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HOME-VISITATION AND PARENT EDUCATION: THE IMPACT ON HOME-BASED SHARED READING DURING KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

All families engage in a range of social practices involving elements of literacy. These practices may be more or less similar to those promoted in school settings. The ways in which family literacy practices mirror those of the school often begin to be revealed as children participate in formal programs. The purpose of conducting this study is to identify how parental involvement in a comprehensive, literacy focused parenting education program results in school readiness and achievement for children and improved parenting skills.

An explanatory mixed methods design is used to determine both the impact and meaning of 48 parents and their children who were involved in the program. Quantitative methods are employed to determine the differences and interaction between home-visitation program involvement and a child's school readiness and performance. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with four Kindergarten families in an effort to discern what involvement in the PACT program meant for these families.

This study suggests that children whose parents are involved with the PACT program demonstrate greater readiness for Kindergarten and academic performance in Kindergarten than families that are not involved in the program. The depth of parental engagement in the PACT program promotes greater school readiness than does the extent to which parents consistently attend home visits. Parents involved in PACT shared that their engagement in the program was heavily dependent upon the relationships developed between the family and the parent educator. Parenting skills that were developed reflected both the objectives of the program and more subtle features of parenting. The results of this study provide additional insight into future research on home-visitation programs and school district practices related to parental engagement.

HOME-VISITATION AND PARENT EDUCATION: THE IMPACT ON HOME-BASED SHARED READING DURING KINDERGARTEN

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful to my advisor, Dr. Joseph Shedd for his guidance throughout my educational endeavors at the Syracuse University and as Chair of my dissertation committee. He has been an influence in each and every phase of the academic process at Syracuse University. This work would not have been possible without his continued support and direction. I would also like to thank Dr. Gail Ensher and Dr. Rochelle Dail for serving on my dissertation committee. The scope and depth of their knowledge and high standards for intellectual and research excellence have continually inspired me. I have learned a tremendous amount from my committee member's comments and suggestions. Their knowledge and expertise were incredible assets and truly enhanced the quality of my work.

I must also thank my parents who have instilled in each one of their five children the will to preserver and continue to learn. I kept this close to my heart as I completed my studies while parenting. I never lost sight of what I was modeling for my daughters. I am also thankful for my husband, Todd, for his belief in my ability to accomplish this work and his commitment and support in every aspect of my educational pursuit. His support of my study has afforded me the time necessary to achieve this goal. In addition, I wish to acknowledge my daughters Ella and Ava. I love them both very much as they have continued to give my life perspective and balance.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my colleague and mentor, Dr. Marion Martinez, who during this past year never let me forget what this work represents and for making the experience more memorable and enjoyable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

LIST OF CHARTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

All families engage in a range of social practices involving elements of literacy. These practices may be more or less similar to those promoted in school settings. The ways in which family literacy practices mirror those of the school often begin to be revealed as children participate in formal programs. Supporting parents as a child's first teacher through home-visitation programs has been shown to be effective in developing early literacy behaviors and skills (Astuto & LaRue, 2009; Hart & Risley, 2002; Reese, Sparks, & Leyva, 2010; Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). It has also been demonstrated that when parents play an active role in home reading, children's early literacy skills benefit (Compton-Lily, 2003; Compton-Lily, 2007; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1998). Few studies exist that examine the meaning parents make of their participation in a parent education program delivered in the home and the resulting implications of parental engagement on academic performance once their child enters Kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers are reporting that children are entering school unprepared to learn (National Kindergarten Preparedness Survey, 2011). The survey results, which included over 500 Kindergarten teachers, identified phonetic awareness as incoming Kindergarteners' weakest skill. School districts have turned to providing formal school or community-based prekindergarten programs for a solution to this problem.

It is the quality of early care a child receives that develops the child's understanding of spoken words, letters and ultimately, text. Reading and talking with children should begin during infancy. The quantity of this book reading is influenced by the parent-child

relationship (Bus, 2001). Parents who are less secure in their ability to share books with children demonstrate behaviors that interfere with student engagement in books. The beliefs and values toward reading held by parents influence a child's engagement. Early childhood programs that do not recognize and address the impact parents have on their child's literacy development are missing opportunities to significantly influence a child's school success. Few districts have looked to directly support parenting skills through parent education programming prior to the start of formal school.

The Binghamton City School District (BSCD) offers a home-visitation program for families known as "Parents and Children Together" (PACT). For over 20 years, the program has delivered a comprehensive, literacy focused parenting education program to families who reside in the Binghamton School District's catchment area. The program has encouraged open enrollment, but is often used as a valued resource for families that display characteristics in need of support. Referral agencies include Catholic Social Services, Broome Developmental High Risk Birth Clinic, and local pediatricians, among other local service providers. Parents have the opportunity to self-select program options that include weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly visits. While participation can occur prenatally through school-age 5, families participate on average for 1 to 2 years. Family participation includes visits with at least one parent/care-giver and the child. As a district administrator, I have been aware of the program over the past 13 years. During the 2012-2013 school year, 48 families whose children were enrolled in Kindergarten had participated in the program.

The BCSD PACT program employs Parent Educators who guide parents in enhancing their child's early language and literacy development by increasing parents' understanding and application of key parenting behaviors that are thought to contribute to

child language and literacy development. A parent educator schedules visits that take place in the home with parent(s) and child present. Parents are presented with information related to the developmental stage of their child. Activities, many of which are literacy focused, are then modeled by the parent educator and practiced by the parent. The curriculum being used is the Parents as Teachers (PAT) national curricula, which has been demonstrated to have a clear connection to emergent literacy skills (Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). The program also attends to providing strategies for parents to instill essential parenting behaviors. These behaviors include: warm, sensitive and responsive parenting, having appropriate expectations for learning and development, providing predictable settings and routines, guiding the child in problem-solving, providing supports for literacy in the home, facilitating quality language interactions with the child, and facilitating shared book reading with the child. Additionally, as children enter Kindergarten in the Binghamton City School District, families participate in an Independent Reading Program known as the 100 Book Challenge, involving a "Read to Me" and "Read with Me" components designed to support children as they learn early literacy skills. This program provides the resources for parents to participate and engage in home reading. However, this is done in the absence of the coaching and parenting supports previously provided by the PACT program.

While the district has offered the PACT program for over 20 years, no research studies have been conducted to demonstrate how the district's program or similar programs affect school readiness, academic performance, or involvement on the part of the family once the child is enrolled in formal school. The program components and design have not changed because of the lack of relevant information to make informed changes. It is likely that program effectiveness is suffering and opportunities for families are being missed as a result.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting the study is to identify how parental involvement in the PACT program results in outcomes for families. This research will a) investigate the relationship among families' enrollment in a home-visitation program, their success in the program, and their child's subsequent success evidenced in the Kindergarten year; and, 2) explore parents' understanding of their involvement in the home-visitation program and its influence on their involvement in their child's Kindergarten year.

Mixed methods will be used to determine both the impact and meaning of parent/child involvement. Quantitative methods will be employed to determine the differences and interaction between home-visitation program involvement and the degree to which parents continued to play a role in literacy development in Kindergarten. Involvement will be defined by two separate, but related elements: the extent of participation and depth of engagement (Korfmacher et al., 2008). Parental participation will be measured by the number of home visits completed by families. A Parent Education Profile completed by a family's parent educator will measure parental engagement. This assessment illustrates the degree to which parents demonstrate parental support for learning in the home environment, their role in interactive literacy activities, their role in supporting a child's learning in formal education settings, and their ability to take on the role of parent. The number of books read in the home will measure participation in the Kindergarten home-based reading program. Qualitative methods in the form of structured interviews will be conducted with a stratified random sampling of parents who participated in the PACT program prior to their child's Kindergarten year.

Research Questions

The key questions guiding this study are: 1) Are a child's school readiness and early literacy skills in Kindergarten different for families who have participated in a home-visitation program than those whose families did not participate? 2) What differences in school readiness and early literacy skills may be present among families who participated in a home-visitation program? and 3) What did participation in the home-visitation program mean for these families?

The resulting study will provide insight into the effect a parent's participation in a home-visitation program that promotes literacy development has on parental involvement with their child in home reading during their Kindergarten year and the literacy success of the child.

Methods and Procedures

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design will be used to explore the proposed research questions. The first phase of the study will involve applying descriptive statistics to determine if there is a difference in literacy measures between kindergarten families who participated in PACT and those who did not. Furthermore, descriptive statistics will be applied to PACT participants to discern any differences in literacy measures based on the extent of participation and depth of engagement in the program. The second phase of the study will involve semi-structured interviews with families who participated in the PACT program. The purpose of the interviews is to identify the meaning families made from their participation and its influence on the success of their parental support of their child. Parents will be identified by applying a stratified randomly sampling technique, creating a one (low

PACT engagement) by one (high PACT engagement) strata from which 10% representative population will be selected.

Parents whose children participated in the Binghamton City School District Kindergarten program during the 2012-2013 school year will be identified as to whether they were enrolled in the district's home-visitation program prior to their child's enrollment in Kindergarten. Their participation in the home-visitation program will be further defined using two measures: extent of participation and depth of engagement. Participation will be based on the degree to which scheduled visits were completed. Parental engagement will be a measure of parent performance scores on the Parent Education Profile tool. Parents will then be identified as demonstrating either low or high participation and low or high engagement.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with four families in an effort to discern what participation in the PACT program meant for these families. A socio-cultural perspective will be used (Gee, 2001; Street, 1984) as a theoretical framework for examining and understanding the qualitative data collected in this study. This perspective argues that the acquisition and development of literacy skills is more than a private, discrete set of skills. Rather it is mediated by the experiences, attitudes, cultures and values surrounding learning to read. Parent Educators will be first asked what parental involvement in the PACT program looks like and what factors they have observed as having enhanced or limited parental involvement in the program. These data will be used to identify and validate relevant questions to ask parents during the semi-structured interviews. Following the interviews, the interviews will be analyzed for themes. During the final stages of analysis, the themes will be co-mingled with the quantitative results.

Significance of the Study

"Simply having children does not make mothers." – John A. Shedd

Parenting is neither inherent nor intuitive. It is an acquired condition, one that comes with experience, reflection and patience. This study is aimed at understanding whether or not participation in a home-visitation program prior to Kindergarten influences parenting skills and the success of the child. It additionally seeks to understand the meaning parents make from their participation in the PACT program and the factors that they identify as being most influential and long-lasting. Numerous studies have been conducted to reveal the impact a variety of home-visitation programs have on parents and their children prior to and following their participation. Some studies have tried to identify the effects program participation had on the literacy development of the child. But, little is known about how parents come to an understanding of their role as parents in absence of the support of the home-visitation program. This study will therefore expand on the current knowledge of home-visitation programs by utilizing a socio-cultural perspective (Gee, 2001; Street, 1984) to identify elements that contribute to or challenge the understanding of parenting as held by the participants in the PACT program. This ideology will allow for the illumination of how the circumstances surrounding parents affect their behavior.

Possible benefits of the study include an enlarged understanding of how program components and factors beyond the control of the program influence the success of PACT participants. The results may also provide insight into potential areas for program improvement. Insight into ways schools can identify, plan for and involve parents as their child's first teachers may be an additional outcome.

Chapter II: Literature Review

       This study is focused on the practices specific to home literacy and behaviors that are promoted as a result of participation in a parent education program. The practices associated with family literacy and its impact on early literacy behaviors of children has been well documented. This literature review begins with identifying the research behind shared book reading as a practice of reading to and with young children in the home. The research on shared book reading includes a review of strategies promoted through family literacy programs. However, there is considerable variation in the way family literacy programs are delivered. This review then explores the various elements associated with delivering home-based family literacy programs and their effectiveness. Because home-visitation programs recognize the important role parents play, the final section of this review considers how school systems have successfully engaged parents in home-school partnerships. This body of work is critical to understanding how participation in parenting education programs before a child's Kindergarten year may influence parenting support thereafter.

Shared Book Reading

       The literacy environment of the home has been demonstrated to impact the development of young children (Bus, 2003; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2001; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). The practice of reading to and with children in the home has received attention because of its potential for influencing a child's oral language, vocabulary development and readiness skills essential for reading (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Duursam, Augustyn & Zuckerman, 2008; Scarborough &

Dobrich, 1994). It is easy to observe the natural tendency of young children to reach for and explore books (Pierroutsakos & DeLoache, 2003). In fact, it is generally understood that parents and caregivers should read to their child daily (Bergin, 2001). Books are often presented to children by adults, resulting in an interaction between the adult, child and book (Karrass & Braungart-Ricker, 2005).

Parents sharing books with children in a way that positively affects children's emergent and developing literacy skills was first described by Holdaway (1979) as *shared book reading*. Joint or shared book reading has been defined as a shared experience between the parent and child that often varies in quality and is influenced by many factors. Such a literacy practice seeks to realize the attainment of sentence structure or new understandings, and at times, combinations of each. The literature on shared book reading references both *emergent literacy* and *beginning reading* as areas of a child's development affected by the experience. Each term implies something different. *Emergent literacy* is considered to be a progressive development of prerequisite behaviors and understandings necessary to begin to learn to read (Kassow, 2006). Emergent literacy skills, such as oral language, listening and reading comprehension, and writing are individually defined but are interrelated (Reese, 1995; Snow & Dickinson, 1991). The term differs from "beginning reader" in that the latter entails formal schooling as a means of developing a set of foundational skills (Teale, 1987). The research findings that follow reflect studies that look to define ways shared book reading between a parent and child impacts children's emergent literacy.

Shared Book Reading Practices

The body of research surrounding shared book reading with young children is diverse in both methodology and the questions they seek to answer. Shared reading practices have been studied as they occur between child and parent, teacher or computer. Of particular interest are the parent-child studies that seek to either investigate the impact on a particular book reading intervention and those that seek to define specific elements of shared book reading that result in identifiable effects on the child, parent or both. How individuals come to share reading experiences has been seen to play an important role in the success of the experience for both the parent and the child.

A number of interventions have demonstrated their impact on the literacy development of the child. Trivette, Dunst, and Gorman (2010) identified 11 characteristics of shared reading practices that have been often noted in the research as being influential in affecting child outcomes. These factors include 1) opportunities to focus the child's attention, 2) labeling, 3) commenting, 4) imitating or repeating what the child said, 5) relating to the child's experience, 6) using corrective feedback, 7) using positive feedback, 8) using open-ended questions, 9) extending what the child has said, 10) follow what the child has said using questions, and 11) letting the child take the lead by following their interests. Trivette, Dunst, and Gorman (2010) then synthesized findings across these variables that correlated with either a child's oral language development (expressive) or comprehension (receptive). Effect sizes were calculated against the overall language development of the child. It was found that relating the book's content to the child's own experiences and providing children with positive feedback were the most strongly correlated with language development. The use of expansions, following the child's interest, and asking open-ended questions also were

found to be statistically significant. When total language scores were compared to expressive language, following what a child says during the shared reading experience with a question resulted in stronger effects on expressive language.

Dialogic reading is named for a specific type of shared reading that relies heavily on the parent asking the child open-ended questions (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Several studies have sought to demonstrate the impact of dialogic reading, particularly the impact on receptive vocabulary and print. Dialogic reading may also be more beneficial to younger children than older children (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000). Bus, van IJzendorn, and Pellegrini (1995) revealed that smaller effect sizes are realized as children grow older and become conventional readers.

It is difficult to draw solid conclusions from the research on shared book reading experiences beyond positive correlations. In the studies considered by the National Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008), slight differences were noted regarding the limited reviews of related research on oral language and shared reading practices. There were no effect size differences discovered between (a) gains in simple vocabulary versus composite language measures; and, (b) dialogic versus not dialogic reading styles or treatments administered by computers, teachers, parents, or a combination. Effect sizes were larger for shared reading experiences among younger children versus older children. However, as the authors note, the studies differed in the type of intervention being employed.

While NELP (2008) concluded that there were no differences in the way shared reading was performed (i.e., by parent, teacher, or computer) nor the particular practice being used (i.e., dialogic versus non dialogic reading), they concurred that the quality of reading does have a significant impact on the outcome for children. Two studies were cited as

exemplars. In one study, parents who were well trained using a video, which showed trained parents reading aloud to their child, were compared to those who were trained by observing live trainers enact reader and child roles (Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein, 1994). The quality of the language interaction was noted as a distinguishing factor. A second study by Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1999) demonstrated positive correlations between parents who more frequently changed the language they used during shared reading.

Beyond the differences that exist in the practices of shared reading experiences with children are the various factors that influence the quality of the experience. Elements that affect quality include the types and quantities of books shared, the ability and value placed on the experience on behalf of the parent, and the numerous factors that affect the parent-child relationship. Following is an exploration of moderating factors that have been taken into consideration, independent of the shared reading practice that is being employed.

Moderating Factors of Shared Book Reading

Fletcher and Reese (1995) describe the three components of a shared book experience as the parent, child and the book. Shared reading experiences are tempered by the qualities of each factor, ultimately impacting outcomes for children (Bingham, 2007; de Jong & Leseman, 2001; Haden et al., 1996). For example, the reading experiences that the parents have had create a particular context for reading together. The initial skill set of the child is influential in what is understood and experienced by the child. And, the type of book that is read presents different opportunities.

Whether an adult's motivation to have books accessible to children is to entertain or educate, children gain insight and understanding as a result of frequent, repeated experiences.

Hart and Risley (1995) documented the impact of exposure to more words, resulting in greater literacy gains through the development of the child. Intuitively, most would agree that the more books read to and with young children, the greater the increase in acquisition of emergent literacy skills.

The quantity and quality of book reading is influenced by the parent-child relationship (Bus, 2001). Parents who are less secure in their ability to share books with children demonstrate behaviors that interfere with student engagement in books. Parents' own beliefs and values toward reading influence a child's engagement. Parents who are readers themselves are more likely to provide quality shared book reading experiences.

Trivette, Dunst, and Gorman (2010) investigated several moderators that impact the success of the child. The moderators included the child's familiarity with the book, the number of books read, the length of a reading session, the type of training provided to the adult, the length of the training, the mother's education, and the cognitive ability of the child (typical or at-risk). Of particular importance was the finding that the longer the reading session and the more books read, the larger the resulting effect size. The effect size for training in how to read with children indicated that less than an hour may be needed for training and the configuration in which the training is delivered (individual, group or video) did not have a significant impact on the child's language development (Bus et al., 1995; Raikes et al., 2006; Zill & Resnick, 2006).

The interest level of the child may also temper the degree of engagement. It stands to reason that a child who demonstrates interest in literacy activities will generate a greater interest on the part of the parent. However, some have argued that motivation to read may not only be a pre-existing condition, but also a result of experiencing a quality shared reading

experience (Bus, 1993, 1994). Parental behaviors exhibited during a shared reading experience are equally important in establishing the foundation of child development (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Zill & Resnick, 2006). Bus (2001) further discovered that over stimulating and over controlling behaviors during shared book reading correlate to children displaying lack of interest in books.

The quantity of books is affected by the quality of the experience. Hindman et al. (2008) point out that the setting in which shared book reading occurs plays a role in realized outcomes. Home-based reading affords a small ratio of adult to child, but relies on the expertise of the parent and the availability of books. School-based shared reading may provide a trained adult, available books related to themes and classroom experiences, and opportunities for peer-to-peer conversations. However, school- based shared reading is disturbed by the teacher's need to read with the child and manage her classroom. In a classroom, student-to-adult ratio is often reduced to four-to-one at best. Children who regularly interact with books in the home long before they are introduced to books in the context of a classroom will experience these books differently.

Few studies have been conducted to demonstrate the short-term and long-term impacts shared reading experiences have on parents. Kassow (2006) examined research that looked at the impact adult-child shared book reading had on the literacy development of the child, as well as, on the development of the relationship between the adult and the child. It is likely that reciprocal displays of enthusiasm and encouragement on the parts of both the parent and child promote sustained positive effects on the parent's understanding of their relationships with their child.

Furthermore, the term "experience" implies multiple facets that play a role in how books are interacted with by the parent and child. Shared book experiences are more than a single approach or method that is applied to affect a predictable outcome. An individual's social and cultural being, in ways that define more than the methodology applied, may enhance, neglect or refute a child's literacy development.

A Sociocultural Perspective of Shared Book Reading

A sociocultural perspective on literacy recognizes both the active and passive roles individuals engage in as they encounter literacy (Gee, 2001; Street, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). Based on many of Vygotsky's theories, Gee (2001) describes learning through a sociocultural perspective as people are confronted with "forms of language, images, symbols, objects, tools, technologies, sites, and times," each of which may affect what may or may not be understood. Consequently, learning to speak is integrated with "ways of talking, thinking, believing, knowing, acting, interacting, valuing, and feeling associated with specific socially situated identities" (Gee, 2001, p.31). Gee (2001) and Street (1984) contend that humans make meaning of an event within different sociocultural perspectives and that these perspectives "give purpose and function" to the event, while taking into consideration the changing forms literacy is taking. Parents are influenced by their experiences with literacy. Literacy behaviors are intricately related to what one says, thinks, writes, reads, believes, and acts. Gee suggests that rather than looking at how a particular literacy practice develops, investigate how a specific sociocultural practice is embedded in a way of doing and thinking. When people act in ways that deviate from the norm, their practices are often seen as unimportant or problematic. By taking into consideration how an individual's social and

cultural experiences shapes their understanding, understanding a practices can shift from a deficit model to one that defines differences. For example, Debaryshe (1995) studied the belief systems of 60 low income and 56 working class mothers and the impact of their belief systems around reading to their children. It was concluded that maternal belief systems have a positive effect on both the degree to which the mothers engaged in joint reading and the quality of the joint book reading experience. As applied to shared book reading, sociocultural theory argues that the outcome of a shared book reading event is a result of the social construct of the activity (Sulzby & Teale, 1991), rather than as a result of a specific set of behaviors prescribed to be experienced and learned.

A child's interest in shared book reading is mediated by the social context presented at the moment of interaction between the child, adult, and book (Bus, 2001). This level of engagement, based on interest, need not be a prerequisite to a successful experience. There have been interventions specifically designed to increase student interest in books. Ortiz, Stowe and Arnold (2001) examined the influence parents have on a child's interest during shared book reading. Parents were provided with an intervention that was designed to teach them how to increase their child's interest in books. Intervention parents demonstrated a positive effect as compared to a control group.

Nolen (2007) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study with school-age children, grades 1 through 3, which examined children's motivation as they learned to read and write. The social context that children experienced in school contributed to their social meaning of reading and writing and their understanding of the role they play in their family (Baker & Scher, 2002; Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Heath, 1982; Scher & Baker, 1997). This has implications for the specificity of feedback given to parents as they learn more about the

reading behaviors teachers discover and communicate to families. Simply sharing with parents their child's reading levels, without sharing the details of progress being made in different reading elements (ie, letter recognition, vocabulary, story comprehension) or providing related shared book techniques, may account for under performance, and hence, reinforce negative beliefs about their child's ability to read.

The nature of shared book reading lends itself to a socially constructed process (Bus, 2001; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Parents and children read together and often jointly make meaning of the story. Children are capable of looking through books and developing their own story line. However, it is a condition of a shared reading experience to include both the child and parent, resulting in a specially constructed understanding. Reading style may also be culturally dependent (McNaughton, 1995). This may account for performance differences between culturally defined groups.

Parents establish in the home a set of values, attitudes and beliefs around the importance of reading. The content of the promotion of shared book reading influences the parents' perceptions and beliefs surrounding how children learn to read. Kabuto (2009) studied how parents and children might become more aware of their strengths as readers as they engaged in shared reading, while revealing miscues in a process called Retrospective Miscue Analysis. The focus of the miscues was situations where the miscue did not change the meaning of the sentence (i.e., substituting the word "home" for "house"). The study revealed that by helping parents recognize and appreciate the accuracy within the miscues, parents were better able to accept that such miscues are common reading behaviors and realize the strengths in their child's reading ability. Parents were able to view miscues as "windows into a child's (Christie's) working models of reading and language development,"

rather than reading behaviors that need to be corrected (Kabuto, 2009, p. 8). Kabuto's study supports the notion that how parents perceive literacy development and their beliefs about how literacy is acquired impacts their interaction with their child at home.

Shared book reading at home has been considered in the larger context of parent-child interactions (Gest et al., 2004). Leichter (1984) suggests that strong relationships among parents and children promote ideal situations for both physical and cognitive growth. Parents set the stage for the emotional climate of the home (Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Parker et al., 1999). A number of studies have explored the influence of parent-child attachment and its influence on the shared book reading experience (Bus et al., 1997; Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997). The research is based on the concept that children who have a strong attachment to their parents are more willing to explore the unfamiliar and take risks. These same studies suggested that the more secure the parent-child relationship, the more engaged the child and parent are in shared book reading experiences. When either a child or mother presents insecure behaviors, fewer verbal interactions occur, with even less frequent conversations that move beyond the page (Bus et al., 1997).

Avoidant and controlling parental behaviors have also been examined as factors that impact how the parent-child relationship affects learning to read at home. Gest et al. (2004) conducted a multi-method study with 76 parents and children during the summer prior to Kindergarten entrance to look at the impact parental preference for disciplinary approaches to their child correlated to a child's language outcomes. Shared reading practices, children's comprehension skills and perspective on disciplining children were each considered as moderating factors. Despite the parent's level of education and the child's ability to negotiate nonverbal cues, parents who identified their preference for use of physical punishment had

children with lower language comprehension scores. An analysis of covariance demonstrated a reliable association between shared book reading and children's language comprehension skills for parents who indicated that they would use high levels of nondirective reasoning as a means of discipline.

Summary

These studies indicate that the experience of shared book reading is integrated with beliefs, actions and values beyond the images and talk presented by a book. To consider shared reading practices without taking into consideration the socially constructed context would neglect to recognize the varying factors that influence learning. Learning is much more than rote memorization. What allows information to be actualized is the ability of individuals to contextualize and make meaning of new information (Vygotsky & Hanfman, 1962).

As powerful a tool as shared book reading can be, some studies have demonstrated the practice to have little to no impact on children's literacy. Hindman and colleagues (2008) challenge the field to "untangle" the findings to better reveal the specific practices that impact specific learning outcomes. Characteristics of the shared book experiences have clearly been examined in the research. Hindman et al. (2008) points out that often the research does not specifically examine and control for such factors as the initial skill set of the child or parent, the shared book experience training model, or the instruments used to measure the shared reading experience. Perhaps an expanded definition and exploration of parental involvement and family literacy (i.e, shared book reading) that recognizes literacy as a "socially situated practice that develops within the context of family life" (Dail & Payne,

2008, p. 331) would further the field's understanding of what it means for a parent to read with their child.

Home-Visitation Programs

Parents are the "first and most significant teachers in the lives of children" (Durkin, 1966; Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999). Parents can have a sizeable impact on the literacy learning of the family (Edwards & Pleasant, 1998). It has been suggested that cognitively stimulating parent-child interactions lead to success in school over other forms of interaction (Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2004).

From birth, children depend on and develop an attachment to their parents. As children interact more with their world they begin to act in ways that demonstrate their desire to deviate from the expected. They need to build on individual understanding and confidence in order to survive. Learning to dress, eat, and interact with others allows children to function autonomously. They are then able to develop self-regulatory skills so that they can competently react to others and their surroundings (Edwards, Sheridan, & Knoche, 2008). The development of problem-solving strategies is critical to the decision-making ability of the child. Therefore, the choices and opportunities presented to children by parents are critical to situating the child optimally to learn.

"Family literacy" has been used to describe the *literacy practices of families*, primarily identified in their homes (Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). It is also a term used to define a *program* that recognizes the importance of promoting strong literacy practices as a key intervention strategy in supporting school and life success (Swick, 2009; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Such programs attempt to promote or enhance family literacy,

often with specific focus on children's ability to read, write and communicate. Numerous studies have identified family literacy practices and programs as having statistically significant effects on children's oral language skills and general abilities (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). In fact, effective family literacy programs have been identified as having key elements that focus on improving the overall degree of literacy competence of the entire family (Swick, 2009). Engagement revolves around literacy-centered activity. Programs are also family-centered co-mingling learning with being a family, designed to take place synchronously. Effective programs give families a voice in programming and encourage the development of a strong parent-child bond. Program options are intentionally intense and provide the necessary amount of time to realize and embed literacy activities. Effective literacy programs also have staff that deliver the family literacy program that are trained and involved in on-going professional development. However, there is considerable variation in the way family literacy programs are delivered.

The explicit means by which family literacy programs may be used to formally engage parents with their children in support of their development has been found in one of three contexts: school-based involvement, home-school conferencing, and home-based engagement (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991). Within these types of frameworks, differing forms of literacy activities have been employed (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). One form, school-based involvement, involves parents reading to their child in or outside the school setting. The second form has been identified as home-school conferencing requiring parents to listen to their child read. And, the third form, home-based involvement, requires parents to be involved in training to learn the literacy activities that are to be done with their child.

Home-based involvement, which is dependent on a training component, has been shown to result in positive effects. When parents of Kindergarten through Grade 3 children are involved in training around literacy activities, an effect size equivalent to a 10-point gain on a standardized assessment has been demonstrated (Sénéchal & Young, 2008, p. 897). It was discovered that parents are most effective when they are trained to teach literacy skills using specially-designed instructional materials (Sénéchal & Young, 2008; Toomey, 1993). Interactive reading (DeBruin-Parecki, 2010) and joint-book reading (DeJong & Leseman, 2001; Isbell et al., 2004; Morrow, 1983) are such interventions that have demonstrated positive effects, resulting in better preparedness for school.

Programs that aim to empower parents to support literacy development through home based involvement may do so by delivering training to parents at home. These programs are named "Home-visitation" programs. The home is thought to be an ideal setting for parents, particularly those with young children. It allows for ease of access for those parents who do not have a means of transportation. Also, it is believed that by bringing the services to an environment where parents are most comfortable strong relationships are more easily fostered with those delivering the training (Riley et al., 2008). While recognizing the important role played by parents, such programs often encompass a broader range of topics beyond literacy, including the establishment of boundaries, rules and routines, and cognitive development. Whatever the program intent, the training that is delivered occurs in the confines of an environment familiar and controlled by the parent.

Defining Home-Visitation

Home-visitation is a label that has been given to programs that deliver knowledge in the home. Such programs have been provided to both young and old parents, ranging in purpose, length of stay, and duration of program participation. Often the primary objective of these programs is to provide prevention or treatment. Recent attention has been given to programs that deliver in home guidance to parents with the goal of improving educational outcomes for their child (Astuto & LaRue, 2009; Haskins, Paxson, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). The federal government and related policy makers have viewed home-visitation programs as favorable and viable options for families (Weiss, 2006). During his first administration, President Obama's call and support for home-visitation programs recognized the existing differences in program implementation, populations served, the variable skill, training and curriculum aligned to each program, and resulting outcomes (Haskins, Paxson, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Because of such disparities, many programs are undergoing further examination that is questioning their success and the construct that surrounds it (Astuto & LaRue, 2009; Haskins, Paxson, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Home-visitation is often used to educate parents or resolve issues related to the home environment. Program objectives vary from providing rehabilitation services for individuals to providing assistance that serves as preventative or proactive measures. The types of home-visitation programs explored in this review are those that provide direct support for parents with the end goal of improving outcomes for both parents and their children, specifically those affecting literacy development. The majority of programs that fall into this category are those that deliver parent education from prenatal to age 5 years of the child. Models include Healthy Families America (HFA), Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

(HIPPY), and Parents as Teachers (PAT). In a meta-analysis of these home-visitation

programs, it was found that most programs differ in the goals they set for their program, the

options they present to parents in terms of intensity of services, the qualifications of staff

who serve in the program, and the population of families they serve (Gomby & Gomby,

2003). Figure 1 illustrates these differences.

Program	Goals	Population Served	Frequency of Visits	Providers
Parents as Teachers (Note: PACT is based on this program.)	• Give child a solid foundation for school success • Increase parents feelings of competence and confidence	• Prenatal through 5th birthday • All income and all ethnicities	• Monthly, biweekly or weekly	Paraprofessionals, and those with associates, bachelors and advanced degrees
Healthy Families America	• Promote positive parenting • Prevent child abuse and neglect	• All woman and child evaluated • Participants are those who are identified as being at risk • Birth through 5th birthday	• Weekly, moving toward quarterly	Paraprofessionals, includes individuals with Bachelors degree
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters	• Promotes parents as child's primary teacher • Encourages parent involvement in school and community	• Academic year, up to two years before, through end of Kindergarten • All incomes and ethnicities	• Bi-weekly visits	Part-time, Paraprofessionals

Figure 1. Profiles of Home-visitation Programs, adapted from Gomby, Colross, & Behrman, 1999; Weiss & Klein, 2006.

Parents as Teachers (PATs) and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool

Youngsters (HIPPY) each focus on the academic and social development of the child, while

Healthy Families objective is to prevent child abuse and neglect. Research studies conducted

on the PATs and HIPPY programs have demonstrate positive impacts on child school

readiness and achievement, as well as, parental involvement (National Research and

Evaluation Center, 2009; Pfannenstiel & Zigler, 2007, 2008). Most home-visitation programs focus on some aspect related to the development of the child's language. A distinguishing feature of the PATs (PACT) program is the emphasis placed on the promotion of parental competence and confidence and use of curricula that has a focus on early literacy development.

What have been commonly defined are the elements by which home-visitation involvement may be measured. Korfmacher et al. (2008) describe how parents participate and use home-visitation services as parental "involvement." The definition of involvement by Korfmacher and colleagues (2008) relies on several assumptions. The first assumption is that participation in a home-visitation program is multidimensional. Participation is inclusive of the frequency and duration of each visit, as well as the amount of the service offered that is actually received. A second assumption is that involvement is a process. This implies that the actualized home visit is ever changing and not static. The third assumption is that the current parenting condition will influence the home-visitation experience. And finally, the nature of the home visitor will equally influence the parent's participation in the program.

In the context of home-visitation, there is a difference between the terms "participation" and "engagement." Program participation is defined as the extent to which families attended scheduled home visits, whereas engagement is a measure of the families' depth of program application. Each of these factors influences the realized experiences for both the parent and child. While what is experienced will vary based on these assumptions, the outcomes that result are equally similar and varied.

Parent Participation

Parent participation is the most frequently reported variable in home-visitation programs (Korfmacher et al., 2008). This may be due to the fact that it is most easily recorded and maintained as part of a family's involvement. The amount of service provided to any one family is likely to be best represented by the total number of hours experienced rather than the number of visitations or the frequency of visitations (i.e., weekly, monthly). Only then can the true quantity of service be measured and compared. However, in doing so, the data would be neglecting the potential influences of both the parent and home visitor over time if the total time experienced was not taken into account. For example, does a parent's participation vary if 30 total hours are realized over a period of 6 months or 3 years? The National Parents and Children program has established a level of acceptable level of participation as being 75% of all scheduled visits completed. While defining participation by the percent of completed visits takes into account the number of completed visits over a period of time, it does not explicitly reflect the total length of participation in the program.

The frequency with which a program can expect parental involvement may be prescriptive, as is the case with Early Head Start, or may be up to the parent, which is the case with the Parents as Teachers programming. Some programs require on-going visits as part of their child's participation in a preschool program, while others require participation as a condition of maintaining enrollment in the home-visitation program. How parents understand what is expected of them may also influence their participation (Korfmacher et al., 2008). It is important for the parent to understand the program's expectations prior to enrollment.

Measuring participation by noting the number of contacts also does not allow for a complete understanding of what constitutes a contact. Some programs might log all contacts to include one-on-one home sessions, joint parent learning activities and phone conversations. Home-visitation contact may also be counted as part of the delivery of other services, as is the case with some Even Start, center-based programs (Rextor-Staerkel, 2002). The average and range of contact is important to understand. It likely provides insight into the way in which information is delivered, as well as the quality of the relationship between the parent and home visitor.

Participation rates also vary based on how parents are invited to participate. Program participation that is a condition of an intervention (i.e., release from substance abuse program) seems to have higher refusal rates than those programs that endorse open enrollment (Thompson et al., 2001; Wagner et al., 2000). Program attendance also varies across programs. For example, in one study of Parents as Teacher programs (PAT), which promotes universal access, found attendance in scheduled visits to be varied, ranging from 38% to 78% (Wagner et al., 2000). Participation also varies based on needs. Parents who are at risk often demonstrate less engagement in a home-visitation program than is required (Wagner et al., 2003). Expectations for participation, opportunities to participate and time spent during and between visits are fundamental elements in understanding how parent participation is understood and measured.

Parent Engagement

Wagner and colleagues (2003) support the notion that parenting programs "help parents create a growth-promoting environment for their children within their unique cultural

and socio-economic contexts (p. 17)." Engagement in parenting programs is dependent on a complex set of conditions and is defined beyond a period of enrollment. In an exploratory qualitative study conducted with participants enrolled in a Parents as Teachers program, five dimensions of parent engagement were identified as "Say Yes," "Be There," Be Involved," Do the Homework," and "Look for More" engagement (Wagner et al., 2003). The "Say Yes" engagement was named as parents sought out enrollment or persisted in participation in the home visits. Parents who demonstrate an internal motivation to participate on a consistent basis in home visits were defined as demonstrating "Be There" engagement. The third form of engagement, "Be Involved," represented families who engaged in activities during the home visits. The researchers used a home-visitation record that was compiled by the parent educator, which rates the degree to which the parent engages based on the parent educators perception of the parent's engagement. The parent educators perceptions of "being involved" were based on a 1 to 7 rating scale around the parents overall engagement, listening to the Parent Educator, asking questions, and asking for advice. "Do the Homework" engagement is the fourth dimension and relates to the families who use information gained from the program between visits. The final and fifth dimension named "Look for More" engagement was used to describe parents who look beyond the information presented during each visit to other resources to increase their understanding.

Parent engagement in "Be There, "Be Involved" and "Do the Homework" engagement are reliant on the relationships established between the parents and parent educator, parent characteristics, program attributes and participation context. Parental characteristics in this study were considered as they related to parent engagement. The analysis of the data from this study indicates that each dimension operated independent of the

others. Wagner et al. (2003) share that data gathered from their analysis indicates that the characteristics of the parent educator, such as their background, personal characteristics (e.g., genuine care for parent and child, sociability) and skills (e.g., ability to balance roles, attunement) may influence parental engagement in each dimension. This research also strongly suggests that the relationship between home visitors and parent engagement affects how and when a family is engaged, and the frequency and intensity of engagement (Wagner et al., 2003).

Parental participation and engagement are dependent on the amount of time a parent has and chooses to spend with their children. It has been well documented that the quantity and quality of time parents spend with their children impacts a child's cognitive and social-emotional development (Belsky, 1991; Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi & Robinson, 1997). Monna and Guethier (2008) reviewed literature that documented how parents spent time involved, engaged, and active in childcare activities. The findings suggest that there is a relationship between time spent and the gender of the child and parent. When gender is matched, more parental time is realized. Differences in gender appear to lessen, as the children grow older. It is also shown that woman continue to play the major role in time spent with the children.

The research on parental time is not without issues. Monna and Guethier (2008) point out that what constitutes time as measured does not include time spent being available for their children or general supervision. It does not take into account time spent that is considered an investment in the well-being of the child, such as music lessons, involvement in sporting teams, time spent with relatives, etc. Therefore, time spent should not be measured merely by analyzing the actual time of the activities or frequency of the activities.

Parents on average are spending more time with their children than they did 30 to 40 years ago (Monna & Guethier, 2000). The investments parents make in their children contribute to their child's cognitive development. In a recent analysis of the American Time Use Survey, parents with a higher degree of education were found to spend more time with their children (Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008). Mothers who held a college degree spent 4.5 hours more per week than did mothers who held a high school diploma or less. Home-visitation programs that advocate for quality parent-child time may more positively influence parents with lower degrees of education.

Patterns of time and the activities engaged in during parent-child time are important in understanding how parenting impacts a child's development. When examining the amount of time committed to participation in a home-visitation program (i.e., the actual visit, time spent implementing what is learned during visitation), a variety of measures should be used to ensure a complete picture of how time is spent participating should be included.

Home Visitors

The Home Visitor (also referred to as "Provider") is another, and perhaps, the most influential factor of quality programming (Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie, 2002; Jack, DiCenso, & Lohfeld, 2005; Kitzman, Yoos, Cole, Korfmacher, & Hanks, 1997). An effective home visitor is able to establish a rapport with the family, navigate the unpredictable lives of families with young children, and can alter curriculum to respond to the needs of families (Gomby & Gomby, 2003). Home visitors are described in the literature as both professionals and paraprofessionals. However, Gomby and Gomby (2003) note that the education level of the home visitor does not seem to matter in terms of their effectiveness. Rather, it is more important to hire an individual who can be taught the

curriculum and has the organizational skills to manage a fluid content and connect with families. It is the ability to develop trusting and supportive relationships that may prove to be the most influential element of home-visitation programs. In fact, an effective home visitor is someone who is able to put their own values and beliefs aside and be open to understanding and valuing those of the parents they serve (Wasik, 1993).

Research on the form of the relationship between a home visitor and parent demonstrates that it is often revealed as a "helping relationship," one in which home visitors demonstrate empathy and parents embrace someone who supports, understands, and is willing to assist them (Daro et al., 2003). Daro et al. (2003) suggest that the home visitors' effectiveness depends more on the background and experience of the home visitor than educational attainment of the home visitor. Some have proposed that the success of this relationship establishes the foundation for the parents to develop fruitful relationships with others (Barnard, 1998). Sar et al. (2010) advocate for the inclusion of relationship strengthening components to support compromised families. They believe that the positive effects of home-visitation services can be boosted and sustained by intentionally encouraging the development of family relationships. However, there are a limited number of studies that have attempted to either quantify or qualify these relationships. The relationship history of the parents also influences the quality of the services and program participation. Understanding these relationships would provide additional insight into the parent's program engagement (Wagner et al., 2003).

Some researchers have attempted to identify factors within the home visitor – parent relationship that might be promoted in an effort to improve the quality of home-visitation programs (Daro, 2003; Wagner et al., 2003). For example, Daro et al. (2003) discovered

programs that attempt to deliberately match home visitors with families based on parenting style preference and ethnicity demonstrated longer enrollment periods on the part of the parents. However, McCurdy, Gannon and Daro (2003) investigated features of the home visitor-parent relationship that positively influenced the engagement of parents in home-visitation programs across ethnic groups. Their study found no differences in attrition due to ethnicity, employment or school status of the parent. This suggests that the relationship is more dependent on a common understanding and respect for the role of parenting between the provider and parent.

Barnard (1998) developed and applied a survey tool to evaluate from the perspective of the parent, the extent to which the provider was meeting the needs of the parent in an attempt to reveal additional insight into the provider-parent relationship. However, the study did not go beyond measuring parent satisfaction. Sharp, Ispa, Thornburg and Lane (2003) reviewed Early Head Start programs, measuring personalities, time spent in the home together and quality of the interaction. They discovered that the personalities of the provider and parent were predictive of the quality of the relationship, rather than the amount of time spent together. These results appear to have implications on the importance of separating out parent participation rates from other measures of engagement.

The quality of the provider is also dependent upon the training and supervision that occurs. Home visitors should receive adequate training and support to ensure that programs are delivered with fidelity. They should be monitored and supported by constructive feedback from program managers so that families have an optimal opportunity to realize change. The feedback should include not only the delivery of the content of the curriculum,

but also the extent to which the established relationship has developed an effective rapport with the family.

If the degree to which a positive relationship has been established between the provider and parent is maintained as a primary source for success in home-visitation programs, then it stands to reason that this relationship should be carefully examined when considering program impact. Program evaluations should look beyond participation rates as signs of effectiveness and look to reveal how the relationship between the provider and parent is supporting the program's objectives.

Other Factors That Influence Parental Involvement

Across the 25 years of research on home-visitation programs that Gomby and Gomby (2003) reviewed, there was one commonality: the struggle to maintain quality programming. When considering the clients of home-visitation programs, the circumstances under which families elect to enroll impact their participation and engagement. For example, members of the family that are present in the home may or may not be active participants in the home-visitation program. And yet, these same family members may influence the content that is heard, understood and utilized by the family. Information received may conflict with family values and beliefs (Korfmacher et al., 2008; Wagner et al., 2000), resulting in underutilization of program components. Additionally, the age of the parents, single or intact family households, socio-economic status, the birth order of the child involved and the number of children in the family each impact the degree of participation and quality of program that can be realized.

The current stability of the family also affects the quality of the program. Mothers who may be suffering from depression or had difficult relationships with caregivers growing up are likely to participate at lower rates (Korfmacher, 1997; Korfmacher et al., 2008). A parent's internal motivation to be involved and perceived need of help also influences the degree to which participation is realized (Daro et al., 2003). The work life of the family may also play a role. Families whose parents work long hours may not have the time to implement and practice taught skills.

Korfmacher and colleagues (2008) further suggest that the program structure and content influence the family's involvement. The way in which the program intends to be realized by the parents is considered the program structure. Home-visitation programs may be structured in a variety of ways, with some using screening assessments to establish needs and goals, while others engage parents in identifying their own needs and strengths from which to build upon. The content will also influence the parent's participation as parents find value in the messages received and experience support in meeting the needs of their children. Consider the following three nationally recognized programs: Nurse Home-visitation Program, Healthy Families of America and Parents as Teachers. The Nurse Home-visitation Program is aimed at serving low-income, first-time mothers with the goals of improving pregnancy outcomes, child health and development needs and supporting family economic self-sufficiency. Healthy Families of America serves parents of all income levels who are at risk for abuse or neglect. The program is designed to promote positive parenting behaviors in an attempt to prevent child abuse or neglect. Parents as Teachers programs serve all income levels and empower families to increase their understanding of child development and preparedness for school. Each of these programs offers different content and support for

parenting (Weiss & Klein, 2006). The content of the lessons is representative of the local program's goals and the curriculum content supports the goals established by the program. Participation in any one of these programs will differ simply because the structure of the program is different (i.e., the number of required visits) and the goals each program seeks to achieve vary.

Home-visitation programs that are specifically designed to promote literacy have been criticized for not taking into account the broader socio-cultural context that influences the parent-child relationship (Auerbach, 1989; Auerbach, 1995). Edwards, Sheridan and Knoche (2008) contend that there is a lack of evidence to support parental impact on literacy learning independent of socio-cultural influences. It has been suggested that participation in home-visitation programs may be somewhat dependent on socio-cultural factors, such as economic status and ethnicity, and that these factors should be examined carefully. For example, Compton-Lilly (2003; 2007; 2009) conducted numerous studies that revealed the power of realizing the strengths of families. She worked with families that were at risk, many of which appeared to struggle to support their child's literacy development. She began to understand her students and their families as possessing the desire to participate in enriched conversation in supportive environments. These families had books they enjoyed reading and reading was strongly connected to social relationships. Even students who struggled to read could still make meaning of text, particularly when constructed with peers. By putting aside her assumptions of what families don't have and recognizing the resources available to each family, she was able to confront her assumptions and realize their potential.

Families play a major role in creating home environments that support the language development of their children. Leading instruction in home-based visitation programs with a

strengths-based approach empowers parents. Families are then recognized for the cultural context from which they thrive. They are prepared to recognize strengths and provide opportunities for families that are relevant and meaningful (Carte, Chard & Pool, 2009).

Gomby and Gomby's (2003) review suggests home visitors should be aware of a family's culture in order to best understand the beliefs and practices currently held by families. As home visitors promote parenting behaviors, it is important to recognize how each family member views parenting. The existing parenting style is highly dependent on the cultural underpinnings of each parent. For example, various families representing different ethnically and cultural groups exhibit differences in language use (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005). Some studies seem to indicate that Black and Latino mothers talk less with their children than do white mothers. Participation in parenting programs has increased their ability to communicate, nurture and apply appropriate means of discipline.

McCurdy, Gannon, and Daro (2003) suggest that patterns of attrition rates among different ethnic groups may be related to contextual issues: service location and service focus. African American and Latino families preferred home-based programming, where as white families preferred centered-based programs (McCurdy, Gannon, & Daro, 2003). White families also preferred programs that were more therapeutic in nature, whereas African American and Latino families preferred programs focused on support (McCurdy, Gannon, & Daro, 2003). Recognizing the social construct associated with different ethnic groups allows programs to better understand and present accessible alternatives for participation.

Home-Visitation Program Outcomes

It has been demonstrated that home-visitation programs whose primary audience includes parents in fact have positive effects on children (Coates, 1996; Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Pfannenstiel et al., 2002; Wagner, Spiker, & Lin, 2002; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). For example, Pfannenstiel et al. (2002) affirmed that parents who participated in the Parents as Teachers program read to their child more frequently and were more likely to enroll their child in preschool, an activity known to promote school readiness. Parents as Teachers studies have found benefits for children well into upper elementary school (Coates, 1996; Pfannenstiel, Seitz, & Zigler, 2007) as compared to peers who did not participate in the program.

There is agreement in the field that two specific conditions magnify the impact home-visitation programming can have on families. The first involves the degree to which the home-visitation program is being implemented in isolation of other early childhood programs. Programs that work simultaneously with the parent and child have been demonstrated to be successful, while others that work with parents in isolation have met with less support (Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). Additionally, it appears that when family participation in a PATs program is combined with participation in center-based, child-focused services programs, impact on children is magnified.

Home visiting programs that are linked with schools may result in parents becoming more involved in their children's schools. School-based, home-visitation programs have been shown to realize more parental involvement in their child's schools (Gomby & Gomby, 2003). This finding suggests that perhaps there is a need to consider the combined effects of home-visitation and other early childhood programs promoted by schools.

The second condition concerns the needs of the family prior to program enrollment. Gomby and Gomby (2003) suggest that cognitive benefits for children are often realized when specific deficits are identified and addressed. It appears that when a specific program outcome is aligned with a population of parents and children, a curriculum to be used, and a common definition of program involvement, benefits for both the parent and child are realized. This has also been identified as an effective approach when families of extremely low income have been identified and engaged in programming (Wagner, Spiker, & Lin, 2002).

Gomby and Gomby (2003) collectively reviewed evaluated programs where home-visitation realized positive outcomes for families in the form of improved parenting and abuse prevention. The effectiveness of home-visitation programs was measured by their impact on the parent's knowledge, behavior, attitudes and beliefs; health and welfare of children; and, the lives of parents. This has been echoed by others. Weis and Klein (2006) reviewed meta-analytical studies and concluded the following:

"In general, across the studies reviewed, home visiting was

associated with the following outcomes: parenting attitudes and behaviors

improved; more mothers returned to school; children had better social,

emotional, and cognitive abilities; and the potential for child abuse was

lower for home-visited children based on emergency room visits, injuries

and accidents. In general, across all studies reviewed, reported or suspected

child maltreatment was reduced but the difference was not statistically

significant (p. 15)."

Home-visitation programs have held the promise of realizing positive outcomes for parents and their children. However, research supports impact based on specific conditions of implementation, rather than illuminate findings that are more generalized across all home-visitation programming. This is due in large part to the variability of programming and the multitude of factors that impact family involvement (Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004).

Home visiting has been used as one delivery method for supporting parents and their children but has not yet been identified as an essential component of early childhood education. The lack of thorough studies conducted on the various home-visitation models (Daro, 2006; Weis & Klein, 2006), and the inconsistent measures of program effectiveness leave home-visitation as a promising practice (U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1991). Weis and Klein (2006) argue for investments in expansions of home-visitation programs to be accompanied by a commitment to continuous quality improvement. Studies designed to better understand the meaning parents make of their participation and recognize the connection between their parenting and the development of their child will likely reveal concrete opportunities for program advancement.

Summary

Involvement in home-visitation programs has been defined across two measures: the extent of participation and depth of engagement (Korfmacher et al. 2008). Research indicates that these measures are dependent on a variety of factors, including parental time, the stability of the household, the work life of the family, socio-economic status, and ethnicity (Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Korfmacher et al. 2008; Thompson et al., 2001; Wagner et al., 2000). The most influential factor is the relationship that has been established between the

provider and parent (Daro, 2003; Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie, 2002; Jack, DiCenso, & Lohfeld, 2005; Kitzman, Yoos, Cole, Korfmacher, & Hanks, 1997).

Korfmacher et al. (2008) challenges the field to consider the conditions under which families view positive engagement. Tension may exist between what parents perceive to be helpful and program curriculum. While it is challenging to measure parental engagement, programs should make every attempt to gather parental input as to how meaning is made of their involvement.

Literature on factors that encourage or dissuade families to participate in home-visitation programs have not fully unveiled conditions that create enhanced involvement in programs (Duggan et al., 2000; Spiker & Wagner, 2001). Many have called for additional empirical studies of home-visitation programs (Astuto & Allen, 2009; Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2008). The majority of the results included in this review are reflective of program evaluations, rather than analysis of experimental studies completed to explain specific outcomes. The difficulty lies in the lack of consistency in curriculum, staffing, and participation.

It has been noted that there is a lack of research around how new learning in family literacy programs in general is translated and used in family activities (Anderson et. al., 2010). Research on identifying the program components that contribute directly to parental engagement and the success of the child is needed. Through further research, home-visitation programs can be better defined and home-visitation in general can be better understood.

Home-School Relationships

Most school staff would agree that students who come from homes that demonstrate a positive relationship between the parents or caregivers and the school are better equipped to support success in school. However, too often school staffs are left asking why parents are not participating in formal invitations to engage in the school community in seemingly simple ways. An exploration of what constitutes family-school relationships and the factors that mediate the relationship reveals insight into what constitutes effective practices.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) devised a model that considers three questions defining the parent-school relationship: Why do parents become involved in their child's education? What does their involvement look like? How does their involvement impact their child's school outcomes? (as quoted from Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010, p. 27). The process focuses on accepting the underlying belief systems and environmental elements that ultimately influence participation and engagement on the part of families and schools. The resulting model can be found in Figure 2.

Level 5	Student Achievement (Varied Summary Measures)		
↑			
Level 4	Student Proximal Learning Attributes Conducive to Achievement		
Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn	Self-Regulatory Strategy Knowledge and Use	Social Self-Efficacy for Relating to Teachers
↑			
Level 3	(Mediated by) Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents		
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction
↑			
Level 2	Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents During Involvement Activities		
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction
↑			
Level 1.5 Parent Involvement Forms			
Values, Goals, Expectations, Aspirations	Involvement Activities at Home	Parent-Teacher-School Communications	Involvement Activities at School
Level 1 Parent Involvement Forms			
Personal Motivators	Parents' Perceptions of Contextual Invitations to Involvement		Life Context Variables

Parental Role Construction for Involvement	Parental Efficacy for Helping the Student Succeed in School	General School Invitations	Specific Teacher Invitations	Specific Student Invitations	Parental Knowledge and Skills	Parental Time and Energy	Family Culture

Figure 2. Adapted model of the parental involvement process from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997 (as illustrated by Walker, Shenkler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010, p. 28).

The five levels of the model describe the various factors that play a role in defining

parental involvement. Of the three factors at Level One, the perceptions held by parents of

contextual invitations to become involved are the most influential. Secondarily is the position

of the family, the motivation to become involved on behalf of the parents, as well as, the contextual situation the family is currently experiencing. This supports the notion that the interpersonal relationships between the parent-child and parent-school frame the degree of involvement.

The authors elected to create a sub-level, between Level One and Two, defining the various forms parental involvement may take. It illustrates how parents vary in the means of involvement (i.e., quality and quantity); the set of values, attitudes, expectations, and beliefs; and types of involvement (i.e., volunteering, helping with homework, reading to their child, or active participation on the PTA). Level Two then addresses the different instructional opportunities that may be presented to parents as they are engaged in school-directed activities.

Just as a parent's perception of the school influences parent engagement and involvement, so does the child's understanding of parental expectations influence the child's goals for learning (Friedel, Cortina, Turner, & Midgley, 2007). The third level further defines how a child's perception of their parent's involvement influences a child's educational performance.

The fourth and fifth levels of the model argue that the actual type of involvement corresponds to student achievement. At Level Four, the model recognizes that the degree of parent involvement is seen in the resulting internalization of learning and development of the child's skill set. The resulting skill set moves behind gaining knowledge to include the child's belief in self, belief and value in their teachers, intrinsic motivation to learn, and learning to self-monitor.

They note that the child's ability to self-regulate predicts success as a student. "What parents do in the context of their involvement seems less directly related to students' academic success than what children are prepared and willing to do" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandlers, 2005, p.30). This has powerful implications for how schools might focus their efforts in supporting parents as developers of a child's emotional and behavioral skill set.

The model recognizes the power held within the parent-child relationship. In doing so, parents are seen as guides and decision makers. Whether or not they are aware of the impact they have on their child's success, children, as they learn and experience the word, begin to navigate meaning. Their school career is framed by both the messages heard and felt in the home and school.

The Power of Perceptions

Hoover-Dempsey's and Sandler's model (2005) suggests that the most influential element involved in the development of the family-school relationship is the perceptions held by parents of their child and the school. It has been demonstrated that the perceptions of schools held by parents and students are positively correlated to the evaluations they have completed of school environments (Griffin, 2000). While the size of the school was not found to be a determining factor, the greater the racial diversity and mobility of the population, the weaker the correlation. Therefore, asking parents to evaluate the school on multi-measures is likely to gauge the degree to which the family-school relationship is conversely solidified.

Ferguson (2005) reminds us to consider the perspective held by the family of the school as the school invites the family to be involved in their child's education.

Understanding that these families may not hold the same perspective of parent involvement as the school means that the school is "building on cultural values of families, stress(ing) personal contact with families, foster(ing) communication with families, creat(ing) a warm environment for families, and facilitat(ing) accommodations for family involvement, including transportation, translators, and other similar services" (p. 1). These approaches are not intuitive and professional development for all staff is necessary to ensure successful approaches are institutionalized.

Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2008) recognize that parents tend to hold higher expectations for their children if they themselves are committed to be involved in the school and view their child's education favorably. Some believe that the benefits are realized when relationships are established that realize outcomes for both parties. When parents are provided the opportunity to engage in a way that respects their role as parents, but does not present a conflict of power or position between the home and school, positive results can be expected (Ream & Palardy, 2008).

Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2008) outline several suggestions that may open parents' access to the resources available from the school by clarifying perceptions. Some families may feel threatened by or misperceive the intent behind a school's efforts to involve parents in their child's education. A first step to involving parents is for a teacher to demonstrate to the parents that they respect them as members of the school community. The way parents are greeted and met will temper the development of this relationship.

School staff hold perceptions of what constitutes family involvement as well. Often school involvement is seen by staff as the primary means of parents supporting their child. If schools maintain their perception of school involvement as being equal to the sole support of

the academic achievement of children, then the majority of low socio-economic parents will fail to engage in family-school partnerships (Christenson, 2004). When marginalized parents do as much as they can, but school officials perceive them as providing less than full support, they can incorrectly be labeled as being incapable of making a positive contribution to their child's success. Creating such barriers places an added strain on the family (Lopez, Schibner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

A parent's understanding of appropriate and effective means of interacting with the school varies across ethnic and social class (Ogbu, 1993; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Wong and Hughes (2006) reported that African American parents understand their school involvement to be more supportive than teachers perceive it to be. Children who live in poverty and are of African American descent do not perform as well as their peers. Educators often blame their families and home environment for the lack of support and development of foundational skills (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Pianta et al., 1999; Snow, et al., 1991). Compton-Lilly (2003, 2007, 2009) argues that schools often perceive urban parents as disengaged and lacking care for the success of their child. Much of the literature on family literacy recognizes the positive expressions and high expectations that are held by urban parents for their children (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Some believe that the difficulties faced by these families can be overcome by culturally responsive instructional practices and the development of positive relationships between students, parents, and teachers (Neito, 1996). Revealing the perceptions held by the school and parents will provide insight into defining opportunities that may not currently exist. This calls for schools to consider how their perceptions and bias may be interfering with parents that represent different ethnic and social classes.

Students also hold perceptions of what teachers and parents think regarding their potential to perform. Latino students who had a lower perception of the expectations held by teacher or parents demonstrated lower performance in reading (Murray, 2009). In this study, the significance of having established strong relationships with more than one adult was not demonstrated. This contrasted with early studies that suggest strong relationships with multiple adults has a stronger effect on students. In this case, a single strong relationship with a teacher resulted in improved performance.

The relationship between parent and child in early adolescent has also been shown to influence school engagement and reading performance as demonstrated on standardized tests. Murray (2009) studied low income, primarily Latino early adolescent youth and identified qualities in the relationships between parent-child and student-teacher that impacted the reading achievement of youth. The quality of the parent-child relationship affected the degree of school engagement and performance in reading on standardized tests. Equally important was the finding that the relationship between the student and teacher positively affected student reported engagement and language arts measures. From the perspective of the child, the impact of both relationships is strongly dependent on the degree to which expectations are clearly articulated and the degree to which a trusting relationship has been established (Murray, 2009).

Perhaps what really matters is that at least one strong relationship is established. That the positive perception and realized support developed through one relationship, whether it be that between parent-child or parent-school, is truly what it takes to make the difference for children. Ultimately, when these relationships are established and result in the promotion of a

child capable of employing, as Hoover-Dempsey's and Sandler's model (2005) suggest, "self-regulatory knowledge and use, children are situated to be successful in school.

School Climate

No matter who holds the perception of whom, perceptions are results of real experiences and developed meanings of interactions. Each of the levels in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model relate to three broad themes that transcend a variety of relationships that exist between individuals and institutions: 1) climate; 2) the means of communication between those involved in the relationship; and, 3) opportunities to engage in true collaborative efforts. A further analysis of each theme and the factors that promote and challenge family-school partnerships provides additional insight into how family-school relationships are perceived and crafted.

Creating conducive climates for all families means providing visible and understandable signs of support that families are able to immediately recognize (Barrera & Warner, 2006). From defining a teacher's role for parents to demonstrating sensitivity for the diverse cultures and norms family possess, creating a culture of acceptance and respect is essential. Meeting family needs means understanding families as a whole. When school staff members are empowered to create an environment that welcomes the experiences and culture of all families, personal contacts are made, opening communication between families and the school. Lopez, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha (2001) advocate for home visits to be conducted by teachers and school leaders to better understand the dynamic under which the family is living. This initial and on-going form of communication sets the foundation for continuous interaction with the family and demonstrates a commitment to meeting the

family's needs. Through the provision of presenting solutions to family needs, schools are able to position families in empowering roles that support their child's learning in tangible ways. Addressing the needs of families is also a way of recognizing parents in respectful situations. Frattura and Capper (2007) agree that home-visitations on the part of the classroom teacher and/or school leader have a powerful impact on the family. Understanding the challenges parents face starts with a realization and visualization of the conditions under which they live. Some schools have engaged in neighborhood walks to have staff be seen and to have staff feel the dynamic of a community.

Communications with families need to take multiple forms, be on-going and consistent (Barrera & Warner, 2006). Newsletters, displaying student work in community settings, respecting the different work lives of families and the barriers that they confront due to their work, and anticipating times when miscommunication or poor communication may occur are some of the suggestions offered by Barrera and Warner (2006). From the start, having an adult speak with students in a way that demonstrates a desire and an openness to embrace all students, regardless of the family structure and support they bring with them to school, illustrates a willingness to work towards success for all. It is possible to provide a school environment in which all students can succeed without adequate parental involvement (Goodwin, 2011). However, if families are engaged "on their own terms over time," the conditions for optimal learning and high achievement are even more probable" (Frattura & Capper, 2007, p. 189). This includes communications that are respectful and responsive, beginning with a warm greeting at the front door of the school.

As long as school communities and leaders approach parental involvement using a deficit model, opportunities to engage families will continue to be missed (Roehlkepartain &

Leffert, 2000). Believing that parents do not care about their child's education, are incapable of helping children learn at home, or that their participation level is a reflection of the lack of potential possessed by a parent, only solidifies perceived deficits and closes the door to understanding how to engage both the child and the family. An asset approach may be used in an effort to tap into a parent's potential for engagement. When parents do demonstrate involvement in an initiative, recognizing them for their effort is equally essential. When families are engaged and recognize that schools reflect a climate of acceptance and assistance, they are more likely to support the efforts of the school. The perspective and experience of school and parents influence parent's willingness to support their child's school success. Recognizing parental perspectives and adjusting school staff understanding of what parents can and are willing to do can result in family-school partnerships that will benefit children (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2001).

Implications for Successful Home-School Partnerships

It is important for all service providers, within both formal and informal settings, to recognize the differences among families and reflect on what impact these differences may have on the role they play in the school community. Guthrie, as cited in Lynch and Hanson (2004), states five reasons why an individual may find it difficult to accept and understand a different culture (p. 20-22). First, one develops a cultural understanding early and establishes their cultural disposition by age 5. This has major implications in daycare settings where children experiencing different cultural perspectives may bring home learned behaviors, resulting in parents perceiving changes in their children that defy the home culture. Second, children learn new cultural patterns faster and easier than adults. Because children are more

likely to make cross-cultural encounters work, school is a prime environment for establishing opportunities to stretch beyond the confines of any one particular culture. Third, one's values are culturally tied and may have to be altered in order for the individual to be successful in a different cultural setting. This is important to note because values are so closely tied to biases, which appear at the surface of cultural conflicts. Fourth, when interpreting a second culture, ones' first culture will inevitably interfere with the understanding of the second. This is only natural as an individual uses past experience and present knowledge to mediate any new situation. And finally, behavior patterns are strongly based on one's values system. If an individual is being asked to assimilate into a new culture, then he is essentially being asked to change who he is and how he acts.

When assessing cross-cultural situations, it is equally important to remember that 1) culture is not static; 2) other factors, such as socioeconomic status, educational attainment and occupation also influence one's values, beliefs, and behaviors; 3) differences between cultural groups can be as great as those within a group; 4) in defining cultural differences, comparisons are usually made to the mainstream culture; and 5) everyone has a culture as a result of exposure to one or more cultures (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 23). All service providers, including school staff, should consider first defining their own cultural perspective, and then become sensitized to the barriers that may be present for cultures not like their own. These barriers may exist in terms of language, family priorities, systems, perception of professional roles, belief systems, and socio-political factors. A first step is for school staff to engage in professional development that promotes an awareness of cross-cultural competency.

Developing a cross-cultural competence has been defined by Barrera and Corso, as cited in Lynch and Hanson (2004), as "'practitioners' ability to respond respectfully, reciprocally, and responsively to children and families in ways that acknowledge the richness and limitations of families and practitioner's socio-cultural contexts" (p. 43). In order to develop such a competence, school staff need to have an awareness of one's culture and bias, appropriate and accurate knowledge of the second culture and the skills to negotiate a bridge between the cultures. The goal is for service providers to create a culturally sensitive environment so that positive outcomes for families result.

An additional shift towards creating a bridge between two potentially opposing cultures can occur when you consider how information regarding how to support a child's development is shared (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2001). Moving away from didactic methods to sharing and asking for input from parents may result in conversations that are more open and a joint effort between the school and home will be established. Many collectivistic cultures believe that the process of education includes the moral, social, and ethical development of children. However, there are no normed approaches to addressing these areas of development. It is, therefore, up to the school or program to communicate and embrace a menu of approaches that are tangible and understandable to families (Lee & Bowman, 2006). Applying the collectivistic-individualistic framework can help school staff identify and avoid potential conflicts.

In an effort to make both individualistic expectations and acceptable levels of collectivistic approaches work, teachers, parents and students need to develop a common understanding of what it means to be a member of the classroom (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2001, p. 133). And here lies the heart of the family-school partnership

challenge. Educators are being asked to raise standards of academic performance of all students, one student at a time, through the lens of an individualistic, competitive society (Lareau & Shumar, 1996). The backgrounds of students entering school are becoming more and more diverse. Educators cannot ignore the varied family lives students return to each evening. We need to put forth the effort and time to reach out and support the current efforts of parents, assuring them that through the development of a sense of belonging, collectively, all students can learn, and can learn more.

Opportunities for parents to learn about their child's literacy development and how to support it in the home are essential pieces of the communication process. How, when, and by whom this is done will likely affect the degree to which parents ultimately will engage in school-based literacy activities. Seemingly simple literacy promotions, such as bringing books from the school into the home, can have a positive impact on the language development of a child (Weitzman, 2004). In a study of kindergarten students and their parent's involvement in school, it was found that parental involvement positively affected student social skills and mathematical ability (Weitzman, 2004). The study controlled for the quality of teacher interaction, parental involvement, parental education, and child race.

Parents who participate in school based activities gain insight into how their child is performing and the expectations the school holds for children (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Fan and Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative studies that considered the impact of parental involvement and academic success of students. They concluded that the relationship is strongest when parents held high expectations and aspirations for children. Parental home supervision of student behavior held the weakest relationship. They also looked at the measures used to determine academic success and found

that stronger relationships exist when more global measures (i.e., GPA) are used over subject specific grades (i.e., reading grade).

Summary

The quality of the parent-teacher relationship is related to the achievement of a student (Fan & Chen, 2001; Powell, 2010; Wong & Hughes, 2006), specifically the development of early literacy skills (Arnold et al., 2008; Sénéchal, 2006). Strong family-school relationships established in a child's early years have been shown to have long-lasting effects, well into High School (Barnard, 2003). Schools can no longer afford to ignore the important role a parent plays in the education of their child and must accept that schools can impact parent involvement.

School leaders need to look beyond traditional programming of parent involvement and look to the reasons why traditional approaches are neither successful nor appropriate for many families (Pianta et al, 1999). Frattura and Capper (2007) suggest as potential barriers the perceptions held by many families of what "school" or a particular school means to them: the work life of families and its impact on their ability to be visible to the school, the knowledge held by parents about school work compared to that of their child's, the current reality around the willingness of all staff members to embrace parents of all walks of life, and the cultural and language barriers that exist for some families. Taking this into consideration and opening up a purview of what skills, knowledge, conditions and beliefs are held by families will lead to new ways to embrace all parents, particularly marginalized ones. Darling (2008) calls for an intergenerational solution that resolves the issues of literacy through

differentiated programming for parents and their children. Schools supporting families in a way that is sustainable over time demonstrates commitment to the family and values the role parents' play.

Conclusions

Reading with young children is understood to be an essential practice that has the promise of benefits for children (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Duursam, Augustyn, & Zuckerman, 2008; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Shared reading between a parent and child has been recognized as a family literacy practice. The practice of shared reading is situated in a particular family context for reading. The promotion and learning around shared reading has occurred through involvement in home-visitation programs such as Parents as Teachers, which serves as the model for the PACT program studied here. Practices used with parents during their involvement in home-visitation programs have not been sufficiently connected to the acquisition of parenting skills or the child's attainment of early literacy skills. There is a need for an expanded definition and exploration of parental involvement in literacy practices that recognizes shared reading as being socially situated (Dail & Payne, 2008, p. 331).

The research reviewed in this chapter suggests that more studies are needed that identify what it means for parents to be successfully involved in home-visitation programs and the specific readiness and early literacy skills acquired by the child as a result of parent involvement in the program. Program evaluations are also needed that include how parents come to understand their involvement so that program quality can be defined and improved. Instruments have been used to measure parenting skills of parents while involved in home-

visitation programs, but such instruments do not include parents' voice and may be slanted toward recognizing a single socio-cultural context (Prins & Toso, 2008). Engaging with parents in conversation about their involvement in programs and how their parenting is informed or strengthened is needed to ensure parenting captures the social and cultural influences.

Home-visitation programs recognize the important role parents play. School systems can learn from the relationships developed between parent educators and parents as they look to increase parental involvement. If schools' intent is to involve and engage parents as partners, then recognition of the power that parents possess is needed in order to reveal solutions.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of conducting the study is to identify how parental involvement in the PACT program results in outcomes for parents and their children. In this chapter, I will discuss how the purpose of the study will be realized. First, under the section entitled, "PACT Program Overview," I will describe the major components of the program relevant to the study. Then, in the section entitled, "Methodology Overview," an overview of the methodology, discussing the intent and specifics used in a mixed method design is described. In the section entitled, "Data Sources and Collection" the data sources, methods of collecting the quantitative data, and subsequent participants for the qualitative phase of the study are discussed. Finally, under "Data Analysis," the specific procedure that will be used to analyze the data that is collected is reviewed.

PACT Program Overview

The Binghamton City School District (BSCD) offers a home-visitation program for families known as "Parents and Children Together" (PACT). For over 20 years, the program has delivered a comprehensive, literacy focused parenting education program to families who reside in the Binghamton School District's catchment area. The program has encouraged open enrollment, but is often used as a valued resource for families that display characteristics in need of support. Referral agencies include Catholic Social Services, Broome Developmental High Risk Birth Clinic, and local pediatricians, among other local service providers. Parents have the opportunity to self-select program options that include weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly visits. While participation can occur prenatally through school-age 5, families participate on average for 1 to 2 years. Family participation includes visits with at least one parent/care-giver and the child.

The BCSD PACT program employs Parent Educators who guide parents in enhancing their child's early language and literacy development by increasing parents' understanding and application of key parenting behaviors that are thought to contribute to child language and literacy development. A parent educator schedules visits that take place in the home with parent(s) and child present. Parents are presented with information related to the developmental stage of their child.

Each PACT parent educator delivers the Parents As Teachers (PATs) curriculum and services. Prior to becoming a PACT Parent Educator, attendance at a Foundational and Model Implementation Training is required. This training lays the groundwork for effective use of the PAT's Foundational Curriculum. The PAT's approach to home visiting focuses around three areas of emphasis: *parent-child interaction, development centered parenting, and family wellbeing*. Model Implementation Training helps the program successfully replicate the PAT model and realize implementation strategies to assist in the delivery of quality PAT services. This is a 30 hour week long training to certify a parent educator in a PAT model. The PAT's approach assists parent educators in strengthening families and promoting positive parent child interaction so their children are healthy, safe and ready to learn. The parent educators hone their skill and knowledge specifically in: Family Support and Parenting Education, Child and Family Development, Human Diversity within Family Systems, Health, Safety and Nutrition, and Relationships between Families and Communities. Additionally, parent educators are supported in the field through the PACT program by a Coordinator who ensures reliability in the use of assessment measures and fidelity to the program objectives.

Before each home visit, families are asked what topic and developmental area they would like to focus on during their next visit. This is asked again when checking in with families. Screenings and assessments indicate to parents and to parent educators skill areas to build. Specifically, the Parent Education Profile (PEP), originally designed for Even Start Families, is used to assess the depth of family engagement in the home (See Appendix A). If parents do not read or read in a language other than English or Spanish, parent educators bring wordless books or images to encourage the parent to tell the story using the pictures as a guide.

PACT encourages families to use what is in their home already to support the development of skills. The Foundational curriculum provides a list of supplies a program may need, creatively use recycled materials. Families are urged to be creative and come up with their own ideas. This happens frequently especially after a parent educator introduces several ideas in the home.

Each visit is accompanied by a book. Rhyming books and books with humor are favorites to engage families in the joys of reading. Books are also selected with the objective to foster attachment, adventure, morality and language development. Parent Educators strive for eight nursery rhymes or songs to be memorized by age 4 and daily reading up to 30 minutes/day using every and any opportunity for reading, writing, speaking and listening. The PAT'S curriculum describes a type of book for each activity. Handouts are provided to parents that describe the type of book for different developmental ages, i.e. board books, bath books. Most parent educators use dialogic reading instruction with the families and observe with the parent how and when the children might change their approach to "reading" a book.

Methodology Overview

Some researchers agree that research methods are not limited to one single methodology (Axinn & Pearce, 2006; Creswell, et al., 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Representing information through numbers (quantitative) or words (qualitative) has been the typical path taken by most. Mixing methods has proven to be not only effective but reliable and valid, with an end result of identifying and understanding impact.

A mixed method study is employed to address the following three research questions: 1) Are a child's home reading success in Kindergarten different for families who have participated in a home-visitation program than for those who did not participate? 2) What differences in home reading as a Kindergarten student exist among previous participants in a home-visitation program? and 3) What did participation in the home-visitation program mean for these families? To address these questions, descriptive statistics are first applied to determine if there are strong patterns of kindergarten readiness, performance during the kindergarten year and parental involvement in a parent education program. Then, a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews is conducted to identify patterns of meaning that parents made and translated for the support of their child during the Kindergarten year. A Sequential Explanatory Strategy is used, and the analysis of the data sets in total are mixed during the interpretation, or findings, phase of the study (Creswell et al., 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The study is conducted in the Binghamton City School District, a small urban school district located in the Southern Tier of New York State. The district is the nineteenth poorest district in Upstate New York State, ranked 411 out of 429 in 2013. In 2012-2013, the district enrolled of 480 Kindergarten students, with a K through 12 enrollment of 5,873. The ethnic

breakdown of the Kindergarten population was representative of the K-12 population with

60% white, 34% black, 3% Asian and 3% from other cultures. The socio-economic

breakdown demonstrated that 73% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Data Sources and Collection

Mixing methods demands the use of different instruments. Three separate student

performance tools are used to measure the Kindergarten students' readiness and learning.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy-Next (DIBELS), a count of books read in

the home, and a rubric that assesses the ability of students to identify story structures are used

to measure readiness and student progress made over the course of the school year. The

DIBELS measure is selected because of its demonstrated reliability and validity and the fact

that the district administers this assessment using a school-wide assessment team, removing

subjectivity from the classroom teacher as a potential interfering factor. The measurement

being used to demonstrate any differences in performance on DIBELS reflects a composite

score, which is composed of a set of related sub-skills (See Table 1). DIBELS measures and

composite scores vary with increasing challenge throughout the school year. At the

beginning of the kindergarten year, the DIBELS composite score reflects the total score

earned by adding the scores for the ability to name letters and identify the first sounds in a

word fluently. At the end of the kindergarten year, the DIBELS composite reflects the total

of the scores earned for letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency and nonsense

word fluency. For the purposes of this study, composite scores are used throughout the

quantitative analysis phase of the study.

The selection of Understanding Story Structure is based on expectation of

competencies set forth by the district. One of the Board of Education goals is to increase the High School Graduation Rate. At the Elementary level, teachers had previously been informed that each quarter the grades they assign to their students in this area would be the benchmark for their grade level. This is the only measure that was reported on the report card that is related to text comprehension. As Kindergarten students build their early literacy skills and ability to read independently, teachers first assess this skill in January of the academic year by either having the student read (text comprehension) a book self-selected from an independent reading library, or by listening to a book read aloud (listening comprehension). All students are assessed on text comprehension on the June assessment. Teachers were brought together and training was provided in how to use the Rubric in Table 3.Teachers use this rubric to rate students on a 1 to 4 continuum, with a 3 demonstrating a level of expected proficiency for a given time of the year.

The third measure of student performance is a self-reported measure of the quantity of books read in the home with parents. The selection of this measure is based on the parallel structure presented during home visitations. Since parents are presented with a book during each home visit and the expectation for reading to and with children is reinforced through enrollment in PACT, determining any differences that may exist between those enrolled in PACT and those not is important. Students have access to "just right books" at their independent reading level in the district Prekindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms through American Reading Company - 100 Book Challenge program. Students and their parents record one line on a reading log for each book read. Books are taken home each night. The goal is to complete 400 lines by the end of the school year. Along with the books, children bring home guides for parents to use when supporting their reading. Each guide

corresponds with the independent reading level of the child and is intended for parents to reference when reading with their child. The total number of books read is recorded by the parent and reported by the Kindergarten teacher each week using an on-line assessment tool. A weekly goal is shared with parents so that they know what the expectations are for reading with their child. A student's ability to identify story structure, including the characters, plot and setting is also collected. Table 1 outlines each of the student performance measures considered in this study.

Table 1

Components of Kindergarten Student Performance Measures

Assessment Type	Area Assessed	Individual Responsible for Administration	Individual or Group Activity and frequency
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Next (DIBELS)	Initial Sound Fluency	School-wide Assessment Team	Individual; September and June
	Letter Naming Fluency		
	Phoneme Segmentation Fluency		
	Nonsense Word Fluency		
Number of Books Read in the Home	Reading to and with	Parent or other adult	Individual; November and June
Identification of Story Structure	Listening/Reading Comprehension	Classroom Teacher	Individual; November and June

Assessment Administration and Scoring Procedures

Beginning in 2006, the Binghamton City School District began to train its teaching staff in the use of the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy as a universal screening tool for incoming kindergarten students. The Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy - Next (DIBELS) version was then introduced upon its release in 2012. DIBELS measures four different areas of early literacy across the school year and the level of attainment changes depending on the time of the year. A benchmark goal is identified for each subcomponent, resulting in an overall composite benchmark goal. Students scoring at or above the benchmark goal have an 80 to 90% chance of achieving important reading outcomes in subsequent years. Students scoring below the benchmark are identified as having some risk. And, students scoring at or below the at-risk score have a 10 to 20% chance of achieving

subsequent goals without receiving targeted intervention. Teachers who administer this assessment use an online program to conduct the assessment through the use of an iPad. A School-Wide Assessment Team (SWAT) administers the assessment during the months of September, February and June of each school year. The benchmark scores for the component and composite scores are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

DIBELS Next – Kindergarten Component and Composite Benchmark Scores

	First Sound Fluency	Letter Naming Fluency	Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	Nonsense Word Fluency	Composite Score
September at or above benchmark	10	no benchmark	n/a	n/a	26
September at-risk	5	no benchmark	n/a	n/a	13
February at or above benchmark	30	no benchmark	20	17	122
February at-risk	20	no benchmark	10	8	85
June at or above benchmark	n/a	no benchmark	40	28	119
June at-risk	n/a	no benchmark	25	15	89

Teachers who serve on the SWAT are certified in Elementary Education, Literacy or Special Education. Data were directly accessed and downloaded from the program's website and

stored as an excel spreadsheet. The component and composite scores are recorded in both numeric score with an indication as to whether their score was at the benchmark level or not (Y=earned benchmark score; N=did not earn benchmark score).

A second set of student performance data is obtained from SchoolPace, an American Reading Company product used by teachers to keep track of at home independent reading practice. Kindergarten teachers document quarterly the number of books read, as noted on a recording sheet completed by parents. A benchmark goal is established for each quarter, with the goal of 117 books read by the end of the 1st quarter and 400 books read by the end of the year. For the purpose of analysis, student data is organized by listing both the number of books read, as well as by identifying whether the number of books read met the goal for that quarter (Y=Yes; N=No).

The third set of student data is collected by each Kindergarten teacher. Kindergarten teachers are guided in assessing a student's ability to understand story structures through the use of a rubric. Based on the independent reading level of the student in January, students are either tested on their listening comprehension, if they are at the Read to Me Level, or on their text comprehension, if they are able to independently read a book. The rubric is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Understands the Concept of Story Structure – Binghamton City School District Kindergarten Rubric

Understands the concept of story structure, including setting, character and plot	4	3	2	1
Understands the concept of story structure, including setting, character and plot *Resource:* Using current Benchmark Assessment - Listening and Reading Comprehension. **January - June**	Student consistently reads above grade level materials and is able to accurately apply comprehension strategies and skills and recognize literary elements covered to this point. This may be evident in one or more of the following: ⇒ Application of comprehension skills and strategies in written and oral language ⇒ Reading Street Unit Benchmark Assessment - Comprehension section >85% ⇒ Demonstrates usage and understanding on selection tests	Student consistently reads grade level materials and is able to accurately apply comprehension strategies and skills and recognize literary elements covered to this point. This may be evident in one or more of the following: ⇒ Application of comprehension skills and strategies in written and oral language ⇒ Reading Street Unit Benchmark Assessment - Comprehension section - 70% - 85% ⇒ Demonstrates usage and understanding on selection tests	Student inconsistently reads grade level materials and is able to accurately apply comprehension strategies and skills and recognize literary elements covered to this point. This may be evident in one or more of the following: ⇒ Application of comprehension skills and strategies in written and oral language ⇒ Reading Street Unit Benchmark Assessment - Comprehension section - 55% - 84%% ⇒ Demonstrates usage and understanding on selection tests	Student is unable to read grade level materials and is able to accurately apply comprehension strategies and skills and recognize literary elements covered to this point. This may be evident in one or more of the following: ⇒ Application of comprehension skills and strategies in written and oral language ⇒ Reading Street Unit Benchmark Assessment - Comprehension section - < 55% ⇒ Demonstrates usage and understanding on selection tests

Unit 1 - 3
Strategies: preview the text, set purpose for reading, activate and use prior knowledge, make and confirm predictions, answer and generate questions, retell stories to include character, setting and plot, identify main idea, make connections – text to self, text to text, and text to world

Skills: cause and effect, classify and categorize, compare and contrast, draw conclusions, main idea, realism/fantasy, sequence of events

Literary Elements: character, plot, setting

Unit 4 - 6
Strategies: monitor comprehension; use fix up strategies; use graphic organizers to focus on text structure, to represent relationships in text, or to summarize text

Kindergarten teachers assess students for the purpose of reporting to parents on quarterly

reports. They record a score of either a 1, 1*, 2, 2*, 3 or 4 in the district's student

management system, SchoolTool. The asterisk indicates the teacher is concerned regarding

the progress made to date. The student numeric scores were directly downloaded from

SchoolTool and merged with the student demographic data and DIBELS scores. Scores of 1*

and 2* were recorded as 1 or 2, respectively.

PACT Involvement Measures

Two separate tools were used to quantify parental involvement in the Parents and

Children Together (PACT) program across the dimensions of participation and engagement.

Parent participation is measured as a function of the number of visits completed. Each

Parent Educator logs visits into an online system known as Visit Tracker. Visits are agreed

upon and scheduled in Visit Tracker, an on-line program, and then later noted as being

missed or completed. *Parental engagement* is a measure of the parent's active engagement in

parenting during and between home visits. Parent Educators conduct a Parent Education

Profile (PEP) assessment once every 6 months (RMC Research Corporation & New York

State Department of Education, 2003, Appendix A). There are no published studies that have

demonstrated reliability or validity; however, over 25 states began to use the tool in response

to a need to demonstrate effectiveness of Even Start Family Literacy programs (Prins &

Toso, 2008). Additionally, RMC research has conducted internal reliability measures and the

PACT program ensures inter-rater agreement. The PACT Coordinator accompanies Parent

Educators throughout the year comparing her scores with those of the Parent Educators. The

tool is openly shared with parents so that they can assess their own learning as well. The

language used to describe each level of the PEP heavily depends on verb and nouns, used to

describe an observable behaviors and conditions, rather than more subjective adjectives. In all instances, documentation of evidence of the condition is required. This assists in the internally consistent use of the tool. The PEP measures the parent's role in their child's literacy development, the parent's contributions selected from research perspectives, judgments based on patterns of demonstrated behaviors, and authentic behaviors from multiple perspectives. Four broad areas are further defined by sub-components: Parent's Support for Children's Learning in the Home Environment, Parent's Role in Interactive Literacy Activities, Parent's Role in Supporting Child's Learning in Formal Settings, and Taking on the Parent Role. Table 4 illustrates the characteristics of parents identified as having low or high participation and low or high engagement in one of the sub-components under Home Environment: Use of Literacy Materials.

Table 4

Characteristics of PACT: Extent of Participation and Depth of Engagement

	Low	High
PACT Participation	Attended less than 75% of scheduled visits	Attended 75% or more of scheduled visits
PACT Engagement	Average Score of 2.9 or lower across all domains of the Parent Education Profile.	Average Score of 3.0 or higher across all domains of the Parent Education Profile.
	Level 2: Beginning awareness and some interest in ways to improve but may be inconsistent; may need lots of support; low comfort level.	**Level 5:** Ability to work desired behaviors into daily lie; adaptability to child's interests and abilities; extends learning; makes connections for child.
	Use of Literacy Materials i.e. Home has some books and/or writing drawing materials but they are not appropriate nor accessible to child. Parent does not yet seek out materials for the child.	*Use of Literacy Materials* i.e. Home has a variety of materials for reading, writing, and drawing that are accessible to child. Materials are used daily. Parent and child select books based frequently on child's interest and skill levels.
	Level 1: Little or no evidence of desired behaviors; limited awareness; limited acceptance; frustrated; not comfortable.	**Level 4:** Routine and frequent us of desired behaviors; initiation of activities; comfortable in role.
	Use of Literacy Materials i.e. Home has few books or writing/drawing materials; little or nothing is age appropriate.	*Use of Literacy Materials* i.e. Home includes books and materials that parent has chosen because parent believes child will like them. Parent uses literacy materials every day with child in engaging ways.
		Level 3: Some encouragement and comfort in use of desired behaviors; seeks out information and support; attends to child
		Use of Literacy Materials i.e. The home has some examples of appropriate reading, writing, and drawing materials. Parent seeks books and writing materials for child. Parent will read and/or write with child several times a week.

The Parent Education Profile (PEP) tool is arranged so that a family's parent educator assigns rating for each of four sub-components of the home environment. These 4 ratings are followed by 3 ratings for interactive literacy, 5 ratings for support given children in formal

settings and 3 ratings for the role parents play, resulting in a total of 15 ratings. A rating of 1 in each case indicates less support for a high quality literacy environment, while a rating of 5, indicates a home that demonstrates a high level of support for the literacy environment. Table 4 contains an example of the descriptors used for Use of Literacy Materials (See Appendix A for all components). An average rating is calculated for each of the four PEP components; then an average is calculated across all four components. An average of a 3 to 3.9 is considered to represent home environments that provide some encouragement and comfort in use of desired behaviors while seeking out information and support for meeting a child's needs. These families are also to be viewed as attentive to a child's needs. PEP ratings resulting in a 4 to 4.9 reflect homes where desired behaviors were routinized and frequently seen. These parents often initiated activities and demonstrated comfort in their role of parent. A level 5 rating was illustrative of parents who were able to work desired behaviors into daily life and adapted each to the interest and ability of their child, thereby, extending learning and making connections to other events. To adjust for small group sizes, two groups were identified as representing low engagement levels or high engagement levels, using an average overall score of 3.0 or higher being identified as high engagement. Families with scores falling below 3.0 were identified as having low engagement. It should be noted that none of the 48 families had scores that varied more than 1 level across the four domains. There were also no families with average scores falling between 2.5 and 3.0. Because the resulting scores clearly fell in one of the two ranges, the scorers were shared with families for their confirmation, the standards for assessing were spelled out and reinforced, and the internal consistency was established by nature of the assessment construct, the reliability of the scores were deemed satisfactory for the purpose of this study. The overall PEP average

rating was recorded in an excel spreadsheet, along with being noted as representing a high

level of engagement (a score of 3 or higher) or a low level of engagement (a score of 2.9 or

lower). Table 5 shows the range of scores for the 48 PACT parents involved in this study

based of the extent of participation in the program.

Table 5

Range of PACT Enrollment and Participation Based on the Depth of Engagement (n=48)

Average Parent Education Profile Score	1 to 1.9	2 to 2.9	3 to 3.9	4 to 4.9	5
Number of Families	2	10	15	17	4
Range of the % of Completed Visits	73% to 93%	42% to 100%	39% to 95%	50% to 100%	73% to 82%
Range of Number of Years Enrolled in Program	1 year 8 months to 3 years	1 year to 4 years 9months	2 years to 5 years 7 months	9 months to 5 years 9 months	4 years to 6 years 5 months

An alignment between the parent performance measures and the selection of parents

interviewed is maintained, ensuring a single study as an outcome (Yin, 2006). The

characteristics of the parents interviewed are in Table 6.

Table 6

Characteristics of Interviewed Parents

Parent	Ethnicity of child	Free/ Reduced Lunch Eligible	# of years in PACT	Participation in District Pre-K Program	PACT Participation	PACT Engagement
Marie	White	Yes	5 years	No	High	High
Grace	White	No	1 year 9 months	Yes	High	High
Maureen	White	No	6 years 4 months	Yes	High	High
Valerie	Black	Yes	2 years	Yes	Low	High

The development of measurement tools is also influenced by the order in which mixed methods are applied. Qualitative protocols can be developed from quantitative data and vice versa. The interview protocol was developed prior to the collection and analysis of the student and parent performance measures. The interview protocol was influenced by two factors. First, research on what constitutes parental involvement in home-visitation programs was considered. Questions asking parents to reflect on their participation as well as their engagement in activities related to parenting were included. Secondly, questions were scaffolded to distinguish between parenting involvement and use of activities as a result of the PACT program as opposed to other early childhood programs the parents may be involved in, such as prekindergarten. Additionally, in order to provide the necessary depth of questioning and understanding of how parents made meaning of the PACT program, informal interviews of Parent Educators were conducted prior to conducting the qualitative portion of the study. Four broad questions were asked of four parent educators. These parent

educators were asked to share their perspective of what it means for parents to participate in PACT, engage in PACT programming, to name some of the contributing factors to the barriers/success to parental involvement in PACT, and their understanding of the parenting practices they believe would transfer once a child entered kindergarten, in absence of PACT support. The interview results framed the questions that were asked during each of four subsequent interviews (See Appendix B).

Selection of Participants

Parents of kindergarten students enrolled in the Binghamton City School District during the 2012-2013 school year and those who had been previously enrolled in the PACT program are identified. Two categories of parents are then identified: 1) parents who demonstrated a high level of engagement in PACT (n=36) and 2) parents who demonstrated a low level of engagement in PACT (n=12). Ten parents from each group are randomly selected and mailed a cover letter inviting them to participate in an interview regarding their participation in the PACT program (see Appendix B). The letter assured the parents that they could choose to participate or not participate without penalty. After waiting 3 weeks and receiving responses from two interested parents, a second set of parents is randomly selected, and an additional two parents demonstrated their interest in participating in the interview. After subsequent contact with each parent and an interview date and location is agreed upon, a review of the interview protocol, an explanation that all information would remain confidential and their rights regarding their participation is reviewed (see Appendix D). The interviews are conducted over the months of June through August of 2013. As the researcher, I am aware of the identity of the parents. Precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of

the subjects and associated data in all reports and publications. The resulting four participants represent approximately 8% of parents who had participated in PACT prior to their child's Kindergarten year (PACT n = 48).

Serial interviews are then conducted with each family. Interviews are conducted within a 2-to-3 week period of receiving a letter of interest from the parent. Each interview takes approximately 40-to-50 minutes. Some of the interviews take place in the parents' home and others took place at a school site. A semi-structured interview is then conducted (see Appendix B). Questions are geared to reveal how parents understood their role as parents, the influence their Parent Educator and the PACT program had on them and their children, and activities parents realized in the absence of their parent educator's presence during their child's kindergarten year. Each of the four interviews is tape recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Integrating data can be challenging when using a single methodology. It is further challenging, when attempting to do it across more than one method. The ultimate goal for using mixed methodology is to create a product that is greater than the sum of the individual methods used (Bryman, 2007). In this study, quantitative analysis is conducted first. Descriptive statistics are used to discern if there are statistically significant differences between students' whose parents had and had not participated in the PACT program and students' readiness for reading as measured by the Dynamic Indicators for Basic Early Literacy – Next, performance on a home reading measure, and ability to identify story structure. The student performance measures are organized in an excel spreadsheet in preparation for analysis using SPSS version 20. Pearson Chi-square tests were first conducted to see if there is a statistically significant relationship between kindergarten

students whose parents had previously participated in the PACT program and those who had not. Each of the student performance measures is taken at two points in time as listed in Table 1. Parental performance measures are also organized in an excel spreadsheet in preparation for analysis using SPSS version 20. Pearson Chi-square tests are then conducted against the same student performance measures and those families involved in PACT to see if there is any relationship between the extent of parent participation and depth of engagement in the PACT program. Following each Chi-square test, two-tailed t-tests of independence are conducted, using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. The t-test of independence is conducted to identify whether there were mean differences between each of the variables tested.

The transcriptions of each of the four interviews are uploaded into the on-line program Dedoose 4.5.95 for analysis. Dedoose was selected as the instrumentation of choice because of its ability to manage data, excerpting and coding, and analysis. The program allows for the user to cross research methods by embedding quantitative tools. When uploading transcripts, quantitative descriptors, such as High Engagement or Met Benchmark Score for DIBELS are tagged to those interviewed, allowing analysis of excerpts across dimensions of participants. Using a grounded theory approach, open coding is applied. During open coding, data are broken into categories representing emergent phenomena about the home visiting program, with constant comparison between participants. The categories are subjected to axial coding, looking for additional themes.

Table 7

List of Codes

Core Categories	Codes
PACT Promotion of Literacy in the Home	Evidence of Support for Child's Literacy Development in the Home
Subtle Aspects of Parenting	High Expectations for Their Child
	Demonstration of Caring and Respect for Their Child
Value Placed on Adult Relationship	Relationship with Parent Educator
	Relationship with Teacher
	PACT Participation
PACT Involvement	PACT Engagement
	Attitude toward Parental Involvement
PACT Support for Transitions	Transition
PACT Empowerment	Parents are empowered as a result of their participation in PACT

Data were reconstructed using axial coding techniques to add strength to the emerging relationships among the categories as illustrated in Table 7 (Creswell, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Summary

In this chapter, the mixed method approach used in this study is reviewed. Methods include the quantitative collection of three measures of kindergarten literacy readiness and proficiency and the use of descriptive statistics in analyzing each measure, discerning any difference between kindergarten students whose parents were and were not involved with the PACT program. Additionally, these same student performance measures are analyzed for those involved in PACT to see if the extent of parent participation or depth of engagement in the program revealed any differences. To identify what meaning PACT parents made from their involvement in the program, four parent interviews are conducted. A description of the qualitative collection and analysis of parent interviews is also presented. Interviews were transcribed and organized online using Dedoose 4.5.95, which allows for simultaneous analysis of quantitative and qualitative measures related to the interviews.

Chapter IV: Findings

"You did not have a choice about the parents you inherited, but you do have a choice about the kind of parent you will be." –Marian Wright Edelman

This study addresses three research questions: 1) Are a child's home reading success in Kindergarten different for families who have participated in a home-visitation program than for those who did not participate? 2) What differences in home reading as a Kindergarten student exist among previous participants in a home-visitation program? and 3) What did participation in the home-visitation program mean for these families?

To address the first two research questions, descriptive statistics are used to discern if there are statistically significant differences between students whose parents did and those that did not participate in PACT on the Dynamic Indicators for Basic Early Literacy– Next (DIBELS), the number of books read in the home, and a student's ability to identify story structure. The population of students included in this study was enrolled in Kindergarten during the 2012-2013 academic year in the Binghamton City School District. The DIBELS data are collected in a spreadsheet, organized by student identification number, numeric composite score for the DIBELS assessment, and a categorical identifier indicating whether the composite score was below the benchmark (BB) or at or above the benchmark (AB) in September and June. Similarly, student data representing the number of books read at home and a categorical identifier of below benchmark (BB) or at or above the benchmark (AB) are collected in November, January, April and June. And, a categorical score out of 4 representing a student's ability to understand story structure are collected in January and June. Student demographic data, including economic status of the home, ethnicity, gender, along with previous enrollment status in the Parents and Children Together (PACT) and

district prekindergarten program prior to Kindergarten are captured. A summary of the

characteristics of the 2012-2013 Kindergarten cohort is in Table 8, with Table 9 illustrating

the characteristics of those students from the Kindergarten cohort who participated in the

PACT program and Table 10 showing the distribution of the number of years of participation

in the program.

Table 8

Summary of Characteristics of 2012-2013 Kindergarten Cohort

	Total Population	# White	# Black	# Economically Disadvantaged	# Enrolled Pre-kindergarten	# Enrolled PACT
Number of students	480	225	101	351	245	48

Table 9

Summary of Characteristics of 2012-2013 Kindergarten Cohort Who Participated in PACT

	Total Population	# White	# Black	# Enrolled Pre-kindergarten	# Economically Disadvantaged	Low PACT Participation	High PACT Participation	Low PACT Engagement	High PACT Engagement
Number of students	48	20	14	42	41	23	25	12	36

The distribution of ethnicity across the 2012-2013 Kindergarten cohort among those enrolled

in PACT and those not is similar: 42% of PACT children are White, with 47% of children

not in PACT White; 29% of PACT children are Black, with 20% of children not in PACT

Black; 77% of PACT children are in poverty, with 73% of children not in PACT in poverty;

and, 19% of PACT children are Hispanic, with 17% of children not in PACT Hispanic. The

distribution of children who attending a district preKindergarten is not similar. 87% of PACT children attended a program, with only 47% of children who were not in PACT attended preKindergarten. Since the district does not formally collect information on the types of preKindergarten programs children attend outside of the district, there is no accurate measure of identifying how many families who are not enrolled in PACT were in similar programs.

Table 10

Number of Years of Enrollment in PACT Program (n=48)

# of years enrolled in PACT	< than 1	1 to < 2	2 to < 3	3 to < 4	4 or >
Number of Families	3	17	8	6	14

To measure the degree of involvement Kindergarten students' parents/guardians had in the PACT program, measures of the extent of PACT participation and depth of engagement are recorded. The National Parents as Teachers program, on which the PACT program is based, identifies a 75% or greater participation rate, meaning 75% of the visits scheduled are held, as a high level of participation. Families are identified as having had either a high or low level of participation. The results from the Parent Education Profile (PEP) are used to determine parents' level of engagement in PACT. Any family whose last PEP score average was 3 or higher are deemed to have a high level of PACT engagement, while families with average scores of 2.9 or lower are identified as low engagement. Table 11 shows the range of years of participation in the program, the proportion of completed PACT visits, and the distribution of average Parent Education Profile (PEP) scores for PACT families.

Table 11

Extent of Participation and Depth of Engagement in PACT (n=48)

Participation: % Completed Visits	Less than 25	24 to 49	50 to 74	75 to 90	Greater than 90
Number of Families	0	2	21	17	8
Engagement: Average Parent Education Profile Score	1 to 1.9	2 to 2.9	3 to 3.9	4 to 4.9	5
Number of Families	2	10	15	17	4

Note. Blue shaded areas indicate high levels of participation and engagement, with the yellow shaded areas indicate low levels of participation and engagement.

PACT Involvement and Student Performance in Kindergarten

In order to evaluate the impact the PACT program has on student performance, beginning and end of the year data collected on Kindergarten students are analyzed. A chi-square test of independence is performed to examine the relationship between involvement in the PACT program and performance on DIBELS assessment, the number of books read in the home and the ability to understand story structure. There is no significant relationship between PACT involvement and end of the year DIBELS, X^2: (1, N=469) = .575, p > .05 (.488). The relationship between PACT involvement and number of books read in the home in November and June is also not significant, X^2: (1, N=418) = .001 p > .05 (.971) and X^2: (1, N=421) = .213 p > .05 (.645). The relationship between PACT involvement and the ability to understand story structure in January is not significant X^2: (1, N=452) = 1.553, p > .05

(.213). Levene's Test for Equality of Variances revealed equal variances in each instance.

The difference between involvement in PACT and performance on the DIBELS assessment in September is significant, X^2: (1, N=443) = 4.228, p < .05 (.040). Additionally, the difference between kindergarten involvement in PACT and ability to understand story structure in June was significant, X^2: (1, N=476) = 6.140, p < .05 (.013). Children whose parents were involved with PACT were more likely to earn a benchmark or higher score on the beginning of the year DIBELS assessment and understand story structure at the end of the year than the children of parents who were not involved in PACT.

Tables 12 and 13 illustrate student performance on DIBELS in September and June. Tables 14 and 15 illustrate the distribution of scores for the ability to understand story structure in January and June.

Table 12
DIBELS – September

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
PACT	15	32	47
No PACT	189	207	396
Total	204	239	443

X^2: (1, N=443) = 4.228, p < .05 (.040)

Table 13

DIBELS – June

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
PACT	13	33	46
No PACT	143	280	423
Total	156	313	469

X^2: (1, N=469) = .575 p > .05 (.448)

Table 14

Ability to Understand Story Structure – January

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
PACT	32	16	48
No PACT	303	101	404
Total	335	117	452

X^2: (1, N=452) = 1.553, p > .05 (.213)

Table 15

Ability to Understand Story Structure – June

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
PACT	11	37	48
No PACT	177	251	428
Total	188	288	476

X^2: (1, N=476) = 6.140, p < .05 (.013)

Two-tailed T-tests of independence are then conducted to determine if there is a statistical significance between the means of PACT involvement and each student performance variables. Results of the t-test for independence indicate a significant difference in mean scores on the DIBELS assessment in September for PACT families (M=129.65) and Non-PACT families (M=133.85), t (1) = -2.563, p = .011. It was also revealed through the t-test of independence that there is a statistically significant difference in mean scores of students' ability to understand story structure in June between PACT families (M=2.92) and Non-PACT families (M=2.67), t (1) = -2.118, p = .035. Equal variances are revealed for DIBELS performances and Understanding Story Structure for January. However, unequal variances are present for student's ability to understand story structure in June, with little difference in p-value (Equal variance p = .035; Unequal variance p = .033). These results confirm that participation in PACT has an effect on children's readiness for reading at the beginning of the year and their ability to understand story structures through text comprehension at the end of the year. Specifically, students whose parents participate in the PACT program perform better on the beginning of the year DIBELS measure and are able to

understand story structure better at the end of the year. Table 16 illustrates the results of the t-test of independence for each variable measured.

Table 16

A Comparison of Children's Performance for PACT families and Non-PACT families

	Mean			
	PACT	No PACT	*t* value	Prob.
September DIBELS	38.30	29.13	-2.563	.011*
June DIBELS	129.65	133.85	.628	.530
November Number of Books Read	137.96	142.62	.493	.623
June Number of Books Read	577.25	582.67	.144	.885
January Understands Structure of a Story	2.31	2.16	-1.591	.112
June Understands Structure of a Story	2.92	2.67	-2.118	.035*

Note. (*) denotes statistical difference at .05

Level of PACT Involvement and Student Performance

To further understand PACT involvement, two factors are considered: extent of PACT participation and depth of PACT engagement. Table 17 demonstrates any existing trends.

Table 17

Range of PACT Enrollment and Participation Based on the Depth of Engagement (n=48)

Average Parent Education Profile Score	1 to 1.9	2 to 2.9	3 to 3.9	4 to 4.9	5
Number of Families	2	10	15	17	4
Range of the % of Completed Visits	73% to 93%	42% to 100%	39% to 95%	50% to 100%	73% to 82%
Range of Number of Years Enrolled in Program	1 year 8 months to 3 years	1 year to 4 years 9months	2 years to 5 years 7 months	9 months to 5 years 9 months	4 years to 6 years 5 months

A chi-square test of independence is then performed to examine the relationship between PACT participation and PACT engagement X^2: (1, N=48) = .028, p > .05 (.868). Table 18 lists the results, demonstrating that there is no statistical difference between levels of PACT participation and degrees of PACT engagement. This suggests that any subsequent differences discovered between student performance and their parents participation and engagement in PACT is independent of the relationship between PACT participation and engagement.

Table 18

PACT Participation vs. PACT Engagement

	High PACT Participation	Low PACT Participation	Total
High PACT Engagement	19	17	36
Low PACT Engagement	6	6	12
Total	25	23	48

X^2: (1, N=48) = .028, p > .05 (.868).

A chi-square test of independence is then performed to examine the relationship between PACT participation, engagement and each of the kindergarten student performance measures used in this study. Student performance on the DIBELS assessment and their parent's extent of participation and engagement in PACT are compared. There is no significant difference between PACT engagement and the DIBELS assessment in September, X^2: (1, N=46) = 2.426, p > .05 (.119) or in June, X^2: (1, N=46) = .468, p > .05 (.494). There is no significant difference between PACT participation and the DIBELS assessment in September, X^2: (1, N=47) = .704, p>.05 (.401) and the DIBELS assessment in June, X^2: (1, N=46) = .965, p>.05 (.326). The extent of parent participation or depth of engagement in PACT does not appear to influence students reading readiness as measured on the DIBELS assessment in September or June. Tables 19 and 20 illustrate the results.

Table 19

DIBELS - September for PACT Engagement and Participation

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
High PACT Engagement	9	26	35
Low PACT Engagement	6	6	12
Total	15	32	47
High PACT Participation	9	15	24
Low PACT Participation	6	17	23
Total	15	32	47

Engagement X^2: (1, N=46) = 2.426, p > .05 (.119)

Participation X^2: (1, N=47) = .704, p > .05 (.401)

Table 20

DIBELS - June for PACT Engagement and Participation

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
High PACT Engagement	9	26	35
Low PACT Engagement	4	7	11
Total	13	33	46
High PACT Participation	8	15	23
Low PACT Participation	5	18	23
Total	13	33	46

Engagement X^2: (1, N=46) = .468, p > .05 (.494)

Participation X^2: (1, N=46) = .965, p >.05 (.326)

There is no significant difference between the number of books read at home and the degree of PACT participation in November, X^2: (1, N=47) = .031, p > .05 (.859) or June, X^2: (1, N=44) = 1.312, p > .05 (.252). There is also no significant difference between level of PACT engagement and the number of books read in the home in November, X^2: (1, N=47 = 1.189, p >.05 (.276). There is a significant difference when comparing the level of PACT engagement and the difference between the number of books read in the home in June, X^2: (1, N=44) = 13.200, p <.05 (.000). However, two cells (50%) had an expected count less than 5 requiring an additional test to demonstrate the relationship. Without further analysis, it

appears that neither the degree of parent participation nor engagement in PACT influence the number of books read in the home.

While the ability to understand story structure in June is seen statistically different when comparing PACT and non-PACT families, further analysis revealed a statistical significance in both January and June when looking at the level of PACT engagement, X^2: (1, N=48) = 4.500, p < .05 (.034) and X^2: (1, N=48) = 17.337, p < .05 (0.000). However, two cells (50%) have an expected count less than 5 requiring an additional test to demonstrate the relationship. Without further analysis, it also appears that neither the extent of parent participation nor depth of engagement in PACT influence the number of books read in the home. Chi-square results are found in Tables 21 and 22.

Table 21

Ability to Understand Story Structure – January for PACT Engagement and Participation

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
High PACT Engagement	21	15	36
Low PACT Engagement	11	1	12
Total	32	16	48
High PACT Participation	19	6	25
Low PACT Participation	13	10	23
Total	32	16	48

Engagement X^2: (1, N=48) = 4.500, p < .05 (.034)

Participation X^2: (1, N=48) = 2.045, p > .05 (.153)

Table 22

Ability to Understand Story Structure – June for PACT Engagement and Participation

	Below Benchmark	At or above Benchmark	Total
High PACT Engagement	3	33	36
Low PACT Engagement	8	4	12
Total	11	37	48
High PACT Participation	5	20	25
Low PACT Participation	6	17	23
Total	11	37	48

Engagement X^2: (1, N=48) = 17.337, p < .05 (0.000)

Participation X^2: (1, N=48) = .251, p > .05 (.616)

T-tests of independence are also conducted to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of PACT participation and engagement in the program and each of the student performance measures.

Four of the six student performance variables demonstrate statistically significant differences for different levels of PACT engagement (see Table 23) while none of the measures for PACT participation demonstrate statistical significance (see Table 24). Levene's Test for Equal Variances demonstrates equal variances across all measures except for Understanding Story Structure. However, there was very little difference in the resulting

p-values for equal variance in either January (equal variance p = .014; unequal variance p = .009) or June (equal variance p = .001; unequal variance p = .021). Participation in PACT does not influence student outcomes while in kindergarten, rather it is the depth of engagement in the program that affected student performance. Parents who demonstrate a high depth of engagement in the PACT program have children who perform better on the DIBELS assessments and the ability to understand story structure at the beginning and end of the school year. While story structure in January is an assessment of either listening or reading comprehension, depending on where the child is in their learning, the June measure, which demonstrated a statistical significance, measures reading comprehension.

Table 23

A Comparison of Children's Performance and Depth of PACT Engagement

	Mean		*t* value	Prob.
	High Engagement	Low Engagement		
September DIBELS	44.69	18.00	4.461	.000*
June DIBELS	138.89	100.27	2.302	.038*
November Number of Books Read	134.40	129.89	.190	.851
June Number of Books Read	590.00	494.60	1.041	.306
January Understands Structure of a Story	2.44	1.92	2.866	.009*
June Understands Structure of a Story	3.11	2.33	2.616	.021*

Note. (*) denotes statistical difference at .05

Table 24

A Comparison of Children's Performance and Extent of PACT Participation

	Mean		*t* value	Prob.
	High Participation	Low Participation		
January Understands Structure of a Story	2.16	2.48	`1.709	.094
June Understands Structure of a Story	2.96	2.87	.420	.677
November Number of Books Read	132.71	138.32	-.340	.736
June Number of Books Read	553.78	582.55	-.428	.671
September DIBELS	33.52	43.09	-1.3431	.190
June DIBELS	121.96	137.35	-1.189	.241

Notes. (*) denotes statistical difference at .05

Summary of Student Performance Measures

There are noteworthy relationships between those children whose parents were enrolled in PACT and student performance on the beginning of the year DIBELS assessment. Children whose parents participate in PACT perform better on beginning of the year DIBELS tasks, hence demonstrating an increased readiness for Kindergarten and learning to read. These same students also perform better in June when assessing their understanding of story structure.

When comparing the differences that may exist within the population of parents who are enrolled in PACT, it was found that there are differences when considering the depth of engagement parents displayed while in the program. There are no significant differences found when considering the degree of parent participation. Children whose parents demonstrate a high level of engagement in PACT outperform those with a low level of engagement on the DIBELS assessment at the beginning and end of the year. These same children perform better when assessing their understanding of story structure in the months of January and June. The impact PACT engagement has on children is demonstrated by the lack of dependency between the extent of PACT participation and depth of PACT engagement.

Interview of PACT Parents

To address the third research question, "What did participation in the home-visitation program mean for these families?" families are randomly selected for participation in semi-structured interviews. After selecting 30 families and mailing each letters inviting them to participate in the interview, four mothers agreed to be interviewed. For purposes of confidentiality, fictitious names of each mother are used in reporting. Tables 25, 26 and 27 show the demographics, risk factors and the performance measures assessed in this study for mothers and their children. Of the 48 families enrolled in PACT, 77% or 37 families had one or more risk factors. Of the four parents interviewed, 75% or 3 also have one or more risk factors demonstrating the high degree to which families enrolled in PACT are potentially at risk for not meeting with success in school.

Table 25

Characteristics of Parents Interviewed

Mother	Economically Disadvantaged	Ethnicity of Child	# of Children	Birth Order of Kindergarten Child	Level of PACT Participation	Level of PACT Engagement
Marie	Yes	White	1	First	High	High
Grace	No	White	1	First	High	High
Maureen	No	White	3	Second	High	High
Valerie	Yes	Black	4	Third	Low	High

Table 26

Risk Factors Associated with Parents Interviewed

Parent	Teen Parent	Low Education	Single Parent	Parent Disability/ Health Issue	Child Disability	Poverty
Marie	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grace	No	No	No	No	No	No
Maureen	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Valerie	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
All 48 (%)	6.3%	31.2%	39.6%	14.6%	12.5%	62.5%

Table 27

Characteristics of Children of PACT Parents Interviewed

Mother	Economically Disadvantaged	Ethnicity of Child	Gender of Child	Met Benchmark Score on DIBELS - September	Met Benchmark Score on DIBELS - June	Met Benchmark Score # of Books Read - November	Met Benchmark Score # or Books Read - June	Met Benchmark – Concept of Story Structure – (Listening or Read) January	Met Benchmark – Concept of Story Structure – (Reading) June
Marie	Yes	White	Girl	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grace	No	White	Girl	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Maureen	No	White	Boy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Valerie	Yes	Black	Boy	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Prior to conducting the interviews, the quantitative data was reviewed. Since there were significant differences found in DIBELS scores and text comprehension, but not number of books read in the home, questions to probe these distinctions were included on the

semi-structure interview form. When parents were asked to describe the types of activities that involved reading, writing or books in general, follow-up questions focusing on strategies that parents might use to draw their child's attention to the print on the page or in the environment are asked. "Did their child ever read a word that they were surprised they could read? Where was the word? How do you think they knew what the word was?" When asked about books that accompanied the parent educator or those that came home from school, additional questions revealing the frequency of completing these activities, with whom and where are asked to match the quantity of reading in home with the parent's purpose and intent behind the reading. And, because PACT engagement was identified as a significant factor during the quantitative analysis, questions related to engagement with PACT activities and depth of understanding parenting are also followed up with open ended questions to probe into the reasons why they enacted or did not enact program components.

The interview protocol consists of questions that are designed to reveal skills, beliefs and attitudes that resulted from involvement in the PACT program and how these parental attributes may have been used during their child's kindergarten year. Two of the interviews are conducted in the family's homes, one took place in the mother's work place, and one in a mutually agreed upon public location. Each interview lasted for 40 to 50 minutes. Because of the low response rate to the initial request for interview participants, firm conclusions are limited. The interviews were conducted up to the start of a new school year, prohibiting multiple interviews of the same four participants from occurring. Additionally, since each of the four parents represented families who have a high level engagement in the program, the themes that emerge from the qualitative analysis is limited to this population and may not be reflective of families who are less engaged in the program.

Qualitative themes emerged from statements that appeared frequently and repeatedly throughout each of the four interviews. The themes that emerged from the interviews were relevant to the research topic and included: Promotion of Literacy in the Home, Understanding of Parental Participation, Understanding of Parental Engagement, Relationships, Subtle Aspects of Parenting, PACT Empowerment of the Parent, and Support for Transitions. Chart 1 shows the distribution of excerpts realized from the four interviews across each code.
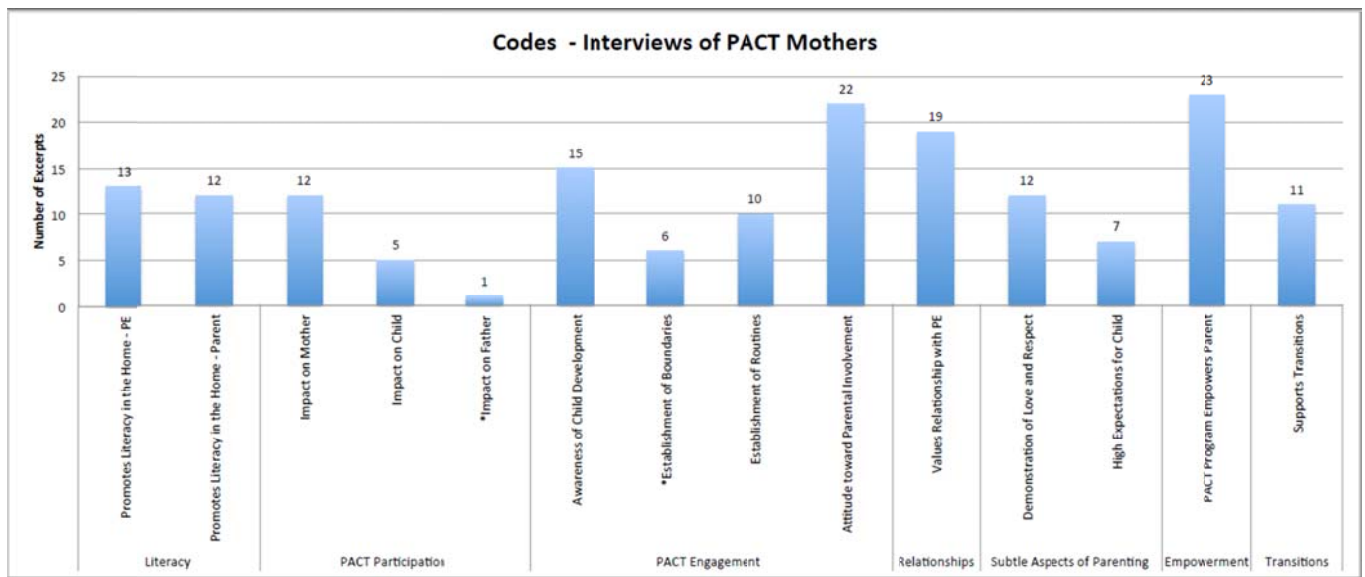
Chart 1 – Distribution of Codes and Number of Excerpts from Four Parent Interviews *Note*. (*) denotes codes found within less than four interviews

Promotion of Literacy Activities

During open coding, inductive analysis is used to reveal themes that emerged from the parent interviews. The first set of themes that emerged is related to the early literacy development of the children. Central to the PACT program is the promotion of family literacy through modeling activities, directly coaching parents as they engage in reading with

their child and structuring environments for families to engage in early reading behaviors.

Because each of the student performance measures addressed some element of early reading,

it was particularly relevant to inquire as to how these mothers made meaning from literacy

events that occurred during their home visits and how they continued their supported during

their child's Kindergarten year. They recalled specific ways their parent educator promoted

literacy:

> She usually brought books and papers for me. And my daughter is an excellent reader
> now and I believe that is because of the program. We read a lot. (Marie)

> Every time she came she would do a book. She would bring a book for me to read to
> (my daughter). She would kind of point out like different things. And I never thought
> to read the way she would be reading. Like I don't know why she would be pointing
> to things and expanded on them. Like I never thought to do it like that. It was weird. I
> don't think I would have ever have thought to, you know, look at the mouse. And she
> would really expand on things and kind of talk about things in ways I just would not
> have thought to do. (Grace)

> She would always bring books with her so I knew what age appropriate books I
> should be looking for…what kind of skills. Like I remember she brought us a book
> that had a square house on the front of it and it was all about shapes and I went right
> out and bought that book. Just different books that she had brought guided my
> thinking as a parent. I would think, 'Ok, this is the kind of skill I can be working on
> now.' (Maureen)

> Another thing (our parent educator) taught me…something about the syllables of the
> words. I don't get it but…my son puts a lot of pressure on himself so when he is
> reading he gets frustrated. So she calmed him down with showing me how to help
> him sound out the word. (Valerie)

Each of these mothers also shared how they continued a focus on reading in the

absence of their parent educator now that their child had completed Kindergarten. Marie

shared, "We read a lot. It is so funny cause now that she can read it takes so much longer to

get through because she wants to read everything. But I don't discourage it. I just have to

wait." Grace disclosed that as a Kindergarten student, her daughter will see a word

somewhere and will read it. She would ask how her daughter knew the word and her

daughter would reply, "It was one of our words in school." Grace went on to say, "I like the words that they send home. That is something we go over together. We cut them up." Maureen talked about her son's progress in terms of his literacy development in school and stated, "I remember on my child's report card every time their vocabulary scores are like fours. He has a big vocabulary not because we just read with him but interacted with the book as we were reading." Each understood how important reading and thinking about what is being read is and how critical it is to their development and success in school. They were also able to continue their support for their child, which was likely strengthened by their involvement with the PACT program.

Understanding of Parental Involvement

A set of broad themes emerged referencing the parents' involvement in the PACT program. Codes identified how participation in the PACT program impacted different family members (mother, father and child), as well as how these family members had made meaning of the program. A third related code emerged as parents consistently revealed their attitudes and beliefs about parenting as a result of their involvement.

All four mothers interviewed spoke to their understanding of participation and engagement as a parent. While most commented on the impact the PACT program had on the child or child's father, the majority of comments centered on how PACT participation made them feel, creating an understanding of the important role they played as parents. These mothers used words and phrases like "confident" and "I felt encouraged" to describe themselves after interacting with their parent educator. These mothers felt relieved of worry and self-doubt that can occur when engaged in an activity for the first time. Children are not

born with prescribed directions. Without a point of reference it is difficult at times for parents to be certain that the "right" decisions are being made. These mothers realized they were going to make mistakes. Having someone present who recognized that mistakes were expected provided these mothers with a sense of relief and contributed to the development of their confidence.

> (Participation in the PACT program) gave me the confidence that you are doing things ok and that you are doing things the right way. You know. Things may happen but it is not going to ruin you…you just pick yourself back up and keep going. (Marie)

> We are going to make mistakes and just knowing that we have someone here to tell you you are going to make mistakes. Let's learn from them. (Maureen)

These mothers also shared that by having someone available to them who was neither family member nor friend, they would not be judged on "how good they are as a parent." This appeared to be a very important factor in developing their parental identity. The parent educators reaffirmed their actions unconditionally and were accepting of their decisions.

Grace recalled that when her parent educator would remind her that she is her child's most important teacher, she realized that her daughter was learning from her not only through her words but also through her actions. She developed a deeper understanding of the teaching that is going on in her home stating, "the modeling that is going on is so important." Participation in the PACT program gave these mothers the confidence to parent in an environment of support and acceptance. The parent educator created the opportunity for these mothers to share their experiences and think through alternatives. Their thinking about what parenting means was greatly impacted.

Evidence of engagement in the form of knowledge or skills as a result of their involvement with the PACT program was found in their understanding of child development,

establishment of boundaries and establishment of routines. These mothers verbalized the knowledge they gained from their home-visitations as a result of the content delivered and the circumstances under which it was delivered.

Awareness of Child Development

Understanding the stages of child development is neither intuitive nor easily understood. The PACT program provides families with knowledge of what typical child development looks and sounds like. As Grace shared, "They bring activities and share articles on things you just wouldn't normally have known or understood." But, no one child's journey is the same. Marie not only recalled being taught what to expect at different stages of her daughter's development, but how to navigate and best understand what she was observing. "I learned through PACT that just because your kid is not doing one thing that it is probably because they are focusing on doing something else." Marie went on to share how understanding what to expect during each phase of development put her at ease now that she is expecting her second child:

> I slept on the couch with (child's name) and I kept my hand on her little chest so I
> could tell that she was breathing. So with this one just having it in the basinet next to
> me will be fine. I mean I realize nothing is going to happen to him. I mean I have to
> be secure... with my second child I think I will be more relaxed and knowing that he
> is just next to me and doing the normal routines and I will be fine. (Marie)

Knowing what typical development might look like was associated with having an education. When Grace explained, "unless you are in education you are not going to know what is expected," she implied that unless you seek out the information in a formal way, you are not likely going to know what to expect. She valued the opportunity to learn how developmental phases are defined.

Another parent contextualized her change in understanding of child development as occurring when she realized that some of the opportunities she had created for her child at home were not appropriate.

> Sometimes I would be pushing him to do things that were not age appropriate and (my parent educator) would say, 'Look, don't be stressing out about this because that is not a skill at this age level.' So, it was just nice to have her there to say, ok this is what we are looking for now. (Maureen)

This mother also shared a specific incident of how the knowledge of what to expect at different ages helped her understand why her child was testing boundaries at age 2 and experiencing nightmares at age 3. Understanding the developmental stages of childhood is an objective of the PACT program. These mothers acquired an increased awareness and understanding of their child's development that contributed to their confidence in parenting.

Establishing Boundaries

The PACT program supports parents in their understanding of how and why boundaries should be established. Boundaries keep children safe and exposed to appropriate environments that they can navigate by defining what they can and cannot do within these environments. As their children moved through different stages of development, these mothers were faced with the establishment of different sets of boundaries.

> He was still getting frustrated and hitting and so it was still an issue. We had to put an end to it right away and one of the things was there is no excuse for abuse. So just saying and being forward with him and saying this is unacceptable. We would do that and then that was it. (Maureen)

Establishing boundaries required this mother to be consistent in her own actions. She shared her struggle in moving from reacting to her child's misbehaviors to naming misbehaviors for

her child as either not safe or inappropriate. She attributed this shift to the learning she experienced in the program.

Other mothers shared their struggles with establishing boundaries. Marie talked about how with each boundary she put into place her daughter would respond by questioning it and would get angry. She would tell her daughter that she could not have something and her daughter would respond by asking her "why not." This mother became continually frustrated, but ultimately realized "that little things don't really matter that it is the big picture." Marie expressed how she worked through her daughter's learning of what was allowable and what was not, requiring herself to reframe the level of importance being placed on the rules that were established. While certain activities were off limits in her household, the attention and energy she placed on reacting to her daughter's frustration was tempered as she figured out how to put the rules she established in perspective.

Another mother struggled with the boundaries they had established as their parent educator encouraged engagement in the use of scissors in their home.

> (Our parent educator) wanted to see a change in what I let them do. Her (the parent educator) big thing was to let them have scissors. Well, we have four kids and we don't let them have scissors. So she suggested make a table, leave their box there…this and that. We didn't do it because we didn't necessarily take the time to sit and watch them use the scissors, but she kept pushing the scissors. (Valerie)

While this mother did not see how the developmental benefits of using scissors at home outweighed the potential hazards of having scissors available, she clearly shared that boundaries had been established. These boundaries, while not necessarily a result of the PACT program, were supported by the joint discussion around the activity and the need for the limitation.

Establishing Routines

Providing an environment with routines creates a sense of security and predictability. When change occurs, children are more able to handle differences when they occur. Specific incidents were shared relating how their involvement in the PACT program help support the establishment of routines, such as "make sure the TV was off" and "read to her before she goes to bed." One parent turned to established routines to divert their child from inappropriate behavior.

> If she gets antsy or bored I would tell her to get a book and I would read it to her…to help calm her down if she was going to have a fit. She liked the texture books so it would curtail any behavior if she was going in the direction of a bad one. We still have the same bedtime routines today. (Marie)

When asked if there were routines that they have established, Grace replied, "besides reading at night...we usually do the same things as soon as I pick her up from after-school each night." Each mother was able to identify ways they instituted routines as a means of providing predictable activities. While the establishment of routines outside of reading together may or may not have been the result of these families' involvement with PACT, each family had recognized the importance of establishing a way of going about their day and consistently approaching daily activities. Valerie shared the routines they had established for getting ready for bed and dressing in the morning. Grace shared the routines associated with coming home from school each day. All four mothers talked about the routines surrounding shared book reading. These mothers valued establishing an expectation for how their child's time would be scheduled and the behavior their child would display as a result of having done so.

Additionally, positive statements about the importance of parental involvement were

discovered. These parents reflected on their own experiences as children and how that

experience has framed their thinking about being a parent.

> My parents always read to me. I think that is why I bought books when (child's
> name) was first born and still read with her today. (Marie)

> My parents were…they were great parents since I did well...I turned out ok. I just
> remember growing up that they never stuck up for us and whatever anyone else said
> that was the truth. They didn't really look into things. (Grace)

> So I kinda think about how my parents, like I don't remember them sitting down to
> talk with me and doing my homework or checking it over. I see that importance of
> having that support and being that support. (Maureen)

> My parents really didn't take time to be with us growing up. They were always
> working. I am always thinking about how much time we are or are not spending with
> them. (Valerie)

We all come to parenting with the understanding of parenting as we experienced it.

At some point, a parent may come to realize that they sound or act in some way that is just

like their parents. They may make a conscious decision to not be like their parents. Actions

taken by parents do not function in absence of these experiences and are influenced by them.

Participation in the PACT program provided an opportunity to understand and discover the

influences their parents' parenting have on their decisions. Two mothers talked about how

they wanted to be different than their parents and how involvement in PACT supported

changing their behaviors. Grace shared that her parents never "stood up for her." When her

child was struggling with her behavior in her preschool classroom, Grace was empowered by

her parent educator to hold a meeting to discuss how she and the preschool teacher could

help her daughter. Valerie was bothered by the limited amount of time her parents spent with

her when she grew up and was committed to spending more time with her children. Her

parent educator assisted in investigating what was going on in the community so that Valerie could spend time doing "something fun" with her children. Having someone to talk through their current understanding of parenting assisted these parents understanding how their experiences growing up may influence the decisions they were now making as mothers.

Relationship with Parent Educator

The parenting curriculum that is delivered in the home is ideally done in the presence of the child so that instruction can move from modeling to practice in the presence of the parent educator. As a result, a positive relationship was formed between the Parent Educator and the family. Furthermore, there was evidence that these mothers capitalized on this relationship by demonstrating for their children how relationships with adults can be defined differently.

> I would put (the home visits) on the calendar and (my daughter) would wait for (my parent educator) and she would be very excited that she would be coming. I consider her a family friend. If I was going through something with my daughter I can confide in her and get direction. (Marie)

This parent went on to say how her parent educator gave her great resolve as an impartial adult whom she could confide in. When dealing with a sensitive issue related to her daughter's father, she shared "I could have told my family but I didn't want to deface her (her daughter). That is their granddaughter. You know, if she was having a tough time I wanted to curtail it and solve the problem without getting everyone involved." The parent educator provided a neutral, trusted provider that was available to listen and assist.

Marie also shared the value of having another adult in the life of her child.

> "I believe that having her (my daughter) as an only child at the time and going through what I was going through, I don't think that my daughter would be as open to other adults as she is if we didn't have a Parent Educator (visiting us on a regular basis.)" (Marie)

Marie attributed the open, trusting relationship her daughter has with her Kindergarten teacher to the fact that she had a parent educator.

> Having someone come into the house and then getting to know them taught her how to become a friend. Even when they are grown up and to trust. I think that is why she is so close to her teachers now. She doesn't have a problem with them probably because she communicated with (our parent educator). It wasn't grandma or grandpa or auntie…it was (our parent educator). (Marie)

Another mother described her parent educator as a family friend who was "kinda raising them (their child) with us so we don't have to do it on our own." She described the amount of time she spent together getting to know each other and the types of activities they shared as "family" activities. Valerie also described her parent educator as an advocate.

> She helped me keep track of stuff that was going on in the community and if I had questions, she helped me with the schools. (Valerie)

Mothers identified their relationship with their parent educator as professional, but also someone who felt like "one of the family." The parent educators demonstrated respect and trust that created an environment in the homes of these parents that allowed for open and honest communication. The parent educators did not have to hold all the answers, but rather served as individuals in these mother's lives who could be confided in and assist with their evolution as parents.

Subtle Aspects of Parenting

Each mother also spoke to her role as parent not in terms of what she explicitly did for their child, but rather how she demonstrates her love and respect for her child and the expectations she held. All four mothers spoke to one or more of these subtle aspects of parenting in the context of their child's learning and development.

Love and respect demonstrated itself in the interviews as each parent expressed a genuine desire to understand and support their child's behavior. Marie spoke often of her sensitivity toward her daughter and her daughter's relationship with her father, who is struggling with a debilitating illness. Because the illness is very visible, Marie wants her daughter to maintain respect for her father while building a better understanding for others. Marie explained, "I want her to learn to not judge people but put herself in their shoes." Others' love and respect for their child came into play as they shared how both the teacher and the child recognized the child's behavior in preschool as problematic.

> It was getting like she would have a red circle every day and then it would get double red and it was just getting to the point where everyday I was getting a bad report and she would know. The first thing (my daughter) would say would be, 'I had a red day.' Like she would be the one that would tell you and I think it was more upsetting for her. (Grace)

This mother showed empathy for her daughter and wanted to put in place measures to protect her. She shared later in the interview that she spoke to the teacher and asked for a different mechanism for sharing her daughter's behavior. Empathy was also seen as Maureen struggled with her child's continuous lack of success and hearing of these failures from her son.

> Like when he would come home I would question him and I would say, 'Hey, did we have a great day at school today?' and he would say, 'Yes.' I would say, 'Are you sure, do I need to call (your Kindergarten Teacher)?' He would say, 'Well, I was on yellow.' And I would say, 'Well, why were you on yellow?' 'Because I was flying like a butterfly around the room.' And I was like, 'Well why were you flying like a butterfly around the room?' He would say, 'Well I already know about the butterflies we hatched at home.' So a lot of the stuff he was doing he had already seen and he was just bored.

Other examples of love were seen when these mothers shared their observations of when their child had fun. Valerie told of a time when her children were excited as a result of the

time they spent together, illustrating her respect for what her children wanted to do. She recognized that when they are with her it is a demonstration of her love for them.

These mothers also spoke to the high expectations they have for their child. They genuinely wanted their children to succeed, and recognized obstacles as opportunities for their child to grow.

> (My daughter) does well and the teacher says she does well. But she does whatever task in the shortest amount of time because she wants to do what is next. At our last conference with her Kindergarten Teacher she kinda agreed that she probably does have some kind of issues or concerns but as long as my daughter meets the minimum criteria it is not going to be an issue. Even now if she is doing things at this level if she can be doing other things way up here then I want her to be up there. (Grace)

> At home I feel like I have to push him extra hard whereas he is not getting that at school. (Maureen)

Valerie noticed that her son responded to rewards. She used this to help motivate him in completing his homework and accomplishing his reading goals in schools. These mothers expressed a desire for their children to succeed and sought out opportunities for this to happen.

Two additional themes emerged that are not directly tied to the intent of the PACT program. Parental empowerment came through as a result of involvement in PACT as each was supported to advocate for either their child or themselves at some point during their enrollment in PACT. Additionally, each of these families experienced some form of support during a period of transition while enrolled in PACT. The Parent Educator maintained a needed consistency and stabilizing force during a time of adjustment for the family.

PACT Empowers the Parent

While involvement in the PACT program supports parents in their development of parenting skills, it has not been an explicit aim of the program to empower parents to advocate for their children when challenging situations arises. However, each mother experienced a feeling of empowerment to take action during times when they would have otherwise been challenged to respond.

Marie had shared a situation that occurred in Kindergarten when her daughter was frightened by a picture of a group of students that hung on a school wall. The picture bothered her daughter so much that the child approached the teacher, who then took her to speak with the Principal. The child, not happy with the answers she was getting from the school, told her mother. Marie shared, "So, what I ended up doing was put her on my steps and took her picture and showed it to her and said, 'Does that look like the picture?' and she said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'That is what that little girl is doing. It is not suppose to be scary or anything. She is not in jail or anything.'" Marie's daughter had asked her teacher, the principal and her mom about the picture on the wall that had bothered her. Marie was persistent and believed that her daughter's conflict needed to be resolved. She did it in a way that allowed her daughter to discover an answer for herself, while demonstrating to her daughter that she recognizes her need to find out answers to her questions. Marie may have acted in this way regardless of her participation in PACT, but her participation in PACT supported her action and that of her daughter. Marie had shared earlier that she believed her daughter trusted her teacher and had developed a positive relationship with her as a result of the relationship she had developed with their parent educator. These experiences supported Marie's daughter in seeking out answers to her questions.

Grace struggled with the teacher from their daughter's preKindergarten. When reflecting on the role her parent educator played, she said,

> I think their role is to encourage and advocate especially if things are not right. You don't just need to sit back and say well this is the way it is. Well, maybe this is the way it should be! And that is kinda what (my parent educator) encouraged in me. (Grace)

Grace spoke to the value that the parent educator's knowledge and experience brought to supporting her family. In a situation when their daughter was struggling with being successful in her prekindergarten classroom, her parent educator was found to be invaluable.

> She (the parent educator) kinda understood where they were coming from. She knew how she did it (referencing work with her daughter) and what worked for her. She understood that what might not be working for them (the prekindergarten classroom) and I know it was never her spot to take their place but I think sometimes she knew what type of person (our daughter) was and I think she knew what worked for her because what was being done for (our daughter) just wasn't working. (Grace)

Grace had also previously stated that she felt her own parents did not stand up for her when she was a child. In a moment when she felt her child needed defending and support, she was able advocate for her. Grace shared that it was the presence of her parent educator that gave her the confidence to do so.

Maureen's family went through a difficult period when their child's nanny unexpectedly passed away. This event caused her son's behavior to spiral downward. Maureen was at a loss and turned to her Parent Educator.

> She suggested that we seek outside counseling. (I) called my Employee Assistance Program. I was just like I don't know how to tell my kids this. She (Nanny) has been there for every day of their life. I didn't know what to say. (Maureen)

Because of the success Maureen had experienced in the PACT program, she sought out the advice of her parent educator and was empowered to seek out additional support. Maureen

shared that the counseling helped her to best work through the loss with her children and provided her with supplementary information that helped her understand her son's behavior.

Valerie was empowered by her parent educator to speak with the principal of her son's new school prior to entering Kindergarten. And when she was concerned about her son's transition during the middle of his Kindergarten year to another elementary school, she reached out to the principal once again. Valerie's parent educator had encouraged her to seek out the teachers and leaders in the school in the event she needed support.

> She (parent educator) never really said anything about the (Kindergarten) teachers, except for the one that I got. I forgot her name. She said, 'Yes, I know her because she used to work at (Washington) and she just transferred to (State Street). My parent educator encouraged I guess. (Valerie)

These mothers felt a sense of empowerment as they sought out support for their children. As parents, they wanted what was best for their child and learned that other adults in their lives, like their parent educator, are resources that can be accessed when they feel they need help.

Support for Transitions

A final theme surrounding the support for transitions emerged. Marie recognized the ease her daughter had transitioning into a Kindergarten classroom. There were a number of events that occurred during the year as her daughter spoke up for herself and was not intimidated whatsoever by an adult. Marie attributed this to that fact that her daughter had a parent educator as part of her life for five years prior to going to school. Her daughter was used to speaking openly with another adult outside the family. She felt strongly that her daughter's relationship with their Parent Educator supported her daughter's transition into her Kindergarten classroom.

Having someone come into the house and then getting to know them taught my daughter how to become a friend even when they are grown up. I think that is why she is so close to her teachers now. (Marie)

Grace felt that the emphasis placed on the value of reading together frequently and early during her child's development contributed to her daughter's love of reading and motivation to want to read more. This supported her transition into an environment where books played a significant role.

I think because of this program she likes books more. We read to her before the program but I think and even this year in kindergarten all the books she will bring home it is more of like she wants to do more. (Grace)

The parent educator also maintained a sense of predictability and consistency for transient families. Valerie shared that she has moved three times in the past 2 years. Her son had attended prekindergarten at one elementary school, then transferred to another elementary school for Kindergarten and then transferred to a different elementary school towards the end of his Kindergarten year. Valerie recognized how having the Parent Educator throughout the period of transition from preschool to another elementary school provided her son with stability and familiarity.

When he had to change schools after being with the same kids, same teacher…very comfortable, very stable…so when he had to change schools, it was a big mess. But, with being with (our Parent Educator) regularly he had bits and pieces of that so familiarization. (Valerie)

Not only did these families value the relationship they had with their parent educator but that relationship served as a cherished asset during periods of transition. These relationships also served as contributing factors in empowering these families to act on behalf of their children. While the primary objectives of the PACT program is to support a solid foundation for a child's school success and increase parents feelings of competence and confidence, the

resulting relationship between the parent educator and mother assisted in information gathering and decision making related to unanticipated events.

Summary of Findings from Parent Interviews

The mothers interviewed for this study are able to identify how they made meaning out of their involvement in the PACT program. The information they acquired supported by the relationship they formed with their Parent Educator helps them establish the confidence to parent. Family literacy in the form of reading together is one area of knowledge that is acquired and applied during the child's kindergarten year. However, the parent's reflections on their use of the more subtle aspects of parenting are not learned but rather enhanced by the parent's engagement with the program. Having a sense of empowerment to act on behalf of their children provides the foundation for supporting their child's preparation for and success in Kindergarten.

The relationships established between these mothers and their parent educators also provided support during critical times of change. Whether it is the knowledge about parenting, child development, or understanding of early literacy that was gained by these mothers, the relationships that were established played a significant role in the success of these children. Furthermore, the relationship that was developed between the parent and child as illustrated by the more subtle aspects of parenting may have been a contributing factor to the success of the child (Kordi & Baharudin, 2010; Jeynes, 2010). Maternal belief systems that are often demonstrated in the form of love, respect and expectation have been shown to have a positive effect on both the degree to which the mothers engaged in joint reading and the quality of the joint book reading experience (Debaryshe, 1995). These relationships

strengthened the literacy support provided for their children (Trivette, Dunst, & Gorman, 2010).

The results from these interviews speak only to highly engaged parents. There were no trends discerned that would imply differences in engagement occurred between different social or culture groups. Mothers who were highly engaged in the PACT program had children who were associated with a higher degree of readiness for school and school performance. The parenting that was measured by the parent educators and shared by these mothers points to the importance of acquiring parenting skills that affect family literacy. It also reveals the important role more subtle aspects of parenting play, like love and respect, in supporting a child's development (Jeynes, 2010). Schools may benefit from reconsidering how existing parent involvement programs address the acquisition of parenting skills and recognize the subtle aspects of parenting through the lens of a trusting relationship.

Chapter V – Discussion

Research on home-visitation programs that promote parenting behaviors has called for additional studies to exam the constructs that result in success for the parent and child (Astuto & LaRue, 2009; Haskins, Paxson, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). This study examined the impact enrollment in a home-visitation program designed to influence parenting skills and family literacy had on children's readiness to learn to read and subsequent school performance. For the purpose of the study, kindergarten performance was measured by early reading behaviors including the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy-Next assessment (DIBELS), the number of books read in the home, and the ability of the child to identify story structure. Parental involvement was a measure of the extent with which parents attended scheduled home visits and their depth of engagement in the visits. Following analysis of these performance measures, four in-depth parent interviews were conducted to identify what involvement in the Parents and Children Together (PACT) program meant to these mothers and how they applied what they learned to their parenting of their child. This chapter reviews the major findings of the study and its relevance to other research, juxtaposed to the study's limitations. How practice and policy surrounding the PACT program may be impacted are considered, along with areas requiring further research.

Kindergarten Student Performance

Children whose parents are involved in the PACT home-visitation program outperformed children whose parents were not involved on the beginning of the year DIBELS, which measures the student's ability to name letters and initial sounds. While there are no significant differences among the measures assessed by DIBELS at the end of the

year, the same proportion of the PACT population performed at or above benchmark expectations. The end of the year DIBELS assessment measures a different set of skills. This suggests that these children are able to initially perform and continue to perform in part because of the support they had received from their mothers. These mothers had shared the importance reading had in their home and how reading with their child took on a new meaning for them due to their involvement in the PACT program. Reading together did not just mean reading the words on the page and looking at the related pictures. Reading together meant reading and extending what is read beyond the page and story. It meant talking about the composition of the words and their meaning. It meant making connections between the characters in the story they are reading or listening to and the characters in other stories or events in their own lives. It meant relating the setting of some stories read together with their parents with places they have visited, as well as connecting events or plots of stories read with events they have experienced. And perhaps, as has been suggested by Bus (2001), Kassov (2006) and Debaryshe (1995), it strengthened the relationship these mothers had with their child.

These mothers spoke of the importance of talking about the words on the page. They pointed out words in books and then again in the environment. These early literacy behaviors experienced through PACT appeared to influence these parents and children. There were no differences in student's ability to understand story structures in January. In fact, the same proportion of PACT students demonstrated proficiency as students whose parents had not been involved in PACT. Because differences between children whose parents were and were not highly engaged in PACT are shown on end of year measures, the data suggests that the PACT program impacts the acquisition of new skills during the Kindergarten year. This

study supports the concept that connections are made between student outcomes and the social construct created in the home (Baker & Scher, 2002; Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Heath, 1982; Kabuto, 2009; Nolen, 2007; Scher & Baker, 1997; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Children who have an attachment to their parents are more willing to explore the unfamiliar and take risks. The more secure the parent-child relationship, the more engaged the child and parent are in shared book reading experiences (Bus et al., 1997; Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997). And, parental expectations influence the child's goals for learning (Friedel, Cortina, Turner, & Midgley, 2007). While the relationship between program engagement and student outcomes suggests that parenting behaviors learned and reinforced have a positive impact on student learning, this study is limited in its ability to connect student outcomes with specific parenting behaviors. The limited number of interviews realized, combined with only highly engaged parents being represented, allows for only tentative conclusions to be drawn. Further study to identify the specific parenting behaviors that result in children's literacy and school success are needed (Hindman et al., 2008).

Parental Performance

Home-visitation programs should not be solely judged on how often parents attend home-visitation sessions. Greater attention should be paid to the strategies parents are actively engaged in and how parents make meaning of these strategies. This study provides evidence that suggests involvement in a home-visitation parent education program designed to support a children's literacy development not only affects the child's acquisition of early literacy skills, but impacts the parent-child relationship resulting in future positive outcomes. Engagement in the program occurred through two separate, but related relationships. The

relationships created or enhanced between the parent-provider and parent-child serve as vehicles for learning. Research on parenting programs has demonstrated the influence programming can have on supporting a "growth-promoting environment within a unique cultural and socio-economic context" (Wagner et al., p. 17, 2003). The mothers interviewed shared how their involvement is realized in each home environment effectively, yet differently. Words of encouragement and support framed the relationship they had with their parent educator and have with their child. Identifying the conditions for establishing these relationships require further investigation.

Furthermore, when these same measures were investigated among families involved in PACT, parents who demonstrated higher levels of engagement had children that outperformed their PACT peers. How some of these parents made meaning of the PACT program provides insight into other factors that may affect student performance. Each mother interviewed revealed subtle features of parenting that may play a role in sustaining the support the program provides (Kordi & Baharudin, 2010). These mothers shared the high expectations they have for their child and their demonstration of love and respect for their child's well-being. These mothers also shared how their level of confidence in acting on the behalf of their child is heightened. These factors may have contributed to their level of engagement in the program and ultimately, to their child's academic success.

Research often describes the relationship between a home visitor and parent is described as often a "helping relationship," one in which home visitors demonstrate empathy and parents embrace someone who supports, understands, and is willing to assist them (Daro et al., 2003). Sar et al. (2010) advocates for the inclusion of relationship strengthening components in parenting programs to support compromised families. They believe that the

positive effects of home-visitation services can be boosted and sustained by intentionally encouraging the development of family relationships. However, there are a limited number of studies that have attempted to either quantify or qualify these relationships. The mothers interviewed in this study consistently referenced the supportive relationship they had developed with their parent educator. They sought help from their parent educator, increased their confidence through their communication with them, looked forward to each visit and enjoyed the time they spent with them, referencing them as "one of the family." The creation of the conditions that foster positive relationships is complex. But this study's interviews provides evidence of an association between high levels of program engagement and strong relationships fostered between mothers and their parent educators, suggesting that these relationships serve as a vehicle for the acquisition of parenting skills.

These parents also recalled elements of the relationships they had with their own parents when they were children. Each of these mothers spoke to how the parenting they experienced as a child influences their beliefs and decisions. Participation in the PACT program helped these parents understand how these experiences are impacting parenting decisions. The relationship history of the parents also influences the quality of the services and program participation. Understanding these relationships would provide additional insight into the parent's program engagement (Wagner et al., 2003).

The effectiveness of home-visitation programs has been measured by their impact on the parent's knowledge, behavior, attitudes and beliefs; health and welfare of children; and, the lives of parents (Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). This study supports the idea that acquisition and development of literacy skills is more than a private, discrete set of skills (Auerbach, 1989; Auerbach, 1995; Edwards, Sheridan & Knoche, 2008;

Gee, 2001). The mothers interviewed shared how their experiences, attitudes and their

relationship with their parent educator mediated their acquisition of parenting skills, and

ultimately, influenced their child's early reading behaviors.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Parents whose children are performing in school are likely to have parenting

strategies that work in the home. How these parents acquire these strategies and apply them

impacts how ready their child will be for Kindergarten. Some parent education programs

wisely promote ways that parents can support literacy development and ensure that literacy

events occur in predictable and supportive ways. Creating environments that are safe

promotes trusting parent-child relationships. However, the subtle features of parenting, such

as the articulation of high expectations and demonstrations of love and respect, were

consistently demonstrated in those interviewed and should be given equal attention (Jeynes,

2010). It has been noted that there is a lack of research around how new learning in family

literacy programs in general is translated and used in family activities (Anderson et al.,

2010). Identifying when and how programs promote these aspects can strengthen program

effectiveness. Teachers can equally benefit by focusing on how parents can support the

content they are delivering and recognizing the place subtle features of parenting have in

learning.

The results from this study suggest that home-visitation programs should emphasize

the quality of the parent's engagement, and use of program components, rather than on the

frequency of participation in home-visitation. Training parent educators in explicit

techniques to ensure that trusting relationships are developed with families is essential (Sar et

al., 2010). These relationships served as a vehicle for building confidence in parents skills and empowerment to act on behalf of their child.

This research also suggests that the relationship between home visitors and parent engagement affects how and when a family is engaged, and the frequency and intensity of engagement (Gomby & Gomby, 2003; Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie, 2002; Jack, DiCenso, & Lohfeld, 2005; Kitzman, Yoos, Cole, Korfmacher, & Hanks, 1997; Wagner et al., 2003). However, further research is needed to identify the parenting skills that are associated with each type of engagement.

The presence of a parent educator in the life of these families did more than provide opportunities for learning parenting skills and children to acquire early reading behaviors. It provided families with a sense of stability. Young children thrive on predictable environments as they learn to self-regulate and navigate the world. When a family experiences change, whether it be in day care providers or residency, family members turn to those who are known and trusted. Parent educators served as a stabilizing presence, assisting parents in thinking through alternatives. Home-visitation programs may be directed to families that have a history of being transient or that are currently experiencing conditions that involve frequent or unpredictable change. School districts may also benefit from placing parent educators with families before and after years that involve transition, such as the years that span prekindergarten-to-Kindergarten, Fifth-to-Sixth grade, and Eighth-to-Ninth grade. As the students experience change and act in ways that reflect typical behavior, parent educators could provide needed guidance helping parents understand their child's experience and reaction to a new experience.

Finally, it was found that the engagement in the program reflects supportive relationships that are developed between parents and parent educators. School leaders and teachers may benefit from reframing their thinking about parents to first consider their efforts in developing positive relationships. Without these relationships, children who are struggling in our school systems will likely not realize their potential. And, parents may not accept the assistance available or offered.

Limitations and Implications for Future Studies

This study set out to discern the impact a home-visitation literacy focused parent education program had on the performance of Kindergarten students. The study was able to measure the performance of 48 Kindergarten students who were enrolled in the Binghamton City School District's Parents and Children Together (PACT) program. However, this cohort of students did not include students who were enrolled in the PACT program but moved outside the district prior to Kindergarten entrance. The study was also not able to finding out how parents who were less engaged in the program made sense of the program. The limited number of subjects interested in being interviewed additionally prevents stronger implications from being identified. Studying the impact of a home-visitation program on families who are less engaged or highly mobile would provide insight into the program's influence.

Student literacy measures were the only student performance measures considered. Further exploration of how program performance may affect specific elements of text comprehension could identify more explicitly how students understand what they read. Other student performance measures might include cognitive measures such as mathematics or

127

retention and memory, gross and fine motor skills, social and emotional measures, or other behavioral measures, such as disciplinary referrals and school attendance. This study did not look to explore differences that may exist among those children who were referred to or had received services through Early Intervention or the Committee on Preschool Special Education. Research has demonstrated that early intervention can influence student outcomes. Participation in early intervention or other formal preschool programs was mentioned in some interviews but not taken into consideration as variables in this study.

Differences among family demographics were also not explored. The differences that may exist among families in poverty should be studied and may reveal supports that are particularly helpful for these families. Analysis of parental interviews did not explore the unique perspectives from families in poverty. Families that are less resourced than others may define key elements of programming differently. While the small group size prevented quantitative analysis by ethnic group, investigating how different cultures may engage in the program may also expose how parenting skills impact student performance.

The quantitative data collected in this study did not address the differences that may exist in the performance of students who experience support through subtle aspects of parenting or parents who are able to navigate transitions due to unanticipated life experiences with the support of a parent educator. Given the influence these parenting features had on the mothers interviewed, further studies are suggested to investigate if home-visitation programs that have a literacy focus while emphasizing general parenting skills have a broader or longer lasting influence on parenting and/or student outcomes then programs that focus exclusively on literacy.

There were other limitations that resulted from the methodology used in the study.

Only one district program was examined. In order to make assertions that are more generalizable within and between home-visitation programs, future studies should include additional program sites. Additionally, the qualitative portion of the study was limited to interviews with parents. In order to provide a greater depth of understanding of both program engagement and evidence of parental support, future studies should consider including interviews with parent educators, classroom teachers and children. It may also reveal greater insight into the degree to which effective parenting practices are contextualized and culturally immersed.

A stratified random sample of parents was invited to participate in the interviews. Each of the four parents that responded had demonstrated a high level of engagement in the PACT program. Consequently these parents may have had an intrinsic willingness to participate. This may have an unintended influence on the qualitative data collected since their willingness to participate in the study may also be connected to a willingness to participate in other events, including the PACT program. Parents who were engaged in the program are likely to have a desire to participate in a written solicitation to be interviewed. Because the solicitations were written, parents with low literacy levels were virtually excluded. The resulting four in-depth interviews, while extremely insightful, were small in number. Follow-up interviews would permit questions raised in other interviews and questions raised with the passage of time during the Kindergarten year to be addressed. While limited in their perspective, the interviews did reveal what high engagement meant to these parents. A parent educator had identified each mother as having been high engaged in the PACT program, but no quantitative analysis could be done connecting the qualitative outcomes directly with academic performance.

This study also sought to explore the meaning that parents make of their participation in a home-visitation program and how that meaning may or may not be applied to their parenting of their child while enrolled in Kindergarten. The identification of program involvement through the use of the Parent Education Profile, while useful in general application, is limited due to the subjectivity in the completion of the tool. The utilization of the tool has also been criticized for its applicability to a narrow population as it was originally designed to evaluate parents enrolled in a specific family literacy program, Even Start, which included both early childhood education and adult literacy. Using a tool that could provide information beyond the degree of engagement to include what constituted the engagement on both the part of the parent and parent educator would provide a deeper understanding of forms of engagement that may translate to program practices and benefits for the family. Incorporating possible home observation tools to be conducted during the interview sessions might shed light on the current condition of parental engagement. The findings from this study also suggest the need for future tools that can measurement of the quality of relationship between the parent and parent educator, recognition of high expectations held by the parents, and demonstrations of love and respect.

Parental engagement was measured using the Parent Education Profile. Connections between parental involvement in literacy-based activities and parental understanding of the importance of the literacy-based activities were shared during the interviews. Parents also shared their use of existing skills and acquisition of new skills that were more generalizable across parenting. Because these more generalizable parenting skills were identified only through the interviews, there were limited chances to explore connections between literacy and these skills. While the research has pointed to the importance of recognizing the social

construct of parenting further investigation into the connections between parenting features, early childhood literacy development and academic success are needed (Wagner et al., 2003).

Families are both challenged and supported by a number of factors, which may affect their success as parents. Income level, family composition, work conditions of parents, and the current literacy level of the family are just a few elements that impact the family condition. Such circumstances may be temporary or may be permutations that have long-lasting effects on the role parents play in the life of their child. While these factors were not taken into consideration during the quantitative portion of the study, it was the explicit intent of the interviews to reveal whether parents' participation in the PACT program may have helped them overcome challenges. The semi-structured interviews were selected as a means to provide a rich understanding of what parents realized as a result of their participation in the PACT program. The results from the semi-structured interviews allow readers to judge the extent to which they are generalizable to other situations.

In Conclusion

Parent and child involvement in an early childhood home-visitation program designed to influence both parent and child skills supports a child's literacy readiness and school success. Subtle aspects of parenting, such as demonstrations of love and respect, and expectations for learning, may be equally supported through participation in a program. It may also be that fostering a sense of capability through PACT involvement is related to what McKenna and Millen (2013) call "parent voice and presence", the ideas and opinions parents hold of their children and the actions parents take in response to these beliefs. A distinguishing feature of the PAT's program is the emphasis placed on the promotion of

parental competence and confidence. This promotion was found in this study to be supported by the relationships parents developed with their parent educator. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (2005) suggests that one of the most influential elements involved in the development of relationships between families and schools are parents' beliefs and opinions about their child. It is likely that the high level of engagement of the four parents interviewed was predicated on the trusting relationships that they had with their parent educator.

The quality of parenting was impacted by the relationship developed between the parent educator and the family. Attention should be paid to the interactions and the rapport that exists between parents and providers in order to ensure program participation is optimized. The results from this study also suggest that the identity development of these women as parents and the skills needed to successfully support their child's learning was influenced by this relationship.

Home-visitation programs that provide parent education not only contribute to children's readiness for school but also transform parents' roles and their relationships with schools. Parent Educators appear to play a critical role in promoting parental competence, confidence and empowerment. The results of decisions that parents make are not always evident to educators, and rarely receive positive feedback. Having an individual observe those decisions and their consequences – someone who does not judge but rather reflects back actions and thinking – helps parents learn and build confidence. The trusting relationship between parents and providers documented in this study was almost certainly one of the keys – if not *the* key – to changes in the parents' skills, behaviors and confidence as their children's teachers and advocates. Children need their parents to play these roles, *schools* need them to play those roles, and schools need to support them in doing so.

Appendix A: EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PARENT EDUCATION PROFILE*

RMC Research Corporation & New York State Department of Education (2003). Even start family literacy parent education profile. Portsmouth, NH/Albany, NY: Author.

*This excerpt is included with permission from RMC Research.

Introduction to The Parent Education Profile

"Measure what you treasure." "If you didn't measure it, it didn't happen." The clichés about the values of evaluation for signaling importance of program components are well known both to those who take meaning from them and those who are distressed by them. My general stance leans more toward the latter than the former interpretation even though I have spent considerable time working as an evaluator. In the area of family literacy, however, I have developed a new appreciation for the wisdom of the clichés as a result of my work with the Parent Education Profile (PEP), a new observational approach to assessing parental behaviors associated with children's literacy outcomes. Because family literacy programs have not been able to gauge in a standard and meaningful way the progress of parents in their educational roles, it has been difficult to establish the value of family literacy as distinct from other services. The lack of measurement tools (and therefore of reported outcomes) for parenting education has increased the risk that policymakers will not see value in comprehensive family literacy programs.

One component that distinguishes family literacy programs from other education programs is the support provided for parents to become educators of their own children: direct parenting education for literacy development and guided practice in interactive literacy activities with children. Without this component, family literacy programming is not different from services that combine high quality adult education and early childhood services. The value added by the parenting education and interactive literacy components of family literacy programs has been difficult to capture for potential collaborators, funders, and policymakers. Not surprisingly, the value of these programs is often expressed only in terms of adult outcomes in literacy and employment and children's growth in readiness for reading. Yet family literacy program staff often credit the changes made in families' abilities to become educational advocates for their children as the long-lasting benefits of the program (New York State Even Start Family Literacy Partnership, 2000). Family workers and home instructors are understandably frustrated that the achievements of their work with parents do not show up in formal evaluations. Parenting outcomes do not even show up in the list of participant expectations that state agencies are required to measure in the Even Start law. Even Start is a federal program that funds comprehensive family literacy programs for low-income families with high literacy needs.

The problem for family literacy evaluators is locating valid instrumentation for measuring parents' progress. Many instruments in the field are paper-and-pencil questionnaires that attempt to measure parent attitude change; they tend to pose both reliability and validity issues for family literacy programs. Underlying constructs rarely address the multiple dimensions of the parent's role in literacy development in any way other than on the most

elementary level, e.g., number of reading materials in the home. Existing measures typically have been developed and used with families who are different in income level, language, and ethnicity from the low-income, often non-English speaking participants of family literacy programs; the approaches employed and the interpretations of results may not be as relevant to low-income parents from a range of cultural experiences (Powell & D'Angelo, 2000). In some cases, staff from family literacy programs have objected to even the most well-known parenting instruments as assuming living conditions, opportunities, and use of terminology that are not characteristic of the families in their programs.

Some program coordinators credit the PEP as providing the first opportunity that paraprofessional staff who conduct home instructional visits have had to "give words" to what they have been trying to do with parents. Other programs immediately began to use the PEP as a framework for brainstorming the kinds of interventions that would be helpful to guide parents' development. One program's evaluator used the experience with PEP to raise the issue of the staff's limited observation and interaction time with parents.

to measure the growth of parents in their roles as their children's educators and advocates. The goal was to develop a measurement approach with the following characteristics:

- the content would focus on the parent's role in children's literacy development rather than other aspects of parent support;
- the content would be research-based as the focus would be on family contributions to children's literacy development and school-related outcomes that have been established through research;
- the approach would focus on parents' patterns of demonstrated behaviors for making judgments;
- the approach would be sensitive to changes in parents' behaviors over time but the suggested

Taking all the above problems as appropriate challenges at a time when states were beginning to develop performance indicators in July 2000, staff from RMC Research and New York State Even Start state and local programs embarked together to remedy the situation. We initiated the development of an approach

measurement approach and use would recognize that meaningful changes in behaviors take a considerable amount of time;
- the framework would accommodate a wide range of parent development, including behaviors that could be expressed to infants as well as school-age children, and behaviors that would

be appropriate in a range of cultures as well as income levels; and

● because behavioral change is complex and demonstrations of behaviors take place in many settings, the instrument would be based on authentic behaviors and encourage multiple perspectives on parents' development, including the viewpoint of the parent.

The team that created the PEP recognized that the development task would be iterative, evolving through field piloting over time, and we acknowledged that reliability challenges were inherent in the approach. But we were inspired by the usability and success of the Child Observation Record (High Scope Educational Foundation, 1992), which is a framework for capturing authentic demonstrations of child development in different areas. RMC Research recently had used the Child Observation Record successfully in a large-scale policy evaluation and we were convinced that a similar format might work for parenting education. To ensure validity of the instrument, the development team drew for content upon Even Start's parent education framework, which is based on an analysis of the research literature relating characteristics of parent education to literacy outcomes for children (Powell & D'Angelo, 2000), the Equipped for the Future frameworks related to parenting (Stein, 2000), and the stages of parent development synthesized from New York's longitudinal

evaluations of family progress in Even Start (Boser & Hodges, 1998).

The Parent Education Profile consists of four scales that are based on research about the parental behaviors associated with learning outcomes for children:

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1. **Parent's Support for Children's Learning in the Home Environment**

2. **Parent's Role in Interactive Literacy Activities**

3. **Parent's Role in Supporting Child's Learning in Formal Educational Settings**

4. **Taking on the Parent Role**

Each scale has three or more subscales that further define constructs. For example, Scale 1 includes three subscales: Use of Literacy Materials, Use of TV/Video, Learning Opportunities, and Family Priority on Learning. Scale 2 also includes three subscales: Expressive and Receptive Language, Reading with Children, and Supporting Book/Print Concepts. Descriptions of different developmental levels of parent behaviors are arranged hierarchically to form each subscale. So, for example, the lowest point on the Expressive and Receptive Language subscale (Level 1) is described as: *Parent's verbal interactions with child are predominately commands or discouragements. Parent responds inconsistently to child's verbal or behavioral cues.* The highest level (Level 5) of that

same subscale is: *Parent actively engages the child in discussion, using strategies such as paying attention to the interests of the child, using open-ended questions providing verbal encouragement, or giving the child an opportunity to process information.*

The full instrument includes seventy-five descriptions of behaviors in fifteen different subscales. The descriptions are used to help summarize the status of parent progress. The intent is to identify the highest level of typical behaviors within each area of development, that is the level of behaviors that represents patterns that are consistently observable. Using the developmental levels on the subscales as a guide to understand progress, those who are most familiar with the parent make assessments at six to twelve month intervals. As with any observation framework, the key in meaningful use of the PEP is full discussion and documentation of the patterns of behavior. To increase reliability of judgments, users are encouraged to include in the discussion all staff members who have knowledge of a parent's literacy-related behaviors, including family workers, home visitors, classroom teachers, and program evaluators, and to reach consensus among the team members on ratings.

Documentation notes provided by the initial field users have been used to determine reliability of judgments across programs and make changes in training for the use of the instrument. Work continues on formally determining inter-rater reliability with full-scale use of the instrument by expert re-scoring of documentation notes collected from programs.

The initial version of the instrument was piloted by fifteen Even Start programs in New York State during the 2000-2001 program year. Minor improvements were made based on those experiences, formal guidance for instrument use was drawn up, and training on parenting education for literacy and the PEP instrument was provided to staff from all New York State Even Start programs during the fall of 2001. A cadre of trainers from the New York pilot programs who had a year's experience using the PEP provided onsite training to staff from other family literacy programs. The trainers had received additional training in the research base related to parent education, strategies for engaging staff with the structure and intent of the instrument, and practice in scoring, including "real time" scoring based on in-depth discussions among staff about several parents.

The field notes collected by initial users to document their discussions about parents' progress were transcribed and categorized by subscale and scoring level. The notes formed the basis of a documentation guide that provides multiple descriptions of actual parent behaviors that correspond to scores at each subscale level. The documentation guide and other materials have

been used as the core of subsequent training for PEP users. Experience to date suggests that it is important to provide users with training in the research base for parenting education, information about parents' actions that promote children's development of language and literacy, an orientation to the structure of the PEP, an opportunity to discuss applications to different ages and cultures, and guided practice in observing and determining levels on subscales.

Reactions from coordinators of the fifteen programs that were initial users of the PEP has been generally enthusiastic — with the exception of the amount of time it takes for a team to consider thoughtfully and discuss thoroughly individual parent's progress. Program staff report that an in-depth discussion takes approximately forty-five minutes to one hour per parent; as currently implemented, programs plan to discuss and formally record each parent's progress once per year. Program staff are pleased that the instrument attempts to capture the goals they are working towards with parents and, in fact, provides guidance to help shape their interactions with parents. Program directors are pleased that the instrument communicates the intention of parent education for literacy purposes, clarifying an arena that has been confusing for many family literacy programs.

Some program coordinators credit the PEP as providing the first opportunity that paraprofessional staff who conduct home instructional visits have had to "give words" to what they have been trying to do with parents. Other programs immediately began to use the PEP as a framework for brainstorming the kinds of interventions that would be helpful to guide parents' development. One program's evaluator used the experience with PEP to raise the issue of the staff's limited observation and interaction time with parents.

The PEP seems to provide a way for staff to discuss concepts that are at the core of family literacy programming, and which previously may not have received adequate attention. Once additional technical work has been completed, the developers intend to make the PEP widely available for use by family literacy programs. We are hopeful that the PEP is on its way toward becoming a tool that gives "measurement voice" to the value of family literacy.

M. Christine (Chris) Dwyer *is senior vice president of RMC Research, a firm specializing in research, evaluation, and technical assistance in education, health, social sciences, arts and culture, and media.*

Author's Note

A small group of us, including Diane D'Angelo of RMC Research staff and New York State Even Start state and program staff (Susan Henry, Lila Gibbs, Helen Schaeffer and Susan Perkins) developed the initial framework for the Parenting Education Profile in July 2000.

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Note: This section appeared in the Fall 2002 issue of the *Family Literacy Forum.*

PARENT EDUCATION PROFILE STRUCTURE
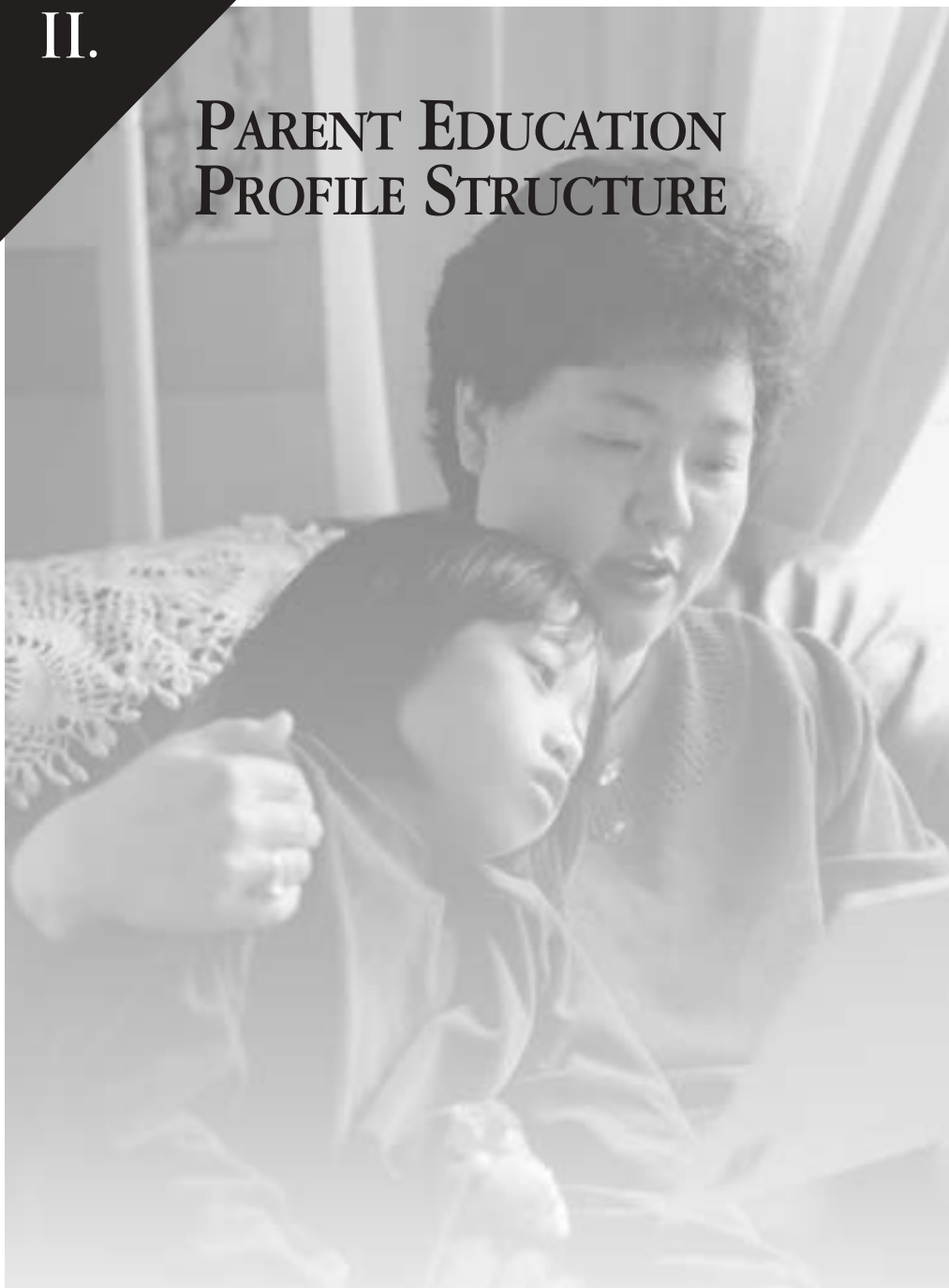
This PEP is designed to help summarize the status of parent progress in family literacy programs by organizing observations of behaviors related to literacy and learning made by parents themselves and those who know them well.

The record is designed to trace the progress of development of parents and to capture the highest level of typical behaviors within each area of development, that is, the level of behaviors that represent patterns that are consistently observable. In each area, statements of behavior are arranged from one to five in approximate order of development; the statements are arranged hierarchically.

Ratings should be made by a team that knows the parent well and based on evidence of behaviors from logs, portfolios, interactions, and interviews or discussions with the parent over a several month period. Observations shall come from everyday activities and routine program opportunities rather than specially constructed demonstrations and should represent multiple observations in a variety of settings. Thus, the focus of attention is on behavior initiated by the parent and parent's responses in national situations. In most cases, staff will need to have multiple interactions with the parent over at least a three month period before making an initial rating.

LEVELS

LEVEL 1 —

(LEAST SUPPORTIVE OF

LITERACY OUTCOMES)

LEVEL 5 —

(MOST SUPPORTIVE OF

LITERACY OUTCOMES)

LEVEL 1 —

little or no evidence of desired behaviors; limited

awareness; limited acceptance; frustrated; not comfortable

LEVEL 2 —

beginning awareness and some interest in ways to improve

but may be inconsistent; may need lots of support; low

comfort level

LEVEL 3 —

some encouragement and comfort in use of desired

behaviors; seeks out information and support; attends

to child

LEVEL 4 —

routine and frequent use of desired behaviors; initiation

of activities; comfortable in role

LEVEL 5 —

ability to work desired behaviors into daily life;

adaptability to child's interests and abilities; extends

learning; makes connections for child

SCORING: EACH PART IS RATED IN TERMS OF HIGHEST CONSISTENT LEVEL ATTAINED BY THE PARENT

Home Environment:	**4 ratings**
Interactive Literacy:	**3 ratings**
Support for Children in Formal Settings:	**5 ratings**
The Parent's Role:	**3 ratings**
Total:	**15 ratings**

RELATIONSHIP OF FOUR PEP SCALES
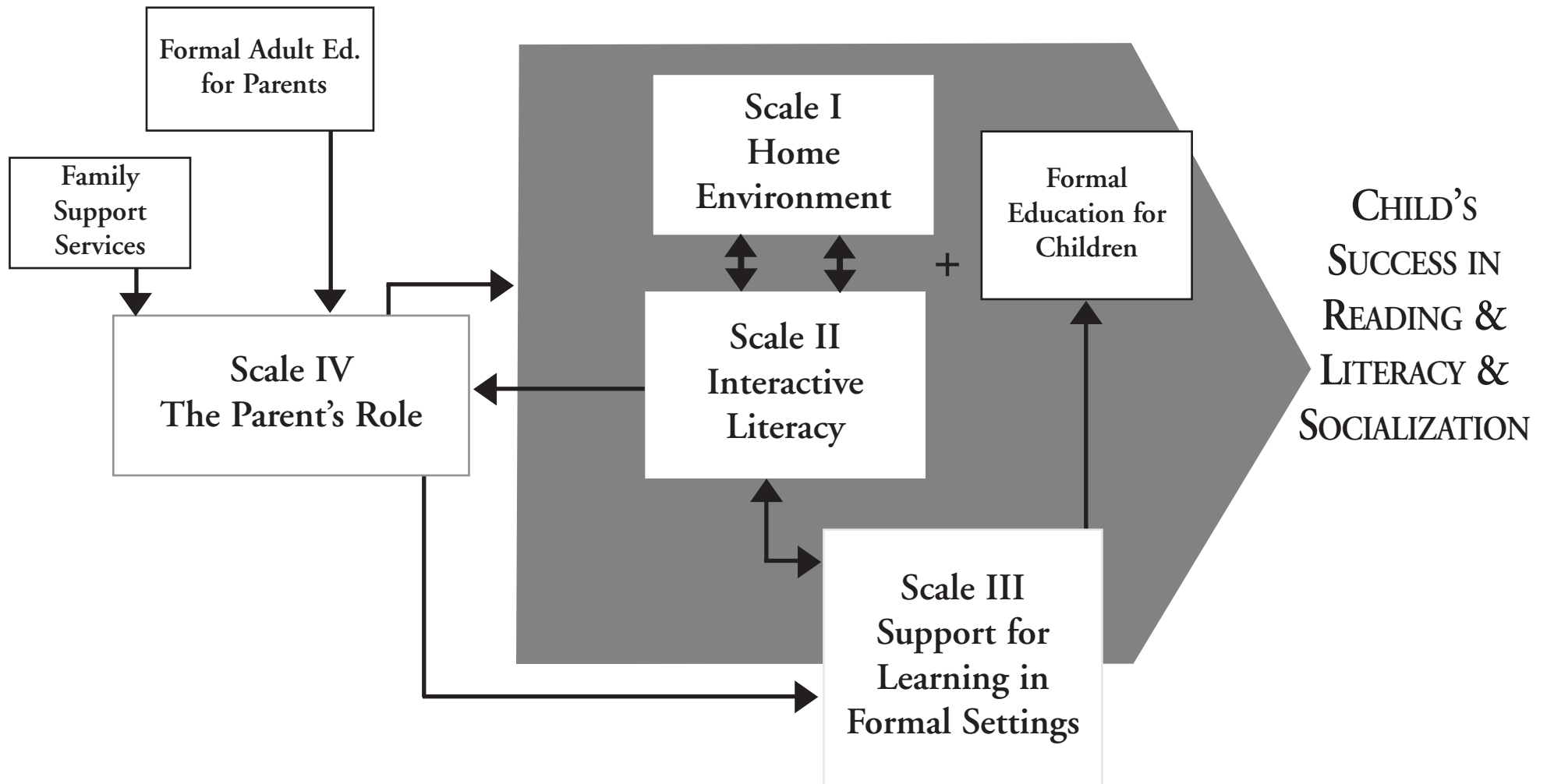
III.

PEP Scales

and

Documentation Forms

PARENT'S SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

USE OF LITERACY MATERIALS	USE OF TV/VIDEO	HOME LANGUAGE AND LEARNING	PRIORITY ON LEARNING TOGETHER
1. Home has few books or writing/drawing materials; little or nothing is age appropriate.	1. There is no monitoring of TV; children watch whatever and whenever they choose.	1. Parent does not recognize role of home routines and play in literacy learning. Parent limits child's opportunities for play, doesn't join in child's play, doesn't set up opportunities for learning.	1. Family does not have experience of devoting time to family activities and learning together. Family doesn't yet place value on learning together.
2. Home has some books and/or writing/ drawing materials but they are not appropriate nor accessible to child. Parent does not yet seek out materials for the child.	2. Parent is aware that it is his/her role to limit television but has not successfully done so.	2. Parent is interested in doing more to build child's literacy learning but parent's choices for child often do not match child's age or ability. Parent and child experience frustration.	2. Family relies on support from outside the immediate family to participate occasionally in family learning opportunities.
3. The home has some examples of appropriate reading, writing, & drawing materials. Parent seeks books and writing materials for child. Parent will read and/or write/draw with child several times a week.	3. Parent encourages some watching of age-appropriate programming.	3. Parent seeks information about age-appropriate learning opportunities and is able to use information to set up appropriate learning activities and/or occasionally join in child's play to extend learning.	3. Parent is aware of the importance of family learning activities and expresses desire to initiate them. Parent occasionally plans family learning opportunities.
4. Home includes books and materials that parent has chosen because parent believes child will like them. Parent uses literacy materials every day with child in engaging ways.	4. Parent tries to set some viewing limits on the type and times for viewing. Parent consistently reinforces viewing rules.	4. Parent often bases his/her choice of activities on observations of child's skills and interests. Parent facilitates learning opportunities for child several times per week and regularly joins play to extend language.	4. Family members routinely make an effort to initiate family opportunities that foster learning, e.g., attending field trip.
5. Home has a variety of materials for reading, writing, & drawing that are accessible to child. Materials are used daily. Parent and child select books based frequently on child's interest and skill levels.	5. Parent uses television as a learning tool; parent watches with child and moderates messages from TV.	5. Parent regularly uses "teachable moments" with child. Parent takes cues from child and allows child to guide choices of learning activities. Parent frequently participates in play and takes proactive role in expanding language.	5. Family members take pleasure in family learning opportunities. Parent is able to make learning opportunities from everyday activities.

SCALE I: PARENT'S SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Summarize the evidence that led to placement of the parent at a specific level (see section IV for examples).

Scale I A. Use of Literacy Materials

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale I B. Use of Use of TV/Video

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale I C. Home Language & Learning

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale I D. Priority on Learning Together

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

PARENT'S ROLE IN INTERACTIVE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

EXPRESSIVE AND RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE	READING WITH CHILDREN	SUPPORTING BOOK/PRINT CONCEPTS
1. Parent's verbal interactions with child are predominately commands or discouragements. Parent responds inconsistently to child's verbal or behavioral cues.	1. Parent tells stories, sings or reads infrequently to or with child. Shared reading or storytelling is a frustrating experience for parent and child.	1. Parent is not yet aware of their own role in modeling reading and writing with child.
2. Parent has limited verbal interaction with child, but the tone is more positive than negative. Language is characterized by simple sentences and questions that can be answered yes/no.	2. Parent sometimes tells stories, sings, or reads to child but does not attempt to engage child in the story or in the process of reading or telling the story. Parent has low comfort level.	2. Parent occasionally demonstrates awareness of child's development of book and print understanding, e.g., points out words, shows book pictures to young children.
3. Parent is aware of the impact of their own speaking/language and listening to child on the child's language and behavior. Parent sometimes tries out strategies to support child's development of language.	3. Parent is interested in learning how to tell stories or read to child and tries out suggested strategies for engagement. Parent becomes comfortable with at least 1-2 strategies to support/reinforce reading and oral language, including, rhymes, songs, word play with younger children.	3. Parent begins to help child understand how print works, e.g., letter names connected to sounds, left to right progression, book handling.
4. Parent regularly adjusts own language or uses strategies to support child, e.g., choice of vocabulary, variation in words, asking questions, and listening to the child.	4. Parent regularly uses a variety of different strategies for engaging the child in reading books, storytelling, or singing.	4. Parent uses strategies with child to develop meaning for print, e.g., writing letters and words, playing games with sounds and words, child dictating stories to parent.
5. Parent actively engages the child in discussion, using strategies such as paying attention to the interests of the child, using open-ended questions, providing verbal encouragement, or giving the child an opportunity to process information.	5. Parent matches reading or storytelling strategy to situation, e.g., child's developmental level, child's mood, setting. Parent verbalizes connections between stories and the child's experiences, and encourages child to make similar connections.	5. Parent takes advantage of every day activities to frequently make the connection between sounds, oral language, and print.

Summarize the evidence that led to placement of the parent at a specific level (see section IV for examples).

Scale II E. Expressive and Receptive Language

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale II F. Reading with Children

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale II G. Supporting Book/Print Concepts

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

PARENT'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING CHILD'S LEARNING IN FORMAL EDUCATION SETTINGS

Note: Depending on the age of the child, formal educational settings may be school, preschool, and/or child care settings. Educational settings vary widely in the degree to which they actively promote interaction with parents; thus, the ratings here will need to take into account the context in which parents' initiatives and responses to school's initiatives are taking place.

PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS	EXPECTATIONS OF CHILD AND FAMILY	MONITORING PROGRESS/REINFORCING LEARNING	AS A PARTNER WITH EDUCATIONAL SETTING	EXPECTATIONS OF CHILD'S SUCCESS IN LEARNING
1. Communication between parent and child's teacher is infrequent.	1. Parent is not aware of school's expectations for child.	1. Parent does not know about nor question child's progress in educational setting.	1. Parent takes no role or has no understanding of parent role connected to educational setting.	1. Parent has not formed expectations of child's success or has low expectations. Parent gives negative or mixed messages to child about child's ability.
2. Parent attends some school or center functions, e.g., open house, meetings—probably with outside support.	2. Parent knows that school has expectations but has not taken actions to learn specifics.	2. Parent acknowledges that he/she has responsibility and begins to monitor child's progress, at least in formal ways, e.g., review report card/progress report.	2. Parent would like to be connected to school but does not feel ready or is not in a position to do so. Parent may reluctantly agree to participate in school-connected activity—perhaps with support for doing so.	2. Parent sometimes verbalizes concerns about the effects of negative expectations, e.g., verbal messages or actions, on child. Parent often demands more of child than is realistic for developmental level.
3. Parent verbalizes awareness of the importance of own role in communication with teachers. Parent usually responds positively to requests on own, e.g., for attending parent-teacher conference.	3. Parent finds out information about school's specific expectations of child.	3. Parent questions child and/or teacher about how child is doing.	3. Parent occasionally participates in school-connected activities.	3. Parent tries to use positive and consistent messages with child. Parent asks for information about child development. Parent takes active role in helping the child reach appropriate expectations.
4. Parent initiates contact with child's teacher and others in school/center setting in relationship to child's needs and interests.	4. Parent assesses expectations and the school's approach to helping children meet them. Parent begins to supplement school initiatives with actions of his/her own.	4. Parent inquires about ways to help child make more progress and works with child to reinforce what the child is learning.	4. Parent sees that he/she could be involved with school in a variety of ways. Parent tries more than one type of involvement, e.g., going on field trip, making game for class.	4. Parent uses lots of different ways to encourage high but achievable expectations, including creating experiences that build the child's success.
5. There is ongoing exchange of information between parent and child's teacher; each is comfortable initiating contact with the other.	5. Parent finds out information to place the school's expectations in context, e.g., what others are asking of children of the same age. Parent works with others to promote system improvements for quality education for all children.	5. Parent takes an interest in what and how their child is learning and finds ways to extend child's learning beyond what is required by educational setting.	5. Parent participates in a variety of different ways on a consistent basis, i.e., 4-6 times a year.	5. Parent sets benchmarks to help child achieve longer term expectations. Parent creates opportunities that are challenging for child.

18

148

Summarize the evidence that led to placement of the parent at a specific level (see section IV for examples).

Scale III H. Parent-School Communication

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale III I. Expectations of Child and Family

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale III J. Monitoring Progress/Reinforcing Learning

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale III K. As a Partner with Educational Setting

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale III L. Expectation of Child's Success in Learning

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

TAKING ON THE PARENT ROLE

CHOICES, RULES, AND LIMITS	MANAGING STRESSES ON CHILDREN	SAFETY AND HEALTH OF CHILDREN
1. Parent operates from an extreme position or moves between extremes, sometimes setting no limits and other times rigid rules. Parent does not provide choices for the child.	1. Parent is absorbed in own needs or needs of one member of the family. Parent does not acknowledge responsibility for managing stresses of the family on children.	1. Parent is not yet aware that issues in the home settings/environment have a negative effect on child's learning and development, e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse, nutrition, smoking.
2. Parent observes the behavior of other adults with children and sees the connection between parenting strategies and child behaviors. Parent acknowledges need for strategies.	2. Parent is able to identify family problems, issues, or needs and expresses a desire for change.	2. Parent is aware that he/she has a role and responsibility to create a safe and healthy environment for child.
3. Parent seeks out information about strategies to develop child's skills to make choices, solve problems, and stay within limits.	3. Parent recognizes the various demands of different family members and also the strengths of the family. Parent sees his/her own part in family system and takes action to buffer children from stress.	3. Parent seeks out information and help to create an environment that protects and nurtures children. Parent takes actions to improve environment for children.
4. Parent applies range of strategies in appropriate situations. Parent helps children discriminate among strategies appropriate for particular situations.	4. Parent tries out various strategies to strengthen family. Parent engages other family members or friends or program supports in strengthening family.	4. Parent engages other family members in ensuring a safe and healthy environment for children.
5. Parent consistently provides opportunities for child to make choices within limits, e.g., age, safety. Parent is comfortable with and able to apply a range of strategies that match the situation.	5. Parent thinks about the family as a whole and balances the needs of different individuals and the whole family. Parent accepts that role of parent is to take responsibility for the well-being of the family as a whole.	5. Parent makes informed decisions to improve the health and safety of the environment.

Summarize the evidence that led to placement of the parent at a specific level (see section IV for examples).

Scale IV M. Choices, Rules, and Limits

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale IV N. Managing Stresses on Children

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Scale IV O. Safety and Health of Children

Date:_____Level: _____

Rationale:

Parent Name or Code_____

Assessment Date #1_____

    Scoring Team (names or roles):

    Which ages of children are considered in determining scoring?

Assessment Date #2_____

    Scoring Team (names or roles):

    Which ages of children are considered in determining scoring?

Assessment Date #3_____

    Scoring Team (names or roles):

    Which ages of children are considered in determining scoring?

Assessment Date #4_____

    Scoring Team (names or roles):

    Which ages of children are considered in determining scoring?

Level

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A. Use of Literacy Materials	____	____	____	____
B. Use of TV/Video	____	____	____	____
C. Home Language & Learning	____	____	____	____
D. Priority on Learning Together	____	____	____	____
Avg. (Add A-D; divide by 4)	____	____	____	____

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
E. Expressive and Receptive Language	____	____	____	____
F. Reading with Children	____	____	____	____
G. Supporting Book/Print Concepts	____	____	____	____
Avg. (Add E-G; divide by 3)	____	____	____	____

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
H. Parent-School Communication	____	____	____	____
I. Expectations of Child and Family	____	____	____	____
J. Monitoring Progress/Reinforcing Learning	____	____	____	____
K. As a Partner with Educational Setting	____	____	____	____
L. Expectations of Child's Success in Learning	____	____	____	____
Avg. (Add H-L; divide by 5)	____	____	____	____

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
M. Choices, Rules, and Limits	____	____	____	____
N. Managing Stresses on Children	____	____	____	____
O. Safety and Health of Children	____	____	____	____
Avg. (Add M-O; divide by 3)	____	____	____	____

Appendix B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Opening

     My name is Tonia Thompson. I spoke with you on the phone about coming and answering a few questions about your participation in the Binghamton City School District's Parents and Children Together (PACT) Program

     I would like to ask you some questions about your participation, your parenting experiences with your child and your child's participation in Preschool and Kindergarten school year in order to learn how the PACT program is experienced and used.

     I hope to use this information in a study I am doing for my doctorial thesis through Syracuse University. The interview should take about 30 to 45 minutes. With your permission, I will be audio-taping recording this interview so that I am better able to recall our conversation and use the information to inform my research. I have brought with me an additional piece of paper that I will read to you and ask you to sign. (Read the consent form to have the interview recorded, asking the interviewee to sign unless they have any further questions.)

Let me begin by asking you some questions about you and your family.

Topic: Introduction to Family
1. What is your name? What would you like me to call you during the interview?
2. How many children do you have and what are their names?
3. You were selected to participate in part because you have a child that was four years old when you participated in the PACT program. When you participated in the PACT Program, was your four year old going to PreKindergarten?
     a. If so, where?
     b. Was it for a half-day or whole day?
     c. Were their activities that the PreKindergarten program did that invited parents to participate at the school? What were these programs?
     d. Were their activities that your child's PreKindergarten teacher sent home that required you to do with your child? If so, what were some of these activities?

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about your participation in the PACT Program.

Topic: Understanding their Participation in PACT
1. How did you come to find out about the PACT program?
2. When the program was first described to you, was there anything about it that stood out and interested you?
     a. If yes, what was it? Why did it interest you?
3. How many months did you work with the parent educator?
          a. How many times during the month did you meet with your Parent Educator?
          b. How often did your sessions last with the Parent Educator?
          c. In addition to meeting with your parent educator, did you ever participate any other activities available to you through the PACT

program, such as the Parent Evening Events, or the Reading Challenge?

       i. If yes, what did you learn from your participation in these events?

Next, I am going to ask you about your involvement, or the kinds of activities you did with your Parent Educator.

Topic: Understanding of their Involvement in PACT and PreKindergarten
1. What was the purpose of the parent educator working with you?
2. What kinds of activities did your parent educator do with you?
3. What kinds of activities did your parent educator do with your child?
4. What kinds of activities did you do with your child because your Parent Educator had either demonstrated or talked to you about doing it?
5. Did you and your Parent Educator do any activities that involved reading, writing or books in general?
    a. If so, what were some of these activities?
6. Did your Parent Educator ever use children's books with you?
    a. What did they show you?
    b. Did you ever do these same activities with your child when your parent educator was not around? When and how?
7. How would you describe your relationship with your parent educator?
8. Can you recall any one activity that you did with your child that resulted in a change for either you or your child?
    If so, what?
9. Was their anything challenging about being in the PACT program?
    a. If yes, what challenged you/your family?
    b. Where you able to overcome these challenges? If so, how?
10. Were there any activities that you did with your Parent Educator that you received from your child's PreKindergarten Teachers?
11. Do you recall books coming home from your PreKindergarten Teacher?
    a. If so, what kinds of things did you and your child do with these books?
    b. Did you and your child enjoy the books? If so, how did you know that your child enjoyed them?

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your role as a parent.

Topic: Understanding of Parenting
1. Did your participation in the PACT program change how you parent your child?
    a. If so, how?
2. How did your Parent Educator communicate the importance of parenting to you?
3. What do you think a parent's role is in a child's education?

Finally, my last section of questions will be about your parenting now that your child is in Kindergarten.

Topic: Understanding of Their Role as Parent of Kindergarten Student

1. Now that your child is in Kindergarten and you are no longer participating in the PACT program, is there anything that you learned from the PACT program that you now find useful in helping your child be successful in school?
2. Did you think your child was ready for Kindergarten?
    a. Why or why not?
3. How do you think your child is doing in Kindergarten?
4. Have you been invited to participate in any school events?
    a. If so, what where they?
    b. Did you attend?
         i. If so, how did the event involve you as a parent?
5. Has your child's school or teacher given you anything to help your child work on school topics at home?
    a. If so, what where some of these activities?
6. What kinds of things do you do at home to help your child with school?
7. Do you and your child now do any activities that involved reading, writing or books in general?
    a. If so, what were some of these activities?
    b. Have you been receiving 100 Book Challenge books from your child's Kindergarten teacher?
    c. What are some of the things you do with these books?
7. Was there anything in particular that you did with your Parent Educator that you now do to help support your child in Kindergarten?
8. Do you think the fact that you participated in the PACT program has made a difference for your child in other ways?
    a. If so, how?

It has been a pleasure learning more about your participation in the PACT program and your child. The information you have provided to me has been extremely helpful and as I mentioned when we began, will remain confidential and neither your or any member of your families names will be associated with it as it is used in my research.

If you have any questions following this interview, please do not hesitate to contact me or my advisor, Joesph Shedd, at Syracuse University. (Note contact information on consent form left behind.)

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter – Parental Interest

Dear [Parent],

I am writing to you because of your previous participation in the Binghamton City School District Parents and Children Together (PACT) program and your child's enrollment in Kindergarten in the school district. I am a doctoral student interested in learning more about how parents experience the program and the ways in which they use what was learned from the PACT program while their child is in Kindergarten.

I would like the opportunity to meet and talk with you. The interview will involve responding to questions regarding your experience in the program. Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and will remain confidential. At no time will your name or your child's name or the names of parents who did not choose to participate be revealed to anyone. You may choose to participate or not without any concern for yourself, your child(ren) or the program. The resulting research report will not identify you, your child, the parent educator that you worked with while enrolled in the program, or any other individual named during the interview. While the school district will be interested in the outcome of the study, because it might help improve the PACT program, the primary purpose of the research is for the completion of my doctoral studies.

I anticipate the interview to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The location of the interview may take place either in your home or at Columbus School, 164 Hawley Street, Binghamton, New York, which ever you are most comfortable with. The questions I will ask are meant to help understand how parents experience and use the program, and not to evaluate you or your child. Even so, people sometimes feel uncomfortable answering questions about themselves and their children's experience. You will be free to choose how you want to answer any question, or to not answer some question at all.

If you are interested and willing to participate in the interview, please return the enclosed envelop and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. I will then be in contact with you to set up a time and identify the specific location for the interview. If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact me at 607-760-5887 or thompsot@binghamtonschools.org , or you can raise them at the time I call you or at the time we meet for the interview. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Joseph Shedd at Syracuse University, at 150 Huntington Hall, Syracuse NY 13244, 315-443-2685, or jbshedd@syr.edu, or the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013 or 121 Bowne Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244.

Thank you for considering this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Tonia Thompson

~ Please return this completed form in the prepaid postage envelop at your earliest convenience. Thank you! ~

Name:

_____

Kindergarten Child's Name:

_____

☐ Yes, I am interested in talking with you about the Parents and Teacher Together (PACT) program. I understand that our conversation will be audio-taped for the purposes of research, only. I understand that I may ask further questions about how the interview and your study will be conducted at the time we get together, and that even then I can decide not to participate.

I can be contacted at the following phone numbers:

Home Phone Number:_____ Best Time To Call:

Cell Phone Number:_____ Best Time to Call:

Work Phone Number:_____ Best Time to Call:

☐ No, I am not interested in talking with you at this time.

Appendix D: Parental Consent to Interview at Time of Interview

1) I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Tonia Thompson. I understand that the project is designed to get information about the Binghamton City School District's Parents and Children Together (PACT) program. I will be one of approximately four people being interviewed for this research.

2) My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one will be told.

3) If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

4) Participation involves being interviewed by Tonia Thompson, a doctoral student at Syracuse University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recorder connected to a computer will be present to record our conversation. It will then be converted to a written document. If I don't want to be taped, I understand that I will not be able to participate in the study.

5) I understand that Tonia Thompson will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

6) The Parent Educator that worked with my family is neither present during the interview nor will have access to the researcher's notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions. The fact that Tonia Thompson is currently an administrator with the district may create an uncomfortable situation since the questions asked during the interview are related to mine and my child's experience with their Kindergarten year. I understand that the content of this interview will remain confidential and after the information gathered from the interview is used in the study, all audio recordings and related written documents will be destroyed.

7) I understand that a benefit to my participation is this study is for the district and other similar programs to gain insight into how to improve and enhance the important role parents play in the education of their children.

8) We will keep your study data as confidential as possible, with the exception of certain information that we must report for legal or ethical reasons (such as child abuse).

7) I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Syracuse University. If I have any questions regarding the interview, I can contact Tonia Thompson directly at 164 Hawley Street, Columbus School, Binghamton, New York, by phone at (607) 762-8100 or by email

(toniat@stny.rr.com) or Tonia Thompson's thesis advisor, Dr. Joseph Shedd, Syracuse University, 150 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University by phone (443-1468) or email (jbshedd@syr.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, or if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than Tonia Thompson or in the event you are unable to reach her, please contact the IRB at 315-443-3013 or 121 Bowne Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244.

9) I have listened to this being read aloud and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

10) I am 18 years of age or older.

11) I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Please indicate your willingness to be audiotaped below.

☐ I agree to be audiotaped.   ☐ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

_____   _____
My Signature   Date

_____   _____
My Printed Name   Signature of the Researcher
                                   Tonia Thompson

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