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Early interventions in learning to read

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Early interventions in learning to read

Abstract

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an insight into the world of creating readers; people who love to read and want to read. The review presents information about early interventions by parents and teachers that can increase a child's ability to learn to read. The intent is to help parents and teachers become more aware of the dimensions of literacy, to allow them to become more informed about literacy and the importance of early interventions, and to use this information in ways that can help children become readers.

EARLY INTERVENTIONS IN LEARNING TO READ

A Graduate Research Review

Submitted to the

Division of Elementary Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Kathleen Duax

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an insight into the world of creating readers; people who love to read and want to read. The review presents information about early interventions by parents and teachers that can increase a child's ability to learn to read. The intent is to help parents and teachers become more aware of the dimensions of literacy, to allow them to become more informed about literacy and the importance of early interventions, and to use this information in ways that can help children become readers.

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CHAPTER ONE

We are surrounded by, and engage in, reading and writing everyday. We see it on street signs, on cereal boxes, on billboards, in stores telling us what to buy, on menus, in catalogs, in the mail, in newspapers, on schedules, and in calendars. Our environment is inundated with the printed word. We write notes, keep lists, or e-mail messages to people. Reading as defined in Webster's New World Dictionary (1988, p.1117) is "the ability to get the meaning of (something written, printed, embossed, etc.) by using the eyes, or for Braille, the finger tips, to interpret characters or signs." Reading is something many of us take for granted. It is a procedure we go through daily without giving much thought to the process. Some people enjoy this plethora of words, others don't. If you enjoy reading now, you probably had people read to you and found reading to be a pleasant experience when you were a child.

Learning to read is a critical factor in succeeding in our world, but parents need more information and support in the process in aiding children to learn to read. Teachers also have an impact in the process and some need concisely stated ways to encourage early literacy practices for families.

Noted author, and speaker, Jim Trelease believes reading is the most important social factor in American life today (as cited in Schwartz, 1995). It is the heart of education, the knowledge from which almost every subject in school flows. One must first be able to read the word problem in math in order to understand it. If students cannot read the science or social studies chapter, they cannot answer the questions at the end of the chapter (Trelease, 1995).

Trelease (as cited in Schwartz, 1995, p.88) may have summed it up best by saying:

The more you read, the more you know. The more you know, the smarter you grow. The smarter you grow, the longer you stay in school. The longer you stay in school, the more money you earn. The more you earn, the better your children will do in school, and the longer you will live. So if you hook a child with reading, you influence not only his future health and financial circumstances but also those of the next generation! On the other hand, the less you read, the less you know. The less you know, the sooner you drop out of school. The sooner you drop out, the more likely you are to be poor, and the greater your chances of going to jail. Eighty-two percent of prison inmates are school dropouts, and 60 percent are illiterate.

Background

Taking into consideration the above quotation, it is safe to say reading plays an important part in everyday life. The focus of this literature review is to unveil some of the tools which can be utilized to help create readers from birth until they enter school. I want to first begin with an understanding of the term "reading." Trelease (1995, p.4), referred to reading as a two-part formula:

- The more you read, the better you get at it; the better you get at it, the more you like it; and the more you like it, the more you do it.
- And the more you read, the more you know, and the more you know, the smarter you grow.

He goes on to give two basic reading facts. The first reading fact is that human beings are pleasure-centered. This means humans will do over and over only what brings them pleasure. If a child never or seldom experiences the pleasures of reading and meets only the unpleasantness of reading, then the child will withdraw from it.

The second fact is that reading is an accrued skill. It is like riding a bike or driving a car; in order to get better at it you must do it. The more you read, the better you get at it; and the better you get, the better your chances of liking it.

Research Question

Students begin kindergarten with a wide range of reading abilities. They range from not recognizing any letters of the alphabet to being able to recognize and read some words. Literature suggests there are some practices in children's lives that will not only increase their ability to read but their desire to do so. If this is the case, what are some of the home-based and/or school based practices that can occur early in a children's lives and that will help heighten their ability to learn to read and love it?

Purpose

It is my intention in this literature review to discuss some practices which have been found successful. I plan to use these practices to educate parents to prepare their children for reading in kindergarten.

Terminology

Partnership for Family Reading: A program aimed to help parents support the literacy development of children and improve their own literacy in the process. It also helps schools develop the expertise to mount a successful family involvement program.

Family Reading Workshops: Comprehension sessions designed for adults. Each workshop session features a children's book representing a particular literary genre and an accompanying reading strategy appropriate to that book.

Phonics: Learning letter sounds and reading syllables before attacking words or stories.

Whole Language: Encouraging children to learn through experience and invent their own spellings.

Literacy Enriched Play Centers: Centers in which young children explore the materials and roles of the adult world. Centers offer opportunities for oral language development as the children imitate language and refine their understandings of adult forms, vocabulary, and conversational turn-taking.

Kindergarten Round Up: An opportunity during the month of April provided for parents and future kindergarten students. The parents and future students come to see the classroom and learn about the expectations of kindergarten.

CHAPTER TWO

This literature review focuses on influences that effect children's ability to learn to read. The following topics will be explored: Pediatric interventions, nursery rhymes, phonics and whole language, television, literacy enriched play centers, real life experiences, reading aloud, and family reading workshops. They will be explained, and discussed, in terms of their impact on children's abilities to learn and want to read.

Pediatric Interventions

Pediatricians can play an important role in promoting family literacy. They can help parents introduce children to books at an early age. Needlman (1993, p.1) stated three factors that give pediatricians a special opportunity to influence the patterns of family book use: The first is access. Young children and their parents visit the doctor frequently for immunizations, "well-child" care, and minor illnesses. They may have much less contact with other early childhood professionals. The second factor is the doctor-parent relationship. Parents and pediatricians come to know each other and hopefully to trust each other. The third factor is time. Although the "well-child" visit is typically short, parents and children often sit for long periods in waiting rooms, where they are a captive audience.

Needlman and Zuckerman (1993) discussed a Boston City Hospital model program that integrates family literacy into pediatric care. The program has 3 components. 1) While in the waiting room, volunteers look at books with children. They listen, question, discuss, and occasionally read to children

which provides modeling for the parents. 2) In the examination room, pediatricians provide guidance about books. They encourage the parents to share books with their children. This is not done to “read to” or “to teach” them, but rather to help them to grow up loving books. 3) At each visit, beginning at six months, pediatricians give parents a book for the children to take home. These books, selected to be developmentally and culturally appropriate, are purchased by the program at a discount.

Nursery Rhymes

It has been established that children’s knowledge of nursery rhymes can be their path to learning to read and enjoying it (Partridge, 1992). Bryant, Bradley, MacLean, and Crossland (as cited in Partridge, 1992) established a strong link between children’s early knowledge of nursery rhymes and their developing phonological skills. In addition, they also reported a strong relationship between early knowledge of nursery rhymes and success in reading and spelling. Nursery rhymes can also enhance children’s phonological sensitivity and that, in turn, helps them to read.

It is suggested by Bryant, Bradley, MacLean, and Crossland (as cited in Partridge, 1992, p.2) that a child who knows that the words “light, fight, and sight” rhyme is in a better position to learn about the sound usually associated with “ight”, and the spelling pattern which these words have in common.

Being able to relate to a rhyme and to understand vocabulary are aids in comprehension. The following rhyme is an example (Partridge, 1992, p. 4-5):

My courage is growing stronger,
This feeling I can vent:

The folks slept in the camper,
And I, outside my tent.

This rhyme might spark a discussions about acts of courage. This rhyme also requires an understanding of the word “vent.” Children can discover the meaning of the word vent through other types of vents which may be familiar to them; car vents, floor vents, ceiling vents.

Children should be encouraged to participate in reciting nursery rhymes. Partridge (1992) lists many benefits for reading nursery rhymes. Rhymes provide a sense of order and harmony of sound. They provide many thought-provoking questions and stimulate the imagination and creativity; thus they are challenging, more enjoyable, and more likely to help children to become readers.

Contributing to rhymes helps children acquire a facility with language. For example, those who know the rhyme, “Jack and Jill”, can probably contribute a great deal to it, which in turn helps in learning to read. (Partridge, 1992).

Phonics and Whole Language

Discussions of how we learn to read have resulted in a debate on how to teach reading. Two of the most common methods of teaching reading today are through the use of phonics or through whole language strategies. Phonics involves learning sounds and syllables before attacking words or stories. Whole language starts with stories then, as reading skills grow, children learn to figure out unfamiliar words not by sounding out letters but by searching for clues in the story or illustrations (LaForge, 1993).

Supporters of phonics say children cannot learn to read without an understanding of phonics. All children must know their ABCs and the sounds that letters make in order to communicate verbally (Airy as cited in Connections, 1997, p. 2).

There are many phonics programs available to parents and teachers to aid in teaching phonics. However, phonics “programs” may not be the answer to teaching phonics. Many of the parents who are rushing out to buy phonics programs do not understand that most three and four year olds are incapable of making the sound distinctions in intensive phonics instruction (Trelease, 1995). Anderson and Fordham (1991) state that parents need to beware of “magic” phonic programs. They stress that parents need to be aware that raising good readers takes time, not money. Anderson and Fordham (1991, p.8-9) mention seven points to consider before becoming “hooked” on expensive phonics programs which:

- are generally boring and lead to a dislike of reading.
- misrepresent what reading is.
- use money that would be better spent on books.
- lead to unrealistic expectations for children.
- ignore realities of development in acquiring mastery of print.
- detract from time that would be better spent in reading aloud together.
- overlook the fact that knowledge gained by rote memory does not readily apply to the complexities of actual reading circumstances. The best circumstance in which to learn phonics is through repeated use of stories

and rhymes children have heard and enjoyed, and through practice in writing unfamiliar words.

LaForge (1993) believes teaching can be done using the whole language approach. Most children find whole-language activities more exciting than the skill-drills of phonics. The idea is to build up their confidence and interest in reading before bogging them down in the more tedious details of phonics and grammar. It produces students who read and write earlier and with more enthusiasm.

However, not everyone agrees with the whole language approach. Some educators blame whole language for the nation's poor literacy rates. Some parents wonder if children are learning anything when a teacher has not corrected a sentence such as "I lke dogs" (LaForge, 1993). Airy (as cited in Connections, 1997) states teachers worry that encouraging children to learn through experience and invent their own spellings will not provide them with adequate language skills.

The key to the debate may be a balance of the two approaches. The latest research shows looking at words in context and learning letter sound relationships is superior to either phonics or whole language on its own (LaForge, 1993). Many children's understanding of phonics will arise from their interest, knowledge, ideas, and the prompts and encouragement of loving parents and teachers.

Television and Reading

Television may have more of an impact on our young children than many

of us know or will ever realize. Television has become the most pervasive and powerful influence on the human family and, at the same time, the major stumbling block to literacy in America (Trelease, 1993). It is obvious that the more T.V. watching that one does, the less time is spent reading. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a maximum limit of two hours of TV a day for children. Academic research shows that after ten hours a week, school grades begin to drop (Trelease, 1995, p.166). Also, children and adults average nearly four hours a day watching and letting someone else do all the thinking, speaking, imagining, and exploring (Trelease, 1993).

Shaughnessy (1995) discusses three main effects of prolonged T.V. viewing. The first is passivity. One does not have to do anything other than watch and listen. Secondly, the social interaction of the characters is shallow, and non-intimate. T.V. is full of individuals who solve all of their problems in a half hour sit com. Finally, there is the amount of sexual preoccupation that is portrayed on television. Many shows such as MTV attempt to sell rock and roll, heavy and lite metal, and sex to children.

Unfortunately, the television makes a good baby sitter for parents. Bob Keeshan, "Captain Kangaroo", places the prime responsibility for television's negative influence upon parents. Keeshan (as cited in Trelease, 1995 p. 178) says, "Television has become the great national babysitter." It is a cheap substitute with many side effects such as decreased literacy, a passive attitude, less time spent reading and studying. On the other hand, reading is a multifaceted operation which involves several different components. It

incorporates speed, comprehension, vocabulary, and retention (Shaughnessy, 1995).

Trelease (1995, p.172-175) mentions 10 ways television fails as a positive educator for children.

- Television is the exact opposite of reading and television requires a shorter attention span than reading. Books encourage a critical reaction; the reader can ponder the character's next move.
- Television is an antisocial experience, while reading is a social experience. When children sit in front of the screen, conversation is seldom encouraged by the child or by the parents.
- Television deprives children of their most important learning tool: questions. Children learn by questions and when sitting in front of a television, a child can not ask or answer any questions.
- Television interrupts the child's most important language lesson: family conversation.
- Much of young children's television viewing is mindless watching, requiring little or no thinking.
- Television encourages deceptive thinking. Instead of making us think through our problems, television promotes the easy way. Whether the problem is anxiety or common diarrhea, nervous tension or the common cold, a simple tablet or spray solves the problem.
- Television has a negative effect on children's vital knowledge after age ten. It helps to build vocabulary for younger children, but this stops by age ten.

- Television stifles the imagination. A study of 192 children showed children hearing a story produced more imaginative responses than they did after seeing the same story on film.
- Television's conception of childhood is regressive rather than being progressive.
- Television overpowers and desensitizes a child's sense of sympathy for suffering. Children who continually view acts of violence have a tendency to be insensitive to violence.

To make the most of TV viewing, parents should watch some programs with their youngsters, posing questions, raising critical issues, and changing passive viewing into responsive interaction. Parents should choose programs for which parallel books are available such as "Sesame Street", and "Reading Rainbow" (Morrow, 1989, p. 33).

Literacy Enriched Play Centers

Another source available to aid children in learning to read is that of literacy-enriched play centers. Play centers offer rich opportunities for oral language development as the children imitate language and refine their understandings of adult forms, vocabulary, and conversation (Rybczynski, 1995).

Children have the opportunity of exploring both the purpose and forms of written language. Language-enriched play centers encourage children's exploration of reading and writing through sociodramatic play that is built around a theme (Rybczynski, 1995). Rybczynski also notes that with access to "real"

adult-world materials and with adults' encouragement and occasional help, children will naturally explore reasons for reading and writing while they learn the conventions and forms that compose written language.

There are five guidelines to keep in mind when planning a literacy enriched play center and eleven tips on operating one in a classroom environment (Rybczynski, 1995, p.10-11):

- Decide upon a theme. It is important to involve the children in the decision. Examples include a post office, library, office, or restaurant.
- Start collecting items: Finding authentic materials motivates the children. Examples include real apples, real money, and empty cereal boxes.
- Get the children involved. Let them bring items from home.
- Build excitement. The day before a center goes up, bring in items to arouse curiosity and get the children excited.
- Decide on procedures for using the center. One may need to limit numbers of children in the center or time of use.

When operating a center in the classroom, it is important to remember the following suggestions:

- Introduce the center. Give children informal instructions on the use of any special equipment found there.
- Teach mini-lessons on how to use the center. For example, a mini-lesson for a grocery store might include writing a shopping list and using coupons.
- Model behavior. Children are often reluctant to enter into dramatic play, either because of shyness or unfamiliarity with an adult role.

- Extend, but do not redirect children's play.
- Accept all "writing" samples. Writing that occurs should not be wrong.
- Listen to the children. Take time to listen to what they say to each other and to what they tell you.
- Allow for naturally occurring social interactions and peer learning.
- Allow for each child's individual play patterns and interest.
- Tie other daily activities to the play center.
- Add something new to the center as often as needed to keep interest alive.
- Watch for waning interest.

Literacy-enriched play centers appear to be a powerful method for encouraging young learners to explore literacy. They can explore literacy in unique ways and at their own rates. These centers allow children to become empowered as learners when they direct their own activities (Rybczynski, 1995).

Real Life Experiences

I believe in order to support the growth of reading, children also need to have quality life experiences. This means talking to children, engaging children in conversation and providing them opportunities to converse with other adults. It also means taking children with you on outings, especially to the public library which is full of resources. Examples of other outings may include going shopping, to the park, or to other places of interest. I believe if a child has

experienced something then encounters it while reading, the background knowledge will create familiarity with the text, thus making it easier to read.

Trelease (1995 p.11) defines background knowledge as, “the tool we use to make sense of what we see, hear, and read.” If a person’s background knowledge is shallow or faulty, then the new material, even if read correctly, will not make sense. The less we know about a subject, the slower we read and the less we understand. That is a reason why children who read or travel the most are the most well-rounded students. They bring the largest amount of background knowledge to their reading.

Butler and Clay (1982) state that children need opportunities to arrange their own lives and to organize their own experiences. They believe one method to assist children in becoming readers is for children to explore the text, respond to it, recreate the story, find their own mistakes, correct them, and read on. Children must learn to organize their own reading behavior. Many past experiences in play will have prepared children for this sort of control over what they are trying to do.

Butler and Clay (1982) continue by noting that play is recognized as having tremendous value for children. In their play, be it with saucepans from the kitchen or blocks or cars, they are extending their knowledge of the world and how it works. Cause and effect, comparison, trial and error, the give-and-take of relationships with other people, are all experienced and reexperienced in play. Children learn through play how to manipulate their environment and test rudimentary, physical, intellectual, and social skills, within the environment.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to children is the most effective way to help them learn how to read and how to love reading. Reading aloud helps children by building vocabulary, lessening anxiety, increasing attention spans, encouraging creativity, helping them to identify emotions, and promoting the expansion of learning (Walsh, 1995). Children who have been read to approach books with a larger inventory of sounds, words, and experiences. The larger the vocabulary, the easier it is to understand what you are reading (Trelease, 1995).

Trelease (1995) notes the reasons we read to children are many of the same reasons we talk to children: to reassure, to entertain, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire. He goes on to say reading aloud also conditions the children to associate reading with pleasure as the experiences increase background knowledge and provide a reading role model.

Reading aloud also builds a child's listening comprehension.

For example, take the word enormous. If a child has never heard the word enormous, he'll never say the word. If he's neither heard it, nor said it, he'll have difficulty when it's time to read and write it. The listening vocabulary is the reservoir of words that feeds the reading vocabulary pool (Trelease, 1995, p. 11).

Parents can follow some simple guidelines provided by Lynch (1992, p.

1) when reading aloud to children:

- Be a ham! The more enthusiasm the reader displays, the more your child will enjoy the book.

- Run your finger underneath the words while reading to signal that the print carries the story.
- Leave time for examining the illustrations more closely: encourage children to find things in the pictures.
- Invite youngsters to join in whenever there is a repeated phrase in the text.
- Link up events in the book with similar events in children's lives.
- If a child asks a question, stop and answer it. The book can be a means to learning more about your children's thoughts.

Lynch (1992, p. 1) also offers advice on listening to children read aloud.

- If a child is learning to read and asks for a word, give it immediately so that the meaning of the story is not interrupted. DO NOT ask the child to sound out the word.
- On the other hand, if a child initiates the act of sounding out, do not intervene.
- If a child is reading along and makes what is called a miscue, listen for the sense of the miscue. If the word "road" is substituted for the word "street" for instance, no meaning is lost. Do not stop the reading for a miscue correction.
- If the miscue makes no sense (for example, "horse" for "house"), ask the child to reread the sentence because you are not sure you understand what has just been read.
- Above all else, enjoy children's growing command of print and make

sure you give lots of praise. Parents are their children's first teachers- and the most important ones. Praise from parents is critical for further risk-taking and learning on the part of young children.

To sum up the importance of reading aloud, Jim Trelease states (as cited in Schwartz, 1995) reading aloud is, in essence, an advertisement for learning to read, a process that can otherwise be tedious, frustrating, or even threatening.

Family Reading Workshops

Handel (1992) describes a program called The Partnership For Family Reading. It is a process aimed to help parents support the literacy development of their children and to improve their own literacy at the same time. The Partnership For Family Reading also helps schools develop a family involvement program. The program varies in size and intensity, but recognizes the importance of the family in promoting literacy.

The Partnership For Family Reading strives to serve three groups: parents, students, and educators. It encourages interactions among participants and connections between the home and school. The Partnership is set up to encourage parents and other family members to come to school for informal and enjoyable workshops. Using children's books, the adults learn reading comprehension strategies important to the development of learners of all ages (Handel, 1992). When the program began, parent sessions included book presentations, book borrowing, reading to children in classrooms, and

storytelling. More recently, the model offers more structured workshops such as The Family Reading Workshops (Handel, 1992).

The Family Reading Workshops are comprehension sessions designed for adults. Each session features a children's book representing a genre and a reading strategy appropriate to that book. The purpose is to supply information to the family members, not to tell them what to do (Handel, 1992).

The workshops include the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and some writing. There are six components to the model (Handel, 1992, p.119-121):

- **Introductory activities.** The adult participants are asked to recall and share positive reading memories from their childhood. This allows the adults to connect with their own childhoods.
- **Presentation of a children's book.** Quality picture books that are multicultural and gender-fair are used. The books represent a variety of genres. At the workshop, the title and author are announced along with a brief description of the book's genre. The purpose is to encourage participation and build knowledge.
- **Demonstration of a reading strategy.** Reading strategies taught include making predictions, formulating questions, learning new information and relating reading to personal experience. One reading strategy is taught per workshop.
- **Practice in pairs.** The adult participants pair up to read and practice the targeted strategy. One reads aloud and the other asks questions at appropriate times. Practicing allows participants to become familiar with

a book which they will later read to their children.

- Group discussion. The group then has a discussion on the story. Children's literature may be simple in plot and language, yet it deals with sophisticated ideas.
- Preparation for reading at home and book borrowing. Adults borrow books for home reading and are given a form on which to write reactions to the book.

The workshops last about an hour and are held during the school year. Participants are vigorously recruited and they are made to feel welcome. Such programs have been found to be successful in many different ways. They build family reading relationships and strengthen the quantity and quality of reading in the home. The programs also portray adults and parents as positive role models for reading and learning, which benefits the children, families, teachers, and schools. Children see positive role models, teachers feel it reinforces the goals of helping children develop a love of reading, and the school is viewed as a positive place to be (Handel, 1992).

Creating Readers and Writers

Children are natural learners and children who are read to daily usually grow up loving books (Glazer, 1990). There are numerous measures adults can take to encourage children to become readers and writers. Glazer (1990) notes that casually pointing to the print as we read helps children understand how the English language moves from left to right. Also, reading poems helps

children feel the words and rereading books is fun for children because it helps words to become friends.

Glazer (1990, p. 5) encourages the use of language by offering the following suggestions.

- Provide a comfortable environment.
- Provide a variety of books.
- Establish a place for writing messages.
- Have a place to store books.
- Furnish a place to display writing and drawing.
- Provide books that help to do things (cookbooks etc.).
- Have a variety of writing tools.
- Supply paper and pencil near the telephone.
- Provide different kinds of paper for writing.
- Have books for traveling.

To create readers and writers, one needs to build a positive attitude toward reading, writing, and speaking. Praise helps build a positive attitude. When offering praise it is important to describe the activity and give the reason for encouraging it (Glazer, 1990). Remember when praising a specific behavior that the comments must be free of evaluation. Glazer (1990, p.7) recommends using intuition and common sense when praising. A good question to ask is, “would that remark encourage me to continue?” If your response is “yes”, you are probably praising your child appropriately. Glazer also states it is important to demonstrate the purposes of reading, writing, and speaking.

Summary and Conclusions

I believe to create life long readers one must begin reading to children at the onset of birth. From the literature review, I think it is the parents' responsibility to jump start their children in the right direction, because parents are the persons with whom children interact first. Parents are the children's first teachers. Parents know their children better than anyone else does. A parent knows what a child likes and dislikes. Therefore, it is up to parents to provide an environment that will make their children want to read. If parents make reading part of their daily lives, then their children will be more likely to do so.

An important role of teachers, doctors, day care providers, and other professionals working with children, is to aid in the process of informing parents that they must interact with their children, play with them, expose them to reading, and above all, read to them. As noted earlier, a major problem of undereducated parents is the fact they did not experience success in school. Therefore, they do not know the potential importance of experiences such as homework, being read to, or having and using a library card. I believe professionals have a responsibility to help change this attitude and make a difference.

Programs like the pediatric intervention in Boston seem to be a step in the right direction. If we can expose parents to the advantages of reading when their children are born, they may have a better chance at being successful in helping their children become readers. Hospitals and other pediatric health care settings seem like a perfect place to begin, because most children need pediatric care at one time or another.

Schools are another excellent location available for initiating communication with parents. Informing them could begin as soon as kindergarten round-up and continue through all grades. Parents could be advised by newsletters sent by teachers, administrators, or reading specialists.

Schools are also great settings for workshops such as a Family Reading Workshop. Ideally, such workshops could be offered during the day and at night to accommodate all parents. I believe the key to successful workshops is getting the adults to attend. To me, one of the biggest drawbacks at such workshops is the attendance. It seems like it is always the same small group people who attend the school events. To be successful you would need backing, commitment, and help from the entire school community: teachers, school board members, principal, parents, students, and anyone else involved with the school.

I believe the best intervention which increases children's ability to learn to read is to introduce them to books early in life, and show them the pleasure and purposes of reading. I would like to see all homes take advantage of the opportunities available to them to access books for pleasure. I also believe it is important to keep factors like the amount of television viewing in mind, but learning to read and enjoy it ultimately comes down to the early introduction and frequent exposure to books.

CHAPTER THREE

Recommendations For Parents

I believe the first step in teaching children to read begins with the parents. After all, parents are their children's first teachers. The most important way a parent can begin to teach their child to read is by reading to their child in a pressure free, comfortable environment.

Trelease (1995) notes there are stumbling blocks for undereducated parents. Because they have not experienced school success, they may not know the importance of homework, being read to, a library card, books in the home, a daily newspaper, or of endless conversations with children. Children who achieve usually come from homes rich in reading material and conversation and, in turn, tend to provide these same things for their children when the time arrives.

Considering the above statement, I will try to offer suggestions that all parents will be able to use to achieve success with their children, regardless of parental background. First of all, LaForge (1993) states it is never too soon to start reading to children and that even babies enjoy books. The rhythm of your voice and the warmth of your body help your child associate reading with pleasure.

Parents can also give children opportunities to explore reading and writing. Anderson and Fordham (1991) note that parents can promote children's knowledge of phonics in developmentally appropriate ways that contribute to their emerging understanding of the printed world. When using "temporary spelling" children discover the relationship between speech and

print. Practicing this form of writing promotes phonics learning and helps children move toward correct spelling form.

Anderson and Fordham (1991) suggest the use of language play books, for example Annie Bananie or Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. These types of books focus children's attention on sounds and language patterns, inviting playful manipulation with words. Along the same line, traditional nursery rhymes and books with repeated refrains contribute to a child's sound awareness.

Another effective method for parents to incorporate is the use of songs and simple word games. For example the Raffi songs "Willoughby Wallaby Woo" and "I Want to Eat, Eat, Eat Apples and Bananas, I Want to Oat, Oat, Oat, Ayplus and Ba-nay- nays," work well (Barbour, 1991).

Reading together even 15 minutes a day, either silently or aloud, can make a difference in developing young readers (LaForge, 1993). To make the time more effective, Trelease (1993, p.17-19) offers suggestions for what parents should do and should not to do when reading aloud.

Do

- read as often as you and the child have time.
- try to set aside one traditional time each day for a story.
- remember the art of listening is an acquired one that must be taught.
- start with picture books, and build to story books and novels.
- picture books can be read to a family of children widely separated by age.

- remember if you are reading a picture book, make sure the child sees the pictures easily.
- vary the length and subject matter of the readings.
- follow through with your reading. Do not leave a child hanging for three or four days between chapters.
- occasionally read above the child's intellectual level and challenge their minds.
- avoid long descriptive passages until the child's imagination and attention span are capable of handling them.
- allow the listeners a few minutes to settle down and adjust their feet and minds to the story.
- remember when reading a longer novel, position yourself where both you and the child are comfortable.
- remember that even sixth grade students love a good picture book now and then.
- allow time for discussion after reading a story.
- reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully one must practice.
- use plenty of expression.
- adjust your pace to fit the story. The most common mistake in reading aloud is reading too fast!
- preview the book by reading it to yourself first.
- bring authors to life as well as bringing their books to life.
- add a third dimension whenever possible. For example, have a bowl of

blueberries ready to be eaten during or after reading Blueberries for Sal.

- allow readers to interact with the story.
- allow reluctant or unusually active readers to keep busy while you read.
- take books wherever you go.
- fathers should make an extra effort to read to their children.
- regulate the amount of time your child spends in front of a television.
- arrange for time each day for the child to read in private.
- lead by example. Make sure your child sees you reading for pleasure at times other than read aloud time.

Do not

- read stories that you do not enjoy.
- continue reading a book once it is obvious it was a poor choice.
- forget to consider the intellectual, social, and emotional level of your audience in making read-aloud selections. Challenge a child, but do not overwhelm.
- read above a child's emotional level.
- be fooled by awards given to books. Not all books given awards are great.
- start reading if you are not going to have enough time to do it justice.
- get too comfortable while reading. A reclining position is bound to bring on drowsiness for both the child and parent.
- be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from a very young child. Answer questions patiently.
- impose interpretations of a story upon your audience.

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- confuse quantity with quality. Reading for ten minutes may last longer in the child's mind than two hours of television viewing.
- use the book as a threat. As soon as your child sees you have turned the book into a weapon, it will change the attitude about books from positive to negative.
- try to compete directly with television. Do not let books appear to be responsible for depriving the children of viewing time.

Dergsouff (1997, p. 4) offers some similar and some different tips for parents wishing to motivate a child to read. Their suggestions include:

- Let your child chose the reading material.
- Read aloud as often as possible.
- Make reading a routine family event.
- Let the child read, or take turns, if he/she wants.
- Have a reluctant reader fill in odd words, big words that repeat, or the last word of sentence or poem.
- Read rhymes together over and over. A young child may love to fill in the last word.
- Get excited even if it is the twentieth time.
- Stop if the story is not interesting to the child. Try something else.
- Read all kinds of reading material. Magazines, signs, comic strips, menus, recipes, shopping lists, directions to a game, etc.

Parent Plan

I have developed a plan to better inform parents how to prepare their

children for literary experiences in Kindergarten. My plan includes the following interventions: the use of written correspondences, providing information at kindergarten round up, working with the school community resource coordinator, holding parent meetings, providing video tapes, and literature based book bags for parents to check out.

First of all, during the school year, I will send written correspondences to the entire school community in our monthly newsletter. I believe the information should be made available to all members of our school because many parents may have young children at home who have not yet begun school. Parents will then be able to begin some of the interventions at home before their children begin school. These written correspondences will be brief informational items. For example, one letter might include the benefits of reciting nursery rhymes with children, another might include facts about reading aloud at home. Reading aloud is not just for young children, but has advantages for children of all ages. Although some of the information will be covered at kindergarten round up, hearing it more than once might help parents internalize it better. Also, at round up I will only have access to a limited number of people, but the monthly newsletter can be accessed by the entire school population.

At kindergarten round up I will take the opportunity to discuss the benefits of reading aloud to children. I will offer the book The Read Aloud Handbook, by Jim Trelease (1995) as a resource for the parents. Ideally, I would provide a copy for each family in attendance. I plan to write a grant, or seek out the help from the community, such as the local banks, The University of Northern Iowa, or early childhood organizations to help fund the purchasing of the books. If I

can not obtain funding to purchase copies of the book for each family in attendance, I will have some available for check out. At round up, I will also stress the role television plays in a child's ability to learn to read. I will quote some of the points from the book and other sources I have come across in my research.

At our elementary school we have a community resource coordinator. This person's responsibility is to help the community in and around our school. Our school is open for G.E.D. classes. Clothes and school supplies are also available for those who need them. I will work with the community resource coordinator to develop Family Reading Workshops as mentioned earlier in my review. We have the perfect setting to begin such a program, and together we should be able to bring parents in and excite them about reading.

I plan to hold parent meetings, teaching them about the importance of early literacy on an as needed basis. These meetings will be held before school, after school, and/or on Thursday afternoons to accommodate all work schedules. The purpose of these meetings is to offer support to parents, continue to inform them of ways to help their child, and help build the school as a comfortable place for them to be. I will have refreshments available, in an informal atmosphere. At the meetings I will ask parents to share what they want to talk and learn about. I will also have an agenda at each meeting and discuss ways, such as those mentioned previously in my paper, that they can help their children at home. Some of the meetings will be held during the school day and parents would be invited to come and spend time with their children while at school. I will have centers set up in the classroom that promote reading.

Children and parents could participate in the centers together. This will encourage communication and working together.

Finally, I plan to have video tapes and literature-enriched book bags available on a check out basis. Both will be available to parents, grandparents, or any members of the community who interact with children. The video tapes will model strategies to use with children. Also, I plan to tape the Family Reading Workshops and have those available for check out. The literature enriched book bags will have a theme such as Bernstein Bears. For example, this bag will contain Bernstein Bear books and have a list of suggested activities to accompany them. A suggested activity might be to create a tree house using craft sticks. Another bag's theme might be the 5 senses. This bag could contain books about our different senses. Suggested activities might include taking a walk and trying to consciously use all five senses. Many of the bags will contain the stories on tape to provide reinforcement for auditory learners.

As stated earlier, I believe parents are the key to children's futures. They are their children's first teachers. The above methods are examples that I could implement at school that would have a positive effect on the parents and the children. These strategies will then hopefully increase each child's ability to learn to read. After all, knowledge is power, and if you give the parents knowledge, you are giving them the power to make a difference in children's lives.

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