Parental Involvement and Children's Attitudes Toward Reading

THESIS

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Parental Involvement and Children's Attitudes

Toward Reading

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Abstract

The following thesis studied Parental Involvement and Children's Attitudes Toward Reading. The researcher found numerous studies dealing with parental involvement and children's attitudes toward reading although very few dealt with the use of a reading program designed to go home.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parents' involvement in a home/school reading program and the attitude their child has toward reading. The question was: How is parents' involvement in a home/school reading program related to children's attitude toward reading?

The subjects of this study were twenty five-year-old kindergartners attending a suburban elementary school. On a daily basis these twenty children chose a book to go home. Along with this book the child brought a bookmark for their parents to fill out. For two months the researcher kept separate piles of bookmarks for every child. At the end of the two month period the bookmarks were evaluated by the researcher and two other district personnel.

The researcher found a strong correlation between

parental involvement and children's attitudes toward reading.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parents' involvement in a home/school reading program and the attitude their children toward reading

Need for Study

There are many different approaches to teaching. Even in the same teaching situation, teachers may vary the approach they choose to use. There is one approach to the teaching of reading that many teachers have found useful and that is to involve the parents at home (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

If parents take a more active role in their child's learning, the love for learning will develop. One article pointed out that "parents are increasingly viewed as a vital ingredient in the successful literacy development of their children" (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989, p. 180). One of the obstacles facing parental involvement is the myriad of approaches for

connecting with parents. There have been several articles written on parental involvement which include, tips on effective communication at conference time, lists of tips on home studying, and information on how to get the parents in the classroom to volunteer (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989).

Petit (1980) specifies three levels of increasing parental involvement: monitoring, informing, and participation. All are important when dealing with parental involvement. Some researchers feel Petit had good ideas but his level of hierarchy does not go far enough.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) wrote about two parallel strands of involvement. One pertains to school and the second deals with a home focus. Parents and teachers work together to obtain the ultimate goal called empowerment. At the empowerment level the parents and teachers work together to help the children do their best and achieve the goals that they have set for themselves.

While there are numerous studies of parental involvement and children's attitudes toward reading, very few deal with the use of a reading program designed to go home.

There has been a considerable amount of research conducted to demonstrate the positive effect that parents have when participating in the educational and social growth of children. However, there has been little research on the effects that parental involvement has when stimulated by the teacher (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

Definitions

Attitude- Attitude will be defined by the score subjects receive on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

Involvement- The degree that the parent participates in the Home/School Reading Program.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Parental Involvement

There have been vast amounts of money, time and energy spent on new reading programs for schools in the United States. Shuck, Ulsh and Platt (1983) revealed in a study that urban children's reading test scores are lower than the children attending suburban schools. "One suggested explanation has been the small degree of reading experience that many urban children receive in their home." (Shuck, Ulsh & Platt, 1983 p.524).

Early research on parent involvement showed that the parents' educational values and their reinforcement of school learning directly affect their child's academic performance (Bloom, 1965). Blatt and Garfunkel (1967) reported that the more communication the parents had with the school the higher the child achieved academically.

Alexander and Filler (1991) revealed in a study that

students' reading values can be affected by a number of factors. Some factors are the amount of reading done by parents and the availability of reading materials in the home, and the value placed on reading by family and peers.

Epstein and Becker (1982) conducted a study of parent involvement in the school and the use of favorable techniques to get the parents interested in learning activities. The study reported that the most supportive parents in the school and in the classroom were especially in favor of informal activities that teach parents how to tutor and evaluate their child.

In studies by Brzeinski (1964) and Cassidy and Vukelich (1978), parents improved their children's reading after receiving direct instruction in teaching reading. The parents cooperated with the teachers by providing extra practice reading at home. Results from these studies indicate parents can effectively improve their children's reading ability.

Shuck, Ulsh, and Platt (1983) conducted a study involving parents as their child's tutor. It was discovered that the children who were involved in the

parent tutoring program had significantly higher reading scores than the children who were not involved in the program. "The overriding message of this investigator is simply that parents can produce significant positive results for their children at a very small cost to the educator. Teacher parent involvement can increase student achievement" (p.527).

Teale (1981) summarized several studies on the effects of parents reading to their children. He found that many children that are read to have a better vocabulary and an understanding of what is going on around them.

Henry (1986) reviewed many studies dealing with the impact of the home literary environment on reading attitude before coming up with his own questionnaire which dealt with four areas: 1) the availability of reading material in the home; 2) the amount of reading that a parent does with a child; 3)reading guidance and attitude of the parent; 4) parents as good reading models. The researcher then gave the reading attitude scale to a group of fourth

graders. He also interviewed mothers about their likes and dislikes.

Henry found that girls in the study showed a more positive reading attitude than the boys, and they also read more books. The study concluded that parents should consider the effect of early home environment on later reading patterns. Parents should enrich their children's lives with good literature, and they should be the role models of what they want their children to become.

The study also suggests that public schools could consider the relationship between the home environment and later reading success. One of the suggestions was to have an in-service program that would involve the teachers to identify and measure the home environment. "After the teachers were aware of the home environment they could apply this knowledge to provide for a continuation of home literary experiences, and to make up for those that have been lacking" (p.23).

"Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) conducted a survey that indicated parents realize they have a

major responsibility in promoting the reading development of their children. They sense the schools simply cannot do it all themselves" (p. 236). Parents also indicated that they share the responsibility in developing their children's reading ability with the school. This survey suggests that parents are willing to work to support children's reading ability if schools are willing to reach and support the parents in their efforts.

Children's Attitudes Toward Reading

It is the goal of all educators when using reading programs to develop voluntary readers. How do children become voluntary readers? Morrow (1983) looked at the home and school environments and the behaviors of kindergarten children identified as having either a high or low interest in literature. She concluded that parents should be encouraged to be role models when it comes to reading. By the parents showing interest in reading, the children develop an interest in books. The child's home environment is a strong influence on his/her interests. Greaney (1980)

and Maxwell (1977) have demonstrated that voluntary readers come from homes in which there is a supportive "literary environment," as indicated by the amount of reading done with the child, reading guidance, and role models. Lomax (1976) studied the characteristics of young prereaders who are interested in literature. Lomax found that the group of children that was interested in books preferred literature, cutting activities, and painting. They came from homes where many types of literature were available, and the parents read to their children.

Summary

Research seems to show that children succeed with the help of their parents. There was very little research dealing with parental involvement and school programs. There is a need for more research to be conducted in this area.

Chapter III

Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parents' involvement in a home/school reading program and the attitude their children have toward reading.

Question

How is parents' involvement in a home/school reading program related to children's attitude toward reading?

Methodology

Materials

1. Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (1989)
2. Books for the children to bring home on a daily basis.

3. Bookmarks for parents' responses.

4. A scale designed to evaluate parent involvement based on their comments.

Subjects

Twenty kindergarten students from a rural western New York school district were the subjects.

Procedures

Every school day for two consecutive months these twenty children participated in a home/school reading program in their classroom. On a daily basis, these children chose a book to go home. Along with this book the children brought a bookmark home for their parents to fill out. The children brought the book and bookmark back to school the following day. The investigator kept separate piles of bookmarks for each child. At the end of two months the investigator and two other experienced teachers catagorized the responses made by the parents and evaluated the comments according to the researcher-developed scale.

Analysis of Data

Two experienced district teachers who use a

similar program in their rooms also evaluated the parent comments on the bookmarks using the same scale the investigator used.

At the end of the two month period the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered to the subjects and scored according to directions on the survey. Analysis of data was checked to see if a significant correlation existed between the two scores.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between parents' involvement in a home/school reading program and the attitude of their children toward reading.

The research question was: Is there a significant correlation between parents' involvement in a home/school reading program and their child's attitude toward reading?

Analysis Procedures

Two experienced district personnel who use a similar program in their rooms were chosen to evaluate the comments that parents make on the bookmarks using the scale designed by the investigator. Each bookmark was evaluated on a scale of 0-3. Bookmarks received a 0 if there was no parent interaction. A bookmark would receive a 1 if there was some indication of interaction. A 2 was given for interacting with their child in more than one area. A 3 was given for

consistent interaction in more than 2 areas. At the end of the two month period the children were given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and their scores were compared with the score of their parents to see if a correlation existed between them.

Results

The parents' and children's scores were changed to percentages to make the calculation possible. The following was found:

The parents' involvement was ranked using the scale described on the previous page and then the scores were changed to percentages to make the calculation possible for a correlation to exist between the two sets of scores. Parents' involvement ranged from 29.17%-100%

The children were asked to take the Elementary Attitude Survey and then their test was evaluated by the researcher. The children's scores were also changed to percentages to make the scores compatable. Children's attitudes ranged from 40%-98.75%

A table has been provided (see Appendix A) to show the relationship between parent and their children's score on the attitude survey.

The results of the calculated correlation are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation Between Parent Involvement and Children's Attitudes

	Parents	Children
Mean	100.15	68.05
S.D.	24.45	12.35
Median	112.00	71.50
Range	85.00	47.00
Min.	35.00	32.00
Max.	120.00	79.00
Calculated *r*	0.87	

crit *r* (a=.05, df=18) =.4438

The critical value for this research at an alpha level of .05 with 18 degrees of freedom was set at 0.4438. Since the calculated correlation 0.87 was greater than the critical value 0.4438, the investigator must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that a positive correlation exists between

parents' involvement and their child's attitude toward reading.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if a significant correlation exists between parental involvement in a home/school reading program and the attitude their child has toward reading.

Conclusions

The investigator predicted that the parents' involvement in the reading program would parallel the score their child received on the attitude survey. The reason for this prediction was the body of research establishing that parents' involvement does play an important part in the academic success and attitudes of their children. The investigator found a high correlation between children's attitudes toward reading and parents' involvement.

The investigator and the subjects had a close relationship in an educational setting for one year. During this time the investigator had many opportunities to also work with the parents of these children. The conversations and observations with

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these subjects and their parents helped the investigator gain a better understanding of what takes place at home. These observations were consistent with Becker and Epstein (1982), Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) and Petit (1980).

Implications for Research

This group of children and their parents could be looked at again in a few years to see if the same relationship exists between parental involvement and children's attitudes toward reading. All parents could be interviewed to get a more precise interpretation of their thoughts and feelings about parental involvement. Questions relating to why they feel the way they do could be addressed. Studies could be conducted to see how involved each parent's parent was in their educational upbringing. Future research could also examine factors such as how daily reading to a child affects the attitude they have toward reading. A researcher could also find out if a child's attitude toward reading increases when a parent is involved in a daily program or could it be another person who is not related to the child.

Implications for the Classroom

Parents' attitudes affect their child's attitude toward reading. Teachers could hold information nights and explain to the parents the importance of being involved in their child's reading. During this time parents could ask questions about how they can become more actively involved in their child's school success. Teachers could be prepared with handouts and times to come to the classroom for visits to see what actually takes place in their child's room. By having classroom visits the parents leave with a better understanding of the school environment and they leave with a better knowledge of things to do with their children. When parents serve as room volunteers they can learn about techniques and materials that can be used at home.

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APPENDIX A

Parent and Child Percentages

Letter	Parent	Child
A	95.83	96.25
B	96.67	92.50
C	45.83	40.00
D	72.50	66.25
E	87.50	91.25
F	92.50	98.75
G	100.00	98.75
H	29.17	53.75
I	71.67	86.25
J	98.33	95.00
K	89.17	90.00
L	75.00	88.75
M	97.50	92.50
N	50.00	73.75
O	95.00	85.00
P	83.33	87.50
Q	99.17	88.75
R	100.00	91.25
S	95.83	98.75
T	94.17	86.25