

# The Effect of Family Literacy on Kindergarten Success

by

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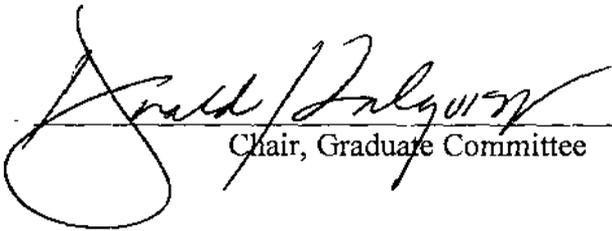
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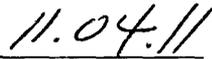
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I dedicate this Master's thesis to all Kindergarteners who bring in their own knowledge and literacies to enrich their kindergarten classrooms.

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## Abstract

*The Effect of Family Literacy on Kindergarten Success* study took place in a rural school district located in western New York. Five students were randomly chosen out of a kindergarten class that contained sixteen students. Parent surveys, a teacher interview and four classroom observations were conducted in order to collect research. Data was analyzed and four conclusions were made. Conversation is an important part of students' success in kindergarten. Parents included creative responses when answering what types of literacy activities they participate in with their children. Few parents reported daily reading and writing activities with their children. Lastly, it was concluded that the choices that students make during free play correlate with the activities that they participate in at home with their families. This study provided an opportunity for the researcher to see the important role that family literacy plays in kindergarten success as well as seek out ways of how to make family literacy known in the homes of her future students.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Students enter kindergarten with differing abilities. Some students may know how to write their names and read simple sight words while others can't recite the alphabet. An example of a mother and child engaged in literacy follows.

A stay-at-home mom greets her four year old off the bus from her half day, Universal Pre-Kindergarten class.

Mom: Hi, Jessica! (all student names are pseudonyms). How was school today?

Jessica: Good. What are we going to do later?

Mom: We need to make a birthday card for Grandma.

Jessica: Yay! Can I help write the words?

Mom: Of course sweetie. We need to practice that "s" of yours.

Jessica: I want to write that the card was from you too mommy. I know how to spell "mom."

Mom: Oh really? How?

Jessica: M-o-m!

Mom: Great job! You are so smart.

This example shows how important literacy is in this particular household.

Jessica was extremely excited about making birthday cards and getting to write her name along with others' names. She realized that writing is an essential part of living and has purpose (Zeece & Wallace, 2009). Literacy is a subject that encompasses every other subject that students will come across throughout their school careers (Swick, 2009). If you cannot read, write, listen, speak, and view, school won't make sense. The first few years of school are designed to teach students these skills in order to support successful learning throughout school years. But, "The home is the child's first school, the parent is the child's first teacher, and reading is the child's first subject" (Bush, 2009).

### *Significance of the Problem*

By the time students are old enough to attend kindergarten, they are expected to know a wide range of information. Without home support, they may have a chance for falling behind (Mendelsohn, 2002; Prescription for early reading, 2003; Van Schaick, 2011). When parents engage in family literacy with their students, they are setting them up for a literate life (Zeece, 2005). This can be accomplished by engaging in a variety of activities. Family literacy can take on many forms in the home. Each family brings their own knowledge of literacy and other topics when teaching their children in the home (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992). Creating birthday cards, helping write a shopping list, praying, and reading aloud to students are just a few ways to include students in family literacy (Johnson, 2010).

Some parents do not know how to provide literacy support for their students (Shephard & Roker, 2005). Although parents may believe that they do not have the knowledge to work with their students on literacy, they have a wealth of knowledge from their backgrounds and cultures (Moll, et al., 1992). As teachers, numerous ways exist to include our students' parents in activities that will help the students succeed in school while also creating a strong literate bond between them. Swick (2009) discusses how literate activities in the home need to be on-going and not just periodic happenings. In order to produce literacy achievement, a variety of activities need to take place on a regular basis.

### *Purpose*

This study was designed to find out if family literacy activities created kindergarten success. The research questions that were addressed in this study were, what literacy activities do families report? What correlations, if any, appear to exist between reported family literacy activities and a child's literacy skills, and choices? After using a variety of methods, this study helped me decide if family literacy activities were essential to helping students succeed in kindergarten. I shared my findings with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, in hopes of creating a successful, literate community.

### *Study Approach*

This qualitative study took place in a kindergarten classroom at a rural school district. The participants included five kindergarten students between the ages of five and six. Five students were chosen randomly. The chosen students then received a letter asking their parents to complete a survey. The survey measured what types of literacy activities the family engages in together. The kindergarten teacher was also interviewed to discuss her views on family literacy and how it is promoted. Observations of the students in the classroom occurred once a week for four weeks for approximately two hours each time.

### *Rationale*

I conducted this particular study to see what I can do as a future teacher to make sure that students are coming into kindergarten with the knowledge and skills that it takes to be a successful reader and writer at the ages of five and six. I used these specific

students from this specific classroom because I do not have a classroom of my own and I have a good relationship with the teacher. Before beginning this study, I discussed this study with her and she was willing to learn more about this topic as well. For this study, I chose to survey the parents of the students who had been selected to find out what types of family literacy or lack thereof was being used at home. I also wanted to interview the teacher of these students to find out how and if family literacy was being promoted in the schools. Observations of the students took place in the classroom atmosphere in order to see their reactions and responses to specific questions that were being asked by the teacher and the aide in the classroom.

### *Definition of Terms*

- **Family Literacy:** Activities that usually involve parents and students being engaged in reading and/or writing in the home, at school, or in the community (Johnson, 2010). family literacy could include the following: creating birthday cards, writing letters or lists, shared reading, read aloud, and prayer time (Johnson, 2010).

### *Summary*

Reading and writing are skills that make our lives easier. Although the first few grades in school are devoted to teaching the basic literacy skills, parents can support their students by giving them a jump start to their future by using literacy practices in the home (Zeece, 2005). Since there are parents who do not have the resources or knowledge to engage their child in literacy activities (Shepherd & Roker, (2005), the community can be a help in order to provide the proper information and resources to ensure students get a

good home education (Prescription for early reading, 2003). According to Swick (2009), parents/guardians need to continuously work with their students on literacy activities, not just sporadically. The results of this study helped decide whether or not family literacy activities need to be promoted with the help of teachers and school districts.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter describes literature that is significant to the research of this thesis study. It is organized into three sections: a) The Importance of Family Literacy, b.) Literacy in Kindergarten, c.) Ways to Support Parents. At the end of each section, the literature will be used to show the significance of the research in this thesis.

### **The Importance of Family Literacy**

Although educators are expected to teach reading, students learn first from their parents (Zeece, 2005). Read aloud is a great way for parents to model that print has meaning along with general book handling techniques such as front cover, back cover, left to right reading (Memfox.com ; Prescription for early reading, 2003). Reading aloud to students and practicing other literacy activities in the home cannot be completed sporadically and still have a lasting effect on students (Swick, 2009). Daily literacy interactions are necessary to make progress (Swick). The author and literacy expert, Mem Fox, believes that parents should read at least three times per day to their students even if it is the same story. By the time they enter school, students should have heard more than 1,000 stories (Memfox.com). In order to meet Fox's expectations, reading and literacy activities are crucial and need to be continued daily for at least ten minutes each day (Memfox.com).

Swick (2009) discusses the benefits preschool family literacy programs have on students. When students and their parents participate in family literacy programs during the preschool years, they gain numerous benefits that will stay with them for the rest of their lives (Swick). If students participate in these family literacy programs, they are

more likely to be ready for school compared to students who did not participate in a program (Swick). Another benefit is that they are more successful throughout their school careers (Swick). They stay on grade level and rank high in reading and literacy skills (Swick).

Mendelsohn (2002) sees many students with medical problems, including speech and language delay in an “economically disadvantaged population” (Van Schaick, 2011; Prescription for early reading, 2003). If speech and language isn’t developed early on, there will be a delay, and therefore, when students enter kindergarten they will be behind other students, and have a lower chance at school success (Prescription for early reading). The studies also show that if students and their families take part in family literacy programs during the preschool years, the students are more likely to maintain an independent living style more effectively as they grow up (Swick, 2009; Warner, 2008). Family literacy programs that are offered when students are in preschool give the students a better life overall (Kirp, 2007; Swick). Students are more likely to graduate high school as well as go on to college level (Kirp, 2007; Swick). Students who have participated in family literacy are more likely to have a career that has meaning and overall have economic stability (Kirp; Swick).

Although the above research illustrates how family literacy is important to a child’s early development and throughout the rest of a child’s life, a contradiction exists in the research. A study conducted by Hartas (2010) shows no correlation between learning at home and a child’s success in school. Hartas’ study began in 2001-2002 with 19,000 students between the ages of 9-11 months. The study then followed these same

students two other times when they were three and again when they were five years of age (Hartas). Parent interviews took place as well as a teacher questionnaire (Hartas). This particular study used three sets of measures such as socio-economic, home-learning and Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) (Hartas). The study found that if a child came from a wealthy home and the parents had a good educational background, the child will have more success throughout school. The number of activities that were done at home with students didn't have a large impact on their school success. Hartas also stated that the higher the education received by the students' parents, the more success the students had. However, the study did say that the more money that parents had, the more they were able to put towards learning materials such as books and other learning manipulatives such as toys (Hartas). This means that the child would be living in a "home environment conducive to learning" (Hartas). Hartas' study had a literacy specialist comment on the study's results. Sue Palmer, a literacy consultant and early-years specialist, "insists that parents who teach their students rhymes or songs can influence school results" (Bloom, 2010, p.1) making students more successful in school and throughout their life. Sue Palmer's statement goes along with why family literacy is an important aspect in the home of students who are learning emergent literacy. Since family literacy has the reputation to be essential in a student's success in school, in this thesis, I will study random students to learn whether they come from a home that includes family literacy and how the home affects the students' success at school.

## **Literacy in Kindergarten**

When students enter kindergarten, they are coming in with funds of knowledge, or “the knowledge [they] gain from their family and cultural backgrounds” (Gonzalez, 2005). Zeece (2005) agrees that different families participate in different literacy activities based on cultural suggestions. Watson (2004) concurs that culture plays a large part in literacy practices as well as ethnicity, class, and gender. Personal differences such as those mentioned above may be the reason for parents not knowing or understanding literacy enough to mirror it for their students (Watson).

Heath (1982) compares three different communities and how the individuals in the communities react to education based on their home experiences with print. Maintown, Roadville, and Trackton have different ways of engaging their students in literacy activities at home. For example, in Maintown, many of the parents of the students are teachers. The students have a wide range of experiences with books and print from as young as six months old. These particular experiences change and become more intense as the child becomes older. By the time they are three years old, they are expected to stop interacting with the book and listen attentively while an adult reads to them. Roadville students are talked to and interacted with from the time they arrive home from the hospital. It is average for two-year olds to own about twelve books with at least eight books that contain the alphabet or numbers. Roadville preschool students are given cloth books at first and then graduate to books that help them acquire gross motor skills such as zippers, buttons, etc. It is safe to say that Roadville parents use books as a way of teaching and not just for pleasure. Reading occurred before naps and bedtime or when a

child became upset (Heath). The town of Trackton is not like Maintown or Roadville. Babies who lived in Trackton were brought home to a house that did not consist of cribs or other baby furniture and necessities. Trackton babies were often held and cuddled throughout the day and were by their parents' sides at bedtime. Students in Trackton generally played with household items for toys such as spoons, pots, and pans. At Christmastime, Trackton students received toys, but rarely any educational toys such as puzzles or books. Although students in Trackton did not read regularly, the adults did engage in reading the newspaper and the Bible as well as brochures. The adults did not sit and read directly to the students. By the time that Trackton students were between the ages of two and four, they began telling verbal stories.

Johnson (2010) conducted a study on the Jones family and their thoughts and practices of literacy. This study took place in a rural community in the southeastern United States. The purpose of Johnson's study was to see how this particular African American family practiced literacy in their home. The African American family Johnson studied valued literacy and practiced it in multiple forms. These forms included domestic tasks, religious practices, as well as maintaining finances, learning, and entertainment to name a few.

Just as families have differing views and opinions of literacy, kindergarten classrooms contrast in their schedules (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). Some school districts have full day kindergarten while other districts hold a half day program. Hendler & Nakelski discuss in their article how the Levittown School District investigated what success students had by attending Kindergarten for a full day versus attending for a half

day. The Levittown School District concluded that “the students’ handwriting, muscle strength and letter formation enhanced substantially... Moreover, the students increased their ‘toolbox’ of reading strategies, sight word recognition and their awareness of print and phonics” (Hendler & Nakelski). This study shows that full-day kindergarteners were able to make a bigger gain from the program. Hall-Kenyon, Bingham, & Korth (2009) performed a study that related to full and half day kindergarten programs and the students’ achievement. Two schools in the same school district were used as participants in Hall-Kenyon, et al.’s study. Eight classrooms were used; four full-day, and four half-day programs. The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) was used as a measuring tool. This is an “observational instrument designed to assess instructional quality in preschool through third grade classrooms and is based on the interactions of teachers and students in the classroom” (Hall-Kenyon, et al., p.33). According to Hall-Kenyon, et al.’s study, full-day kindergarten students performed higher on many literacy assessments including rhyming, letter-sound relationships and word recognition. Half-day kindergarten programs obviously have a shorter time span to fit their literacy block into, meaning students don’t have as much time to practice literacy skills. My thesis study will occur in a full-day Kindergarten.

Kindergarten schedules clearly fluctuate depending on the model that the district chooses (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008). Many kindergarten teachers utilize their literacy block to the maximum to enhance their students’ literacy skills by using a balanced method that includes read alouds, independent reading, shared reading and guided reading (Hendler & Nakelski). Multiple kindergarten teachers are beginning to

maximize literacy instruction by including parents in the process (Gibson & Scharer, 2007). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) includes that “parents should be actively involved in the education of their students in order for them to succeed” (Hendler & Nakelski, p.61). In order to actively involve parents in the learning process of their students, teachers are encouraging students to read at home with parents and guardians (Gibson & Scharer, 2007). Participants in Gibson & Scharer’s study included twenty three students from six urban Kindergarten classrooms. The researchers visited the classrooms eighty two times; visits lasting an hour each time. During the visits, the researchers took field notes, documenting interactions between the teachers and students as well as school-home literacy interactions. In Gibson & Scharer’s study, teachers had students take books home to read with their parents, siblings, friends, etc. Students were engaged and were making progress on their literacy assessments).

For those students who enter kindergarten with minimal literacy skills, supplemental reading may be needed (Cooke, Kretlow & Helf, 2010). Depending on the district, supplemental reading could be offered at the beginning of the school year and continue through the school year (Cooke, et al.). The study conducted by Cooke, et al. took place in two urban school districts that had a large number of kindergarten students who needed supplemental reading. School A started supplemental reading at the beginning of the school year while School B started their supplemental reading program at the beginning of the second semester. The researchers used DIBELS testing as a means of assessing the students. Cooke, et al.’s study showed that students who received supplemental reading services for the entire kindergarten school year improved in

phonemic awareness and early decoding skills compared to students who only received supplemental reading services for part of the kindergarten school year. Ukrainetz, Ross & Harm, 2009 agrees that phonemic awareness is an essential part of instruction for students when they are in the process of learning how to read. Phonemic awareness is also highly recommended by the National Reading Panel (2000). Phonemic awareness is being taught in numerous classrooms and assists with classifying students who may need supplemental reading. The more phonological awareness skills that a kindergarten student has, the more likely the students are to succeed in reading achievement such as comprehension skills and fluency. Ukrainetz, et al.'s study focused on phonemic awareness and took place over a four week period. Three different treatments took place from October to December. The forty-one Kindergarteners who were involved all scored below grade level on the DIBELS test at the initial testing. The students were divided into three different groups to receive the different treatments (one treatment per group). DIBELS testing was used throughout the study as a measure of progress. All three groups made gains throughout the study no matter what treatment plan their group was given. This particular study taught phonemic awareness by using the concept of print and then discussed the letters that students came in contact with. With this in mind, reading practices were being taught without students being aware of it, which then brings out more proficient readers.

Although Cooke, et al. and Ukrainetz, et al.'s studies focused on the importance of phonemic awareness and reading, there are other strategies that work for teaching students how to read (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). Miscue analysis is another way that

students learn to read since all humans tend to learn from their own mistakes (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). Using this technique, young readers begin to understand how to make sense of words and use them to make meaning (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). This process is especially helpful to those students who need extra support. There are teachers who meet with students with special needs and review their miscue analysis on a daily basis. Students who review their miscue analysis become aware of how they read and what mistakes they may be repeating consistently (Owocki & Goodman, 2002).

### **Ways to Support Parents**

Multiple family literacy articles relate to what can be done to support parents with low literate ability or the lack of tools to foster their students in literacy activities (Zeece, 2005). Zeece and Zeece & Wallace (2009) agree that literacy activities should be sent home from school to assist parents with the necessary tools to create a family literate environment. Zeece suggests that parents read aloud to students as well as share the book reading responsibilities with their students. One strategy that Zeece & Wallace adopted was called BAGS or Books And Good Stuff. BAGS are simply sacks of literacy materials for early childhood professionals to send home with students to engage in with their family members. Although many teacher supply companies commercially sell literacy kits, BAGS is a simple procedure that any teacher could put together with careful thought. When using the Books And Good Stuff approach, teachers need to think about each student and students' family situation when selecting what to put in their student's bag (Zeece & Wallace). BAGS should include the following: a) books that are old and new but are within the same theme or level, b.) Literacy activities that are

developmentally appropriate for students such as pictures to color, dot to dot, etc., c.) a small game that is related to the theme or level, d.) a journal that gets passed from student to student, e.) a parent letter that suggests ideas for using the bag, and f.) any additional materials that have been donated (Zeece & Wallace). My study will help determine if teachers should send materials home and give suggestions on what could be done in order to enhance students' literacy experiences.

Research states that newsletters can be a tool to parents since parents can provide children with the assistance children need to support their own students in their literacy development (Shepherd & Roker, 2005). Although Shepherd & Roker's article outlines a project regarding ways newsletters affect parents of adolescents, the project is relevant to parents of emergent readers as well. The project began by deciding which topics should be included by holding meetings that encouraged parental involvement regarding content published in the newsletters. The project consisted of four newsletters that would be published and available for parents of adolescents to read. The researchers concluded that after parents of adolescents read the newsletters, they were less apprehensive of raising a teenager. This outcome resulted from parents receiving useful information that will help in the upbringing of their children. Depending on the results of my study, newsletters may be a way for teachers to communicate support to parents if the study suggests that communication and support is needed. Teachers and other education professionals seem to play a large part in parent involvement and whether family literacy activities are taking place in the home.

Local and national organizations are willing to support families in order to ensure family literacy is taking place in the home. Some organizations that support families in literacy are the American Library Association (ALA), the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Association of Early Childhood Education (NAEYC), the American Medical Association (AMA), and the American Publishers Association. Foundations also focus on students such as the Annie B. Casey Foundation (Watson, 2004). Watson outlines the above mentioned foundations and how they focus on the fact that parents need to make sure they educate themselves so that they can be teachers for their students. Also each foundation has its own trademark, such as making sure each child has a book, by loaning or donating books. In addition, some foundations have trainings that will help parents understand how to educate their students in literacy as well as other skills. I hope that the results from my thesis will show what types of family literacy activities students and their family engage in and how that correlates with their success in school. Newsletters could be another way that teachers could include parents in what is happening in school in order to extend literacy instruction at home. Also if the study shows that parents need more support in involving their students in family literacy activities, the above mentioned organizations could be mentioned by teachers or the school could advertise workshops that the organizations may be holding in order to meet the parents' needs.

### **Summary**

Family literacy should be practiced daily in the home to ensure students' success during their Kindergarten experiences (Swick, 2009; Memfox.com) since parents are

their child's first educators (Zeece, 2005). Although there is a large amount of research showing that family literacy leads to kindergarten success (Swick; Memfox.com), there is also research that demonstrates that there is no correlation between family literacy and school success (Hartas, 2010). Culture and opinions of literacy in the home can cause students to enter kindergarten with different funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, 2005; Watson, 2004; Zeece). If minimal school-oriented support was given to students in the home, supplemental programs in Kindergarten are known to cause progress and success by first grade (Cooke, et al., 2010). Although some supplemental programs only focus on phonemic awareness, there are other programs that use miscue analysis as a means of teaching young students how to read (Owocki & Goodman, 2002).

School districts develop different models of kindergarten such as half-day and full-day sessions (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008; Hall-Kenyon, et al., 2009). Performance of students in a full-day kindergarten has been shown to outperform students in a half-day kindergarten programs (Hall-Kenyon, et al., 2009).

Kindergarten teachers have also begun asking parents to engage their students in literacy activities in the home to add to the students' literacy knowledge. Parents don't always have the proper tools to maximize their literacy instruction (Zeece, 2005; Zeece & Wallace, 2009). With this being said, programs and organizations are available to work with parents to give them the education they need in order to educate their students in literacy and other areas (Swick, 2009; Watson, 2004). Along with programs, educators are beginning to include parents in the education process by sending home literacy activities that parents and students can work on together (Zeece, 2005; Zeece & Wallace,

2009). Shepherd & Roker (2005) suggest that newsletters can be sent home to inform parents of activities that they can engage in with their child to enhance their literacy development.

Family literacy is an important part of kindergarten success. It is not just the job of the teacher to provide this teaching as students look up to their parents for academic support as well. My study will be analyzing research to get insight as to what family literacy activities families engage in with their children and how that correlates to their children's success in school.

## **Chapter Three: Study Design**

### *Introduction*

This study was designed to see if families of kindergarten students are engaging in literacy activities and if the engagement in literacy affects the success of the students in the classroom. A variety of methods were used to collect and analyze data.

### *Research Questions*

This study was focused on the following questions:

- What literacy activities do families report?
- What correlations, if any, appear to exist between reported family literacy activities and a child's literacy skills and choices?

### *Participants*

The research took place in a kindergarten classroom that was made up of 16 students. The classroom was located in an elementary school in a rural community. This small town school was situated in western New York. Out of the sixteen students, 8 were girls and 8 were boys. All the participants came from low to middle-income families. A convenience sample with randomly chosen participants was used for this study. Every student in the classroom was asked to participate in this study, and then five students were chosen randomly to be observed. Those who were chosen were observed to find out how they perform in the classroom compared to the amount of family literacy support that is being offered at home.

### *Context of the Study*

This study took place in a kindergarten classroom that was not my own. This particular classroom was a very colorful and happy place. Bright bulletin boards bordered the classroom with students' artwork as well as learning materials. A section of the classroom was designated for the calendar and morning message accessories such as a counting chart and straws to count the number of school days. The classroom was made up of three tables where the students sit. There were also two other tables where the teacher or aide could work with the students in small groups or individually. The classroom was stocked with a wide variety of books that students had the opportunity to read throughout the day. The students engaged in learning on the SMART Board daily, as there was no chalk board or white board in the classroom. Students learned through technology on the three computers that were provided for their use. The students used computers for ELA and Math centers as well as during free play. Students also frequented the writing center during free play to work with crayons, markers, and paper. Toys lined the shelves for students to play with during free play at the end of the day.

### *Positionality of the Researcher*

When this study began I had two semesters left in my graduate studies for a master's degree in childhood literacy. I held a New York State initial teaching certificate in childhood education grades 1-6 as well as a certificate in Birth-2. I completed the requirements for an extension in students with disabilities grades 1-6 certificate as well.

Substitute teaching for the past 6 years as well as interactions with my five year old niece have encouraged me to want to become a literacy specialist. When I watched

my niece grow from a newborn to a Pre-K student it made me tremendously interested in students learning to read, write, and become literate beings. My sister in-law was a stay at home mom and I saw how she worked with my niece daily on literacy activities. This was one of the main reasons family literacy has gained my attention. I saw how much my niece has improved just over the past months and wish that every student could enter kindergarten with the knowledge that she possesses.

The classroom where this study took place was a familiar area for me. I substituted frequently in this room and the students knew me quite well. I also had a personal connection with the teacher and the teacher aide in the classroom. The classroom teacher was my fifth grade teacher, and the contact between us has been consistent throughout the years. The aide in this classroom was part of my family, my aunt.

### **Data Collection**

Several techniques were utilized to gather the data necessary to conduct this study. The data that was collected from the parents, the teacher, and the observations from the classroom were analyzed in order to come to a conclusion about family literacy and its importance.

#### *Parent Survey*

The first instrument that was used was a parent survey. Questions on the survey asked parents to generate responses. The questions dealt with the topic of family literacy and how family literacy is used in the home. See Appendix A for the survey questionnaire.

### *Teacher Interview*

The second instrument used for this research study is a teacher interview. Interview questions included the teacher's thoughts on family literacy. See Appendix B for interview questions.

### *Classroom Observations*

The third instrument that was used to gather information for this study was classroom observations. I visited the classroom one time a week for approximately two hours each time. This helped me to see how the students responded to literacy-type questions and activities in a classroom setting. The data that was collected through observations not only included the five chosen students, but also their interactions with the teacher, teacher aide, and other students. All participants remained anonymous by using pseudonyms. See Appendix C for observation dates.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Parent Survey*

Once the initial parent surveys were returned to me, I began going through them to see what types of family literacy, if any, were being practiced in the home. After seeing what types of family literacy were being practiced, I analyzed my information by making a chart for each student that displayed the correlation between the parent survey to the students' literacy choices and skills. Then I took this information and began observing the students and recording their behaviors and actions during literacy practices in the classroom.

### *Teacher Interview*

At the end of the study, I took the information I received from the teacher and used it towards making my interpretations when reviewing my observations. The information that I gained from this teacher interview was analyzed by creating a chart to easily access the answers to the questions that were asked. This information was used in comparison with the information that I received from the parent survey. The results helped me to see what I could do as a future teacher in helping families develop literacy routines with their children to increase their kindergarten success.

### *Observations*

Observations were used to see how the information that was received about literacy practices in the home through the survey affected the students' success at school. When the observations were completed, I analyzed my data by making a chart for each student that displayed the correlation between the observation to the students' literacy choices and skills.

### **Criteria for Trustworthiness**

This study was considered valid. Prolonged engagement took place since this study lasted for four weeks. Persistent observations took place. I was in the classroom one time a week for approximately two hours each time. There was one teacher interview, and surveys sent home to parents. With the above mentioned observations, interviews, and surveys, triangulation was met. Using the three sources of data assured that the data cross-checked itself. Confirmability was met because after the data was

received and analyzed, it was decided whether more family literacy activities need to be promoted to parents of young students in order to increase their skills for kindergarten.

### **Time Schedule**

Data collection began during the middle of May and continued until the end of the 2010-2011 school year. The observation and interview times depended on my availability as well as the classroom teacher's schedule and availability. Analyzing data and the preparation of results of this study continued through the summer and fall of 2011.

### **Limitations**

Limitations were attached with this study. Biases played a major factor in research. An interview took place between me and the classroom teacher as well as surveys from the parents. The teacher and parents played a large part in this study and if they weren't stating the entire truth that will never be known. Also, I could only use surveys that were returned. This hindered the results at the end of the study. Another limitation for this study was that it did not begin until the near end of the 2010-2011 school year; schedules were altered due to state testing and other activities provided by the school. The weather at the end of the school year in western New York was hot and, therefore, moods and behaviors were changed due to this factor. There was also a time that the participants in this study were absent or out of the room for pull-out services.

### **Summary**

A study that focused on learning whether families of kindergarten students were engaged in literacy activities and if family literacy affected the success of the students in

the classroom was conducted. The study began in the middle of May and continued to the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Participants included five kindergartners from a classroom that was not my own. The classroom had an inviting atmosphere where learning took place in multiple forms. Data was collected through a number of methods including, surveys, an interview, and multiple observations. Using the three above mentioned ways of collecting data was analyzed after the collection had taken place. Since I played an important role in this study as the researcher, my positionality needed to be recognized. This study was valid through the research practices that I used. Although it was considered valid, there were limitations that need to be taken into account when reading the study.

## **Chapter 4 Findings**

The purpose of this study was to find out what literacy activities families engage in with their children and how that may correlate with the children's literacy skills and choices in Kindergarten. The study took place at a rural school district in a kindergarten classroom. Five students were chosen randomly to be observed, and parents of those students were surveyed. A teacher interview was also conducted to learn the teacher's opinion of family literacy and how it influences kindergarten success. The research questions that were explored in this study were as follows:

1. What literacy activities do families report?
2. What correlations, if any, appear to exist between reported family literacy activities and a child's literacy skills and choices?

The data collection process included observational notes, a parent survey, and a teacher interview. To ensure triangulation, the data was analyzed using evidence from all three data collection instruments.

### **What literacy activities do families report?**

A parent survey was sent home to the five randomly chosen students. This survey consisted of questions that asked parents to state whether they had heard of family literacy and if they practiced it in their homes. The survey also asked parents to identify what types of literacy activities were practiced in their homes and how often. Family literacy was defined at the top of the survey for parents' reference. Family literacy was defined in the parent survey as the following:

Activities that usually involve parents and children being engaged in reading and/or writing in the home, at school, or in the community (Johnson, 2010). Some activities that Family Literacy could include are creating birthday cards, writing letters or lists, shared reading, read aloud, and prayer time (Johnson, 2010).

Although this is the definition that the parents received at the top of their surveys, I now realize that the definition should have included listening and speaking as part of the definition as well as what was actually included. Through the observations that I completed, listening and speaking played a large part. Observations included the students being read aloud to and students speaking to answer questions. Students' language was also observed such as throwing temper tantrums and answering questions asked by the teacher.

Of the four surveys returned, two families had heard of family literacy through home, family, and church. The other two families were unaware of the term *family literacy*, but still stated that family literacy was practiced in their homes.

A variety of literacy activities were reported being practiced in the home. Reading books and magazines together, writing letters and birthday cards, and working in kindergarten workbooks were reported by a majority of the parents. Bible reading and prayer time were also reported by a parent who learned of family literacy from the parent's church in conjunction with the other practices listed by parents. A parent who was unaware of family literacy stated that her child reads baseball stats on the television as part of a family literacy activity. Another unaware parent also reported that her child writes out her alphabet on a daily basis. The number of times per week that family

literacy activities were being engaged in varied. The four answers that were received were as follows: a.) 5-7 times per week, b.) 3-5 times per week, c.) 5 times per week, and d.) 4 times per week when our schedules aren't busy. When the parents were asked how it made them feel when engaging in these activities with their child, three out of the four parents answered a.) It makes me feel happy, b.) I feel closeness and the satisfaction that my child is learning, and c.) I enjoy it. The fourth survey had the fifth question answered, but answered in how it makes the child feel instead of how the parent feels when engaging in family literacy activities with the child. The parent stated that "it gives them (children) motivation skills to help improve themselves and it gives them (children) a sense of self worth."

Although one child's family did not return their survey, it may be evident, through my observation of the child in the classroom that she participates in family literacy activities in her home and community. During an observation of a discussion about Memorial Day, Sadie (all names are pseudonyms) proudly raised her hand and said that she knew how she was going to celebrate Memorial Day. "I am going to Memorial Park to hear about the soldiers" (Appendix D). This conversation took place the week before Memorial Day, and Sadie did not hesitate when answering what she was going to do. Another moment during observation that shows that Sadie spends time with her parents and has conversations with them is when I commented on her necklace. I told Sadie that I liked her necklace and her response was, "It is from "Anta, (Atlanta) Georgia" (Appendix D). Many kindergarteners would not have come up with this type of answer. It is apparent that Sadie has conversations with her parents about many topics

such as holidays and traveling. Sadie seems to learn by conversations and by asking questions, which is also evident from the classroom observations that I conducted.

**What correlations, if any, appear to exist between reported family literacy activities and a child's literacy skills and choices?**

After completing surveys, observations and an interview, I was surprised at the lack of correlation between reported family literacy activities and a child's literacy skills and choices in kindergarten. Four of out of the five students returned their parent survey. These students all reported doing activities at home, but for one student, the activities listed were vague and unclear if they meet the definition provided. Peyton's survey stated that their family practices family literacy four times a week when their schedules aren't busy. Her parents responded by saying that they do "arts and crafts, games, adding numbers, reading a special book and activities outside" (Appendix A). The listed activities could relate to literacy but depending on how they were used, the child may or may not have picked up on the learning concept.

While observing Peyton, a variety of behaviors were noticed that would make one wonder if her family literacy practices at home relate to her choices in the classroom. She is an active participator, but tends to get answers incorrect or she needs clues to get the answer correct. For example, the teacher asked the question, "If you know any parts of this plant (diagram), raise your hand." Peyton did not initially raise her hand until two students had already gone up to the diagram. After that she raised her hand and was called on. She went up to the diagram, but pointed to a part that another student had already done. Peyton eventually answered the word correctly with a little help from the

teacher (Appendix E). Peyton's manners and her language imitate the language that may be being used at home. There were times during the observations where Peyton would ignore the teacher or raise her voice. During the June 16 observation, the teacher asked Peyton twice to take down her breakfast tray and she just sat there and continued to eat. During another observation, the teacher asked Peyton to go clean her face after eating breakfast. Peyton got up and walked over to me and in a loud, rude voice said, "I am not dirty!" (Appendix F). At times she will throw a tantrum if she doesn't get what she wants. For example, Peyton threw a tantrum because she wanted it to be her turn to paint her fish, but the teacher chose two other friends, who were doing their work at their seats, to go to the painting center. She stomped her feet, and slapped her hands down on the table (Appendix G). At times Peyton acts out before thinking. While the teacher was holding a box with a surprise in it, she began banging and hitting the box because she was so excited. This was not a good choice since there were live caterpillars inside the box (Appendix D). Another time when Peyton did not think before acting was when a classmate from last year (Peyton is in her second year of Kindergarten) walked into the room. She became so excited that she ran up to him and gave him a hug and a kiss on the cheek (Appendix G). Overall, Peyton makes certain choices that show family literacy influence, but other choices make me wonder if she receives the types of home literacy support that would help her to perform successfully in Kindergarten.

After reviewing Peyton's parent survey I noticed that there were few correlations between the survey and Peyton's skills. Peyton's parents reported that she reads books at home by herself and she has books read to her. During class she primarily listens

attentively to stories when the teacher is reading a book. For a kindergartener, actively listening is a skill that develops the more that a child is engaged in it and therefore if she listens attentively at home often, that skill will carry over into a classroom setting.

The survey that Peyton returned said that she frequently plays board games at home with her families but it did not specify which type of board games. There was one correlation between the activities that Peyton participates in home the choices that she makes during the school day. During free-time at the end of the day, Peyton chose to play a board game with a few peers and the teacher. The game’s main concept was colors. She may have chosen this as her activity for free-time because it is familiar to her.

Peyton		
	<b>Literacy skills</b>	<b>Choices</b>
<b>Parent survey</b>	<b>Listens attentively may be from listening to books read to her at home</b>	<b>Arts and crafts, board games, adding numbers, reading a special book, or on her own, activities outside.</b>
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Will raise her hand to answer questions, but needs help or hints at times to get the question correct</b>	<b>Plays a game (colors and shapes), or with toys during free choice.</b>

Figure 1: Peyton’s Literacy Skills and Choices

Sadie never returned her parent survey. As previously mentioned, my observations of Sadie suggest that she has a large amount of home support. Sadie has a

unique personality and a mind of her own. She knows what she should be doing at all times but does not always choose to be doing it. For example, during the May 25 observation, she came back from a group session with the counselor and the rest of the class was having “book look” time. She noticed this and sat down and began reading without being instructed to do so. After the teacher told everyone to put their books away, she continued to read and quietly refused to put her book back. Sadie tends to sit quietly while listening to stories and instruction. Sadie will speak out if she is unable to see the pictures. This behavior suggests that Sadie is read to frequently and that she is able to see the pictures clearly as they are most likely in front of her. It is evident that she understands that print has meaning because when she reads on her own and comes to a word that she does not know, she will read the entire sentence until she comes to the unknown word and ask; once she gets the word, she will go back and reread the entire sentence putting the word in that was unknown at first. Many students would skip over the word and continue reading, but she realizes that print has meaning and she wants the full meaning (Appendix D).

She participates frequently and usually gets the questions correct when she is called on. For example, when the teacher asked when the last day of school was during calendar time, Sadie’s hand shot up, and when called on, she said in a loud voice, “The 21<sup>st</sup>!” (Appendix F). Although there are times when Sadie does not get the answer correct, she is normally on the right track. During a conversation about the zoo animals they saw on a field trip, the teacher asked if the students remembered what an animal that only eats meat is called. Sadie raised her hand and answered, “omnivicient” (meaning

omnivorous). Although that wasn't the correct answer, that is a large word for a Kindergartener to know and understand and she was on the right track (Appendix F). Besides participating in conversations that she understands during instruction time, she also asks questions when she does not understand something. For example, she said, "Mrs. Burgio, how do I spell sunflower?" (Appendix E). She also asks questions during non-instructional time. While arriving back from a field trip, the teacher realized that her fan was missing. Sadie says, "Why are you sad about someone taking your fan? Are you sweating like a beaver? Mrs. Burgio, did you take the fan? Mrs. M., did you take the fan?" (Appendix F). Sadie picks up on teacher and adult language and uses it towards others. For instance, there was a student who was being very sad and did not want to participate in class activities. Sadie had heard the teachers use a certain phrase to make this student happy again, so she began saying, "Don't smile! You aren't allowed to smile!" Another time when adult humor was evident was when she said, "Mrs. Burgio, I didn't get to watch the parade for Memorial Day. I got to ride in an Army truck in the parade instead!" (Appendix E). Most students this age are not able to use humor like that to trick an adult. Sadie also chooses to play in the writing center during free play time which shows that she enjoys writing letters and words that she has learned (Appendix E). Although there is no record as to what types of family literacy activities are being practiced at home, it seems obvious that Sadie has a lot of interaction with her parents and other adults.

Sadie

	<b>Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Choices</b>
<b>Parent Survey</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Will raise her hand to answer questions correct. Also use words that are above a kindergarten level. Asks questions when she doesn't know the answer.</b>	<b>Plays at the writing center during free choice time.</b>

Figure 2: Sadie's Literacy Skills and Choices

Nigel's parent survey reported that they practice family literacy activities five to seven times a week by participating in reading, writing letters to the military, kindergarten workbooks, and magazines such as Highlights for kids, reading the Bible and prayer.

Nigel is a quiet, shy, little boy most of the time. He sits quietly and listens to stories and instruction; however he rarely participates in group questions. He may be afraid of getting questions wrong in front of the entire class since the teacher asked him a question about the book that was just read and he tried to answer it, but answered incorrectly (Appendix D). During calendar time one day, the teacher asked who could say today's date and Nigel proudly raised his hand and said, "Today is Tuesday, June 7, 2011" and the teacher responded by saying "very nice job!" (Appendix F). He seems to only raise his hand if he is completely sure of the answer. Another time, the whole class was going around saying what they thought was in a surprise box that the teacher was holding and when it came time for Nigel to give his guess he said, "I'm still thinking" and he ended up never giving a guess even when the teacher came back to him a second

time (Appendix D). It seems that Nigel is a perfectionist. He likes to get his work correct the first time and this could be a reason he may only raise his hand if he is 100% sure of himself and the answer. During an assignment Nigel had asked me how to spell a word, so I gave him a sticky note with the correct spelling on it. Later on, he came up to me and said, "I think I need that yellow paper again, Mrs. Burgio" (Appendix G). He also likes to practice reading and then when he has perfected it, he enjoys reading it to the class. One day during observations, Nigel came up to me and wanted me to listen to him practice reading during "book look" before he read the book to his classmates. When he read to the class, he read with 100% accuracy and good book handling. It was obvious at this point that he was read to quite frequently (Appendix D). During free time, Nigel chooses to play in the writing center, drawing pictures and writing a story to go along with the pictures (Appendix E). It is evident that Nigel participates in family literacy activities at home and is a very smart boy.

After reviewing the survey that Nigel returned and compared it to his skills, he was similar to Peyton's correlations. Nigel can sit quiet and be attentive while listening to stories in the classroom. As stated above, this can be a hard concept for kindergarten students to carry out. Nigel's survey reported that he is read to frequently at home and therefore suggests that he learned this skill through the numerous times that he has had stories read to him.

There were a few correlations between the survey results and the choices that Nigel makes throughout his day in the classroom. He always wants to do his absolute best work as illustrated above in the June 16 observation. Nigel uses a workbook at

home. Perhaps his parents react well to getting 100% in the workbook and therefore, Nigel consistently wants to do his best work the first time through. Throughout my observations, Nigel chose to either read during free-time or use the writing center where he drew pictures and wrote words to go along with the pictures. It is visible that he truly enjoys reading and writing and sees it as a fun activity.

Nigel

	<b>Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Choices</b>
<b>Parent survey</b>	<b>Listens attentively may be from listening to books read to him at home</b>	<b>Reading, writing letters, workbooks, magazines, Bible and Prayer</b>
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Sits quietly, rarely answers questions. He is a hard worker. Likes to get his work done correctly the first time.</b>	<b>Plays at the writing center during free choice time.</b>

Figure 3: Nigel's Literacy Skills and Choices

Courtney's parent survey reported that they practice family literacy activities five times a week. These activities included "reading to Courtney every day, and she writes her letters every day."

While observing Courtney, I noticed that she will generally sit and listen to stories and instruction for a limited amount of time before getting restless. During "book look" time, she took a long time picking out a book. When she finally sat down, she was distracted by a poster and another classmate she was sitting near (Appendix D). At times she is quiet while other times she is chatty. During my June 16 observation, Courtney began talking about volleyball to her friends which then turned into a T-ball conversation

while working on an assignment at their table. Courtney also shouted at a student for sitting in another student's seat (Appendix G). Although Courtney can be a chatty little girl, she does not always use language that we all would understand. For example during the May 31 observation, Courtney walked up to the teacher, interrupting her saying, "I need to borrow a skin color." She was referring to a peach colored marker that the teacher had. This took the teacher a few minutes to even understand what Courtney had meant. Courtney is a very talented girl who likes to go above and beyond for her work. While doing a worksheet for a Father's Day project, Courtney came up to me and said, "Can we do two pictures even though the teacher said we only have to do one?" (Appendix G). During a project where painting was involved, she was the first student to not copy the teacher's sample. This was not surprising since the Courtney is good at following directions and the teacher said during directions that students should try to do their own thing and not copy her fish (Appendix G). During snack, Courtney separated her gold fish crackers by color before eating (Appendix G). During free time, Courtney chose to go to the writing center and write her letters, and draw pictures that correspond with the letters (Appendix E).

As with Peyton and Nigel, Courtney's skill to sit attentively on the carpet while listening to a story read by the teacher may be related to the fact that she gets read to at home. There is also one correlation between the survey that Courtney's parents filled out and the choices that Courtney makes during her Kindergarten day. During my observation, Courtney chose to work in the writing center during free time. When I reviewed her work there, she was writing her letters out on paper. Her parents reported

that Courtney writes her letters almost every day. Although I feel that this practice could force the child to go beyond their own hand strength and cause a negative reaction towards writing, she must enjoy it or she feels confident and comfortable while doing this activity if she is choosing it for free time. It has become a familiar activity that she can feel a sense of accomplishment over.

Courtney

	<b>Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Choices</b>
<b>Parent survey</b>	<b>Listens attentively may be from listening to books read to her at home.</b>	<b>Gets read to almost every day, writes her letters every day.</b>
<b>Observation</b>	<b>She will sit quietly and listen to stories and instruction. Good at following directions.</b>	<b>Plays at the writing center during free choice time. Very chatty during work time. Chooses to separate her goldfish crackers for fun.</b>

Figure 4: Courtney’s Literacy Skills and Choices

Kaden’s survey was sent back saying that he participates in family literacy activities three to five times a week by “writing birthday cards and reading and looking at baseball stats on television” (Appendix A). Just as Peyton was in her second year of Kindergarten, Kaden also repeated Kindergarten. He generally follows directions and sits contently during stories and instruction time. He enjoys being read to and reading to himself. When he knows there is going to be a story, he tries to sit close to the teacher. He also tried reading the words while the teacher was reading the story (Appendix D). Kaden is good at asking questions when he does not know something. While being read to on May 25, Kaden raised his hand and asked a question when he was unfamiliar with a word in the story. Also during a discussion about plants, a student stated that it took 110

days for a sunflower to grow, and Kaden rebuked by saying, “I thought a sunflower took 104 days to grow, not 110” (Appendix E). He also tries to answer classmate’s questions. The teacher used the word “several” in a sentence and a classmate said, “What does several mean.” Kaden spoke up and said, “3 or 4” to clarify for his friends (Appendix E). Kaden not only asks questions that help with clarifying, he asks them to make conversation as well. During a conversation about the zoo field trip, Kaden asks the teacher, “Did you see the monkey with the celery?” (Appendix F). Kaden tends to make very random comments that go along with his interests many times. For example, all students were sitting at their tables doing their work when Kaden randomly yells, “I wish I was two years old” (Appendix G). Another time when he blurted out a random comment was when all of the students were sitting on the carpet waiting for the teacher to join them, when Kaden gets up and walks over to the teacher and says “I had a game on Saturday and we won! (Appendix F). Yankees baseball became the topic of discussion for Kaden when he began talking to the teacher while the class was having a discussion on numbers. He associated numbers with baseball scores.

There was one correlation that I found when reviewing Kaden’s information that links his survey results to his skills. Kaden reads at home; His readings include looking at the baseball stats on T.V. as well as books. Sitting close to the T.V. to read baseball stats relates to Kaden’s position when the teacher reads stories in the classroom. He is always sitting close to the stories so that he can “help” read them with the teacher at his own will. Sitting close to the T.V. and the stories may suggest that he enjoys what he is looking at and therefore is engaged in the reading process.

Kaden also chooses to chat about baseball frequently when the topic comes up as discussed in a previous paragraph. Both the teacher and Kaden are huge baseball fans so the topic arises often. Kaden generally brings up stats that he saw on T.V. as well as how he played in Little League baseball in his past games and practice.

Kaden

	<b>Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Choices</b>
<b>Parent survey</b>	<b>Reads at home, sits near television to read baseball stats</b>	<b>Chooses to discuss baseball when he makes connections</b>
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Follows directions and sits contently during stories and instructions</b>	<b>He chooses to play games with the teacher during free play.</b>

Figure 5: Kaden’s Literacy Skills and Choices

The teacher interview started out with having the teacher define family literacy in her own words. Mrs. Hart’s (pseudonym) definition stated that parents need to be good role models by reading books, magazines and the newspaper in front of children and with them; exposing children to reading at all times including bedtime, while on trips or while waiting to do something. When asked what types of activities she thought may be going on in the homes of her students she said, “Well, some not at all.” She is aware of who gets worked with at home and unfortunately who is not exposed to any educational material at home. Children’s language and performance appear to reveal what types of conversations are taking place in the home. Conversations with children are very important and influential to students’ learning. Although it is hard to know exactly what exposure is being had in the homes of students, Mrs. Hart is very in tune with her students and parents, and therefore, feels that she knows a wealth of information about her students. She is a veteran teacher in the district and has taught many siblings to the

students that she has this year. Mrs. Hart is invested in her job and well-known in the community. Mrs. Hart wishes that more families would take TVs out of the students' bedrooms and read to their children at bedtime. She feels that reading a bedtime story is a "lost tradition." She asks her students if they get read a story before they go to bed at night and many of them say "no." Mrs. Hart believes that family literacy plays a large role in the success of Kindergarten students. The families that surround their children with literacy should be reading above a Kindergarten reading level, while there are students who aren't meeting the benchmark (Appendix H). When Mrs. Hart was asked what type of role she thought family literacy played in a kindergartener's success in literacy, she stated that the lack of family literacy is the reason for students who are not meeting the benchmark in Kindergarten. A lack of family literacy may not be the sole cause of students not meeting the benchmark (Hartas, 2010), but if students have a passion for reading and writing due to family involvement in the home, home involvement could allow for more practice in reading and writing, making students more likely to meet the benchmark. Mrs. Hart said that she sends home books for students to practice reading to an adult weekly. There is also a short activity that goes along with the book. "Mostly I just want them to get in the habit of reading with their child. I don't send a large amount of homework home," Mrs. Hart said. This school in particular does not support the parents in engaging in family literacy. Teachers give parents encouragement to read with their children through newsletters and reading activities that are sent home. The support that is being mentioned here relates to a family literacy night at the school where families who do not have the knowledge or materials to make family

literacy happen on a daily basis. For instance, a storyteller could be present or the library could be open to read books. Teachers could be available to work with parents who are willing to accept help at family literacy nights as well. Swick (2009) discusses the benefits that family literacy programs have on student success throughout school. Students who participate in family literacy programs will stay on grade level and rank high in reading and literacy skills (Swick).

When Mrs. Hart was asked if she thought it would be beneficial to set up a program and bring their students to a literacy night she stated, "It might be, but I think that the parents that would come would be the parents that already expose their children at home. It is sad to say but if there were incentives to come they might get here, like cookies and punch," (Appendix H).

Mrs. Hart's Interview

Question 1: How would you define family literacy?	Parents need to be good role models by reading in front of their kids. Sight words should be up labeling the house. Exposing kids to reading at all times is important.
Question 2: In what ways do you think family literacy is being used in your students' homes?	Some kids are not immersed in family literacy at all at home. It is noticeable for the kids that are exposed by their language and performance. Conversations with your kids are very important.
Question 3: What more do you wish families would practice in the home?	Talking with your child, asking questions, and reading. Turn off the T.V. and take it out of the bedroom! Read bedtime stories!
Question 4: What type of role do you think family literacy plays in a Kindergartener's success?	It makes a major difference. Kids that are immersed are reading above level and then there are students that aren't meeting benchmark.
Question 5: Do you send home any form of literacy activities that the parents can work on with their child? If so, what?	Books with activities are sent home to read with an adult to get the family in the habit of reading together.

<p>Question 6: In what ways does the school support parents who do not engage in school-sanctioned literacy practices?</p>	<p>The school does not have a support program, but rather just gives encouragement to continue reading.</p>
<p>Question 7: Why do you think it would be beneficial to have a program set up for families to come and bring their children to a literacy night?</p>	<p>The parents that would most likely come are the parents that work with their kids at home already. Other families might attend if there is an incentive such as punch and cookies.</p>

Figure 6: Mrs. Hart's Interview

### Summary

All five students show that they are progressing in Kindergarten. Family literacy is most likely being practiced in all five homes at different levels of intensity which is evident through the observations that were conducted. After interviewing the teacher about her thoughts on family literacy, it is clear that she finds family literacy to be an important aspect of Kindergarten success although she gave vague answers to the interview questions. After analyzing the data, it is evident that there are parents who are familiar with family literacy practices while there are others who have never heard the term but still may be practicing family literacy in their own ways.

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion**

After the data was analyzed, I was a bit surprised at my results. Since I am very familiar with the classroom that the data collection took place in, I went in with assumptions that were not supported by my results. Overall, the results helped me to understand a portion of what goes in the homes of the students and what could be done from a teacher's stand point. The observations convinced me that conversations are extremely important, in the classroom and at home. I found the parents to be creative while answering the survey that was sent home. I thought for sure many parents would just reiterate the examples that were given in the family literacy definition, but many came up with interesting family literacy activities that they participate in with their children. After reviewing the surveys that the parents returned, I recognized that parents reported a minimal number of reading and writing activities when they were asked what types of literacy activities they participate in. The activities that were reported in the parent surveys and the observations made during free play show high correlation between what activities students choose to take part in during free play and what activities the students engage in at home. In lieu of student learning I want to be in-tune with my students' interests so that students can be engaged in learning activities. As for teaching practices, I will strive to make parents aware of family literacy and the importance of daily reading to their children. I would recommend that teachers send home surveys and get to know the parents and their parenting style so that home teachings can be brought into the classroom.

## **Importance of Conversation**

After completing observations in this particular kindergarten classroom, I noticed the importance of children's speaking and having conversations with other individuals. During the teacher interview, when the teacher is asked what she wishes more families would practice with their children, her first response was "just talk to your child, explain things, asking questions, wondering about things, reading about things" (teacher interview). Many parents do not realize how having a simple conversation can enrich their child's learning. One student named Sadie is a prime example of this. Unfortunately, Sadie's parent survey was never returned so we couldn't compare her actions in school with what goes on at home. However, it is obvious from my observations of her that Sadie's parents talk to her and make conversation.

Delays in speech and language can make communicating more difficult (Izenberg, 2011). Mendelsohn (2002) found that if speech and language are not developed early, there will be a delay, and therefore, when students enter kindergarten, they will be behind the other students and have fewer chances for school success (Prescription for early reading, 2003).

Many observations included me listening in on student to student and student to teacher conversations. According to my findings, students tend to participate in conversations when they are interested in a specific topic. In an observation that took place on June 16, one student at a table started a conversation about T-ball, an activity that a majority of children at the table were involved in. The conversation lasted a short amount of time when another student at that table started talking about volleyball, an

activity that she participated in. The student who started the T-ball conversation stopped participating when she wasn't interested in the topic anymore. This also seemed to happen when the topic of baseball came up for Kaden during the May 31 observation. When the class was having a discussion about numbers, Kaden seemed to associate numbers with baseball scores (which correlates with an activity that he frequently engages in at home). He jumped up and was talking to the teacher about the Yankees since they both enjoy watching that specific baseball team.

### **Reported Activities**

After receiving the returned parent surveys, I was amazed at the answers reported when asked about what types of family literacy activities they engage in with their families. Since they were given the definition and some examples of family literacy, I assumed that many would reiterate the examples. To my surprise, parents were creative and seemed like they took the time to think about the activities that they tend to engage in frequently or daily with their children. One parent did use the birthday card example but also added in reading baseball stats. Though I like to think of myself as an expert on family literacy, I don't think I would have thought to include that if I were given the chance to take the survey. Another parent said that they read to their child "almost every day" and that the child "writes her letters almost every day also." It is great that this particular parent chooses to work with her child "almost every day," but writing out her letters may not work to the child's benefit in the future, especially because children are just learning to memorize the alphabet and how to create the letters with a pencil when children could be learning to write words that will help him or her in their writing for

years to come. A third parent decided to list activities that I still question as to whether they are literacy related. These activities included “arts and crafts, board games, working with adding numbers, reading a special book, or read on their own and activities outside.” While many of those activities could be literacy related, depending on how the activities were used, it may or may not influence learning while enjoying the activity. A parent stated that the child reads alone, but the point of family literacy is to get involved in the learning process. Reading a book is a literacy activity, but family literacy involves the family doing a literacy-related activity together. When parents engage in family literacy with their children, they are setting them up for a literate life (Zeece, 2005). Lastly, a parent reported that they “read with their kids, write letters to family and military, work in children’s workbooks, read the bible and have prayer.” This parent is a prime example in my eyes of what family literacy should look like in an average home.

### **Few Parents Reported Daily Reading and Writing Activities**

Before I reviewed the returned surveys, I thought to myself, “what types of answers do you think you will get back from these parents?” I thought for sure that I would see the general answers of reading to my child and/or write stories or letters to friends and family. I was literally blown away when I saw the responses. I was happy to see that the parents took the time to fill out the survey and that activities were taking place in the home, but I was shocked to not see more reading and writing activities being reported as frequently as I expected. When the parents answered the question of how many times a week do you engage in the above stated activities, 3-5 was a common answer, while one said, “when we have time.” So even though some families reported

reading and writing activities, literacy may not be happening as frequently as recommended. Daily literacy interactions are necessary to make progress (Swick, 2009). The author, Mem Fox, a literacy expert, believes that parents should read at least three times per day to their children even if it is the same story. By the time they enter school, students should have heard more than 1,000 stories (Memfox.com). In order to meet Fox's expectations, reading and literacy activities are crucial and need to be continued daily for at least ten minutes each day (Memfox.com).

### **Choices during Free Play Correlate with Activities at Home**

When reviewing both my observations and the family literacy activities that the parents reported on the survey, I noticed a high correlation between family literacy and free choice in the classroom that may lead to further research. Overall, I observed five students, with only four students returning their surveys. Out of those four students, three of them or 75% chose to participate in an activity that they take part in at home when given free play in the classroom. Seventy-five percent is an overwhelming percentage that I wasn't expecting to see when coding my data. The one student who did not participate in an activity in the classroom during free play that relates to an activity he partakes in at home didn't have an option open for him that would correlate with his interests. For example, this student enjoys baseball and reading baseball stats on T.V. There was no television available during free play or else I would have to take a guess that he would be there looking at the stats. Two of the students, who frequently write at home, as stated in the survey, chose to spend their free play time in the writing center. One student chose to play a board game with the teacher and another student. The

student who was interested in baseball stats also chose to play a game, possibly since there was no other choice that went with his home activities.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Student Learning**

Family literacy may improve student learning in Kindergarten. Without family literacy, the students would not bring in their own school-based literacy background from home; it would merely depend on what they learn in school. Each family brings their own knowledge of literacy and other topics when teaching their children in the home (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992) that can impact their children throughout their school career. In my future classroom, students will work with literacy activities that relate to their interests in order for them to willingly participate and learn to their maximum capacity. Students tend to learn best when they are engaged in an activity that they enjoy. This practice is also called “bottom-up learning” (Crick, 2009). It is important for the teacher to ensure that students are meeting requirements made by the curriculum but to make the learning meaningful for the students by having them learn through their interests (Crick).

### **Implications for Teachers**

When I have a classroom of my own, I will make parents aware of family literacy from the beginning of the school year. I would let them know how important it is for families to work with their children and read with them daily. (Swick, 2009). I will send home articles that I find interesting yet easy to read and show how important family literacy can be.

## **Recommendations**

What should teachers do based on this research? Teachers should send surveys home early in the school year to find out their students' interests and the activities they participate in with their families. If the kindergarten teacher in this study had sent home such a survey, she could have set up a baseball station that could have had activities that Kaden may have been interested in. Then, during free play, his literacy knowledge would have been supported and his interests would have risen. It is also important for teachers to be able to know their students and what activities they are working on at home with their parents so that teachers can build off those activities in the classroom and participate in conversations about those activities.

## **Summary**

Many topics came to the surface over the course of this research. The importance of conversation was something that I did not seem to think of when beginning this project but came to see how important it actually was during my analyzing of data. Also, I was surprised to see how little families actually read and write with their children on a daily basis. Lastly, a topic that could be researched a bit more is the high correlation between family literacy activities and the choices that students make during free play in the classroom. My overwhelming 75% of students choose an activity during free play that they engage in at home with their families.

This project and the research that was collected for it taught me that you can go into a project with assumptions but you need to recognize them as only assumptions and report them in the end because you never know how the research will present itself when

the project is completed. I went into this project thinking that family literacy will definitely make students more successful in kindergarten. My research shows that students can have a low amount of family literacy stimulation, still be able to answer questions and do their work successfully in a kindergarten classroom. The research also shows that students who participate in literacy activities with their family can also answer questions and complete their work successfully in a kindergarten classroom.

## **Appendix A**

### **Parent Survey on Family Literacy**

**Definition of Family Literacy:** Activities that usually involve parents and students being engaged in reading and/or writing in the home, at school, or in the community. Activities that Family Literacy could include are: creating birthday cards, writing letters or lists, shared reading, read aloud, and prayer time (Johnson, 2010) to name a few.

1. Before receiving this survey, have you ever heard of family literacy? If so where?
  
2. Does your family engage in family literacy activities daily?
  
3. What types of activities do you engage in, if any?
  
4. How many times a week approximately do you engage in these activities?
  
5. How do you feel when you engage in these types of activities with your child or students?
  
6. If you weren't aware of what family literacy was before this survey, and you weren't engaging in these types of activities, would you start since you are aware of them now?

## **Appendix B**

### **Teacher Interview**

Participants:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Questions:

1. How would you define Family Literacy??
2. In what ways do you think Family Literacy is being used in your students' homes?
3. What more do you wish families would practice in the home?
4. What type of role do you think Family Literacy plays in a Kindergartener's success in literacy?
5. Do you send home any form of literacy activities that the parents can work on with their child? If so, what?
6. In what ways does the school support parents who do not engage in school-sanctioned literacy practices?
7. Why do you think it would be beneficial to have a program set up for families to come and bring their students to a literacy night?

## **Appendix C Observation Dates**

**Observation # 1: May 25, 2011**

**Observation # 2: May 31, 2011**

**Observation # 3: June 7, 2011**

**Observation # 4: June 16, 2011**

## Appendix D

Observational Notes

Date: May 25, 2011

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Students being observed: S, K, C, P, N

\*\*\*Some of the friends were At counselor or O.T/ P.T. for a portion of the observation time.

Observations	Interpretations
<p><b>C</b> knew she planted sunflower and pumpkin seeds when asked by the teacher which seeds were planted yesterday.</p> <p><b>P</b> was very attentive during the story that was being read to the class.</p> <p><b>K</b> sat up close to the teacher when he knew a story was going to be read to the class. He also tried reading the words while the teacher was reading the story.</p> <p><b>C P K</b> all raised their hands when asked if they've tried sunflower seeds.</p> <p><b>K</b> asked a question when he didn't know what something was in the story.</p> <p><b>N</b> was playing with his shirt during the story, but his eyes were on the book. When the teacher asked him a question about the book, he tried to answer it but he got it wrong.</p> <p><b>K N C</b> all participated in group questions.</p> <p><b>N</b> during book look time, he practiced a book so that he could read it to the</p>	<p><b>C</b> was able to answer simple questions and participated during most activities. When it came time to sit down and look at a book, she became distracted and didn't read.</p> <p><b>P</b> paid attention while being read to and participated when questions were being asked of the entire class. Many times she follows directions but acts out at times perhaps when she can't sit still anymore. She may not be used to sitting still for a story or a conversation for a long period of time.</p> <p><b>K</b> enjoys being read to. He participated when questions were asked of the class. He knows when he doesn't understand something and asks a question about it. He uses phrases that he may have heard from an adult "It's junk mail!"</p> <p><b>N</b> Doesn't always participate when the teacher asks a question of the class. He may be afraid of getting the question wrong in front of a group of students. He enjoys reading and is good at it. He used his book look time for practice so</p>

teacher and then get the O.K. to read it to the entire class. He was so excited when he found out he could read it to the class

**C** spend a long time picking out a book for book look. When she finally sat down, she was distracted by a poster and another classmate that she was sitting near.

**S** came back from the counselor and got right to work picking out a book to look at. She asked me what a word was after reading the entire sentence to me, except that one word.

When it became time for **N** to read his book to the class he read with 100% accuracy! He also had good book handling.

**S** complained that she couldn't see the pictures.

**C N S K** all participated in the singing of the children's peace song doing all movements/motions.

I told **S** that I really liked her necklace and she told me that it was from "Anta, (Atlanta) Georgia"

**N** bent over to tie his shoe and he "hurt his back"

**S** "I love our flag" she said during a flag song.

**N** was singing to his flag during the flag song.

**P** and **K** followed directions from the teacher on how to handle the flag that they were holding.

that he could read a book to the entire class. He uses phrases that he may have heard from an adult such as "I think I hurt my back"

**S** She knows what she should be doing. She enjoys reading and does a fairly good job at it! Instead of skipping over a word, she realizes that ALL words have meaning and wants to get the full meaning of the sentence. You can tell that she is most likely read to as she gets upset when she can't see the pictures and to her pictures must have meaning and go along with the words that are being read. She enjoys doing class activities such as singing songs. She has good understanding of the world and holidays that are celebrated. She doesn't like when she is not included in a kind of praise that another classmate is getting

**S** “am I following directions?” she asked after **K** and **P** were praised for their good behavior.

**S** answered the question what country do we live in? She responded with “United States”

During a discussion about Memorial Day, **S** proudly raised her hand and said that she knew how she was going to celebrate Memorial Day. “She was going to Memorial park to hear about the soldiers”

**S** When asked to go to the carpet, she picked a book off the shelf and began reading even though that wasn’t the direction.

**P** was banging on a surprise box that the teacher was holding.

**S P C K** all had guesses for what was in the surprise box that the teacher was holding.

**S:** toys

**P:** lizards

**N:** “still thinking” He said this 3 times and he never gave a complete guess.

**C:** caterpillars

**K:** caterpillars

While opening the box, the teacher asked what all the papers and mail were that came with the surprise.

**K** answered in response “it is junk mail”

## Appendix E

### Observational Notes

Date: May 31, 2011

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Students being observed: S, K, C, P, N

\*\*\*Some of the friends were In and out for pull-out services

Observations	Interpretations
<p><b>S</b> said she didn't get to watch the parade → she rode in an Army truck in the parade!!!</p> <p><b>N</b> responded good morning when I said good morning to him.</p> <p><b>N</b> didn't ask permission to get breakfast and then told the teacher he didn't understand her when she asked him if he was going to get breakfast.</p> <p><b>K</b> shows a friend where coloring book goes by using words and gestures "right here!" and by pointing.</p> <p><b>C</b> interrupted teacher to ask if she could borrow a "skin color" (referring to a marker) but it took the teacher a while to figure out what she was referring to.</p> <p><b>S</b> "come see how nice my coloring is Mrs. Burgio."</p> <p><b>C</b> "I need to water my plant" during a time that was not appropriate (discussing an assignment to be done)</p> <p><b>P</b> was very attentive during instruction</p>	<p><b>S</b> uses language that adults would use to trick someone. Also wants praise on her work. She interrupts and uses a loud, rude voice many times. She usually is engaged in activities, but tends to do her own thing instead of what she is supposed to be doing. Very smart and her answers are correct when she is called on. Enjoys literacy activities since she is engaged in them during free play.</p> <p><b>N</b> very quiet, but will respond when spoken to. He rarely raises his hand to speak, and when he did, he wasn't called on. He enjoys literacy activities as he chooses them for free play. He takes his time on activities and usually gets them correct the first time. Good at riddles.</p> <p><b>K</b> tends to have the answers to questions that are asked by friends and the teacher. He makes random comments that seem to go along with his interests. He raises his hand if he needs clarification or he will clarify what words mean that he knows that other classmates do not.</p> <p><b>C</b> does not use language that everyone</p>

time.

**S** “are we going to draw?” (Interrupted teacher in response to the directions that the teacher was giving.)

**K** attentive during directions

**N** sat quietly during directions

**S** when the plants were being passed around, she touches the plant despite what the directions were.

**K** raises his hand in response to the question “which plant is bigger?”

**S** yells at a classmate “DON’T TOUCH IT!” even though she touches it when it is her turn.

**K** the teacher said the word “several” and **K** says “3 or 4” to clarify to the class what several meant.

**S** says “lots and lots of water” in response to the question “what do plants need?”

**P** after a clue, she was able to say that plants need a lot of sun.

**K** “I thought a sunflower took 104 days to grow, not 110.” (In response to a classmates answer) The teacher told him that it is only an approximate number.

**N** Raised his hand to say something but wasn’t called on to find out what he needed to say.

**K** raises his hand when class is asked if they have hanging baskets at their house.

**K** “here is my picture of my plants.” The

understands at all times. She generally will follow directions but at times she will interrupt. Although she is usually quiet, she was interacting with a few friends on the carpet. She enjoys the writing center during free play.

**P** At times she needs clues in order to get the answers correct but she is willing to raise her hand and take a chance. When she doesn’t know how to do something, she is willing to ask for help but sometimes in a rude, impolite way. Doesn’t always understand what is being asked of her. At times she is unaware of 1:1 correspondence.

teacher says, “check the spelling of pumpkin.” **K** came back but still had it wrong even though the spelling was on the top of the paper.

**S** “Mrs. Burgio, how do I spell sunflower?”  
I responded by showing her the spelling at the top of her paper.

**P** “I don’t know how to write pumpkin!!!”  
I responded by showing her the spelling at the top of her paper.

**C** follows the teacher’s directions right after being said, by putting her name on her paper.

The teacher asked the question: “If you know any parts of this plant raise your hand.”

**K** raises his hand.

**P** raised her hand after 2 people already went up and pointed to 2 parts.

**P** pointed to a word that was already chosen, but then correctly answered the last word when she had a turn.

**S** “I can’t see!” (the picture).

**P** did awesome work on her plant paper. The teacher was very proud. The teacher told her, “you are doing fantastic work **P!**”

**P** couldn’t find her folder when she needed to put her paper in it, although it was right in front of her eyes.

**S** “It’s right in the front!” (responding to **P** in a loud, rude voice)

**N** “perfect” said the teacher in response to

his plant paper.

**C** “perfect” said the teacher in response to her plant paper.

**N P K C S** all participated in morning songs.

**P** came up to me and said, “I have fleas crawling on me!” I proceeded to ask her if she had any pets at home and she said no. The teacher then asked if she had pets and she named 3 of them.

**P** didn’t shake a neighbor’s hand like she was supposed to but at the last minute, she came up and shook my hand.

**S** was playing with her band-aid but was told to stop by the teacher.

The teacher asked **S** if she was singing and she shook her head yes.

**C** was interacting with friends on the rug while waiting for the rest of her class to finish getting drinks. They were talking about how many girls were in the room at that moment.

**S** didn’t raise her hand when asked about going to parade.

**N** knew why there were soldiers in the parade after the teacher asked the question “why were there so many soldiers in the parade yesterday?”

**P** while doing the weather graph yelled out, “It’s a tie!” She was referring to the sunny and windy days.

**K** was talking to the teacher about the Yankees b/c the class was discussing

numbers and he associated them with baseball scores.

**P** The leader today, couldn't keep up with #'s on the chart (pointing) while the class was counting to 100.

All friends could read the title of their book (about the zoo) when trying to figure out what all the books had in common that everyone was holding.

**S** didn't hand her book in when asked, she wanted to read it.

**K** said he stubbed his toe and needed a band-aid.

**N** During a guessing game with the clues black and white guessed "Zebra"  
**S** guessed skunk for black and white clue.

**N** "This book is easy to read!"

**K** for the clue big, he guessed "kangaroo"

**S** guessed "elephant" for the clue big.

**P** guessed "giraffe" for big and smooth.

**S** guessed "fish" for smooth, big, and swims.

**K** "squid"

**N** "seal"

**S** "turtle"

**K** "I was thinking a hippo!" just as the teacher turned the book around.

**P** guessed "zebra" for striped

**S** guessed “tiger” for striped

**P** was paying attention to her show and not the book.

**N** “zebra” for striped, black, and white.

**C** guessed “polar bear” for the clue white

**N** guessed “lion” for white, big and growl.

Later on that day during play time...

**N S C** all engaged in the writing center making letters and pictures with words on them.

**K** and **P** played a color game with a group of students and the teacher.

## Appendix F

### Observational Notes

Date: June 7, 2011

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Students being observed: S, K, C, P, N

Observations	Interpretations
<p><b>K</b> asked the teacher “do we have a concert today?”</p> <p><b>K</b> “my mom never comes to anything”</p> <p><b>S</b> was looking at a book instead of participating in a conversation about their trip to the zoo.</p> <p><b>N</b> and <b>C</b> were sitting quietly while the rest of the class was chatting while the teacher was calling lunch count in.</p> <p><b>P</b> came up to me after the teacher asked her to wash her face and said, “I’m not dirty!”</p> <p>Teacher tells a student he has a bug bite and <b>K</b> said “yah! I found it!”</p> <p><b>S</b> “I liked the bald eagle and bee exhibit”</p> <p><b>P</b> “I liked the bald eagle”</p> <p><b>N</b> “I liked the parrot and the monkeys”</p> <p>Teacher said in response to <b>N</b>: “Which monkeys? The ones that were outside?” <b>N</b> nods his head yes.</p> <p><b>S</b> “Why is it their last concert?”</p> <p><b>K</b> “snow leopard and turtle”</p> <p>Teacher responds to <b>K</b> by saying how big</p>	<p><b>K</b> made some very random comments that didn’t necessarily have anything to do with what was being said at the moment. He tries to explain what things are if he thinks he knows but it is not always the correct explanation. If he doesn’t know something, he does ask. (meaning his parents use a questioning technique).</p> <p><b>S</b> very smart girl. Usually does what she is told, but there are times when she is doing what SHE wants to do. She asks questions when she doesn’t know the answer to them. Very curious. I can tell that she is worked with at home and learns many things that children this age would know nothing about. (ex: omnivore is not a word in an average kindergartener’s vocabulary even though it wasn’t the exact answer the teacher was looking for, it was in the right context.)</p> <p><b>N</b> was able to answer multiple questions from the teacher and were correct. He has the stamina to sit quietly and wait (perhaps he is read to at home or is made to sit quietly for other reasons).</p> <p><b>C</b> can sit quietly when asked to, but will chat with friends if able to. She answered the questions that were asked of her by the teacher correctly.</p> <p><b>P</b> Does not always use the best manners</p>

was the tortoise?

**K** shows how big with his arms.

**K** asked the teacher if she saw the monkey with the celery. (carried on a conversation about monkeys)

**C** "I liked the alligators and penguins."

**S** "Omnivicient" was how she answered a question of what is an animal who only eats meat called.

Concert from 930-1020

**P** was fighting with a student over stickers when not even told to get one.

**P** "He's pushing me!!!"

**K** "I had a game on Saturday and we won!" He was saying to the teacher.

**C** and **P** chatting

**S** "why were you sad about someone taking your fan?"

**S** "are you sweating like a beaver" she says to the teacher?

**S** "Mrs. Burgio, did you take the fan?"

**S** "Mrs. M, did you take the fan?"

**S N K C P** all followed directions for standing still for songs.

**C** and **S** shook friend's hands as the song directed.

**S** gives the teacher a hug.

when adults are talking to her. She has her moments when she does not get along with her peers because she does not have the language to use when she needs help or is upset. She has an answer to all questions that the teacher asks, but they are not always correct, but you can tell she puts thought into them.

**P** was not participating

Teacher sang “beautiful” to **S** b/c she was doing such a good job singing.

**K** “My foot hurts.”

**S** ignored me when I asked her a question.

**S** was going around saying everyone’s full names

**K** “what does update mean?”

**S** “you didn’t put up the 5<sup>th</sup>” (she wasn’t listening when teacher said she couldn’t find the 5 even though they were brand new).

Teacher says, “who can say today’s date?”

**N** says Today is Tuesday, June 7, 2011)  
Teacher responds by saying, “very nice job!”

Teacher says, “When is the first day of summer?”

**K** responds by saying 21<sup>st</sup>

Who knows when the last day of school is?  
Says the teacher.

**P** points to the 30<sup>th</sup> on the calendar.

**S** “I know!” The 21<sup>st</sup>!

**K** “I went in the pool yesterday.”

**N** “My mom’s birthday is in June!” I know how old my dad is-31. My mom will be 27.

While discussing lakes and water shoes **S**

asks "How big was the cut?"

**K** says that a dock is for a diving board in response to a classmate asking what a dock was.

**S** "A dock is for a boat"

**S** "I am going to a lake at camp Hough. That's on Silver Lake."

**S** "I like to go to Camp Hough with my parents" in response to what do you like to do with your parents?

The teacher responds by saying, **S** think of something you do all the time with your parents, not something you did once.

**P** "I like to play with my family and brothers I like to play basketball with them."

**N** "I like to garden with my dad."

## Appendix G

### Observational Notes

Date: June 16, 2011

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Students being observed: S, K, C, P, N

Observations	Interpretations
<p><b>N</b> told me I was sitting in his chair and that he needed to sit there.</p> <p><b>P</b> was ready to get to work when she came in. She got her paper and said thank you.</p> <p>Teacher says “ you are welcome. Are we going to have a good day today?” <b>P</b> shakes her head yes.</p> <p>I said “hi” to <b>S</b> and she responded with “hi” and then continued working.</p> <p><b>C</b> yells at student for sitting in <b>S</b>’s spot.</p> <p><b>S</b> “I need a brown marker!!!”</p> <p><b>C</b> “can we do 2 pictures?”</p> <p>Teacher tells <b>P</b> to take her breakfast tray down 2 times and she ignores her and continues to eat.</p> <p><b>K</b> very talkative at table while working.</p> <p><b>N</b> working very hard and quietly</p> <p><b>S</b> was working quietly until her table started talking about T-Ball.</p> <p><b>C</b> started talking about volleyball and <b>S</b> stopped participating in conversation.</p>	<p><b>N</b> Today he was a very hard worker and very social with me and his teacher. Still quiet around his peers. He wants to do his absolute best on his work.</p> <p><b>P</b> interacts with the teacher, but doesn’t always do what the teacher tells her to do. She doesn’t always think before she acts. Although she has the ability to do things, she chooses to not do her best on her work. At times she throws a tantrum because she can’t do what she wants to do.</p> <p><b>C</b> Very chatty today, but got her work done, shows that she is still on task and knows what her job is. She wants to do above and beyond the other students.</p> <p><b>S</b> Can be demanding at times, but can work quietly when she wants to. She joins in conversations that interest her, and if she is not interested, she will stop participating in the conversation. She speaks exactly what is on her mind.</p> <p><b>K</b> comes up with random ideas, but is still able to get his work done and does it correctly.</p>

**C** very chatty while working.

**P** got very excited to see a classmate from last year. She gave him a hug and kiss on cheek! Teacher told her that she needed to save those kisses for mommy and daddy.

**K P S N C** all sit and listen to first grader read a story.

**C** got tapped on the back while trying to listen. She turned around and held finger up to mouth signaling to be quiet.

**K** gave compliment to reader “good job drawing the pictures.”

**S** compliment “I liked the facts!”

**S** was playing with the carpet instead of listening to friends comments.

**N** showed me his paper when he was finished.

Teacher said to **S**, “ go finish your paper and she responded with “I am DONE!” rudely

**K** I wish I was 2 years old (very random).

**S** “I have an idea!”

**S** was talking to the aide about going to first grade. **S** says she will wave to the aide when she sees her in first grade.

**C** and **S** not following directions.

Teacher to **P**, “Why did you write 100 at the end? What comes after 19? (**P** was writing her numbers 1-20)

Teacher to N, "Look at all the friends you made this year (referring to a picture in his memory book).

N to teacher, " I only had room to draw 6 friends."

S tried to make a classmate feel better by saying "don't smile! You aren't allowed to smile!"

S became sad when she wasn't allowed to see a paper but teachers could.

S read her kindergarten memory book to me. (The drawings were very in depth!)

P threw a tantrum b/c she wanted to paint when it wasn't her turn.

C painted the first fish that was different from the sample.

C and S separated their gold fish crackers by color before eating.

S asked me, "Can you help me spell fire safety day?"

N told me, " I think I need that yellow paper again Mrs. Burgio." (used to spell words)

K not acting himself. He was acting out quite often compared to other observations.

S talking to teacher, "what was the song where it said growing up was boring?" The teacher didn't know what she was talking about. "I will need to think about that one." Said the teacher.

N was dancing with a friend before the music even started.

**N P K C S** all participated in morning songs.

**S** when taking a picture she was asked to sit and she said, "I am not good at sitting."

**C** pulled a student while sitting on the carpet.

**K** came up to smart board for calendar and put the Thursday and 16 in their spots with no problem.

**P** was talking during directions

**S** was told to write a sentence for an end of year test. She wrote "go home" perfect but forgot uppercase and period.

## Appendix H

Interview with Teacher  
June 16, 2011

### **1. How would you define family literacy?**

Family literacy, Umm I suppose it starts with the parents that they are good role models. Reading books magazines and the newspaper in front of them and with them. choosing to do it as a daily activity and also reading to their children before bed, when they are waiting to do something, taking books on trips or. Just exposing them to reading all the time. Having sight words up in the house, labeling things, just having reading be a big part of their lives.

### **2. In what ways do you think family literacy is being used in your students' homes?**

Well, some not at all. And it is very evident with the little friends that understand and get language because they are exposed to it. It is not only reading to your child, it is talking to your child and being exposed to language, having conversations. Some kids don't have anyone to talk to.

### **3. What more do you wish families would practice in the home?**

Just talk to your child, explain things, asking questions, wondering about things, reading about things. Turning off the T.V. and taking the T.V.s out of their bedrooms. I think reading to your child before you go to sleep is a lost tradition. When I ask a lot of them if they have a story before bed, many of them say no. It doesn't have to be in bed, but just sat aside a time like a ½ hour before bed to read to them so that they are getting the full reading experience and not always falling asleep during the story.

### **4. What type of role do you think family literacy plays in a kindergartener's success in literacy?**

I think it makes a major difference. I've got kids in here that I know their families just immersed them in literature and they're reading at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> grade level or beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. And then you got friends who aren't immersed in literature in the home and they just aren't meeting benchmark. It is just such a hindrance if family literacy isn't being practiced.

**5. Do you send home any form of literacy activities that the parents can work on with their child? If so, what?**

They practiced reading books in school and then take them home to share with their families. Many times, there is an activity that I send home that goes along with the book. Mostly I just want them to get in the habit of reading with their child. I don't send a large amount of homework home. They usually return the activity. They are in a bag with the book.

**6. In what ways does the school support parents who do not engage in school-sanctioned literacy practices?**

How do we support the parents? Not really any support, just encouragement from the teachers. No real Parents As Reading Partners (PARP). We don't have that here. I'm trying to think if we ever have. Maybe they tried to get it, but it just never flew. Batavia has a very strong PARP program.

**7. Why do you think it would be beneficial to have a program set up for families to come and bring their children to a literacy night?**

It might be but I think that the parents that would come would be the parents that already expose their children at home. It is sad to say but if there were other incentives to come they might get here like cookies and punch. It is hard enough to get them here for parent conferences or open house.

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