A Study of the Processes and Outcomes of Parental Cooperation Affecting Children’s Reading Ability

Chanelle Anne Keithahn
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A STUDY OF THE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES
OF PARENTAL COOPERATION AFFECTING
CHILDREN'S READING ABILITY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Chanelle Anne Keithahn
July, 1969
APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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John E. Davis, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

______________________________
Azella Taylor

______________________________
Colin Condit
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to Dr. John Davis, Dr. Colin Condit and Miss Azella Taylor for their encouragement, guidance and leadership in helping the author achieve the intended purpose of the study. Their professional direction and constructive criticism has been extremely valuable to the author and is sincerely appreciated.

It would be most difficult to recognize each and every appreciated contribution offered by my fellow teachers and friends. Their interests and suggestions would be inspirational to many in the field of reading.
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

At birth, every child has certain inborn functions which are basic to his survival. He also has basic needs which must be provided for by his parents. In fulfilling these needs, the parents concurrently become the first teachers of the child. Although parents do not regard themselves as teachers in the academic sense, they consistently search for ways to be of assistance in shaping a successful life for their offspring. Thus upon a child's entrance into school, the parents often become frustrated. They feel a need to help their child be successful in school, but become perplexed when it comes to methods by which they can help achieve this end. Furthermore, a prevalent concern among parents is that they may interfere with a child's learning at school, which could result in more harm than good. Since reading is a necessary tool for learning in all the other content areas in school, parents especially want to help their children become successful readers.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. This experiment was devised as a possible means of overcoming reading difficulties
in children who come from a low socio-economic and cultural background and, at the same time, involving their parents in the reading instructional program. Weekly sessions, involving informal reading activities, were attended by the parents and their children. Those who participated regularly were used as the experimental group, while those who participated at some of the meetings were used as the control group. The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast the growth of reading skills between matched individuals in an experimental group and a control group.

Hypothesis. The hypothesis used as a basis for this study was that the reading achievement of primary grade children in low socio-economic families can be significantly improved by involving parents in their children's academic reading instruction.

Importance of the study. This study is significant for several reasons. One of the foremost of these reasons is directly related to the kind of community from which the school population for the study was selected. This population, composed largely of low-income and/or poverty level families, is highly transitory. The families live in a World War II government housing project, and as the incomes rise beyond a certain level for any given family, that family is required to move out of the project. Hence, there
is a large turnover in the school population. It has consistently been the policy of the school to find workable teaching methods whereby the transitory students can continue to acquire knowledge based on what they have learned at the school from which the sample population was extracted. This experiment was conducted under the assumption that parental help, if offered in a helpful manner, could be a tool used by any student no matter how mobile his educational ties.

A number of sociologists and social psychologists have noted that cultural background of the family group has a significant impact on child-education practices, especially as it relates to reading. And, the lower the economic status of the family, the less likelihood there is that parents do help their children in reading (21:32). Since this latter was the case with the students in the sample, it was assumed that with parent support and guidance, the students in the experimental group would show significant improvement in their reading skills over those in the control group.

Furthermore, at many of the parent-teacher conferences held each fall, at this school, a common question posed by parents was, "What can I do to help my child to read better?" In an effort to assist these parents in aiding their children's reading development, it was assumed that
parent-child-teacher help sessions might be the type of aid a parent could best employ in his attempts to help his child. In this kind of situation, the parents could learn specific methods to use in developing a particular skill in their child.

The norms for achievement in reading are ten to twelve points below the school district average norms. This is due in part to the fact that parents have little or no education and feel at a loss as to what to do to help their children. Thus, the study made an attempt to show parents some ways in which they could help their children.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Informal reading experiences** refers to those kinds of reading activities in which the parent-child participated under the teacher's guidance. The setting was a schoolroom but the activities consisted of game-type learning situations.

**Parent-child team** refers to a parent(s) working with his own child in a school situation.

**Poverty area** is used in reference to those families who fall below the poverty line according to the Organization of Economic Opportunity statistics (Refer to Table I, page 22.) In this community there are approximately 30% of the families classified as living in poverty. This term
is also coined because the school is adequately funded from the Title I Governmental Aid Plan. The average annual income per family is less than $3000.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THEORY AND RESEARCH

I. RELATED RESEARCH

There is a dearth of research in the area of parental cooperation. This writer has only located the report of one completed study related to this thesis topic. This study was conducted by Merle Meacham of the University of Washington. In the writer's correspondence with him, Meacham stated that he had little luck in finding associated studies (55:1).

The invaluable statistics in this study carried out by Dr. Meacham indicate that a parent's aid to his child in reading does result in significant improvement. In his research, he used as his subjects three fifth-grade youngsters with reading disability. The disability was thought to be related to the fact that the parents were poor readers. The remediation consisted of parents reinforcing and working with their children. Two of the children attained an acceptable reading level. The father of the third child withdrew from the program a short time after its beginning. This child, though he improved while his father was working with him, reverted to his old behavior when the father stopped coming to school (35:26-28).
Parents and teachers should be partners in aiding a child's educational development. In order for such a partnership to evolve, the parents must have an active interest in the child and his school, and the teacher should continually strive for a workable parental-teacher relationship. Most parents are interested in the child's progress and are eager to aid the school in furthering that progress (11:297), because the parents find pride involved in their children's success in school (13:317). The present generation of young parents, those whose children are between the ages of four to fourteen, are beset by more anxieties than any similar group in the past fifty years. These parents, young enough to remember their own school experiences, want their children to make better use of theirs. The parents, sensitive to the changes in society even when they cannot understand the changes, want to help their children to be able to cope with a dangerous new world (28:115). It is these same changes and behaviors which parents are so conscious of that are being shaped by the school and the community, and, which, in turn, influence a child's attitude toward reading (9:41).

Although parents are concerned with their children's success in school, there are certain pitfalls that must be
overcome when developing a cooperative reading program among the teacher, the parent and the child. In fact, in regards to this matter, Omar K. Moore was quoted by Chall as saying, "I do my best to keep parents out of it--or more generally, 'significant others'. This is important to keep it autotelic, i.e., free of extrinsic rewards and punishments" (8:73). Wilson says that some of these extrinsic factors which are barriers to parental cooperation are needless anxieties, coaching by parents, lack of contact, and underestimation of parental love (51:212).

Learning to read must be fun. Those teachers and parents who are overanxious about the child's success and who press for arbitrary standards of performance help to produce poor readers (30:54), (19:305). Furthermore, a parent who has worked with a child daily and on weekends, who has drilled him on sight words, only to have the child miss these same words day after day usually displays some hostility, either overtly or unconsciously toward the child. In such a case, the parent often shifts the blame to the child for poor reading, when in fact, it is the parent's attitudes and behaviors which are related to the child's poor reading (24:389-90). It would behoove the parent to work more closely with the teacher so that the former might know of the objectives, plans, and procedures of the latter.
However, the parents all too often have no knowledge whatsoever of the child's progress in school, and know little about the reading program (3:79).

In homes that are of low economic standards, the parents must be persuaded that their responsibility in such a matter as reading as in the whole pattern of their child's education, must begin by a positive attitude at home (28:118) and it is the job of the school, and more specifically the teachers, to work with parents to glean this positive attitude when there is clear evidence that home conditions are continuing to prevent reading improvement (46:204). Statistics show that home conditions such as parent-child relations, child-care practices, and presence or absence of intellectual stimulus may influence a child's reading achievement during his entire life span (47:85). Strang states that parents in low economic areas tend to show a lack of interest in education, or a neutral attitude toward it; they also may have an overanxious or inconsistent attitude toward the child (47:83). Furthermore, very little reading is done in lower class homes, few purchase books and few subscribe to magazines. Comics and "tabloid" newspapers are read, but reading as a leisure activity is not valued in these homes (9:29). It is vital to the child's reading success that parents do read more than newspapers and picture magazines because a child will soon discover by
his parents' actions that reading is of little consequence
to them, and thus to the child (28:117).

Since parental attitudes so strongly influence a
child's reading patterns, "parents are the teacher's
strongest allies in developing a love of books" (41:173).
In a family with several children, read-aloud time may be
one of the few occasions for family gatherings. This kind
of reading aloud provides a warm feeling of family unity
that will be cherished through the years (30:93), or as
Larrick states in A Parents Guide to Children's Reading,
"...the influence of a good book may last long after the
red truck has fallen apart" (30:172).

Parents can aid and support their child in school,
and more specifically, in reading. In fact, Wilson says
that next to the classroom teacher, parents can do more to
prevent the development of difficulties in reading than
anyone else (51:208). When a child falters in reading, the
parents are usually compelled to find means to assist
him (17:283). Each parent and teacher should work together
to help a child to enjoy and engage at length in all kinds
of verbal activity. This sort of verbal activity can begin
while a child is in the cradle. A parent could begin
talking to him when he picks the baby up to feed him, love
him or cuddle him (36:34). This is the beginning to the
教学 of reading and works much more effectively than a
large dose of formal phonetic instruction or any other such panacea that might be administered in the home (18:438). Furthermore, Mergentine says that research has shown that a child who has established a satisfying relationship with his parents will want to imitate the habits of adults and older brothers and sisters in the family (36:65). Hence, the greatest success in teaching the children to read comes to those from "reading families" (49:35). If the parents and older brothers and sisters are readers, the student is more strongly motivated to keep up with the family and enjoy the same pleasures (49:35).

It has been proven that parents do play a very important part in developing a successful reader. There is a vast array of things that parents can do to help their child before he has formal training in reading at school and additional methods that can be employed in the home after a child has entered school. It has been previously stated, that one way to help a child to become an interested reader is to talk to him during his infancy. There is evidence that much of the basal equipment for reading is learned at mother's knee. She can help by engaging in language activities with the child; mother or father can answer questions asked them by their son or daughter. Often, just talking to a child and telling him stories is a way to develop reading interests, as well as to encourage
the child to respond, even if it's just reporting his daily experiences. Often taking a child on various tours will provide some stimulus for him to read for discovery when he goes to school (18:438-440). It is advisable for parents to read to their children during the preschool years as well as early primary. This helps develop in him an interest in books as well as listening skills (43:532), (31:174).

When a child reaches school age, he is being lent to the school by parents for one fourth to one third of the day. A parent then becomes responsible for extending each child's education informally during the remainder of the day (34:12). Besides knowing what goes on at school from the day his child begins (8:285) there are three basic things that a parent should do when he sends a child to school. These three include making reading important, giving the child good study and work habits, and learning how the child reads (28:117).

When a child once enters school, parents and teachers become partners in the work of aiding the child's educational development. The day has long since passed before us when the teacher regarded parents' interest in education as something which interfered with schoolwork or when the teacher merely ignored the parent (38:569). Thus, after a child is five or six years old, a teacher or school staff should usually take the initiative in getting home and
school to work together (35:231). Probably "the happiest and most successful teacher in the school is most often the one who regards parents as helpmates and friends to education" (11:57).

There are many kinds of activities that can be employed by schools and/or teachers to help the parents explore and become involved in reading with their children. An excellent starting point is to keep parents abreast of the kinds of opportunities the school is providing for their children (4:225,226). Thus it is that reading clinicians and other school personnel are more and more involving parents in the reading process (46:159-160), (5:90). Since communication has to be a two-way process, the teacher, possibly via a parent-teacher conference, can counsel with the parent immediately and have parental feedback if he allows a parent to work with his child in the presence of the teacher (38:569-590), (12:115), (31:93). Wilson and Pfau state that a supervised situation in which a parent or parents work with their child coupled with positive educator reaction provides for a better self evaluation. Through this self evaluation the parent may discover whether or not he is well suited to work with his child (52:759). Educators should make themselves aware of the fact that parents realize there are portions of instruction which need reinforcement by parents at home.
and other portions which are better left to the educator. Involving parents in areas where they can fruitfully assist may serve to dis-involve them from areas in which their help could prove less profitable (52:760).

Educators should make certain that parents not only be told which types of activities would benefit their child and which would not, but also that they be shown the method involved. One example which involves the educators training parents to work with their children is in the Denver School System. They have devised and offered to parents a television course with an accompanying manual entitled "Preparing Your Child for Reading." Dr. Kenneth E. Oberholtzer, Denver's superintendent of schools, has said, "Parents are well qualified to help their preschoolers with an early start toward successful reading—all these parents need is sound professional guidance so their efforts and energy will not be misdirected or wasted" (52:758). Thus, the task of helping parents understand that reading readiness and a suitable background of experiences is vital to the instruction of reading (27:303).

Van Orden, in working with parents, says this about her method of parental guidance, "In working with parents, I find that those persons (parents) first have to realize that poetry and science books have technical aspects and they must begin where they are themselves. Releasing both
groups from being ashamed to read children's books themselves often aids in identifying books they can use to advantage with children; and at the same time they are strengthening their backgrounds and comprehensions of the child's viewpoint" (49:36).

Carrillo, in his book, The Reading Readiness Role of Parents, suggests several kinds of informal activities to help the child acquire readiness through parental guidance. These approaches include class demonstrations, where an educator might demonstrate a technique and then give the parents an opportunity to practice the technique under the watchful eye of the educator. The total process here would allow the parents to learn what to do, to see how to do it, and to try it under observation (7:365), (52:759). Other kinds of activities involving parents as suggested by Carillo include group meetings of several parents and teachers where parents read to children and/or children read to parents (7:366). One precaution is to make certain parents are directed to first read silently all materials which they plan to read orally (51:209). Written materials are an additional avenue for parent training, as in the development of a children's library for parents. Individual conferences between the parent and the teacher often aid the parent (7:366), (3:80).
When directed toward useful roles, parents are usually willing to follow the advice of educators. Furthermore, without parent-teacher teamwork, success especially with those who are severely handicapped will be unnecessarily limited (51:202).

There are some general practices that parents can follow that need not be school or teacher directed but nonetheless will provide positive reinforcement for the development of good reading habits in children. In many situations, a child's pleasure reading should not be connected in his own mind with lessons or assignments; however, it is from "pleasure reading" that a great deal of factual and general information is gleaned (32:40). Mothers and fathers can set the stage for pleasure reading in a direct and positive way at home with their children by developing a favorable attitude toward reading (36:67). This can be done by setting examples of good reading habits (48:410). A father who regularly reads good literature aloud, for his own pleasure, helps his own family. He provides the children with a vital aspect of reading—the listening, attending, and comprehending aspect (54:452). Parents can also provide the preschool child a rich background of prereading skills and help the school child overcome specific areas of reading difficulty.
Children and books should be brought together in close and friendly companionship under happy conditions, just because books are fun (32:41). To aid in this friendship of a child with his books, the parent should happily provide a quiet place in the home, a planned reading time during the day, an assistance when material becomes difficult to read, a variety of follow-up exercises, and, when necessary, a discussion or an audience to listen to "book reports" (51:205). Those parents who have established good reading contacts such as these with their young people have the advantage of possessing an indirect but completely workable method of guidance and control (32:61).

Parents can further encourage growth in interests and tastes for their children by themselves showing an interest in materials the child is reading. It is satisfying for the parent to go to the library with his child, show an interest in the books selected, and share further the experience by reading some of the material so that he can participate in a discussion of the contents with his child (45:188,189). These shared experiences are pleasant ones and extra-ordinarily profitable for the child. Sharing books at home in a family circle by means of oral reading should continue as long as the child anticipates the sessions with eager expectancy (3:300,301).
Research has borne out these statements, that the home does have a great influence on a child's reading. A summary of the worth of parent interest and its effect on the child's reading development is well-expressed in a letter to parents regarding a summer reading program as quoted by Aasen, "...Your [the parents] interest in your child's reading is valuable. ... Reading is contagious. ... your enjoyment of good books will serve as an inspiration to him. Surround him with suitable books for home reading. Go with him to the public library. Let him share his reading with you. Read to your child and discuss books with him. ..." (1:450).

If the case should arise that a child is a poor reader at school, despite the ridiculing he is liable to get from his classmates and the condemnation from his teachers, he usually will not experience the extreme effects of failure if he can feel that his parents are sympathetic and do not reproach him. A sense of family solidarity in meeting a trying situation helps to avert the grave emotional problems. (20:24).

One further thing a parent can do and probably one of the most important asked of parents, is to listen to the child reread something he has already read in school. The important thing is that the child has already read the material. This gives the child more practice at recognizing
words he must know by sight, as well as to give him a feeling of confidence and success and gives the family confidence in him and his ability (13:364).

Author's statements and limited research have indicated that parents can help in a child's reading as well as hinder. This writer has suggested some possible approaches in enlisting parent support directed by educators as well as disclosing some things parents can do on their own at home.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE FOR THE EXPERIMENT

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast the growth of reading skills between matched individuals in an experimental and a control group. The experimental group and their parents had attended most of the eleven informal reading sessions and the control group and their parents had attended not more than three of the same sessions. In an effort to meet this purpose the following procedures were followed.

I. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population from which the sample for this experiment was obtained consists of all the children from kindergarten through grade six at the White Center Heights and White Center Primary Schools of the Highline School District No. 401, King County. There are approximately 600 students enrolled at these two schools, 412 of whom either withdrew or entered school after September 3, 1968. The population is mobile because of the very nature of the community from which the children come. This community consists of a government housing project, and of the 600 enrollees in the two schools, eighty per cent come from this project. The other twenty per cent come from homes
surrounding the project, however, these children attend only White Center Heights. There are approximately 3,200 people living in this housing project and an average of 370 families. Approximately one-half of all children at White Center Heights and White Center Primary are being raised by only the mother.

In order to be admitted into the project, a one-person family must earn less than $3,000 per year, a family with two members, less than $4,000 and, from there, the rate varies according to individual cases. There are 102 families who are on Welfare Aid to Dependent Children and who get less than $4,000 (average) yearly. The remainder of the families earn less than $5,000 (average) yearly.

The Organization of Economic Opportunity (O.E.O.) has established the following poverty line for 1969. (Table I.)

Those people earning the amounts in the following table or less than that amount are classified as living "in poverty." In the housing project, there are thirty-eight families with incomes below the poverty line. There are sixty-nine families whose incomes fall below the poverty line and who are on King County Welfare. Thus, there is a total of 107 families below the poverty line and from these 107 families a total of 223 children attend the White Center Schools. The mean of children who fall in families of these category is 2.08 children per family. (The average income is $2,996 per family presently residing in this project.)
TABLE I
ORGANIZATION OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
POVERTY LINE, 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Non-Farm Income</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$ 1,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,900</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>6,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+</td>
<td>7,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample used in the experiment was taken from a heterogeneous second grade class at White Center Primary School. All children who attend this school reside in the project. Table II shows the economic status of the sample.

The following information was given to this writer by Ferry F. Fischer, Principal, and Fred Vaughan, Psychologist, both employed at White Center Primary and White Center Heights. Their information was obtained through personal studies and through the office at Park Lake Homes, King County Housing Authority, Seattle, Washington.

To eliminate the teacher variable both the control and experimental groups were selected from the investigator's classroom. In this way the children in both groups would be
TABLE II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families below 0.E.O. poverty line</th>
<th>Families on King County Welfare category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families below 0.E.O. and on King poverty line</td>
<td>County Welfare</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sample of 25 students</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group of 7 students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group of 7 students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

exposed to the same classroom teaching procedures. Thus, it was assumed that using this procedure would assure a more exact measurement of the uncontrolled variable.

The control and experimental groups were selected on the basis of attendance at the weekly sessions. Seven of the children and their parents participated regularly. These children were used as the experimental group. They were matched with seven other children who attended some of the meetings, but not more than three. The children were matched on measures of intelligence and reading achievement, and when possible, according to sex (Table III).
TABLE III
MATCHED SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>I.Q.</th>
<th>Raw Scores Vocabulary</th>
<th>Raw Scores Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>113</td>
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X=experimental
C=control

II. PROCEDURE FOR THE EXPERIMENT

The first phase of the experiment was the determination of Intelligence Quotient scores of the second grade students contained in the sample of the population. The Intelligence Quotient scores were computed on the basis of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, Level 2, Form A, Battery: Primary, Non Verbal. The test was administered by
Fred E. Vaughan, school counselor and psychologist, employed at the school which the subjects attended. The entire population of second graders was tested on September 18-19, 1968.

After the intelligence tests were administered the entire second grade population was given a reading survey test. This test, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Primary B, Form 1, tested Vocabulary and Comprehension development, and was also administered by Fred E. Vaughan on September 24-25, 1968. The sample population was not retested before the experiment began in February.

During the first two weeks of February, a teacher-developed interest inventory for reading was given to each child. The investigator took each child individually and read each question to the child; the child responded either "yes" or "no," and as he gave his answers, the investigator recorded each response on an inventory sheet with that child's name on it. The interest inventory and responses are enclosed for reference (Appendix D and Appendix E).

Parents of the students in the sample population were invited to the school to discuss their child's reading. These meetings were held on February 17, 1969, at 2:45 p.m., and on February 18, 1969, at 7:00 p.m. The following points were discussed between teacher and parent(s):
1. Did parents help their child in any way with reading at home?
2. Were the parents concerned with their child's reading progress?
3. Did the parents feel they wanted to help the child but didn't know exactly how to go about it?
4. Would parents be willing to help their child in reading if the teacher showed them a variety of ways they could assist?
5. Would parents be willing to come for a half an hour to an hour weekly to explore reading with their child?

Many parents felt they would like to give an hour a week to come to the school, and, with the writer's guidance and direction, learn methods by which they could help their child in reading. One of the parents' main concerns was lack of funds to furnish a babysitter for other young siblings of the child involved in the program. The writer suggested she provide a qualified babysitter. The parents agreed to a furnished babysitter, and each session another teacher took those children into another room where supervision was provided.

Hence, meetings were set up on Wednesday evenings from 7:00-7:30 for a period of at least ten weeks, and more if the parents desired. The meetings were to be open to any parent and his second grade child from the sample population.
In addition, the parents were given an open invitation to visit the child's classroom during any time of the day and the week that was convenient to them.

The first Wednesday evening session was held for the parents only, so they could be oriented to their children's experiences as they learned to read. The parents, themselves, experienced the process of learning to read all over again. Using Primer for Parents, a booklet published by Houghton Mifflin Company, which substitutes symbols for letters, the parents struggled to read. Then the investigator gave some clues by interpreting the code for some of the symbols. The parents then spent some time trying to decode the rest of the symbols, using picture clues and number of symbols in each word. Finally they became frustrated. This beginning reading experience provided an invaluable reference point for the parents in future learning experiences. Discussion followed about the many things involved in the process of reading. Now the parents, good and poor readers, had somewhat experienced the same feeling their child experiences each day when unlocking symbols in the classroom reading situation, and were at a point of readiness to aid their child. A teacher developed interest inventory was then filled out by the parents. The inventory and the responses appear in Appendix B and Appendix C.
The following meetings were originally planned in a developmental procedure but as the parents requested their needs, spot lessons were incorporated.

The writer wishes to thank Azella Taylor, John Schwenker, Shirley Nelson and Suzanne Lorain for many of the ideas from which the following devices and games originated.

February 26, 1969. To begin the meetings with something motivating and exciting, the investigator introduced the idea of a beginning blend. After eliciting some responses from the parents and children, a "blend train" game was played whereby, each person who thought of a word beginning with a particular blend could be a car on the train which traveled throughout the school. The investigator asked for specific blends, such as "bl," "st," "br," "gr," etc. One response from a non-reading parent for a "br" blend was the word, "beer," but the parent was allowed to join the train as she was the only one at this point not included. The parents laughed and the children appeared delighted to work in this way with their mothers and/or fathers. The students were then instructed to return to their desks with the parents seated next to them. Each child read to his parent the story he had read that day in school from his basal reader. Parents were asked to read every other page. To conclude the session each parent-child team was given a magazine. As the investigator gave an oral example of a beginning blend (for example,
the blend "bl"), the student and parent were to find a picture of something in the magazine which expressed a word beginning with that blend. Using the "bl" example, one parent held up a picture of a Negro, and recited, "black" as the blend word. Each person shared his picture with the rest of the group. This session lasted about forty-five minutes.

March 5, 1969. This meeting began with a review of blends. A circle game was played where an object was passed around a circle in the center of which was a person who was "it." "It" had his eyes closed while the object (a ball) was being passed around the circle. When "it" clapped, he could open his eyes, and the person who had the ball when "it" clapped had to pass the ball on and name five words beginning with a blend. If five words were not given before the ball returned to him that person became "it." Following this game, the parent-child teams chose a picture from a magazine about which they were to write one simple sentence. Then they were to build on this original sentence by adding one more word to make the sentence more descriptive. Each picture was shown and the sentences shared orally. This process continued, each time one word or phrase was added to the original sentence. This session lasted a half an hour.
March 12, 1969. The third meeting involved puzzle games of building words from a single letter. The investigator gave the following as an example: "I have the letter 'a' (shown on blackboard). Can you think of another letter I can add to this letter to make a word?"

"Can you think of another letter I can add to these letters to make a new word?" (etc.)

```
an
and
sand
sandy
```

The investigator let the meeting members work with "a" or "I"; following are two of the responses:

```
a
at
ate

gate
```

```
a
an
can
cane
```

Another type of puzzle was illustrated and the parents and children were left on their own to build words from a given letter or word. Here is an example of the second type of puzzle where words can be read vertically as well as horizontally.

```
    can
   a t e
 n e w
```

The session had a change of pace for the last five minutes. The investigator had prepared cards with action sentences
written on them. The child and parent read the sentence and did what action was called for. A sample sentence might read, "Stand up and jump four times."

March 19, 1969. During the fourth session the investigator demonstrated some ways to develop comprehension skills. The investigator read a story entitled Swimmy by Leo Lionni and then had two sets of parent-child pairs work together to discuss the story and answer some comprehension questions from a previously prepared list. Discussion followed on points for good oral reading. Each pair then received a copy of Jack in the Beanstalk (retold for the Lucky Book Club) which the parent and child were to read and discuss in the same manner as Swimmy. This was to be done at home. The group then went to the library to pick out some books to read at home. Hereafter, the library was open each night for one half an hour before and after each session. This session lasted approximately an hour.

March 26, 1969. The meeting began by the sharing of a story by one mother. She had selected The Golden Egg Book by Margaret Wise Brown from the library the week before. The book was discussed and the mother asked the group several questions. Then, the group answered questions about Jack in the Beanstalk. The book, Old Rosie, the Horse Nobody Understood by Lilian Moore and Leone Adelson was given to be
taken home. Just before adjournment a rhyming word game was played. A word was put on the board, someone was asked to read the word aloud, and then the word was repeated aloud by the investigator. The parent-child teams who could get the most rhyming words in a period of two minutes could be the first to go to the library. This game was played until all but the last two sets of parent-child remained; these two groups were released together. Words such as "can," "cat," "look," "ball" and "he" were used. The sessions hereafter were very flexible, regarding time; the library was opened at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday evening, the sessions began between 7:00 and 7:10, and the library was closed at 8:10.

April 9, 1969. The session began with a father reading The Old Barn by Carol and Donald Carrick and this was followed by a short discussion of the book, Old Rosie, the Horse Nobody Understood. Each parent asked the total group a comprehension question about the book. Many parents asked why Rosie was not understood. The group moved next to a study of beginning and ending consonant sounds which was culminated by an "Around the World with Consonants" game. One student was given a beginning or an ending consonant and to get around the world he had to stop at each person's desk and give that person a word beginning or ending with that particular consonant sound. If the person missed at one
stop, the person at whose desk he was stopped, received the ticket and would try to get around the world with a new sound. The interest began to lag after ten minutes so the book Benny and the Bear by Barbee Olifer Carleton was distributed. The book was to be discussed at the next meeting.

April 16, 1969. At this session, a child read the story, Nobody Listens to Andrew by Elizabeth Guilfoile, to the entire group. Next, each child asked other members of the group a question he thought was important regarding the story of Benny and the Bear. Typical examples of questions were, "Who was Benny?" "Was the bear a dog?" "Why didn't Benny know what a bear was?" "Why did Benny's brothers want to kill the bear?". A review of the short and long sounds of vowels preceded a game to distinguish the same. Show-me cards were used—each person had a show-me package with the long and short vowels written on cards. The investigator either held up a picture or gave a word orally and the competitors held up the corresponding vowel sound. Parents competed against children as teams. The score was tied.

April 23, 1969. A mother shared a story at the beginning of this session. Then a lesson in sequence was presented where the group working in parent-child pairs was given magazines. After a discussion of what sequence meant and some concrete examples of sequence elicited from the
students and parents, such as first the sock, then the shoe and first the kitten then the cat, the following instructions were given: Choose any three pictures from the magazine which you feel follow a set order of sequence and put them in that order. Then write one sentence to go with each picture to show how the order goes. Each picture of a set was then pasted on a separate sheet of paper with the sentence written below the picture. When they were completed, the sets of three were put in random order and exchanged with another team to see if they could get the correct sequence. This appeared one of the most stimulating activities.

April 30, 1969. The ninth session began by poems shared by a mother and child. The book used was by Margaret Wise Brown, entitled Nibble Nibble. Dictionary skills were emphasized, including alphabetizing simple words, and word pronunciations. The "Sword Dictionary Game" was played. In this game the dictionary, Words I Like to Read and Write, published by Harper and Row Publishers, was called the sword. Each book was held face up, closed in the hands of the person. The investigator would give a word, such as "bat" and then say, "draw swords," which was the clue for each person to open his dictionary and find that word. The first person to find a word shared all the things a dictionary told him about the word. The dictionaries were sent home for further practice and exploration.
May 7, 1969. During this session, a child shared a story, from a basal reader, and dictionary skills were reviewed briefly. A word building game was then played. Everyone started with his own first name and the following word had to start with the ending letter of the previous word:

Sam
match
horse
egg
go
oat
tack

May 14, 1969. The final session was another comprehension building session, as well as one developing creativity. After one of the fathers shared the story, *The Man Who Never Snoozed* by Jean Lee Latham and Bee Lewi, an experience in creative dramatics was introduced. Several names of familiar nursery rhymes were listed on the blackboard. The group members divided into sets of four and chose the rhyme they'd like to act out. Each group was given two minutes to do their part of the rhyme. Each group at least attempted to act out a rhyme.

The investigator was always available for a conference at the request of a parent to forestall any problems which had arisen or to answer any perplexing questions. To further instill clarity of purpose, preceding each session the children went to a separate room while the parents and
investigator discussed what might occur at a particular session, as well as to discuss and define the objectives and goals aimed for in each session. These were all discussed and stated in very simple terms. Furthermore, a post-session containing only parents and teacher was held for a few minutes each week. At this time, the sessions were evaluated in terms of goals set prior to the session. Parents asked many questions from which a basis for further meetings was evolved. "Homework" was also assigned. This homework usually involved carrying over activities into the home.

At each meeting, refreshments were served, which helped to establish the investigator desired "informal atmosphere."

III. TREATMENT OF THE DATA

After the final parent-child-teacher session, the Gates MacGinitie Reading Survey Test, Primary B, Form 2, was administered to the sample population. On May 15 and 16, 1969, Fred E. Vaughan administered the test. These scores were used to support or reject the hypothesis.

The "t" test was applied to the means of the scores to determine whether or not there were any statistically significant differences.

During the week of May 15-23, the investigator gave the teacher-made interest inventory to the sample population.
The inventory and responses are found in Appendix D and Appendix F.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

I. ANALYSIS

This study tested the hypothesis that the reading achievement of primary grade children in low socio-economic families can be significantly improved by involving parents in their children's reading instruction. The members of one second-grade class in a school in a low socio-economic neighborhood were used in the study. The parents and their children were invited to participate in weekly sessions held in the evening.

Seven of the children and their parents participated regularly. These children were used as the experimental group. They were matched with seven other children who attended some of the meetings, but no more than three. The children were matched according to sex (when possible) and on measures of intelligence and reading achievement. After eleven sessions the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test was administered to both groups.

The "t" test was then applied to final scores on the vocabulary portion of the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test. The results are presented in Table IV.
TABLE IV
MEAN DIFFERENCES FOR VOCABULARY SCORES:
GATES MACGINITIE READING TEST

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Obtained &quot;t&quot;</th>
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<td>25.42</td>
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The mean score for the experimental group on the vocabulary portion of the test was 35.14 as compared with the mean score of 25.42 for the control group. The value of "t" was computed to be 5.55 which is significant beyond the .01 level.

The "t" test was then applied to the comprehension scores of the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test. The results are presented in Table V.

TABLE V
MEAN DIFFERENCES FOR COMPREHENSION SCORES:
GATES MACGINITIE READING TEST

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The mean score of the experimental group on the comprehension portion of the reading test was 23.00 as compared with the mean score of 16.10 for the control group. This difference produced a "t" value of 4.45 which is also significant beyond the .01 level.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Since the difference between the means on both portions of the test were significant beyond the .01 level support was given to the hypothesis that in low socio-economic families the involvement of parents in the reading instruction did improve the reading achievement of primary grade children.

It should be recognized, however, that even though the "t" scores establish differences in reading achievement, it does not eliminate the possibility that other differences would measure at the same level of significance. It is possible that the criterion test measured only part of the reading achievement of the students. For example, the test is not designed to measure speed of reading. It is also obvious that certain individuals in the class benefited more from the parent-teacher-child-help sessions than the others. It may be seen in Appendix A that growth as measured by raw score points ranged from five to twenty-four points.

Another possible limitation of this study was the lapse of
time between the initial reading test (September 24-25, 1968) and when the sessions actually started (February 26, 1969). However, since the subjects in both the experimental and control group had the same classroom experiences during this interim, the time lapse may not have had an adverse affect on the results reported here.

The teacher developed interest inventory for parents (Appendix B and Appendix C) was used primarily for the purpose of becoming cognizant of the reading attitude and background of the parents involved. Presumably because of educational background, the parents were hesitant about answering the inventory. Yet, their answers and comments throughout the sessions proved invaluable in relating to and with them.

The parents who came regularly (those in the experimental group) were very appreciative as to the amount of investigator-spent time. They always were eager and willing to work in the situations presented. (Of course, these same attitudes affected their children, positively.) Often it seemed as if the parents were having more fun and learning more than the children. Most of these parents came at least once to observe the regular classroom activity. Several mothers worked as volunteer teacher aids in the room. On rainy evenings the parents would form car pools so that all who wanted to could attend. Those who attended contacted
other families regarding the sessions. This type of advertisement seemed more beneficial than the usually disregarded teacher bulletins.

Parents became so involved that they even offered to make the refreshments. This, however, because of the area, is against school policy. As the sessions progressed many mothers wanted to include other siblings and some wanted to bring families whose children were in other rooms.

Following are two parent-written letters the subjects of which are the weekly evening sessions. The first letter was written by the mother of experimental child number 3. This child spent over thirty school days in Children's Orthopedic Hospital due to a degenerative eye disease.

"I think these reading classes on Wednesday evening should help out a lot. [child's name] seems to be reading better now than she had a few months ago. She can read a lot better when she's reading to smaller children than she can to me or someone whom is older than she is. I have noticed her reading to her younger sisters and friends. She reads pretty smoothly and doesn't stumble over many of the words."

"Thank you
Mrs.______"

The second letter was written by a mother who had only completed the tenth grade. Her husband was an eighth grade drop-out. Both parents came regularly to all sessions.

"Hello!

I am Miss Keithahn's room mother. I would like to share with you how much I've enjoyed working with your child these past few months."
To begin with I always thought I didn't have time to become involved with the school program. You see, I have five active children—all quite close in age. And I work two days a week besides. I guess I felt I had "done my duty" if I got up and got the children dressed and fed and "off to school" and then maybe attend an occasional PTA.

Then last year I got begged into a field trip or two by my children. It took time and effort and I thought of all the things I should be doing at home—but the pleasure the children showed was gratifying.

But when I was asked to be room mother this year I thought it was impossible. This meant going on all the field trips plus helping in the room at special party times. (Now you know how it is to clean up spilled Kool-aid and cookies crumbs after maybe two children—try 20 or more!)

Then I was approached by the teacher and principal with another request—would I like to help in the room one morning a week. So now here I am, the typical mother with "no time" to get involved. I am involved—and I love it! In fact the teachers almost have to kick me out and lock the door behind me because I can hardly tear myself away when my morning is up.

This is what I am doing and what I have been learning: I spend most of the time listening to each child read—individually—just that child by himself—or herself reads to me whatever book he or she chooses. This gives them individual reading experience, at their own speed, at their own level. And you might be amazed, as I was, at what a vast range a teacher must work with. You would also better understand and appreciate the need for individual attention in the classroom. You'd become better acquainted with your child's classmates—and these children are an influence in your child's life. You could observe your child as he is at school (which is sometimes the opposite of how he is at home!). I have had the joy of seeing the excitement of childhood—the pleasure of feeling I am helping a child who maybe is a little slower and needs more individual help. (Maybe that child will learn enough to keep him from repeating the same grade next year.)

I hope each parent realizes what a terrific school we have. We have had children in seven schools and this is
tops! Nowhere have I seen so much understanding—
compassion—and hard work on the part of teachers and
staff—toward each child as an individual. The faculty
gives of themselves and their time long over the hours
required and I have been thrilled to have the opportunity
to work with them. Working with your child—his class-
mates—and his teacher has not been the burden I
anticipated but an opportunity to enlarge my own life—
and a great pleasure.

Wouldn't you like to share some of this with me? You
can! Miss Keithahn is giving of her time, out of her
private life, to give your child extra help on Wednesdays
at 7:00 P.M. This is a time for parents and child to
share. So Moms and Dads—come bring your child and you'll
see what I mean. My husband and I will be there with
[__________[child's name, X2]. See you then!

Room mother

The teacher developed interest inventory for students
also provided valuable information (Appendix D, Appendix E
and Appendix F). In all cases those in the experimental
group bettered their original number of positive responses.
The attitude of the pupils in the experimental group improved
far more than the interest inventory could show. Reading was
their most important subject. They'd stay in at recess to
read or read while eating lunch. More books were going home
in the afternoon. The number of books read in individualized
reading nearly doubled to what they had read the previous
five months. With the writer's guidance and the backing of
the experimental group a child-exchange library was started.
(Children brought books from home which were checked out by
others.) This library provided a greater choice of reading
materials.
Instead of sharing new toys, etc. these pupils were bringing in new books. Other reading materials such as magazines, comic books, etc. were also being brought from home. Phonetic skills were understood and used faster than before. In all, their attitudes and interests were broadened and their skills strengthened.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study was designed to measure only the achievement in reading. Several other factors should be studied before a complete evaluation could be made. Were there differences in the amount of tension felt by the experimental group than the control group? Exactly how much carry-over was conducted in the home? Were parent attitudes toward their children different than those shown to the teacher in the classroom? Were these a "unique" set of parents? Would a child continue to show marked improvement if this was conducted again next year? Of what affect is the teacher's enthusiasm? What affect would these sessions have if conducted in a different socio-economic population? If the sessions were conducted in the fall and both groups were retested in May, after five months of no sessions, would both control and experimental groups be equal? If both parents were involved, would this have a greater effect?
Since the hypothesis was supported at the .01 level of significance, it is suggested that other such sessions be tried, both on the primary and intermediate levels. However, until the findings of such studies as those cited above are available, a decision as to employ this program would have to be based on personal preference. This study does, however, provide evidence that Parent-Teacher-Child-Help Sessions will produce greater achievement in reading vocabulary and comprehension among primary children in low socio-economic areas.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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OTHER SOURCES

Personal Correspondence of the Author

APPENDIX A
APPENDIX A

GATES MACGINITIE: PRE- AND POST-TEST SCORES

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APPENDIX B
APPENDIX B
TEACHER DEVELOPED INTEREST INVENTORY
(FOR PARENTS)

1. Do you enjoy reading a good book occasionally?
2. Do you subscribe to a daily newspaper in your home?
3. If your child is having trouble with reading, do you think he should spend extra time catching up if it means taking time away from other subjects? (11:574)
4. If your child has trouble in reading do you think he should study with other slow readers? (11:574)
5. If your child has trouble in reading do you think he should study in a class where most students are better readers? (11:574)
6. Do you subscribe to any magazines?
7. Do you have a dictionary in your home?
8. Do you take your child to the library on a regular basis?
9. Have you ever taken your child to a library?
10. Do you read to your children on a regular basis?
11. Do you frequently ask your child to read to you?
12. Have you ever given your child a book?
13. Does your child have many (over ten) books of his own?
14. Has your child ever seen you reading a book, magazine, or newspaper to yourself?
15. Has your child ever asked you to help him with a word when he is reading?
16. Does your child ask you about what you're reading?
17. Do you think your child is (a) low; (b) average; (c) above average reader?
18. Does your child bring books home from school to read?
19. Does your child try to read billboards, traffic signs, etc.?

20. Does your family ever share a story together?
## APPENDIX C

**RESPONSES FROM TEACHER DEVELOPED INTEREST INVENTORY FOR PARENTS**

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Number of Positive Responses: 12 12 14 7 6 7 12 6 10 13 9 11 9 12

X=experimental  C=control  Y=yes  N=no
APPENDIX D
APPENDIX D

TEACHER DEVELOPED INTEREST INVENTORY
(FOR CHILDREN)

1. Do you take a daily newspaper?
2. Do you have more than ten books of your own?
3. Do you get (subscribe) to a magazine?
4. Do you like to read?
5. Do your parents read to you?
6. Do you read at home?
7. Do you have your own place to keep your books?
8. Do your parents ever read to themselves?
9. Do you have any comic books?
10. Do you have a magazine you receive through the mail or that your mother buys for you?
11. Is there a set of Encyclopedias in your home?
12. Is there a television set in your home?
13. Is there a dictionary in your home?
14. Do you read more at school than at home?
15. Does your mother have a cookbook that she uses?
16. Do you read to your parents?
17. Do you use the Park Lake Library or the White Center Library to check out books?
18. Do you ever get books on your birthday or for Christmas?
19. Do your parents care about how well you read?
20. Do your parents ask you about school?
## APPENDIX E

RESPECTS FROM TEACHER DEVELOPED INTEREST INVENTORY FOR CHILDREN (PRE-TEST)

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**Number of Positive Responses**: 14, 15, 15, 9, 6, 8, 11, 6, 12, 14, 11, 10, 9, 12
APPENDIX F
### APPENDIX F

**RESPONSES FROM TEACHER DEVELOPED INTEREST INVENTORY FOR CHILDREN (POST-TEST)**

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**Number of Positive Responses**

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