

2007

How does home literacy help children?

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Pick, Katie, "How does home literacy help children?" (2007). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1341.
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How does home literacy help children?

Abstract

This review of literature paper focuses on the importance of home literacy programs. The literature shows the importance of parental involvement in their children's formal and informal educational process. Children who are exposed to home literacy have learned literacy better than children who are not. Many literacy activities for home are described. Many schools offer home literacy programs to assist parents within the home. This review of literature has implications for parents and teachers who try to implement home literacy.

HOW DOES HOME LITERACY HELP CHILDREN?

A Graduate Review of Literature

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

Katie Pick

May, 2007

ABSTRACT

This review of literature paper focuses on the importance of home literacy programs. The literature shows the importance of parental involvement in their children's formal and informal educational process. Children who are exposed to home literacy have learned literacy better than children who are not. Many literacy activities for home are described. Many schools offer home literacy programs to assist parents within the home. This review of literature has implications for parents and teachers who try to implement home literacy.

This Review of Literature: by Katie Pick

Titled: How Does Home Literacy Help Children?

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

4/24/07

Date Approved

Graduate Faculty Reader

4/26/07

Date Approved

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Date Approved

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Introduction

There is extensive evidence that family involvement in the education of children is critical to effective schooling (IRA, 2002). Henderson and Berla (1994) reported that family involvement improves a student's achievement, self esteem, and attitudes toward learning. A child doesn't enter formal school until age three, but long before age three children are introduced to print in their environments including their home. Parents are a child's first teacher, and in literacy this is no different. Parents are the number one influence on a child's literacy development. With a good formal or informal reading time at home, a child's literacy ability will expand at a faster and higher rate than with little or no literacy time at home (Senchal, 2006).

Whitehurst & Lonigan (2001) reported that early literacy skills will provide the building blocks for the successful acquisition of higher level literacy skills. These early literacy skills are learned in the home environment from their primary caregivers, usually the child's parents. This brings up the need for a strong parental influence in a child's life when it comes to literacy acquisition whether it is early in the child's life as they begin to explore sound or as they are nearing graduation from their formal schooling. This study aims to show the importance of home literacy and parental involvement in the home literacy process.

This study is significant because it will identify ways that parents can influence their child's literacy acquisition in a positive way. I will also explore some literacy acquisition activities that can be accomplished within the home setting. Along with ways parents and the school can work together to create a positive and influential learning environment for their students.

I chose to explore the ways Latino parents can be assisted in the literacy acquisition process because they are a quickly growing population in the Midwest. I hope to give parents and teachers ideas to use with their growing Latino population.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize research about the influence parents have on their child's literacy acquisition, and their role in their child's educational process in regards to literacy development. These questions will be explored:

1. What is the importance of parental involvement in their children's education?
2. How does parental involvement impact children's literacy development?
3. How can parents be assisted in implementing a home literacy program?
4. What activities promote literacy acquisition at home?

Methodology

In searching for literature discussing home literacy with children I used resources that were available to me. Iowa AEA Online's EBESCO database was used to locate journal articles. These resources also included the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library, Wilson Web, and ERIC databases. When using these databases I used search terms such as 'home literacy', 'Hispanic home literacy', 'family reading', and 'reading at home'. Terms that weren't so limiting such as 'home literacy' and 'family literacy' tended to reveal more articles.

Method to Select Sources

While exploring the existent literature, I kept in mind the topic which I had chosen for my literature review. I searched for research that was consistent, useful, and

logical. I wanted to include information that was useful to the students, families, and teachers I work with.

I looked for journals that were respectable, such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Educational Research*, and *American Journal of Education*. I used websites and pamphlets from the International Reading Association. I tried to find journals and articles that were published after 2001, the year the No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Because this act was so instrumental in changing the teaching of reading in American schools, I felt many of the studies to be included in my review needed to be written after the No Child Left Behind Act came into effect.

Procedures to Analyze Sources

In reading the books and journal articles, retrieved from the previously mentioned databases, I kept in mind my research questions and always asked myself if the literature I was reading led me to a better understanding of the topic of my paper.

As I looked through the articles I highlighted the text which lead me to a better understanding of the articles in respect to home literacy and its connection to school literacy. While reading, if a question came to my mind, I wrote it down. This way I could process the questions that came to the forefront of the studies. I knew that I wanted to discuss the implications of parental involvement and show how family and home literacy does improve a child's literacy. I also wanted to discuss the importance of literacy on a child's education. An emerging area of interest is the school to home, literacy connection. Home literacy connection became an area of interest because programs are emerging in schools and communities all around the country to promote parental involvement in home literacy programs. I also looked for themes that emerged.

Parental Involvement in Home Literacy

Parents who are highly involved in their children's lives have students who do better in school (Redding, 2001). The following literature review will explore the areas of the importance of parental involvement in children's education, the impact of parental involvement on children's literacy development, lack of parental involvement in families from low socio-economic status, and assisting parents in implementing home literacy.

Importance of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

"Children do best in school when parents provide predictable boundaries for their lives, encourage productive use of time, and provide learning experiences as a regular part of family life," states (Redding, 2001, p.12).

Parental involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on children from kindergarten to grade three. Christenson & Sheridan (2001) have found evidence that demonstrates that parental involvement at home has a more significant impact on children than school activities have. This tells us that parents are one of the most important teachers in their children's lives.

Sticht and McDonald (1990) found that educated mothers have greater success in providing their children with the cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school. The influence of a mother on a child's education, especially in reading, is highly influenced by her ability to read and the stake she takes in her child's education. When mothers read to and with their children they are showing their children the importance of literacy. This reinforces, to the children, the need to learn to read and write and how vital it is in our world.

While discussing home literacy and education some scholars note that we must look at the family's life at home. According to Redding (2001), if the importance is placed on education, the quality of the child's education will improve. Family expectation is another area that must be examined. The following list describes some important components to education at home:

- Priority given to schoolwork and reading over television and recreation
- Expectation of being on time
- Parental expectation for the children to do their best
- Concern for correct and useful language
- Parental monitoring of children's peer group
- Parental monitoring of children school progress and personal growth (Redding, 2001)

Parents and teachers as a unit working with the child in their school progress show the most benefit. Raskinki (2003) states that if a partnership between school and home occurs, parents are more likely to get involved and stay involved throughout all of their child's school years, thus keeping the child involved in their schooling process and completing higher education. Again, as parents help in their child's education process they show their child the need to become educated and thus the child will pick up on the importance and strive for higher learning.

Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Literacy Development

Learning to read begins long before a child receives formal instruction in elementary school according to researchers (Hammer & Miccio, 2006, Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Rasinski (2003) found that parental involvement does matter. If children

don't learn to read early in their years, they will likely fall behind and stay behind their classmates for the rest of their schooling. This finding shows how important a family's literacy environment is to children who are learning how to read. It also emphasizes the need for early introduction and participation in literacy related interactions between parents and children. This interaction is seen as one of the most important elements in preparing children for instruction in reading and writing in a school setting (Leseman & de Jong, 1998).

According to Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991), opportunities for children to participate in high quality language interactions is a unique contribution poised by home literacy. It encompasses the use of family discussions about everything from meals to friends to homework. These discussions help children develop their use of language and vocabulary. When parents talk with their children this improves the child's speaking vocabulary, which in turn helps with the child's written vocabulary. As parents and children converse, they also are expanding their spoken vocabulary with conversations about new topics.

Padak and Rasinski (2003) found that children and families who participate in a family literacy program reaped the following benefits:

- Children's comprehension improved
- The children's knowledge of print functions improved

Many scholars (Heath, 1983; Jordan et al., 2000; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill, 1991; and Well, 1983, 1985) have shown that school literacy is a much easier task for children from homes with certain characteristics, including parental modeling of literacy, actions to support literacy development, uses of language

that prepare children for classroom discourse, a print rich environment, and parents who frequently talk with their children about daily happenings. Many of these characteristics are found within homes with parents who believe literacy is important in their lives both at home and school.

In 1995 Anderson found that children whose parents believed in the importance of a structured literacy program at home tended to have stronger emergent literacy skills compared to children whose parents provided less structured experiences. It is widely acknowledged that linguistically rich home environments contribute more powerfully to the early development of these critical abilities in reading, according to Jordan, Snow, and Porche (2000). One could conclude that with more formal reading instruction at home children would be better prepared for school literacy acquisition.

Redding (1991) stated that certain home practices are linked with a child's learning process. These home practices are:

- Daily conversation about events
- Expressions of affection
- Family discussion about magazines, newspapers, books, and television programs
- Families visits to museums, zoos, depictions of historical events, and libraries
- Encouragement to try new words and expand vocabularies

These home practices are important to children because they teach the value of print and learning. Through these activities parents show the importance of learning. They bestow the idea that acquiring new knowledge is a positive experience and literacy

is at the forefront of the process. In just one activity parents are discussing, reading, and viewing new knowledge with their children.

Homes which have between sixty-one and eighty children's books and conducted regular visits to the library, tended to have children who were better emergent readers (Senechal & LaFevre, 2002). These parents placed a high importance on providing their children with a print rich environment and helped to instill a love for reading in them. Many local libraries offer free educational programs to their children. Parents who take advantage of these programs are also showing the value of literacy to their children.

Douville (2000) suggests that parents can influence the quality and quantity of a child's literacy experience daily within the home. Parental involvement within the home can take two forms, formal or informal reading (Whitehurst et al. 1998, Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Parents are conducting literacy activities where the child is listening to a story at bed time, and the children may or may not be focusing on the print reading, but listening for pleasure. This activity is said to be informal. Though questioning may take place and vocabulary building is going on, it is still said to be an informal teaching by the parent. This is an important part of reading acquisition in children. Children recognize the importance of reading when they see their parents reading and placing a value on that reading time.

According to Senchal & LeFevre (2002), an example of a formal literacy activity would be when a parent focuses on the print and sounds of specific letters in an alphabet book. It is called formal because they are calling attention to the print and formal writing in the book. All of these early literacy skills relate to alphabet knowledge, beginning reading, and inventive spelling (Senchal et al., 1998). Parents can make a significant

contribution to their child's reading achievement through formal and informal literacy experiences (Senechal, 2006).

Lack of Parental Involvement in Families of Low Socio-economic Status

Heath in 1983 wrote, "Difference in home environments have been linked to differences in early reading achievement, and later school success." These differences could be socioeconomic, educational, cultural, family make-up, or many other reasons. Though there are many different reasons, they all create positive and negative effects on home literacy and children's literacy development.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) discuss how school readiness is linked to family income. Socioeconomic status is also one of the strongest predictors of performance difference in children at the beginning of first grade. Students from low economic families experience greater success when family involvement is present. If family involvement is lacking, it isn't always because parents are unwilling to participate; it may be that they are unable to participate because they are physically or culturally isolated or because they are consumed by providing the basic needs for the family (Barbour, 1999). Though there are many reasons why parents aren't involved in their child's literacy process or life, Barbour points out it may not always be the parents fault. Society has changed the way family life is structured and many parents may need to be working to support and sustain a home, thus putting family literacy lower on the list of necessities.

An assumption is that language minority students, especially Latino children, come from literacy impoverished homes where there is little or no emphasis placed on education. Another assumption is that the child's success is limited because at these homes the parents lack the abilities to support and extend school practices in the home

(Auerbach, 1989). Both of these assumptions maybe true in some cases, but not all of the homes who are low socio-economic are this way. As stated before, there may be other needs that must be met first for the family to survive. Therefore less time and resources may be placed on reading in the home. What is most important is how to help improve the opportunities for the children affected by the differences and improve their reading abilities.

Assisting Parents in Implementing Home Literacy

In 2004 Darling and Westberg reported that training parents on how to teach their children to read produces greater results than just having parents listen to children read. Educators need to provide parents with programs that teach parents how to implement literacy practices into their homes (Hughes, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1999). These programs should focus on what parents need to do to help their children with reading and writing. They need to teach the parents how to help the child, not just tell them. Hughes et. al. (1999) points out that many times modeling needs to take place for parents to understand how to accomplish the correct reading practices with their children.

Darling & Westberg (2004) state that as they learn about the essential skills for reading and practice the skills with their children, they can support their children's reading acquisition. This also holds true for immigrant Latino parents. Many times they don't respond to a young child's attempts to read. They may become involved in their child's reading development if a teacher assigns a child homework which requires parental participation in reading to or with their children (Goldenberg et al., 1992). With this step, parents may start to change their daily routine and adapt the routine of reading with their child (Reese et al., 2000). Research by Reese & Gallimore (2000) has shown

that Latino parents spend more time monitoring or assisting with homework compared to reading to or with their children. This may result in less time spent on home literacy geared specially toward Latino children.

Schools have provided various family literacy programs for parents such as home literacy bags, family literacy nights, and intergenerational family literacy programs. Though each school or community runs their programs in a different manner, the rationale is the same, to provide them with strategies for home literacy. According to Barbour (1991) some schools have integrated home literacy bags as a resource which could be used to improve the literacy of students. Home literacy bags contain collections of books, games, and activities that are brought into the home and used by the parents and family members over a given period of time. These bags can empower the children in their reading practices. Children will have the abilities with little help to read and accomplish the activities included in the literacy bags. The activities included could be writing stories on writing paper, sight word bingo, reading poems, matching activities, or listening to stories on cassette. The bags also include appropriate, high-quality literature to be utilized by the children and families. The home literacy bags have been successful in building home and school partnerships while promoting reading and putting free literacy materials into homes (Barbour, 1999).

Many schools across the country hold school family literacy nights. At these literacy nights the family is encouraged to read and explore new reading activities. According to Colombo (2004) many of the activities are demonstrated by a literacy coach for parents. This helps the parents understand how to implement them into their home. Then in small groups, parents practice with such skills as a picture walk, working with

words within the text, and comprehension activities. This helps to reinforce the skills the parents will take home to use with their children. These activities and skills can then be brought into the home to assist the families in literacy activities. Colombo adds that many of the parents that attend workshops become presenters at the workshop, to prove the skills' effectiveness.

Some schools hold these workshops up to two times a week for two hours per time, while others hold these nights just twice a year for a longer period of time (Colombo, 2004). Whatever the case, they have proven useful in improving parents' abilities to teach their children literacy skills.

Intergenerational literacy programs are another invention for families to improve literacy among the children and literacy among all the family members involved. Many schools have begun intergenerational classes. These classes are filled with parents that haven't completed their schooling years and are looking to better themselves and their children. This type of intervention involves parents taking part in skills classes involving their own literacy acquisition, while children are working on the literacy skills through early interventions with teachers and trained associates. Many of the parents are learning slightly above their children's level (Whitehurst et al., 1998).

Both the parent and the child are taking classes in the same building at the same time. Both are being taught according to their literacy level. At different times during the day the parent and child interact to share literacy experiences. This is reinforcing the idea of strong family literacy while teaching the parents how to use their skills to help their child with literacy acquisition. These classes improve parental literacy which in turn improves the home family literacy environment.

Assisting Latino Parents in Home Literacy

There are ways that a school or teachers can assist Latino families in the literacy acquisition process. Ortis (2005) states that family literacy programs have a greater chance of success and longevity when the attempt is made to tap into the background knowledge and experiences of the parent participants. According to Nieto (2002) it is important to find common ground and avoid making negative assumptions about their educational values and expectations. Thus the more communication that takes place between the parents and the teacher, the more positive connections can be made.

Ada's (2003) found that Latino families read more books tied to preserving Latino tradition, celebrating the richness of their culture, telling personal stories, and valuing family. With this information teachers and schools need to create a program which embraces the culture and heritage of Latino children. Schools need to tailor the family reading program to include books about the subjects that Latino families find acceptable and ones that will enhance their literacy already in place.

Ada (2003) also states that the selection sent to Latino families should include a wide variety of literary selections such as theater, poetry, biography, history, contemporary fiction, and fantasy. Parents can then choose what they feel will enhance their home literacy already in place.

Inviting Latino parents into the classroom or school enables them to feel empowered by the school (Ortiz, 2005). When parents are invited into the classroom they feel a connection with the school and have the ability to see what happens within the schools setting. By viewing this, they may understand the literacy process better. With

this knowledge in hand they can take it back into their homes and create a literacy program that fits their family.

Activities for Effective Home Literacy

In this section I will discuss activities that are conducted to promote effective home literacy. These activities can be grouped into these categories: 1) Reading to children; 2) Connecting reading to writing and speaking; and 3) Using appropriate reading materials. These activities have different objectives in developing children's literacy abilities.

Reading to Children

The National Commission on Reading found the single most important activity for reading success is reading aloud to children at an early age. Reading aloud to very young children has been shown to increase receptive language skills and add expression to language in toddlers (Bus, 1998). Goldenberg & Gallimore (1991) found that increasing children's early reading exposure to meaningful literacy opportunities should improve their reading achievement and by enlisting parents' help, it should also help improve early reading literacy skills. This improvement has been noted even in households that have children who are considered at-risk and from low-income and language minority homes. Children who are read to frequently tend to achieve at a higher rate than those not read to with frequency. Reading with frequency would be reading with one's child at least four nights a week. As a child grows the hope is that this will instill a routine and love for reading.

In 1992, Lancy and Bergin found that children who were better readers had fun parent-child interactions in respect to reading. Stories were read with humor and

mistakes. Perfect decoding wasn't stressed; instead questions and humor were used to explore the readings. Researchers have found that reading stories to children with appropriate coaching and support has been linked to later success in academics (Mason, 1990).

A few more possible activities for a home literacy program include:

- bedtime stories, reading aloud to children
- reading for meaning, such as a newspaper or a magazine
- decoding words correctly, while reading a recipe
- memorizing sight word vocabulary, through the use of lists
- retelling familiar tales or folklore from family history (Reese & Gallimore 2000).

Connecting Reading to Writing and Speaking

Reading, writing, and speaking are all inter-related, and therefore related in the teaching and learning aspects. As one area improves the others will also improve. Activities that include all three of these forms such as nursery rhymes, can be very effective for improving a child's overall literacy development. One aspect of our American culture is that all children are able to speak with clarity and meaning. We learn this process through reading, with the connection to writing and speaking.

Daily conversation about events brings vocabulary and comprehension at a fore front. As a child listens to what is being said in the conversation, they are analyzing it and comprehending the events. Redding (1991) suggests that these events could be daily events or a trip to the museum. With trips to other places children are enlightened into new vocabulary and an excitement is brought into the learning process. This is also true

when a conversation takes place about what was read in the newspaper, magazine, or book. The more conversations which take place, the more words the child could understand and comprehend.

According to Danielson (1997) parents should be reading books to their children, and then writing about it in a reader response journal. Danielson found this promoted children and parents building relationships around books. Discussions need to take place between the parent or teacher and child about the reading so a connection can be made to the book. High-quality children's literature should be used to create this meaningful reading situation. When written, the child could share it with their parent or grandparents. This would create a connection from reading to writing to speaking.

Douville (2000) suggests that one method which maybe used to help students in the home setting is the Language Experience Approach. The LEA approach believes that what is spoken can be written and what is written can be read. This approach uses daily home activities to encourage dialog with descriptions of the daily happenings. The child dictates what happens, parents need to help them write down the sentences and practice reading the sentences. This approach helps with reading and fluency.

Another concept of the LEA approach uses reading comprehension and understanding through questions and dictation of stories coupled with repeated readings of the stories. This should be used with picture less books and reading materials.

According to Douville (2000) parents need to encourage children to write a story from the pictures and then create a book from the picture and sentences written. When this approach is used it is a viable and an inexpensive reading instruction tool.

Activities that use children's own names provide a natural, easy approach to helping children understand functions of print, increasing their phonemic awareness, introducing letter sound correspondence, and fostering letter and word recognition (Kirk & Clark, 2005).

Kirby & Hogan (2001) stated that home instruction about letter names and sounds, is a powerful factor in a child's academic outcome. When children are young, parents are influencing them by spelling their name and becoming excited when they have drawn a picture for them. Both of these activities lead to a greater understanding of the literacy process.

It is common for a child's first attempt at writing to be a part of their name (Clay, 1975). Bloodgood (1999) found that names serve as a good place for children to make connections to letters, words, sounds, and reading and writing concepts. This makes for an easy connection to literacy within the home. Children can be encouraged to find the letters of their names on items used daily. This could be the start of a home literacy program.

Using Appropriate Reading Materials

International Reading Association (2000) states that large amounts of printed material needs to be made available to children, either through buying books, borrowing from a library, school or public, sharing with friends, or asking a teacher for extra books to bring home.

According to Raskinski (2003) nursery rhymes are an easy and effective way to teach phonemic awareness at home. Nursery rhymes are public domain, so they are readily available. Parents can put the nursery rhymes into a book and then spend fifteen

minutes a night reading from the book. Using nursery rhymes will very likely increase the child's level of phonemic awareness and print knowledge. After the nursery rhyme is read it can be connected to a song, and used as writing materials for stories and pictures.

Even a bowl of cereal can provide reading materials for children. All cereal boxes are colored brightly and filled with interesting games, facts, and fun ideas or recipes. According to Hill-Clark (2005) leaving the box out for the child to read encourages children to notice the words around them. As a child notices the world of print around them, their vocabulary and comprehension of the world will expand, thus creating a larger vocabulary base for them.

According to Goldenberg et al. (1991) little or predictable books will give children the opportunity to see and hear books repeatedly, therefore reinforcing the words that are repeated and adding books to collections in children's homes along with promoting literacy within the homes. Parents should read these books with the children or encourage children to read these books alone to their parents or siblings. This activity promotes fluency and reading within the home. Repeated books can be found on the internet or from a child's teacher.

Books that are made by and include pictures from a child's life are another way parents can promote letter and word recognition (Danielson, 1997). The more personal the activity the more the child will grasp the skills surrounding it.

Activities used in home literacy programs need to be effective, authentic, easy to implement, and brief (Rasinski, 2003). These activities are designed to be completed quickly, less than thirty minutes, at home, by the parent and child, and are based in good theory and research. The goal of the activities is to provide children with an opportunity

to read and grow in their reading process. Raskinski reports that home literacy programs and activities work if they have the enthusiasm from both the parent and children.

Teacher support of home literacy is also crucial to all activities.

Conclusions

The purpose of this literature review was to discuss literacy within the home and its implications on children's education. Along with how parents can be assisted in creating a home literacy program and some sample activities that will help create a home literacy program. The research that was found showed that home literacy is an important piece to every child's educational experience.

Children who come from print rich environment had parents whom read to them. Children who have had a home literacy program score higher on testing than children with little reading material at home. Parents whose involvement persists inside and outside of the home have children who also score better on tests. Parents who have structured home literacy programs teach their children about schedules, the proper way to do homework, and instill a love of learning, including reading and writing.

Parents can be assisted in implementing a home literacy program by the schools, libraries, and communities they live in. Many schools offer literacy activities along with print rich environments. Parents can create literacy activities from everyday activities. There are many programs to assist parents with home literacy such as literacy bags brought home from school, family literacy nights at school, intergenerational literacy classes, and classes to teach parents how to assist their children in reading and writing activities.

Latino parents can also benefit from assistance by the schools. One way is for schools to use the background that they bring with them as a teaching tool. This allows the school to find common ground with the parents, and then the parents feel empowered to help. Again the students gain a positive outlook on literacy within the home.

A home literacy program must be effective, authentic, easy to implement and brief. Activities such as bedtime stories, conversations about daily activities, writing in a response journal to literature, activities that involve a child's name, and predictable books that can be made or borrowed from the library or school. All of these activities allow interaction between the parent and child in literacy related activities.

Literacy with children takes many forms within a home environment. A print rich environment is an important part of a home. Print rich environments can incorporate many aspects of a home.

Implications for Educators and Parents

The results of this research paper will help educators to understand the importance of parental involvement in the literacy process. They can talk with the parents about the importance of reading and sharing literacy with their children. They can also discuss the importance of creating an environment within the home that is filled with print rich materials, and discuss ways to use those materials, or create new activities that fit within their family structure. Teachers can use the information presented in this paper to help parents understand their role in their child's education. They could take this information presented in this paper and write a pamphlet telling the importance of their involvement.

The information presented also could be used as the backbone of a home literacy night at schools. Many of the activities presented in this paper are ones that can be

presented to parents at a home literacy night. They are also activities that can be demonstrated during conferences or their classroom, and then brought into the student's homes.

Another implication of this literature review is that it can help parents understand that their involvement in the reading process is very important, and the more they partake in their child's education, the higher level of learning their child will achieve. Parents have the first and one of the most important roles in their child's literacy acquisition process. The more that they commit to the process, the more positive a learning experience for their children.

Parents are the first teachers to their children. They are the teacher who starts the literacy process within the home. A child imitates what they see their parents do, and parents who read with their children and create a print rich environment for the children are showing the importance about literacy to their children. The more parents do with reading, writing, and speaking, the more the children will grasp the idea of literacy in their life.

As a parent it is important to pass on all the values that we find important in life. Parents who value literacy will pass the importance on to their children. They can do this by showing interest in their child's education, volunteering at school, attending parent-teacher conferences, family literacy nights, or reading with them or to them nightly. As the first teacher to their children, they have the most important job in a child's life.

Further Research

Further research is needed in the area of home literacy involving low socio economic children. I found many studies, but the studies stated a major discrepancy

about the availability of reading materials. Researchers noted that though the parents said they had a large amount of reading material within the homes on questionnaires, but when the researchers visited the homes they saw very little reading material within their view. Also longitudinal studies need to be done to track children for a longer period of time, through high school, to find out the long term effect of a strong home literacy environment on the students progress in their literacy acquisition.

Further research also needs to be done in the area of home literacy for Latino Americans. Latino American children are learning two languages, one at home and one at school. Do learning dual languages hinder the literacy process? Can a child effectively speak and read one language at home and a second at school and learn the second language at the same rate as his/her peers? What kind of home literacy best helps children? Can parents be trained to be effective in teaching literacy at home? As children grow how do the effects of home literacy help them? These are some questions that need to be answered by further research in this area.

Parents play an important part of their child's literacy acquisition. Everyday home activities help with the literacy learning. When schools and parents partner together in literacy programs they show the importance of literacy and help children with their literacy development. The goal of both parents and schools is to teach every child to read and write. When they join hands in helping children, no child will be left behind in their literacy development!

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