An Examination of the Effects of an Intergenerational Reading Workshop on the Listening Comprehension of At-Risk Pre-Kindergarten Students

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An Examination of the Effects of an Intergenerational Reading Workshop on the Listening Comprehension of At-Risk Pre-Kindergarten Students

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

URBAN SERVICES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
October, 1991

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ABSTRACT

An Examination of the Effects of an Intergenerational Reading Workshop on the Listening Comprehension of At-Risk Pre-Kindergarten Students

Marycarolyn G. France
Old Dominion University, 1991
Director: Dr. Jane M. Hager

A surge of interest in working with parents to help their children build prerequisite language skills that would prevent reading failure has developed in recent years. The challenge of preventing reading failure in students is exacerbated when parents themselves have limited skills in reading. In recognition of this fact, schools and other institutions have begun to provide intergenerational programs to teach parents and children together. The workshop which is the subject of this study is one such program.

Thirteen parents and their pre-kindergarten children, who had been identified by the school as at-risk students, were exposed to an intergenerational reading workshop in which the parents were taught how to read aloud to their children. A control group of thirteen parents and their pre-kindergarten children, likewise identified by the school as at-risk students, did not attend the workshop but, in all other respects, had the same school program as the experimental group.

Both groups were pretested on listening comprehension skill using two tests. The first of these is the Circus, a standardized test that assesses the ability to recall the main idea of the story and specific details which support the main idea. The second test is the Early School Inventory--

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Preliteracy, which assesses the ability to retell a story using the conventional elements found in a simple narrative. These same tests were administered immediately following the intervention and again eight and twelve weeks after termination of the intervention. A repeated measures analysis of variance was performed on the resulting data. For each of the two measures of listening comprehension, a statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups for interaction of time and treatment was found (p < .01). The researcher concluded that the workshop instruction together with practice of the read-aloud techniques over a period of eighteen weeks accounted for the difference between the experimental and control groups.
For our children
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I acknowledge the guidance and assistance of friends and colleagues who have worked with me to complete this research: the members of my committee, Dr. Robert A. Gable and Dr. Stephen W. Tonelson, my committee chair, Dr. Jane M. Hager; my friend Dr. Ellen Miller; and my colleagues at Chesterfield Heights Elementary School, Mrs. Carolyn B. Umphlett, Mrs. Inez Blount-Mason, Mrs. Margaret Riddick, Mrs. Laurel Morgan, Mrs. Joanne Deskins, and Mrs. Constance LaBudde.

No less important to this project was the loving support of my husband, William H. France, my children, Carolyn Anne White and W. David France, my parents, J. Elliott Green, Jr. and Miriam D. Green, and all the other members of my family.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In modern technological society, the importance of a literate population is undisputed. In 1983, A Nation At Risk stated that "American prosperity, security, and civility" depend on the education of its people.¹ In support of this contention, Chall has proposed that a twelfth grade reading level is required to "live productively in a complex, postindustrial society..." in which the ability to read has become essential to every aspect of life.² Few educators would argue with the pervasive need for skill in reading. However, there is much less agreement about how to accomplish the daunting task of assuring that all students will learn to read and thus become fully participating members of society. Many programs have been attempted. Thousands of reading teachers in the United States have been trained to help students who fail to learn to read in the regular classroom. In most cases, the help that is offered students is remedial. However, as Allington indicated in his examination of the


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federally funded Chapter I programs, remediation is extremely expensive and often proves to be ineffective.\(^3\) Students frequently enter remedial programs early in their education and remain in these programs for many years without reaching an acceptable level of reading proficiency. Part of the problem may rest with the exact nature of the remediation. Allington's study suggests that the type of remediation offered is critical. He cites several characteristics of unsuccessful remedial programs: (1) instruction centered on word, sentence, or paragraph level tasks, (2) a remedial program that is not supportive of regular classroom instruction, (3) too much time spent on non-academic activities, like movement between classes, (4) poor coordination between instruction by the specialist and the classroom teacher, and (5) a program structure that fosters dependency on the remedial teacher.\(^4\) Although these and other shortcomings may exist in many programs, a complete condemnation of remediation is not justified. Indeed, there are many examples of highly successful remedial programs.\(^5\) Some of them are: PEGASUS-PACE, a continuous-progress program with seventeen reading levels; Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), a program in which students work in mixed-ability teams; Reading Recovery,

\(^3\)Richard Allington, "Shattered Hopes: Why Two Federal Reading Programs Have Failed to Correct Reading Failure," Learning 87 16 (July/August 1987): 60-64.

\(^4\)Ibid., 62.

a tutoring program in which specially trained teachers work with students daily for thirty minutes; and Basic Literacy Through Microcomputers, a program which uses microcomputers to practice phonics and writing skills, to mention a few. Madden and Slavin found that these and other programs they studied produced significant gains in reading for students. However, as Slavin notes, studies of Chapter I revealed that Chapter I students performed only slightly better (one to three percentile points) than similar students who had received no remedial instruction. Furthermore, these gains in achievement were "largely limited to the primary grades." Clearly enough students do not profit from current remediation efforts to warrant the exploration of alternatives to remedial programs.

One alternative to remediation that is favored by some experts is a preventive approach. Recently, interest in working with parents to assist them in helping their children build prerequisite language skills that would prevent reading failure has been mounting. A preventive approach to reading problems is desirable for at least two reasons. First, according to some authorities, preventive programs are cost effective in the long term, since they reduce the need for expensive remedial education. Second, a preventive approach forestalls the

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emotional and academic distress children experience when they develop reading difficulties in school.9

Promising as the preventive approach might seem, the usefulness of this approach is severely diminished when parents themselves have limited skill in reading.10 However, some evidence exists that with assistance from the school low literate parents can learn to provide the kind of environment which fosters literacy.11 Building on evidence of the contributions parents can make, schools and other institutions have begun to provide programs that teach parents and children together. A number of these intergenerational programs have been established, ranging from the ambitious Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project in which parents learn parenting skills while earning a high school equivalency diploma, to the modest read-aloud programs offered by many public libraries.12 Viewed together, these programs show potential as a means of developing increased literacy for both parents and children, resulting in family literacy.13


Projects associated with intergenerational or family literacy seek to break what has been called the "illiteracy cycle."\textsuperscript{14} That is, parents who are low literates tend to have children who do not read well;\textsuperscript{15} accordingly, illiteracy is cycled on from generation to generation. Studies suggest that the urban poor are especially vulnerable and often fall victim to this cycle. A disproportionately large number of persons who are poor in our cities are low literates who, lacking the reading skills demanded by our society, are unable to get the kind of jobs which would allow them to improve their socio-economic status.\textsuperscript{16} By some estimates, 75 percent of persons who are unemployed and 60 percent of prison inmates are illiterate.\textsuperscript{17} Many intergenerational and family literacy programs, therefore, include employment among their long-term goals for parents and children.\textsuperscript{18}

Schools have sought to deal with family literacy education in many ways. Workshops that teach parents how to read aloud to

\begin{quote}

  \textsuperscript{15}Somerfield, 1.

  \textsuperscript{16}Michael Bernick, "Illiteracy and Inner-City Unemployment," \textit{Phi Delta Kappan} 67 (January 1986): 364.

  \textsuperscript{17}Patricia M. Cunningham, review of \textit{Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print}, by Marilyn Jager Adams, in \textit{The Reading Teacher} 43 (May 1990): 678.

  \textsuperscript{18}Nickse, 6.
\end{quote}
their children are among the most successful intergenerational projects developed.\textsuperscript{19} Examples of such programs include Parents as Partners in Reading, and the Parent Readers Program.\textsuperscript{20} Their focus on story reading is supported by a considerable body of research that indicates reading aloud to young children promotes reading achievement. For example, in Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, the authors stated that "[t]he single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years."\textsuperscript{21} Various researchers have found that children who have parents who read to them regularly are the youngsters who become early readers and show a natural interest in books.\textsuperscript{22} Other studies report that reading aloud to children develops vocabulary.\textsuperscript{23} The enhancement of listening comprehension of stories is one of the most significant benefits

\textsuperscript{19}Sommerfield, 3.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 64.
of reading aloud.\textsuperscript{24} By listening to many stories, children learn about story structure. They begin to understand that stories have characters, settings, beginnings, middles, and endings.\textsuperscript{25} This helps them make sense of what they hear,\textsuperscript{26} and later what they read.\textsuperscript{27} Some authorities consider listening comprehension a good predictor of success in reading.\textsuperscript{28} Among the various strategies, choral reading is recommended frequently in the literature as a technique for reading aloud to children. This strategy is a natural way to involve youngsters in the read-aloud experience.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, some researchers report that it is not unusual for children to initiate choral readings spontaneously.\textsuperscript{30}

The previously mentioned research on various aspects of story reading provides ample evidence to support encouraging parents to read aloud to their children. In fact, teachers,
librarians, businesses, and community groups are promoting reading aloud to children through television spots, library and school programs, posters, billboards, and even the distribution of books to mothers of newborns. However, in the case of the urban poor, exhorting parents to read to their children is not enough. Many low-income urban parents are functionally illiterate and have little experience with books.\textsuperscript{31} Low-literate parents need to be shown how to read to their children and need to be given proof of the benefits of doing so. Only then will they take advantage of the advice of the authorities who advocate reading aloud.\textsuperscript{32}

Introduction of a personalized workshop appears to hold promise as one realistic solution to the longstanding problem of finding ways to prevent students from experiencing failure in reading. Such a workshop should provide instruction in a format that accommodates low-literates and should be conducted at the child's school, where parents can be made aware of the impact of their reading on the child's progress.

\textbf{Problem Statement and Research Question}

Because the cost of educational remediation is high, preventing reading failure is especially desirable. In 1987, Slavin reported that, nationwide, 3.9 billion dollars were spent on Chapter I remedial programs alone.\textsuperscript{33} Clay discussed the

\textsuperscript{31}Somerfield, 1.
\textsuperscript{32}Somerfield, 41.
\textsuperscript{33}Slavin, 110.
cost in human terms, listing loss of confidence, self-esteem and motivation to learn as some of the most serious consequences of unsuccessful experiences in remedial programs. Research indicates that the most effective strategy to prepare children for success in reading in the first years of schooling consists of reading to children before they reach school age. Therefore, schools that serve children of parents who are low-literate may consider ways to conduct training workshops that are designed to teach these parents how to read to their children. Without this assistance, parents who lack reading skills are likely to perpetuate a cycle of illiteracy. As appealing as this assertion may be, scant evidence as yet exists that intergenerational workshop training enables parents to establish reading aloud as a regular practice or that children benefit from reading aloud as a result of the workshops.

According to Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, "Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts." Reading comprehension, then, is the ultimate objective in reading. Numerous authorities agree that the foundation for good comprehension is laid in early childhood, in listening comprehension, and that the single most important early activity for fostering comprehension is reading

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35Anderson et al., 23.

36Anderson et al., 7.
Therefore, the question this study seeks to address is: Will parent and child participation in an intergenerational workshop in which parents are taught how to use choral reading to read aloud to their children result in improved listening comprehension of stories for at-risk pre-kindergartners? In examining this issue, greater knowledge of how family literacy is related to preparing students for success in reading may surface, which will contribute to an understanding of the kinds of programs schools need to offer parents and children.

**Hypotheses**

In addressing the research question, the following null hypotheses will be tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who were not exposed to this experience.

2. Eight weeks following participation in the workshop, there is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques were taught and students who were not exposed to this experience.

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3. Twelve weeks following participation in the workshop, there is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques were taught and students who were not exposed to this experience.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this research paper and are listed in alphabetical order:

At-Risk Student - A student who is at risk of failure in school. As Harold Hodgkinson, director of the Center for Demographic Policy, Institute for Educational Leadership, writes "...about one-third of preschool children are destined for school failure because of poverty, neglect, sickness, handicapping conditions, and lack of adult protection and nurturance."38

The students in this research project are all considered at-risk by the Norfolk Public Schools by virtue of their scores of 80 or below out of a possible 100 points on the Brigance Preschool Screen for Three and Four-Year-Old Children, which is administered prior to admission to pre-kindergarten.

Big Books - Enlarged versions of popular children's books. The books usually measure fifteen by eighteen inches or larger.

Choral Reading - A reading technique in which parent and child read aloud in unison.

Emergent Literacy - A philosophy which assumes that literacy

begins in infancy and is ongoing. The development, at home, of literacy skills in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is significant, and subsequent learning at school should build upon that existing knowledge. Literacy learning should take place in a positive social context in which adults model literacy behavior and children learn by imitation, experimentation, and sharing language with others.\textsuperscript{39}

**Family Literacy Programs** - Programs which teach literacy skills to both parents and children, operating on the belief that the parent's role in developing the child's literacy potential is crucial and can be fulfilled better if parents are themselves literate.\textsuperscript{40}

**Holistic Reading Techniques** - Techniques which teach reading by introducing students to whole texts first. The teaching of reading skills is incorporated as part of the reading experience.

**Intergenerational Reading Workshop** - An informal instructional program in holistic reading techniques offered to parents and children learning together.

**Listening Comprehension** - Those skills measured by the two instruments used in this research, the \textit{Circus Listen To The Story} and the \textit{Early School Inventory - Preliteracy (ESI-P)}. The \textit{Circus} assesses the ability to understand the gist of a story which has been read to the student and the ability to remember specific details which support the main idea. The \textit{ESI-P} assesses the

\textsuperscript{39}Morrow, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{40}Sommerfield, 2.
ability to retell a familiar story read aloud and uses the conventional elements found in a simple narrative to determine if the student has acquired a concept of story.

**Predictable Pattern Books** - Books that have simple story structures and repetitive language. Some examples of such books are *The Little Red Hen*, *The Gingerbread Man*, and *The Teeny Tiny Woman*.

**Pre-Kindergarten Students** - Students four years of age in September of the year they apply for admission to school.

**Rationale and Purpose**

Research on reading aloud to children indicates that it is the best available strategy for preparing pre-kindergarten children to read successfully. However, many low-literate parents fail to read to their children. In recognition of this fact, the purpose of this study is to examine a practical, cost effective way for public schools to help low-literate parents learn how to read aloud to their children. Many schools have neither the funds nor the staff to write grants in order to obtain funds for large, expensive programs. Therefore, experimenting with programs which are comparatively inexpensive and which do not require great expenditures of time by school personnel is important.

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41 Anderson et al., 23.

42 Nickse, Speicher and Buchek, 643.

The results of the study will reveal whether, given the conditions of the experimental treatment, the listening comprehension of the child is improved when parents are taught how to read aloud to their children in a workshop setting. The study also will examine whether this effect is sustained over time. In addition, parent interviews following the workshop will explore related questions concerning the effects of the workshop: (1) Can the habit of reading aloud be established in the home? (2) Will parents read more frequently to their children? (3) Will parents have more confidence in their ability to help their children learn? (4) Will parents have a more positive attitude toward reading?

Research that addresses family literacy issues among the urban poor is of vital importance. Kozol and others warn that there is a large discrepancy between the achievement levels of high and low socioeconomic groups in our society. This gap will continue to widen unless the children of disadvantaged groups are given the help they need to succeed in school. As First Lady Barbara Bush's family literacy project suggests, elementary and secondary schools alone cannot solve the problems of educating the children who will be adults in the twenty-first century. The critical role of the home and the family must be addressed. Studies of family literacy indicate that home

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44Jonathan Kozol, Illiterate America (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1985), 63-64.


46Morrow, 140.
environment variables, and most particularly parental skill in using and transmitting formal language, give middle class children an advantage in school. Educating low-literate parents about how to foster literacy appears to create a positive influence on the achievement of their children.47

**Project Background**

The intergenerational workshop which represents the intervention in this study was conducted on a trial basis five times in three different schools between the fall of 1987 and the spring of 1990. These experiences gave the researcher knowledge of how to improve workshop design, content, and assessment prior to conducting the workshop to collect data for this research paper.

One of the first insights gained from workshop trials was that it was possible to teach many age and ability levels together at the same time using predictable pattern books and holistic read-aloud techniques. The books and the techniques proved to be easy to use for even the youngest children and the most disabled adult readers, and yet so enjoyable that older children and adults who were accomplished readers remained engaged. Flyers advertising the workshops stated that parents and children in kindergarten and first grade were invited to attend. However, parents brought younger and older siblings to

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every workshop session. Children as young as two and as old as fifteen attended and participated enthusiastically. Likewise, adults within a wide range of age and reading abilities were accommodated easily. Grandmothers who read with great difficulty and young adults with college training were willing and interested participants.

When the first workshop was planned, parents were given instruction separately at the beginning of each session and children were asked to attend only at the end for supervised reading of the books intended for home practice. This plan was possible when the workshop was held during the school day, but when it was conducted in the evening, children had to be included from the first, since baby-sitting arrangements were not available. In the evening workshops, to accommodate the children, explanations of the techniques were brief and more audience participation was employed. These adjustments strengthened the workshop. Therefore, the researcher decided that separate instruction for parents was not imperative.

From the outset, workshop attendance posed some problems. That is, many parents did not come for all six sessions of the workshop. Therefore, sessions had to be planned so that parents who were absent were not excluded when they returned, and parents who joined the workshop after the first session were able to be full participants. Each session needed to stand on its own and, at the same time, be integrated into the overall workshop program. A number of steps were taken in an attempt to improve
attendance. These included refreshments, door prizes, flyers to advertise each session, personal notes to parents, and attendance charts. The most effective means found to increase attendance was to obtain the cooperation of the teachers and the principal in recruiting parents. Of the three sites where the workshop trials were conducted, the school with the highest rate of attendance was one where the teachers, the library media specialist, and the principal actively sought out parents and attended the sessions themselves.

Although the workshop could be conducted by one person, the support of other school personnel was valuable not just for assistance and recruitment, but also to give parent and child pairs feedback during guided practice, to manage audio-visual equipment, to take attendance and give out door prizes, and to tend to small emergencies. At various times, classroom teachers, parent workers, supervisors, library media specialists, university professors, and parents who previously had attended the workshop assisted the workshop leader.

In selecting instructional materials, once again the special needs of parents and children were considered. Two types of books were employed in the workshop. Attractive trade books were used to illustrate the use of holistic reading techniques and encourage parents to seek additional titles in the library to read to their children. The workshop trials provided an opportunity to learn which stories had the most audience appeal,
and a bibliography of these books was written. Experience from the first workshop indicated that the books intended for home practice must be selected carefully so that they were easy enough for the least able adult reader. To assure the smooth operation of the workshop, multiple copies of the home practice book were needed so that every family could take home a copy with which to practice. These problems were solved by creating small books which were retold versions of traditional tales. The resulting works were reproduced on a photocopier. Writing the home practice books allowed the researcher to have control over the difficulty level of the content, permitted simultaneous guided practice of the book for all workshop participants, facilitated homework checks, and reduced the cost of providing the books to the families.

Perhaps the most important information which surfaced from the workshop trials concerned assessment. By experimenting with video-taping, audio-taping, tests, and interviews, it was learned that interviews were considered by parents in the trial population, which included many low-literates, the least intrusive, the least threatening, and the most acceptable form of assessment. Interviews cannot, of course, provide a measure of reading achievement and do not allow an accurate estimate of the effects of the workshop on a parent's reading skills. However, this disadvantage is outweighed by the fact that the interviews did not alienate parents or discourage them from participating in

\footnote{A bibliography of predictable pattern books appears in appendix F.}
the workshop. In consultation with teachers and others who helped with the workshop, the researcher revised interview questions after each workshop trial. Wording was refined to obtain more precise information, and several questions were either added or eliminated. The trials also provided guidance in the matter of deciding which aspect of student reading skill to assess and how to assess it. Parents did not raise objections to formal testing of their children, and children were not intimidated by the tests. Unlike their parents, the children were available for testing at school, so individual sessions in a non-threatening atmosphere were possible. Several students were selected at random to be tested informally for listening comprehension but formal data collection was not attempted.

Results of Workshop Trials

During the initial workshop trials, data on attendance, home literacy practices, and completion of homework assignments was collected on an informal basis through the use of logs, surveys, and interviews. Some patterns began to emerge regarding the impact of the workshop. For example parents appeared to be more aware of the importance of reading aloud to their children. They were able to demonstrate specifically how to help their children become involved in read-aloud sessions. Parents showed confidence in their ability to help their children prepare to be good readers. Families reported that they were reading to their children more frequently, and that their children were able to attend for longer periods of time when stories were read to them.
Some parents appeared to make gains in their ability to read the homework books fluently. Further, parents and children alike displayed positive attitudes toward reading. The trial results also raised some questions. If children were indeed attending to the reading of a story for longer periods of time, were they also understanding stories better? Were permanent changes in family literacy practices achieved, or were the new practices abandoned after the workshop? These questions led to the formulation of the present investigation.

Summary

Chapter 1 has introduced the topic of intergenerational literacy and suggested the establishment of intergenerational reading workshops to teach parents how to read aloud to their children as a way of intervening to prevent reading failure. The problem of finding alternatives to costly remedial programs was discussed and the research question was stated as follows: Will parent and child participation in an intergenerational workshop in which parents are taught how to use choral reading to read aloud to their children result in improved listening comprehension of stories for at-risk pre-kindergarteners? The three null hypotheses for this investigation will test, immediately after the intervention and again at intervals of eight and twelve weeks, whether there is a significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who were not exposed to this experience.
Terms which will be used in this research were defined and the rationale and purpose of the study was explained. Finally, the workshop trials which resulted in a model for the intervention that was used in this research were described. Chapter II will review the professional literature that supports the conceptual framework for the study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The professional literature provides insight into various aspects of the study of literacy and indicates the place of this investigation in the body of knowledge that has been accumulated about reading. In order to build a conceptual framework for the study, an understanding of reading theory, and theory related to the acquisition of literacy is needed. In addition, an understanding of the whole language approach and its relationship to reading theory, and the impact of home literacy practices on the process of learning to read is necessary. The value of reading aloud, choral reading, predictable pattern books, and repeated readings must be explored, and listening comprehension must be examined as a measure of prereading skill. The factors that place students at risk of reading failure are another facet of the knowledge base for this study. Finally, adult literacy and intergenerational literacy programs must be examined to complete this study's conceptual framework.

Reading Theory
The many models of reading that exist can be grouped under
three theories: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive.¹

Proponents of each of these theories view the reading process from a different perspective. Bottom-up theorists see the text as the main focus of the act of reading, while top-down theorists place the reader at the center of the reading process. Advocates of interactive theory state that the interaction of the reader and the text, from bottom-up and from top-down, goes on simultaneously throughout the reading process.² In recognition of the significance that reading theory holds for the present study, succeeding sections focus on each of the three major categories of reading theory.

**Bottom-up Theories**

Among the most respected of those who have written bottom-up theories are Leonard Bloomfield, Charles C. Fries, and Philip B. Gough. Fundamental to their view is the idea that the reader must respond to the printed text and decode the symbols on the page to arrive at the meaning. Therefore, the first thing the student should be taught is "the printed equivalents for his oral vocabulary."³ In the reading process, letters are organized into words, then words are organized into phrases, phrases into sentences, and sentences into larger units of text. At every


²Ibid.

level—word, phrase, sentence, and text, the reader must retrieve and build meanings.

Sentence meaning is conceived to be the deterministic product of the lower-order levels of analysis and, presumably, the meaning of a text is a concatenation of the meanings of its component sentences.  

Thus, the emphasis in the bottom-up theories is on learning the smaller units of language first in order to understand the larger units, in learning the parts of language in order to understand the whole.  

Several researchers have elaborated on bottom-up theory. Among them are S. Jay Samuels and Jeanne Chall. Samuels proposes a "theory of automatic information processing." According to this model, the learner must master reading subskills at the automatic level and make the integration of these subskills automatic as well in order to become an accomplished reader. Chall calls her "reading-stage scheme" an "instructional theory of reading" and claims that it can "explain some of the similarities and differences among reading process theories."  

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7Ibid., 713.
Chall argues that students go through six stages in learning to read and that each stage has a distinctive "processing style." Thus, the style at Stage 0 (To age 6) is top-down; students engage in pseudo-reading with an emphasis on meaning. However, at Stage 1 (Grades 1-2.5) the style is bottom up; the focus is on decoding skills. At Stage 2 (Grades 2-3), the focus begins to shift again to toward top-down processing, and in Stages 3-5 (Grades 4-13) the major emphasis is on top-down "with secondary emphasis on bottom-up for materials that become very difficult or unclear." Chall became renowned for her defense of instruction based on bottom-up theory as it applies to beginning reading with the publication of Learning to Read: The Great Debate.¹⁰

**Top-Down Theories**

Foremost among top-down theorists is Frank Smith. In contrast to the position of bottom-up theorists, Smith asserts that:

1. Only a small part of the information necessary for reading comprehension comes from the printed page.
2. Comprehension must precede the identification of individual words.
3. Reading is not decoding to spoken language.¹¹

According to Smith, the reader controls the reading process, not the text. The reader does not derive meaning from print; he

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⁹Ibid.


brings meaning to print. Furthermore, he does not read by identifying or sounding out individual words. He "reads for meaning," using the smallest amount of visual information from the printed page necessary to "reduce uncertainty" about the message carried by the print.\(^\text{12}\)

**Interactive Theories**

Kenneth Goodman is perhaps the most renowned of the interactive theorists. His theory recognizes that both the text and the reader interacting with the text are important to the reading process. Goodman states:

[My model] assumes the goal of reading is constructing meaning in response to text. . . . It requires interactive use of grapho-phonetic, syntactic, and semantic cues to construct meaning. My model is thus interactive.\(^\text{13}\)

Goodman explains the implications of his interactive theory in eight principles which are listed in Table 1.\(^\text{14}\)

In his analysis of reading theories, McCormick finds that the interactive theories "offer the most promising approach to the theory of reading today."\(^\text{15}\) He believes that interactive theory incorporates the strongest aspects of the bottom-up and top-down theories and avoids their most apparent weaknesses. Unlike top-down theory, interactive theory generates testable

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 76-79.

\(^{13}\)Kenneth S. Goodman, Letter to the editors, Reading Research Quarterly 16 (1981): 477, quoted in McCormick, Theories of Reading in Dialogue, 23.

\(^{14}\)Ibid.

\(^{15}\)McCormick, 29.
TABLE 1
GOODMAN'S INTERACTIVE THEORY OF READING

PRINCIPLE 1: Reading is the search for meaning.

PRINCIPLE 2: Because all aspects of language (phonology, grammar, lexicon) are interdependent, they should not be taught separately.

PRINCIPLE 3: Because language is a process, it is not possible to divide it up and create a hierarchy of reading skills.

PRINCIPLE 4: Children are "competent language users," and "This competence constitutes their primary resource for learning to read."

PRINCIPLE 5: Children can learn to read in much the same way that they learned to speak.

PRINCIPLE 6: Reading is a "psycholinguistic guessing game" in which the reader samples information, makes predictions, confirms or denies those predictions, and accommodates what he learns as he goes along.

PRINCIPLE 7: Expository and narrative prose each demand different kinds of reading.

PRINCIPLE 8: Prior knowledge brought to the reading task determines how much a child understands of what he reads. Therefore, "Meaning is both input and output in reading."

Additionally, in contrast to bottom-up theory, interactive theory allows for higher-order thinking in connection with the lower-level processes of decoding print and does not insist on the idea that letters must be decoded to sounds.17

Implcations for Instruction

Each of the reading theories that has been discussed has

16Ibid., 30.
17Ibid., 18-19.
been used to justify real-world instructional programs for students. The bottom-up theory first proposed by Bloomfield in the 1930s was the basis for a linguistic approach to the teaching of reading. In this approach, the student is first introduced to words that are spelled regularly. By noticing the patterns in these words, the student learns about letter-sound correspondences, (e.g. the grapheme "at" in "cat", "mat", "rat", and "pat"). Bloomfield believed, in accordance with his theory, that students would automatically comprehend what they were reading because the words they were decoding were already a part of their listening and speaking vocabularies.\textsuperscript{18} Many of the phonics approaches also are based on bottom-up theory. In a bottom-up phonics approach, the student is drilled on letter-sound correspondence. Then he is taught to blend sounds together to make words. An important underlying assumption is that "the meaning of text is accessible only and automatically through the sounds."\textsuperscript{19} A third type of instruction with a bottom-up emphasis is the sight-word approach. In this approach, the student learns the whole word and its meaning first. Then the word is analyzed into its parts. The sight-word approach places more emphasis on comprehension than the phonics approach. However, words are often introduced in isolation, rather than in context, resulting in a bias toward word-level meaning.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18}Chall, 29.

\textsuperscript{19}McCormick, 307.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 308.
Perhaps the clearest example of an approach with a top-down emphasis is language experience. In language experience, the student dictates stories drawn from his own experiences to the teacher. The student then reads the story with the teacher. Copies of the story are reread in several forms. Later, instruction in word analysis proceeds from opportunities suggested by the student's story. This approach exemplifies the top-down emphasis on bringing meaning to the text, and of control of the reading process residing in the reader.\textsuperscript{31}

Since the instructional approach used in this study was inspired by the whole language movement, it seems appropriate to devote some attention to whole language. The whole language movement is guided by several principles, including the ideas that: "(1) Children should have real purposes for reading, writing, speaking and listening. (2) Children should work with whole authentic texts. (3) Good instruction builds on the language, knowledge, and strategies children have been developing since birth. (4) Classroom activities should integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening across the curriculum. (5) Because of their knowledge of and proximity to their students, teachers are the ones best qualified to make the decisions about principles 1-4."\textsuperscript{22} Whereas the theoretical base of whole

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 309.

\textsuperscript{22}Joanne Yatvin, Developing a Whole Language Program for a Whole School (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Reading Association, 1991), 2.
language is interactive theory, as conceived by Goodman, the focus of the whole language approach is on reading whole texts.23 Students study words, phrases, and sentences in the context of a connected discourse which represents a "real" literacy event, rather than a workbook exercise.24 Instead of word recognition skills, students develop strategies for reading. They use the syntactic, semantic and grapho/phonetic cues in the context to interpret print. Sampling, predicting and confirming/correcting strategies enable students to comprehend passages. In addition, the student is taught to bring prior knowledge to bear on the text, and to interact with it in order to construct meaning.25

Whole Language stands in opposition to what Goodman calls the "technology of reading instruction," which has generated basal programs that teach a hierarchy of skills, standardized tests which assess knowledge of isolated pieces of language, and an array of reading materials such as workbooks and ditto masters.26 Whole Language recognizes that learning to read is a cognitive as well as a social process. From this perspective, all children are driven by a need to communicate and to make sense of the world.27 Modern American culture is rich in print

24Ibid., 28.
25McCormick, 309.
26Ibid., 34.
27Ibid.
and surrounds children with ample reasons to employ reading to enrich their lives. For these reasons, learning to read can and should be "easy," provided it occurs within the framework of language that has meaning and purpose for students, in situations where students have a sense of control over and ownership of their learning.  

Theories of Reading Acquisition

Each of the three theories discussed previously,—"bottom-up," "top-down," and "interactive"—describe the reading process itself and posit principles which attempt to explain how children acquire literacy. For example, bottom-up theory suggests that children learn in a linear fashion. Children learn letter names, then the sounds that the letters stand for, then words, phrases and sentences. Therefore, it is assumed that teachers should provide drills and exercises which will help children learn how to decode words and books to read which have been simplified so that they contain only as much of the code as children have mastered. In contrast, top-down theory takes the view that, "Children learn to read only by reading" and therefore teachers should help children to learn to read by, "respond[ing] to what the child is trying to do."  

Interactive theory holds that reading skill is acquired as

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the child discovers for himself the rules of language by interacting with it in meaningful, purposeful ways. Children learn to read by hearing printed material read aloud, by following print with hand and eye as it is read, by reading along with accomplished readers, by "pretend reading," by making connections between illustrations and print, and by experimenting with composing. Children learn by trying out their knowledge of print, making errors, and then correcting those errors as they learn more. Teachers help children learn to read by showing them strategies such as using the cues in the context to help them discern a word, and predicting what will happen next to help construct the meaning of a passage.

Building on interactive theory, the whole language approach rejects the concept of reading readiness which came out of bottom-up theory, and embraces the notion of "emergent literacy," introduced by Marie Clay in 1966.30 If, as bottom-up theorists suggest, students learn in a linear fashion, then they must acquire certain low-level skills before they will be able to attempt more difficult tasks. At some point, they will have learned enough to be "ready" to read. A typical reading readiness program lists competencies for students in at least three areas: social and emotional development, physical development, and cognitive development. Students are expected to demonstrate that they can do such things as completing tasks set

by the teacher, writing their name, identifying and
differentiating sounds, and recognizing likenesses and
differences in shapes, letters, and words.\textsuperscript{31} The implication
is that students who have not demonstrated these competencies are
not ready for reading instruction.

Emergent literacy, as espoused by whole language advocates,
views early language learning in a very different way. Beginning
in infancy, children gradually acquire the skills they will need
to become literate. They do not begin to learn about reading
when they come to school, and there is no definitive moment when
they are "ready" to read. Furthermore, the acquisition of
reading is considered an integral part of learning about the
other language skills,—listening, speaking, and writing.\textsuperscript{32}

Research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s on how children
acquire oral language led some educators, like Don Holdaway in
New Zealand, to examine the ways in which children learn to talk
to find a model for the acquisition of literacy.\textsuperscript{33} In this
respect, he is in agreement with Goodman's interactive model of
the reading process. Goodman states, "Mechanisms which operate
in the acquisition of oral language . . . are available to the
learner as he strives to master literacy."\textsuperscript{34} Holdaway's model

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 70-71.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{33}Don Holdaway, \textit{The Foundations of Literacy} (Sydney,
Australia: Ashton Scholastic, 1975), 21.

\textsuperscript{34}Goodman, "The Reading Process," 158.
of developmental learning includes immersion, emulation, reinforcement of approximations, control of learning by the learner, a risk-free learning environment, and allowances for individual differences in learning patterns. Applied to a program for emergent readers, this model directs the immersion of the student in an environment full of print used in many ways, including books, magazines, signs, labels, and captions. The student is then shown by capable and enthusiastic readers all the ways in which print can be used, among them to inform, to entertain, and to direct. Next, the student is encouraged to try to use the print materials independently. Any approximation of the reading act is reinforced, no matter how distant it is from "correct" reading. Adult readers are available to the learner to provide assistance with reading, but their role is to encourage rather than correct reading behavior. No pressure is put on students to conform to a timetable or a skills list.

In summary, bottom-up theory leads to a view of reading acquisition that emphasizes learning a hierarchy of skills beginning with letter recognition. From top-down theory follows a focus on responding to the beginning reader's attempts to make sense out of written language. Interactive theory, which forms a basis for the concept of emergent literacy, suggests that children learn to read through a series of successive approximations of mature reading behaviors, a process parallel to that of learning to speak.

Holdaway, 23.
Origins of Emergent Literacy

The idea of emergent literacy has many antecedents in the history of educational philosophy. In *Emile*, the famous eighteenth century discourse on the education of children, Jean Jacques Rousseau recommends that children be taught in ways that are appropriate to their developmental stage in life, and that they be allowed freedom to observe, to explore, and to learn on their own from the ages of two to twelve. According to Rousseau, the only formal training during these years should be in reading and writing, and that should be accomplished by making it useful and interesting for the child to learn these arts. In Rousseau's writing is found the idea of giving the child ownership and control over his learning and of fitting instruction to the needs of the child. Emergent literacy incorporates both of these concepts. In a classroom which operates from an emergent literacy perspective, ownership and control over learning are fostered by encouraging children to experiment with writing materials, to play with words, and to choose the books they want to read. Children are given instruction that capitalizes on their discoveries about language, rather than lessons that come from a rigid sequence of skills thought to be appropriate for a particular age group.

Edmund Burke Huey was one of the first to do research in

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37Holdaway, 81.
reading in this century. In his book, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, written in 1908, he describes what he believes to be the "right method" for developing literacy:

Just so, a few years later, he finds that he is in an environment of books, papers, notices, printed language as omnipresent as was the spoken language. All of it has, at first, as little meaning as had the spoken sentences, and his scribbling is as little like writing or printing as his early babble was like speech. But he begins to be interested in these printed and written things, and to imitate; and the steps from this to facile reading and writing are as certain and as natural as were the earlier ones for spoken language.38

Huey's observations and recommendations foreshadow those of emergent literacy advocates like Goodman, Clay, and Holdaway, who, sixty years after Huey, reached many of the same conclusions on the basis of research in the 1960s and 1970s on language acquisition.39

Writing soon after Huey, in 1916, John Dewey recommended a child-centered curriculum in which children learned by manipulating their environment. He believed that the interests of the child should direct the curriculum, and that social interactions were important to nurture learning. Furthermore, he regarded teaching skills for their own sake as a negative practice.40 Like Dewey, the proponents of emergent literacy emphasize the importance of social interaction to learning and

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39Morrow, 42.

40Ibid., 5.
de-emphasizes skill learning.

The work of Jean Piaget had a marked influence on the development of the concept of emergent literacy. His ideas about learning through problem-solving and making children "active participants in their own learning, constantly changing and reorganizing their own knowledge" have been incorporated into the emergent literacy philosophy.41

Another direct influence on the concept of emergent literacy comes from Vygotsky, who theorizes that children learn by imitating and internalizing the behaviors they observe. His notion of a "zone of proximal development" describes how children learn by interacting with adults, who provide guidance, encouragement and support which is gradually withdrawn as children become more competent.42 Emergent literacy includes Vygotsky's ideas on the role of the adult in the education of the young child. Vygotsky's research on the evolution of "inner speech" or verbal thought is part of the basis for the practice of having young children read aloud.43 Adherents of emergent literacy hypothesize that children may go through a stage in which they need to hear themselves read as a precursor to silent reading, paralleling Vygotsky's description of the interiorization process for verbal thought.44

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41Ibid., 8.
42Ibid., 42-43.
Research In Early Literacy

Several areas of research in the field of early literacy have contributed to the emergent literacy model for the acquisition of reading and to the development of whole language practices in the teaching of young children. The acquisition of oral language was the subject of studies by both linguists and educators in the 1960s and the 1970s. Bloom, Brown, Chomsky, Halliday, and others learned that in acquiring speaking skills, children do not simply imitate what they hear. They reconstruct the rules of language for themselves as they experiment with communicating to others.45 The researchers also learned that children are more likely to develop oral fluency when they have many opportunities to interact with adults in an environment that is rich in language than when they (children) are deprived of the stimulation provided by conversation with adults and exposure to multiple and varied language experiences.46

Studies of how children learn to talk prompted some researchers to look for similarities between the acquisition of oracy and the acquisition of literacy. Holdaway, Halliday and Hopkins discovered that there were some parallels. Just as ease in learning to speak is nurtured by a rich oral language environment, children who are surrounded by print materials and

45Ibid.
46Ibid.
are read to regularly are encouraged to learn how to read.\textsuperscript{47}
Durkin, Morrow, Teale, and Wells are among those who have studied
the factors in the home that promote early reading. These four
researchers found that literacy is fostered in homes where there
are many books and other print materials, adults who enjoy
reading to themselves and reading to children, and adults who
talk with children about books and print.\textsuperscript{48} One home factor,
reading aloud to children, was found to be of such significance
that extensive research has been conducted on this topic.
Pioneering work in this field was done by Dolores Durkin. Durkin
determined that all forty-nine of the early readers in her study
had been read to regularly.\textsuperscript{49}

Searching for factors that lead to success in reading,
Wells did a longitudinal study of the literacy development of a
group of children in England. Those who had the greatest success
in school had been read to at home. The highest achieving
student had heard approximately 6,000 stories before entering
school, while the lowest achieving student had not been read to
at all.\textsuperscript{50} In a study involving children in fifteen countries,
Thorndike found that the best readers had been read to since

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47}Holdaway, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{48}Morrow, 25-26.
\item \textsuperscript{49}Dolores Durkin, \textit{Children Who Read Early} (New York:
Teachers College Press, 1966), 54.
\item \textsuperscript{50}Gordon Wells, \textit{The Meaning Makers: Children Learning
Language and Using Language to Learn} (London: Heinemann, 1986),
158.
\end{itemize}
infancy and had parents who respected literacy. Finally, Chomsky found that children who were read to more frequently by more individuals reached higher stages in language development than children who were read to less frequently.

In a related area of investigation, some researchers have asked the question, "How do parents behave when they read aloud to their children?" In seeking an answer to this question, Durkin examined the range of printed material to which children were exposed. In Durkin's study parents read not only books but also package labels, street and truck signs, and billboards. In short, they took advantage of every opportunity available to bring the attention of their children to the printed word and to bring it to life by reading it. Chomsky focused on the kind of books parents selected to read. She learned that some parents read books that contained more complex language and that the children who heard these books were in higher stages of linguistic development than children who listened to books with less complex language. Brzeinski examined what parents did with the materials they chose to read. He determined that children whose parents had simply read to them did as well on

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53Durkin, 32.

54Chomsky, 27.
beginning reading tasks as children whose parents were trained to teach their children to name letters and identify sounds using a workbook.\textsuperscript{55} But other studies indicate that questions and discussion are as important as reading itself.

When parents ask children only superficial questions about stories or don't discuss the stories at all, their children do not achieve as well in reading as the children of parents who ask questions that require thinking and who relate the stories to everyday events.\textsuperscript{56}

However, other researchers have not found such interaction necessary with children in their first years of schooling. Gillam describes a study of the paired reading technique, which involves having parent and child choose a short book which they read aloud simultaneously with no discussion. Children involved in the study made significant gains in reading.\textsuperscript{57}

Strickland and Morrow have summarized much of the research in early literacy in a list of behaviors that appear to enhance storybook reading at home. They are:

questioning, scaffolding (modeling dialogue and responses), praising, offering information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to life experiences.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55}John E. Brzeinski, "Beginning Reading in Denver," \textit{The Reading Teacher} 18 (January 1964), 20.


Another of the questions addressed by studies on reading aloud is, "What do children learn when their parents read to them?" In one study, Chomsky found a strong correlation between reading exposure (number of read-aloud experiences) and language development. In Brzeinski's study, the children who were read to learned about letters and sounds. Heath found that children improved in their ability to comprehend following read-aloud sessions, and that "the experience of listening to, and talking about, stories provides children with the opportunity to learn the importance of attending to events removed from the immediate here and now." Strickland and Morrow indicate that story readings are pleasurable and so build an interest in reading and a desire to read. According to Strickland and Morrow, reading aloud also helps children learn to predict what will happen next, leading to better comprehension of stories. Teale reports that reading aloud to children develops vocabulary and a sense of story structure. Feitelson and Goldstein's study comparing school-oriented families and nonschool-oriented

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59Chomsky, 1.

60Brzeinski, 16.

61Richard C. Anderson et al., eds., Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, Center for the Study of Reading, 1985), 130.

62Dorothy Strickland and Lesley Mandel Morrow, "Interactive Experiences With Storybook Reading," The Reading Teacher 42 (January 1989): 322.

families in Israel determined that reading aloud familiarized children with the style and form of language in books.  

Morrow suggests four goals for children from birth to age seven that can be accomplished by storybook readings:

1. to develop positive attitudes toward reading;
2. to develop concepts about books;
3. to develop comprehension of story;
4. to develop concepts about print.

Choral Reading

The read-aloud experience that is widely advocated among those who espouse a whole language perspective can take many forms. Among those that have gained the most popularity are echo reading, choral reading, paired reading, story retellings, reader's theater, chanting, and mediated reading. Available evidence suggests that the particular type of reading adopted by an adult reading to a child may be dependent upon the adult's purposes, the child's age, interests, and level of language maturity, or the style of writing of the book that has been chosen. Sometimes more than one of these factors play a part in the decision.

In examining various factors associated with reading aloud, it must be recognized that the purpose for reading often dictates the way the reading is done. If the purpose is to enjoy the

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64Dina Feitelson and Zahava Goldstein, "Patterns of Book Ownership and Reading to Young Children in Israeli School-Oriented and Nonschool-Oriented Families," *The Reading Teacher* 39 (May 1986): 929.

65Morrow, 82.
sounds of language, to be entertained by the rhythm of the words or the rhyme, then echo reading, choral reading, or chanting all are appropriate. When the reader wants to highlight particularly vivid characters or dramatic action, reader's theater is a good choice. The reader's voice can convey the strong emotions inherent in a dramatic scene or capture the personality of a dastardly villain. Mediated reading, in which the reader comments, questions, and carries on discussion about the story as he reads, usually has as its purpose the enhancement of comprehension. Paired reading, in which parent and child read together, usually is employed to support young readers as they attempt to read portions of familiar stories on their own. It is one way to bridge into independent reading.

Young children one and two years old have relatively short attention spans, but are beginning to imitate adult behavior more elaborately and respond to rhythm.66 Echo reading, choral reading and chanting are good choices for reading aloud to this age group because these techniques capture and hold their attention and capitalize on their developing ability to imitate words and phrases.67 Children three and four years old have slightly longer attention spans, are beginning to be able to keep time in response to music, are learning to use listening skills, and are beginning to solve problems.68 They, too, enjoy echo

66Ibid., 17.
67Ibid., 55.
68Ibid., 19.
reading, choral reading and chanting. However, three and four-
year-olds are able to sit still long enough to participate in
more mediated reading. Their awareness of personalities and
emotions helps them appreciate reader's theater, a technique
which calls for reading story dialogue in a dramatic fashion, as
in a play. 69 Children five and older are more able to
participate in mediated reading and paired reading as their
language abilities mature. 70

Certain books clearly lend themselves readily to echo
reading, choral reading, and chanting. Among these are books of
poetry, songs that have been transformed into picture books, and
stories with refrains, phrases, or story patterns that are
repeated. Stories filled with interesting dialogue make good
candidates for reader's theater. Longer and more complicated
narratives and informational books call for the use of mediated
reading. Paired reading can be done with any book, but for
younger children a book with a highly predictable pattern should
be chosen.

Taken together, echo reading, choral reading, and chanting
are all techniques often recommended for introducing young
children to reading. In 1908, Huey advised mothers to sing songs
with their children "from the printed page," because children
"learn to read these [songs] readily in this way." 71

69 Ibid., 92.
70 Ibid., 106.
71 Huey, 333.
Strickland and Morrow counsel the use of chanting repetitive phrases in a story as an important interactive storyreading strategy.\footnote{Strickland and Morrow, "Interactive Experiences With Storybook Reading," 323.} Cullinan states that choral reading is appropriate for any age level and comments that, "Very young children unconsciously chime in when you read aloud passages that strike a sympathetic chord."\footnote{Bernice E. Cullinan, Literature and the Child, 2d ed. (San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 79.} Huck recommends choral reading to interest students in poetry.\footnote{Charlotte S. Huck, Children's Literature in the Elementary School, 4th ed., (Fort Worth, Texas: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1987), 451.}

Choral reading, chanting, echo reading, and paired reading, along with the neurological impress method, all share an essential feature which makes them very closely related. In each of these techniques, adult and child read together. In choral reading and chanting parent and child simply read in unison. The other techniques are variations on choral reading. In echo reading and neurological impress, the adult reads slightly faster and louder than the child. In paired reading, adult and child begin by reading in unison, but the adult withdraws as the child indicates his desire to read independently.

Research on choral reading, chanting, and echo reading is limited. However, the universal approval of choral reading by educational experts for home and classroom applications and its spontaneous introduction by children during the read-aloud
experience, indicate that it is a technique popular with teachers and children. Indeed, in their study of bookreading behaviors of infants, Lamme and Packer learned that children as young as twelve to fifteen months like to read rhymes in unison with adults.\textsuperscript{75}

Several studies of the neurological impress approach to reading have been completed. In this remedial technique for older readers, the teacher and the student hold the book together. The teacher sits slightly behind the student so that the teacher's voice can be heard more easily. As the student and teacher read aloud simultaneously, the student follows the words by pointing with a finger. The object is to involve the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, and focus them on reading. Although somewhat limited, available research into this method shows a positive effect on reading comprehension for remedial students in grades three through six.\textsuperscript{76}

Paired reading has been the subject of numerous studies of parents and children in England. With paired readings, the child selects the book and sets the pace for reading. The parent adjusts to the child's rate of reading so that they may read simultaneously. A signal is arranged so that the child can indicate readiness to read independently, and the parent ceases

\textsuperscript{75}Linda Leonard Lamme and Athol B. Packer, "Bookreading Behaviors of Infants," \textit{The Reading Teacher} 39 (February 1986): 508.

reading. If the child makes an error, the parent says the word correctly and resumes reading in unison with the child until the next signal. A five-year paired reading project begun in 1983 in West Yorkshire with a population of 1,200 children yielded gains of "3.5 in Accuracy and 5 times normal in Comprehension."\textsuperscript{77} Other paired reading projects report similar gains in reading accuracy and comprehension.\textsuperscript{78}

Although the accumulated literature offers strong testimony to the widespread use of choral reading, as yet there is no experimental evidence regarding why or how choral reading and its variants (chanting, echo reading, neurological impress, and paired reading) have produced the positive effects claimed by many educators. However, there is reason to believe that practice in choral reading of poetry helps students apply their knowledge of the prosodic features of speech (pitch, stress, and juncture) to oral reading. Attending to prosodic cues appears to help comprehension.\textsuperscript{79} Other researchers have speculated that young children need to hear themselves read in the initial stages of skill acquisition in order to "recode print to speech and decode spoken input to meaning. What is comprehended is the spoken form of language."\textsuperscript{80} Still others have posited the


\textsuperscript{79}Jeannette L. Miccinati, "Using Prosodic Cues to Teach Oral Reading Fluency," \textit{The Reading Teacher} 39 (November 1985): 211.

theory that choral response is successful because it affords
students increased "academic learning time" (ALT). ALT research
shows that students learn more when they are engaged actively in
using instructional materials with which they have a high rate of
success. In summary, apart from some interesting but
unsubstantiated hypotheses about how and why the technique
works, it appears that there is an emotional and social appeal in
choral reading. Holdaway claims that in choral reading we find
the remnants of the powerful oral tradition through which people
once transmitted all language and culture. Children find
"acceptance and security" in "unison participation in learning
language."

If choral reading is a suitable technique for read-aloud
sessions, then the question arises of which textual materials
should be employed. Predictable pattern books will be discussed
in the next section as one option.

Predictable Pattern Books

Predictable pattern books are suited ideally for choral
reading. They often feature rhythm and rhyme, refrains, or bits
of dialogue which invite children to join in as an adult reads to
them. Several types of patterns are found in these books.

81William L. Heward, Frances H. Courson, and Janani S.
Narayan, "Using Choral Responding to Increase Active Student

82Holdaway, 58.

83Lynn K. Rhodes, "I Can Read! Predictable Books as
Resources for Reading and Writing Instruction," The Reading
Teacher 34 (February 1981): 512.
One type is the simple repetition of a story element. Brown Bear, Brown Bear by Bill Martin⁸⁴ is such a book. On every other page, a succession of animal characters is asked what they see, using the same wording for the question each time. Alternate pages provide the answer to the question. A second type of pattern is cumulative. The traditional rhyming tale, The House That Jack Built, has a cumulative pattern that begins with a rat and adds a cat, a dog, and numerous people until it builds the complete story. Other books draw on familiar sequences. Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar⁸⁵ uses the days of the week to structure the story. Rhymes like those in John Longstaff's Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go⁸⁶ constitute still another sort of pattern. The Gingerbread Man has a memorable refrain, and The Three Little Pigs has delightful repetitive dialogue. A closer examination of these books makes it apparent that many of them contain more than one type of patterning. In The Three Little Pigs, for instance, the repetitive dialogue contains both rhyme and a strong rhythmic pattern. In addition, it has two repeated episode patterns (Each pig builds a house; the wolf visits each of the three pigs in turn.). Heald-Taylor has devised a rating system that judges books on the number of


predictable attributes they have. She lists limited text per page, repeated pattern, refrain, strong rhythm, and supportive illustrations. Books with four or more of these attributes she labels "very predictable." 

Because their predictability allows easy access to the language, patterned books provide a successful first experience with reading that is enjoyable. Predictable text also develops listening skills, as children must listen attentively in order to be able to join in the reading. Children can learn to use prediction strategies with patterned books. Tompkins and Webeler describe a three-part prediction cycle based on Goodman's model of reading in which children take a sample of the story and predict on the basis of that sample, then confirm or correct their prediction.

A study comparing predictable materials and preprimers found that predictable materials were a better vehicle for teaching beginning sight words. But perhaps the most important reason for using patterned books is that they are easy for children to understand. As Goodman says, "Predictability is

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88Morrow, 111.


the real measure of how hard a text is for a particular reader. The more predictable, the easier."\textsuperscript{91}

Repeated Readings

Because predictable pattern books help make reading enjoyable, they encourage the practice of repeated readings.\textsuperscript{92} There is considerable research evidence that reading books to children repeatedly improves their comprehension of the books. For example, in Morrow's study, two groups of four-year-olds were compared. One group listened to three readings each of three stories. The other group listened to a different story at each of nine sessions. The repeated-readings group made more responses to the stories and their responses were more sophisticated than those of the other group.

[They] . . . began to predict outcomes and make associations and elaborative comments . . . to narrate stories . . . and to focus on elements of print, asking names of letters and words.\textsuperscript{93}

When Hoffman recorded the responses of a three-year-old who listened to the same book eleven times in ten days, she found that later responses showed a greater understanding of the text.\textsuperscript{94} Martinez and Roser discovered that preschoolers

\textsuperscript{91}Goodman, What's Whole in Whole Language?, 40.


\textsuperscript{93}Morrow, 112.

increased the number of responses and gave responses that showed greater insight after several rereadings of the same story.\textsuperscript{95} Lastly, Yaden reported that repeated readings resulted in a shift from questions about illustrations to questions about word meaning and story events. He concluded that understanding of a story grows gradually in small steps and is aided by listening to favorite books over and over again.\textsuperscript{96}

In summary, research has revealed the contributions to comprehension of prosodic cues and academic learning time in connection with choral reading, the easy access to language provided by predictable pattern books, and evidence that repeated readings aid understanding of text. Combining the use of predictable pattern books with repeated choral readings might be a way to improve listening comprehension for young children.

**Listening Comprehension**

The purpose of this study is to examine a program designed to prevent reading failure by giving young, at-risk students better preparation for reading through a workshop that teaches parents how to read aloud to their children. The measure of the effects of reading aloud to children in this study will be listening comprehension. Therefore, the relationship of

\textsuperscript{95}Miriam Martinez and Nancy Roser, "Read It Again: The Value of Repeated Readings During Storytime," \textit{The Reading Teacher} 38 (April 1985): 786.

\textsuperscript{96}David Yaden, "Understanding Stories Through Repeated Read-Alouds: How Many Does It Take?," \textit{The Reading Teacher} 41 (February 1988): 558-60.
listening comprehension to reading, and especially reading comprehension will be discussed.

While there is little if any empirical evidence that listening comprehension leads to reading comprehension, the two clearly are related. Oral language comprehension skills precede reading comprehension and facilitate learning to read. Some experts have said that oral and written language comprehension are essentially the same process. According to this view, reading is a matter of decoding written symbols into sounds which can then be comprehended as though they were speech. An alternate view is that although listening and reading comprehension share some characteristics, there are significant differences. Listening and reading are both receptive processes, in contrast to speaking and writing, which are generative processes. Other important similarities involve the thinking skills required in both listening and reading. In ten of the twelve studies surveyed by Jenkins and Pany, reading improved following training in listening to recall events, ideas, and details, to predict outcomes, draw conclusions or inferences


98Ibid.

99Ibid.

or follow directions.\textsuperscript{101} In addition, the ability to structure the information that is received in a way that is meaningful to the receiver is crucial to any sort of language comprehension.\textsuperscript{102}

The differences between listening and reading comprehension are as important as their similarities. Listening and reading comprehension differ in the modality employed. In listening the message is spoken; in reading it is written. Spoken language contains prosodic cues such as stress, pauses, and intonation, but written language has fewer aids to meaning of this kind. Punctuation performs some of the functions of prosodic cues but does not reflect all the nuances possible with speech.\textsuperscript{103} In listening to speech, interaction is possible between the speaker and the listener, communication often is directed at the listener, and speaker and listener share a spatial and temporal context. The physical presence of the partners in a speaking-listening exchange makes possible a series of cues, including gestures and facial expressions, which are not available in a writing-reading situation.\textsuperscript{104} In oral and written communication, there are also marked differences in the topic of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{101}Rubin, 429, citing Joseph Jenkins and Darlene Pany, "Teaching Comprehension in the Middle Grades: Instruction and Research," (Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois at Urbana, 1977).
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 429.
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 415.
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\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., 416-17.
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the message, its structure, and its function. The topic in oral conversation is likely to be one that is thoroughly familiar to the participants, while reading often introduces ideas, characters and situations the reader does not encounter in real life. The structure of written language is usually more abstract and complex than oral language. Finally, the functions of the oral conversation of children are usually:

- to persuade, to obtain information, to express some emotion, or to acquire some object or action. . . . Stories, on the other hand, often have as their function to describe, to entertain, to excite, or to evoke.105

Rubin's review of the research on the relationship between oral and written language comprehension reveals that the distinctions between the two processes are not well understood by many experimenters. Accordingly, the research in this area is characterized as inconclusive:

If any conclusion is supported, it is that certain aspects of oral comprehension may be prerequisites for reading comprehension; that is, certain shared skills that facilitate both types of comprehension can be tested in certain listening situations and used as predictors for certain reading situations.106

The literature describing the relationship between listening and reading comprehension suggests some areas for further inquiry, such as identifying, through empirical research, how reading aloud to children leads to successful reading. Reading aloud may be effective as a strategy to prepare children to read because it represents a bridge between oral and written

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105Ibid., 421-24.
106Ibid., 427.
language. The reader presents the written message in the oral mode, providing the prosodic and context-sensitive cues missing in printed language and interpreting its unfamiliar function, topic, and structure. Some of the research on mediated reading points to such a conclusion.

Improved listening comprehension appears to be one of the most important benefits of reading aloud to children. Morrow lists comprehension of story as one of the four primary goals for developing literacy in the first seven years of a child's life. Holdaway names listening comprehension as one of the components of a "literacy set" or "a complex range of attitudes, concepts and skills predisposing them [children] to literacy." Most important of all, Teale, Hiebert, and Chittenden identify listening comprehension as the foundation for reading comprehension, which is the ultimate purpose of reading. As a group of the foremost researchers in the field of reading conclude: "The ability to read with understanding is an essential skill in modern society."

Because reading comprehension is vital for full participation in today's world, the number of children from low-

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107Morrow, 82.

108Holdaway, 49.


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income families who are not able to read well is alarming to contemplate. In the next section, there will be a discussion of factors that contribute to the high failure rate for children from low socio-economic status families.

Factors Which Put Students At Risk of Failure in Reading

The children of the poor are at greater risk of failure in school than any other group. Don Davies, president of the Institute for Responsive Education, says that these high rates of failure amount to a major national crisis—a social, economic, and political peril of great importance.\textsuperscript{111}

The Children's Defense Fund's 1986 report stated that the dropout rate for children from poor families was 40 percent or more in many major cities, a figure that was three or four times that for children from more affluent households.\textsuperscript{112} Moreover, great numbers of these children are not able to find jobs once they drop out of school. The employment rate for minority teenagers, as of November, 1985, was half that for white youths.\textsuperscript{113}

Why are children raised in poverty more likely than others

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111}Don Davies, "Poor Parents, Teachers, and the Schools: Comments about Practice, Policy, and Research," (San Francisco, California: American Educational Research Association, 1989), 3, photocopied.
  \item \textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 88.
\end{itemize}
to fail in school? A multitude of factors serve to explain what places these children at risk. Ernest Boyer believes that malnutrition may be one cause of school failure. He refers to medical research which has found that children who are malnourished, particularly during gestation and the first year of life, may suffer brain damage. Boyer cites a Louisiana study which found that poor children who received food supplements for one year beginning at birth and whose mothers had received nutritional support during pregnancy performed better in school than children who had not been given such help.\textsuperscript{114}

While Boyer believes that there may be physical causes for school failure among the poor, others find explanations in psychology, in the hierarchy of needs theory. This theory holds that students will not be motivated to focus on such matters as learning unless more basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing are met.\textsuperscript{115} A Children's Defense Fund report states that many families in poor urban neighborhoods spend almost all of their energy on survival.

Thus, virtually every family on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) faces a daily struggle to meet its children's basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter with minimal government support. Families survive day-to-day, often falling behind on rent or utility payments, turning to charity providers for food at the end of the month, rarely buying even used clothing, and trying to get small school fees waived. Surviving on AFDC is itself virtually a full-time job.\textsuperscript{116}


\textsuperscript{116}Children's Defense Fund, 142.
Yet another factor is discussed by Hunter and Harmon in their report to the Ford Foundation on adult illiteracy. They state that in our cities is a group they call the "hard-core stationary poor" who have given up hope that anything they do will change their lives. They were unsuccessful in school and do not believe that schooling would help them improve their lot in life. They feel betrayed by social institutions--public schools, the welfare system, the courts--because of negative experiences with them.\textsuperscript{117} These are people who are unlikely to come to school or to help their children at home with school-related tasks like reading.

Hunter and Harman see one segment of the low-income population succumbing to alienation and despair, but two anthropologists, John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham, have identified another attitude that they believe leads to school failure among poor African-Americans. In their study of African-American high school students, Ogbu and Fordham learned that the students considered behaviors like speaking standard English, getting good grades and being on time "acting white."\textsuperscript{118} The students were under pressure from their peers to reject "white" behaviors. Ogbu and Fordham theorize that, for these students, "the underlying issue is one of racial identity."\textsuperscript{119}


\textsuperscript{118}Donald Kimelman, "Do Some Blacks Reject Schooling as 'Acting White?' \textit{The Philadelphia Inquirer}, 6 March 1990, 13(A).

displayed by the students were typical for members of "subordinate minorities" who feel there is no hope for full acceptance by the dominant racial majority.\textsuperscript{120}

Believing that family involvement is linked with academic success for children, Davies undertook a cross-cultural study of the relationships between low-income parents and the schools. The results were similar in all of the three countries where the study was conducted, the United States, Great Britain and Portugal. Little contact transpired between parents and teachers, and when communication did occur, it was usually negative. Teachers had low estimations of the ability of parents to make contributions to the education of their children. Families were interested in helping their children, but did not feel capable of effective involvement in the educational process.\textsuperscript{121} Davies' findings were confirmed by others who concluded that low-income parents were willing to participate in the education of their children but lacked the knowledge and the confidence to do so.\textsuperscript{122}

Studies of home literacy practices conducted in various countries share several common elements. Researchers in England, Israel, and the United States found that literacy practices in the home were correlated with school achievement. In England, a

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121}Davies, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{122}Jo Mortimore and Tessa Blackstone, Disadvantage and Education (Aldershot, England: Gower, 1982), 51.
survey conducted in the 1970s by Newson and Newson found that low-income families were less likely to own books, read to their children, and belong to libraries than middle class families. A child from a poor family was "four times more likely to be a poor reader at age 7 than the child of a professional."\textsuperscript{123} In Israel, where the schools must absorb large numbers of immigrants from Africa and the Near East, Feitelson and Goldstein conducted interviews with 102 families of kindergarten students in two neighborhoods, one where the children "tend to do well in school" and one where children "do poorly." Detailed, standardized protocols were used and families were asked to show the researchers the books they owned. This study found that poor families owned fewer books (sixty-one percent had no books for their kindergarten aged children), read to their children infrequently if at all, and regarded books as materials to be purchased and used only in connection with schooling. As in England, children in these families tended to do less well in school than children from middle class families who owned many books, were read to frequently, and were exposed to books at an early age.\textsuperscript{124} Walberg reported that, in the United States, programs which promoted practices in the home like reading and discussing books and conversations between parent and child about everyday events have had a positive effect on school achievement.


\textsuperscript{124}Feitelson and Goldstein, 926-927.
He cites twenty-nine different controlled studies in which "91% of the comparisons favored children in programs designed to improve the learning environment of the home over children not participating in such programs." ¹²⁵

Walberg also found, in his synthesis of "2,575 empirical studies"¹²⁶ which examined the influence of parental involvement on academic learning, that the home learning environment was twice as important as socio-economic status in predicting academic achievement.¹²⁷ Therefore, poverty is not inevitably linked with school failure. Many low-income families provide their children with excellent literacy-related experiences. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines made this point vividly in their six-year-long ethnographic study of inner-city families whose children were achieving well in school. In the words of the researchers, the children in their study were "active participants and interpreters in a social world in which texts are written and read."¹²⁸

As the preceding review suggests, it is likely that no single factor can provide a full explanation for the high rate of school failure among the children of the poor. However, educators need to be informed about the physical, social, and

¹²⁵Walberg, 400.

¹²⁶Ibid, 398.

¹²⁷Ibid., 400.

psychological components of this problem. For this reason, the theories advanced in the literature that relate to multiple factor analysis need to be considered. Educators may be able to address some issues such as malnutrition and social injustice only indirectly. However, they can work to improve home-school communication and to build programs which capitalize on the willingness of low-income families to help their children succeed in school. As Walberg's summary of the research suggests, teachers may even be able to help families learn to create home learning conditions which foster literacy and school achievement.

**Adult Literacy**

Still another factor associated with students who are at risk of failure in school is the reading skill of their parents, and especially their mothers. The 1985 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress states that level of parent education is an important element in the prediction of their children's reading proficiency.129 Toward a More Perfect Union, written for the Ford Foundation in 1988, asserts that

Because of this intergenerational effect of the parents' education on the child's it is unlikely that we will be able to make a major difference for the child unless we place equal priority on education and academic remediation for the parent.130

Unfortunately, our understanding of effective adult literacy instruction is limited. Because so little is known

129Somerfield, 2.
130Ibid.
about how adults learn to read, educators have attempted to extrapolate from research on children's literacy development, "with disastrous effects."\textsuperscript{131} With insufficient research in the field, there has been no framework for the logical development of reading programs for adults. Instead, according to Nickse, adult education has been "a cottage industry, with no strong research base."\textsuperscript{132} Furthermore, Sticht claims that adult literacy skills have been misidentified and adult styles of learning ignored.\textsuperscript{133}

Adult learners have a number of characteristics which distinguish them from younger students. They are independent and self-directed, possess many past experiences which have shaped their identities, are interested in learning that can be applied immediately in practical situations, and are motivated to learn by the demands placed upon them by their roles in society as parents, workers, members of church groups, and the like.\textsuperscript{134} Perhaps it is the adult's motivation to learn which accounts for the encouraging evidence found by some researchers that intergenerational and family programs retain adult students


\textsuperscript{132}Nickse, p.9

\textsuperscript{133}Sticht, 68.

\textsuperscript{134}Eunice Shaed Newton, "Andragogy: Understanding the Adult as a Learner," in Reading and the Adult Learner, Laura S. Johnson, ed. (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1980), p. 3-4.
longer than some traditional adult literacy programs, thus increasing their chances of becoming proficient readers.\textsuperscript{135}

Though the parent's level of education is associated with the child's success in school, no causal interactive link has been established. In fact, even parents with limited reading ability can do many things to help their children both before and during schooling.\textsuperscript{136}

### Parental Involvement

Currently there is widespread support in the educational community for parent involvement. Teachers are offered numerous suggestions in the literature on ways to include parents in the education of their children.\textsuperscript{137} Epstein has identified five major types of parent involvement:

1. Positive home conditions that support school learning;
2. Clear and frequent home-school communication;
3. Volunteer assistance from parents for school-based activities;
4. Home learning activities coordinated with the children's class work;
5. Parent participation in decision-making about school issues, problems, and programs.\textsuperscript{138}

In more than ten years of research on family-school


\textsuperscript{137}France and Meeks, 223-24.

connections, Epstein has studied each of these different types of parent involvement and has concluded that schools should sponsor more of:

the type of involvement parents want most: how to work with their own child at home in ways that help the student succeed and that keep the parents as partners in their children's education across the grades.\textsuperscript{139}

According to Epstein, teachers can increase the amount of parent involvement, even among parents who have little education. Epstein compared teachers who were active in seeking parental support with those who were not. Differences in parent reports of their involvement in learning activities at home were significant only in classrooms of teachers who failed to show leadership in parent involvement. Epstein concluded that teachers who got parents involved "mitigated the disadvantages typically associated with race, social class, and level of education."\textsuperscript{140}

In 1984, Vukelich reviewed the professional literature to find the most common suggestions for parent involvement in reading. The most frequent recommendation to parents was that they read to their children. This was mentioned in twenty-two of the twenty-four sources consulted. Other suggestions included modeling literate behavior, providing the materials and creating a good atmosphere for reading, and taking advantage of

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid.

opportunities to read during day-to-day activities (signs, labels, recipes, instructions).\textsuperscript{141} The accumulated evidence on adult literacy and parent involvement suggests that programs are needed to help all parents, including those with limited reading skills, learn how to assist their children with reading.

\textbf{Intergenerational Programs}

Although making specific suggestions to parents about how to get involved is worthwhile, in many cases it is not sufficient to bring about a change in their behavior. In the U.S. Department of Education's booklet \textit{What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning}, the problem is stated very clearly:

Most parents want to be involved with their children's schoolwork but are unsure of what to do or how to do it. Many say they would welcome more guidance and ideas from teachers.\textsuperscript{142}

Intergenerational literacy programs are one way to give parents the specific help they require. Most programs are fashioned to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged parents and children. They are predicated on the assumption that parents have great influence on the literacy development of their children and that parents should be given instruction on how to foster literacy in settings where parent and child can learn together. Intergenerational programs are particularly beneficial for parents who are low-literates, and who may be able to improve


\textsuperscript{142}Finn, 19.
their own reading skills as they help their children learn about reading.\textsuperscript{143}

Intergenerational literacy programs also are identified as family literacy programs by some educators. Both terms are new, as are the efforts they represent. Among the first programs reported in the literature was The Family Learning Center in Massachusetts, in 1985.\textsuperscript{144} In a paper commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and completed in March, 1989, Nickse admits that because family literacy programs have sprung up quickly in many different localities with no attempt at coordination of efforts, the number of programs in existence is unknown. Nickse identifies the need for a national clearinghouse on intergenerational and family literacy.\textsuperscript{145} In the spring of 1990, The National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky began a survey of intergenerational and family literacy programs which will form the data base for:

- a Clearinghouse to assist in program development, to provide information and technical assistance, to organize staff development institutes and workshops, and to provide regular support through a newsletter.\textsuperscript{146}

Beginning in 1985, the federal government enacted

\textsuperscript{143}Nickse, 4.


\textsuperscript{145}Nickse, 5.

\textsuperscript{146}"Survey and Information Form, Intergenerational Literacy Programs," (Louisville, Kentucky: The National Center for Family Literacy, 1990), photocopied.
several legislative initiatives in support of intergenerational and family literacy: The Family English Literacy Program under the Office of Minority Education and Bilingual Languages Affairs (Title VII), library literacy programs sponsored through the Federal Libraries Service and Construction Act (Titles I and VI), family literacy programs supported through the Adult Education Act, Section #310 Special Projects, and Even Start programs under the Elementary and Secondary Act (Title I).\textsuperscript{147}

Private organizations at the national level also have begun to fund intergenerational literacy programs. Among these are SER, Inc., a group serving the needs of Hispanic people, and The Kenan Trust Literacy Project. In the planning process are programs to be sponsored by The American Bar Association and the American Association of Retired People.\textsuperscript{148} Further, the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy was established as March of 1989. Since then, more than one million dollars in start-up funding has been pledged by corporations, foundations, and individual donors. The Barbara Bush Foundation will not operate programs, but will make grants for program initiation and development.\textsuperscript{149}

A number of state and local programs predate national efforts and were developed by schools, universities, and service

\textsuperscript{147}Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{148}Ibid., 5.

organizations which recognized the need to educate the whole family rather than either parents or children separately. Among these are the Home Instruction Program (HIPPY), the Intergenerational Literacy Program of the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Pennsylvania State University, and Motheread, Inc. The diversity in these programs reflects the disparate populations they serve. HIPPY was developed in 1969 at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel to prepare the children of immigrants to succeed in school. It now exists in six countries, including the United States. The HIPPY program is home-based. A trained paraprofessional works with a pre-school child and his parents for two years. The second year is the child's first year in kindergarten. Weekly lessons concentrate on language, discrimination skills, and problem solving. In the language component, parents are taught how to read storybooks to their children and ask questions about story content, vocabulary, and concepts related to the story.

The Intergenerational Literacy Program at Pennsylvania State University is used with the parents of Chapter I students. Parents are invited to use computer courseware to improve their own reading skills. They work in a variety of settings,

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150 Somerfield, 36.


152 Mary Franklin, "Intergenerational Literacy Projects" (Russellville, Arkansas: The Reading Center, 1988), photocopied.

153 Somerfield, 36-37.
including classrooms, offices, the teacher's home, and the parent's home. The children are not involved directly in the program. However, positive spill-over effects are seen in increased school attendance and improved behavior in school.\textsuperscript{154}

In yet another program, located in Raleigh, North Carolina, women prisoners and their children are the target population. This program, called Motheread, gives women with marginal reading skills instruction in reading through children's literature. The goal is to enable the women to read storybooks to their children.\textsuperscript{155} In contrast to the narrow sphere of influence of Motheread, parents from every sector of the community are involved in the Parent/Child Workshop in Middle County Public Library, Centereach, New York. Parents and children come to the library to learn about library services and materials and to discover the pleasure to be found in reading. The workshop encourages social and verbal interaction between parent and child and between children. It also stresses the importance of daily family read-aloud sessions.\textsuperscript{156}

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania sponsors the Read Together Program for the children of parents or grandparents who are enrolled in adult literacy programs.

\textsuperscript{154} Maclay, 4.

\textsuperscript{155} Franklin, p.2.

Individual read-aloud sessions conducted by volunteers are provided at various branches of the public library. The program is limited to children aged two to ten.157

In an attempt to bring some understanding to the structure and purpose of the many different kinds of efforts which have been grouped in the general category of intergenerational programs, Nickse has developed a typology which classifies intergenerational programs according to the type of intervention used by program leaders and the type of participant (parents; children). The literature has borne out the fact that programs vary widely in the way they approach family literacy. Some programs target parents, believing that adults who themselves have good literacy skills will realize their value and become transmitters of literacy to their children. Other programs emphasize the child. Parents may gain some reading skill in the process of helping their children, but the primary goal is to improve the child's achievement in school. The instruction employed in these programs ranges from very informal sessions in which the purpose is learning to read for enjoyment, to highly structured courses of study in which parents earn a high school equivalency diploma and children graduate from a well-planned pre-school program. Still another issue which defines programs is whether or not parents and children are present in the same setting during any or all of the literacy intervention. Nickse

calls the family component "abstract" when the parents are taught separately about reading; "concrete" when parents and children read together on site during the intervention.\textsuperscript{158}

Nickse's four types of intergenerational programs are:

1. **Direct Adults-Direct Children** - Both parents and children are directly involved in a formal instructional program. The goal is to improve the literacy skills of both groups.

2. **Indirect Adults-Indirect Children** - Reading for enjoyment is emphasized in an informal program with little or no direct literacy instruction. Parents and children participate together, and the goal is to help both groups develop better attitudes and literacy-related practices.

3. **Direct Adults-Indirect Children** - Literacy instruction is targeted at parents. Children participate occasionally or not at all. The goal is to improve the literacy skills of the parents who will in turn transmit these skills to their children.

4. **Indirect Adults-Direct Children** - Children are given direct literacy instruction. Their parents are taught how to help enhance student learning at home. Parents may benefit indirectly by improving their own reading as they help their children. However, the primary goal is to help the child succeed in school.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{158}Nickse, 29.

\textsuperscript{159}Nickse, 32-33.
According to Nickse,\textsuperscript{160} each type of intergenerational program has characteristics which may fill the requirements of particular groups or settings but not others. For example, a Direct Adult-Direct Children program like The Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project benefits non-working parents and pre-school children. Parents earn a high school equivalency diploma, and are given job opportunities. Children attend pre-school classes in which they gain pre-literacy skills. However, this program would not be appropriate for working parents or for parents with infants for whom child care would have to be secured. The Indirect Adults-Indirect Children model seems to work best with parents who already have good reading skills, since direct literacy instruction is not provided. Library programs like The Parent/Child Workshop in Centereach, New York serve the needs of a broad spectrum of the community who benefit from guidance in enhancing home literacy practices. Programs in the Direct Adults-Indirect Children category can focus on adult literacy instruction without the distraction of having to teach the child as well. The Intergenerational Program at Pennsylvania State University, for instance, allows individual parents to proceed at their own pace through a series of lessons that help some participants gain more than one year in reading level in only twenty hours of instructional time. However, the benefits

\textsuperscript{160}Ibid., 33.
to children seem to be incidental and by no means assured. According to Nickse,\textsuperscript{161} a program of this type seems appropriate when separate instruction for children is already well-established and sound. The Read Together Program is an example of an Indirect Adults-Direct Children program. A focus on student literacy usually operates best in a situation where the literacy needs of adults are minimal or are already being addressed separately.\textsuperscript{162}

The Indirect Adults-Direct Children model often is used in pre-schools and elementary schools. In these settings, the program is aided by the fact that student attendance is compulsory and instructional methods and goals can be coordinated with those of the school.\textsuperscript{163} Parents may be persuaded to attend if they perceive that the program will help their children achieve in school. Costs may be reduced if the school building and personnel are employed and the program is considered part of the school's mission. In larger school systems, it is possible to link the program with an adult literacy class offered through the schools, so that parents with serious reading problems can receive additional help. Moreover, schools could be in a position to coordinate assistance to families that find themselves in distress because parents are illiterate. School counselors, psychologists, and social workers have established

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., 32.

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 32-33.

\textsuperscript{163}Ibid.

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connections with community agencies which could bring their resources to bear on family problems.

Family literacy education is still a new field. According to Nickse, many programs have been initiated by individuals or groups who have proceeded on a "trial and error" basis. Nickse cites the need for programs with a conceptual and philosophical base.\textsuperscript{164} She also suggests that there has been little research on intergenerational programs to "substantiate their worth."\textsuperscript{165} For this reason, there are a number of questions to be answered about such things as appropriate outcome measures for parents and children, cost effectiveness, and criteria for selection of program type for a particular population.\textsuperscript{166} In a monograph by Dickinson,\textsuperscript{167} five hundred programs designed to help parents support the literacy acquisition of their children were reviewed. Dickinson found few programs which served preschoolers and their parents. Recent research on emergent literacy and the importance of the role of parents in fostering literacy development before school would indicate that Dickinson's findings have uncovered a critical gap in program

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., 30.

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., 33.

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{167}Dorothy K. Dickinson, "An Examination of Programs that Involve Parents in Efforts to Support Children's Acquisition of Literacy," Report for the W.T. Grant Foundation, (Worcester, Mass.: Clark University, 1988).
the need for empirical investigations of intergenerational literacy programs, particularly those developed for low-literate parents of pre-schoolers. Such studies could help educators improve program design, which, in current practice, is largely atheoretical and draws on the limited experiences of practitioners rather than research findings. Intergenerational education is new. Most programs are less than ten years old. Therefore, it is valuable to conduct investigations which add to knowledge about which kinds of programs are worthwhile and why they are effective.
development. Finally, Nickse states that there is a need for research that would help us understand how "low literate adults and their children . . . cope with literacy demands," since most family literacy research has focused on "advantaged families."

**Summary**

Intergenerational literacy represents the convergence of several fields of study: emergent literacy and theories of reading acquisition, reading methodology, family literacy and the role of parents in the development of literacy in their children, and adult literacy. The body of research-based knowledge about the development of literacy in adulthood is small. However, much is known about how children learn to read and about the important influence of parents on literacy acquisition. One finding confirmed repeatedly in the literature is that reading aloud to children before they reach school age has a significant bearing on their success in learning to read in school. Listening comprehension appears to be a useful measure of how children benefit from reading aloud. The children of the urban poor are placed at risk of failing to become fully literate members of society because of the circumstances of their lives, which militate against literacy. Intergenerational literacy programs are a means of intervening to assist children in the development of literacy through the help of their parents before they experience failure in school. A review of the research suggests

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168 Morrow, 23.

169 Nickse, 36.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The research design and procedures used to collect data will be discussed in this chapter. Descriptions of the subjects, the setting, measurement instruments, project background, and procedure also will be presented.

Research Design

A pretest-posttest control group design was selected for the study. Campbell and Stanley recommend this design, which, when properly executed, controls for history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, regression, selection, mortality, and interaction effects.\(^1\) Subjects were assigned randomly to the experimental and to the control group using a random numbers table. Differences between the experimental and control group can therefore be attributed to the intervention rather than any of the aforementioned rival explanations for group differences, since an assumption underlying random assignment is that it assures the initial equivalence of the two groups.\(^2\)


\(^2\)Ibid., 15.
Subjects

The children and adults who served as subjects for this study were twenty-four pre-kindergarten students in an inner city school and their parents. Parents of four-year-olds who live in the neighborhood served by the school are invited to enroll their children in the pre-kindergarten program. Before admitting students to pre-kindergarten, the school administers a test of early learning skills, the Brigance Preschool Screen for Three and Four-Year-Old Children, to determine whether the students are at risk of failure in school. Students who score below a pre-determined cut-off score established by the school division are judged to be at risk and in need of educational stimulation and placed in pre-kindergarten.

For purposes of this study, an at-risk kindergarten student will be defined operationally as a four-year-old admitted to the pre-kindergarten program of a public school on the basis of a raw score on the Brigance Preschool Screen for Three and Four-Year-Old Children of eighty or below out of a possible one hundred points.³

In the school where this study took place, pre-kindergarten is offered as a half-day program. Ordinarily, the teacher arbitrarily assigns half of the eligible students to the morning class and the other half to the afternoon class. In order to make it possible to use an experimental design for the study,

³This standard was established by the Department of Instruction, Norfolk Public Schools for all students entering the pre-kindergarten program for the school division.
permission was obtained to assign students randomly to the morning and afternoon classes. There were thirteen students in the morning and thirteen in the afternoon class. The morning class was selected as the experimental group and exposed to the intervention during the months of October and November. Because it was deemed to be unethical to deny any student the opportunity to participate in the workshop, the control group (the afternoon class) was exposed to the intervention in March and April, following the termination of the study.

It should be noted that the pre-kindergarten students and their parents who participated in this study comprise a population with special characteristics. They all are African-Americans, and many of the families live in a government subsidized housing project in an urban neighborhood. Family income levels qualify the students for the school free lunch program. The school in which the pre-kindergarten is housed is a target school, defined by Norfolk Public Schools as a school in which a substantial percentage (seventy-five percent or more) of children qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Parents who elect to enroll their children in pre-kindergarten may be said to have displayed an interest in their children's education, since pre-kindergarten is not required and since parents must personally escort their children to and from school.

Demographic, Income, Housing Data

The City of Norfolk City Planning and Codes Administration supplied the following data for the area served by the school in
this study. Table 2 contains data concerning the number of residents in the area and the age and racial distribution of the population. Table 3 reports on the income of area residents. Table 4 lists characteristics of housing in the neighborhood.

**TABLE 2**

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

| Population (1990 Census) | 2,647 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Distribution (1990 Census)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White 2.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black 97.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian 1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Distribution (1990 Census)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years 11.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years 9.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years 10.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years 9.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years 8.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years 13.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years 9.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years 7.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years 8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years 7.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over 4.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3**

**INCOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected Average Household Income</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>$16,640</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income (1980 Census)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$7,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Projection) 1988</td>
<td>$11,875</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income (Projection)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>$13,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected Per Capita Income</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>$4,993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3—Continued

Projected Income Distribution for 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 - $9,999</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $14,999</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - $24,999</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $34,999</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 +</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4

HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS (1990 CENSUS)

Distribution of Housing Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied Units</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied Units</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Persons Per Housing Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-Occupied</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 - $50,000</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units $48,900

Contract Rent of Renter-Occupied Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rent Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 - $150/month</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150 - $299/month</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300 - $449/month</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$450 - $599/month</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $749/month</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750 or more/month</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Contract Rent $141

School records indicate that 69 percent of the students enrolled...
in the pre-kindergarten classes reside in public housing. The City Planning and Codes Administration estimates that 85 to 90 percent of the families in public housing have a single head of household who is female. The average income for residents is $375 to $390 per month or $4,500 to $44,680 per year. Housing regulations require that a third of that income be paid in rent.

Educational Background of Parents

In an interview conducted before the workshop, parents were asked, "What was the last grade you attended in school?" Table 5 below lists the self-reported educational level of parents in the experimental and control groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
<th>SELF-REPORTED EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gr. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents also were asked to estimate the number of books they had in their homes. Table 6 reports the number of books for

⁴The number of parents reporting some college education may be affected by the fact that a predominantly African-American state supported university is located within walking distance of the neighborhood.
adult use and the number of books for the use of children that the respondents reported owning prior to the beginning of the intervention.

TABLE 6

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BOOKS OWNED PRIOR TO THE INTERVENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books for Adult Use</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for Child's Use</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 7

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES SUBSCRIBING TO MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS PRIOR TO INTERVENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Subscriptions</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Subscriptions</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES USING THE PUBLIC LIBRARY PRIOR TO INTERVENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once A Week Or More</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 reports on the number of families in the
experimental and the control groups which subscribed to magazines and newspapers prior to the intervention. Table 8 reports on use of the public library. This information was obtained in the interviews to provide data indicating the amount of exposure to printed materials students had prior to the intervention.

Setting

The intervention consisted of a workshop for parents and their pre-kindergarten children designed to teach parents how to read aloud to their children. The workshop took place in the pre-kindergarten classroom in an elementary school that serves a poor urban neighborhood. The room was 754 square feet in area. Three circular tables with six chairs and one rectangular table with eight chairs were in the room. Parents sat at the tables with their children. The room was well-lighted with both artificial lights and a wall of windows. In addition to the tables and chairs, it was equipped with a housekeeping corner, a block area, a library center, a computer station, a painting station, a sand table, and a sink.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study, the Listen to the Story section of the Circus, and the Story Structure section of the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy. While the Circus provided objective data on recalling and understanding a story, the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy yielded qualitative information about listening comprehension.
The Listen to the Story section of the Circus (Educational Testing Service, 1976) is intended to be a tool for gathering information about student comprehension, interpretation, and recall of a story read aloud. The test administrator reads a story to the student and then asks questions about the story. The student is presented with a series of pictures. Answers are indicated by pointing to a picture which represents the response chosen by the student.

According to The Eighth Mental Measurements Yearbook (1978), the Circus norms are technically sound and predictive validity is adequate (.60 for the Listen to the Story subtest). No information is listed in the Circus Manual and Technical Report on content validity and no test-retest reliability is reported. In Assessment in Early Childhood Education, Langhorst gives the Circus ratings of "excellent" for norms (norms based on a representative, national sample), "good" for reliability (total r is greater than .80) and "good limited" for validity (strong but limited evidence of the type of validity most appropriate for the intended test use).

The Circus was selected after an extensive review of available instruments. Notwithstanding its limitations, the

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7Beth H. Langhorst, Assessment in Early Childhood Education (Portland, Oreg.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Test Center, 1989): Appendix F.

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Circus provides the best match between the treatment and assessment that was found. Most reading readiness tests measure subskill areas such as auditory and visual discrimination, letter recognition, and vocabulary. It was determined that no other valid and reliable commercially marketed test for four-year-olds provides a more objective assessment of a student's ability to recall and to understand a story. Since the intervention is concerned with story comprehension rather than reading readiness subskills such as letter recognition, the Circus appears to be the most appropriate available objective measurement tool.

The second source of information was observational data collected using the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy (ESI-P). It provided a qualitative measure of listening comprehension that can be compared with the objective data collected with the Circus. The Story Structure section of the ESI-P asks students to retell the story of The Three Bears. Students are rated on the story elements they include in their retellings. In retesting students on the ESI-P, three other stories similar to The Three Bears were used to reduce the likelihood that test results would be contaminated by the student's familiarity with the story. Teale, Heibert, and Chittenden recommend retellings as a promising way to measure comprehension congruent with current reading theory, research, and practice.8 Pikulski states that "[t]here has been a serious over-reliance on formal,

published tests," and advocates holistic measures which emphasize the active role of readers in constructing meaning.9 According to Valencia and Pearson, "the best possible assessment of reading would seem to occur when teachers observe and interact with students."10 The use of an observation measure such as the ESI-P is appropriate in light of current reading theory and research which support the use of informal assessment tools. Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficients for the ESI-P for children ages five to seven range from .75 to .81. The ESI-P manual offers an analysis of test objectives related to early learning as evidence of the content validity of the instrument. Correlation coefficients between Level 1 of the Metropolitan Readiness Tests and the ESI-P range from .31 to .42.11

The researcher developed and pretested an interview protocol for conducting the parent interviews. A semi-structured interview format was used so that the interviewer could probe for additional information when appropriate. The pre-kindergarten teacher and the researcher conducted the interviews. They reviewed proper interview conditions, logistics, and necessary controls and safeguards. The teacher and the researcher then studied the interview questions and conducted practice


interviews. Corrective feedback was monitored and adjustments were made in order to reach an acceptable level of objectivity and reliability as defined by the researcher. A copy of the interview schedule appears in Appendix C.

**Procedure**

Before the intervention was initiated, certain changes prompted by the workshop trials were made in the formulation of the workshop. First, the population was narrowed to pre-kindergarten students and their parents so that the effects on one group could be studied. Second, one read-aloud technique, choral reading, was chosen so the effects of learning this technique could be studied. Third, because of the problems inherent in self-reporting, a three-pronged check on home practice was adopted: audio-tapes, parent logs, and interviews. Fourth, in order to avoid the problems encountered in testing parents, conventional measurement procedures were rejected in favor of parent interviews, interview protocols were developed and revised, and training of interviewers was conducted. Fifth, as mentioned previously, two tests of listening comprehension were selected for students, the *Circus, Listen to the Story* and the *Early School Inventory-Preliteracy*.

After the appropriate alterations in the intervention were completed, an abstract of this study and a copy of the parent consent form were submitted to the Human Subjects Committee of Old Dominion University and granted approval on April 12, 1990. The Norfolk Public Schools Department of Research, Testing, and
Statistics, The Department of Special Projects, which oversees the pre-kindergarten program for the school system, the building principal, and the classroom teacher all were consulted and their approval of the project was gained prior to the initiation of the study.

One week before the first workshop session, parents of all the pre-kindergarten students were contacted and their consent to participate in the study was secured. The parents in the experimental group were invited to an orientation meeting to explain how the parent-child workshop would be conducted. The week before the first workshop session, the pre-kindergarten teacher administered a standardized test of listening comprehension, the Circus. A story retelling checklist, the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy (ESI-P), was administered by the pre-kindergarten teacher, the researcher, and the school librarian. Listening comprehension was defined operationally as those skills measured by the Circus and the ESI-P. The Circus assesses a student's ability to understand the gist of a story and to remember specific details which support the main idea. The ESI-P assesses the ability to retell a familiar story using the conventional elements found in a simple narrative to determine if the student has acquired a concept of story.

Parents kept logs of their home practice reading sessions. In addition, each parent was provided with a tape recorder, and tapes of the home practice reading sessions were collected each week. As a third measure of home practice, two parents, selected...
at random, were interviewed after each meeting of the workshop. These three measures—logs, tapes, and interviews—provided a reliability check of the data collected on participation in home practice during the six-week workshop. Parent interviews conducted by the researcher before and after the intervention provided information otherwise not available on the extent of the workshop's impact on literacy practices in the home.

The intervention was an intergenerational workshop for parents and pre-kindergarten students in a public elementary school which serves a poor urban neighborhood. The workshop was conducted over a period of six weeks by the researcher, who designed the workshop. Parents and their children attended workshop meetings once a week. Each session was forty-five minutes long. Sessions took place in the pre-kindergarten classroom of the school between 11:30 a.m., when parents normally arrive to take their children home, and 12:15 p.m. A minimum of two library books were read to parents and children by the workshop leader to model the choral reading technique they would use at home that week. Then, the workshop leader read the home practice book aloud, modeling choral reading once more. Finally, each parent and child pair was given a copy of the home practice book and was supervised in reading the book by the workshop leader and the pre-kindergarten teacher. A outline of a workshop session appears in Appendix F.

Student participation characterizes the choral reading technique selected for use in the workshop. Students do not just
listen as their parents read; they engage in "reading along with" their parents. This gives children the opportunity to experience what it is like to read fluently as an accomplished reader.

In choral reading, the parent and the child read aloud in unison. The parent leads the child with his/her voice. The child is, in actuality, echoing each word as it is read. In early attempts there is a perceptible delay between the pronunciation of the word by the parent and the repetition of that word by the child. With daily home practice sessions of approximately fifteen minutes, the child learns to listen carefully so that he can pronounce the word almost simultaneously with the parent. The child is instructed to point to the words in order to reinforce the connection between the spoken and the printed word.\(^{12}\)

All of the books used in the workshop are predictable pattern books chosen because they have simple story structures and repetitive language which can be understood readily by low-literate adults. A minimum of two such books, selected from the school library collection, are used to introduce the technique. (See Appendix G for a bibliography of predictable pattern books.) The home practice book is a retold version of a traditional tale or an original story written by the researcher. Using stories retold by the researcher allows control over the content, assuring that the stories will be easy enough to be read by every

parent. It also reduces the cost of providing each family with a copy of the book. Multiple copies of the book are printed in order that all members of the workshop can be given guided practice simultaneously in the read-aloud technique being introduced. Additionally, when all workshop members use the same book to practice at home, checking on progress the following week is facilitated.

The following home practice books were employed for the workshop:

Week 1 - The Little Red Hen
Week 2 - The Three Billy Goats Gruff
Week 3 - The Gingerbread Man
Week 4 - The Teeny Tiny Woman
Week 5 - The Three Little Pigs
Week 6 - Everybody's Got to Go Home

Immediately following the end of the sixth session of the workshop, the pre-kindergarten teacher and the researcher, and the school librarian administered the Circus and the ESI-P again as posttests. These same tests were administered again eight and then twelve weeks after the workshop to both the experimental and the control group. The teacher and the researcher hand-scored the tests. A reliability check on scoring of the ESI-P was obtained by having a third person independently score the test, and an interrater reliability coefficient of .86 was obtained.

Structured interviews were conducted with parents in both the experimental and the control groups before and immediately
after the workshop, and at the same time the students were retested eight, and again twelve weeks after the workshop. Before the workshop, parents in the experimental and the control group were questioned concerning their level of educational attainment and the literacy related activities they engaged in with their children. They were also asked what they expected to learn from the workshop and what they expected their children to learn. After the workshop, parents in both groups were asked about literacy related practices in the home. Parents in the experimental group were asked about their reaction to the workshop and their opinion as to the effects of the workshop on home reading practices and the listening comprehension skills of their children. In addition, they were asked to assess the effects of the workshop on their own reading skills.

Throughout this study, the experimental and the control group had the same teacher and the same curriculum. The pre-kindergarten program uses the High/Scope curriculum which is a developmental approach to pre-school education based on Piagetian principals. The curriculum centers around key experiences grouped in eight categories: "active learning, using language, representing experiences and ideas, classification, seriation, number concepts, spatial relations, and time." A classroom library of approximately 200 books was available to the children, and they were encouraged to browse and look at the pictures

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during the daily "center time." The pre-kindergartners had a daily read-aloud session with their teacher, and a weekly visit to the school library-media center during which they each checked out one book to take home to read. The class also participated in the school-wide home reading program, which encourages parents to read to their children at home nightly. Children were rewarded with small tokens, such as bookmarks, when their parents turned in a form listing the books they had read to their child. Clearly, the regular pre-kindergarten curriculum provides children with read-aloud experiences in school and encouragement for parents to read to their children at home. The intervention introduced by this study exceeds mere encouragement of the practice of reading aloud by providing specific instruction to parents about how to read aloud to their children.

**Summary**

Chapter III has discussed the research methodology used for this study. The pretest-posttest control group design was selected because of its strength in controlling for threats to internal validity. The subjects were twenty-six pre-kindergarten students and their parents who live in a poor urban neighborhood. The study took place in the pre-kindergarten classroom of the school that serves the neighborhood. Two instruments, the Circus and the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy, were used to measure the listening comprehension of the students prior to an intergenerational workshop in which parents were taught how to read aloud to their children. The same instruments were used to
measure listening comprehension immediately after the workshop, and again eight and twelve weeks following the workshop. Three different methods were used to verify home practice during the workshop, and parents were interviewed before and after the workshop to elicit their views on the effects of the workshop on home literacy practices. Chapter IV will present the research findings.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of an intergenerational workshop to teach parents how to read aloud to their at-risk preschool children using choral reading techniques. Improvement in listening comprehension was selected as the measure of the impact of the workshop on young children. The study findings provide insight for discussion of the following hypotheses:

1(a) There is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who are not exposed to the experience.

1(b) There is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who are not exposed to the experience.

2(a). Eight weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who are not exposed to the experience.
taught and students who were not exposed to the experience.

2(b). Eight weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who were not exposed to the experience.

3(a). Twelve weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who were not exposed to the experience.

3(b). Twelve weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy of students who participated in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students were not exposed to the experience.

Testing of the Null Hypotheses
Null Hypotheses 1(a), 2(a), 3(a)

Null Hypotheses 1(a), 2(a), and 3(a) were tested by utilizing a repeated measures analysis of variance. Table 9 presents a comparison of performance on the first measure (Circus) of the dependent variable, listening comprehension, immediately following, eight weeks following, and twelve weeks
following the workshop.

As shown in Table 9, on the pretest, the mean score (10.46) for the control group is slightly higher than the mean score (9.38) for the experimental group, although the means are not significantly different. On the first and second posttests, the groups performed similarly. On the third posttest, the mean score (20.15) for the experimental group is higher than the mean score (15.07) for the control group.

**TABLE 9**

PERFORMANCE ON THE CIRCUS
MEANS BY GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest 1</th>
<th>Posttest 2</th>
<th>Posttest 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 presents the results of a repeated measures analysis of variance which examined the main effects of group (experimental vs. control) and time. The interaction effect of group and time also was examined.

The between groups (experimental vs. control) data yielded an insignificant $F\ (p = .4379)$ at $p < .05$. The $F$ for time ($p = .0001$) is significant at $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ and the $F$ for group by time is significant at ($p = .0032$) at $p < .05$ and $p < .01$.  

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Table 11 presents the differences between the means for the experimental and control groups on the Circus pretest and each of the Circus posttests.

The null hypothesis 1(a) of no difference between experimental and control groups immediately after the intervention on listening comprehension as measured by the Circus is supported. The Tukey grouping for the first posttest indicates no significant difference between the means for the two groups.

The null hypothesis 2(a) of no difference between
null hypothesis 3(a) of no difference between experimental and control groups twelve weeks after the intervention on listening comprehension as measured by the Circus is not supported. The Tukey grouping for the third posttest indicates a significant difference between the means for the two groups.

Taken together, the significant interaction of group and time on the analysis of variance, and the significant difference between the third posttest means on the Tukey suggest that the interaction was effective over time in improving listening comprehension as measured by the Circus.

Null Hypotheses 1(b), 2(b), and 3(b)

Null hypotheses 1(b), 2(b), and 3(b) were tested by computing a repeated measures analysis of variance. Table 4 presents a comparison of performance on the second measure (Early School Inventory—Preliteracy) of the dependent variable, listening comprehension, immediately following, eight weeks following, and twelve weeks following the workshop.

As shown in Table 12, the mean of the experimental group on the pretest (0.38) was lower than the mean of the control group (1.76). However, on the first posttest, the mean of the
The experimental group (3.32) was higher than the mean of the control group (1.61). On the second and third posttests, the mean of the control group rose from 2.76 to 3.00, but remained lower than the experimental group mean.

### TABLE 12

**PERFORMANCE ON THE EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY—PRELITERACY MEANS BY GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretest Mean</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest 1 Mean</th>
<th>Posttest 1 SD</th>
<th>Posttest 2 Mean</th>
<th>Posttest 2 SD</th>
<th>Posttest 3 Mean</th>
<th>Posttest 3 SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 13

**REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE SCORES ON EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY—PRELITERACY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance of F (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>.4751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88.38</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group by Time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.26</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 reports on the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance for scores on the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy. The between groups (experimental vs. control) data yielded an insignificant F (p = .4751) at p < .05. However, a significant F was found for time (p = .0001) at p < .05 and p < .01 and a significant F was found for group by time (p = .0032).
at $p < .05$ and $p < .01$.

**TABLE 14**

**TUKEY STUDENTIZED RANGE TEST FOR SCORES ON THE EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY--PRELITERACY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSE</th>
<th>Critical Value SR</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significantly Different Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 1</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 2</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 3</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 presents the differences between the means for experimental and control groups on the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy pretest and each of the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy posttests.

The null hypothesis 1(b) of no difference between experimental and control groups immediately after the intervention in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy is not supported. The Tukey grouping for the first posttest indicates a significant difference between the means for the two groups.

The null hypothesis 2(b) of no difference between experimental and control groups eight weeks after the intervention in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy is supported. Although the mean score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group, the Tukey grouping indicates no significant difference between the two groups.
The null hypothesis 3(b) of no difference between experimental and control groups twelve weeks after the intervention in listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy is supported. As on the second posttest, the mean score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. However, the Tukey grouping indicates no significant difference between the two groups.

The interaction of group and time on the analysis of variance indicates that the intervention was effective over time in improving listening comprehension as measured by the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy. Comparisons of the experimental and control group means using a Tukey grouping indicate that there was a significant difference in favor of the control group on the pretest. However, on the first posttest, immediately after the intervention, there was a significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Although the experimental group continued to score higher on the second and third posttests, there was no significant difference between the groups on these last two tests.

Analysis of Early School Inventory--Preliteracy
Story Structure Subtest Results

The preceding analysis of scores on the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy compared the total mean scores for the experimental and control groups on the Story Structure Subtest. The student's total score on the Story Structure Subtest is a global listening comprehension score reflecting the student's
ability to reconstruct a story read aloud by the teacher. To arrive at the score, the number of story elements the student has included in the retelling are counted. The sum of the elements included is the student's score.

To learn which of the story elements students attended to and were able to retrieve in constructing retellings, it is necessary to examine scores for each of the elements. Table 15 reports the number of students who included a given element in their retelling for each administration of the ESI--P Story Structure Subtest.

**TABLE 15**

NUMBER OF STUDENTS INCLUDING A GIVEN STORY ELEMENT IN STORY RETELLINGS ON THE EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY--PRELITERACY STORY STRUCTURE SUBTEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Elements</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest 1</th>
<th>Posttest 2</th>
<th>Posttest 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 shows that, overall, for the experimental group, there was an increase across test administrations in the number
of students who included each of the story elements in their retellings. A clear pattern does not emerge for the control group. Five of the eight elements were used by fewer students on the third posttest than on the second posttest. Three of the elements were used by the same or a smaller number of students on the third posttest than on the first posttest. Two of the elements were used by the same number of students on the pretest as used them on the posttest.

**TABLE 16**

**TOTAL FOR ALL ADMINISTRATIONS OF TEST OF STUDENTS USING EACH OF STORY ELEMENTS ON THE EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY—PRELITERACY STORY STRUCTURE SUBTEST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Elements</th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 reports on the total number of students using each of the story elements across test administrations. Table 16 indicates that, when all administrations of the test are considered together, a greater number of students in the experimental group included each of the elements in their retellings, with the exception of "description."

For both groups, three elements, (character, sequence and conversation), were used by the largest number of students.
Likewise, for both groups, one element, (feelings) was used by the smallest number of students.

**Number of Books Read by Experimental and Control Group Families**

Each of the families in the two pre-kindergarten classes in the study kept a log of the names of the books they read at home in addition to the homework books for the workshop. This log was turned in weekly to the classroom teacher so that the students could be entered in the school Home Reading Program and earn small prizes such as stickers and bookmarks. Table 17 indicates the number of books read by the families between the beginning of the workshop in October and the end of data collection in January.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>No. of Books</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>No. of Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 805

Total 285

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The totals disclose that the experimental group families read more than twice (2.8 times) the number of books the control group families read. This finding is important because research has found a correlation between number of books read and success in reading. In a study conducted by Wells, students who were read to frequently before entering school had better grades in school than those who did not have this experience.¹

**Parent Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with all of the thirteen parents who participated in the workshop sessions.² The interview questions invited parents to share their reactions to the workshop and assess what they and their children had learned. Parent responses are summarized below.

**TABLE 18**

PARENT REACTIONS TO THE INTERGENERATIONAL WORKSHOP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses Given</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop provided expected information</td>
<td>13 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent enjoyed workshop</td>
<td>13 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent enjoyed workshop because:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child learned to read</td>
<td>1 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child excited about reading</td>
<td>3 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop was fun</td>
<td>5 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent and child learned a lot</td>
<td>4 out of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Wells, *The Meaning Makers*, 144.

²The form used to document interviews is shown in Appendix C.
All of the parents interviewed said that the workshops had provided them with the information they expected to learn and that they had enjoyed attending. When asked why they enjoyed attending, one parent said it was because her child had learned to read. Others gave various answers indicating they and their children had found the workshop "exciting" or "fun," or a good learning experience. Table 18 summarizes parent reactions to the workshop.

### TABLE 19

**WHAT PARENTS REPORTED THEY LEARNED FROM THE INTERGENERATIONAL READING WORKSHOP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Response</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent learned to help child get ready to read</td>
<td>13 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's reading was about the same as before the workshop</td>
<td>4 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's reading improved as a result of the workshop:</td>
<td>9 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent read more fluently</td>
<td>9 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent learned new words</td>
<td>3 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent understood more when reading</td>
<td>3 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent learned to ask child better questions</td>
<td>13 out of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked what they learned from the workshop sessions, all of the parents said they felt they had learned to help their children get ready to read. Nine of the thirteen parents believed their own reading had improved. Four said that their own reading was about the same. Of the nine who believed their
reading had improved, all said that they thought they read more smoothly. Three said they had learned new words. Five said they believed they understood more when they read. All the parents interviewed said they had learned to ask their children better questions about the stories they read. Table 19 summarizes parent responses concerning what they believed they had learned from the workshop.

When asked what their children learned from the workshop sessions, all the parents interviewed made positive comments. Seven said that they had seen "a lot" of improvement in the child's ability to pay attention during read-aloud sessions at home. Six said they had seen "some" improvement in the child's ability to pay attention to stories. Eight said they had seen "a lot" of improvement in the child's ability to listen for longer periods of time. Three said they had seen "some" improvement in the length of time the child listened to stories, and two said they had seen "a little" improvement. All parents interviewed said their children had learned to like reading more. When asked what else their children had learned, one parent replied that her child could "read" The Little Red Hen "by heart." Ten said their children could follow a line of print from left to right. Six said their children could pick out some words. Nine said that their children picked up books on their own and pretended to read. Seven said their children requested reading sessions with parents or other members of the family. Table 20 summarizes parent responses concerning what the parents believed their
children learned from the workshop.

TABLE 20
PARENT RESPONSES: WHAT PARENTS THOUGHT THEIR CHILDREN LEARNED FROM THE WORKSHOP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Response</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child paid more attention during read-aloud sessions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A lot&quot; of improvement</td>
<td>7 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Some&quot; improvement</td>
<td>6 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child listened for longer periods of time during read-aloud sessions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A lot&quot; of improvement</td>
<td>8 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Some&quot; improvement</td>
<td>3 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A little&quot; improvement</td>
<td>2 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child learned to like reading more</td>
<td>13 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other things child learned:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child &quot;reads&quot; The Little Red Hen</td>
<td>1 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child follows a line of print from left to right</td>
<td>10 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child picks out some words</td>
<td>6 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child pretends to read</td>
<td>9 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child requests reading sessions</td>
<td>7 out of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the question, "Has the workshop changed the things you do at home that are related to reading?," eleven replied that they read "a lot more" and two said they read "a little more." Seven said they had bought books, joined a book
club, or purchased a children's magazine subscription. Three said they had visited the public library more often. Six stated that they visited the school library more often. Table 21 summarizes parent responses concerning changes that occurred in family reading practices as a result of the workshop.

**TABLE 21**

PARENT REPORTING OF CHANGES IN FAMILY READING PRACTICES AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERGENERATIONAL READING WORKSHOP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Response</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family reads more:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads &quot;a lot more&quot;</td>
<td>11 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads &quot;a little more&quot;</td>
<td>2 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family has purchased reading materials:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family purchased books</td>
<td>5 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family joined a book club</td>
<td>1 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family purchased a children's magazine subscription</td>
<td>1 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family visits the public library more frequently</td>
<td>3 out of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family visits the school library more frequently</td>
<td>6 out of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When given an opportunity to make comments, parents reported on the enthusiasm their children were showing for books and for "reading on their own." One parent asserted that her child requested as many as five books at a sitting be read to
him. Another parent said that her child insisted on calling a grandparent long distance to "read" *The Little Red Hen* over the phone. Another parent said that her child enjoyed "reading" to his older brothers and sisters.

**Summary of Results**

The statistical findings of this study indicate that an intergenerational reading workshop which teaches parents how to read aloud to their preschool children using choral reading techniques does improve the listening comprehension of the children. The statistical findings may be summarized by examining the status of the hypotheses set forth in the study.

Hypotheses 1(a) and 1(b): At-risk preschool students who participate in a reading workshop with their parents will perform at the same level as their peers in listening comprehension immediately after the intervention.

On the first measure used in the study, the *Circus*, the null hypothesis was confirmed, but on the second measure, the *Early School Inventory--Preliteracy*, the null hypothesis was denied. Students in the experimental group scored higher on both measures, but only on the ESI--P was the difference between the groups significant.

Hypotheses 2(a) and 2(b): At-risk preschool students who participate in a reading workshop with their parents will perform at the same level as their peers in listening comprehension eight weeks after the intervention.

The null hypothesis was confirmed using both measures of
listening comprehension. Students in the experimental group scored higher on the ESI--P and slightly lower on the Circus, but the differences between the groups were not significant.

Hypotheses 3(a) and 3(b): At-risk preschool students who participate in a reading workshop with their parents will perform at the same level as their peers in listening comprehension twelve weeks after the intervention.

The null hypothesis was denied using the Circus but confirmed using the ESI--P. As on the first two posttests, students in the experimental group scored higher on both tests, but the differences between groups were significant only on the Circus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Administration</th>
<th>Circus</th>
<th>ESI-P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 1</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 2</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest 3</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22 shows that the impact of the workshop was recorded immediately on posttest 1 of the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy but was not apparent on later administrations of the test. The opposite was true of the Circus. The impact of the workshop was not seen until the third administration of the test.

These findings present statistical evidence of the positive effects of the intervention on listening comprehension. However,
the results are not conclusive, since on one measure of listening comprehension the effects appear to dissipate over time, while on the other measure of listening comprehension the effects appear to build over time.

ESI—P Story Structure Subtest
Story Elements Analysis

Tabling the number of students who used each of the eight story elements on the ESI—P in their retellings permits several observations. Overall, the number of students in the experimental group who used each element increased across test administrations. For the control group, there was no clear pattern of increased use of the elements. When all administrations of the test are considered together, more experimental group than control group students used seven of the eight elements. The reverse was true for the element of description. Characters, sequence, and conversation were the elements used by the largest number of students in both the experimental and control groups. Feelings was the element used by the smallest number of students in both groups.

Number of Books Read

Logs of books read at home in addition to the homework books for the workshop were kept by parents for the school's Home Reading Program. Experimental group families read 805 books, more than twice (2.8 times) the number of books (285) the control group families read. Since reading achievement has been found to be related to number of books read, this is an important finding.

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Parent Interviews

In post-workshop interviews, parents were asked about their reactions to the workshop, what they had learned, what their children had learned, and how their family reading practices had changed. Parent comments were favorable. Parents believed they had learned how to help their children get ready to read. Nine out of thirteen stated that their own reading had improved. All the parents were confident that their children had learned important prereading skills and had acquired a love of books. In every case, parents reported that the workshop had changed their home reading practices. Seven had bought books or magazines for their children. Nine were visiting either the school or public library more often, and all were reading either "a little" or "a lot" more to their children.

Chapter IV presented information gathered from the Circus and the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy as well as data on the number of books read by the families in the study and information taken from parent interviews. Chapter V will be a discussion of the research findings and their implications.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a workshop which teaches parents to read aloud using choral reading techniques to their at-risk pre-kindergarten children improves the listening comprehension of the children. This question was explored through the following null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus and the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who are not exposed to the experience.

2. Eight weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus and the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and students who are not exposed to the experience.

3. Twelve weeks following the conclusion of the workshop, there is no significant difference in listening comprehension as measured by the Circus and the Early School Inventory--Preliteracy of students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which choral reading techniques are taught and
students who are not exposed to the experience.

Review of Methodology

A pretest-posttest control group design formed the framework to test the three null hypotheses. The factors which were considered were treatment and time. Two pre-kindergarten classes in a school serving a poor, urban neighborhood served as the experimental and control groups. The subjects were assigned randomly to the experimental and the control group. Students in both classes had the same teacher and the same curriculum. Students in the experimental group participated with their parents in a six week workshop in which parents learned techniques that would help them have successful read-aloud sessions at home with their children and would encourage them to establish reading as part of the family routine. Members of the control group did not participate in the workshop. A standardized test of listening comprehension, the Listen to the Story subtest of the Circus, and the Story Structure section of the Early School Inventory—Preliteracy were administered to the experimental and the control group immediately after, eight weeks after, and twelve weeks after the workshop. A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to assess treatment effects and the interaction of time and treatment. The Tukey post hoc test was used to determine where the mean differences occurred. The results of this investigation are summarized in the sections that follow.
Results

The statistical findings of this study indicate that participation in an intergenerational workshop in which read-aloud techniques are taught to parents does improve the listening comprehension of the children.

1. There is confirmation at the .01 level that at-risk pre-kindergarten students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which their parents are taught how to read aloud to them will perform better twelve weeks after the intervention on a standardized listening comprehension than their peers who were not exposed to the workshop.

2. There is confirmation at the .01 level that at-risk pre-kindergarten students who participate in an intergenerational workshop in which their parents are taught how to read aloud to them will perform better immediately following the intervention on a story retelling checklist than their peers who were not exposed to the workshop.

Interpretation of the Findings in the Context of Previous Research

This study addresses the problem of how to approach the instruction of young children who are at risk of failure in learning to read. One of the strategies most often suggested in the literature is reading aloud to children from an early age. A number of intergenerational programs have been initiated to teach parents about reading aloud to their children. Examples include the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project, the Parent and Child
Education (PACE) Program, the Parent Readers Program, Motheread, the Mothers' Reading Program, the Arkansas Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and the Avance Family Support and Education Program. However, little research has been conducted to measure the impact of these programs on the achievement of students. In her comprehensive report on intergenerational or "family" literacy education, Ruth Nickse observes that many programs have proceeded on a "trial and error" basis. Of the programs cited, only HIPPY and the Kenan Family Literacy Program report having tested students before and after the program to assess gains in language skills. The Kenan project also evaluated the reading skills of parents. The other programs reported their outcomes through such methods as anecdotal records, interviews, and self-reporting surveys. In view of the paucity of empirical research in the field, this study makes an important contribution to understanding the benefits and limitations of intergenerational literacy programs by providing quantitative information about program outcomes.

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3Somerfield, 38.

4Somerfield, Program Summary Chart.
Discussion of Findings

The statistical data from this study contain some surprising findings. Students in the experimental group had significant gains over the control group only on the third posttest of the Circus. However, on the ESP--P, the experimental group students performed significantly better than the control group only on the first posttest. The discrepancy between data gathered using these two tests necessitates reflection on the results.

The Circus and the ESI--P differ in the way they are constructed and in the tasks they require of the student. The Circus is a standardized test. The Listen to the Story sub-test contains twenty-five multiple choice items designed to tap the student's knowledge of main idea and supporting details. The student is asked to recall what he remembers as the story is read to him by pointing to a picture representing some aspect of the story. In contrast, the ESI--P is a checklist of story elements. A story is read to the student a day ahead of the test administration. The student's task is to recall and orally retell the story using the elements traditionally associated with simple tales such as a beginning, plot episodes in sequence, and an ending. The Circus, which asks for simple recall immediately after the student hears the story read aloud, may be a much less difficult test than the ESI--P, which asks the student to remember after a delay of twenty-four hours and reconstruct the story independently. This difference in level of difficulty
combined with differences in practice of the tasks required by the tests may account for the results. The Circus may have been easy enough so that the experiences in simple recall during story readings provided at school alone could enable the control group to perform almost as well as the experimental group at first. Only after the experimental group had accumulated many additional hours of practice not experienced by the control group in listening to stories at home was there a significant difference in performance on the Circus. On the other hand, the difficult task of retelling stories required by the ESI-P was practiced only during the workshop when a form of retelling was used as children demonstrated to the workshop leader that they had done their homework by "reading" the home practice book to her. Initial results could have favored the experimental group because of their workshop experience. Retelling was not a part of the school curriculum and parent interviews revealed little or no evidence of home practice for this task. Therefore, during the time which elapsed between the end of the workshop and the posttests, the student skill in retelling may have been diminished through lack of practice.

In order to better understand performance on the ESI-P, student use of the story elements on the test was analyzed in an alternative fashion. A table was devised showing the number of students who used each of the elements in their retellings. An examination of this table revealed for the experimental group an overall pattern of steady growth in the number of students using
each of story elements across test administrations. Anomalies such as the fact that a large number (11) of students used a beginning on the first posttest, but many fewer students (2) used a beginning on the second posttest, could be explained by the nature of the tale that was read for the first posttest. The story, *Chicken Little*, had a very distinctive beginning in which an acorn hits the protagonist on the head. Large numbers of students in both groups (experimental - 11; control - 6) were impressed enough by this unusual beginning to use it in their retellings. The story read for the next posttest, *Little Red Riding Hood*, has a less interesting opening. Only two students in the experimental group and one student in the control group used a beginning in their retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

For the experimental group, in only three other instances, the number of students using a story element was reduced by one. No such consistency was evident for the control group. The number of students using an element fluctuated considerably.

The researcher speculates, on the basis of the foregoing analysis of student use of story elements, that although there is no statistical difference between the experimental and control groups on the second and third posttests of the ESI—P, there is nevertheless evidence that the students in the experimental group grew steadily in their ability to retell stories, while the control group students showed more erratic growth.

This explanation for the apparent dissipation on the second and third posttests of the experimental group's gains on the
first posttest of the ESI--P would support the results from the Circus. No significant difference was found between experimental and control groups on the first and second posttests of the Circus. However, a significant difference in favor of the experimental group was found at the .01 level on the third posttest, leading to speculation that the third posttest gains may have represented the culmination of a gradual growth in listening skills, as a result of many read-aloud experiences.

A group of additional findings worthy of note is the tally of books read at home by experimental and control group families during the data collection period from October through January. In the course of four months, experimental group families collectively read 805 books, while control group families read only 285 books. These figures appear to reflect an adoption of one of the basic tenets taught in the workshop, the importance of reading many different books to children. The numbers would indicate that parents did not just attend the workshop, they acted on what they learned.

Three questions arise from the findings about the numbers of books read. Will parents continue to read to their children in the months and years ahead? Will children, as earlier research would predict, become skilled readers as a result of being read to at an early age? Will the foundation in listening skills gained from their read-aloud experiences lead to a lifelong reading habit? These questions will be addressed again in the "Recommendations for Further Study" section.
Another body of additional findings is derived from post workshop interviews with parents. The interview questions were grouped in four categories: 1) workshop benefits to parents, 2) workshop benefits to students, 3) changes resulting from the workshop in reading related family practices, and 4) general comments on the workshop. The general comments on the workshop were uniformly favorable. Parents enjoyed the workshop activities. Because attendance could be related to enjoyment of the workshop, the researcher found these comments valuable.

Parents reported on several ways in which the workshop influenced their families' approach to books and reading. They said they read more often, bought more books, and went to the library more frequently. Whether these changes in reading related practices are permanent is not known. While even temporary immersion in a print-rich environment is advantageous, research indicates that if children are to receive the language background they need to become good readers, they must be exposed to books continually over a period of years. This study leaves unanswered the important question of long-term effects intergenerational literacy programs may have on reading in the home.

Some of the parent responses about benefits of the workshop for children were confirmed by test scores. Test results supported assertions that the children were listening more actively and learning more from what they heard read to them.

Responses about the influence of the workshop on the parents'
own reading skills were of particular importance to this research. Seven out of thirteen parents believed the workshop helped them improve their ability to read fluently. Two thought it helped them read with understanding. The reading skills of the parents were not assessed, so this is the only information that was gathered on their achievement.

Implications of the Findings

Findings of the present study research demonstrate that conducting an intergenerational workshop to teach parents how to read aloud to their pre-kindergarten children does enhance the listening comprehension of the children. Such a conclusion may have several implications for decision-makers in early childhood education. First, the study offers evidence to support linkage between intergenerational programs and student achievement. Second, the study suggests partial answers to questions raised by other researchers in the field of intergenerational literacy. Third, this study presents an intergenerational reading workshop model which can be subjected to further examination.

Relationship Between Intergenerational Programs and Student Achievement

The evidence that parental involvement is related to school achievement is extensive. In 1987, Henderson found 49 different studies which provide documentation of a correlation between student gains and home-school collaboration.5 However, less is

known about which specific types of parent involvement best foster academic goals. Intergenerational projects are among the most recent innovations in parent involvement. Only a few family literacy programs have been subjected to experimental investigation. This study substantiates the existence of a correlation between intergenerational programs and at least one aspect of student achievement at the pre-kindergarten level. Using two different measures, researchers found student gains in listening comprehension following exposure to an intergenerational reading workshop.

Questions Raised by Earlier Research in Intergenerational Literacy

In Nickse's typology for classification of intergenerational programs described in Chapter II, the program in this study would be Type 4: Indirect Adults—Direct Children. Adults are supplied with instruction so that they can help their children. Children are the primary beneficiaries. Adults are the secondary beneficiaries. Nickse asks six questions about each of the program types she identified. Below are her questions and the context specific answers that come out of this research:

1. Nickse's first question asks about the effectiveness of the four program types she identified for specific groups of children and adults. In this study, a Type 4: Indirect Adults—

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"Jennings, 21.

"Nickse, 7.

"Nickse, 33.
Direct Children program proved effective for poor, at-risk, African-American pre-schoolers and their parents. The children were enrolled in a public school pre-kindergarten program.

2. The second question Nickse poses concerns identifying effective program components. In this study, the following components contributed to the effectiveness of the program:

A. The intergenerational workshop was made an integral part of the pre-kindergarten class. It had the support of the classroom teacher, the principal, and the school reading specialist. All of these individuals impressed on the parents the importance of participation in the program for themselves and their children.

B. The workshop was held at a time and place that was convenient for these particular parents. This appears to have been a factor in obtaining parent participation.

C. Materials selected for reading were easy enough so that parents felt comfortable with them. At the same time, the books were enjoyable for both parents and children.

D. Workshop sessions were lively. Most of the reading called for active participation.

E. Easier reading materials and techniques were introduced first, so that parents could see immediate evidence of achievement.

F. Praise and encouragement were given to parents and children for every effort they made to participate. In addition, a large chart kept track of attendance with colorful stickers and
a drawing was held each week for a doorprize (a book).

G. Accountability for participants was built into the program. Each week, every parent and child pair received their own copy of the homework book, an audio tape, and a reading log. The tapes and logs were collected the following week and homework was checked by asking for oral readings of the homework book.

F. Parents and children were accorded respect and individual attention. They were greeted at the door, given name tags, and given appropriate personalized instruction.

3. Nickse's third question is about the problems faced by administrators and staff in conducting each type of program. Although the primary problem in conducting this type of program typically is recruiting and retaining parents, this difficulty was overcome by workshop organizers by using the aforementioned strategies to enlist parental support. Two lesser problems are obtaining materials (library books and homework books) and structuring the program to suit the reading abilities of the parents and children. The needed technical assistance can be obtained from school personnel. Therefore, schools may be the best sites for Type 4 intergenerational literacy efforts.

4. In question four, Nickse poses the problem of finding outcome measures appropriate for adults and for children. Of the two measures used for the children in this study, the informal story retelling checklist yielded more information. Although it was used as a measure of listening comprehension, it also allowed researchers to see evidence of language development and
metacognitive thinking about story structure. In order to spare parents any embarrassment over their reading skills, they were not tested but instead were interviewed about program outcomes. The researchers elected to use a less intrusive measure for parents because it was believed that formal testing would discourage parent participation.

5. In the fifth question, Nickse asks how various service providers (Adult Basic Education, libraries, public schools, associations, workplace sites) can work together to support family literacy. For the parents, a logical extension of this program type is the Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) programs offered by many public school systems. They offer parents the opportunity to improve their own literacy skills, a goal that is secondary in intergenerational workshops of the kind under investigation in this study. Since level of parent education has been linked to student achievement, parent acquisition of basic skills and eventually a high school equivalency diploma could have a major impact on the literacy of children.⁹ Parents identified through participation in the intergenerational workshop could be guided to appropriate and easily accessible programs. In the school where this study took place a General Educational Development (GED) program was offered in the Parent Activity Center during the regular school day by teachers from the Adult Learning

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Collaborations with the school library media center and the public library would make important contributions to Type 4 intergenerational programs. Easy access to a large and varied collection of good children's literature supports the goal of establishing the reading habit. In this research, the school library media center provided a readily accessible supply of books for the families. The public library was used as a secondary source of reading materials.

6. Last, Nickse asks whether family literacy programs are cost effective. In terms of their potential for preventing reading problems, family literacy programs represent a modest investment in children that could realize in savings to school systems many thousands of the dollars now spent for remedial reading programs. Though it is unlikely that family literacy programs will eliminate the need for remediation, they could reduce the number of students who experience failure in reading by giving at-risk children a better foundation upon which to build literacy skills. The program in this study could be operated successfully with virtually no cost to a school other than paper to reproduce homework books and reading logs. For purposes of keeping an accurate record of home reading habits, the parents in this study borrowed tape recorders and audio tapes provided by the researchers. Subjective data indicate that the additional expense of the tape recorders and audio tapes is not necessary. Parents and children appeared to be sufficiently
motivated to practice reading at home without monitoring.

Cost Effective Program Model for Low-Income Minority Families

The low-income minority parents and their children in this study are representative of a fast-growing segment of the school population plagued with severe academic difficulties that are costly to remedy.\textsuperscript{10} Minority students outnumber whites in the public schools of twenty-three out of the twenty-five largest cities in the United States.\textsuperscript{11} A large percentage of these minority students are poor. The Children's Defense Fund calculates that four out of every nine black children and three out of every eight Hispanic children live in poverty.\textsuperscript{12}

Many problems resulting from poverty are likely to have a negative impact on a child's ability to learn. Poverty often leads to homelessness, and homeless children are more likely than others to have a wide range of health disorders.\textsuperscript{13} Research indicates that African-American infants are twice as likely as white infants to die in the first 28 days after birth, and those black infants who survive have nine times more neurological

\textsuperscript{10}Sally Reed and R. Craig Sautter, "Children of Poverty: The Status of Twelve Million Young Americans," \textit{Phi Delta Kappan} 71, supplement (June 1990): K8.


\textsuperscript{12}Reed and Sautter, K4.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., K6.
impairments than white infants. In addition, large numbers of poor minority infants are born with drug exposure. In 1988, 375,000 newborns (four times the number in 1985) had been exposed to drugs in utero. This same group also is over-represented (up 82% between 1981 and 1988) among abused and neglected children. Poverty often leads to homelessness, and homeless children are more likely than others to have a wide range of health disorders. Finally experts assert that poverty can erode self-esteem, foster hopelessness, and contribute to the disintegration of the family.

Though the factors listed may have a profound effect on learning, most schools are ill-equipped to address these problems, all of which are linked to economic and social phenomena that require large scale remedial efforts. For this reason, some educators have created partnerships with private and government agencies. A notable example is The Center for Successful Child Development in Chicago. The Chicago Urban League and the Ounce of Prevention Fund are working in a public housing project to bring educational, social, and medical services to families with young children. The emphasis in this project is on "family-oriented early childhood intervention."
Promising as The Center for Successful Child Development may be, funding, staffing, organizational and bureaucratic obstacles present barriers to the implementation of projects like the one in Chicago. Many schools need smaller, less costly programs which can be realized by the current staff. Funding alone may preclude attempts to initiate some efforts. A number of state governments presently struggle with budgetary crises. In July, 1991, two states, Maine and Connecticut, shut down all but emergency services because their legislatures failed to reach accord on state fiscal planning for the coming year. California debated how to finance more than fourteen billion dollars in state services for which it did not have sufficient revenues. Other states had already cut their budgets.20 At the same time, in 1990, Congress made a five-year agreement to set limits on spending for federal government programs, including domestic programs like health and education.21 Because most local school districts are affected by state and national fiscal policies, obtaining funds for large projects may become increasingly difficult.

Educators need to be prepared to teach the victims of poverty without depending on state and federal funds for special services to lessen poverty's effects. Recognizing that they may

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not be able to remedy the social, psychological, and health problems associated with poverty, teachers must find ways to educate these children with limited resources. Need exists for inexpensive programs that can make an impact on student achievement despite the depredations resulting from growing up poor. The intergenerational workshop described in this study may be one such program. The workshop can be organized and taught by the school faculty during the school day. Costs are limited to the reproduction of the small homework books and the time required of faculty members who organize the workshop. The books can be reproduced with the use of the school's photocopying machine. Yet, in spite of this small monetary investment, evidence was found of improved student achievement for poor minority children in the area of listening comprehension.

Recruiting and Retaining Parents

In addition to providing a model for a cost effective family literacy program targeted at low-income minority groups, the present study illustrates one successful effort to recruit and retain low income minority parents in a school sponsored program. As in earlier studies, the low-income African-American parents in this study were interested in improving their children's chances of doing well in school. All but one of the families in the pre-kindergarten classes came to some of the workshop sessions. In one case, a grandmother who was guardian

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22 Reed and Sautter, K9.

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for a child in the class came and brought the child's uncle, a retarded adult in his thirties who could not be left home alone. One mother gave up her lunch hour at work to attend. Another mother obtained release time from her employer to attend the workshops. Two fathers came with their wives on days when they did not have work. These parents went to great lengths to make sure they could participate in a program that offered as its sole incentive the opportunity to prepare their children to learn to read. The high rate of participation can be viewed as a measure of the program's success, since researchers list the "difficulties in the recruitment of parent participants" and "erratic attendance of adult participants" as two of the major challenges confronted by educators in developing intergenerational or family literacy programs.\textsuperscript{23} Attracting parents and keeping them involved is a problem when working with all racial and economic groups. The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher found that nearly half of the teachers and more than half of the parents polled believe that parents take too little interest in their children's education.\textsuperscript{24} However, poor minority parents historically have been considered particularly "difficult to reach." Some researchers have suggested that poor minority parents may not feel welcome in schools dominated by white middle-class culture

\textsuperscript{23}Nickse, 18.

\textsuperscript{24}Lynn Olson, "Parents as Partners: Redefining the Social Contract Between Families and Schools," Education Week 4 April 1990, 18.
and values. Findings that surfaced from the present study indicate that a sense of shared responsibility for the education of children in which parents and teachers show respect for the role of each group in the educational process can overcome differences in culture and values.

Other factors that affect parent participation in educational programs must be considered as well. Parents who lack the technical skills for reading may avoid coming to workshops because they would be embarrassed to have their educational shortcomings revealed. The findings of the present study suggest that workshops should be organized so that the level of skill in reading for individual parents is not exposed. Group responses, private coaching during independent practice, and never forcing individuals to read aloud before the group are some ways to help low-literates feel more comfortable in a workshop setting. Given the opportunity to practice for a week at home, most parents and children were excited about displaying their new skills. The teacher was careful to make sure every effort to read was applauded by all participants.

Finally, in homes where severe economic and health problems have caused instability, schooling may not be a priority. Workshop leaders discovered that it was necessary to spend more time talking with parents who were known to have unstable homes about the importance of attendance. The parents were given

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25Ibid.

26Nickse, 14.

27Ibid.
personal attention in the form of reminders about the workshop as they brought their children to school and took them home. The teacher acknowledged the difficulties parents faced and encouraged the parents to put forth extra effort to surmount these obstacles in order to attend.

Fostering the Reading Habit

Program goals in this study went beyond persuading parents to attend the workshop sessions. The intent was to foster the reading habit, to have reading become part of the family routine. To the extent that parents continued to log the reading they did with their children three months after the end of the workshop, this goal appears to have been accomplished. However, it is not known whether the parents continued to read to their children beyond the conclusion of data gathering for this study. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this study to learn whether reading aloud to children when they are pre-kindergarteners will by itself lead a majority of students to choose to read on their own when they are older. Since reading achievement has been shown to be related to the amount of independent reading students do, this is an important question.\(^{23}\)

Taken together, the data from the present study show that an intergenerational workshop that teaches parents of at-risk

minority pre-schoolers how to read aloud to their children can improve the listening comprehension of the children. Such a workshop can affect home literacy practices at least temporarily, influencing parents to read more frequently and to read a greater number of books to their children than they would have without exposure to the workshop. In addition, interview data suggest that as a result of the intergenerational workshop parents had more confidence in their ability to help children learn and a more positive attitude toward reading.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

In consideration of the findings of the present study the following recommendations for further research are offered:

1. A longitudinal investigation of students involved in an intergenerational workshop of the type described in this study to determine long-term effects on achievement in school. Since the workshop is intended to provide fundamental literacy experiences that could act to prevent reading failure, information is needed about whether students exposed to this intervention are more or less successful than others in learning to read.

2. A study of the effects of an intergenerational workshop like the one in this study on the literacy skills of parents. Parents reported in post-workshop interviews that they believed their reading skills had improved as a result of the intervention. However, no empirical evidence was collected on
parent achievement.

3. An investigation of appropriate schedules, content, and methods of delivery for family literacy training beyond that provided by an initial intergenerational workshop like the one described in this study. In post-workshop interviews, parents requested additional instruction. Several issues should be considered. Should there be follow-up sessions during the same year the workshop is first offered? Should there be follow-up sessions at other grade levels? If so, should these sessions be offered every year or only at certain junctures in the student's educational career that are determined to be critical? Should the follow-up sessions have a different format and deal with other reading-related issues? If so, what would these be?

4. A comparison of the workshop format in this study with other ways of conducting intergenerational workshops. Currently, many intergenerational literacy projects are being attempted. Knowing which approaches are most successful, given a particular population and set of goals, would be useful.

5. A longitudinal study to learn whether reading aloud to children at an early age leads to the acquisition of the reading habit. Evidence that independent reading is linked to student achievement suggests that this would be an important area to explore.

6. An investigation of new assessment techniques such as story retellings which yield information about the student's ability to use language. While such techniques require more
training and more skill on the part of the test administrator than standardized tests, they have the potential of yielding more information than standardized tests about language development, critical thinking, and metacognitive thinking.

**Conclusion**

Chapter V has been a summary and discussion of the results of this study. Evidence has been presented in support of the value of an intergenerational reading workshop designed to teach parents how to read aloud to their children. On two different measures of listening comprehension, the performance of children who participated in the workshop exceeded that of their peers who had not been exposed to this intervention. In light of the correlation established through previous research between listening comprehension and success in reading, workshops of this type may be one method available to schools of preventing students from experiencing problems in reading. Furthermore, the workshop is a practical solution to the problem of assuring that young children receive the read-aloud experiences that reading authorities, without exception, deem essential to reading success. It involves little or no expenditure of school funds and can be conducted by regular personnel during the school day. Finally, the workshop model proved effective in working with low-income minority parents and their children from a poor urban neighborhood.
APPENDIX A

CIRCUS - LISTEN TO THE STORY
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APPENDIX B

EARLY SCHOOL INVENTORY--PRELITERACY
SECTION III. STORY STRUCTURE
Three teachers will be trained to administer the test. The test will be administered to students three times by three different individuals. During one of the three administrations of the test, a second teacher will conduct a reliability check that consists of an independent administration and scoring of the test.

The story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" will be read to the class three days before the administration of the test.

Guidelines for Scoring Retellings:

A. Students receive one point for every story element listed below which they include in their retelling.

B. If the student pauses in the retelling, the checklist administrator should allow a period of ten seconds to pass before introducing a prompt.

C. The student should be allowed ten seconds to respond after a prompt.

D. The administrator should begin with the following prompt: "I'd like you to tell me the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." If the child hesitates, say: "Just tell me the story about the Three Bears or make up a story about the Three Bears."

E. If the student needs encouragement to continue the retelling, the administrator should use neutral phrases to prompt the student.

Acceptable prompts:  "Tell me more about the story."
                        "What happened next in the story?"
                        "Did anything else happen?"

F. A maximum of six prompts should be used by the administrator during the retelling.

G. The student may include words or phrases not stated in the story as read to them, as long as the story elements listed below are included in the retelling.

H. Students may change the content of an element, as long as it does not disrupt the retelling of the story. For example, the child can change the specific setting for the story, as long as he includes a setting.
I. The student may change a portion of his retelling. The checklist administrator should follow up on any change by asking, "Which way do you want to tell the story ____________ or ______________? (The checklist administrator fills in the blanks by reading back the student's first statement and then the change he has made.) The checklist administrator should then ask, "Have you finished?" or "Is that all you want to say?"

J. Story elements:

1. **Beginning** - Begins story with: once upon a time, one day the three bears, or something similar

2. **Setting** - Tells where the story happened: in a house, in the woods, or something similar

3. **Characters** - Names significant characters: Goldilocks, the bears (not she, he, they, it)

4. **Sequence** - Includes at least three events in logical sequence

5. **Feelings** - Describes at least one feeling of a character: tired, hungry, angry, or something similar

6. **Description** - Uses descriptive words at least twice: big, little, hard, or something similar

7. **Conversation** - Gives at least one example of a character speaking

8. **Ending** - Tells what happened at the end of the story: jumped out of the window, ran away, or something similar

K. The element must be included in the retelling as indicated above. Elements will be scored "1" if present in the retelling as indicated above or "0" if they are not included in the retelling.

L. The administrator should record briefly the words the student uses to retell each element of the story so that the student can be questioned if he makes changes in the retelling. In addition, she should make an audio tape recording of the retelling to back up her notes.
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APPENDIX C

PARENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULES
1. What was the last grade you attended in school?

2. How would you rate yourself as a reader?
   excellent above average average fair poor

3. How much do you like to read?
   I love to read. Reading's okay. I don't like reading.

4. How often do you read to your child?
   every night several times a week once in a while never

5. How many books have you read to your child so far this year for the school's Home Reading Program?

6. What do you read for your own pleasure or benefit?
   books magazines newspapers other

7. How often does your child see you reading?
   every day several times a week once in a while never

8. Do you have subscriptions to magazines? Which ones?

9. Do you take the newspaper? Which one? How often does it come?

10. Do you own books? How many?

11. Do you buy books for your child? How many books does your child have?

12. Do you take your child to the public library? How often?

13. Do you use the school library? How often?

14. What do you expect to learn from this workshop?
15. What do you think your child will learn from this workshop?
1. Did you learn what you expected to learn from the workshop?

2. Did you enjoy attending the workshop sessions? Why?

3. What did you learn from the workshop sessions?
   
   Do you feel you learned to help your child read?
   
   Do you feel you learned to improve your own reading?
   
   How has your reading improved?
   
   Do you feel you learned to read more smoothly (fluently)?
   
   Do you feel you learned to ask better questions about the stories?

4. What did your child learn from the workshop sessions?
   
   Did your child learn to pay closer attention when you read to him? How much improvement have you seen in his ability to pay attention? alot some a little
   
   Did your child learn to listen for longer periods of time? How much improvement have you seen in his ability to listen for longer periods of time? alot some a little
   
   Did your child learn to better understand what you read to him? Can he answer more of your questions about the stories you read? How much improvement have you seen in his ability to understand what is read to him? alot some a little
   
   Do you think your child learned to like reading more? Why?

   What else do you think your child learned?
5. Has the workshop changed the things you do at home that are related to reading?

How much change has there been in the amount of reading you do with your child?
We read alot more. We read a little more. No change.

How much more do you read as a result of the workshop?
alot more a little more no change

How many books have you read to your child since the workshop began?

Have you bought books, magazines, or the newspaper since the workshop began?

Have you visited the public library more often as a result of the workshop?

Have you visited the school library more often as a result of the workshop?

6. What other comments would you like to make about the workshop?
APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT FORM
I agree to come to the Making Friends With Books workshop with my child. I will come to the workshop in my child's classroom every Wednesday morning for six weeks beginning __________ and ending __________. The workshop will last for 45 minutes beginning at __________ and ending at __________. I will learn about how to read stories aloud to my child in order to help my child get ready to be a good reader.

I will take home a book each week to practice for 15 minutes a night with my child what I have learned in the workshop. I will tape each practice time with a tape recorder given to me by the school and also I will write down the days and the times when I practice with my child.

Before the workshop begins, I will have an interview with my child's teacher. She will ask me questions about things like how much I read and what I think my child and I will learn in the workshop. Also before the workshop begins, my child will be tested to see how much he remembers after he/she listens to a story that is read to him/her.

After the workshop ends, during the week of __________, my child will be tested again to see whether or not he/she remembers more when he/she listens to a story that is read to him/her than he/she did before the workshop. Also after the workshop ends, during the week of __________, I will have another interview with my child's teacher. She will ask me questions about things like what my child an I learned from the workshop and whether or not I like the way the workshop taught me to read to my child.

My child will be tested two more times, at six weeks __________ and ten weeks __________ after the end of the workshop to see whether or not what my child and I learned in the workshop is still helping him/her remember more when he/she listens to a story that is read to him/her.

I understand that the workshop leader will write a paper telling about the workshop and about the results of the interviews and tests. The paper will be turned in to Old Dominion University, and copies of the paper will be put in the Old Dominion University library and sent to educators who are interested in helping children learn how to read. It is one of the things the workshop leader must do to earn the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Services at Old Dominion University.

I understand that my name and my child's name will not be used in anything that is written down about the workshop, and that I can have a copy of the test results, the interview results and any other information about the workshop I would like to know.
I understand that the things my child and I will learn in the workshop are recommended by experts in teaching children to get ready for reading and should help my child learn to like reading. If I do not think the workshop is helping me and my child, I may stop coming to the workshop at any time I choose.

---------------------
PARENT'S NAME

---------------------
STUDENT'S NAME

---------------------
DATE
Reading Log Reliability Check
Parent Interview Schedule

1. How many days this week did you and your child read the home practice book?

2. Which days did you and your read the home practice book? 
   Wednesday____ Thursday____Friday____Saturday____Sunday____
   Monday____Tuesday____

3. How long did you and your child spend reading the book 
   Each time you read? 15 minutes? more than 15 minutes? 
   less than 15 minutes?

4. When did you do the reading? After school? After dinner? 
   Before bedtime?

   Another room?

6. Where did your child sit during the reading? On your lap? Next to you?

7. Did you sit on a chair? a couch? a bed? on the floor?

8. Did you enjoy the reading practice? What did you like 
   (dislike) about it? Can you give me an example of what you mean?

9. Did your child enjoy the reading practice? What did 
   he/she like (dislike) about it? Can you give me an example of what you mean?

10. What progress has your child made in learning the choral reading techniques? Can you give me an example?

11. Has the way you read to your child changed since we began the workshop? Can you give me an example?
## Predictable Pattern Books To Read Aloud

### Echo Reading
- **Aardema, Verna**
- **Gag, Wanda**
- **Velthujs, Max**
- **Sanders, Phyllis**
  - *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*
  - *Millions of Cats*
  - *The Little Red Hen*
  - *Can You?*

### Choral Reading
- **Schmidt, Karen**
- **Martin, Bill**
- **Keats, Ezra Jack**
- **Munsch, Robert**
  - *The Gingerbread Man*
  - *Fire! Fire! Said Mrs. McGuire*
  - *Over in the Meadow*
  - *Love You Forever*

### Paired Reading
- **Mathias, Catherine**
- **Mayer, Mercer**
- **Charlip, Remy**
- **Carle, Eric**
  - *I Love Cats*
  - *Just for You*
  - *What Good Luck! What Bad Luck!*
  - *The Grouchy Ladybug*

### Story Telling
- **Zemach, Margot**
- **Carle, Eric**
- **Galdone, Paul**
- **Slobodkina, Esphyr**
  - *The Teeny Tiny Woman*
  - *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
  - *The Three Bears*
  - *Caps For Sale*

### Reader's Theatre
- **Galdone, Paul**
- **Appleby, Ellen**
- **Galdone, Paul**
- **McGovern, Ann**
  - *The Three Little Pigs*
  - *Three Billy Goats Gruff*
  - *Henny Penny*
  - *Stone Soup*

### Chanting and Singing
- **Martin, Bill**
- **Langstaff, John**
- **Raffi**
- **Wood, Audrey**
  - *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*
  - *Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go*
  - *Down By the Bay*
  - *The Napping House*

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**Note:** These are only a few of the many predictable pattern books you can use with the techniques listed above. Ask the librarian at your local library to help you find more. Remember also that most books can be used with more than one of the techniques.

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APPENDIX G

SAMPLE WORKSHOP LESSON
LESSON PLAN - SESSION II

Making Friends With Books

Teaching Technique: choral reading

Skill Emphasis: prediction

Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>sign-in sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Catherine Matthias</td>
<td>pencils and pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire, Fire Mrs. McGuire</td>
<td>name tags and pins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Bill Martin Jr.</td>
<td>library books for browsing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love You Forever</td>
<td>homework books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Robert Munsch</td>
<td>logs and scissors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>book for doorprize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework Book

The Gingerbread Man
Retold by Marycarolyn G. France

Schedule

11:30 - Sign-in and make name tags. Greet participants.

11:35 - Call on several children to read last week's homework book aloud.

11:45 - Discuss choral reading. Emphasize prediction as you involve parents and children in choral reading using the books I Love Cats, Fire, Fire Mrs. McGuire, and Love You Forever.


12:15 - Fill out logs and have drawing for doorprize book.

12:30 - Informal conversation and book browsing.

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Rigdon, Joan E. and Alecia Swasy. "Distractions of Modern Life at Key Ages Are Cited for Drop in Student Literacy." *Wall Street Journal*, 1 October 1990, 1(B) and 6(B).


