

HOME LITERACY SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

by

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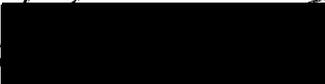
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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled HOME LITERACY SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES by EMILY FRANCHINA, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, LITERACY BIRTH-12 GRADE, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.


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HOME LITERACY SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

ABSTRACT

Building a bridge between home literacy and school literacy has become very important for young children. A creation of consistent school to home communication about what went on during the school day was another important factor. To address the issues of the gap between students' home and school literacy skills, the research question was created, "How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool to kindergarten?" First finding was to ensure that there is positive communication among teacher and families about their children's' reading and writing abilities which would then promote positive student literacy achievements at school. The Second finding was found that when families kept a steady communication connection (newsletters, face-to-face conversations or emails) between themselves and the school the students showed reading and writing improvements. The third finding was that when families took an active role in their children's literacy activities at home and at school their children felt supported and showed improvements in reading and writing. Finally it was determined that when teachers took their time to get to know their students personally by talking to their families the students felt welcomed and did their best in reading and writing. All of these findings led to a Prezi professional development project to answer the question and support teachers abilities to engage families in different literacy activities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

There have been new suggestions that are being made that lean towards forming literacy connections between home and school which will promote early childhood literacy development (Moschovaki, 1999). Researchers have found that children learn at different paces and understand new information in different ways, having the support of home literacy from parents children can connect with the way things are done at home. Several researchers (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006; Breit-Smith, Cabell, & Justice, 2010) have noted that families have great influence on how young children acquire literacy skills at home. According to Weigel et al. (2006) and Moschoaki (1999), children's lives were being affected by many different influences such as changes in family dynamics and the different traditions families have. Home literacy has been a way to scaffold learning for all types of children (Breit-Smith et al. 2010).

Home literacy has been looked at differently by parents and teachers, some focus on the reading and writing aspects while others look at the family aspects that connect into home literacy (Moschovaki, 1999). The problem of home literacy looking different for all students lead to the following research question for this proposal: How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool to kindergarten? The most appropriate way to complete this research was by fulfilling an extensive literature review, then synthesize the findings from the literature, then take the findings and present them to teachers through a Professional Development Event. The information that has been gathered will allow the teachers more insights into ways others use home literacy as well as ways that they can support home

literacy in their classrooms. Children in preschool to kindergarten need the support from their families as well as from their teachers and if the two can connect it can positively support their early literacy development.

Background

I chose this topic based on previous experiences with children and noticing how they are all at different levels entering preschool and kindergarten. Students that I have worked with all come with their own experience that can enhance their learning abilities. I have seen that some students have not had the same exposure to certain literacy aspects compared to others who have had the exposure. I have also noticed that if students home lives relate to what they are doing in school they are able to relate more. There needs to be more of a connection for children (preschool to kindergarten) between their home literacy and the literacy provided within the school setting.

I wanted to research this topic in hopes that I can see where there is a gap in children's learning and try to provide a way to shorten the gap among the children. Children grow up in different homes so with the creation of a home and school literacy skills connection program families may begin to feel connected. The research question was developed through researching articles that built on one another, in which they all related to families and how they support their children as they entered preschool through kindergarten. This resulted in the culmination of the ideas that looked at different ways home literacy was seen and presented to students through teachers, students and families views.

Terminology

Home Literacy has been defined by writing and reading skills, as well as it relates more

to the completion of a set of attitudes, expectations, feelings, behaviors and skills related to written language (Moschovaki, 1999). Home literacy programs can be found within the home as well as found at home through the use of families own practices (Moschovaki, 1999; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann, 2009).

Scaffolding has been defined by the guidance of parent-child or teacher-child literacy interaction, they use tools or techniques that allow for children to eventually reach a goal that they might have not been able to previously (Neumann et al., 2009). The use of scaffolding with a child should be able support them in moving within their zone of proximal development, getting them to a point where they might not have been able to reach without support. A type of scaffolding is materialization which means using an object such as drawing lines that relate to the direct unit of speech in the written form (Neumann, et al., 2009).

Socio-economic status has been defined by the families income (living below the poverty line 60%) and maternal educational qualifications, having none to having a degree (Hartas, 2011).

Digital literacy is used to explain the types of literacy such as reading and writing activities are not more involved with the technologies that are forming today (Marsh, Hannon, Lewis & Richie, 2017). New technologies provide for more opportunities for parents and children to explore literacy skills using digital games, access websites and learn together. Technology is ever changing and now schools, teachers, will have to begin to introduce students literacy skills using the provided technology.

Theoretical Stance

The theoretical stance that supports this research was the view of literacy presented

through Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective (Neumann et al., 2009). These authors noted that literacy interactions can happen through different modes of scaffolding for children by their parents or teachers that are within their zone of proximal development.

The proposed research synthesis is aligned with the International Reading Association (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010). Several of the Standards addressed the component of literacy foundations and how they influence their targeted audience. One example, this candidate was addressing Standard 5: Literate Environment by providing an environment that fosters a connection between the outside world and the classroom. A focus on the idea that education (literacy skills) can be related what is going on in the world outside. Another focus is on providing an environment that gives opportunity for the students to engage in meaningful ways.

Rationale

Huisman (2012) explained that young children that have been exposed to positive literacy experiences can provide them with a better understanding in their future literacy development. As well as it being stated by Huisman (2012) that the early skills that are being introduced to children should be done in a natural environment and in meaningful ways. It has been proven that early literacy skills are important so now there is a need to ensure parents are apart of this process. Families might not always have the necessary tools to create a literacy enriched environment at home for their children or are unsure of how to create such an environment.

This is where the school and families partner together to create this environment for all families. Literacy development happens over time through multiple lenses. A few lenses are first, children begin to create relationships with family members as well as these people then become

their role models of their literacy behaviors, then children learn from their cultural experiences and lastly children learn from watching where in return create their own sense of what should be occurring (Moschovaki, 1999). Home literacy can be seen in many different forms but should all promote a positive child-literacy relationship as it will impact their learning for years to come (Huisman, 2012; Wiescholek, Hilkenmeier, Greiner, & Buhl, 2018). Family literacy allows for families to spend quality time with their children, learning in ways that connect to their everyday lives (Saracho, 2017). Literacy environments are important to the way children learn, they should be learning in literacy rich environments (Wiescholek et al., 2018). This research is important to the field of education because it will contribute knowledge that can help teachers support families feel connected and provide their students with the best literacy supports that are available.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In order to address the research question: “How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool to kindergarten?” a review of empirical research studies was conducted. The literature review began with a search of the major databases such as ERIC, PsycINFO and Education Source. Keywords and phrases in the searches included literacy importance, family literacy, home literacy, young children and early childhood. The studies that are most relevant to this proposed research were grouped together below and arranged according to the common factors they presented. The first group dealt with families backgrounds, the second with home literacy environments, the third with children’s view of home literacy, and the fourth with home literacy experiences.

Families Backgrounds

Many researchers have stated that there is an importance of early literacy skills and the connections they had seen in the children’s success in school in years to come (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011; Santos, Fettig & Shaffer, 2012; Cater, Chard & Pool, 2009). Children come to school with a variety of different literacy skills (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). It was noticed when there was a strong parent involvement with everything that is going on, children are more ready for school academically (Santos et al., 2012; Cater, et al., 2009). According to Otter (2014), Santos et al., (2012) and Cater et al., (2009), it was believed that child’s first learning environment and become comfortable by listening to their families voices. Positive interaction with literacy activities at a young age have shown that they support children in elementary school (Santos et al., 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Early literacy skills

should be formed from children's home and school experiences through natural exposures to the literacy (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Cater et al., 2009). An example of this is to form a bridge between home and school: a classroom created an environment that replicated what the children were used to seeing, placing items that children might see outside of the classroom to encourage more literacy exposure through writing (Moschovaki, 1999). Children need to feel included within their classroom environment so the creation of a bridge between home and school can provide the children with the necessary relatable literacy skills (Moschovaki, 1999; Cater et al., 2009).

Along with creating a bridge between school and home it has been shown to be important to try and embed different unique pieces of the different family cultures within the classroom (Cater et al., 2009). According to Otter (2014) when parents and their children discuss what they have been learning in school there has been shown to increase student achievement in school. The amount and the quality of parent to child interactions at home before a child enters school have shown to be important (Cater et al., 2009). It is also important to look at the different ways that families play roles in children's lives and impact their literacy development.

According to Huisman (2012) and Otter (2014), there are many different ways that families can have the opportunity to engage with their children at home with literacy skills. These skills are Do it Daily, Do it in Authentic ways, Have fun with it, Be Creative, and Be Developmentally appropriate (Huisman, 2012). Another way that families have supported their children's literacy skills are through shared reading and through strong parental support in instruction, tutoring, and listening to the child read, these all promoted reading skills (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Families have different roles in their children's early literacy development but

overall they should be there to motivate their children as well as begin to make literacy a more enjoyable experience for their children (Huisman, 2012; Otter, 2014). In some cases parents have been known to be their child's support system and to push them to do their best in school to reach their goals (Otter, 2014). Children's early exposure to print such as children's book but not limited too has been essential to their literacy development (Santos et. al., 2012; Otter, 2014) . Similarly, Moschovaki (1999) noted the experiences of home literacy through the different social and cultural differences that are presented in families. Families' home lives have been shown to all have unique characteristics and have provided teachers with opportunities to share these experiences with others in the classroom (Carter et al., 2009). A way to try an promote a well developed early literacy skill set for children there should be a connection between home and school. According to multiple researchers children should be exposed to literacy through natural and meaningful ways at home and at school (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Santos et al., 2012).

Moschovaki (1999) addressed other ways that daily literacy exposure can occur in children's lives that could have an impact on how they gain their literacy skills. She looked specifically at students literature exposure through daily living routines, entertainment, school related activity, work, religion, interpersonal communication, participating in information networks, literacy for the sake of teaching/learning literacy and storybooks. Children have been exposed to different literacy activities at home and at school are building the tools that are needed to further their literacy skills (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999). The literacy skills that children have been exposed to naturally or at school are developing their listening , oral language, reading and writing skills which will all support their social-emotional growth (Santos

et al., 2012).

According to Hartas (2011), another way that literacy skills were looked at were by how families support their children with homework (reading and writing), enrichment activities and emergent literacy activities. Otter (2014), explained that parental involvement into the education of youth is very beneficial. Teachers have tried to engage families through newsletters, interactive activities for both the parents and the children to do and hold literacy events at the school that will encourage parents to interact with their child (Santos et al., 2012). Looking at the ways that literacy can be exposed to children at home and at school, teachers and parents can begin to create a literacy connection that will provide the children with early literacy experiences (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999). Using the ways that families incorporate literacy skills outside of school in with the ways literacy skills are taught in school will provide a more positive experience with the learning of the skills. It has been noted that families and school staff that model positive ways for the children to follow they can learning and build their confidence in wanting to continue to learn (Santos et al., 2012 & Cater et al., 2009).

Hartas (2011), as well as, Moschovaki (1999) and Phillips and Lonigan (2009) presented the impacts between home learning and parents socio- economic status and how it related to young children's literacy skills. Hartas (2011) in particular looked at the socio- economic disadvantages that come when parents chose to spread their resources (money, time and energy) not focused on their children's needs and time with their children to promote literacy skills. Many researchers have focused their studies on children enrolled in preschool to kindergarten and the different ways that families interacted with their children (interviews, observations) (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011). Hartas (2011) specifically looked at families

that had socio-economic incomes below 60%. Several researchers (Huisman, 2012, Moschovaki, 1999 & Hartas, 2011) concluded that family literacy support, school connections and income all showed some type of effect on early literacy development for young children.

Home Literacy Environments

Several researchers (Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines & Vernon-Feagans, 2016; Işitan, Saçkes, Justice, & Logan, 2018; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Quiroz, & Dixon, 2012) looked into how the role of government, different family literacy programs, different home environments all play roles in young children's literacy development. The differences that were found may put children at disadvantages in their literacy skills and they might need extra literacy support to reach to level of their peers (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Işitan et al., 2018; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009). Families have all different literacy backgrounds that they with share with their children, this has shown to have both positive and negative effects on the children's literacy skills (Işitan et al., 2018; Yeo, Ong & Ng, 2014).

Many researchers have also looked closer into family literacy, they explained it as a way for parents and their children to learn together in their natural environment (Saracho, 2017; Sawyer, Cycyk, Sandilos, & Hammer, 2016). Home literacy environments have included the exposure to literacy in multiple different forms such as artifacts, functional uses, verbal references and the support from the parents to the children (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Yeo et al., 2014). It has been also necessary to have families involved in their children's school, this can help bridge the gaps that may occur between families.

The way families have looked at literacy and its importance have had effects on children's early literacy skills, active involvement have stronger effects on improving literacy skills (Işitan

et al., 2018; Yeo et al., 2014). Reading activities that have impacted children and parents literacy involvement the most are direct engagement, which means that the parent and child are working together to complete the literacy activities (Yeo et al., 2014).

Several researchers (Saracho, 2017, Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016, Sawyer et al., 2016 & Yeo et al. 2014) have pointed out that with the exposure to early literacy skills for young students that there will be a higher reading success. Developmentally appropriate literacy activities have shown have a stronger impact on the children's learning (Işıtan et al., 2018). Home literacy environments have typically supported children's literacy skills in the areas of language and vocabulary skills (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009). Saracho (2017) in particular looked at different literacy activities between parent and child, informal activities such as printed materials (story based) and formal activities such as print based learning (focused on the words).

Another way that children get exposed to literacy skills is through writing, writing should be first modeled then completed through one's own experience of writing (DeFauw, 2017). Saracho (2017) and Işıtan et al., (2018) noted that the different exposures to literature through vocabulary and listening skills found that the children's experiences with print changed how their literacy skills developed. The more frequent exposure to literacy skills promoted students literacy skills, the younger the children the better (Yeo et al., 2014). Parents and children have been taught through modeling of an activity then with continued encouragement to build confidence (DeFauw, 2017). DeFauw, (2017), explained that parents who are reluctant about writing or using different literacy skills has been shown that their child are more reluctant. Throughout DeFauw, (2017), writing activities the parents had begun to build the skills needed to support their children with their writing and wanted to learn more writing techniques that

would support their children.

Several researchers (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2016; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Quiroz, & Dixon, 2012; Santos, & Alfred, (2016). explained that they have found that weak early literacy skills can be due to children living in poverty and living in low-income African-American and Latino households. As a result of this there might be a noticeable gap between students in their literacy skills and it has been seen to that these students might not gather all of the necessary literacy skills needed (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2016; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Yeo et al., 2014). Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016), Phillips and Lonigan, (2009), Yeo et al. (2014) and Quiroz and Dixon, (2012) focused on children who lived in poverty, likewise to Sawyer et al. (2016) that focused on children and their mothers of African American or Latino backgrounds. Children who have grown up in lower income households are in need of more quality literacy interactions at home and at school (Quiroz, & Dixon, 2012). According to Quiroz and Dixon, (2012) families don't always speak English as their home language while when the children go to school English is the primary language that the children are being expected to speak. Across many studies the researchers have noted that it is important for families to have a positive and engaging home literacy environment that their children can learn and grow within (Phillips & Longian, 2009; Yeo et al., 2014; Işitan et al., 2018).

Tichnor-Wagner et al.(2016) and Sawyer et al. (2016) found that different home literacy activities such as, the students access to literacy materials, students' literacy achievement and the interactions of the mothers with the children through the literacy exposures impacted on their development of literacy skills. It was also found that positive interactions between parents reading behaviors and the parent-child interactions with the literacy skills would further literacy

achievements (Yeo et al., 2014). Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) investigated the different types and frequency of these literacy activities are presented within the home environment.

According to Phillips and Lonigan (2009), there was a higher chance of families with a middle range income to read books to their children daily while families who had a lower income did not always read daily to their children. Phillips and Lonigan, (2009) completed a study that surveyed families, first they looked at the socio-economic status (SES), parental presence, children within the household, then they asked each family questions based on what literacy resources they had available in their homes, these factors allowed the researchers to dive into how the children were receiving exposure to literacy. They discovered that families that had the resources began reading to their children as young as six months old and owned multiple books, this showed to have a positive impact on the children involved (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009).

Similarly, Sawyer et al. (2016) interviewed mothers at home to learn about how the families used home literacy with their young children. Quiroz and Dixon, (2012) also looked at the interactions between mother and child through their communication of literacy skills. It was presented that in most of the cases the second language and the language support between home and school is very important, the quality of the communication between the mother and child was another factor that supported the literacy skills (Quiroz, & Dixon, 2012). Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) found that there was a positive impact with children in Kindergarten and First Grade with the addition of literacy within the home environment. Sawyer et al. (2016) noticed that the families were implementing the literacy activities but they didn't fully understand their purposes.

Another aspect came from the father-child interactions that was explained by Santos, and Alfred, (2016) they looked that how fathers engaged with their children as they were the primary

caregivers, this was completed through interviews. It was determined that the fathers completed literacy activities at home as well as they had reading materials for their children (Santos, & Alfred, 2016). The interviews allowed for the fathers to express what they have used with their children to support their literacy needs, a lot of the fathers had other family members that were of great support (Santos, & Alfred, 2016). It was also noted that the fathers interactions with their children's literacy activities revolved around what they did in their daily lives (Santos, & Alfred, 2016). Along with Santos, & Alfred, (2016), Morgan, Nutbrown, and Hannon, (2009) discussed father's involvement in their children's literacy development. The fathers that were involved in the Morgan et al., (2009) study were a part of a family literacy program. This program promoted support with children in preschool and their exposure to literacy skills. Morgan et al., (2009) noted that fathers were not strongly involved in the center based meetings (not as appealing) but were more involved in the home visits. Even with that being presented the fathers were still engaging their children in literacy activities (Morgan et al.,2009).

Parental Engagement

Several researchers (Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, & Yuan, 2016; Merlo, Bowman, & Barnett, 2007; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule, Živoder, & du Bois-Reymond, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Newman, Staples, & Woodrow, 2016; Meyer, Ostrosky, Yu, Favazza, Mouzourou, van Luling, & Park, 2016) examined the connections that have been made between children's literacy skills and parental involvement with their children. Parental involvement does not need to be formal conversation it has been shown to be just a casual conversation about what is going on in each child's academic lives (Cabus, & Ariës, 2017). Sometimes teachers have sent home literacy activities for families to participate in with their child (Meyer et. al., 2016). These

studies have looked at a very critical time in a child's life, early childhood, working with children at this time has shown positive effects on child's literacy success as they continue through school (Ma et al., 2016; Merlo et al., 2007). Providing children with high-quality education that is also age appropriate is very important to spread the success of all children (Ma et al., 2016; Meyer et. al., 2016).

According to Ma et al., (2016), and Hornby and Lafaele (2011), it has been shown that parental involvement has played a large part in every child's success in their academic years, communication between parents and their child is just as important. Parents have been planting seeds in their children's academic lives, so that in the future they can succeed (Ule et al., 2015). Over time, children have been given more responsibilities, which should encourage them to be more motivated in enhancing their literacy skills (Newman et al., 2016; Ule et al., 2015). School and home literacy based events have shown to encourage parents to have a part in their children's literacy achievements (Newman et al., 2016; Meyer et. al., 2016). Literacy activities that have been provided by teachers to families can impact the ways the children are learning and what information they are gathering (Meyer et. al., 2016). Children who have been raised in a lower income household have been seen to have lower literacy skills, but if their parents are involved in their schooling and encourage them they will be able to succeed (Merlo et al., 2007; Ule et al., 2015). Parents have been supporting their children to want to succeed in school and monitor the activities that they are taking part of to ensure that they are making appropriate decisions (Ma et al., 2016; Merlo et al., 2007; Ule et al., 2015; Meyer et. al., 2016). It has been shown that parents who are more nurturing and express guidance their child will feel more self worth and value learning (Merlo et al., 2007; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015). According

to Meyer et. al., (2016), teachers have been trying to provide a teacher-parent relationship that will encourage improved literacy outcomes in their children, as well as provide parents with tools to support their children in areas that they might need more support in.

Most schools have programs for families to communicate with them about their student academically as well as to ensure they are not lacking the necessary tools to succeed (Ma et al., 2016). Connecting with schools has always been important, this has promoted strong relationships among parents and school personnel, children are always watching and have learned from their parents (Ma et al., 2016; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Newman et al., 2016). One of the major ways parents have been involved with their children at school has been through the communications effects made to ensure that their child is doing the best and that they are receiving everything they need (Cabus, & Ariës, 2017). An increase in parental involvement has shown to be beneficial to all students but more important to the students who seem to be struggling (Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015; Meyer et. al., 2016).

Positive learning outcomes have been connected to strong positive parental involvement with children in school (Ma et al., 2016; Ule et al., 2015). According to Ma et al., (2016) the area that has been given the most attention was the area of home to school connection. Some important areas that parents have contributed to their children's education have been in completing homework, reading stories, communication about the day and natural exposures to literacy in daily life (Newman et al., 2016). Parents were most involved in the child's schooling due to the attention brought to behavioral issues while parents still put effort into supporting their children academically (Ma et al., 2016). It has been shown that children thrive off of positive encouragement and do better when they have had the involvement of their parents in the areas

such as: encouragement to learn, given high expectations and parents have become involved with the education that their children are achieving (Ma et al., 2016; Ule et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Newman et al., 2016). According to Merlo et al., (2007) and Ule et al., (2015), the more nurturing parents have been during the early years of a child's life has been shown through their growth in their reading abilities. In Meyer et. al., (2016) research it was shown that families had noticed that their children were learning new concepts as well as they enjoyed the opportunity to read as a family.

In some cases there are barriers that prevent parents to be involved in their children's education (Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parent and teachers goals are focused on different aspects of the child's schooling such as reaching standards provided by a larger source whereas parents want to do what is best for their children. There needs to a compromise between what the school expects and making sure the children are receiving the appropriate education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Children's View of Home Literacy

Several authors (Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholek et al., 2018) presented the idea that home literacy exposure to children through different forms such as digital literacy and rich literacy language can provide positive impact on children in the future. In both the Marsh et al. (2017) and Wiescholek et al. (2018) studies, the focus was on the how children see their individual home literacy environments and how the environments are influencing the literacy skills of early learners.

Marsh et al. (2017) also noted the range of the different digital literacy activities that children are provided within their homes and how they are used in the families lives. Literacy

should be presented in a way that provides a rich space for literacy activities to be performed that can help students develop their literacy skills. Marsh et al. (2017) interviewed families and their children multiple times learning the different views that the children had based home having digital literacy at home. Overall Marsh et al. (2017) explained that now children are being exposed at home to the digital literacy, schools should as well be ensuring that they are aiding to the children's literacy learning for the future. Wiescholek et al. (2018) explained through questionnaires had had text presented but also had pictures next to them for the children to relate to what was being asked of them, the students were to express their views about their home literacy environments, literacy enjoyment and literacy frequency. Providing children with the necessary tools to gain the proper literacy skills showed that there was a better response to wanting to explore more books (Wiescholek et al., 2018).

Foundations of Literacy

Neumann et al. (2009), Breit-Smith et al. (2010), Roskos and Christie (2011) and Niklas, Nguyen, Cloney, Tayler, and Adams, (2016) discussed the ways that parent-child interactions may support the formation of emergent literacy skills. Children have shown more positive attitudes towards school and willingness to learn when their parents are involved (Uludag, 2008). Parents play key parts in supporting early literacy skills for young children which will develop further as they grow (Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011; Niklas et al., 2016). Teachers who have had the experience of working with families as preservice teachers are more likely to want to engage families within their teaching (Uludag, 2008). Preservice teachers as well as teachers need the exposure to different activities to engage families, so that their confidence level can build to include their students parents in their

classroom activities, this will then build the school-family relationship that will support literacy development (Uludag, 2008).

Home literacy environments are needed to support the increase in children's literacy developments as well as the ability to access to the necessary materials (Niklas et al., 2016). All children need to have the support of their families within their literacy development, through one on one support or the exposure to different forms of literacy (Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011). Families influences support children literacy development as early as birth during home literacy environments (Niklas et al., 2016). Breit-Smith et al. (2010) looked deeper into how parents report their home literacy activities and the differing literacy levels of the children.

Roskos and Christie (2011) looked at the relationship between play and literacy, children were observed as they played and connected language together, also referred to as the play-literacy nexus. Play environment should be literacy-enriched which in return can promote higher leveled literacy behaviors (Roskos and Christie, 2011). Children have interacted with literacy games, formal exposures and parental expectations to support their literacy achievements (Niklas et al., 2016). Before children enter school it is important to understand the home literacy environment that they have been in, as this should lead to what literacy skills the child has (Niklas et al., 2016). Teachers and families who provide early literacy skills to young children have opportunity to enrich their future literacy skills development (Roskos & Christie, 2011; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Niklas et al., 2016). It then all connects back to school readiness and academic achievement. Neumann et al. (2009) explained that parents should continuity work with their children on reading skills both formally and informally. Starting children out when

they are young can help guide further introduce for individualized children (Neumann et al., 2009). Parents and teachers can scaffold their students to ensure that they are receiving the literacy skills at the appropriate time that suits each individual child needs (Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos and Christie, 2011). There has been evidence of positive effects on children's literacy skills when the information is provided using the scaffolding technique.

Summary

The research studies above expresses the importance of home literacy and parental involvement on children's early literacy skills. Each study looked at different aspects of home literacy, through families, children and teachers viewpoints. The literature review was split up into five different themes that connect to one another. All five of these themes lead to a better understanding of how children, parents and teachers look at and incorporate literacy skills within their home and school environments.

Family Background. Family background presents the ideas that children form relationships at home and at school that will impact their literacy development skills (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011). It has been shown that at very young ages children all bring different literacy experiences with them as well their parents all have provided different levels of support (Santos et al., 2012; Cater, et al., 2009; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Children have shown greater improvements in their literacy interactions when they were provided with positive experiences (Santos et al., 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Schools have been

supporting the children by providing them with bridges between their home and school to strengthen their literacy skills (Moschovaki, 1999; Cater et al., 2009).

Home Literacy. The Home literacy environments section presented the ideas that children learn differently when presented with different environments to learn in, with the exposure to literacy earlier children can develop the necessary skills to succeed in the future (Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016 & Sawyer et al., 2016). Families all have put different emphasis on the importance of literacy, this then impacts the way their children are engaged with the different literacy activities (Işitan et al., 2018; Yeo et al., 2014). When families have provided their children with age appropriate literacy activities at home it has been shown to support their literacy development (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Saracho, 2017). It has been shown that the more frequent that literacy skills are presented to children the more engaged they will become with them (Yeo et al., 2014).

Parental Engagement. The parental engagement section presented the ideas that supported of children benefited from their parents being involved in their school activities ((Ma, et al., 2016; Merlo et al., 2007; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Newman et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2016). It was shown that when families have been their for their children, there has been an increase in the success (Ma et al., 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Research has shown that when parents and teachers work together to support children in literacy skills there was an increase in the willingness to learn (Newman et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2016). Certain areas that were looked at closely were the parental engagement with completing homework, reading together and the ability to communicate about the daily activities

to each other, these areas all showed to have positive effects on the children (Newman et al., 2016).

Children's View. The Children's View section lays out the different views that children bring to the table when they are asked their perceptions of home literacy, ranging from a rich literacy environment to an environment that contains digital literacy (Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholek et al., 2018). Children have been provided with different types of literacy activities such as digital activities and hands on activities (Marsh et al., 2017). Both types of literacy exposures provided children with different experiences that have allowed them to explore more literacy based activities; reading, writing and speaking (Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholek et al., 2018).

Foundations of Literacy. Foundations of Literacy explains how literacy is expressed through play, and the development of literacy skills using scaffolding tools (Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011). Children have shown more positive attitudes towards school when their families are involved in their literacy activities at home and at school (Uludag, 2008). Teachers who had the experience with working families have been more likely to engage their students families in their classroom as a result of having a higher level of confidence, the relationships that teachers make with families will support the children's literacy development (Uludag, 2008).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Children in preschool to kindergarten have presented a range of literacy abilities when they arrive in preschool and/or kindergarten (Moschovaki, 1999). The ability to learn and understand the leading factors as to what may be resulting in this range would become helpful for teachers to create a plan to try and connect families to school earlier (Saracho, 2017). Researchers (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011) have stated that there are gaps between children's home literacy and school literacy skills, teachers can support children by creating a bridge between the two. Having opportunities for families to engage in home literacy activities with their children can provide a time for children to learn from their parents (Saracho, 2017; Sawyer et al., 2016). This research addresses the question of “How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool and kindergarten?”

The question of “How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool and kindergarten?” has been looked at through an extensive literature review. The databases and related sources that have been searched have provided previous research studies that connect to the topic of teachers supporting families with the understanding of importance of home literacy. The principal investigator described the data collection process, the data analysis and the data synthesis. The data collection section depicted the studies that were used within the study as well as how the studies were organized. The data analysis sections explained how the studies were found and the common themes among the research. The synthesis section summarizes the findings from the data analysis.

Data Collection

The search began on ERIC using the keywords home literacy and young children and early childhood, this search came up with about 25 articles. Next, the search went to PsycINFO using the keywords family literacy and young children/early childhood, this search came up with about 30 articles. Then the use of Education Source was used using the keywords home literacy and parental involvement, this search came up with about 25 related articles. All of the searches will be found within the years of 2008-20018. This search has provided multiple research studies as well as other related keywords which then lead to a deeper search. After the completion of the research, the researcher determined the main idea for the research topic. The data then was organized into different categories, each category having a theme that the research all relates to. The different themes are be Families Background, Home Literacy Environments, Parental Engagement, Children's Views and Foundations of Literacy. These categories are used as a way to organize the data analysis.

Data Analysis

The initial analysis began when the studies were broken up into the different themes that all related back to the main idea of home literacy and how teachers can support families with it. Once the studies were gathered they were analyzed further to find the common themes among the ideas and participants. The principal investigator developed categories that came to the determine the findings for each category; then a synthesis of these findings showed the new findings of this study. The first category that has been described is family backgrounds, the second category that was depicted is home literacy environments, the third category that has been further investigated is parental involvement, the fourth category that has been explained is

children's views, the fifth category that laid out is foundations of literacy. The overarching themes that appeared within these studies are Home Literacy, School Literacy and Home and School Literacy Connections. Home Literacy, means that families are taking an active role in their children's literacy skills work at home. School Literacy, means that teachers have been providing students with the appropriate literacy skills. Home and School Literacy Connections, means that families are working with their children's teachers (school faculty) to ensure that their students are receiving the appropriate literacy support.

Family Background. Seven studies (Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011; Santos et al., 2012; Cater et al., 2009; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Otter, 2014) in this section all connected to the idea of how families backgrounds link to *home literacy and school literacy* connections. Moschovaki (1999), and Otter (2014) presented the idea of building a bridge between home and school to connect *home literacy and school literacy*. A child's background played a large role in how they viewed their *school literacy* in the future (Moschovaki, 1999). Santos et al., (2012) and Cater et al., (2009) stated that when parents are strongly involved with their children academically they notice there was an increase in the children's performance in their *school literacy*. When families are involved with their children by creating a *home literacy* environment their children are seen to be engaged more (Cater et al., 2009). Santos et al., (2012) strongly supports the idea that children need to be exposed to literacy skills through natural means such as; conversations or through activities that could pertain to their everyday lives, this will allow the students to build their *home literacy to school literacy connections*.

Home Literacy Environments. Six studies (Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Işitan et al., 2018; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Quiroz, & Dixon, 2012; Yeo et al., 2014)

looked into how the role of government and how different ways family literacy plays a role in children's *home literacy and school literacy*. Families literacy backgrounds can present both positive and negative effects on their children's *home literacy and school literacy* (Işıtan et al., 2018). Children should have consistent and frequent exposure to literacy skills through *home literacy and school literacy* (Yeo et al., 2014). Family members who read to their children at home can support their *home literacy and school literacy connections* (Yeo et al., 2014). Through *home literacy* children should be receiving developmentally appropriate activities (Işıtan et al., 2018). A *home literacy* environment typically builds upon children's language and vocabulary skills through informal and formal activities (Saracho, 2017). These findings presented that students can receive support from there *home literacy* which then will lead to improvements in their *school literacy*.

Parental Engagement. Seven studies (Ma et al., 2016; Merlo et al., 2007; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Newman et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2016) focused on the connections that are made between parental involvement and children's *home literacy and school literacy*. Communication is very important between families and children, it shows that families are interested in their children's *school literacy* (Cabus & Ariës, 2017). When children are younger teachers try to initiate this conversation by sending home a weekly or daily note to the parents about their children that discusses their *school literacy* (Meyer et al., 2016). These findings have presented that when parents provide their child with positive academic experiences their is a better chance that the child will want to succeed in *school literacy*. Teachers should provide (send home) literacy based activities to encourage parents to support their children's *home literacy* (Meyer et al., 2016).

Children's View of Home Literacy. Two studies (Marsh et al., 2017 & Wiescholek et al., 2018) focused on how children seen how their *home literacy* influenced their *school literacy*. Marsh et al., (2017) focused more on the digital technologies that children were using to develop their *home literacy*. Children whose parents read to them more or took them to the library more often showed to be engaged more with the digital literacy presented to them during *home literacy* and *school literacy* (Wiescholek et al., 2018). *Home literacy* and *school literacy connections* are made when the same type of digital literacy are being used (Marsh et al., 2017). According to Wiescholek et al., (2018), children were able to develop appropriate literacy skills using technology as long as they were familiar with the technology. These finding presented that children need to have a consistent exposure the the technology to be able to become familiar to gain the necessary information needed to develop their *home literacy* and *school literacy connections*.

Foundations of Literacy. Five studies (Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011; Niklas et al., 2016; Uludag, 2008) looked specifically at ways that parent-child interactions have effects on the development of *home literacy* and *school literacy connections*. Engagement with families does not come easy to everyone, but has been shown to have positive effects on communication between families and the school in specific areas such as *school literacy* (Uludag, 2008). Teachers should try to get to know what their students that are coming into their classroom with so they can build off of or provide the student with the extra help to succeed, this has shown to support their future *school literacy* (Niklas et al., 2016). *Home Literacy* needs to be weaved into the everyday activities to engage the children to want to learn (Niklas et al., 2016). Positive *home literacy* environments are needed to develop children's *home*

literacy and school literacy connections (Niklas et al., 2016). These findings presented that if families work with their children at home and then school builds off of it the student should be receiving the necessary skills to succeed. As well as if teacher try to send literacy based activities home with students the parents might feel more inclined to want to support their children and work with them at home too.

Table 1: Summary of Data Analysis: Types of *Family Literacy* Supports used at home and/or with collaboration with *School Literacy*

	Home Literacy (13)	School Literacy (8)	Home and School Literacy Connections (15)
Family Backgrounds	Moschovaki, 1999; Santos et al., 2012; Cater et al., 2009;		Huisman, 2012; Moschovaki, 1999; Hartas, 2011; Otter, 2014; Santos et al., 2012
Home Literacy Environments	Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016	Işitan et al., 2018; Yeo et al., 2014	Yeo et al., 2014; Saracho, 2017
Parental Engagement	Meyer et al., 2016; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015	Cabus & Ariës, 2017; Meyer et al., 2016	Meyer et al., 2016; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017; Ule et al., 2015
Children's View of Home Literacy	Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholak et al., 2018	Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholak et al., 2018	Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholak et al., 2018
Foundations of Literacy	Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011	Uludag, 2008; Niklas et al., 2016	Neumann et al., 2009; Uludag, 2008; Niklas et al., 2016

Synthesis

The results that have emerged from the analysis of each of the five categories now be

synthesized into findings that address the research question for this study. Each study is combined into a chart that represents the articles, themes and results. Presented are the highlights from the findings of the study. The findings now point to a answer or conclusion of the findings from the extensive literature review. To support the findings from the extensive literature review their is a professional development Prezi that will further support teachers abilities to engage families with their children's literacy abilities.

Table 2: Home Literacy and School Literacy support for Family and School Communication

	Home Literacy (4)	School Literacy (6)	Home and School Literacy Connections (10)
Family Backgrounds	Moschovaki, 1999; Santos et al., 2012*; Cater et al., 2009*		Huisman, 2012; Hartas, 2011; Moschovaki, 1999*; Otter, 2014*; Santos et al., 2012*
Home Literacy Environments	Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016	Işitan et al., 2018*; Yeo et al., 2014*	Yeo et al., 2014; Saracho, 2017
Parental Engagement	Ule et al., 2015; Cabus & Ariës, 2017*; Meyer et al., 2016*	Cabus & Ariës, 2017*; Meyer et al., 2016*	Meyer et al., 2016*; Cabus, & Ariës, 2017*; Ule et al., 2015*
Children's View of Home Literacy	Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholek et al., 2018	Marsh et al., 2017; Wiescholek et al., 2018	Marsh et al., 2017*; Wiescholek et al., 2018
Foundations of Literacy	Neumann et al., 2009; Breit-Smith et al., 2010; Roskos & Christie, 2011	Uludag, 2008*; Niklas et al., 2016*	Neumann et al., 2009*; Uludag, 2008*; Niklas et al., 2016*

**Home & School Communication*

An analysis of the data showed that there is a strong connection between

family literacy and school literacy (see Table 1). This led to the conclusion of the importance of *home and school communication*.

Family Background. Four studies (Moschovaki, 1999; Otter, 2014; Santos et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2009) in this section all showed a positive connection between *home and school communication*. Families showed to support their children more when teachers (school) communicated what they were doing or provided at home literacy activities (Moschovaki, 1999; Otter, 2014). Families were more involved with their children's school work when there were positive forms of communication between home and school (Carter et al., 2009). When schools make families feel that what they do at home is apart of what their children are doing at school there is a positive reactions from the families (Santos et al., 2012).

Home Literacy Environments. Two studies (Işitan et al., 2018; Yeo et al., 2014) in this section both showed that there was a positive connection between *home and school communication*. Families and teachers communicate about what they are teaching at home and at school there are positive connections (Yeo et al., 2014). When families and schools (teachers) provide the children with appropriate and frequent literacy activities there is a positive connection (Işitan et al., 2018).

Parental Engagement. Three studies (Cabus & Ariës, 2017; Meyer et al., 2016; Ule et al., 2015) in this section showed that there was a positive connection between *home and school communication*. Communication between families and schools (teacher) showed that families who are involved and the children will want to be more engaged in the learning (Cabus & Ariës, 2017). At school teachers have communicated with children about what they are working through, so then when this is carried over to families communicating with their children there is

positive results (Meyer et al., 2016). Families need to have consistent communication from the school to know they are supporting their children in a positive way.

Children's View of Home Literacy. One study (Marsh et al., 2017) in this section showed that there was a strong connection between *home and school communication*. When there has been communication between the school and families as to the type of technology that they are being used the students seemed to improve (Marsh et al., 2017). Communication between parents and schools (teacher) showed that children need to get a consistent exposure to the necessary literacy technology (Marsh et al., 2017).

Foundations of Literacy. Three studies (Neumann et al., 2009; Uludag, 2008; Niklas et al., 2016) in this section all showed that there was a strong connection between *home and school communications*. Families who were involved with their children in literacy activities at home had a positive effect on how their children performed in school in the same areas (Niklas et al., 2016). Teachers who are engaged in learning about each individual student and their families, this has been done through direct communication with the families, there has been a positive communication system created (Uludag, 2008). Without positive *home and school communication* children were found to not always succeed or lose interest (Neumann et al., 2009).

Chapter 4: Results and Application

Results of the Review

After an extensive literature review it was determined that the research found that there was a positive connection between family and school communication. The researcher has determined four key findings from this synthesis. The first finding was that when families had a positive communication connection with the school about what their child was doing in school the child showed improvements in literacy area such as reading, and writing. The second finding was that when families communicated with the teachers through written letters or emails about the literacy activities that families were doing at home there was a positive connection. The third finding was that when families showed their children through consistent literacy support that they wanted to be a part of what they were doing at school and in turn the children showed they wanted to be engaged in the literacy activities in school. The fourth finding was that when teachers get to know their students by communicating directly with families the students felt welcomed and were more willing to participate in school.

Application of the Results to a Professional Development Project

There was a large amount of support for classroom teachers from the findings in these studies. This knowledge base could support teachers in being able to provide the necessary and appropriate home and school literacy communication supports. Also, these findings could support teachers in the area of engaging families to become more apart of their children's school lives. A professional development presentation was beneficial in sharing the synthesis of this research. The most appropriate form of professional development to share this new knowledge is

through an engaging Prezi.

Design of the Professional Development Project

The design of this professional development project was in the form of a Prezi. This professional development Prezi was intended for teachers who teach children in preschool and kindergarten. The research that backs up this professional development has been found from studies that focused on preschool to kindergarten age children. The Prezi included a different section for each of the different types of family and school communication techniques. Each section provided details for teachers on how they would support families with literacy communication at home and at school. The Prezi was designed to allow teachers to see new forms of communication between homes and schools which provided a positive learning experience for young children. The Prezi would always be readily available to teachers at any point that they may need to reference different ways of communication with families. Prezi is a free resource, so school districts would not have to pay for this type of professional development. Prezi does allow for comments on the beginning page before present is pressed. This feature allows for teachers to collaborate between each other on the presentation itself. The Prezi was designed for preschool and kindergarten teachers.

Literacy Coaching Project Goals and Objective. The goal for this professional development project through a Prezi was to support preschool and kindergarten teachers who felt that they needed more resources on how to support families with communication with their children as well as with the school. The following learning objectives provided clarification to support this goal. The first objective of this Prezi was that the teachers will be exposed to more literacy based home to school communication techniques such as newsletters, face-to-face

conversations, and emails. The second objective was for the teachers to be able to collaborate directly on the Prezi by writing comments, leaving their suggestions or sharing their own ideas for the other teachers to read and respond back too. The Prezi provided an opportunity for teachers to take what they have learned and share it with families. Once they have shared their findings with their students and families, the teachers will be asked to come back to the Prezi to share their experience with the the different forms of communication through leaving new comments (newspaper, face-to-face conversations, emails). The professional development Prezi will be used as a reference for teachers to see different types of home to school communication techniques such as newsletters, face-to-face interactions and emails.

Proposed Audience. This professional development project was developed for an audience of preschool and kindergarten classroom teachers. The link to the Prezi would be provided to the preschool and kindergarten teachers. The Prezi link was all that the classroom teachers would need to participate in the professional development. The resources provided through the professional development would be kept on the Prezi and available for the teachers at any time.

Proposed Project Format and Activities (Appendix A) . The format for this professional development project is one section for each type of communication that will support preschool and kindergarten teachers. There will be access to some of the original research that was used to form the synthesis on the different forms of home and school communication. The provided access to some of the original research could be helpful for the teachers because some lay out explicit ways to support families to create positive communications. Some of the specific areas of positive communication are: newsletters, face-to-face communication, emails. Teachers

would provide their families with weekly newsletters, in the newsletters there would be an outline of what they are working on in literacy that week (reading and writing)(see Appendix A). Attached to the newsletters there would be examples of activities families could do at home with their children to build off of what they are working on in school. Teachers would also be provided with ways to communicate face-to-face with their students in their classrooms parents. In these face-to-face conversations the teachers would discuss with the families the highlights of the literacy activities that they are doing and suggest different ways parents can support their own children's reading at home. Another form of communication would be emails, in these weekly emails that teachers would send home to parents could explain what they did or will be doing in the upcoming weeks in their literacy areas. Teachers would then attach different literacy resources (links, books, review of weekly unit, youtube videos) for parents to work on with their children at home. Along with the different forms of communication that will be provided there will also be a place for teachers to add their own comments, thoughts, and other forms of communication for other teachers to view and try out in their classrooms. This could be used as a way for teachers to collaborate with one another and determine the best support for their classroom families.

Proposed Resources for Project. The proposed resources for this Prezi professional development included a way to access online internet and a computer (technology device) for the teachers. Due to the fact that Prezi is a free resource this form of a professional development was cost effective for school districts. The best way to provide the Prezi link to teachers was to send the in through an email, this way the teachers will have access to it. Access will be granted with just the Prezi link that is sent to the school email addresses.

Proposal Evaluation of Project. An effective way to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of the content and design of the Prezi for the professional development as well as to find out whether the project objectives were met, was a link in the last section, to an online survey (see Appendix B) through Google Forms. The participants (teachers) will be asked to score the effectiveness of the Prezi and then provide their feedback related to the Prezis' usefulness for this professional development. The provided survey was to used to figure out if the provided information was presented clearly, if the different supports provided were appropriately and served their purpose and if the teachers would use these family communication supports with their own students families.

Project Ties to Professional Standards

This professional development project connects to the Professional Standards of the International Literacy Association (ILA) because their Standard 5 encourages teachers to create “literate environments that affords opportunity to engage in meaningful ways by providing time, accessibility, tools, choice and support” (IRA, 2010). Also it encourages teachers to make sure that “student learning is positively impacted by positive teacher dispositions, such as high expectations, a physical environment, and a safe, low-risk social environment” (IRA, 2010). Classroom teachers who use the tools provided on the Prezi will be meeting this standard by creating literate environments and positive interactions between teacher, student and families. The following proposed professional development project also connects to the following New York State Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The CCLS within the “language” area of literacy there are supports for kindergarten. Examples are, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K.5 states “With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word

meaning” (CCLS, 2015) and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K.5.C states “identify real-life connections between words and their use” (CCLS, 2015). If the literacy communication school to home supports are used then these standards will be met.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

In today's society children have different family backgrounds and schooling has been viewed in many different ways. Communication has played a very important role when it comes to how children do in school especially in the area of literacy (reading and writing). The research question was “How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool and kindergarten?”. These findings came from thirty two studies. To answer the proposed research question an extensive literature review and analysis was completed, and have produced four findings. It was first found that when families had positive communications with the school about their children's literacy achievements (reading and writing) their children showed to make positive improvements. The second finding was that when families took an active part in communicating through newsletters, face-to-face conversations or emails with their child's teacher there was a positive reaction from the students. A third finding was that when families took an active role in their children's literacy activities at home based off of what they were doing at school the children showed to want to be more engaged in school. A fourth finding was that when teachers got to know their students through communicating directly with their families the students felt welcomed and were motivated to participate in school. The Prezi professional development addresses the research question by providing preschool and kindergarten teachers with different home to school communication techniques that have engaged families. It provided a layout of different forms of communication such as newsletters, face-to-face conversations to try to support families.

Significance of the Findings

These findings have been shown to be significant to preschool and kindergarten teachers because they have provided new knowledge about the impact that home and school communications has on students literacy improvements. Positive interaction at home with literacy activities at a young age have shown that they support children in elementary school (Santos et al., 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Sometimes teachers have sent home literacy activities for families to participate in with their child (Meyer et. al., 2016). According to Ma et al., (2016), and Hornby and Lafaele (2011), it has been shown that parental involvement has played a large part in every child's success in their academic years, communication between parents and their child is just as important. All of these findings showed that it is very important for families to continue to communicate with the school. They are also significant to the field of literacy because it provided new research about the importance of home and school communications to support students literacy achievements. This research all formed together is the baseline for the Prezi Professional Development. The Prezi looked closely at the different forms of literacy communications between home and school and provided different techniques to support them.

Limitations of the Findings

The findings from this study have limitations. The research that was used to complete this project was taken from the existing research and there wasn't much research specific for preschool and kindergarten teachers and children that used technology based techniques. Research was only found on the basic forms of communicating such as newsletters, face-to-face conversations and emails. Most of the studies that were found that included the older students

was based more on technology based techniques. The research was taken from a limited number of found studies.

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

The Prezi Professional Development answered the question for this research study that was “How can teachers support home literacy connections for families with children in preschool and kindergarten?” After completing a literature review and completing a synthesis of the new information, it was determined that there were four major findings; positive communications between families and school promoted positive student literacy achievement (reading and writing), when families kept a steady communication flow (newsletters, face-to-face conversations, emails) between themselves and the school students showed literacy improvements, when families took an active part in their children's literacy schooling their children felt supported so they showed improvements, and it was extremely important for teachers to get to know their students by communicating directly with families. Altogether these findings provided an answer to the research question. Home and school communication in the area of literacy (reading and writing) strongly supports student improvement.

Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations from this study provided the baseline for the recommendations for future research. The first recommendation for future research would be to look at a different variety of school and home communication techniques such as ones that use technology. A second recommendation for future research would be to complete a study, using local school districts to see what actual types of communication techniques are being implemented in classrooms. A third recommendation would be look at a larger range of ages to compare how the teachers

communicate with families.

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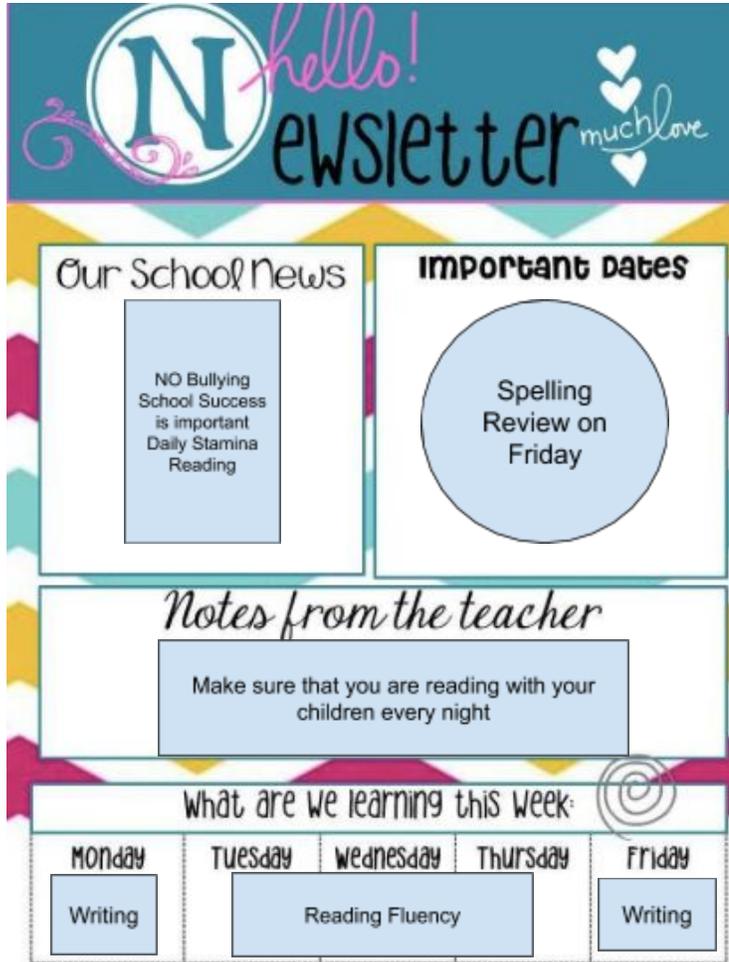
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Appendix A: Outline of Professional Development

Section One: Home and School Communications



*This would be an example of what a newsletter might look like.

*Teachers would send these home weekly.

*Teachers would edit it to fit their classroom and support their families.

Comments (0)

Avatar icon

Add comment

0 characters used (of 300 allowed) [Comment](#)

Teachers Comments:
(Prezi, has a section at the beginning of the presentation for the teachers to leave their comments)

Appendix B: Evaluation of Professional Development

Google Forms Evaluation Survey

1. How effective was this form of professional development for you?
2. How frequently do you think that you would refer to this Prezi?
3. What did you find most helpful about this Prezi as a form of professional development and why?
4. What did you find least helpful about this Prezi as a form of professional development and why?
5. Were you as a preschool or kindergarten teacher able to implement any of the home and school communications supports?
6. If you could change how this professional development was presented to you, how would you want to see it?
7. In your classroom, have you personally used any of these home and school communications supports to ensure that there is always a positive communication path between you and your students families?
8. Would you use any of the home and school communications techniques (newsletters, emails or face to face communication) to support your students within your classroom?

Suggestions/Comments: