EFFECTS OF PARENT READING INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT READING LEVELS

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Abstract
This study was completed to find out if there is a link between student reading levels and the amount of time parents spend reading at home with their children.

Research shows that primary grades, specifically pre-school, kindergarten and first grades, are critical in the development of reading skills. Studies on curriculum, reading skills and phonics have continued to enhance the educational process while response to intervention is becoming a more fine-tuned process for those students who need a little more attention and help. Even with all of the training and enhanced educational processes, many students are still falling behind in reading and it is critical that we find out where the breakdown occurs. This study was conducted by sending home a survey to all the first grade parents of a school with around 120 first graders. The survey asked parents to circle one of several listed amounts of times that they read with their children each week. The surveys were sorted into groups based on whether parents read with their children a minimal amount of time or a significant amount of time. A descriptive analysis and a t-test were used to analyze the data. The findings of this study suggest that students who read with their parents for a significant amount of time are more likely to be on or above grade level in reading in first grade.
Introduction

Background, Issues and Concerns

First grade is an important year in the development of reading skills for students. Research has shown that the early years of a child’s life are crucial in the development of reading skills. Students who do not receive adequate support during these early years are at an increased risk of not graduating.

Kindergarten and first grade are the years when phonics and decoding skills are taught. Through lots of research about interventions, schools have figured out ways to increase the achievement of struggling learners. Still, there are many students who slip through the cracks and continue to struggle even with increased classroom intervention. Researchers continue to study curriculum and teaching practices that enhance student achievement but despite their best efforts, there are factors that cannot be controlled by teachers.

Students may be at school for a significant part of the day but parents are still the biggest influence over their lives. The impact they have, or don’t have, at home plays a role in their educational outcome. In order for students to reach their highest level of achievement parents and teachers need to be working together to help students develop the skills they need to succeed.

Many parents want to help but wonder what they can do. What will make the most difference for their child? If they can only spend five minutes a night reading with their child, does it still help?
Practice under Investigation

Parents reading with students at home for varying lengths of time.

School Policy to be Informed by Study

The school practice that will be informed by this study is homework. After finding the results of this study, I will be able to rethink homework and give kids work that will encourage parental involvement in the learning process. While homework is not always a best practice, it can be a very beneficial way to help parents and teacher partner up for the educational well-being of students.

Conceptual Underpinning

Students who have reading support from parents at home perform better than students who do not receive support from parents at home. Kids that are read to at home before they begin school will already have a general understanding of how reading works. They know things like how to read from left to right and top to bottom. They will also be exposed to more words which will increase their vocabulary and word recognition.

In first grade, reading is a major part of the curriculum. Some students come in and are great readers and some come in and struggle to use basic decoding skills. Anyone working with students for a length of time will begin to notice a trend. Often times, the best readers in a class seem to have parents that are very involved with their children. Lower readers often have parents who not as involved for various reasons leading me to believe that a student’s success is a team effort between the teacher, student, and parents. The teacher and student are a given, however, parents don’t always understand the impact they have on their child’s academic lives.
Statement of the Problem

The problem is that with the addition of great response to intervention programs as well as teachers who are being trained in more efficient ways to teach reading, students are still falling behind in reading early on in their lives. This sets the tone for their future academic success. We need to figure out why such a large gap still exists and we can close that gap to improve student achievement in reading.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a difference in reading scores when students have educational support from parents at home verses when they do not receive educational support at home from parents. Education support in this study will be shown by the amount of time parents spend reading with their children each week. This would be valuable when providing intervention for struggling readers.

Research Question

Is there a difference in 1st grade reading scores between students who receive educational support from parents at home and students who do not receive educational support from parents at home?
Null Hypothesis

There is no difference in 1st grade reading scores of students who receive educational support from parents and students who do not receive educational support from parents.

Anticipated Benefits of the Study

This study will document the effects of educational support from parents on a student’s achievement. This research can be used to share with parents the importance of working with their children at home. It can also be used to help teachers adjust the way they use homework and address parent communication to increase the partnership of parents and teachers in a way that will best serve students.

Definition of Terms

DRA- developmental reading assessment

Summary

This study is going to examine the link between student achievement and parent involvement in the academic lives of their children at home. First grade is an important grade in the development of reading skills and there are lots of children who struggle all year to make adequate gains. While many schools are utilizing a strong intervention
system, such as Response to Intervention (RTI), to raise reading levels of struggling students, there are still many students who continue to struggle.

The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a difference in student reading achievement when parents read with their children at home verses when they do not. The results of the study will help teachers communicate with parents about the importance of working with their children on reading. It will also help teachers develop homework that requires communication between teachers, parents and students.
Review of Literature

Reading is a fundamental building block of a well-balanced life. The skills needed to be a good reader are developed and nurtured throughout the schooling of a child but are most important in the earlier years from Kindergarten to 2nd grade. As new standards are written and a focus on college and career readiness comes into play, it is clear that students learning to read in those primary grades is of utmost importance.

While the importance of reading is known to teachers and parents alike, the influence parents can have on their child’s reading ability is often neglected. Schools are making great gains in student achievement through the application of response to intervention (RTI) programs yet there are still many students who struggle with reading and are not making the gains they need to be successful. Research has shown that students with parents that read with them at home see improved reading scores at school.

Michelle Hood, Elizabeth Conlon and Glenda Andrews (2008) conducted a study on the effects of home literacy practices and student literacy development. They discuss a study done by Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini that found there are “moderate effect sizes for the relationships between the frequency of parent–child reading and language skills” (p. 252).

Hood, Conlon and Andrews (2008) found, in the same study, that, The effects were larger in younger samples, suggesting that the relationship is stronger around the emergence of reading. Bus et al. also found that the effects of parent–child reading did not differ by socioeconomic status (SES). Even in families with low SES and low literacy level and with few other incentives to become literate,
engagement in shared reading had a positive impact on children’s language and literacy outcomes (p. 252).

Hood et al. (2008) looked at two different aspects of parental involvement in the area of reading with students in preschool. They studied the effects of parents reading to or with their children as well as parents who taught reading to their children. Their testing took into account other factors that might play a role in student growth in those areas such as age and memory. They found that while “there were direct paths from both Parental Teaching and Vocabulary to Preschool Letter–Word Identification… there were no direct paths from Parental Reading to Letter–Word Identification” (Hood et al., 2008, p. 258).

While looking at first and second grade, Hood et al. (2008, p. 259-61) did not find any significant paths from Parent-Reading to student word identification, reading rate, spelling rate or phonological awareness. While looking at Parent-Teaching, “there was no direct path from Parental Teaching to Grade 1 Letter–Word Identification— only an indirect path via earlier Letter–Word Identification” (Hood et al., 2008, p. 259). This was the case for reading rate and spelling rate as well. Parent-Reading only seemed to influence the vocabulary of students, while Parent teaching seemed to play a more significant role in boosting student achievement.

Although some research has suggested that parents reading to children may not have a significant impact on student achievement, an article from the Department of Children (2008) titled, The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, states that research into the topic, “demonstrates that a relationship exists between parental involvement and achievement” (p. 3). In the same article, the idea of student
parental involvement and student achievement is connected when it is said that, “Parental involvement with children from an early age has been found to equate with better outcomes (particularly in terms of cognitive development)” (The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, 2008, p. 4). It is important to note that socio-economic status, ethnicity, and parental education have been taken into account in this study. In fact, “home learning activities undertaken by parents is more important for children’s intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income” (The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, 2008 p. 4).

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education has conducted research on the involvement of parents in a students’ life and

> Found that a range of activities are associated with positive outcomes at age 3 and 7 including: playing with letters and numbers, emphasizing the alphabet, reading with the child, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, and visiting the library (The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, 2008, p. 5).

The article also looks at data from the National Child Development Study and showed, “that very high parental interest is associated with better exam results compared to children whose parents show no interest” (The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, 2008, p. 5). According to the article, The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education, reading with children and working on the alphabet often during the years prior to school correlated with better “pre-reading” and “language” scores (2008).
Casey Dexter and Ann Stacks (2014) researched correlations between shared-reading and child development and found that, “reading quality is most predictive of receptive language development and that the addition of shared reading frequency does not significantly contribute to the prediction of child development outcomes” (p.405). Dexter and Stacks (2014) go on to describe “quality” shared reading by describing the parents role. They found that shared-reading was most beneficial when parents brought an increased focus to the text allowing children to share in the reading experience and build better comprehension of the reading in the process (p. 405).

A study done by Andrea Follmer Greenhoot, Alisa Anne Miller Beyer and Jennifer Curtis (2014) looked at the role of interactive reading between parents and children while also taking into account the role illustrations in most children’s books could play. Their study was done with preschool students but also looked at the benefits to students a few years older as well. In their research they found that,

> When a parent or other adult reads a story to a child, both the child and the reader may ask questions and make comments about the pictures and text. Research on adult-child story reading suggests that these types of story-reading behaviors enhance children’s processing of stories. For example, adult references to print, both verbal and nonverbal, increase preschoolers’ references to print” (p.6).

While the evidence in support of parents reading to students having a significant effect on student reading achievement is limited, this study shows that certain reading behaviors are linked to increased comprehension skills as well as some print reference skills. The skills mentioned all include metacognition. As parents read picture books to their
children, questions that are asked and discussions that are had help students think about what they are thinking and learn to verbalize and organize their thoughts. These behaviors lead to increases in student comprehension skills.

While there are many skills and specific reading strategies that parents can teach to their children, one area that should not be overlooked is the impact of a positive view of reading. An article from Archived Information says, “Children who learn from parents that reading is fun may be more likely to sustain efforts to learn to read when the going gets tough” (Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader, 1999). It also states that, “Enthusiasm about books and reading can be shared between a parent and child and deepen the child’s interest in learning to read” (Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader, 1999). With the increasing amount of screen time children are getting, reading often gets overlooked. Reading requires the actual involvement of a parent whereas computers and TV do not. While reading is a necessary part of a child’s education, it does not always have to be drill and practice. “Some experts believe that parental emphasis on reading as entertainment, rather than as a skill, develops a more positive attitude toward reading in children” (Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader, 1999).

In an article by Duursma, Augustyn and Zuckerman (2008) they write that “Reading aloud to children or shared book reading has been linked to young children’s emergent literacy ability, which can be defined as the skills or knowledge that children develop before learning the more conventional skills of reading and writing” (p.554). Emergent literacy skills are crucial for students to have if they are going to be successful in their early school years.
The impact of parents reading with their children can be seen in more areas than just reading. “Sharing books with children can also help them learn about peer relationships, coping strategies, building self-esteem and general world knowledge” (Duursma, Augustyn, Zuckerman, 2008, p.555). Reading with your child is an act that requires one to stop what they are doing and focus on their child. “It is not sufficient to simply read a text aloud in order to encourage children to learn from being read to. When parents are supportive when interacting with their children around books, this affects how children engage with books” (Duursma, Augustyn, Zuckerman, 2008, p.555).

Research shows that “reading with your child at home from birth literally wires brain cells together in networks that later facilitate independent reading” (Parents and Caregivers Build Strong Minds and Strong Relationships, n.d.). Those brain cells help a child to “detect the different sounds in words, recognize letters and develop strategies to figure out new words, develop real-world understanding of what the words refer to and build an oral and listening vocabulary” (Parents and Caregivers Build Strong Minds and Strong Relationships, n.d.).
Research Methods

Research Design

The independent variable in my design is the amount of time parents spend reading with their children at home. The dependent variable is student achievement in reading. A survey will be created that asks parents questions about the amount of time they spend on reading with their children each week. It will also include questions about what kind of work they do with their children (i.e. read to them, listen to them read, use phonics based programs, tutoring, etc.).

There are five first grade teachers in the building and each of them will pass out this survey to the kids in their rooms sometime in the middle of the year after parents have had time to get in the routine of school. This should provide a sample size of around 100 students. First grade uses a test called the DRA throughout the year to monitor student progress in reading. Data will be collected from those scores and compared to the data collected about their parental involvement.

Study Group Description

The study group is going to be first graders from one school building. That is 74 students. The students in the building are most commonly medium to high socioeconomic levels with only 13.4% on free and reduced lunch. We also have a 7% ELL population at my school. The ethnicity breakdown of the building is as follows: 7.2% of students are Latino, 4.7% are Black, 4% are Asian, 0.3% are American Indian or Alaska
Native and 0.7% are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. About 45% of the student population is boys while about 55% are girls.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Scores will be gathered from the DRA from quarter 1 and quarter 2. Information about parent involvement will come from a survey that is distributed to every first grade parent.

Statistical Analysis Methods

Analysis will be done through a descriptive analysis as well as through a t-Test.
Findings

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1st Quarter</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal (n=33)</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>Mean D</td>
<td>t-Test</td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>p-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant (n=42)</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>24.84</td>
<td>-2.72</td>
<td>-2.57</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p = < 0.10

As seen in Table 1, in the first quarter of the school year, there was a significant difference found (t-Test= -2.57, p-value=0.01, Mean D=-2.72) between DRA scores of students of students who do minimal reading with parents at home and students who do significant reading with parents at home. The null hypothesis, that there is no difference in 1st grade reading scores of students who receive educational support from parents and students who do not receive educational support from parents, was rejected. Students receiving significant reading work with parents at home scored a little more than one reading level above students who received minimal reading work with parents at home (Mean 7.85 verses 10.57). These findings show that significant reading time at home is valuable in increasing student reading levels.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2nd Quarter</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal (n=33)</td>
<td>10.94</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>Mean D</td>
<td>t-Test</td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>p-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant (n=42)</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>23.65</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
<td>-1.87</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p = < 0.10
As seen in Table, in the second quarter of the school year, there was a significant difference found (t-Test= -1.87, p-value=0.01, Mean D= -2.68) between DRA scores of students of students who do minimal reading with parents at home and students who do significant reading with parents at home. The null hypothesis, that there is no difference in 1st grade reading scores of students who receive educational support from parents and students who do not receive educational support from parents, was rejected. Students receiving significant reading work with parents at home scored a little more than one reading level above students who received minimal reading work with parents at home (Mean 7.85 verses 10.57). While the Mean D from quarter two (-2.68) is less than the Mean D from quarter 1 (-2.72), these findings still show that significant reading time at home is valuable in increasing student reading levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent Reading vs. Student Reading Levels</th>
<th>Quarter 1</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal reading time (Below level)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal reading time (On or above level)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant reading time (Below level)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant reading time (On or above level)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 1 and Graph 1 illustrate the amount of students who scored below level or on level when they had minimal reading done at home. They also show the amount of students who scored below level or on level when they had significant reading at home. For first quarter, 12% of students scored below level and 32% of students scored above level with minimal reading done at home. Only 4% of students who did significant reading at home were below level for first quarter while 53% were on or above level. In second quarter there were 9% of students who scored below level with minimal reading at home compared to 34% that were on or above reading level. There were 5% students who were below level while doing significant reading at home during second quarter compared to 51% students who were on or above level.

The mean percentage of students below level with minimal reading at home was 11% while the on or above mean for the same group was 33% of students. The mean percentage of students below level with significant reading at home was 5% while the on or above mean for the same group reading at home was 52% of students. The median percentage of students below level with minimal reading at home was 11% while the on
or above median for the same group was 33% of students. The median percentage of students below level with significant reading at home was 5% while the on or above median for the same group reading at home was 52% of students.

The standard deviation for students reading a minimal amount at home and scoring below level was 0.02. The standard deviation for students reading a minimal amount at home and scoring on or above level is 0.01. For students who read a significant amount at home and score below level in reading the standard deviation is 0.01. When students read a significant amount of time at home and are on or above grade level the standard deviation is 0.01. The maximum percentage of students reading below grade level while reading a minimal amount at home was 12% while the max for the percent of students reading on or above level while reading a minimal amount at home was 34% of students. The maximum percentage of students reading below grade level while reading a significant amount of time at home was 5% of students. The maximum number of students reading on or above grade level while reading a significant amount of time at home was 53% of students.
Conclusions and Recommendations

After reviewing the data from the research it can be seen that of students that read a minimal amount at home with their parents, only about 34% of them were on or above grade level in reading. When significant reading time was done at home 53% of students were found to be on or above grade level in reading. After completing a t-test, the null hypothesis, that there is no difference in 1st grade reading scores of students who receive educational support from parents and students who do not receive educational support from parents was rejected. The p-value of 0.01 was less than the alpha of .10.

Prior research presented some valuable information regarding the findings. While there are correlations, especially in the early years of a child’s life (six and under), the data shows that reading alone does not prove to enhance student learning by a significant amount. The data did show that parent teaching can enhance student learning. This means that parents not only read with their children but encourage their children to interact with the book. Activities include working on decoding skills, playing with letters and numbers and singing nursery rhymes. For parents reading with their children to really have a significant impact they need to ask questions about the text or have their children help identify words.

The research looked at the approximate amount of time parents spent reading with their children at home during a given school week. While the amount of time is an important factor, there were students receiving significant reading time at home who scored below grade level and students receiving minimal reading time at home that scored on or above grade level. There are a few likely possibilities for these outcomes. One is that the students who are reading a significant amount of time at home and are still
below grade level are not involved in any kind of parent-teaching while reading and that the students who read a minimal amount of time with their parents but are on or above grade level, engage in more parent-teaching activities during their time.

Another possibility is that students whose parents read with them at home are probably more involved and more apt to fill out a survey and send it back to class than students whose parents are not as involved at home. This could skew my data. Another possible skew could be that each teacher sent this survey home to their own students. Parents may not have been as honest when recording their time reading with their students in an effort to not be judged by the teacher.

If this study were to be done again it should not only include reading time on the survey sent to parents, but it should also include various teaching activities. The survey conducted this time provided space for parents to comment on the type of reading activities they do with their students but did not provide specific examples.

Overall, this study showed that parent reading with students does have a positive impact on student reading levels. With more than 50% of students who read with their parents at home being on grade level, which is something that parents should be made aware of. The research also shows that when communicating to parents the importance of reading at home, it is also important to give them strategies for teaching as they read.
References


