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The impact of parental involvement on children's literacy development

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The impact of parental involvement on children's literacy development

Abstract

Reading is a growing concern in the United States. Many students are leaving the educational system not ready to deal with the literary demands of everyday life and/or higher education. Factors that support students' growth in reading were reviewed. One specific factor that has a significant impact on literacy, which was a focus, was involvement of parents. What parents can do to assist their children's literacy development and attainment were also reviewed. A parent pamphlet design on reading at home came about from obtained information from the reviews.

Running head: IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Literacy Development

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Titled: The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Literacy Development

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Abstract

Reading is a growing concern in the United States. Many students are leaving the educational system not ready to deal with the literary demands of everyday life and/or higher education. Factors that support students' growth in reading were reviewed. One specific factor that has a significant impact on literacy, which was a focus, was involvement of parents. What parents can do to assist their children's literacy development and attainment were also reviewed. A parent pamphlet design on reading at home came about from obtained information from the reviews.

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Introduction

Reading is a skill one learns early on in life and uses for the duration of it.

Learning to read happens in numerous ways including multiple people assisting the process. These skills are used daily and individuals need to be proficient in their use.

Every day people are reading, at home, work, and/or school. Reading has become a major concern in our country because more and more students are leaving the educational system not being able to read. Reading scores have gone up and down with different reading trends. Many people ask what can be done to assure that children leaving school can read, no matter what trend is in place. There is no one simple answer, but parents helping at home can have a significant impact on their child's literacy achievement.

Parental involvement is defined as interactions between a parent and a child that may contribute to development (Anderson, 2000). It may also be direct participation with the child's school in the interest of the child (Anderson, 2000; Reynolds, 1996). Parents being actively involved with their children and reading is significant because that is where learning begins (Hawes & Plourde, 2005). Home is a child's first teacher and learning environment. When parents are actively involved, their children embrace the importance and value of reading (Anderson, 2000). Children spend much of their time at home and in their neighborhood; therefore providing reading and literacy materials in the home enhances a child's chance of being successful once they enter school.

Rationale

This topic was chosen because a child's academic success, in reading and other content areas, is the responsibility of educators, parents, and the community (Anderson, 2000; Dickinson, Tabors, 1991; Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004; Hawes, Plourde, 2005). Some parents and/or families believe that schools are supposed to teach everything to their child and they should have to do nothing. This is not true. Educating a child is the responsibility of everyone in that child's life (Gilliam, Gerla, & Wright, 2004).

The most influential people in a child's life are his/her parents (Anderson, 2000). Many parents are highly motivated to help their children, but they are uncertain about what they can do or should do to promote reading (Neuman, 1996). Although highly motivated, some families have another burden to overcome. Families of low socioeconomic status (SES) and families living in poverty do not have adequate resources for support (Payne, 1996). Ruby Payne (1996) states in her book *A Framework For Understanding Poverty*, that it's more about other resources than it is about money. Resources like emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical support systems play a significant role. It's these other resources that educators can influence greatly (1996).

One significant resource an educator can provide to a child is being a positive role model and building a relationship together. This is a support system that some children may not have otherwise. Payne (1996) discusses a role model as an appropriate adult, who is nurturing, does not engage in self-destructive behavior, and one whom the child has frequent access to. An educator can be a role model and show a child the importance and value of reading. By doing so, the child is more likely to copy or imitate that adult's behavior (Anderson, 2000; Payne, 1996).

Purpose

A resource that educators can give families is information. A parent pamphlet about reading is one resource for parents to have at home. It's quick, easy to understand, and small enough to store anywhere. This pamphlet will also make a positive connection between home and school, the teacher and parents (Hawes, Plourde, 2000; Lin, 2003). It is a resource that gives enough information for parents to be successful in reading with their child at home, and yet not too much to be overwhelming. Being able to access and utilize this information, parents will gain a sense of contribution to their child's academic achievement (Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004; Neuman, 1996).

Importance

Parents are the predominant influence in a child's life (Anderson, 2000). Therefore, it is important for parents to be active in their child's learning. Not only will it benefit their child, but they will also feel a sense of self-worth. By providing a how-to reading pamphlet for parents, it is more likely that they will use it. Giving them a resource to have in hand that is easy to read and use, strengthens the possibility of parent participation. Letting parents know that there are simple things they can do to be actively involved is reassuring and satisfying for parents to perceive. Christian, Morrison, and Bryant (1998) found the following:

The strong association between family literacy environment and early academic abilities suggests that relatively simple behaviors such as monitoring television viewing or taking a child to the library can substantially influence growth in academic skills, regardless of parents' educational or financial circumstances.

Terminology

Family structure and make up have drastically changed over time (Neuman, 2000). For the purpose of this paper the term *parent* or *parents* will refer to the primary caregiver of a child. This definition has been chosen because one's parent may or may not be their biological parent.

Another term chosen for this paper is that of *poverty*. Ruby Payne's definition of poverty will be used. Poverty is "the extent to which an individual does without resources," (Payne, 1996, p. 16). These resources include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, role models and relationships, and the knowledge of hidden rules.

A third definition refers to someone who is considered *at-risk*. The National At-Risk Education Network (2005) defines this term in two ways: (a) at-risk of dropping out of school and/or, (b) at-risk of not succeeding in life due to being raised in unfavorable circumstances.

The final term to clarify is *low SES status*. This would be individuals who qualify for free and reduced lunch according to Dubuque Community School District standards (2005). According to these standards, a household consisting of four people with a yearly income at or below \$35,798 would be eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Literature Review

Social success

Across all racial and social groups "the home is the first institution of learning" (McClain, 2000, p. 22). It's at home where children initially learn social and academic skills (Anderson, 2000). Analysis conducted by Pettit, Brown, Mize, and Lindsey (1998)

demonstrated that a mother social coaching and father-child play “additively and incrementally predicted children’s social skillfulness” (p. 173).

When parents play and talk with their children they’re teaching them multiple social skills. Children are learning by example the skills needed to be socially successful in society. They learn how to share, compromise, and effectively communicate through verbal and body language (Pettit, Brown, Mize, & Lindsey, 1998). Pettit, Brown, Mize, and Lindsey (1998) also state that parent-child play fosters “development of emotion regulation and encoding skills” (p. 175). Acquiring these skills early allows children to develop their self-concept and esteem.

A strong self-concept is a means by which parents demonstrate care, concern, and worth to their children. When children know they are sincerely cared for they build strong, positive self-esteem that assists in a magnitude of achievements. Feeling good about oneself encourages a suitable outlook on daily encounters. Interacting with others in a positive manner encompasses social success (Pettit, Brown, Mize, & Lindsey, 1998).

Children have a number of social encounters in and outside of school on a daily basis. At times some encounters become obstacles to overcome. Parents being involved and being positive role models supports children in approaching obstacles in a positive way with more skill (Pettit, Brown, Mize, & Lindsey, 1998). A parent modeling positive behavior exhibits the value and affect it holds (Anderson, 2000). Children observe their parents in situations and how they handle them. They see the confident composure of an adult. Studies have shown that children with involved parents have higher levels of social skillfulness and more peer acceptance (Pettit, Brown, Mize, Lindsey, 1998). These two skills direct students toward social and academic success.

Literacy has been seen as a social process that is a part of children's lives "through their interactions in a variety of activities and relationships with other people" (Neuman, 2000, p. 21). Through social interactions children become interested in reading and writing (Neuman, 2000). Literacy can give children power, help them to see and understand the world they live in, and help them to express their feelings to friends (Neuman, 2000).

Academic success

Once children enter school, parental involvement continues to be a key to success (Anderson, 2000). Hawes and Plourde (2005) explain that the parental responsibility of being involved assists students in gaining knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes. Involved parents help to shape children into adults with a strong self-concept who in turn become productive citizens (Hawes & Plourde, 2005).

Parent involvement is linked to school readiness and achievement (Anderson, 2000; Christian, Morrison, Bryant, 1998; Holloway, 2004; Lin, 2003; McConnell, Rabe, 1999; Weir, 1989). Lin (2003) discusses that the more parents are positively involved with a child's learning, the greater the effect on school performance and higher academic achieving. Parents' level of involvement in their children's academics exhibit the value they place on and the attitude they merit towards education (Anderson, 2000).

Parent behaviors and attitudes have an immense impact on their children's abilities (Anderson, 2000; Pettit, Brown, Mize, Lindsey, 1998). Christian, Morrison, and Bryant (1998) discuss how some parental behaviors, like reading together, going to the library, and providing academic activities, are "important predictors of children's cognitive and academic growth" (p. 502). Parents placing high value on education and

holding high expectations of their children is another predictor of school performance (Anderson, 2000; Neuman, 2000). Children who have parents holding high expectations often perform better in school than children who do not (Anderson, 2000).

The study completed by Christian, Morrison, and Bryant (1998) in Greensboro, North Carolina looked at the significance that family literacy environments had on the academic performance of kindergarten students. Participants were from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicity. General literacy behaviors such as daily reading, visiting the library, and family resources were measured. Children of these families were assessed using the Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised (1989). The following outcome measures were the focus: (a) math achievement, (b) reading achievement, (c) verbal achievement, (d) general information, and (e) alphabet recognition. Results have shown family literacy environments having positive associations with four of the five outcome measures. There were no significant effects between home literacy environments and math achievement.

According to the study mentioned above, and other studies (Anderson, 2000; Brown, Briggs, 1991; Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004; Hawes, Plourde, 2005; McConnell, Rabe, 1999; Neuman, 1996; Wade, Moore, 1998), parental involvement has an ample effect on reading academics. When children are consistently read to by parents, reading skills improve (Allison & Watson, 1994). Within a family context, people are using literacy skills in everyday communication, interpreting information, and in reasoning skills (Neuman, 2000). Family members are talking, writing, and reading in front of and with their children. They are in essence being literacy role models to their children. McCallum (1992) says the interaction that occurs between family members plays a

significant role in a child's overall development of literacy skills. Family is a support system for developing and maintaining literacy acquisition (Anderson, 2000; Hawes, Plourde, 2005).

Exposure to adult language

There are a number of things parents can do to develop and maintain literacy acquisition. By talking positively with and in front of their children adults are exposing them to how language works (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). Parents serve as expert models of how to use spoken language. Dickinson and Tabors (1991) found that particular types of conversational language support the development of literacy-related language skills. Strong vocabulary and narrative skills facilitate reading comprehension. These two literacy skills are developed from positive interactions with adult language.

McConnell and Rabe (1999) make it clear that vocabulary is acquired through both formal and informal actions a child has with parents. Parents can build their child's vocabulary and literacy skills by asking them questions. Parents may ask questions about their children's day, something they are reading, or about a television show they are watching. Parents help construct children's literacy skills by giving positive feedback during conversations together. By questioning and giving feedback parents are entailing children with how language works.

Children participating in and listening to adult language strengthen their vocabulary knowledge (Dickinson, Tabors, 1991; Gunn, Simmons, Kameenui, 1993). Vocabulary is an essential building block of early literacy and later reading competence (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). Having a large vocabulary predicts children will have better language skills and a broad background knowledge. Background knowledge

assists in learning new concepts and ideas a child will encounter. Background knowledge, along with language skills, promotes decoding and comprehension of text (McConnell & Rabe, 1999).

Not only does exposure to adult language help with vocabulary skills, but also it serves as a model of reading to younger children (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1993). Many beginning text structures resemble common spoken language. If children are continually exposed to speech and how it works, it is easier for them to read beginning text. Being successful in the beginning is a predictor that children will enjoy reading and continue to embrace academic growth.

Reading together

Academic growth can also be assured by reading with children (Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004; Neuman, 1996; Wade, Moore, 1998; Weir, 1989). Throughout the literature it has been noted that shared book reading, or reading aloud to children, emerges as a key component to early literacy acquisition (McConnell, Rabe, 1999; Morrow, O'Connor, Smith, 1990; Wade, Moore, 1998). When a child is read to, it introduces a variety of language patterns and provides knowledge for children to understand and construct rules of the reading process. (Anderson, 2000; Gunn, Simmons, Kameenui, 1993; McConnell, Rabe, 1999; Morrow, O'Connor, Smith, 1990; Neuman, 1996). Reading to children develops the following literacy areas (Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1996): (a) awareness of the function and use of written language, (b) concepts about print (the form and structure of writing), (c) developing a positive attitude towards reading, and (d) developing self-monitoring and prediction strategies. These four areas are crucial to early literacy success and building later literacy skills.

A skill that develops as parents and children read together is deriving meaning from the text in relation to one's own life (Neuman, 1996). There are innumerable stories containing themes and situations children may encounter. If a parent reads these stories with their child and discusses it, they are building knowledge for later use. Therefore, when a child encounters a similar situation in his/her life, it is predictable that they will recall and use what they discussed with their parent. In most cases using what was discussed with a parent would be more appropriate compared to what the child may think of without having had a previous conversation about it. Data indicates "that more global concept . . . seemed to be learned in the context of storybook reading" (p. 508).

Anderson (2000) says, "Reading to a child increases the child's listening vocabulary, letter and symbol recognition abilities, length of spoken sentences, and many more comprehension abilities" (p. 62). Reading and discussing what was read has the greatest impact on literacy skills. In order to gain maximum learning out of shared book reading, parents need to discuss the story with their child (Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990).

Story elements can be discussed to support the structure and meaning of the story. Morrow, O'Connor, and Smith (1990) have demonstrated knowing and recalling important events and characters will improve reading comprehension. They've also shown (1990) comprehension also improves through retellings and rereading text. Once completing a story, having a child retell it in order allows his or her mind to hear the story again, improving memory recall about the events. Rereading text has the same impact on memory.

Discussions, meaningful conversations, and reading together not only benefit students, it also benefits parents. Gilliam, Gerla, and Wright (2004) conducted a study where they helped parents of kindergarten students become aware of in-home activities that could be done to promote literacy. Sessions were held for the parents to attend weekly for ten weeks. A number of topics were covered including storytelling in the home and choosing when, how, and what to read to children. After the ten weeks, parents were interviewed about their thoughts and feelings. “Parents reported a positive change in the way they felt about themselves as parents” and “Parents reported increased bonding with their children” (p. 232).

When parents are confident about promoting literacy, a bond with their child is an added bonus. Shared book reading also exhibits a parent fostering to the interest of the child (McConnell & Rabe, 1999). They are taking part in something their child enjoys and possibly cherishes. This signals to the child that their parent cares about them and their interests. Anderson (2000) explains that reading books together enables the child to experience closeness with a parent. They feel “the intimacy of sharing a book with a loved parent” (p. 64). In turn, positive attitudes about literature and parents are created.

Shared book reading and adult participation is increasing in our country. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports the percentage of kids whom a family member read to them three times a week or more was 78% in 1993 and increased to 84% by 2001. An increase of participation may be due to knowledge and availability of resources to parents.

One readily available resource is the use of public libraries. Wade and Moore (1998) have shown from their study that children who visited libraries often, and engaged

in more storybook readings, had a higher reading level by the age of five than students who did not. In their study they provided parents with a children's book, a bookmark, poster and poem card, information about local library facilities, the value of book sharing and book purchases. Given the resources parents took a more active role in their child's literacy growth and development. Visiting the library together increases a child's access to books and demonstrates the value and joy of reading. Libraries are print rich environments exposing children to multiple forms of literature.

Home literacy environment

Providing a print rich environment at home stimulates creativity and enthusiasm in children. Shaver and Walls (1998) found evidence about parents who provide learning materials and books to their children at home, tend to have higher achievement. When materials are made available, children are likely to make use of them while developing their language skills and abilities in the process.

Simple actions can be taken to create a home rich in print. Making sure there are multiple print sources present in the home like newspapers, magazines, and books increases a child's exposure. Parents can give books as presents instead of video games. Educational toys, or toys that incorporate reading, is preferred over others in order to gain literacy knowledge. Brown and Briggs (1991) explain that children naturally acquire story discourse by hearing and reading high quality literature assisting in reading achievement.

Alphabet blocks and magnetic or wood blocks are another source to have available to young children. With these sources children are seeing and feeling the letters at the same time. This stimulates more than one sense making a greater impact on the

memory of the letter. Letter knowledge is crucial to development because it forms connections in spellings and the sounds in word pronunciations (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1993).

Letter knowledge can also be gained through educational television programs (McConnell & Rabe, 1999). Children should watch programs like *Sesame Street* or *Between the Lions* which constantly reinforce letters, letter sounds, and word pronunciations. Episodes are centered on language and how language works. Repetition of language structure factors into memory and recall that children need for academic success.

Letter knowledge is crucial to language development along with the capability to write those letters. Children need to have literacy experiences that include writing. Writing letters and words reinforces the names and sounds of the letters. Writing develops concepts about print (Weir, 1989). Children are engaged with how letters build words, and words build sentences. Children learn through observations to begin their writing on the left side of the page and move to the right. Older children develop a sense of sentence structure and punctuation.

Literacy utensils develop language functions while encouraging creativity and exploration. A child is able to explore and experience all forms of literacy through everyday activities. Parents need to involve their children as much as possible when they read labels, write out a list for the store, or read the newspaper. Participating in these activities demonstrates the importance of knowing how to read and write to a child. They notice how much literacy is embodied on a daily basis. An environment full of literacy

activities is encouraged because it is absolutely essential to language development (Brown & Briggs, 1991).

Word games play a role in language development for children (Glazer, 1996). Games like Scrabble, Scrabble Jr., crossword puzzles, and word searches encompass essential elements to literacy development. Children are experiencing how language functions, dialogue with adults, and problem solving with letters and words.

Playing word games is fun and exciting for children. Glazer (1996) has shown that playing games “increases word knowledge and vocabulary for reading and writing” (p. 92). While playing these games children are utilizing and building letter and word knowledge. The brain is stimulated and working by drawing upon prior knowledge and building new knowledge. Literacy games and activities are crucial because children learn how to attend language and then apply this knowledge by interacting with others who model language functions (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1993).

Methodology

Procedures in Developing the Project

Working with parents of elementary children every day can be challenging and rewarding. Many of the parents at Lincoln Elementary School in Dubuque, Iowa want the best for their child and are willing to help if they know how. Reading scores have been declining and I wanted to create something that was meaningful, had proof behind it, and was easy for parents to follow. Creating such a resource could encourage parents' participation in literacy activities with their children.

One way for parents to maximize their involvement with the reading development of their children is through the use of resources. To develop a resource for all parents to

utilize, it was necessary to take into account their educational experience, attitude towards educators and education, and their comfort level. I reviewed current parents and parents of past students I've worked with. I took into consideration their comments and feelings they've expressed. Taking these factors into account for the parents of Lincoln Elementary School, the idea of a reading pamphlet for parents evolved.

In order to ensure effective information is being provided, a review of literature was conducted. Information obtained through the review was utilized in creating a reading pamphlet for parents. Throughout the readings it was evident parental involvement was a good predictor of a child's academic success. Of all academic areas, reading has been shown to be most affected by involved parents (Christian, Morrions, & Bryant, 1998).

The pamphlet needed to be accessible for parents. Therefore, it could be given directly to parents at First Day Orientation and again in December and March. Additional copies will be made available in the school office. As the research has shown, having a resource accessible makes the chances of its use more likely for parents and families (Wade & Moore, 1998).

To ensure parents feel comfortable using the reading pamphlet, it needs to be free of language lingo and easy to handle. It needs to contain suggestions of activities to do and have available for their children. Activities need to be simple with materials accessible to all parents. Not only will the pamphlet give suggestions about ideas, it will also give a purpose for carrying out the activities (Gilliam, Gerla, & Wright, 2004).

The Project

The reading pamphlet is a six panel design on a single piece of paper, three panels on the front and three on the back (see Appendix A for complete pamphlet layout). Once creased, this piece is a three fold resource for parents. This project will be described as it would look lying open with no folds.

When lying open on the front side of the paper, the first panel on the left contain four ways for parents to include literacy in their daily lives. Each suggestion includes phrases on how this particular act would help to enhance reading academics and the desired frequency of each. Based on the literature the following four activities were selected in order for successful parental achievement: (a) storybook reading (or shared book reading), (b) visiting the local library, (c) playing word games, and (d) making literacy materials available to children at home.

It has been found that the most important home activity to do in order to build knowledge required for reading success, is to read aloud to children. Storybook reading is the first suggested activity because of its ample impact. This practice is recommended daily in order to reach the maximum benefits. The following six reasons are given for why storybook reading should occur: (a) exposes children to a variety of literature when using different types of genre, (b) builds vocabulary, (c) broadens background knowledge, (d) helps to associate reading as enjoyable and fun, (e) builds familiarity with how the English language works, and (f) develops concepts about print.

The second practice is visiting the library and it's suggested to be done weekly. Visiting the library shows your child that you value books and reading. It's showing

children how important it is to read and be able to read while displaying multiple literature sources.

The next activity is playing word games on a weekly basis. Games like Scrabble, word searches, crossword puzzles, and Hangman are given as ideas. The reason to play these games is it develops and maintains vocabulary and problem solving skills while engaging children with adult language.

The final suggested activity is providing literacy materials at home. Books, magazines, and newspapers are all kinds of print material children should be exposed to. Paper, pencils, pens, crayons, and markers are recommended for all ages to have available at home. Magnetic or block letters and numbers are optimal for younger students. When these materials are made available, there is a better chance that children will utilize them. Therefore, when children use them they are building literacy skills that ultimately help in academic success.

The middle panel on the front side contains paraphrased information from Wood (2002) about the connection of reading achievement and parental involvement. The pamphlet states children reading above average have reported playing more word games and reading more at home. A clip art piece of a child surrounded by books reading is included on the bottom of this panel.

The far right panel gives information about what the research says about parents being active with their children. The following are the general statements made about what research has shown: (a) children spend most of their time at home and in their neighborhood and having reading and writing materials at home gives more exposure to the use and value of these skills, and (b) children who have public library cards and use

them regularly, have an easier time learning to read once they begin school. The third statement comes from Weinberger (1996) and says that children who listen to stories read aloud have a higher reading level of 8.1 compared to 6.5. At the bottom Wood (2002) is referenced in saying a number of studies have shown children benefit from having adult-supported literacy activities at home.

The next three panels are located on the back side of the piece. The far left panel contains information about Carnegie-Stout Public Library in Dubuque, Iowa. The address, phone number, and business hours are listed. How to secure a library card is included because the process is so easy. Some parents may not realize how easy it is for children, and themselves, to attain a card. Items that can be checked out with a library card are included to motivate students and their parents to visit the library. There are items that they may not know the library holds and they can check out (magazines, CD's, etc.).

The middle panel, once folded will be the back side of the pamphlet, lists books that would be beneficial for reading skills of all levels. Eight books are recommended including some Newberry Award winners. Along with the title, the author's name is given to assist in finding the book in a library. Books were selected from the Children's Book-of-the-Month website at http://www.cbomc.com/doc/full_site_enrollment/fse_homepage.jhtml

Literacy websites are also listed as resources on this panel. Sites range from very simple and basic to a bit more sophisticated. They were chosen from recommendations from other educators and searching on the internet. The degree to which a site was interactive and engaging in literacy skills was the prerequisite in selection for the

pamphlet. Sites are simple enough that once children have been through it once, they would be able to successfully visit it independently. If a computer is available, this is a great way for parents to read and do literacy activities with their child.

The far right panel is the front cover to the reading pamphlet. The title Reading At Home is at the top in large, bold print. An actual photo of a child reading at home is placed in the middle. Credit is given to the author, me, and the University of Northern Iowa at the bottom of the panel.

Conclusions

Reading is one of the most important academic skills that will be used daily no matter what future road is taken. “Reading matters: being able to read is both a means and an end to enhancing life materially and intellectually” (Hawes & Plourde, 2005, p. 48). Knowing how to effectively read and comprehend supports academic and social success. There are four key points to remember when thinking about the impact parental involvement has on literacy.

First, the literature suggests that reading together with your child has the greatest impact on social and academic success. Reading together in a child’s early years is a significant predictor of reading achievement. This action demonstrates to children the value parents hold in reading. Along with benefiting the child, parents benefit as well by reading together.

Second, the literature supports parents giving children many literacy opportunities. Providing such opportunities lays the foundation for reading. Making books and word games available and visiting the library exposes children to language and supports their reading achievement.

Third the literature supports that active parental involvement in development and learning needs to be ongoing. It doesn't stop once a child enters school. Through the years parents need to have high expectations in place. Children have shown to do better in school when parents are active, have high expectations, and hold their child to them.

Finally, the literature supports parent involvement no matter the education or economic status. Literature has shown that parents do not have to be an expert in reading in order to help their child. Anderson (2000) has shown there to be direct relationships between parent behaviors at home regardless of socioeconomic status and student reading achievement. By providing a rich, stable environment school success begins at home. Any child, at-risk or not, can make it academically if it is a priority of the parents.

Recommendations

Throughout the literature positive affects on younger children and parental involvement have been shown. The years before a child enters school are the most significant in development. This is the time parents need to act and take part, but it's also significant to be involved when children are older. Much of the research focuses on infant and toddler ages. Completed school aged research has been primarily with kindergarten students. More research needs to be done about the impact involved parents have on older school aged children. Older student success is equally important to study. Specifically, research about the impact parents have on older children's literacy is appropriate.

Not only looking at older children is necessary, but also examining parent education programs. As the research has shown, many parents want to help and be a part of their child's education but are not sure how. Researchers should look at questions like

would supporting a parent education program benefit students? If so, how? Would such programs be more useful with an at-risk population? With research support, more districts and/or schools will be willing to fund and support this parent resource. This would assist parents in gaining knowledge and feeling comfortable taking part in their child's academics.

Along with parental involvement researchers need to do more studies about the effects of a positive home-school relationship on student achievement. This connection could be one that has major contributions and therefore needs to continue being studied. If there is a positive connection between home and school, how and in what ways does it impact children?

There are collections of strategies and resources available for parents' use to enhance their child's literacy development. Throughout the literature there are references to relationships between parents being involved and children succeeding academically and socially (Anderson, 2000; Brown, Briggs, 1991; Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004; Gunn, Simmons, Kameenui, 1993; Hawes, Plourde, 2005; Holloway, 2004, McConnell, Rabe, 1999; Neuman, 1996). Wade and Moore (1998) state "if parents involve themselves actively in their children's development and learning, then evidence shows that children achieve more" (p. 135).

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Appendix A

Reading At Home Parent Pamphlet

Research has shown the following activities positively effect reading achievement:

1. Reading Storybooks (daily)

- builds vocabulary
- broadens background knowledge
- helps to associate reading as enjoyable and fun
- use a variety of types to expose to the many kinds of books out there (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, etc.)
- builds familiarity with how the English language works

2. Visiting the Library (weekly)

- shows the value of books and reading you have
- shows the importance of knowing how to read

3. Playing Word Games (weekly)

- Scrabble, Word Searches, Crossword Puzzles, Hangman
- using problem solving skills
- engaging in meaningful conversations

4. Providing Literacy Materials (daily)

- when materials are available, the more likely they'll be used
- books, magazines, newspapers
- magnetic or block letters and numbers
- paper, pencils, pens, crayons, markers



Children reading 'above average' have reported playing more word games and reading more at home.

- Clare Wood



What Research Says!

Many studies have shown that:

- Children spend most of their time at home and in their neighborhood. Having reading and writing materials at home gives more exposure to the use and value of these two skills.
- Children who have public library cards and use them regularly, have an easier time learning to read once they begin school.
- Children who listen to stories read aloud have a higher reading level (8.1 compared to 6.5).

-Jo Weinberger

Children benefit from having adult-supported literacy activities at home.

- Clare Wood



Carnegie-Stout

Public Library

360 11th Street, Dubuque
563/589-4225

To get your own library card:

1. A parent must be with their child.
2. The child must be able to sign his/her own name.
3. Free of charge!

**Check out books and
magazines.... FOR
FREE with your
library card!**

Library Regular Business Hours

Mon – Wed 9am to 9pm

Thursday 1pm to 9pm

Fri & Sat 9am to 5pm

Sunday 1pm to 5pm



Books To Read Together:

No. David! by David Shannon .

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Oh, The Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

The Sign of The Beaver by Elizabeth
George Speare

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by
Roald Dahl

Because Of Winn-Dixie by Kate
DiCamillo

Websites to Check Out!

PBS Kids <http://www.pbskids.org>

Between the Lions
<http://pbskids.org/lions>

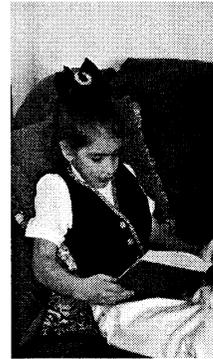
Reading Rainbow
<http://pbskids.org/readingrainbow/>

Reading Planet
<http://www.rif.org/readingplanet/>

Scholastic News
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews>

Weekly Reader
<http://www.weeklyreader.com/homepage.asp>

Reading At Home



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