modeling the enjoyment of literacy activities helped children gain the confidence to take learning on independently and conquer the challenge of literacy. A research performed by Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Inventory concluded that literacy environments with quality and quantity stimulation and support, available in the home, increased later measures of language, cognitive, and academic skills (Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, et al., 2001; Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001).

Literacy at Home

Reading with a child at home played a significant role in the literacy development of the child. Home experiences could not be duplicated in the classroom. The greatest thing to do for a child was sharing a book aloud in a comfortable environment. Children who were read to grew up loving books. Parents who read as a source of entertainment

had children with a positive view about reading (Baker, 1990). Listening to the printed word helped children develop the flow and nature of the language. Children developed an enjoyment for literature and became motivated when entering school.

Parents were the children's first teachers. Research showed greater parent involvement in children's learning resulted in positive school performance and higher academic achievement (McNeal, 1999; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Sio-Chu & Willms, 1996; Trusty, 1998; Yan & Lin, 2002). A child's education began at home. Parent involvement in a child's education meant the difference between a child struggling or succeeding in kindergarten. Research had found preschoolers exposed to literature became better readers by second grade compared to preschoolers with a less frequent literacy environment (Scarborough, Dobrich, and Hager, 1991).

Family literacy was defined as how parent and family members used literacy in the home and community. Working with parents and children increased the awareness of what was needed when entering school. Research had found the earlier literacy skills were taught the more success children had in the primary grades. Research found children, struggling with reading by the end of first grade, had a difficult time catching back up with peers (Clay, 1991; Juel, 1988; Stanovich, 1986).

Literacy occurred naturally in the daily routines of completing tasks. Families used drawing to communicate ideas, and orally shared thoughts or stories. Parents and children initiated activities as part of daily living. Storybook reading, participation in writing a shopping list, and letter writing increased the transfer of literacy (Snow & Tabors, 1996). Creating a literacy enriched atmosphere in the home improved the kindergarten experience. Discussion of books and accessibility to writing materials were

important to the success of a child. Storytelling enhanced vocabulary and language development in young children (Speaker, Taylor, & Kamen. 2004). Parent participation in school activities to reading a story before bedtime created the opportunity for success.

Environmental Print

Children acquired a multitude of experiences with literature at an early age. Print was located everywhere in the natural environment. Researchers had noticed children's eyes automatically responded in the environment (Guttentag & Haith, 1979). The additional exposure to symbols and words in the environment increased understanding. When children saw print around, instantly a connection was made with prior knowledge.

Reading to children was essential in developing an appreciation for stories and books. Exposure to literature developed a concept of print. Children needed to learn readers used one-to one correspondence with the words on the page; directionality and the spaces between words meant something. Research had shown environmental print activities in kindergarten needed to be center-base, with instructions about materials, but allowing children to construct knowledge from interactions in the environment (Kamii, 1993). The researchers have concluded center-based instruction made reading and writing in school natural and enjoyable for children (Aldreidge, Kirkland, & Kuby, 1996). The essential foundation for reading and writing, however, was built on connections of prior knowledge. Between the ages of four and seven children began to recognize words on a page or a box of cereal. But instruction of reading and writing was built upon when the child was two or three.

The first months through the second year of life a child's experiences with oral language development and literacy began to build a foundation for later reading success

(Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). In the first few months of life children began listening to voices in the environment, looking at pictures, and pointing at objects in the environment. Children began to learn the importance of language and word association in a story. Children began to enjoy the sound of language even before knowing what the words on a page were. Reading books aloud to children helped open up the child's imagination and experience further knowledge of the world. Reading aloud helped children develop language and listening skills to become aware of the written word. Researcher Marie Clay described that young children used books and writing materials to imitate reading and writing, even though the children could not actually read and write in the conventional sense (Ramburg, 1998). Listening to the rhythm and the melody of the language consistently made learning to read natural for a child.

Learning to read and write was a developmental process. Children proceeded through the process at different ages. Vygotsky and Piaget made a significant impact on understanding the developmental process. The researchers made the break-through of how children learned to read and write, independently without any excessive intervention from adults (May, 1998). Children with the exposure to reading and writing materials had the opportunity to be ready for kindergarten.

Nurturing Activities for Children

Pre-literacy skills were developed through a variety of activities. Infants loved to listen to the human voice. During the first few months of age babies' heads turned when a voice was in hearing distance. Providing books at an early age and being dramatic when reading kept sustained interest. Books involved at an early age developed attachment.

Singing songs, nursery rhymes, and lullabies created the rhyme and repetition that provided a sense of mastery for the child and encouragement to learn.

Reading aloud was an exercise. The exposure expanded child's concept of print. The adult would read to the child and asked questions about the pictures in the story. The child took initiative with the communication, and expanded the vocabulary. Parents discussed print and modeled one to one correspondence with words. Children and parents worked on literacy skills together and developed a closer relationship through books.

Telling stories enriched the imagination and bond between parent and child. The parent used photo albums and told stories about family members. In turn the parent encouraged the child to recall the story from a picture. On a vacation the child used a writing journal and described things seen or places visited and put the experiences down on paper. Stories from real events were valuable and the child took ownership about retelling the story.

The Child's Name

Children were visualized as the most important person in the world. Children's names were often the first stable written form with meaning. The name represented the singularly important benchmark in early literacy development (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). Parents reinforced the spelling of the child's name above pictures and other written work done. Magnetic letters on the refrigerator continued support of letter recognition. The child used signs that were printed to represent ownership of room, books, toys, etc.

Homemade books were created as valuable resource. Books were composed of writing and pictures that were drawn. Magazines were a source where pictures could be

cut out and pasted on blank pieces of paper. The child could describe the picture with writing. The child would understand the meaning and took pride when reading. The book would be placed in the family home library.

Library cards were a cost efficient way to provide children an enriched environment. Obtaining a library card opened up the world to children. The library provided a wide selection of reading materials and programs reinforcing the joy of literacy. Studies confirmed the development of vocabulary and oral language were significantly advanced in children exposed frequently to a variety of stories (Roney, 1989; Phillips, 2000).

Teaching Children to Read

Reading began at birth and became a lifelong process. When adults talked to a child sounds of the language were registered in the brain. The child's primary goal was to communicate back to the adult. The forms of communication were through facial expressions, gestures, and crying. Language development grew to words and then to complete sentences. By the age of 3, a preschooler's vocabulary consisted of approximately 2,000-4,000 words and by age 5, approximately 5,000-8,000 words (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997).

Rhyming improved children auditory skills in decoding words. Children heard the similarities and differences between letter blends through games and activities (The Literacy Center Education Network, 1999). Rhyming developed vocabulary through word play. Picture cards were used as a matching game or the parent would say an animal or word rhyming, i.e. dog, frog. Reading books with rhymes made the connection to print. Parents read the story and had the child think of the rhyme.

Appropriate Literature for Children

Connections with events in a book took on greater meaning. The child shared a relationship with the character and theme, and responded. Research had shown purpose was an important consideration for a positive transition into reading (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2000). Books needed to have provided a rich language experience and an interesting story to keep the attention of the reader. Books needed to be chosen from the interest of the child.

Summary

The researcher concluded children growing up in a print-rich environment had a positive experience with literacy. Interactions with family members developed a child's vocabulary. Auditory skills were improved by rhyming words. Environmental print provided the experience and understanding of how print carried a meaning. Reading stories to children expanded the environment and knowledge of the world. Research consistently demonstrated that the more knowledge about language and literacy that children received before entering schooling, the better equipped they were to succeed in reading (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Pre-literacy gave children the opportunity to succeed.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

Children entered kindergarten lacking pre-literacy skills that affected a positive education experience. The researcher believed that the cause was due to insufficient literature resources and environmental experiences. Surveys were distributed by the researcher to upcoming kindergarten parents prior to the entrance of school. The surveys were analyzed once a significant number was collected. The researcher used students' first trimester assessments to complete the study.

Methodology

Descriptive was the method used by the researcher. A survey was constructed to reflect if prior literacy experiences influence a child's ability to perform in the classroom. Parents of upcoming kindergarten students were the population of the study. Prior to distribution an appropriate instrument was developed and reviewed by the building principal. Distribution of the surveys was conducted during student placement with the kindergarten teachers.

Participants

The participants in the sample were 70 kindergarten students attending a half-day program at a Washington State school during the 2006-07 school year. Each participant was of five to six years in age and attending their first year of public education. The elementary school where the research was conducted had approximately 429 students and indicated a high population of low socioeconomic status. Surveys were distributed to the

upcoming kindergarten parents and were collected by the researcher. The time period of the project took place from September to December.

Instruments

A questionnaire survey was developed to obtain information for the project. Participants attended the kindergarten placement assessment prior to the entrance of school. The foundation of the survey appealed to participants by being brief and easy to respond. Each survey was personally administered to clarify and answer questions to receive a valid response.

Design

Parents that attended the kindergarten placement meeting received a survey entitled Pre-Kindergarten Literacy Experience Survey. The survey consisted of ten questions that were brief so the participant felt at ease to complete. Eight questions were multiple choice describing the literacy environment. The remaining two questions were short answer focusing on the reading habits at home. The plan successfully generated 56 of the 70 surveys for enrolled kindergartens that year.

Procedure

The first step initiated for the project was to seek permission from the principal of the elementary school to distribute a survey to the parents of 70 kindergarten students. The researcher and principal developed the survey. The second step was to explain the purpose of the survey to the parent of the child. The third step was to hand each parent a copy of the survey to fill out while the student was being assessed by the researcher. Steps two and three were initiated during the first week of September. The fourth step was to collect the completed surveys. The fifth step was to analyze the data by comparing

the scores of the student's first trimester assessment to the literacy environment gathered by the survey.

Treatment of the Data

Surveys were brought together and formulated by each question. The data was gathered and evaluated by the researcher upon completion of the first trimester assessment. Information was broken down into percentages and composed into graphs and charts reflecting the findings.

Summary

A questionnaire survey was constructed to reflect if prior literacy experiences influenced a child's ability to perform in the classroom. The researcher distributed the survey to 70 parents during kindergarten placement. A total of 56 surveys were completed, which represent 80% of the participants to make the study valid. Information was gathered through the use of surveys and the students' first trimester assessment. Data was analyzed and configured through the use of charts and graphs.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

This research project focused on pre-literacy skills that were part of young children's experience prior to their entrance to kindergarten. The researcher believed that there was a connection between early literacy skills and the ability to have a successful kindergarten experience.

Description of the Environment

The study was conducted at a Washington State school. The elementary school had approximately 429 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The research included 70 half day kindergarten students. The time frame of the project was three months long, from September through December in the year 2006. The project included kindergarten teachers, principal, and parents of the kindergarten students. The researcher and principal developed the survey. The survey had ten questions, which outlined pre-literacy experiences. The survey was distributed to each kindergarten parent at school during the child's pre-literacy screening, in September 2006. The school consisted of 76% Caucasian and 24% from other ethnic-minority origins. The percentage of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch was 53%.

Hypothesis/Research Question

Kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences had higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experiences as measured by parental surveys and first trimester assessment.

Null Hypothesis

Kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences did not have higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experiences as measured by parental surveys and first trimester assessment.

Results of the Study

The completed pre-literacy surveys were diagnosed by the researcher. The first question on the survey asked which individual primarily read with the child at home. Mothers read significantly more than any other immediate family member (Figure 1). The second question determined how often the child was read to. The responses varied from 5 minutes to 300 minute a day and from 20 minutes to 300 per week. The third question indicated who initiated reading with the child at home. Data reinforced that 84% of children did initiate reading at home (Figure 2). The fourth question asked if the child had a favorite book at home. Research concluded that 72% of children had a favorite book at home (Figure 3). The fifth question revolved around the involvement and focus the child had when being read to. The majority of the children were engaged with literature (Figure 4). The sixth question dealt with the availability of writing materials at home. Results overwhelmingly demonstrated children had supplies at home (Figure 5). The seventh question focused on the environment print and the interaction in the car by pointing and verbalizing signs. The study proved 67% of children participated in identifying environmental print (Figure 6). The eighth question looked inside the listening habits in the car. Children who listened to music in the car were more engaged. A significant number of families listen and sang in the car (Figure 7). The ninth question

evaluated if there were magnetic letters and educational games provided at home.

Supplies were apparent in the majority of households (Figure 8). The tenth question reflected what reading habits were modeled by adults and siblings in the home. The researcher divided the question up into three sections. Section one concluded that 60% of parents read in the home daily through books, newspapers, magazines, and recipes.

Section two determined that 14% of older siblings read at home through books, comics, and video games. Section three finalized that 23% of incoming kindergartners had no reading taking place in the home.

Final results from the pre-literacy survey, determined by the researcher, concluded that mothers read significantly more than other participants in the survey. Remaining individuals also contributed to the developmental role of pre-literacy prior to the child's entrance to kindergarten.

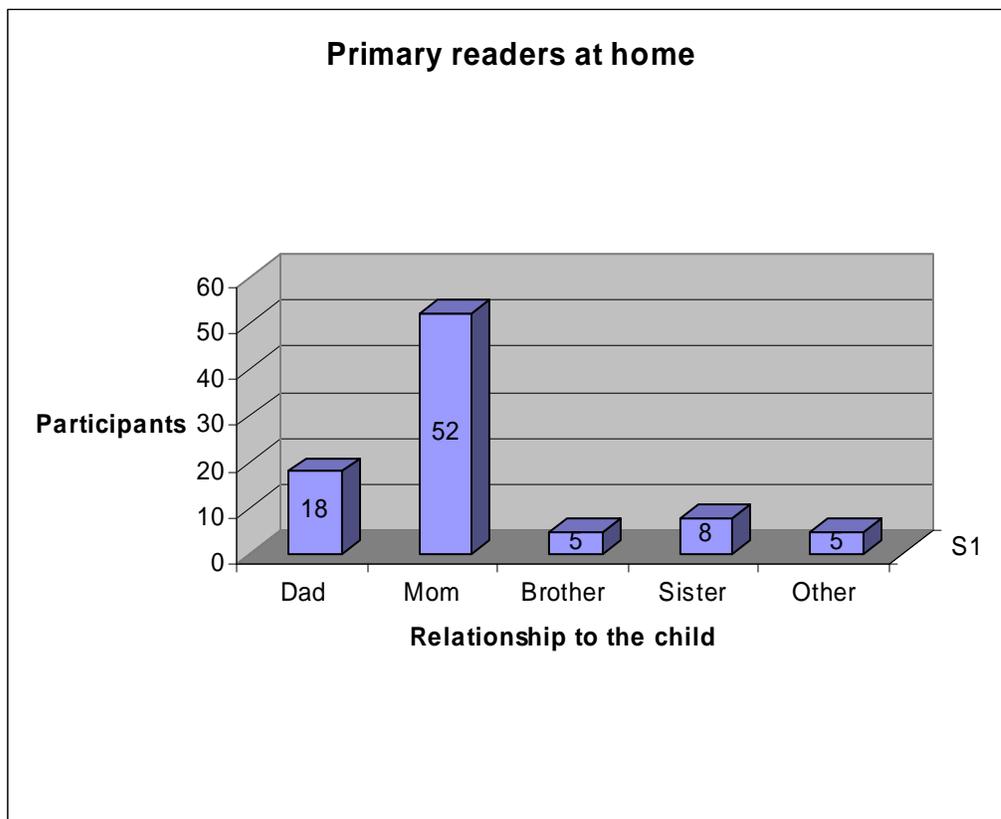


Figure 1, Question 1- Who primarily reads to your child at home?

The study indicated that the majority of children initiated reading at home. The findings have shown that the motivation children had to read books on their own was due to the access of literacy materials. The exposure to books and literacy materials correlated with a child's interests and motivation to learn.

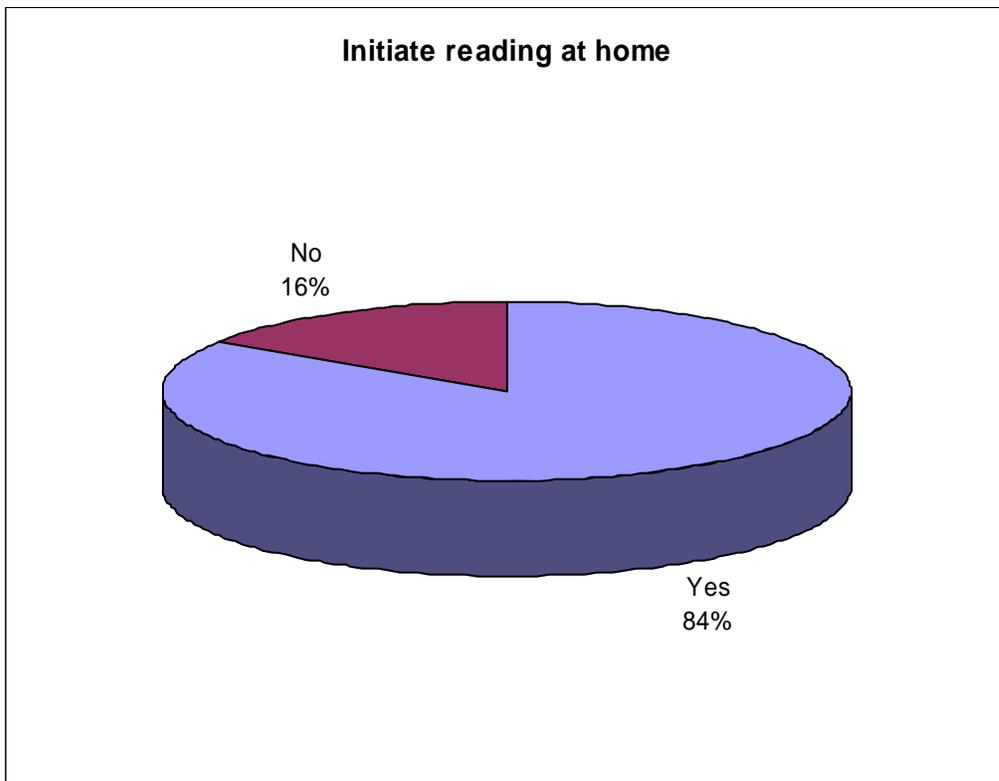


Figure 2, Question 3- Does your child initiate reading at home?

A sufficient amount of children had a favorite book at home. Having a favorite book at home indicated that literacy exposure occurred frequently in the home. Stories that were read repeatedly initiated the child's involvement and established a joy for literature.

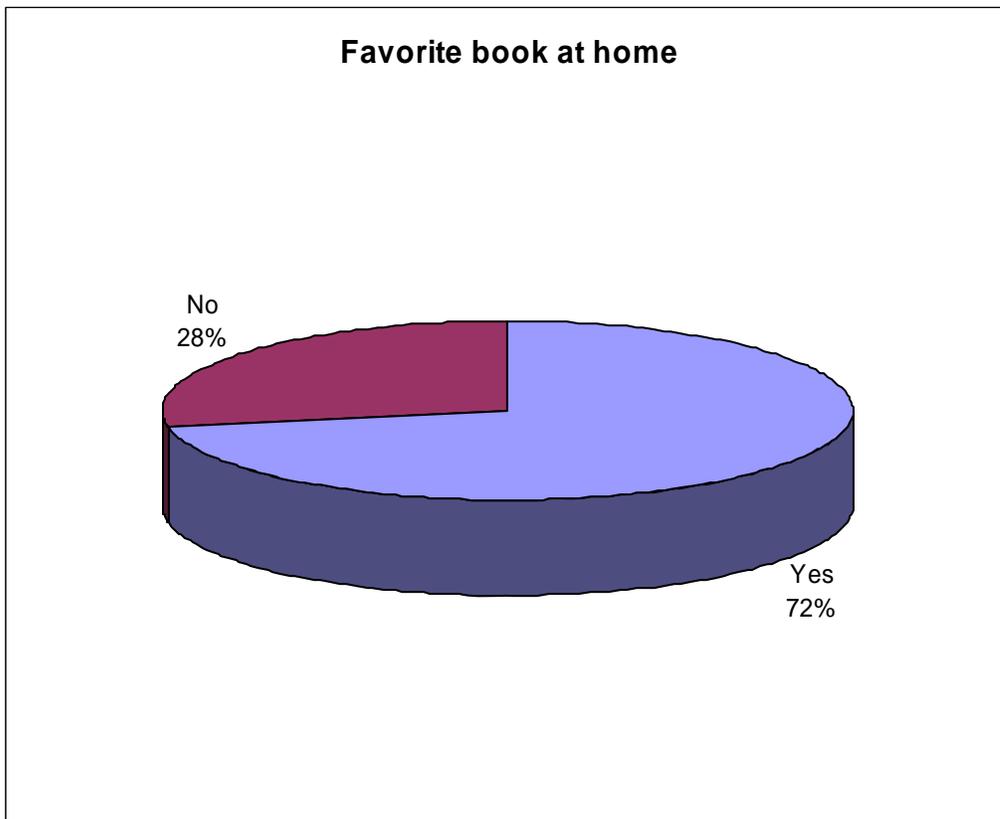


Figure 3, Question 4- Does your child have a favorite book at home?

Being able to focus while listening to a story was shown by the incoming kindergarten students. Maintaining attention to a story contributed to learning pre-literacy skills. Listening created the development of the flow of language and expanded the child's vocabulary.

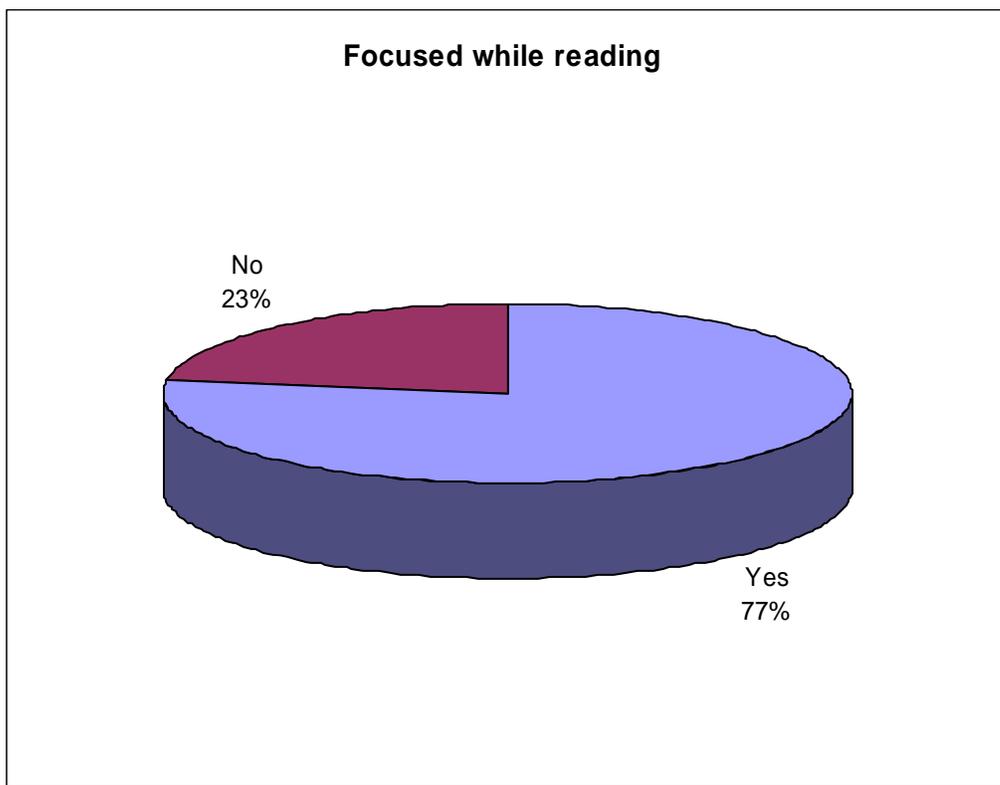


Figure 4, Question 5- Does your child stay focused or become involved while he or she is being read to?

Children had a high availability of writing materials from results of the study. Data demonstrated that children had access to paper and a form of writing material. Using writing materials at home helped develop fine motor skills that affected the way students held a pencil to write and other related tasks that influenced the overall kindergarten experience.

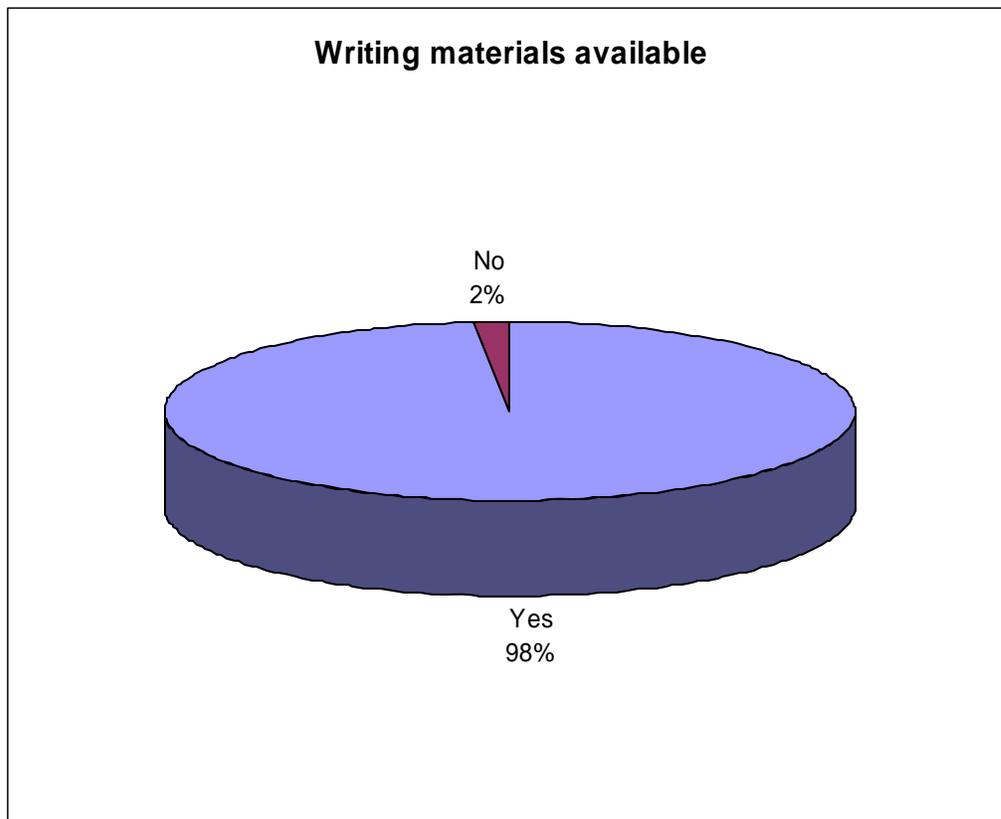


Figure 5, Question 6- Is there writing materials available for your child to use at home (paper, crayons, pencils, etc.)?

Environmental print exposure gave children concrete experiences with words and was a core foundation in literacy. Opening the line of communications by pointing and verbalizing experiences outside the home was environmental print. Activities could be expanded upon to develop connections, which enhanced vocabulary.

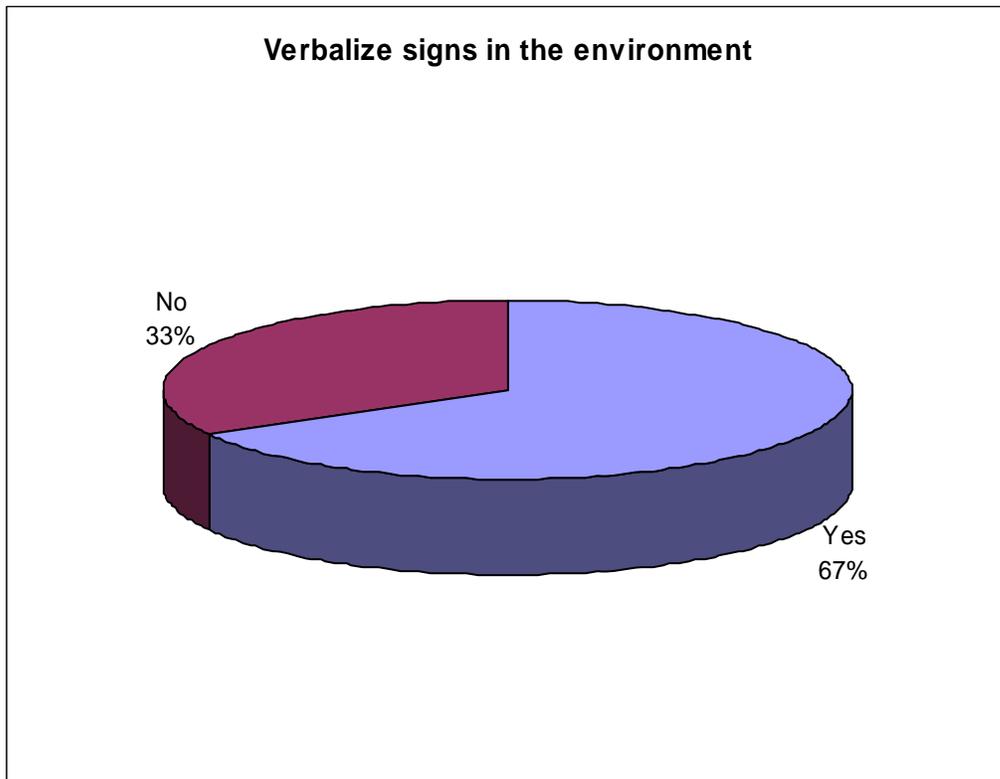


Figure 6, Question 7- Do you point and verbalize signs while driving in the car with your child?

Listening and singing to music in the car or at home created an enjoyable experience using words. By hearing rhymes throughout the song children were able to develop awareness of phonemes. Nursery rhymes made connection to books, which reinforced components of early literacy

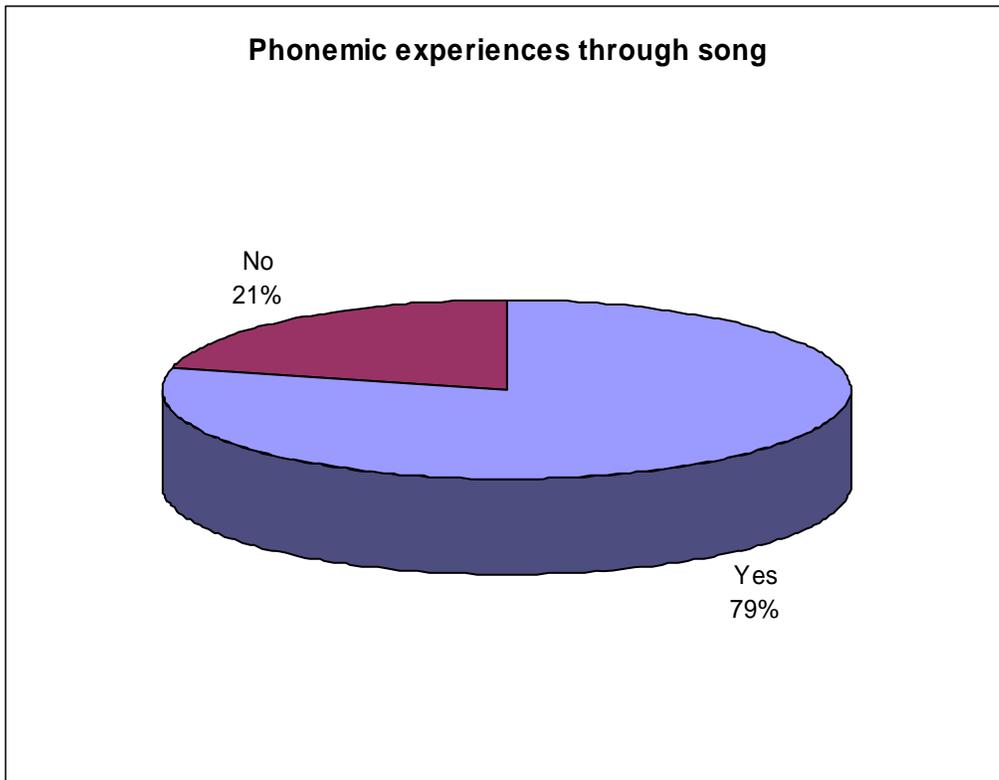


Figure 7, Question 8- Do you listen and sing children's songs while driving in the car with your child?

Exposure to educational games correlated with the basic skills that students received in school. Education materials assisted children to learn information through positive experiences. Students that had learning material at home were confident entering kindergarten.

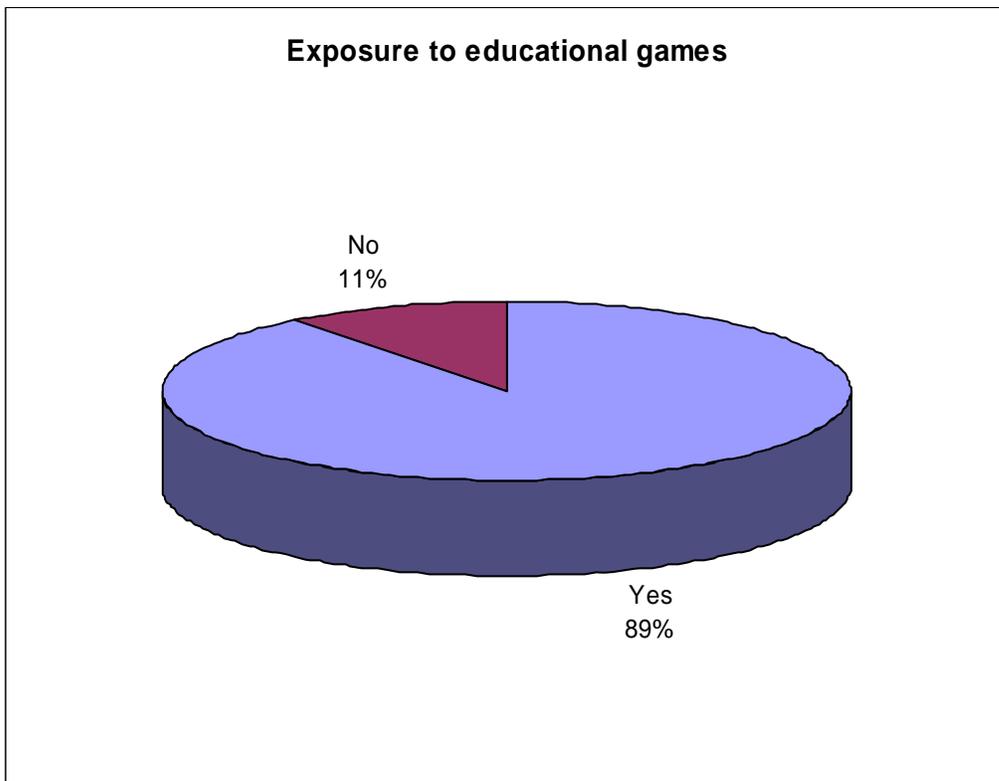


Figure 8, Question 9- Do you have magnetic letters or other forms of educational games at home?

Findings

The researcher determined pre-literacy exposure in the home influenced a positive first year of school for children. The hypothesis was kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences had higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experiences, which could be supported by the high percentage of positive responses on the survey. The researcher analyzed the surveys and found that children were primarily read to by adults and siblings at home. The study disclosed that a high percentage of children were likely to initiate reading on their own. This demonstrated that children with access to literature around the house were motivated to learn. Interest in reading developed an enjoyment for specific books which was proven by a great number of children. Writing materials such as paper, crayons, and pencils, were available to a majority of the participants. The results lead to students entering kindergarten with the awareness of holding a pencil and crayons correctly. Familiarity with writing utensils at home developed fine motor skills, which created an easier transition to writing in school. Exposure to environmental print created the connection of reading to the concrete world, which gave children a greater meaning of literacy. When parents took an active role by discussing signs and objects that were seen everyday, a child's background knowledge was developed. The more involved a parent was in addressing information, the more the vocabulary of the child was expanded and that opened the connection to literacy. Singing and listening to children's music provided enthusiasm and excitement with the language. Children developed an awareness of phonemes when listening in the car or at home. Listening and singing to music created an

exposure to rhyme that was directly correlated to the development of literacy. Pre-literacy experiences were essential for a child's first year of school.

Summary

Closer examination of the research reflected the reading habits of the child's role models in the home. Surveys concluded that 60% of families had parents that read as a source of entertainment. The relevance of how this affected children was that children were influenced by their parent's actions. Literacy materials used by families ranged from newspapers, books, and magazines.

Children learned reading and writing at an early age through observation of the environment around them. Reading was viewed as functional, informational, and enjoyable by their parents. Through these experiences children initiated what they had seen and recreated through memory. The involvement with literacy created a positive attitude and an excitement to learn when entering school.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This research project focused on pre-literacy skills that were part of young children's experience prior to their entrance to kindergarten. The researcher believed that there was a connection between early literacy skills and the ability to have a successful kindergarten experience.

Summary

Expectations in reading had increased, which meant children needed to be prepared for the high demand of literacy. Many children currently entered kindergarten without the basic concept of print. As determined by the survey, there were many homes that did not expose their children to books. With the lack of availability children were not given the opportunity to learn.

The validity of the survey was not accurate as determined by the researcher. A number of questions were misrepresented due to the correlation between the survey and the fall assessment. Surveys were distributed and collected in sufficient amount of time provided by the researcher. A portion of the parents took the survey home to complete and return to school. Of the 70 surveys given to the parents, 20% were not returned. The researcher believed that when parents first met the kindergarten teacher they tended to inflate the results to influence the researcher's vision of the family.

Conclusions

The researcher concluded that, based on the finding in chapter 4, pre-literacy experiences correlated with the child's knowledge of reading and writing in kindergarten.

The hypothesis, that kindergarten children receiving pre-literacy experiences had higher literacy skills when entering kindergarten than kindergarten students not receiving pre-literacy experience, was supported by the data that was collected in the survey.

Information gathered by the survey suggested that a high percentage of children were read to by adults and siblings. Reading to the child created interest and encouraged children to initiate reading on their own. Availability of literature around the house was significant, which provided children the opportunity to explore a variety of books and choose favorites to be read often. Writing materials were prevalent in the majority of households. Children who were exposed to writing material entered the classroom with the familiarity of holding a pencil and crayons appropriately. Exposure to environment print gave children an association between words and the world around them. The more involved parents became in developing the child's knowledge of the environment, the more their vocabulary skills increased. Singing and listening to children's songs created an exciting way to become involved with the language. Children developed an awareness of phonemes through music, which correlated with the development of literacy. Pre-literacy experiences were essential for a child's first year of school.

Recommendations

It is recommended that children need to have pre-literacy skills prior to the entrance of kindergarten. Reading aloud to children is essential in developing growth as a reader. Listening to a story gives children the sense of how text flows and maintains interest throughout the book. Interaction when reading a story, such as questions about the pictures or meaning of words, increases cognitive skills. Open communication on trips by reading signs and discussing objects in the environment helps develop the child's

vocabulary and literacy skills. Parents and siblings that engage in reading for pleasure at home create the interest by being role models for a child. Exposing children to picture books, card games, children's songs, nursery rhymes, writing materials, even educational computer games, are examples of literacy materials. Children need pre-literacy skills to achieve success in reading.

The community provides many opportunities to help children develop literacy skills. The public library has numerous programs that encourage reading. Libraries have designated story times for both parents and children to come and listen. There is a wide variety of books children can choose from and take home. Writing materials are provided for children to color and pencils to write, which develops fine motor skills.

The library provides the environment to create a joy for reading and helps children develop skills needed for literacy. Museums contain concrete objects for children to make connections of what they have seen in books. The history that museums provide helps develop vocabulary and increases the excitement of learning. These community locations give parents a free to low cost opportunity to help their children learn how to read.

The researcher concluded that pre-literacy skills experienced by a child prior to kindergarten led to greater success in reading. Literacy skills could be developed in the home through enrichment activities, programs conducted at the library, and the involvement in a preschool. The more exposure received in literacy increased the child's vocabulary and print awareness skills, which helped children reach reading achievement when entering formalized schooling.

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APPENDIX

Child's Name _____

Pre-Kindergarten Literacy Experience Survey
(circle answers that apply)

1. Who primarily reads to your child at home?

Dad Mom Brother Sister Other

2. How often is your child read to?

Minutes per day _____ Minutes per week _____

3. Does your child initiate reading at home?

Yes No

4. Does your child have a favorite book at home?

Yes No

5. Does your child stay focused or become involved while he or she is being read to?

Yes No

6. Is there writing materials available for your child to use at home (paper, crayons, pencils, etc.)?

Yes No

7. Do you point and verbalize signs while driving in the car with your child?

Yes No

8. Do you listen and sing children's songs while driving in the car with your child?

Yes No

9. Do you have magnetic letters or other forms of educational games at home?

Yes No

10. What are the reading habits of older siblings and adults in the household?
