

The Use of Parent Involvement to Increase
Student Success in the Classroom

A Special Project
Presented to
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Prelita Owen
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FACULTY APPROVAL

Parent Involvement Increasing

Student Success in the Classroom

Approved for the Faculty

_____, Faculty Advisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this special project was to show that parent involvement did make a difference in a student's education. There were parents who hadn't seen the importance of reading at home. Reading three times a week had been questioned. Or a question had been asked as far as, how were students prepared for the state assessment known as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning?

The educator had shown at the end of this project that parent involvement, in the areas of reading at home and helping with assignments, increased the student's success in school as well as scores in different assessments such as reading.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Many students that were capable of success in the classroom had not shown growth in reading or mathematics. Students were not motivated to do well without the support of parents at home. Being an educator and cheerleader was becoming more difficult to do on a daily basis. Most students progressed with a little word of motivation. How much more was accomplished when parents shared the same feelings about school and the importance of an education in the home?

Statement of the Problem

When the No Child Left Behind Act was enacted, states had to find some way to measure student growth to show accountability to the government. Washington was already using the state assessment known as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and continued to use the test to show student growth. Expectations in the elementary level had increased and students were being asked to work harder both in the classroom and at home. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning had also changed the school environment where educators, on a daily basis, had been teaching to the test or back-loading. Other educators had brought up through discussions that the stress the students were

under was the cause for the behavior problems that were dealt with on a daily basis. Other educators had also mentioned that, the students had been taught to become test takers and not problem solvers. The expectations in the classroom had increased. How could the students' parents have supported the children at home? What could have been done to help ensure that the students had reached potential with everything that was done in school? Had reading at home made a difference in how well a student did in school? Did returning completed homework assignments also aid in the student's success when taking assessments such as the Northwest Evaluation Association's reading and mathematics assessment or other- wise known as Measures of Academic Progress? Will the scores of the students with parental support at home be higher compared to the students without parental support (HFRP, 2007)?

Purpose of the Project

The students' *Measure of Academic Progress* in both mathematics and reading were compared. The students with parental support at home should have higher scores than the ones without any support at home. The parental support was evidenced by reading homework logs that had been signed by parents as well as the regular weekly homework assignments.

Delimitations

The students that were used for this special project were third graders from

a school in a small town. The town was a farming community in Central Washington. The school attended had been considered a low income school with a free or reduced lunch rate of 83.8 % from the 2005-2006 school year. The school's ethnicity was comprised of 59.2% White, 34.2% Hispanic, 3.9 % Black, 0.3% Asian, and 2.5% American Indian/Alaskan Native (OSPI, 2007). The classroom had 19 students from the different races such as African American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Ukrainian. Three of the 19 students had Spanish speaking parents. Still half of the class read at or below the second grade reading level. One of the students lived with foster parents. Three students were English as Second Language learners.

Assumptions

The educator had been made aware that with parental support, a student was more likely to be successful in school. The students were successful because the parents instilled and modeled the importance of having an education by working with the students at home on activities such as arts and crafts (HFRP, 2006). According to Marcotte (1999) college educated workers had jobs that were more stable and therefore education remained to be associated with employment stability.

Research Question

How does parental support and reading at home affect the success of

students in the classroom specifically on the students' MAP and STAR scores?

Significance of the Project

The researcher wanted to show a relationship with students that had parents involved in school and at home. The parents needed to understand the importance that the children at home were read to and read with, as well as being motivated to do well at school. The students who received support at home had Measures of Academic Progress scores increase as a result of growth.

Procedure

At the beginning of the school year, the students and parents were given a class packet that contained the class routines/procedures, homework policy, book check-out agreement, and a survey that was to be completed by the parents. The class procedures contained information on the teacher's expectations for behavior as well as information on homework assignments. The parents and students were made aware from the homework policy when the homework went home and when the assignments were to be returned and completed. Part of the assignment was for the students to read at home at least three times a week for thirty minutes each night and a calendar was signed by the parents to show that the students read at home. The homework assignments were given points/credit for being turned in on time. The survey asked the parents ten questions. The questions were geared to show how important the students' education was and how involved the parents

were. All of the students from the classroom had taken the Northwest Evaluation Association's reading and mathematics in the fall and the scores were compared to the winter scores.

The *Measures in Academic Progress* was used to measure student growth because of the assessment's cross grade scale called the Rasch Unit. The Rasch Unit referred to the score that the student received in both mathematics and reading at the corresponding grade level. The *Measures in Academic Progress* was used in Washington along with five other states because of the alignment to the states' standardized tests (NWEA, 2007).

The STAR Reading Assessment from Renaissance Learning was another computer adaptive assessment that the researcher used to monitor student progress. The STAR Reading assessment provided the educator with quick and accurate estimates of each student's reading comprehension by using the student's instructional reading levels (Renaissance Learning, 2006). With the knowledge of each student's reading level, instruction was tailored to each student's reading ability which improved the student's grade level reading comprehension over a short period of time.

Definition of Terms

homework. Homework was the extra practice work that students had done at home. Examples of homework were reading books at home for at least 30

minutes, mathematics worksheets, and spelling practice.

back-loading curriculum. When certain curriculum is taught first, in order for students to pass and alignment check to the state standards is done later.

Many people saw teaching to the state assessment like the Washington Assessment of Student Learning as back-loading curriculum.

family involvement. The different ways parents participated and or became involved with the child's education, such as reading to the child. Other examples of parent involvement were volunteering in the classroom, attending conferences, and helping students with the homework.

fluency. Fluency was the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression and comprehension.

instructional reading level. The highest grade level at which the student was estimated to comprehend 80% of the text written at that level. Students needed to be reading books that were at the students' instructional level in order to challenge the readers and make progress.

vocabulary. Vocabulary referred to the words a reader knew and recognized.

Acronyms

ESL. English as Second Language

IRL. Instructional Reading Level

MAP. Measures of Academic Progress

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

NWEA. Northwest Evaluation Association

PTSO. Parent Teacher Student Organization

RIT. Rasch Unit

SPED. Special Education

WASL. Washington Assessment on Student Learning

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

For many years, parent involvement had been a hot topic for discussion. Many researchers asked how parent involvement helped in increasing student success in school or not help? What extent of parent involvement was necessary to make any changes in the student's education? President Bush passed the No Child Left Behind Act to ensure that all students were being educated. The No Child Left Behind Act and the state WASL, were good reasons for getting parents to be more involved with the students' education. The teachers alone couldn't be responsible nor could the educators teach everything that the students needed to know. The parents and families had a responsibility with the student's education. According to Anderson (2000) the Commission on Reading found that parents laid the foundation for a child to read not the teachers or schools. For one thing, the families had to make sure that the students were in school to learn what was taught. Educators could not make a difference if the students were not in school to learn.

Parent involvement was a broad term and meant many different things to various people. According to Cotton and Wikelund (2001) parents could support the students schooling by attending school functions such as conferences. Parents

became more involved with the student's education by providing a quiet place for studying, monitoring homework, and modeling reading for pleasure. Anderson (as cited in Reynolds, 1996) defined parent involvement as any interaction between a parent and the student that led to success. Parent involvement was also defined as being direct. Parents that were directly involved meant that the parents helped with the homework on a daily basis or volunteered in the classroom or school (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Was homework necessary for student success and why was parent involvement needed? Homework was necessary for student's optimal learning (Battle-Bailey as cited in Auerbach, 1989; Barbour, 1998; Cooper et al.' 2001). Homework influenced the students' academic success because the parents took the time to help, therefore parents gave the message that school and homework were important. The researcher also believed that homework was important to the student's success. The educator communicated to the parents that homework was part of the student's grade. The educator also made sure the homework that the students had was for extra practice and wasn't too much. The homework given was just enough for the parents to double check, therefore, parents participated and showed interest in the student's academics. According to Battle-Bailey (2004) researchers reported that homework served and improved parental involvement and strengthened the home-school connection.

Effects of Parent Involvement

Parent involvement was important because on average, the students with families that were involved in the student's education had higher levels of achievement (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss, 2007). When parents helped students with the homework or read with the children, the children felt empowered and were more likely to stay in school. When parents spent time with the children and on a consistent basis, the children were shielded from the negative influences of poverty and the literacy performance also increased (Casper & Lopez, 2007). When parents read to a child, the child's vocabulary, letter and symbol recognition abilities, and other comprehension skills increased. The time spent between the child and parent was also special because of the quality time spent together. The child felt important because the parent was reading to the child and the child was hearing a role model read. Research had shown that when a child read 5 to 15 minutes a day, the reader made significant gains in both fluency and comprehension (Anderson, 2000).

Family involvement had been proven to have an effect on the child's cognitive and social development. The Harvard Family Research Project (2006) believed that in order for a child to be successful from birth through adolescence, there must have been an array of learning supports around the student. A pre-school program wasn't enough to prepare the child for kindergarten.

Parents that supported children through reading at home and had regular conversations about school made an impact on the success of the children's education. Also, parents that nurtured the relationships provided an emotional refuge for children. Children had become more socially competent and exhibited better communication skills because the parents were sensitive and responded to the children's needs (HFRP, 2006). According to Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss (2007) studies found that when families became involved in the students' education, the students' literacy improved. Researchers also noted that the family's income, the mother's education level, or the student's ethnicity had no impact or effect as to how the students performed as long as the parents participated in at least one or two activities per school year. Henderson and Mapp (2002) claimed that when all families, no matter what the backgrounds, became and stayed involved with the children's education, the children tended to do better in school, stayed in school longer, and pursued higher education.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

There were many reasons why parents weren't involved with the children's education. Every parent wanted the child to be successful in school and therefore have a good life as an adult. Still there were many parents that chose to not be involved with the children's education. How difficult was the task of reading with the child or listening to the child read as the parent prepared

dinner? Or how difficult was the task to have looked at the child's homework to make sure the assignment was completed? What were the reasons why so many parents lacked involvement with the children's education?

There were many valid reasons why parents weren't involved in the schools. Lewis (as cited by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987) found that parents had indifferent attitudes towards school personnel (2002). The minority and disadvantaged parents in general felt threatened by the authority of the teachers (Pena as cited by Moles, 1993).

Another reason was that many of the programs were held during the day when the parents were at work. Other families were also unable to find child care for the younger children which prevented participation. Transportation was also another factor why parents weren't attending school events. There were many families without any vehicles or parents not able to drive. Comfort level was given as another reason. Family members weren't comfortable in attending school events due to the language or parents found the events uninteresting (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Language was the most common barrier to parent involvement. There were many parents that were challenged because English was not the first language or the dominant language in the home. Parents found helping the students with the homework difficult when the assignment wasn't accompanied

by instructions in the native language (Anderson as cited by Finders & Lewis, 1994). According to Anderson (2000) some parents and educators experienced difficulty working together. There could have been a miscommunication regarding student behavior that the parents were not willing to accept. Incidents like these made communication with parents difficult.

School's Role with Parent Involvement

The school had responsibility with parent involvement. There were many obstacles that prevented parents and families from becoming involved with school events such as the language barrier, work schedule, comfort level, transportation, and child care. The school was responsible in providing a parent involvement program that was an easy access for the parents and families. The school's program needed to schedule events in the evenings or weekends so that parents could attend. When the events or meetings were in the evenings, dinner was an incentive that motivated the families to attend (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). The school or PTSO committee provided another incentive which was childcare at the meeting or event site. Horowitz and Bronte-Tinkew (2007) also mentioned having translators to close the language barrier gap. Providing translators at the meetings ensured proper communication between the school staff and parents. The parents and families also left the meeting or event with confidence and knew what was expected. The Harvard Family Research Project

noted that students achieved higher scores on elementary standardized tests when the schools reached out and communicated with the families (2007). Many professionals explained that the key to a successful collaboration between parents and teachers was “communication”. Many teachers had said that newsletters were sent home. This included classroom, PTSO, or school monthly newsletters which provided information on class activities or school upcoming events (Starr, 2005).

The magazine, *Family Involvement in Children’s Education* cited:

Developing effective partnerships with families requires that all school staff (administrators, teachers, and support staff) create a school environment that welcomes parents and encourages them to raise questions and voice their concerns as well as to participate appropriately in decision making (October 1997, pg 1).

Assessments

The STAR Reading was another valid, reliable, and efficient progress monitoring assessment for teachers. The STAR assessment used a computer-adaptive technology that tailored to each of the students who took the test. The assessment system also provided a norm referenced reading scores and informed of the student’s IRL. The STAR system also provided reports for the parents that informed the families of the student’s instructional level and what strategies could be used at home to help increase the student’s reading level over time. According

to Safer and Fleischman (2005), a progress monitoring system was necessary in order to keep track of student growth. The STAR assessment was an effective example of a progress monitoring system because of the assessment's quick process of evaluating students' reading levels. With the results based on the STAR test, the teachers were able to add additional forms of instruction to the students with low STAR scores.

The STAR Reading Assessment had undergone many reliability studies to test the assessment's consistency and effectiveness as a progress monitoring assessment. According to Renaissance Learning (2006), correlation coefficients ranged from -1 to +1, where -1 was a perfect negative correlation and a +1 was a perfect positive correlation. The test re-test reliability was a .94 with all 12 grades. The high reliability was due to the test items' careful construction. The STAR Reading assessment's validity also averaged 0.82. The correlation was based on Bennicoff-Nan's dissertation which compared the STAR Reading to the California Standards Test, Stanford Achievement Test, and Ninth Edition (SAT9) (2002). The researchers Bennicoff and Nan, concluded that the STAR Reading was suitable for program evaluation and monitoring student progress. Based on other studies, the STAR Reading's validity was also irrespective of student ethnicity. The STAR Reading was a strong tool that measured student's reading comprehension. According to Eads (2005), Neely-O'Brien Elementary School in

Kent Washington, saw growth with the school's fourth grade students' Reading WASL scores since the implementation of STAR Reading. The elementary school adopted STAR Reading in 1995 and saw student growth with the Reading WASL two years later. East Valley Intermediate School in Yakima Washington also saw the same kind of growth with the students' reading WASL with the implementation of STAR Reading in 1999. According to Wyman and Stevens (2004), East Valley saw a growth of 9.4% in the reading WASL in just two years of having used STAR Reading. The school's WASL scores were improving faster compared to the state's scores.

NWEA's MAP test in reading was another computer adaptive assessment that the educator used to measure a student's instructional level (NWEA, 2007). According to NWEA (2007) "with adaptive tests, scores were more precise and educators received more information about students regardless of performance levels". The information from the assessment was also used to help plan and determine the type of instruction that was given to the students. The used to help plan and determined the type of instruction that was given to the students. The educator was also knowledgeable of which students have met the benchmarks for reading and who hasn't met the benchmark.

Summary

All the literature discussed the importance of parental involvement in

school. The researchers agreed that the students who had parental support progressed and were much more successful as opposed to students who had no parental support. Teachers and schools had the responsibility to invite the parents into the classrooms and explain what the students were doing. When necessary, parents and families were trained so that the support at home was more effective. The student's ethnicity, economic level, and parental education didn't impact the progress or success of a student. What was important was what the parents had done in order to give support to the student.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The researcher investigated the relationship between reading at home and the students' MAP scores that were taken in the fall and winter of the same school year. The researcher communicated to the parents that part of the homework requirement was for the students to read three times a week for at least thirty minutes each night. The parents were given the information through a beginning of the school year "welcome packet" which contained information regarding the classroom procedures.

Methodology

The researcher used a quantitative study. The purpose of the study was to find out if there was a connection between reading at home and increased MAP scores in reading by the students. The students involved in the study were from a third grade classroom in Central Washington. The researcher gathered the quantitative data from the fall and winter MAP reading scores.

Participants

The study compared gains in the MAP reading assessment for third grade from the fall and winter scores. The study was done in a rural farming community in Central Washington. The school had about 360 students from Kindergarten to 5th

grade and about 50 staff members both certified and classified. Fifty-seven percent of the students were represented by Caucasian with 33% represented by Hispanics. Eighty percent of the school population qualified for free or reduced priced meals. The majority of the student population was in the low socio-economic level. The study began at the beginning of the school year which was in August of 2007 and ended in January of 2008 that same school year.

The school had three third grade classrooms but the study was based on only one of the classrooms. There were sixteen students that started the school year and remained in the same classroom. Two of the students were ESL students and were pulled out for additional help for 30 minutes a day for four days a week. Another student was SPED and was pulled out for mathematics, reading, and writing. The students from the classroom represented a wide range of socio-economic levels. The majority of the students lived with both parents. *Harcourt Trophies* was used for reading instruction in class. The *Accelerated Reader* program was another reading program that allowed the students to read books at the students' reading level based on the STAR Test. Students had the opportunity to read books every time assignments were completed early and waited for the rest of the class to finish.

Instruments

The researcher used the MAP reading assessment from the Northwest

Evaluation Association. The assessment comprised of reading strategies such as literal reading comprehension, word recognition, inferring/interpreting, and literary response and analyses. The scale used on the MAP assessment was the same “test theory that informed the SAT, Graduate Record Exam, and the Law Admission Test” (NWEA, 2008). The MAP was aligned to the students’ growth over time due to the RIT scores which were likened to the meter stick with equal units and never changed.

The RIT scores made the assessment reliable and accurate when compared to the students’ growth over time. The NWEA researchers placed all the test items on the RIT based on the item’s difficulty. Each increasing RIT score was then given a numeric value that indicated difficulty. As the students took the MAP test the students were presented with items of varied RITs. The test being adaptive collected the students’ responses and assigned an overall RIT score that depended on the students’ ability. The RIT scores were used by the teacher to plan instruction. If the student was low on word recognition, the teacher gave more practice from simple sentences where the student had to rely on context clues to identify the word meaning.

The quality of the test also contributed to the test’s reliability and validity. The test drew from a bank of more than 15, 000 test specific items for reading and the other subjects. The test bank was added to annually with test items that were

created by teachers, trained to write test items for NWEA. Each new test item needed to pass through a rigorous content review and followed up with at least 300 students taking the test. Only the few test items that passed the content review were added to the already growing and expanding test bank.

The reliability indices have consistently been above what was considered statistically significant (NWEA, 2008). The high reliability was due to the test and re-test studies that were done and consistently showed valid correlations between multiple test events for the same student. Because of the tests' adaptability, the MAP assessment continued to be reliable due to the test item's construction and being consistently maintained, assured that educators were given data that was reliable and valid.

Design

The MAP assessment was given in September of 2007 to assess the students' reading skills. The students received reading instruction from *Harcourt Trophies* as part of the reading curriculum to teach the students reading strategies such as inferring, analyzing, cause and effect, and other strategies that were needed to have better comprehension of the stories read on a weekly basis. The students also continued to read using the *Accelerated Reader* program. Every time the students read a book at the appropriate reading level, the students had the opportunity to take a reading comprehension test on the computer. The students

were also required to read at home for three days a week every week for a total of thirty minutes each session. The students were re-given the MAP Reading assessment in January for the students' winter scores. A *t-test* was done to compare the students' achievement gains from September to January.

Procedure

All sixteen students were given the MAP assessment in reading first in the fall and second time in the winter. During the November parent conferences, the parents and families were informed of the importance of reading at home and of the homework requirement. The students were given monthly reading logs where the parents signed on the nights that the students read for thirty minutes for three days during the week. The parents and students were informed that the students were given credit for reading at home and points counted as part of the students reading grade at the end of each quarter.

The students went to the computer lab for the assessment. The computer lab teacher gave directions for the test. The students were told that the test had 42 questions. The students were reminded to re-read the questions and answers to ensure that the students were making the correct choices. During the assessment time, the students weren't given any help such as pronouncing the word or word definitions. After the students finished the test, the students had to silently read until the rest of the class had finished.

Treatment of the Data

In January, the students were given the MAP test on reading for winter assessment. The students returned to the computer lab for the assessment and were given the same directions from the fall assessments. The students weren't allowed any help just as the previous test. A *t-test* was done to compare the students' achievement gains in reading from September to January of the same school year.

Summary

Third grade students from one classroom were given the MAP assessment in reading in the fall and winter of the same school year. The students were given instructions on reading strategies from *Harcourt Trophies Reading Curriculum*. The students also used the *Accelerated Reader* program as a tool to evaluate the students' reading comprehension with books that were being read both in the classroom and at school. The students were encouraged to practice reading and extending the reading skills that were learned in the classroom by reading at home. The students were required to read at home for three nights and for at least thirty minutes each night. The parents showed involvement by signing the monthly reading calendar logs on the days that the students completed the reading assignments. In January the students were tested on the MAP reading assessment

and received post-test scores. The scores from the fall pre-test and winter post-test were compared. The students that had done the required reading at home had greater gains when pre and post test scores were compared.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The researcher investigated the relationship between reading at home and students' MAP scores that were taken in the fall and winter of the same school year. The researcher communicated to the parents that part of the homework requirement was for the students to read three times a week for at least thirty minutes each night. The parents were given the information through a beginning of the school year "welcome packet" which contained information regarding the classroom procedures.

Description of the Environment

The study compared gains in the MAP reading assessment for third grade from the fall and winter scores. The study was done in a rural farming community in Central Washington. The school had about 360 students from Kindergarten to 5th grade and about 50 staff members both certified and classified. Fifty-seven percent of the students were represented by Caucasian with 33% represented by Hispanics. Eighty percent of the school population qualified for free or reduced priced meals. The majority of the student population was in the low socio-economic level. The study began at the beginning of the school year which was in August, 2007 and ended in January that same school year.

The school had 3 third grade classrooms but the study was based on only one of the classrooms. There were nineteen students that started the school year and remained in the same classroom for the study. Two of the students were ESL students and were pulled out for additional help for 30 minutes a day for four days a week. Another student was SPED and was pulled out for mathematics, reading and writing. The students from the classroom represented a wide range of socio-economic levels. The majority of the students lived with both parents. *Harcourt Trophies* was used for reading instruction in class. The *Accelerated Reader* program was another reading program that allowed the students to read books at the students' reading level based on the STAR Test. Students had the opportunity to read books every time assignments were completed early and waited for the rest of the class to finish assignments.

Research Question

How does parental support and reading at home affect the success of students in the classroom specifically on the students' MAP scores as well as the students' STAR scores?

Results of the Study

Table 1.

t-test of Fall and Winter Scores for the MAP in Reading

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fall	18	185.22	16.64
Winter	18	191.06	18.22
df = 17		t = 3.26	p < .01

After comparing the students' fall and winter MAP reading scores, Table 1 indicated the results for the researcher's third grade classroom. Most of the students made reading progress in the duration of the study. Table 1 showed that there was greater than expected growth in the students' MAP reading between September and January of the 2007-2008 school year.

Table 2.

t-test for the Fall and Winter Scores for STAR Reading

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fall	17	2.84	1.02
Winter	17	3.59	1.33
df = 16		t = 3.98	p < .01

After comparing the students' fall and winter STAR Reading assessment scores, Table 3 indicated the results for the researcher's third grade classroom. Most of the students made reading progress with the STAR assessment. Table 3 showed that there was statistical significance in the students' STAR Reading between September and January of the same school year.

Findings

The results indicated that the class as a whole did make statistically significant progress in both MAP and STAR reading assessments. Based on the students' STAR scores, the students who read more than eighteen hours during the study were the ones who made at least one grade level of growth. Each of the third graders was asked to read for thirty minutes a night for at least three times a week as part of the students' reading assignment. Of the eighteen students, only nine of the learners read at least if not more than the average time of eighteen hours.

In the beginning of the school year, the students and families were provided with a "Welcome to 3rd Grade Packet". The packet was filled with information regarding classroom procedures and most importantly, the homework policy. The homework policy explained that the students were required to read for thirty minutes a night for at least three times a week as part of the students' reading homework. Both the students and parents signed and returned the homework policy back to the teacher acknowledging that the students and parents were aware of the required reading at home. Included in the packet was also a survey that asked the parents to rate the importance of parent involvement to the students' education. All eighteen parents returned the survey and all other policies within the next two days of school. According to the survey, 67% of the

parents answered that time spent reading to and with the students was important in the family. Eighty-three percent of the families also commented that student success in school was important as well.

Discussion

The results indicated that reading at home did help increase the students' RIT scores in the MAP Reading assessment. The students' STAR Reading scores also indicated that the students who read at home, also increased the readers' reading level at home. All of the students were required to read at home as part of the reading homework that was outlined on the homework policy that was signed by the parents and students. The researcher kept a log of which students brought the reading calendar on a weekly basis. The calendar showed if the student read for at least three times a week at home. The students were also given points for reading at home. The teacher asked students who weren't bringing the reading logs back if the students were reading at home. The students were encouraged to bring the logs back in order to receive credit. Extra copies were placed in the students' homework folders, if the logs weren't brought back. Based on the researcher's results, reading at home impacted the students' education with growth in both MAP Reading and STAR.

Summary

Students in the third grade classroom in this study made significant progress in

reading based on the MAP assessments' RIT scores as well as STAR. Reading at home did make a difference with the students' scores. The consistent reading practice at home helped with the students' reading ability and comprehension of what was read. Parents need to be aware of the importance of reading because of the growth in reading the students are capable of achieving by getting support at home. Schools should provide the families with more literacy trainings to better support the students in school.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The researcher investigated the relationship between reading at home and the students' MAP scores that were taken in the fall and winter of the same school year. The researcher communicated to the parents that part of the homework requirement was for the students to read three times a week for at least thirty minutes each night. The parents were given the information through a beginning of the school year "welcome packet" which contained information regarding the classroom procedures.

Summary

Research has supported a positive relationship between parental involvement and student success in the classroom. According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2006) parents that supported children through reading at home and had regular conversations about school made an impact on the success of the children's education. Dearing, Krieger, Simpkins, and Weiss (2007) found that when families became involved in the students' education, the students' literacy improved.

In this study, the students were to read for thirty minutes a night for at least three days a week as part of the students' homework requirement. The

reading at home was practice for fluency, vocabulary building, as well as story comprehension. The students had the opportunity to check reading comprehension by taking an *Accelerated Reader* Test on the book that was read at home or in school on the computer. The students' reading progress was measured by the MAP Reading and the STAR Reading assessments that were given in September and winter of the 2007-2008 school year.

Conclusions

Most of the third grade students in the classroom showed growth in both MAP and STAR Reading assessments. The students who had growth with the assessment scores were the same students who read for more than eighteen hours during the study time. The students who didn't have growth were the same students who didn't read at home or didn't bring the reading calendars back to show proof that reading was being done at home. The students and the parents just didn't understand the importance of practicing how to read at home. The reading skills and strategies that were learned in the classroom were never used through the reading process at home by the students. Both parents and students needed to realize the importance of reading at home. Without practice, the skills become dull like a pencil that was sharpened over and over again from being used.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that more enrichment evenings be available for families and students in the school. The parents need to be better trained with the reading skills and strategies that the students are learning at school. If possible, educating the families with the different reading strategies like self-questioning or inferring is important in order to have better comprehension of the books that are read at home by the students. If the parents are not trained, then the families are unable to help the students at home, especially when the strategies deal with reading. There has to be accountability for the students and parents for not reading at home. Mathematics is another subject in school that is slowly being affected due to low reading skills by students. If the students can't read the problem, where the majority of mathematics problems are in sentences or story problems, the students will not be successful in solving the problem. Teachers can't do all the teaching alone. The parents are the number one teachers for the students and education should first start at home by having more family literacy nights. The students will enjoy reading and will more likely to pick up books when the students see that both mom and dad enjoy reading.

This researcher concludes that reading at home does make an impact to school success specifically with reading. The parents need to be involved by questioning the students about the book that is being read. Students shouldn't be

allowed to just read books. Questions need to be asked and parents should be reading out loud to the students in order for the students to hear what “fluent” reading sounds like. This also allows the students to see that the parents care about the child’s education and value education in the home.

Schools who are specifically Title 1 schools should host more family literacy nights. The evenings should include parent trainings on reading, for example, if the student is a kindergartner, then the parents should be trained on the sounds and how to blend words. Another important skill that parents should be able to do is to give the child 1 minute timings. The 1 minute timings are great practice for the students to become fluent readers. Teaching the parents about the many reading strategies such as inferring or creating mental images is also important for better reading comprehension.

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Appendices

Table 3. Parent Survey Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Please take a few minutes to fill out and complete the following survey. I am currently working on my Master's Degree and this is part of my "special project". I would like to know what your thoughts and opinions are regarding parent involvement. Please have your child return it to class as soon as possible for a class reward. I will let you know what the results of the survey is as soon as I get them all turned in. Thank you for your help with this "special project".

Sincerely,
Mrs. Owen

Classroom Parent Survey

Gender: Female__80%____/Male__20%____

Ethnicity: White__69%____/Hispanic__26%____/African-American__5%____/
Native-American_____
Ukraine_____/Russian_____/Asian_____/Other_____

Home Language: English__80%____/Other____20%_____

Highest Level of Education: High School__10%_____
High School Graduate__53%_____
Bachelor's Degree_____
Some College__32%_____
Master's/Advanced__5%____

Table 4: Parent Survey Results

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Parent-teacher communication is very important to the success of my child.				12%	88%
I expect the teacher to call me for any concerns regarding my child.				24%	76%
I will support my child's teacher any way that I can. Whether academic or behavior issues.				12%	88%
It is important that I spend time talking to my child about their day at school.			6%	12%	82%
I enjoy and spend time reading to or listening to my child read.			18%		82%
I make sure that my child completes his/her homework.	6%			6%	88%
I feel that I know enough to help my child with his/her homework.				18%	82%
I wouldn't hesitate to contact the teacher regarding school work in order to help my child.			18%		82%
I believe that homework is an important part of my child's success in school.	6%				94%
I want my child to be successful in school.					100%

All 19 students returned the parent survey within two days from the day given. Eighteen percent of the parents surveyed were neutral about contacting the teacher in regards to helping the student with homework. One hundred percent of the families wanted success for the student.

Table 5: Student STAR Scores and Hours Read

Students	FALL STAR	WINTER STAR	HOURS READ
A	4.2	4.8	18.0
B	1.7	1.8	6.0
C	4.8	4.8	18.0
D	1.9	2.3	25.5
E	4.0	5.2	28.5
F	2.3	3.0	13.5
G	4.1	4.2	30.0
H	1.9	2.7	27.0
I	2.9	4.5	3.0
J	2.6	2.4	16.5
K	1.8	1.9	16.5
L	2.7	4.8	22.5
M	2.6	3.5	22.5
N	3.2	5.8	27.0
O	PP	PP	16.5
P	1.4	1.8	6.0
Q	2.4	3.2	27.0
R	3.8	3.9	25.5

Table 4 shows the fall and winter STAR scores for the students in the study. There were some students who showed a significant growth of 2.6 with 27 hours of reading at home. Students who showed less than 1.0 year of reading growth read for less than 10 hours at home.

Table 6: Student Fall and Winter MAP Scores

Student	Fall Scores	Winter Scores
A	200	203
B	150	177
C	200	203
D	178	179
E	199	207
F	183	190
G	199	204
H	174	178
I	190	202
J	186	192
K	174	178
L	195	209
M	197	195
N	211	222
O	155	150
P	166	159
Q	181	189
R	196	202

Table 5 shows fall and winter student scores for the MAP assessment in reading. Students who were good readers made the required personal growth benchmark of 10 points but were still below the grade level benchmark of 202. Other students have already reached the end of the year grade level expectation mid-year and will continue to grow.

Homework Policy

Mrs. Owen's Homework Policy

Homework folders will go home on Fridays and are due back the following Thursday. The folders are blue and with 2 pockets. One pocket is for homework that needs to be completed and returned for credit, while the other side is for school notices and corrected assignments. Please check for important notices/information and empty this side weekly.

The weekly homework will include:

- **Reading:** 30 minutes of reading at home for 3 nights a week. Please sign and write the title of the book that your child read on the monthly calendar. I will be checking this calendar weekly. Students will be allowed to bring books home to read as long as the "Book Check-Out Form" is signed and returned.
- **Math:** 2 pages a week of ADD (front and back)
- **Spelling:** 2 pages front and back of the spelling words for the week. The spelling list is given on Monday to take home and practice and the test is on Friday morning.
- **Writing:** Cursive pages
- **Other reading or math pages for practice as needed.**

Please sign and return as soon as possible.

I have read and discussed the homework policy with my child.

Student Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____