

**ALTERING THE HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT: A LOOK INTO HOW
TEACHERS ARE SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH HOME LITERACY
INTERVENTIONS**

by

Kaitlyn Piatek

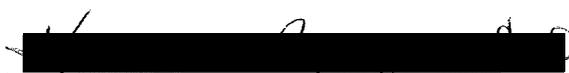
A Master's Thesis/Capstone Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education
Literacy Education: Birth to Grade 12
Department of Language, Learning, & Leadership
State University of New York at Fredonia, New York
Fredonia, New York

May 2019

State University of New York at Fredonia
Department of Language, Learning and Leadership

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled ALTERING THE HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT: A LOOK INTO HOW TEACHERS ARE SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH HOME LITERACY INTERVENTIONS by KAITLYN PIATEK, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Literacy Birth to Grade 12, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.


Kathleen Magiera, EdD.
Master's Capstone Advisor
EDU 659 Course Instructor
Department of Language Learning and Leadership

4/30/19
Date


Kate Mahoney, PhD.
Department Chair
Department of Language Learning and Leadership

5/22/19
Date


Dean Christine Givner, PhD.
College of Education
State University of New York at Fredonia

5/23/19
Date

ALTERING THE HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT: A LOOK INTO HOW TEACHERS
ARE SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH HOME LITERACY INTERVENTIONS

ABSTRACT

This empirical research study investigated the following two research questions: what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students and what supports are teachers providing to families of their students to make these improvements successful. In this study, nine elementary teachers were surveyed. An online survey containing qualitative and quantitative questions was used. The first finding from this research study was that teachers are currently provided families with literacy resources/activities to complete at home with their child/children. The second finding for this research study was that teachers stated that it would be possible to positively influence the home literacy environments of their students but they needed more literacy resources in order to adequately support their students' literacy learning at home. The third finding was that the participants were confident in their ability to support families with home literacy practices and were knowledgeable about the most effective home literacy practices that families could use. The findings from this research study showed that kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers were supporting the home literacy environments and the families of their students by sending home literacy resources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Table of Contents | 3 |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 4 |
| Statement of Problem | 4 |
| Background | 4 |
| Terminology | 5 |
| Theoretical Stance | 6 |
| Rationale | 7 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Shared Reading Interventions | 9 |
| Dialogic Reading Interventions | 10 |
| Storytelling Interventions | 12 |
| Summary | 12 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology | 14 |
| Overview of Methodology | 14 |
| Design of Study | 14 |
| Data Analysis | 17 |
| Chapter 4: Results and Interpretations | 27 |
| Results | 27 |
| Reliability of Data | 27 |
| Interpretation of the Data/Results | 27 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion | 30 |
| Overview of Study and Findings | 30 |
| Significance of Findings | 30 |
| Limitation of the Findings | 31 |
| Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question | 31 |
| Recommendations for Future Research | 32 |
| References | 33 |
| Appendices | 35 |
| Appendix A: Permission of Adapt Surveys | 35 |
| Appendix B: Survey | 36 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The topic of this empirical research study is home literacy interventions and the impact they have on the home literacy environments of students. Niklas, Chorsen, and Tayler (2016) noted that the development of young children's literacy and language abilities are related to the resources parents provide their children, the presence of a literacy role model in the home and the literacy and language activities that parents participate in with their children. Parental involvement throughout a child's schooling can be an important factor in a child's academic success. Steiner (2014) also found that some parents can be reluctant to engage their children in literacy activities at home because they feel they don't possess the necessary knowledge to teach and support their children through these activities

The problem surrounding supporting the home literacy environments of young children and their families led to the research questions for this empirical research study: what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students? and what supports are teachers providing to families of their students to make these improvements successful? The most appropriate way to address the question of the home literacy environment of young children and supporting families is by conducting an empirical research study and surveying teachers to investigate how teachers are supporting their students' literacy development while also providing guidance and support to the families.

Background

Even before children come to school, they are developing important literacy skills at

home (Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello & Ginsburg-Block, 2010). There are many factors that can affect the quality of the home literacy environment of a child. These factors include socioeconomic status, parent education level, and parental language and literacy skills (Boyce, Innocenti, Roggman, Norman, & Ortiz, 2010). There is not much that can be done to change a family's socioeconomic status or educational level but there are ways to positively influence the home literacy environments of students. Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between a child's school-based success and participation in experiences surrounding reading in the home (Steiner, 2014; Evans et al., 2016; Boyce et al., 2010; Manz et al., 2010).

I have chosen this topic because I am a first-generation college student and my parents do not have higher education degrees. For me personally, reading came easily and I never struggled when learning to read. My home literacy environment was full of reading supports and literacy activities. My parents frequently read to my sister and I and we always ate dinner together as a family. I know that this is not the case for all families with backgrounds similar to mine. I want to explore ways that teachers can help to alter the home literacy environments of students while providing support to the families as well.

Terminology

There were key terms which were used in this proposal and may require clarification. The first term was "home literacy environment." A child's home literacy environment "comprises all elements of the environment provided by the family that facilitate a child's acquisition of linguistic skills" (Niklas & Schneider, 2015, p. 492). This includes but was not limited to the number of books/magazines in the home, the frequency of shared reading, and library visits (Niklas & Schneider, 2015; Manz et al., 2010). The second term was "home literacy

interventions.” Home literacy interventions were literacy-based activities intended to be implemented by families at home that would support their child’s development of literacy skills (Manz et al., 2010). Additionally, home literacy interventions provided families with the necessary tools to engage their children in literacy-based activities.

Theoretical Stance

The theoretical stance that supported this research was the view of literacy as a social and cultural practice. The theory that connects the home literacy environment to the reading process is the Sociocultural Theory. The sociocultural theory emphasizes the roles of social, cultural, and historical factors in children’s literacy development (Niklas, Cohrssen & Tayler, 2016). There were four spheres of influence that affected a child’s development, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Niklas et al., 2016). A child’s literacy development is directly influenced by microsystems such as their home and school environments which allows every family and child to use their own experiences and knowledge of the world as a way to navigate literacy learning (Niklas et al., 2016).

The proposed research synthesis aligned with the International Reading Association (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010). This research study addresses standard 4: Diversity focuses on reading professionals creating and engaging their students in literacy practices that develop awareness, understanding, respect and a valuing of differences in our society. Element 4.1 of this standard requires classroom teachers to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of urban, suburban and rural environments on local culture, language and learning to read and write. When teachers understand the impact of different environments on student performance, they will then be able to find ways to supplement the

home literacy environment of their students.

Rationale

Many researchers (Barratt-Pugh & Allen, 2011; Steiner, 2014) have advocated for family literacy programs that provide both a literacy-rich environment for young children and ongoing support for their parents/families. Boyce and colleagues (2010) found one way to do this was by developing programs which included activities that take what parents are already doing with their children and encourages them to partake in these practices more often.

Another approach to enhancing home literacy environments was through literacy workshops (Barratt-Pugh & Allen, 2011; Hunter, Elswick, Perkins, Heroux, & Harte, 2017; Manz et al., 2010; Steiner, 2014). These researchers found that parents often learned literacy strategies from educators and were able to share their experiences with the home-literacy intervention through these workshops. When families participate in these home-literacy interventions, families read more to their children and continue to use the strategies learned even after the intervention is complete (Ijalba, 2015; Huebner & Payne, 2010).

The goal of the proposed study is to examine how teachers are supporting their students' literacy development at home while also providing resources and guidance to the families of their students. The researcher expects to find how teachers are supplementing the home literacy environments of their students with literacy activities that families can do together. Additionally, the investigator hopes to investigate how teachers are supporting and educating families about home literacy practices. The investigator also hopes to get teachers' thoughts on what can be done to improve the home literacy environments of young children. The data collected will add to the current literature by noting what practices teachers currently follow when it comes to

positively altering the home literacy environment of their students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In order to address the research question of how kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers have been supporting families through home literacy environments, a review of the empirical research studies on the topic was conducted. The literature review began with a search of the major databases, specifically ERIC Database and PsycINFO. Keywords and phrases in the searches included strengthening the home literacy environment, family literacy practices or activities, parent involvement, parent participation, family involvement, family engagement, home literacy practices, and home literacy activities.

The studies most relevant to this proposed research were grouped below and arranged according to the factors they examined. The first group of studies dealt with shared reading, the second group dealt with dialogic reading, and the third group dealt with other home literacy interventions.

Shared Reading Interventions

Many researchers (Ijalba, 2015; McElvany & Steensel, 2009; Manz et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2017) have found that shared reading between a family member and young child can have a positive effect on the child's vocabulary and language skills. Ijalba (2015) in particular found that when English as a New Language (ENL) students were read aloud to by their families in the home language, not only did their home language vocabulary grow but the children also used more English at home and at school. Researchers (Steiner, 2014; Barratt-Pugh, & Allen, 2011) have also found that shared reading increases a child's motivation to read and their interest in

reading. Another benefit of shared reading interventions according to Steiner (2014) was that parents remained involved in their children's literacy learning and increased the children's motivation to read. Barratt-Pugh and Allen (2011) stated that giving children individual attention through shared book reading increased a child's interest and enjoyment of books.

However, these outcomes were dependent on the quality of shared reading experiences (Steiner, 2014; McElvany & Steensel, 2009). Steiner (2014) in particular, found that shared reading interventions are most effective when parents/families are taught specific strategies for reading with children. McElvany and Steensel (2009) noted that *Dutch Opstap Programme* was ineffective because of the lack of support provided to parents and the inaccessibility of the parent meetings. When families were taught strategies to use when reading with their children, it resulted in families reading more purposefully and frequently with their children (Barratt-Pugh, & Allen, 2011; Ijalba, 2015; Manz et al., 2010; Steiner, 2014). According to Manz and colleagues (2010), as well as, Hunter et al., (2017) families responded well to home literacy interventions when teachers taught reading strategies that families could easily embed into their typical routines and this, in turn, increased the shared book reading experiences that the families had with their school-aged children.

Dialogic Reading Interventions

Dialogic reading interventions were another approach to home literacy interventions that are highly interactive and encourage children to take an active role in telling/reading the story while the adult provides support to the child (Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas & Schneider, 2014). Dialogic reading was an easy intervention for families to learn and was low in cost

(Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas et al., 2016). In order for dialogic reading interventions to be successful, the parents/family members had to be willing to complete the intervention activities and believe that the activities are beneficial to their child (Manz et al., 2010; Niklas, & Schneider, 2015, Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas et al.,2016).

Many researchers (Manz et al., 2010; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas et al., 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2015) have advocated for family meetings at the start of the dialogic reading interventions where families learn dialogic reading activities to complete with their child. In addition to holding a parent meeting, Niklas and colleagues (2016) provided parents with a hand-out that outlined suggestions on how families support their child's literacy development at home. Niklas and Schneider (2015) held a similar meeting for families participating in their study but they also provided families with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the strategies taught at the meeting. Manz et al. (2010) noted that more than half of the studies in their meta-analysis provided training to parents prior to the start of the interventions and during the interventions; whereas eleven studies only provided parents with training prior to the intervention.

Many of the researchers (Niklas & Schneider, 2015; Huebner & Payne 2010; Niklas et al., 2016) found that parents/families participated in dialogic reading behaviors more frequently with their child as a result of their participation in dialogic reading home literacy interventions. Niklas et al., (2016), as well as, Huebner and Payne (2010) found that 90% of the families who participated in their studies incorporated dialogic reading into their home literacy practices after the intervention had been completed. Likewise, Niklas and Schneider (2015) found that parents who participated in the study used dialogic reading techniques with their child about once a

week. Additionally, the most progress toward improving the home literacy environment of young children was made when families completed the full home literacy intervention (Niklas & Schneider, 2014).

Storytelling Interventions

Children's language and literacy are supported when they frequently hear stories and rhymes (Evans et al., 2016; Boyce et al., 2010). Boyce et al. (2010) found that storytelling was an activity that many parents already did and could easily be encouraged to do more often. Evans et al., (2016) found that reading and listening to nursery rhymes and stories that stress different components of phonetics helped children to develop positive attitudes towards reading and improved their reading skills. Researchers from both studies found that listening to stories and rhymes had a positive effect on a child's vocabulary (Evans et al., 2016; Boyce et al., 2010). Children who listened to nursery rhymes scored higher on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test than those children who did not (Evans et al., 2016). Boyce et al. (2010) found that families who participated in their storytelling and bookmaking intervention increased their support of their children's language and literacy skills and increased children's use of language in narratives.

Summary

Researchers (Niklas et al., 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2015; Barratt-Pugh & Allen, 2011; Ijalba, 2015; McElvany & Steensel, 2009; Evans et al., 2016; Boyce et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2017; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Steiner, 2014; Manz et al., 2010) have found home literacy interventions to be an effective way to influence the home literacy environments of young children. Many home literacy interventions were found to have had positive effects on children's vocabulary and language skills (Ijalba, 2015; McElvany & Steensel, 2009; Manz et al., 2010;

Hunter et al., 2017; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas & Schneider, 2014; Evans et al., 2016; Boyce et al., 2010).

Families responded well when the home literacy interventions incorporated activities the families already participated in and could easily be added to routines that the families followed (Manz et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2017; Boyce et al., 2010). Additionally, researchers (Barratt-Pugh, & Allen, 2011; Ijalba, 2015; Manz et al., 2010; Steiner, 2014; Niklas & Schneider, 2015; Huebner & Payne 2010; Niklas et al., 2016) noted that families who participated in home literacy interventions partook in more literacy-based activities at home and read more frequently and purposefully with their children. Researchers (Steiner, 2014; McElvany and Steensel, 2009; Manz et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2017; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas et al., 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2015) have advocated for continued support for families throughout the entirety of the home literacy intervention to ensure positive results from these interventions. The information found in these empirical research studies have led to the research questions of this research study: what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students? and what supports are teachers providing to families of their students to make these improvements successful?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview of Methodology

Research has shown that successful home literacy interventions provide families with continued support and resources throughout the entirety of the intervention (Steiner, 2014; McElvany and Steensel, 2009; Manz et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2017; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Niklas et al., 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2015). This research study addressed the questions of what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students? and what supports are teachers providing to families of their students to make these improvements successful?

Design of Study

The methodology for this study was a mixed-methods empirical research study. A survey containing qualitative and quantitative questions was used in this research study. The goal of the proposed study was to examine how teachers are supporting their students' literacy development at home while also providing resources and guidance to the families of their students. The investigator expected to find how teachers are supplementing the home literacy environments of their students with literacy activities that families can do together. Additionally, the investigator hoped to investigate how teachers are supporting and educating families about home literacy practices. The investigator also intended to get teachers' thoughts on what can be done to improve the home literacy environments of young children. The data collected adds to the current literature by noting what practices teachers currently follow when it comes to positively altering the home literacy environment of their students. In addition, the data collected provides educators and administrators with a list of obstacles that teachers face when trying to supplement

the home literacy environments of their students.

Participants. The survey used in this research study was emailed to 24 teachers and there was a total of nine participants who consented to this research study. All participants are teachers at two suburban elementary schools in Western New York. The teachers who participated in this study are all kindergarten, first and second-grade general education teachers between the ages of 21 and 65.

Procedures. On December 10, 2018, the Principal Investigator received approval from the State University of New York at Fredonia's Human Subjects Review Board to conduct this study. On January 3, 2019, the Principal Investigator received additional Human Subjects approval from one of the schools included in this research study. The building principals were then sent a reminder email on February 25, 2019, by the Principal Investigator about the research study before the survey was sent out to the teachers at their schools. At this time, the principals provided the Principal Investigator with email addresses for the kindergarten, first and second-grade general education teachers at their school.

The kindergarten, first and second-grade general education teachers at those two schools were sent an email on February 26, 2019, explaining the study and asking them to consent to participate in the electronic survey through Google Forms. A link to the electronic survey was embedded in the email. After one week of collecting responses to the survey, the Principal Investigator emailed the principals at the school on March 5, 2019, and asked them to reach out to their teachers to remind them about the survey. Then the Principal Investigator sent out the survey to the participants for a second time on March 6, 2019. Survey responses were collected for an additional ten days until March 15, 2019.

The survey (see Appendix B) consisted of sixteen questions. The first twelve questions on the survey asked the participants about their opinions toward supporting the families of their students with home literacy practices using a five-point Likert scale. The remaining four questions on the survey were open-ended. These questions asked the participants how they currently support the home literacy environments of their students and their opinions on how they can improve the home literacy environments of their students. The survey used in this study was adapted from two surveys (*Panorama Teacher Survey* and *Family-School Relationships Survey*) published by Panorama Education. The Principal Investigator has received permission to adapt both of these surveys for use in this study (see Appendix A). To ensure validity and reliability, the same survey was administered to all participants.

Data Collection. All quantitative and qualitative survey responses were collected and kept confidential on the Principal Investigator's personal password-protected computer. The results of the survey provided information on how teachers are currently supporting parents while positively influencing the home literacy environments of their students. The information collected will be used to further research on home literacy interventions. The data collected is securely kept in the Principal Investigator's password-protected computer and remained confidential during the study. The data from this study will be erased/deleted by September 1, 2019.

Once all of the survey responses were collected, the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. To do this, Google Sheets was used which is similar to Microsoft Excel. Using Google Sheets allowed the Principal Investigator to organize the data according to the different responses to the survey questions. Additionally, Google Sheets was used to create graphs and

other images to represent the data collected. The qualitative responses from the survey were transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. The Principal Investigator calculated the percentage of participants who chose each answer on the twelve Likert scale questions (see Appendix C). The Principal Investigator only described quantitative data that demonstrated a pattern of responses of six out of nine participants (67%).

All nine of the participants (100%) stated that they met with the families of their students in person at least once or twice per year. Six out of the nine participants (67%) met in person with the families of their students once or twice per year while three of the nine participants (33%) met in person with the families every few months (see Figure 1).

How often do you meet in person with the families of your students?

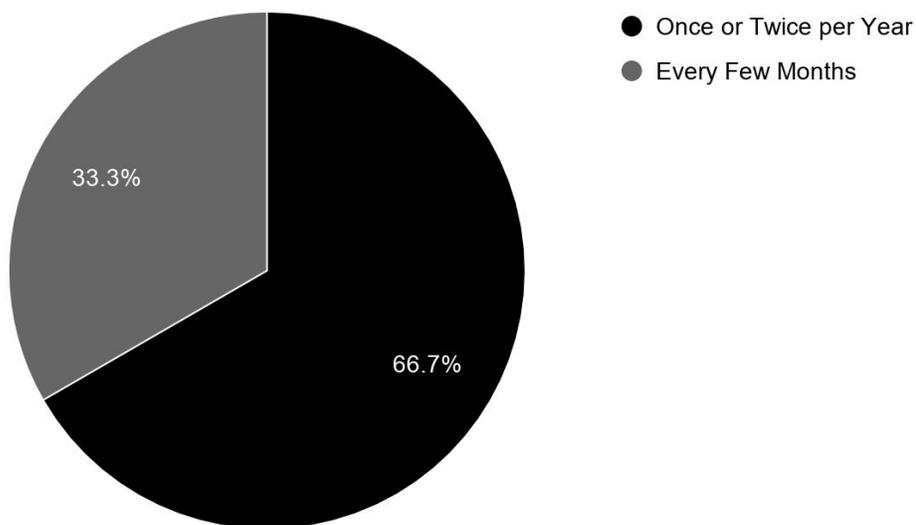


Figure 1. How often teachers meet in person with the families of their students

While these participants may not meet very frequently with the families of their students, six of the nine participants (67%) provided the families of their students with literacy activities

weekly or more frequently (see Figure 2). Two of these nine participants (22%) sent home literacy activities monthly. These responses show that most of the teachers send home literacy activities home for the families of their students to complete at home but they infrequently met in person with these families.

In the past year, how often have you provided the families of your students literacy activities to be completed in the home?

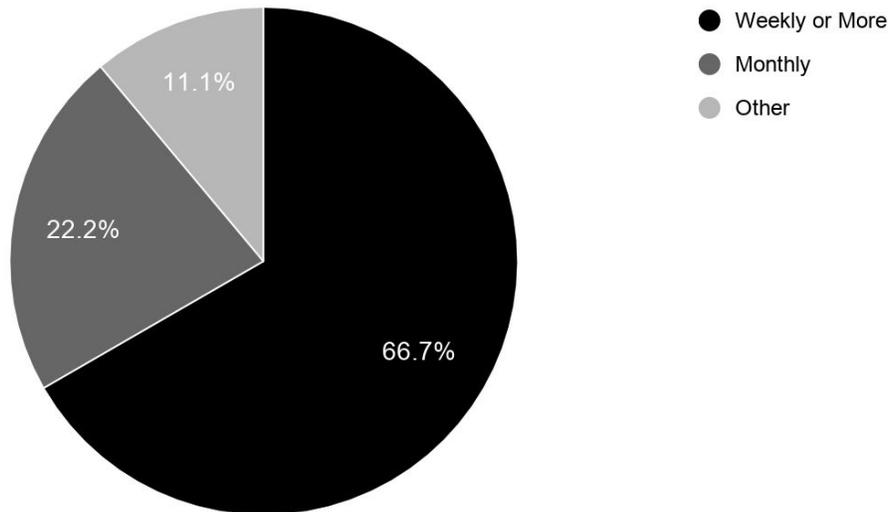


Figure 2. How often teachers send home literacy activities with their students

When looking at how often the participants helped the families of their students engage in literacy activities in school, six of the nine participants (67%) helped families engage in literacy activities at least every once in a while. For this research study, the Principal Investigator has determined that the descriptor once in a while refers to once or twice per year. The descriptor sometimes refers to once every few months and the descriptor frequently refers to engaging the families in literacy activities monthly. One participant (11%) helped the families engage in literacy activities in school once in a while, three participants (33%) helped the families engage in literacy activities sometimes and two participants (22%) helped the families engage in literacy

activities frequently (see Figure 3).

How often do you help the families of your students engage in literacy activities together in school?

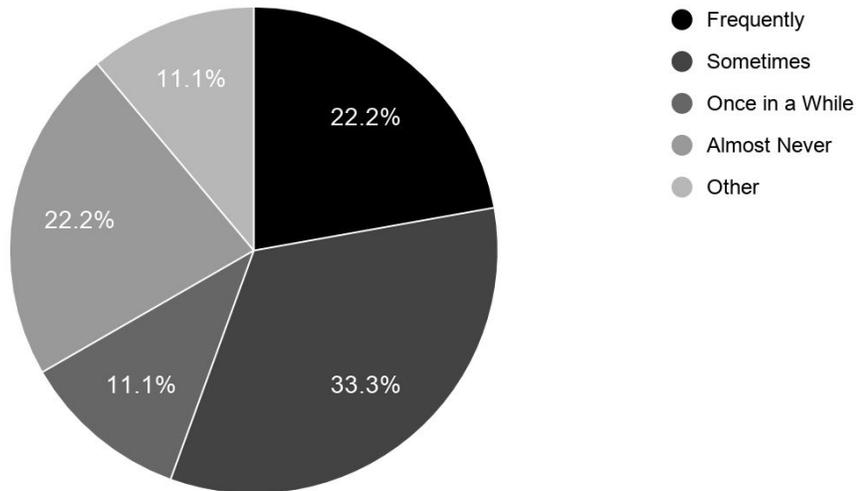


Figure 3. How often participants help families participate in literacy activities at school

While communication with parents/families may be limited, all nine participants (100%) talked with their students about their literacy practices/activities at home but at varying frequencies. One participant (11%) had conversations with their students once in a while, one participant (11%) had conversations with their students sometimes, five of the nine participants (56%) frequently had conversations with their students about their literacy practices/activities at home and two of the participants (22%) had conversations with their students almost all of the time about their literacy practices/activities at home (see Figure 4).

How often do you have conversations with your students about their literacy practices/activities completed at home?

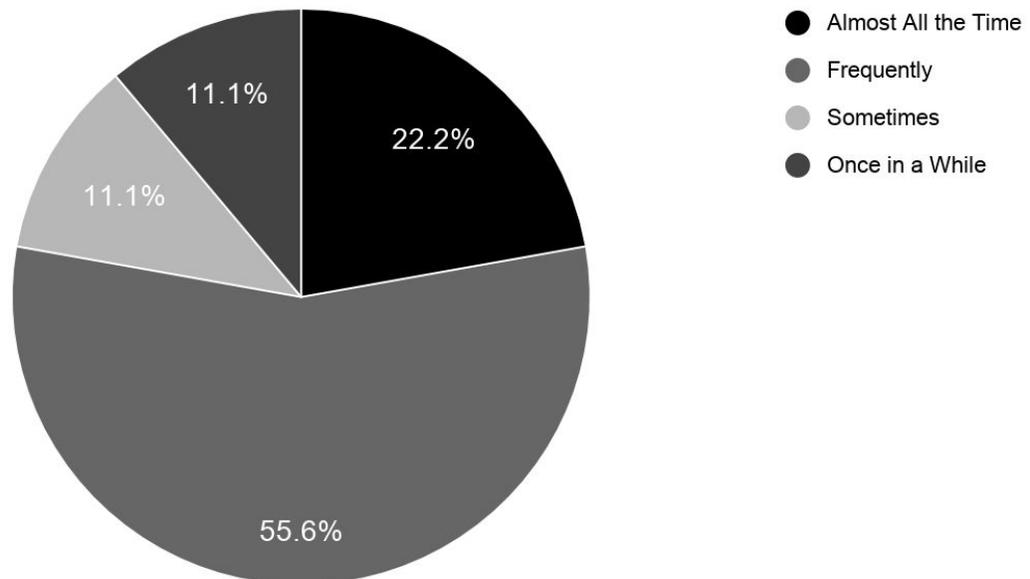


Figure 4. How often teachers have conversations with their students about home literacy

When analyzing the responses to questions pertaining to the participants' confidence in supporting families with home literacy practices at home, knowledge of home literacy practices, and how easy it would be for the participants to teach families literacy strategies, the Principal Investigator noticed that all nine (100%) of the participants were in agreement. All nine of the participants (100%) were confident in their ability to support families with literacy activities at home but at varying degrees. Five of the participants (56%) were extremely confident in their ability to support families with literacy activities, three participants (33%) were quite confident and one participant (11%) was somewhat confident in their ability to support families.

Additionally, these nine participants (100%) were quite knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable about the most effective literacy practices that families can participate in to help

their child improve their reading and writing. Seven of the nine participants (78%) were quite knowledgeable and the remaining two participants (22%) were extremely knowledgeable. These nine participants (100%) also indicated that it would be extremely easy or quite easy for them to teach a group of families literacy strategies that they could use at home with their child/children. More specifically, five of the participants (56%) responded that it would be extremely easy to teach families and four of the participants (44%) responded that it would be quite easy for them to teach families literacy strategies.

When analyzing the questions related to the home literacy environments of students, the Principal Investigator noted that the majority of the participants indicated that the quality of the literacy resources available to their students at home needed to improve. For this research study, the Principal Investigator has determined that the descriptor a little bit refers to the environment needing minimal change or the addition of one high-quality literacy resource. The descriptor some refers to the environment needing the addition of two high-quality literacy resources, the descriptor quite a bit refers to the environment needing the addition of three high-quality literacy resources and the descriptor a tremendous amount refers to the environment needing the addition of four or more high-quality literacy resources. Eight of the nine participants (89%) indicated that the quality of the resources available to their students needed to change at least a little bit. Four of the participants (44%) responded that the home literacy environment needed to change a little bit, two of the participants (22%) responded that the home literacy environments needed to change some, one participant (11%) said the environment needed to change quite a bit and one participant (11%) responded that the home literacy environment needed to change a tremendous amount (see Figure 5).

To what extent does the quality of the literacy resources available to your students at home need to improve?

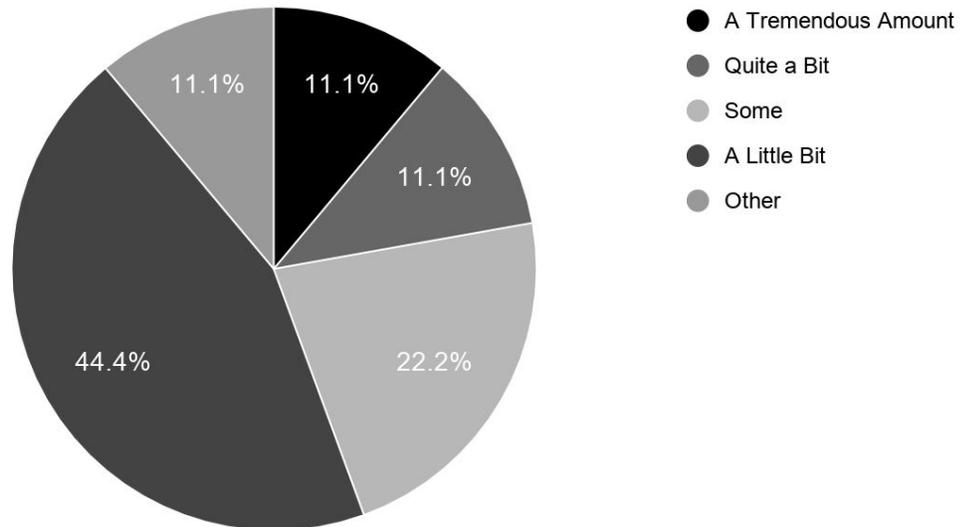


Figure 5. The extent to which the quality of the literacy resources need to change

A majority of the participants (78%) indicated that the families of their students felt comfortable engaging in literacy activities with their child/children. However, the participants had varying degrees of comfort engaging in literacy activities with their child/children. Four of the nine participants (44%) indicated that families were quite comfortable engaging in literacy activities with their child/children and three participants (33%) indicated that parents felt somewhat comfortable engaging in literacy activities (see Figure 6).

To what extent do you think the families of your students feel comfortable engaging in literacy activities with their child/children?

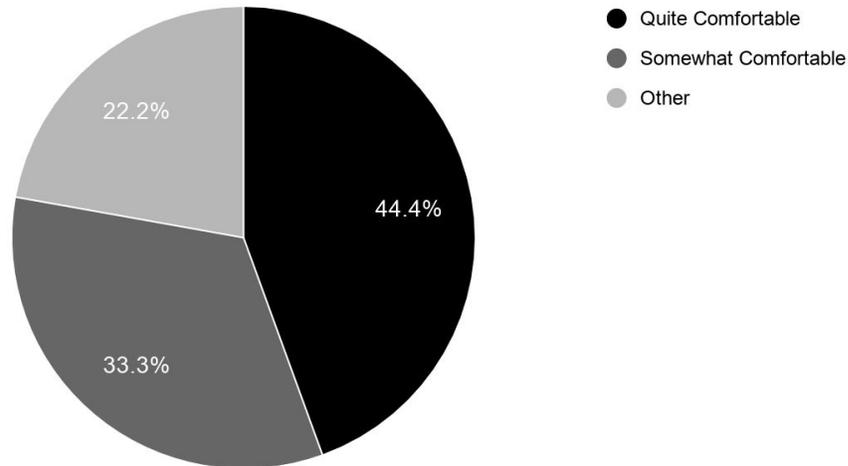


Figure 6. Comfortability of families engaging in literacy activities with their child/children

Although all eight of the participants (89%) responded that it would be possible for teachers to positively influence the home literacy environments of their students, the participants had varying responses to how possible this actually would be. Four participants (44%) responded that it was somewhat possible, three participants (33%) percent thought it would be quite possible, and one participant (11%) responded that it would be completely possible. However, there was one participant (11%) who responded that it was not at all possible for teachers to positively change the home literacy environments of their students.

The Principal Investigator analyzed the questions related to the literacy resources students have access to and the number of resources needed to adequately support their literacy learning at home and found that there was not a majority in the findings so the data could not be aggregated. For this research study, the Principal Investigator has determined that the descriptor

a little bit refers to access to one literacy resource at home while quite a bit refers to access to three resources and a tremendous amount refers to access to four or more literacy resources at home. Four of the nine participants (44%) indicated that their students had access to quite a bit of literacy materials at home. One participant indicated that their students had access to a tremendous amount of literacy resources. Two participants (22%) indicated that their students had access to a little bit of literacy resources at home (see Figure 7).

To what extent do you think your students have access to literacy materials at home?

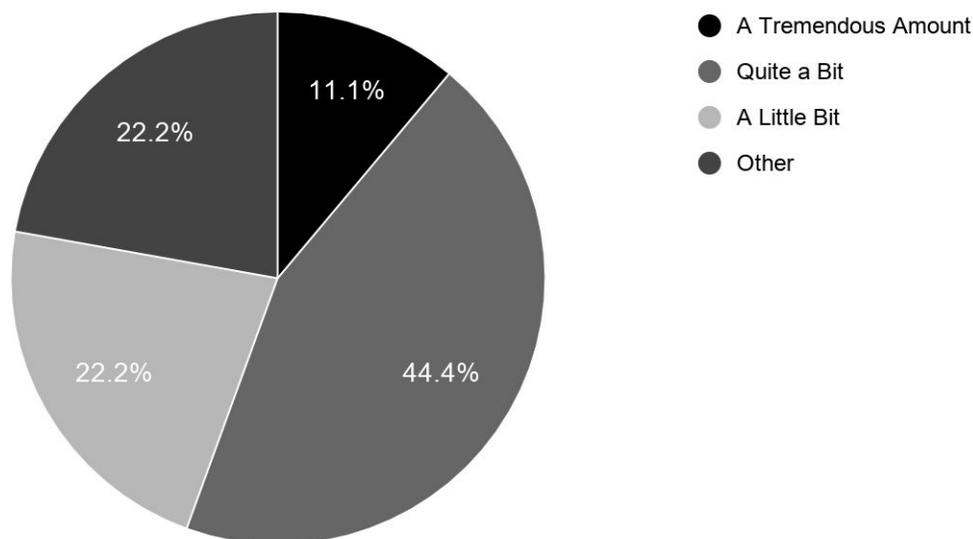


Figure 7. Students' access to literacy materials at home

All nine of the participants (100%) stated that they needed more resources in order to adequately support their students' literacy learning at home. The Principal Investigator has determined that the descriptor a few more resources means at least three more resources, the descriptor several more resources means at least four more resources and the descriptor quite a few more means at least five more resources. Four of the participants (44%) indicated that they

would need a few more resources to adequately support their students' literacy learning at home, two participants (22%) indicated that several more resources were needed, two participants (22%) indicated that quite a few more resources were needed and one participant (11%) indicated that a lot more resources were needed (see Figure 8).

How many resources do you need to adequately support your students' literacy learning at home?

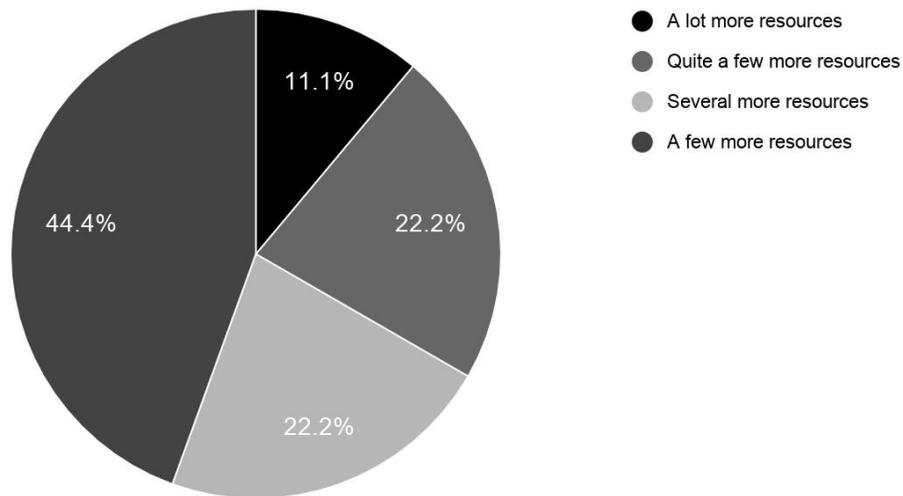


Figure 8. Resources needed to support literacy learning at home

For the qualitative data, the Principal Investigator coded the data for eight different categories, and themes to analyze the data for commonalities among the responses. Kathleen Magiera ED. D served as a second reader and also coded the data for themes and trends. The Principal Investigator and Dr. Magiera then discussed the data and compared their findings. The six themes that the Principal Investigator found among the data all related to ways the participants were currently supporting the home literacy environments of their students and how teachers/schools could improve the home literacy environments of their students. These themes included online resources, sending books home/encouraging shared reading, sight words, other

activities/skills, providing resources and recommendations to the families of their students, and expressing the need for more resources to make a positive influence on the home literacy environments of their students.

Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation

Results

After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, the Principal Investigator discovered three findings. The first finding from this research study was that teachers currently provided families with literacy resources and activities to complete at home with their child/children. These activities varied from teacher to teacher but the data showed that the participants in this research study provided families with these resources. The second finding for this research study was that teachers stated that it would be possible to positively influence the home literacy environments of their students but they needed more literacy resources in order to adequately support their students' literacy learning at home. The third and final finding from this research study is that the participants in this research study were confident in their ability to support families with home literacy practices and were knowledgeable about the most effective home literacy practices that families could use.

Reliability of Data

In order to ensure reliability of the data, several steps were taken to ensure that the data was consistently gathered and analyzed. First, the Principal Investigator administered the same online survey through Google Forms to all participants. Then while analyzing the data, Kathleen Magiera ED. D served as a second reader and also coded the data for themes and trends.

Interpretation of the Data/Results

The first finding of this research study was that a majority of the participants stated that they provided the families with literacy resources to be used at home. Most of the participants sent books home for their students to read or encouraged shared reading between a family

member and the student. The participants “encourage parents to read to their children and listen to their children read” and the “children have a monthly reading log” they have to complete. Some of the participants sent home online literacy resources that the families can participate in together. The participants “suggested many free apps parents can download for students to use” and also “send videos to families of their child reading to me or describing their thinking as they read to show parents what their child can do and/or what they should be doing at home.” Huebner and Payne (2010) stated that parents are underutilized as a resource to help with students’ literacy learning but when they are given strategies and resources they become essential to their child’s literacy growth. Researchers Barratt-Pugh and Allen (2011) reported that parents were more likely to read books with their children when the books were recommended to them by a teacher/trained professional. Several of the participants sent home sight words for their students and their families to study and learn. Additionally, some of the participants even provided families with other activities besides online resources, shared reading and sight words.

The second finding of this research study was that most of the participants stated that it would be possible to positively influence the home literacy environment of their students but they needed more resources. The participants indicated that their schools and personal classrooms were lacking the necessary resources to support the literacy development of their students at home. The participants said that their schools lacked “lending libraries of just right books to support student achievement” and their schools needed “more leveled readers to send home books at the students’ reading levels.” Manz et al. (2010) found that many families have insufficient access to literacy materials at home and even just acquiring books to read with their

child/children can be a challenge. Similarly, Ijalba (2015) found that there was a need for resources and guidance on home literacy practices to better support the families. A majority of the participants also suggested some other ways that they could change the home literacy environments of their students. These suggestions included sending home resources, offering suggestions/recommendations and providing some structure to the families as ways to improve the home literacy environments of their students. Many of the participants stated that “teachers [could] encourage families by sharing ideas, questions, strategies, and books... empowering parents to feel more comfortable in their ability to interact with their child over a text.”

The third finding in this study was that all of the participants stated they were confident in their ability to support families with literacy activities at home. All of the participants also stated that they were knowledgeable about the most effective literacy practices that families can participate in. Similarly Evans et al., (2016) found that teachers who were knowledgeable about home literacy practices were likely to mentor other teachers and share their knowledge and techniques. This finding means that all of the participants are able to support their students' literacy learning at home and be able to provide the families with strategies and activities that are engaging and effective.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

This empirical research study investigated the following two research questions: what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students and what supports are teachers providing to families of their students to make these improvements successful. The first finding from this research study was that teachers currently provided families with literacy resources and activities to complete at home with their child/children. The second finding from this research study was that teachers stated that it would be possible to positively influence the home literacy environments of their students but they needed more literacy resources in order to adequately support their students' literacy learning at home. The third and final finding from this research study was that the participants in this research study were confident in their ability to support families with home literacy practices and were knowledgeable about the most effective home literacy practices that families could use. The data collected through this empirical research study addressed the research questions by providing information on the different types of literacy resources that the participants are sending home to the families of their students. Additionally, the data addressed the research questions for this study by outlining how the teachers could provide assistance to the families to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students successful.

Significance of the Findings

The findings from this empirical research pilot study were significant because these findings support prior research that stated the importance of sending home literacy resources to families and supporting families in order to positively influence the home literacy environments

of young children. Barratt-Pugh and Allen (2011) and Huebner and Payne (2010) found that families responded well to home literacy interventions when they were provided with resources and suggestions for literacy resources. Similarly, the findings from this empirical research study showed that kindergarten, first and second grade teachers sent home these resources and suggestions to the families of their students. Additionally, one of the findings from this research study was the need for more literacy resources to send home to families which was similar to what researchers Ijalba (2015) and Evans et al., (2016) found. The third finding from this pilot study was that teachers were knowledgeable and confident in their ability to support families with the most effective literacy practice and this is significant because Evans et al., (2016) had similar findings to this.

Limitation of the Findings

There were several limitations to this empirical research study. The first limitation of this research study was that there was a small sample size. The sample size for this empirical research study was 24 teachers but only 9 consented to participate in the survey. The second limitation for this empirical research study was that this study took place over a limited time frame. The third limitation for this empirical research study was that the participants in this research study came from only two different elementary schools in Western New York. Therefore, the findings from this empirical research study should be approached with caution.

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

The two research questions that guided this empirical research study were the following: what are kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers currently using to make improvements to the home literacy environments of their students and what supports are teachers providing to the

families of their students to make these improvements successful. The survey used in this empirical research question collected teacher's responses to how they are supporting the home literacy environments of their students. The first twelve questions on the survey asked teachers about their opinions about supporting families with home literacy activities using a likert scale. The remaining four open-ended questions allowed the teachers to share their full opinions in how they supported literacy in the homes of their students and possible suggestions for how to support families with home literacy activities in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

The Principal Investigator has come up with three recommendations for future research on how kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers are positively altering the home literacy environments of their students. The first recommendation would be to repeat this same empirical research study with larger sample sizes. Sending the survey out to more kindergarten, first and second-grade teachers in this current study would allow for stronger findings among the data. A second recommendation for future research would be to complete a follow-up interview or survey with the participants to gain more information on how teachers support the families with literacy activities at home. The third and final recommendation for future research is to complete this research study with participants from more schools than just the two suburban elementary schools used in this study and possibly include some rural and urban elementary schools as well.

References

- Barratt-Pugh, C., & Allen, N. (2011). Making a difference: Findings from better beginnings a family literacy intervention programme. *The Australian Library Journal*, *60*(3), 195-204. Retrieved from <http://dbsearch.fredonia.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ949390&site=ehost-live>
- Boyce, L., Innocenti, M., Roggman, L., Norman, V., & Ortiz, E. (2010). Telling stories and making books: Evidence for an intervention to help parents in migrant head start families support their children's language and literacy. *Early Education and Development*, *21*(3), 343-371. doi: 10.1080/10409281003631142.
- Evans, W., Harris, P., Sethuraman, S., Thiruvaiyaru, D., Pendergraft, E., Cliett, K., & Cato, V. (2016). Empowering young children in poverty by improving their home literacy environments. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *30*(2), 211-225. doi: 10.1080/02568543.2016.1143894.
- Huebner, C., & Payne, K. (2010). Home support for emergent literacy: Follow-up of a community-based implementation of dialogic reading. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *31*(3), 195-201. doi: 10.1016/j.appdev.2010.02.002.
- Hunter, W., Elswick, S., Perkins, J., Heroux, J., & Harte, H. (2017). Literacy workshops: School social workers enhancing educational connections between educators, early childhood students, and families. *Children and Schools*, *39*(3), 167-176. doi: 10.1093/cs/cdx009.
- Ijalba, E. (2015). Effectiveness of a parent-implemented language and literacy intervention in the home language. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, *31*(2), 207-220. doi: 10.1177/0265659014548519.
- Manz, P., Hughes, C., Barnabas, E., Bracaliello, C., & Ginsburg-Block, M. (2010). A descriptive review and meta-analysis of family-based emergent literacy interventions: To what extent is the research applicable to low-income, ethnic-minority or linguistically-diverse young children?. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *25*(4), 409-431. doi: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2010.03.002.
- McElvany, N., & Steensel, R. (2009). Potentials and challenges of family literacy interventions: The question of implementation quality. *European Educational Research Journal*, *8*(3), 418-433. doi: 10.2304/eej.2009.8.3.418.
- Niklas, F., Cahrssen, C., & Tayler, C. (2016). Parents supporting learning: A non-intensive intervention supporting literacy and numeracy in the home learning environment. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *24*(2), 121-142. doi: 10.1080/09669760.20161155147.

Niklas, F., & Schneider, W. (2015). With a little help: Improving kindergarten children's vocabulary by enhancing the home literacy environment. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 28(4), 491-508. doi: 10.1007/s11145-014-9534-z.

Steiner, L. (2014). A family literacy intervention to support parents in children's early literacy learning. *Reading Psychology*, 35(8), 703-735. doi: 10.1080/02702711.2013.801215.

Appendix A: Permission to Adapt Surveys

Permission to Adapt Surveys for Master's Thesis Inbox x

Kaitlyn J Piatek <kiat8746@fredonia.edu>
to research

Wed, Oct 31, 2:38 PM (2 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Good Afternoon,

My name is Kaitlyn Piatek and I am currently a graduate student at SUNY Fredonia in the Literacy Birth-12 program. Prior to my graduate studies, I obtained my Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood/Childhood Education from SUNY Fredonia.

I am emailing you in hopes that I will be able to obtain consent to adapt two of your surveys to use in my master's thesis. The two surveys I would like to adapt are the *Panorama Teacher Survey* and the *Family-School Relationships Survey*. The purpose of my master's thesis is to examine how teachers can support families through home literacy interventions and how these interventions can improve the home literacy environments of students.

I am respectfully requesting permission from you to adapt these two surveys. As this is my first research study, I am working closely with and being supervised by Dr. Kathleen Magiera, my research faculty sponsor and professor at SUNY Fredonia.

If you choose to allow me to proceed, please respond to me by contacting me via email at kipiatek@fredonia.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I have included my contact information below.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Piatek
Literacy B-12 graduate student, SUNY Fredonia
Phone: 716-936-2632, Email: kipiatek@fredonia.edu

Hunter Gehlbach <hgehbach@panoramaed.com>
to me, research

Wed, Oct 31, 3:16 PM (2 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

No problem Kaitlyn, you may use the surveys for research.
Good luck,
Hunter

Hunter Gehlbach
Director of Research
@ Panorama Education

O: 617-702-4746
 http://www.oed.harvard.edu/images/signatures/twitter_logo.png @HunterGehlbach

Hide

Appendix B: Survey

Dear Educator:

My name is Kaitlyn Piatek and I am a graduate student at SUNY Fredonia working on my Master's of Science in Education degree in the Literacy Birth-Grade 12 program. I am beginning the research for my Master's Thesis, and the purpose of my study is to examine how teachers are supplementing the home literacy environment of their students while also providing support to the families. One of the benefits of this study is to find out what teachers like you are currently doing to positively influence the home literacy environments of their students and support families through making changes to their home literacy environments. The results of this study will be shared with you upon completion of the study upon request to the researcher. This study will be conducted over in the spring semester. Survey responses will be collected from February 25, 2019 until March 15, 2019.

You are invited to participate in an online survey. Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary. Please select yes to the questions below to grant your consent to participate in the study. Completion of the survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

All information collected will be kept confidential, and any identifiable information will be removed prior to data analysis. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and, you are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Kaitlyn Piatek at kpiatek@fredonia.edu (716-936-2632).

There are very minimal risks associated with this study, though the questions may cause mild distress or discomfort. You may choose not to answer any question(s) that may cause you distress or discomfort, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am at least 18 years of age. I have read and understand the consent form in its entirety, and I willingly give consent to participate in this study. Please select yes to give consent and participate in the study or select no if you do not want to participate in the study.

- Yes, I am at least 18 years of age and I consent to participate in this study
- No, I would not like to participate in this study

1. How often do you meet in person with the families of your students?

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------------|
| Almost never | Once or twice per year | Every few months | Monthly | Weekly or more |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------------|

2. In the past year, how often have you provided the families of your students literacy activities to be completed in the home?

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------------|
| Almost never | Once or twice per year | Every few months | Monthly | Weekly or more |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------------|

3. How often do you have conversations with your students about their literacy practices/activities completed at home?

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| Almost never | Once in a while | Sometimes | Frequently | Almost all the time |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|

4. How often do you help the families of your students engage in literacy activities together in school?

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| Almost never | Once in a while | Sometimes | Frequently | Almost all the time |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|

5. How confident are you in your ability to support families with literacy activities at home?

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Not confident at all | Slightly confident | Somewhat confident | Quite confident | Extremely confident |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|

6. To what extent do you think the families of your students feel comfortable engaging in literacy activities with their child/children?

| | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Not comfortable at all | Slightly comfortable | Somewhat comfortable | Quite comfortable | Extremely Comfortable |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|

7. To what extent do you think that your students have access to literacy materials at home? (literacy materials refer to books, magazines, newspapers, educational toys/games, television with subtitles etc.)

| | | | | |
|------------|--------------|------|-------------|---------------------|
| Not at all | A little bit | Some | Quite a bit | A tremendous amount |
|------------|--------------|------|-------------|---------------------|

8. To what extent does the quality of the literacy resources available to your students at home need to improve?

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Does not need to improve at all | Needs to improve a little bit | Needs to improve some | Needs to improve quite a bit | Needs to improve a tremendous amount |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

9. How knowledgeable are you regarding the most effective home literacy practices that families can participate in to help their child improve their reading and writing?

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Not knowledgeable at all | Slightly knowledgeable | Somewhat knowledgeable | Quite knowledgeable | Extremely knowledgeable |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|

10. How easy would it be for you to teach a group of families literacy strategies that they could use at home with their child/children?

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|------------|----------------|
| Not at all easy | Slightly easy | Somewhat easy | Quite easy | Extremely easy |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|------------|----------------|

11. How possible is it for teachers to positively influence/change the home literacy environments of their students?

| | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Not at all possible | A little possible | Somewhat possible | Quite possible | Completely possible |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|

12. How many more resources do you need to adequately support your students' literacy learning at home?

| | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Almost no resources | A few more resources | Several more resources | Quite a few more resources | A lot more resources |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|

13. In what ways have you supported the home literacy environment of your students?

14. How can teachers help families engage in literacy activities at home with their child/children?

15. What recommendations would you make to your school for how to improve the home literacy environments of students?

16. What is the biggest obstacle that prevents you from supporting families with literacy at home? Please list any ways that you can think of that teachers/the school might help you overcome this obstacle.