A CASE STUDY OF PARENTAL BEHAVIORS IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY LITERACY LAB SETTING AND THE EXTENSION OF THE BEHAVIORS IN THE HOME


Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2003

APPROVED:

Frank R. Kemerer, Major Professor
Ronald W. Wilhelm, Minor Professor
John Crain, Committee Member
Jane B. Huffman, Committee Member
John C. Stansell, Chair of the Department of Teacher Education and Administration
M. Jean Keller, Dean of the College of Education
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

The purpose of the study was to describe a family literacy program attempting to teach adult English language learners (ELL) the knowledge and skills that would allow them to support their children’s learning at home. The methodology employed was a multi-case study. Fourteen adult participants were interviewed to gather information regarding the factors that influenced the adult participant’s ability to support their child’s learning prior to participation in the family literacy program. The study focused on the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in the literacy program and used to support their child’s learning at home and the curriculum and instruction that the participants used to influence their child’s learning. The methodology used to gather information included adult English language learner interviews, field observations, and contact analysis of lesson plans.

The following conclusions were derived based on analysis of the data:

1. In the family literacy program that was studied, the only prior factor that appeared to influence the parent's ability to support their child's learning was the education level of the participant.

2. Pronunciation, conversation, listening, grammar and writing are
are essential skills that ELL parents use to support their child's learning. Attitudes were directly affected by the participants' ability to master the English language in order to be able to guide their children through the U.S. educational system.

3. The curriculum supported the learning; however the instruction was vital to modeling the procedures for learning that the participants used to support their children's success in school.

4. Regardless of other factors such as marital status, occupation, and other variations in family background, all participants based their ability to support their child's learning on their own ability to master the English language.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations &amp; Delimitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Responsive Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures &amp; Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Context and Informants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Data Collection &amp; Analysis Procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Efficiency in funding allocation in schools today is the focus of superintendents as districts experience the financial constraints of declining fund balances, increased need for additional staffing, and taxing caps imposed on revenue acquisition. Districts are faced with the challenge of allocating funds to the programs most closely aligned with the critical pathway to graduation and the state accountability system. The accountability system across the nation is becoming more rigorous with the passage of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Act is the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since ESEA was enacted in 1965. It redefines the federal role in K-12 education and seeks to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. It is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (TEA, 2002). In Texas, the new assessment, the Texas
Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), is becoming more rigorous by expanding the disciplines assessed and linking promotion of third, fifth, and eighth graders to success on the new assessment (TEA, 2002). The national and state accountability systems require districts to report specific minority populations and to be held accountable for their progress. In the last thirty years, “the total number of foreign born residents has tripled” (Gibson, 2002, p.241). The Hispanic population, which is the fastest growing English Language Learner (ELL) population, comprises 47% of the immigrant population (Gibson, 2002) and is one of the targeted subgroups in the accountability system. In the 2002 Policy Research Report published by the Texas Education Agency Office of Policy Planning and Research, Program Participation and Academic Progress of Second Language Learners: Texas Middle School Update, elementary students of limited English proficiency are identified as being at risk of school failure or dropping out. Additional parameters impact the assessment of the ELL students by mandating an exemption limit of two years before the students must take the TAKS exam in English. Thus, the pressure to accelerate the learning of the ELL students in preparation for the high stakes testing escalates as districts are driven to search for effective programs that result in high student achievement. English Language Learner students and regular classroom teachers feel the pressure to create a learning environment inclusive of parental involvement (SEDL, 2002), but are
challenged when the parents of the ELL students lack the ability to communicate in English.

There is increased awareness of “the strong and positive association between parental involvement in school and students’ educational outcomes” (Lopez, 2001, p. 255). The efforts made by school staff to involve minority parents in their children’s education vary greatly. Research demonstrates that parent involvement is a key determinant of children’s success in school (Henderson, 1988; Walberg, 1984). Educators may want to “find out about the current attitudes and practices of minority parents regarding their involvement in their children’s education” (Chavkin, 1993, p. 73), in order to identify the appropriate structures and strategies that exist in schools.

Statement of the Problem
Extensive work has been done in parental involvement and family literacy and the positive impact on student achievement; however, specific parental behaviors have not been fully described in the literature. The problem is to identify within the setting of a community technology literacy lab, parental behaviors that support a child’s learning at home.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to identify the aspects of parental involvement and learning in a community technology literacy lab that parents use to influence the academic and social performance of their children.

The study focuses on identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are learned behaviors in a community technology literacy lab in the Allen Independent School District in Allen, Texas. In addition, the study examines the aspects of the curriculum and instruction in the lab parents utilize in the home environment to support their child’s learning, as well as, identifies the factors prior to their participation in the lab that influenced parents to support their children’s learning.

City of Allen

The City of Allen, a suburb of Dallas, Texas, is located in North Dallas. According to the 2000 census, the population is 43,554. The overall poverty status of families is 2%, of families with children under 18, 2.6%, and of families with female head of household and no husband present, 5.2%. The ethnicity of the population is composed of 87.1% white/non-Hispanic, 4.5% Hispanic, 4.4% African American, 3.7% Asian, .3% and other.
Allen Independent School District

Allen Independent School District (AISD) has an enrollment of 12,593 students according to the 2002 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and has 675 students, or 5.36%, designated economically disadvantaged, derived from students whose parents’ income qualifies the students for free or reduced lunch prices. The ethnic distribution of the student population includes 80.9% white/non-Hispanic, 8.1% Hispanic, 6% African American, 4.9% other, which includes Asian students.

From the year 2000 to the year 2002, the ESL student population has grown from 146 to 463. AISD offers English as a Second Language (ESL) to students K-12 and a bilingual program for kindergarten and first grade students, with plans for expansion through fifth grade by 2006. The district initiated an adult ESL community technology literacy lab, which offers instruction in language acquisition, reading activities for parent and child, computer literacy and social connections to access the community, two nights a week for the students in grades three through six and their parents.

Program Description

The Allen Family Literacy Program was established in Allen during the 2001-2002 school year. The program was initially funded by collaborative partnerships between Denton Four County Adult Education
Co-op, the Model Reading Intervention Grant for ESL students (awarded by the Texas Education Agency) and the ELLIS language acquisition courseware company. The project funds a project coordinator and a parent liaison and is operated at one of the district’s middle schools. The first semester there were 20 adults and approximately 30 children enrolled in the program with 200 on the waiting list. The second semester, two additional adult English classes were added, making a total of 60 families served. The families were from many different countries including Egypt, Columbia, Venezuela, South Korea, Mexico, Ethiopia and China. There were 23 different languages represented. The program for the 2002-2003 year is funded by the City of Allen along with the Denton Four County Adult Education Co-op and serves 123 adults and 43 students.

The Allen Family Literacy Program is designed to have parents learning alongside their children. There are three components in the program: computer lab time, class activity time and a time for real-life skills. During computer lab time, adults and children are learning to speak, read, write, and spell in English while simultaneously improving computer skills. Both parents and children are using ELLIS interactive multimedia language acquisition software in the computer labs. The ELLIS courseware for adults is similar in design to the courseware for children. The ELLIS program combines the technology of computer-assisted training with a classroom program that includes a Learner Response book.
with follow-up exercises and activities for learners to take home and practice. In addition, Denton Co-op provides the curriculum that includes using a textbook and picture dictionary in the classroom for adults. The text includes plans for student-led dictation, building vocabulary activities, miming activities, and other fun games such as beanbag toss. The dictionary is appropriate to use with both adults and children working on improving English skills. During reading activities time, the ESL teachers use many of the same materials that they use during the school day. This extends the learning time for the ESL students during the family literacy program.

Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly. In addition to the classroom language instruction, guest speakers visit monthly to address topics of interest to parents such as establishing credit, interviewing skills, how to acquire dental and medical insurance, and how to apply for a library card. Last year the families also enjoyed celebrations and socializing. The presentations were translated when possible in different languages. The families also enjoyed a Thanksgiving feast in November and a Valentine party in February, which included foods from their different cultures while a Korean magician entertained everyone.

Class schedule. Classes are taught on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6-8pm. (120 minutes per night, rotating through three groups).
There are approximately 123 adults and 43 kids participating in the program for the 2002-2003 school year. The adults are scheduled for three 40-minute sessions: Computer Lab, Real-life Skills, and Class language instruction. The children, divided by age groups, also attend three 40-minute sessions: Computer Lab, Reading/Activities/Games, Homework Help/Refreshments/Socializing.

The ESL teachers instruct the adult classes. The teachers have received 18 hours of training in adult ESL as part of a federal grant received by the Denton Co-op. The grant allows Denton Independent School District to partner with other districts to provide an adult education program and provide training and compensation for the actual instruction. The children’s classes are taught by ESL teachers and by ESL instructional aides. Allen High School students from leadership clubs and from the Spanish Club also provide their services by volunteering to help with the program.

The success of this model depends in part on effective planning and coordination between the ESL teachers and staff, the parent liaison, the computer lab instructor, the technical support personnel, the volunteers, and the project director. Planning meetings are held before the night class or via video conference at the end of the school day.

Research questions

The following questions will be addressed in the study:
1) Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

2) What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3) What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?

Significance of the Study

Districts have limited funds to support children of second languages. Texas mandates that districts serve children who are English language learners, but does not fully fund the necessary programs. A district does not receive greater than 10% above the basic allotment for an ELL student. This minimal additional funding allotment does not cover the cost of the programming needed to educate an ESL child. The expectation is that all ELL students will be accelerated through language acquisition and be prepared to take the state accountability test within three years. Thus, school districts may allocate local dollars to support the teaching and learning necessary to improve student success. Often suburban districts face the issue of establishing programs that serve small numbers initially but need to expand with rapidly growing ELL and bilingual
populations. Along with the need to educate the students on the state-
mandated curriculum, teachers face the challenge of partnering with
parents who do not speak English. To be successful in the current high-
stakes accountability, districts may identify efficient and effective parent
involvement programs for minority parents in order to accelerate the
learning in schools with rapidly growing ELL populations.

This study is significant because it will examine parental behaviors
that impact student learning in the home and will add to the body of
research by further defining parental involvement. The findings will have
implications for identifying specific programs and learning situations that
accelerate the learning in schools with growing ELL populations and offer
replicable program options. Additionally, parents of ELL children frequently
do not have the social resources crucial to accessing the educational
system and the findings will have implications for engaging the larger
community in support of marginalized populations (Lopez, 2001).

Although research has been done to determine the value of
parental involvement (Epstein, 1987, Henderson, 1988, Scribner, et.al.,
1999), there has been little research to identify the critical attributes of an
adult program for parents of ELL children that contribute to the
acceleration of student success in ELL programs. The parents of ELL
children are faced with the challenge of learning the English language
and, additionally, of learning the teaching and cultural processes in
American schools. Identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that constitute the curriculum that support the students’ success could assist in the acceleration of learning as the adults increase their understanding about what their child is doing in school.

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative examination of adult learners who are participating for the second year in a computer technology literacy lab. A within-case study research design employing qualitative methods of observation, individual interviewing, and document analysis was used for this investigation. The researcher analyzed parents’ understanding of and implementation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes promoted in the Allen ISD community technology literacy lab for parents and children. The analysis involved parents’ behaviors in the technology computer lab, parent use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in the technology lab at home to support their children’s academic success, and other parental factors that contribute to student learning.

A group of twenty-four adult participants were initially selected to be interviewed by the researcher using a structured interview protocol. Four of the participants chose not to be interviewed and five individuals moved from the Allen Community before being interviewed. Ten of the interviewed participants also consented to be observed by ten administrative interns using an observation checklist. The observations
were conducted over a three-month period. Each interviewee was treated as a single case; thus, the researcher examined multiple cases for themes across cases to discern themes that were common to all cases. The constant comparative method of data analysis was utilized to code data recorded during interviews. The coded data were used to develop categories of findings that were used to frame research findings.

The unique setting of the family school literacy lab in a suburban school district will promote understanding and inform practice for similar suburban districts. Analyzing how parental academic support behaviors are impacted by participation in the school lab setting will generate circumstances or interventions that are replicable attributes in future programs for English language learner family literacy programs.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study involved an analysis of the curriculum and instruction of a community technology literacy lab for parents and students in the Allen Independent School District in the community of Allen, Texas, a North Dallas suburb. Specifically, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes promoted in the curriculum and instruction constituted the focus of the investigation. The study is limited for four reasons:

1) A limitation of the study is the high economic status of the suburban district’s profile.

2) A limitation of the study is that it was conducted with parents
who participate in the Community Technology Literacy Lab which serves English language learner students ages four through twelve.

3) A limitation of the study is the homogeneity of the interviewees. There were thirteen Latino participants and one Asian.

4) A limitation of the study is that social class was not explored as a factor.

There are three delimitations:

1) A delimitation of the study is that it will be conducted only with the parents who have been involved in the community lab classes for two years.

2) A delimitation of the study is that it might have excluded other ELL students who had parental involvement in a different setting.

3) A delimitation of the study is that it excluded parents who do not attend the lab but whose children are involved in the lab.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms have been defined as they relate to the study.

Community technology literacy lab – classes for children and adults of limited English proficiency for the purpose of learning to speak, read, write, and spell in English while simultaneously improving computer skills; additionally, a component of socialization and a component of adult and child reading together is included in the community class.
Cultural support – sense of community built upon cultural values within which social resources crucial to the ability to access the American education system are attained

Culturally responsive teaching – uses the students’ cultures and strengths to build a bridge to success by placing their cultures alongside middle class mainstream culture in order to bring congruence between the school culture and the students’ cultures

Ellis software - an individualized adaptive language acquisition software curriculum from beginning to advanced English Language Learners with each level using a thematic approach to teach language within the context of a real-life situation

English Language Learner – person whose primary language is one other than English

English as Second Language - a required program to enable students to become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition of the English language through the integrated use of second language methods (TAC, 2001)

Funds of knowledge - the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well being” (Moll, et. al., 1992, p.133)
Parental involvement – strategies through which parents can support their child in school by increasing their knowledge of the school culture and expectations for their child.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) - new Texas statewide assessment program beginning 2003

Summary

Educators must consider many aspects of the changing demographics of our population. Family literacy programs are among the most rapidly growing educational intervention efforts in the United States. Programs designed to promote family literacy will become essential as accountability dictates that “no child be left behind,” and assures through stringent analysis of achievement of limited English speaking students that language is not a barrier to acquiring an education. Developing programs that encourage strong learning contexts that are supported by culturally responsive teaching and instruction will be the expectation of all school districts. This study culminated in the development of a model for such a program, specifically designed to help suburban districts who are facing rapid growth in their ELL populations to include parents and the community in their efforts to support student achievement in those minority populations.
The organization of the study includes the review of related literature organized into three segments, the methodology, the analysis and interpretation of the data, and the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction & Organization of the Review

This study addresses family school literacy, defined as the transmission of school practices through a utilitarian school-based experience, and the patterns of behavior of parents of English Language Learner (ELL) students that impact student learning. In order to place this study in the context of family literacy, the literature review provides an overview of parental involvement, including the contributing factors that impact student achievement. Next the review discusses culturally responsive teaching and cultural support. The intent of the review is to provide a background for understanding the context of parental involvement in schools and the contributing factors that influence student achievement. In addition, the intent of the review is to provide findings in research pertaining to the relationship between the parents’ culture and the American school culture and to summarize the impact of the relationship on the transmission of school practices into the home that enhance the learning of ELL.
Parental Involvement

In an era of intense accountability for student success, parental involvement continues to play a critical role in school improvement efforts. There is consensus among educators and parents that children will learn more and schools will improve if we can get parents to do a better job of supporting their children’s schooling. “Educators needs to know more about the families of their students in order to capitalize on family strengths in helping children succeed, particularly in schools that serve urban, poor, minority, educationally disadvantaged, or culturally diverse families” (Epstein, 1992, p.15). Parental involvement, although varied in practice, appears to produce a positive impact on student outcomes due to the strong connection between parent and child (Walberg, 1984, Becher, 1986; Henderson, 1988, Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Coleman (1987) concluded that family involvement is one of the sources of schooling achievement, and variations in family background account for far more variation in school achievement than do variations in school characteristics. Educators view parental involvement as highly important, but their time with the students is a precious commodity in today’s high-stakes accountability environment. Time spent during instructional time or spent in planning for parental involvement is not a priority at the classroom
level; therefore, teachers look to districts to provide parameters and resources to ensure the integration of parent involvement.

In Texas, no funds are allocated to parental involvement programs but are mandated to include parents in site-based decision making. Local school districts systemically involve parents through Parent-Teacher Associations and generally leave the inclusion of parents up to the principal and teachers on a campus. District-wide parental involvement is loosely implemented and may not include a parent learning component.

In 1987, the National Committee for Citizens in Education concluded that involving parents in their child’s learning raises student achievement and that indisputably parents can make a critical difference. *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* provides important findings for the planning of parental involvement. Parents need a variety of roles to play and need to be involved in well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting programs and strategies. In order to implement programs that meet these parameters, school districts would need to allocate local funds for the coordination of the parent involvement programs. As budgets tighten through the State of Texas, programs that are not mandated are most likely to be cut; therefore, districts search for successful parent programming that is research based and can provide maximum results with minimum dollars spent or even alternative funding.
Research of parental involvement tends to examine one of three general approaches: 1) improving the parent/child relationship; 2) integrating parents into the school program; and, 3) building stronger connections among schools, families, and the larger community. Research on improving the parent/child relationship focuses primarily on the effects on students’ achievement of family process and status, including the parents’ level of education and income, reading and homework support by parents at home, and the parents’ marital status or social support network. Findings also support the notion that regardless of the ethnicity, the education level of the mother impacts the child’s reading proficiency (Kirsch & Jungleblut, 1986). As districts look at program design and consider research findings, education of the parents surfaces as a component that impacts student achievement. An influx of minority parents and children into Texas schools offers new challenges of parent education: teaching English and assimilating into the American school culture.

Teachers are the first point of contact with minority parents and face the challenge of understanding the needs of the children. Teachers do not have time allocated into their daily schedules to make home visits and only limited time to communicate by phone to learn more about the home environment. To insure that the home-school connection is made, educators look to a systemic approach that promotes the teacher home
connection, particularly for minority parents whose culture and language is different from the dominant language of the school. Resources are necessary to make this happen.

The family attitude and expectations for success largely influence the students’ positive attitudes about themselves. When parents help their children learn at home they nurture attitudes in themselves and in their children that are crucial to achievement (Henderson, 1988). “If educators hope to facilitate more involvement in education by minority parents, it is imperative that educators find out about the current attitudes and practices of minority parents regarding their involvement in their children’s education” (Chavkin, 1993, p. 73). Research is lacking in identifying specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be learned in a parent education program for minority parents that in turn are used to support their children’s learning.

The diversity in the State of Texas is increasing and challenges educators today. Understanding the minority parents’ perspective on teaching and learning is essential to maximizing the success of the learner. Face-to-face meetings are powerful in creating a can-do attitude between parent and teacher, home and school. Coleman documented in 1966 four sources of education in a child’s life, from most to least powerful: the family, the media, the peer group, and the school. We readily accept the impact on education of family involvement presented in
the research. In Coleman's report, he ranks “the media”, which at that time meant black-and-white TV, as a powerful component that impacts education. By 2005, households with broadband access to the Internet will likely increase by 900 percent, from 5 million to 47 million (Mann, 2002, p. 16). This technology component may not be ignored when analyzing the skills that parents need to support their child’s learning, nor, may we ignore the ability and inability to access such technology.

Contributing forces, such as demographic variables, impact the family and their ultimate involvement in their child’s education. The socioeconomic status, comprising of education, occupation, and income, is a contributing force that impacts student achievement. The link between social-class standing and school-class standing means that per capita income predicts student achievement, and the enriched home environment now encompasses access to technology. Children from poor backgrounds are less likely to have the advantages of enriched academic environments generally provided by highly educated adults. School districts cannot assume that all families have the necessary resources to support children at school. The resources may be in the form of printed material, supplies, technology, or in the form of language or academic proficiencies on the part of the parent. Just as the student is met at his or her level to begin the teaching and learning process, parents are met at their level to accelerate their understanding of the teaching and learning
that takes place in American schools. Bridging the home and school
cultures impacts student achievement.

Interest has been kindled regarding how parent involvement might
be used as a strategy to improve the educational achievement of minority
children. The challenge ahead is to provide a variety of opportunities for
minority parents to be involved in their children’s learning. Without the
necessary preparedness for children to be successful learners and
workers, our society will produce poorly educated and nonproductive
citizens unable to compete in a global economy. The “inevitable result of a
nation’s failure to compete is a declining standard of living and a
concomitant decline in other areas” (Chavkin, 1993, p. 81). Parents limited
in formal literacy skills, in English or in the native language, cannot be
assumed to be involved in their children’s education and in helping their
children with schoolwork in the ways schools expect. Families may benefit
from family literacy programs, vocational training, adult English as a
Second Language (ESL) programs, and access to community-based
social services (Espinosa, 1995); however, research is needed to identify
the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn and apply in the home
environment to support their child’s learning.

Educators experience the support of special programs; i.e., ESL
and bilingual to accelerate mastery of the English language, verbal and
written. However, leaving this responsibility to the special teacher only will
not produce the outcomes necessary to assure minority achievement. Finding additional resources to support programming beyond the classroom for family literacy is challenging in the current funding of education. The State of Texas does not allocate dollars for adult literacy as a component of the ESL or bilingual programs, which would support the child in the home environment as he or she learns English. The Texas Education Code mandates that children identified as limited English proficient shall be offered programs that enable them to “become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition of the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language and English” (TEC 29.051). The ultimate goal is to enable limited English proficient students to participate equitably in school; although, there is no provision for adult literacy even though parental involvement in the child’s learning is supported by research. Minority parents may be disenfranchised without knowledge to support their child's learning and without knowledge of the American school culture and how to access it.

It is important to understand the effects of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Either force can inhibit culturally diverse families from integrating into the learning process. Schools face the worthwhile challenge of empowering the culturally diverse families by making the education institution a familiar experience in order to facilitate the
students’ transition to the school culture and eventually to the mainstream (Henderson, 1988). In Texas, additional funding is allocated for students who qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Special accelerated reading programs and low pupil-teacher ratios are structures implemented to bridge the gap for these learners. However, the English Language Learner student is faced with the additional challenge of learning the English language before these accelerated programs can prove beneficial to him or her. Addressing the two populations, ELL and low socioeconomic, with distinct support, is imperative if educators are to know the strengths and weaknesses of the learner and meet the learner at his or her level of learning.

Establishing the coequal partnership through family literacy programs is the focus of several studies. The Dallas Morning News reports that as part of a pilot program aimed at helping newly arrived immigrants learn English and “adjust to American schools and culture,” the Thomas Edison Elementary School in Anaheim, California, is involving parents in the education process. The family literacy approach addresses two levels of need: children who are already citizens but whose parents do not speak English, and a huge immigrant population where nobody speaks English (Carter, 2002). Recognizing the need to educate parents of ELL children in the process of schooling is making its way into American schools. As one generation tolerates, the next generation
accepts, and the third generation embraces. Educators in the 21st century need to look beyond acceptance and embrace the culture of our students in an effort to understand the learner and share the culture of schooling with the minority family through family literacy. One major contributor to family literacy is the Intergenerational Literacy Project (ILP).

The ILP was begun in 1989 in the community of Chelsea, Massachusetts. The project focused on three goals: to improve the English literacy of parents, to support the literacy development and academic success of their children, and to conduct research on the effectiveness of an intergenerational approach to literacy. The instruction was provided to parents, not children, “based on the premise that as parents improve their own literacy, the skills and knowledge they gain will promote literacy learning among their children” (Paratore, 2001, p. 19). Schools take a bold step when they reach out to educate the parents or significant adults within a family. With no mandated funding for adult literacy through either the state or federal government, districts need proven strategies and structures to fund in this area because the adult program is in direct competition with mandated programs for students. The ILP findings provide a sound foundation for adult programming, but research is still needed in a program design that enables specific knowledge, skills, and behaviors to be learned by parents and that are transmitted into the home to support their children’s learning.
Paratore (2001) bases the positive outcome of ILP learners on a combination of factors. First, taking a multiple literacy and social change approach to learning expanded the curriculum available for instruction. The curriculum was built on relevance and the funds of knowledge. Moll defines funds of knowledge as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well being” (Moll, et.al., 1992, p.133). Second, a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate approach expanded the resources for learning. Third, forming groups of multilingual, multicultural learners created opportunities for learners to work in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups and share their personal histories. Fourth, “the ILP differs from many family literacy program models, including Even Start and National Center for Family Literacy models, in its emphasis on influencing the practice of family literacy by teaching the parent about shared literacy practices they might embed within the fabric of daily family routines” (Paratore, 2001, p. 107). Especially helpful to parents who had been educated outside the United States and lacked familiarity with practices common in American classrooms, was their gaining of a more complete understanding of the ways children learn in classrooms and of what is expected of children. The strength of the ILP is its different approach to involving families by strengthening the literacy practices that take place in the informal environment, the home. Suburban districts faced with fast
growing ELL populations can use this component of the ILP to develop a reciprocal approach. Bringing families into the school setting to learn may strengthen the minority families’ depth of knowledge about school practices and their ability to access the educational system. Reciprocally, educators learn about the social networks and native cultures of the minority parents.

Embedding literacy practices into the daily family routines is based on two basic tenets. The first is the belief that parents are capable of understanding and implementing shared practices without the oversight of a teacher in an out of the home setting. Being in the home allows the parent to also attend to and model instruction for the preschool children in the home. The second is that family literacy training activities are conducted within adult literacy classes. Paratore concludes that there is a range of other strategies that may prove beneficial in other contexts, including parent and child activity time, and that projects such as ILP can make a difference “as they help parents to co-construct meaning with other adults, with their children, and with their children’s teachers” (Paratore, 2001, p.111). A positive by-product is the early education in the home of the preschool child who learns from the family literacy model. The child is having the teaching and learning modeled by the parents as teacher and learner, as well as, by the older sibling as teacher and learner.
Research findings support parental involvement and family literacy programs. Further research is needed to identify specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes, promoted in English language literacy programs, and to identify strategies that engage parents in their child’s learning in the more informal setting of the home. Educators seek to attain the goal of bilingual education for students, identified by the State of Texas, which is to enable students to participate equitably in school, and districts seek a replicable program model that may offer maximum impact with limited funding.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Schools are striving to close the gap in achievement between minority and non-minority students. Identifying current attitudes and practices for involving minority parents may prove beneficial in impacting educational achievement. In an ethnographic study of a Latino community conducted by Delgado-Gaitan (2001), the researcher found that 98% of the teachers in the school viewed parental involvement to be very important, but most teachers believed parents were not working enough with their children at home. However, research examining parents’ perceptions of their role in their children’s education has found that Latino parents care very much about their children’s education (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). Part of the discrepancy between the perceptions of teachers and parents lies with the fact that parent involvement is difficult to
define. Parent involvement is a comprehensive term that is subject to interpretation.

Results of an exploratory study of attitudes and practices conducted on minority parents in six states clearly indicated that parents were interested in being involved in a variety of ways. Parents identified the roles as being school-program supporter, home tutor, audience, advocate, and decision-maker. Parents ranked audience and home tutor as the roles of choice. Given an opportunity to offer suggestions, Hispanic parents suggested giving parents more information about children’s success in school and helping students understand that having their parents involved is important (Chavkin, 1993). Just as one strategy in teaching does not fit all learners, neither does one activity for parent involvement fit all parents. Minority parents are on a continuum of learning about the English language and about the teaching and learning practices of American schools. Offering only formal activities such as PTA involvement, supporting school programs, or participating in site-based decision making teams will only address the needs of some parents, excluding others from the necessary instruction they need to become partners in their child’s education.

Reginald Clark (1993) conducted a study on homework-related behaviors of parents. Two significant behaviors that focus on informal activities in the home emerged from the analysis: parenting practices and
parental personality structures. Parenting practices were defined as providing a setting and adequate resources for homework completion, providing positive parental homework guidance, and exposing the child to role models of active learning. The practices also included monitoring during homework. The parental personality structures were defined as acquiring knowledge of homework support strategies, homework expectations, high expectations for the child, and awareness of community support opportunities. In his study, demographic variables of the parents were considered clarifiers of the social context in which the children lived rather than as variables to define practice or structure. Further research is needed in identifying specific strategies that adults learn and can model to the child in the home as active learning.

The results of the analyses revealed that for the students to be academically successful, they needed to be exposed to an array of additional support behaviors. Additionally, the parents’ personal effort to learn had a significant effect on students’ levels of achievement (Clark, 1993). Southwest Educational Development Laboratory reported in Reaching Out to Diverse Populations that because parents who lack formal education or speak a foreign language understand little about the American public school system, the parents are less likely to reach out to their child’s school. Not only may parents not have the academic ability to assist their children with schoolwork, but they may not believe it is their
role to be involved academically out of respect of the role of the teacher (Trumball, et.al., 2001). Teaching minority parents how to access the education system by including them in instruction in a school setting may reduce the intimidation parents may feel by simply going into a school.

“Culture is often almost completely overlooked in explanations of why parents do not become involved in the ways schools expect” (Trumball, et.al., 2001, p.44). “Educators need to develop a greater understanding of the features of the Hispanic culture that influence parents’ child-rearing and socialization practices, communication styles, and orientation toward formal education” (Espinosa, 1995, p. 1). Latino parents respect the educator as teacher and see their role of parenting as one to teach their children to be respectful, well-mannered, and kind. “One characteristic that is of paramount importance in most Hispanic cultures is family commitment, which involves loyalty, a strong support system, a belief that a child’s behavior reflects on the honor of the family, a hierarchical order among siblings, and a duty to care for family members” (Griggs, et.al., 1996). District programs that offer cultural support provide the opportunity for reinforcement and respect of the individual native cultures and provide a learning opportunity for the dominant culture.

The dominant minority culture in Texas is predominantly Latino, but parents of other minority cultures also focus on rearing children to be well-rounded, knowledgeable, and well-mannered. Many minority cultures
perceive that educators have the primary responsibility of educating children and that all educational decisions are made by school administrators and teachers, with parents having little input (Ascher, 1988; Floyd, 1998). Schools commonly seek to communicate in the language of the ELL parents; however, communication problems may exist due to cultural differences (Trumball, et.al., 2001). A program design in parental education that offers the opportunity to celebrate the native culture with other native speakers may reinforce a mutual respect between the native culture and the American school culture and provide the foundation for culturally responsive teaching. Strategies that foster such a respect may accelerate the comfort level that minority parents need to access the educational system and may educate the dominant culture on the implications on learning that culture plays.

Children of marginalized minority parents need to see their parents or other adults interact successfully with school staff members in a school setting in order to build trust and mutual respect. However, schools may actually “facilitate the exclusion of students and parents by establishing activities that require specific majority culturally based knowledge and behaviors about the school as an institution” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, p. 21). Thus, providing parents education through culturally responsive teaching may provide the formal activities in which minority parents can be
involved, as well as, promote learning strategies to specifically help their children at home.

Successful schools focus on providing deeper understanding about what a good school looks like, about how the school system works, and about creating a home learning environment for the child (SEDL, 2000). Thus, parent participation needs to be well developed and well structured so parents gain an understanding about teaching and learning methods (Comer, 1986), and educators should capitalize on the experiences of the ELL student and count the cultural capital and experiences as strengths (Trueba, et.al., 1997). Time outside of the school day may offer optimal access for working parents and their children to come together in a homogeneous setting that offers support for family literacy.

A review of research includes operational models of parental roles: parent as audience, parent as paraprofessional, parent as teacher of own child, parent as learner, and parent as decision-maker. Informal activities encompass parent-child interactions in the home learning environment; i.e., reading with children, tutoring, and playing learning games. The model that defines the parent as a teacher for his or her own child allows the parent to define his or her own time spent with the child. This model is more likely to be adopted by the parents. The home setting promotes tutoring, an intensive one-to-one teaching time that does not take parents away from their children and their home (Peterson, 1989). The broader
notion of home learning, including parent as home tutor, deserves more consideration (Epstein, 1983). For minority parents to have maximum success in home tutoring, learning the English language offers equitable access to the learning their children are receiving at school. Programming for parent education may consider teaching and learning with adults that is closely aligned with the teaching and learning of their children which offers the parent specific strategies to reinforce in the home.

The parent-as-teacher model, in the context of literacy development, strengthens the “ties between home and school by transmitting the culture of school literacy through the vehicle of the family” (Auerbach, 1989, p. 169). Dinah Volk’s case study of parent involvement in the homes of three Puerto Rican kindergartners interprets the parent-as-teacher model as one that transmits school practices. “Immigrant parents of school-age children may feel social pressure to conform to a set of cultural norms that qualifies one as a member of the school culture” (Trumball, et.al., 2001, p. 45). Parents may feel incompetent if the cultural knowledge of American schools and if command of the English language are not attained. In offering parental education to the minority parents, emphasis may be placed on what the dominant culture takes for granted concerning American school culture: how classrooms are set up, how the teaching and learning takes place, what are the school’s expectation of parents, and how parents can access the educational system.
Volk identifies two assumptions that underpin the model: “Learning occurs primarily in school; thus, the teacher must bridge the gap between home and school by helping parents recreate school learning experiences. Secondly, “school practices are adequate but what happens at home makes the difference in children’s school achievement” (Volk, 1994, p. 89). Therefore, educators may be able to maximize the effect of parent involvement by enhancing the connection between learning activities in the home and learning activities in school. Further research supports the informal teaching that occurs between parent and child with learning activities in the home as the one with the most payoff for the parents and students. (Rich, 1988). If parents are willing to dedicate time at home to support their child’s learning, then an expectation is a willing response from school districts to bridge the gap between home and school with meaningful parent education.

In Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools, informal activities at home were identified as the most important parent contributions to children’s success in school. “Checking homework assignments, reading and listening to children read, obtaining tutorial assistance, providing nurturance, instilling cultural values, talking with children, and sending them to school well fed, clean, and rested were among the informal activities parents saw as involvement with the educational process” (Scribner, et. al.,p.36). Coleman (1987) identified two
classes of inputs, each of which conditioned schooling success. He described the input from the school, the institutional setting, as formal teaching and learning. The family controls the informal input or informal opportunities for teaching and learning. The family’s attitudes, efforts, and conceptions of self are seen as family and social capital. Increase in family capital contributes to student achievement. Culturally responsive teaching capitalizes on this family capital and may be considered a significant component in designing a program for parent education of minority parents in order to maximize the feeling of inclusion into American schools.

The majority of parents continue to support the role of audience at school meetings, school events, or working as a teacher assistant. However, Gerardo Lopez in his study of a migrant family in Texas, found that formal activities can be exclusionary of marginalized people in these traditional ways (Lopez, 2001). Efforts in empowering parents of limited English proficiency as learners will change “the conditions which cause marginalization” in their lives (Paratore, 2001, p. 105). There is a general acceptance that parents may feel marginalized due to the inability to speak the English language, but the marginalization can also be apparent in the attitudes toward and use of technology.
Technology Literacy

To avoid exacerbating the exclusion of minority parents, schools should consider that technology literacy is a form of basic literacy provided by schools in formal education. Offering technology resources necessary to enable parents to replicate behaviors learned in a school setting in the home enhances and expands the informal activities in which the parent and child will be engaged. “From a social perspective, technologically illiterate citizens affect a community and nation in many ways. One way is a ‘growing number of disenfranchised citizens, both economically and politically, from participating effectively in the governance and management of their communities’” (Devore, 1992, p. 61). Schools are seen as a microcosm of a community in which all citizens come together and are treated equally irrespective of intelligence, gender, ethnicity, or economic status. In designing programs for adult education, consideration of access to technology may enable equitable participation in the American school system for those who feel disenfranchised.

Technology integration seeks to utilize technology tools as incidental in the teaching and learning process. Emergent technologies used for language acquisition enhance the inherent social nature of language through the interactive and engaging learning style. Students gain meaning by constructing and manipulating information and strengthening the learning by connecting new concepts with established
knowledge (Bermudez, 1994, Trueba, et.al., 1997). Hypermedia systems offer users access to a large knowledge base and allow them to seek out information that meets their particular needs in terms of both their prior knowledge and their preferred learning style. (Bermudez & Palumbo, 1994). Providing a learning environment that facilitates comprehension and retention of concepts through exploration and an interactive format can promote second language acquisition. In districts today minority children engage in learning activities, which include technology. Minority parents who do not have access to or knowledge of technology are not able to extend the classroom activities involving technology into the more informal learning activities provided in the home. In a predominantly affluent suburb, a school district may not take for granted that all parents have access to technology and may choose to provide access to all parents through relevant parent education programs. Technology is a factor in identifying appropriate structures and strategies that should exist in schools to support parental involvement. Providing minority parents and children an avenue to learn together by integrating technology into the acquisition of language may not only enhance the interaction as they learn together, but offer essential skills to the parents for their own employability.
Cultural Support

Minority parents find obstacles that prevent them from being involved: school environment, culture and language, educational level of parents, psychological issues, and logistical issues (Chavkin, 1993). “The process of acculturation, internalizing a host culture’s identity, is more acute for some immigrants than others and they may go through culture shock as they encounter a new culture” (Hyslop, 2000, p. 2). The language barrier is exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of school culture. Concha Delgado-Gaitan, a leading researcher, studied the empowerment of English Language Learner adults through participation in economic and social structures. The researcher conducted ethnographic interviews with parents in Carpinteria, a community of approximately twelve thousand residents on the Central California coast. The 1999 U.S. Census reported that Hispanics comprised 31.5 percent, Asians 12 percent, African Americans 7.5 percent and Whites 49 percent of California’s population. Delgado-Gaitan found “family social resources were crucial to the ability to access the educational system. Familiarity with the educational system had a great deal to do with the parents’ ability to shepherd their children through the school system” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993, p. 504). There is disconnect between school culture and home culture (Gibson, 2002) resulting in cultural barriers. In order to guide minority parents to make the connection between home and school and for schools to likewise connect
with the home, districts may consider empowering the parents by educating them about the school culture and initiating programs that respect and embrace the unique culture of the parents. There is an absence of research in schools that are just beginning to feel the impact of increased minority populations. Many suburban schools are experiencing fast growth in minority populations and research is needed to help define attributes of successful programs that meet the needs of parents and children.

In an effort to address the cultural barriers and foster bicultural relationships, parents need to experience a welcoming atmosphere within the school setting and to be part of a communication network (Moles, 1993). In addition, acknowledging parents’ cultural values (Scribner, et.al., 1999) is important to build genuine partnerships with parents of mutual trust and openness. Incorporating the personal touch along with strong leadership and administrative support will result in flexible policies and a welcoming environment (Ascher, 1988; Espinosa, 1995). Parents from cultures other than the dominant one often feel unwelcome at school, thus, hindering parental presence. Because the parents’ presence at school communicates to children that their own language and experiences are valued, schools may want to recognize that immigrants come from all walks of life and may be fearful to access the education institution. A school may have an ELL child whose parents were professionals in their
native country and due to circumstances beyond their control (political in many cases) have found refuge in the United States. These folks were at their peak in their careers and are starting over because of the language barrier. In their countries they might have worked very well with their child’s teachers in their own environment and culture and are now petrified to enter the school. A school may also have an ELL child whose parents immigrated to the United States without any schooling in their native country and have come to create a better life for their family. Again fear and rejection may hinder their connection with the school. When students feel that their language and culture are important and respected, they find learning more satisfying” (Lapp, Flood, Tinajero, Lungren, Nagel, 1996, p. 263). Making the first step toward welcoming minority parents in the school and offering programming that involves the entire family and educators in an environment of mutual respect may influence learning and is due consideration in designing family literacy programs in schools.

Providing an opportunity of interaction with adults from a variety of cultural and linguistic groups expands the cultural awareness and sensitivity of all community members. Delgado-Gaitan found that involvement of Latino parents benefits the students first, but the whole community stands to benefit tremendously. She states, “The newly formed community becomes a composite of all of its members rather than a school or classroom where students who are acquiring a second language
are forced to fit in to the existing dominant culture” (Lapp, et.al., 1996, p. 263). In suburban cities, the school district may be the first to recognize the need for diverse families to be brought together as a learning community. Offering programming for family literacy that respects the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to access the larger community may enhance a minority parent educational program.

Parents of other languages feel frustrated because they do not understand how to help their children with homework tasks and feel a general sense of helplessness (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993). Language barriers can prohibit parents from making the transfer between their own culture and the school culture. Providing training in English and offering additional adult education opportunities (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995) are strategies to involve parents. “The prevailing belief among academics and adult literacy program and policy leaders is that instruction should be collaborative, dialogic, and responsive to the lives and needs of the learner” (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, Soler, 2002, p. 70-91). As parents participate in their children’s education and gain insights about the curriculum, the school procedures, the cultures of their children’s peers and teachers, the parents are able “to see relationships between their parenting practices and classroom practices” (Lapp, et.al., 1996, p. 263). Research is needed to identify the specific skills which reflect the classroom practices that parents can apply in the home with their children.
As a way of addressing obstacles and responding to the need for informal activities (Scribner, et. al., 1999), schools can focus on providing parents with the means to become involved in their child’s education at home (Scribner, et.al., 1999). Redirecting our focus from parent involvement as time spent at the school to involving families in children’s education beyond the school setting is necessary to bridge the gap in achievement. Two strategies that link parents and school in the home are to provide ways for families to help each other and to provide learning activities which families can use with children (Rich, 1988). Programs for minority parents that offer a social network and opportunities to share their culture with those of the dominant language and those representing multiple minority languages may strengthen the feeling of cultural support. A respectful environment fosters culturally responsive teaching.

“Parent-to-parent approaches to involvement in children’s learning take the burden off the school as the sole provider of support and help for families. Such approaches facilitate a sense of community and friendship between families that results in greater resources for parents” (Rich, 1988, p. 91). In the Intergenerational Literacy Project begun in 1993, the three goals of the program are to provide opportunities for adults to read and respond to literacy materials of personal interest; to provide a selection of books, strategies and ideas for adults to share with their children in order to support their literacy learning; and to provide a forum through which
adults can share their family literacy experiences (Paratore, et.al., 1999). Offering a homogeneous setting for minority parents of the same language reinforces the respect of their culture and an opportunity to learn from each other as each parent learns the English language and ways to support their children in school.

Parent training on school-like activities to be used in the home learning environment for school-age children impacts any preschool children within the family literacy environment. In a study by Paratore & Krol-Sinclair (1999), the researchers found that in all the Latino families studied, the practice of family literacy was an important and integral part of family life long before parents were engaged in the researchers’ study. As families learn the school practices they are able to replicate the learning activities in the home, thus strengthening the connection between home and school. Three tenets of family literacy support the notion that the best choice for parents of ELL children is informal activities over formal school activities. First is that family literacy promotes parent involvement programs whose major purpose is to help parents help their children and also support school learning. Secondly, intergenerational programs that focus on literacy incorporate informal activities that support child and adult learning. Thirdly, literacy interactions that occur naturally within the home and family greatly impact student learning. For family literacy to become an integral component of school, specific knowledge, skills and attitudes
that minority parents need to learn in order to support their child’s learning in the home should be identified.

Cultural support is essential to bridging the gap between culturally diverse families and the school. Children in the culturally diverse households are not passive and are knowledgeable of the skills essential for household and individual functioning (Moll, 1992). In fact, children of culturally diverse families are active in the activities and even mediating household communications with outside institutions. Involving parents from culturally and linguistically diverse communities “requires a firmer grasp of the cultural and language barriers” in order to build this cultural awareness into the engagement of parents and community members (SEDL, 2000, p. 3). District programming may consider the implications of language barriers on the parents of ELL children and the fear of rejection that these parents may have of even walking into a school.

Families develop social networks that are flexible, adaptive, and active, and may involve multiple persons from outside the homes. The networks interconnect them with their social environment and enhance their ability to thrive and survive. The parents train their children within the social aspect to adapt to the social order, which the parents understand and with which the parents identify. In a study conducted by Delgado-Gaitan, the research concluded that children learn about the nature of the world in which they live through parental socialization and that the parent-
child interactions involving homework are directly related to parents’
cultural knowledge about school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993). “Many parents
are experiencing socialization into a new culture, learning a second
language, and becoming familiar with a new educational system”
(Scribner, et.al., 1999, p. 55). Educators in today’s high-stakes
accountability system are respectful of the acceleration needed for ELL
and of the challenge to engage minority families into the education of their
children. New research synthesis produced by SEDL’s National Center for
Family and Community Connections with Schools shows that schools that
succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds: “1) Focus on
building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and
community members; 2) Recognize, respect and address families’ needs
and differences; 3) Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and
responsibility are shared” (SEDL,XXX). In an effort to accelerate their
learning, districts are searching for a program design for English
Language Learner parents that utilizes culturally responsive teaching,
provides access to the educational system, and bridges the home culture
and school culture.

“Through descriptive research educators can make
recommendations regarding the necessity for schools to open lines of
communication with families and whole communities in a systematic way
in order to facilitate the families’ access to necessary academic and social
resources" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993, p. 513). Design and research findings are important in offering sustainable, effective family literacy programming. Current findings support the notions that parental involvement is necessary for maximizing a child’s success in school, that without knowing the dominant language and the American school culture minority parents lack the ability to access all aspects of the educational system and feel disenfranchised, that respect and understanding of the native culture is the foundation for culturally responsive teaching, and that parents value the opportunity to help their children in an informal setting at home in a one-on-one tutoring relationship. Further research is needed to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are learned behaviors in a school setting and which aspects of the curriculum and instruction are transmitted into the home in an informal setting that impact children’s learning and success in school.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study

I applied the case study research method in this qualitative study. Over a three-month period during the spring of 2003, I gathered information regarding the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adult English Language Learners (ELL) that influence their child’s learning. Interviews with adult ELL enrolled in the second year of a family literacy program in the Allen Independent School District, field observations, and review of the curricula were used to gather evidence regarding the community technology literacy lab program. In data gathering and analysis, I attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

2. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3. What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?
I addressed these questions using the multi-case study research method within the framework of one program.

Population

The population for this study included the fourteen parents of students ages four through twelve who participated in a community technology literacy lab for English language learners (ELL) for the second year. ELL students and their parents from all ten elementary campuses in the Allen Independent School District were eligible to attend the lab. Twelve were dominant Spanish speakers, two were fluent English speakers. Five males and nine females participated in the study. The ages of the participants’ children in AISD ranged from five to eighteen.

Procedures and Data Collection

A within-case study research design employing qualitative methods followed the case study structure – the problem, the context, issues, and the “lessons learned” (Creswell, 1998, p. 36). I used observations, individual structured interviews, and document analysis for this investigation. I analyzed parents’ understanding of and implementation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes promoted in the Allen ISD community technology literacy lab for parents and children. The analysis involved parents’ behaviors in the technology computer lab, parent use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in the technology lab at home to support their children’s academic success, and other parental factors that
contributed to student learning.

In order to establish a context for the Allen ISD Family Literacy Program, I interviewed the Director of ESL and Bilingual Programs for the district. In those interviews, I obtained information regarding the program goals for ESL and bilingual children. A longitudinal review of the growth of Limited English Proficient students in the district showed identification of twenty-six students in 1995 to 463 students in 2001. Data depicting the forty-one languages spoken in the district were included in order to secure an overview in which the family literacy program was integrated. The Program Coordinator shared further information about the procedures and logistics of the operation of the program. A tour was taken of the facility to see where the classes met on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The coordinator and I determined the best place for interviewing the candidates and how the observers would be introduced and placed in the classrooms for observations.

The initial meeting with the participants was scheduled with guidance from both the director and coordinator. They not only attended the initial meeting with the participants, but contacted the adults in order to have 100% attendance at the organization meeting. The Spanish language translator and I conducted the meeting by greeting and meeting each individual present. With assistance from the translator, I reviewed the purpose, the procedures and the consent forms, which resulted in a clear
understanding of the interview component of the project. More time was devoted to explaining about the observations to ensure there was exact understanding of where the observers would be in the classroom, how often they would be observed, and how the teachers would be notified of the observers in the classes. We fielded all questions, and additional time was spent with individuals who needed clarification before consenting to the observation. Fourteen of the twenty-four present gave permission to be observed.

I conducted structured individual interviews with each of the parents attending the community technology literacy lab for the second year. I collected the data with assistance from a translator to ensure clear communication of the questions and the participants’ responses. The interviews occurred in the lab on the Tuesday and Thursday evening sessions of Community Night. I used an interview protocol and each interview took approximately thirty minutes. An assistant using a laptop computer recorded each interview, and each interview was tape-recorded for verification during the coding phase of the project.

I had developed questions for interviewing from the research analyzed in the literature review (Appendix A). For the purposes of this study, the questions related to three areas: 1) parental involvement, 2) culturally responsive teaching, and 3) cultural support. I also asked probing sub-questions in each area. Questions about parental involvement
sought to distinguish between formal and informal activities regarding behaviors in the lab and at home. Regarding culturally responsive teaching, questions probed into the components of the computer technology literacy lab, teacher-directed learning, and real-life skills application that facilitate acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned by the adults. The sub-questions about cultural support sought to define the past learning related to both native culture and the school culture.

The second component of data gathering consisted of observing the participants as they rotated through the three segments of the program: computer lab, real-life skills, and teacher-directed learning. The observations were conducted with the use of an observation checklist (Appendix B) that measured whether the behavior was observed or not observed in each of the segments. The expected behaviors were derived from the goals of the curricula used in the family literacy program. I trained ten administrative interns in the use of the observation checklist. The interns were recommended by the human resource coordinator based on their hours toward their administrative certificate or their attendance in a leadership academy sponsored by the school district. The interns had prior knowledge of observation skills and were exemplary teachers. We discussed each indicator on the observation checklist and reached consensus of our understanding of each one. Each observer was
assigned one participant to observe six times, for two hours each time, over a three-month period. Ten participants of the fourteen participants volunteered to be observed in addition to the interview process. At the conclusion of the organization meeting, three additional participants volunteered to be observed if any of the ten volunteers were unable to complete the classes. Lesson plans were collected on the nights the adult learners were observed in order to analyze the objectives for the evening in relation to the observed behaviors.

The third component involved a review of the curricula used in the adult classes. The English Language Learning and Instruction System (ELLIS) software program and the Side-by-Side curriculum were used. Lesson plans derived from these curricula were analyzed in relation to the behaviors documented by the observers. The scope of the curricula encompassed speaking and listening, basic reading and writing, and functional and workplace skills. Consideration was given to the literacy level of the learner in the self-paced computer program.

Mastery of English grammar and structure is a major aspect of the ELLIS program. The basics of sentence formation and structure are covered in detail throughout the ELLIS programs. Comprehensive grammar information is taught and tested, as well as available for students to reference or review. The comprehensive grammar and structure portion includes verbs and adverbs; nouns, pronouns, and adjectives; and
conjunctions, articles, and prepositions. The second component, listening comprehension, provides practice items to test ideas and concepts presented. The listening comprehension practice items specifically fill the need to test student abilities to absorb and interpret spoken information. Specifically, the curriculum covers main ideas, order of a process, supporting ideas, important ideas, ability to make inferences, and ability to categorize topics or objects. The third component, reading comprehension, is the basis of general reading practice. ELLIS contains script pages, word and phrase definitions, practice items, and culture notes, as well as dialogues in a companion workbook. Writing is the final component. ELLIS teaches the fundamentals of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, and culture. The workbook contains a variety of writing exercises touching upon different writing skills.

The Side-by-Side curriculum was used for the teacher-directed culturally responsive teaching. This is a skills program that integrates conversation practice, reading, writing, and listening. The major aspect is a clear focus on grammar and vocabulary, with interactive, communicative practice through conversations and exercises. Lessons highlight communication strategies such as complimenting, hesitating, and apologizing. Exercises provide models for practicing authentic pronunciation, stress, and intonation. There is a vocabulary section in every chapter that focuses on key words in a picture dictionary format.
Activities invite students to relate lesson themes to their own lives and experiences through journal writing. The student has a workbook that facilitates practice at home.

A final component that emerged during the study took place after I had conducted three-fifths of the interviews. I discussed the interview results from nine of the fourteen interviews with the director. Learner responses to the interview questions prompted the program director to conduct a two-part survey. Second year students who no longer attended the family literacy program were asked to complete a one question survey identifying why they no longer participated, and all participants were surveyed with a satisfaction survey of eight questions (Appendix C).

I coded and analyzed the interview responses. I looked for correspondence between two or more categories and established patterns. I used two verification procedures: triangulation and member checks. In triangulation, the research corroborated the evidence found in the multiple interview responses and the behaviors identified in the multiple observations conducted by the observers. In member checks, I met with ten of the participants to share the analyses, interpretations, and conclusions in order to allow the informants the opportunity to judge the accuracy and credibility of the research. The program coordinator and the Spanish language translator coordinated the meeting.
Data Analysis

The database for this case study included interview notes, transcribed interviews, field notes from observations and lesson plans from the curricula. Steps utilized to obtain the database are outlined below:

First, the data from the interviews were imported into the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD-ist 6) software program revised in 2002. The interviews were identified in the software program according to the individual interviewed. The interviews were classified by code for each participant interviewed (parent 1, parent 2, etc.).

Second, the interview data and field observation notes were analyzed using initial codes composed of key words from the interview questions. “Native culture” is an example of key words used. All interviews were coded by the initial codes embedded in the interview questions drawn from the three major categories found in the literature review: parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and cultural support. Additionally, the data from the observation checklist and notes were coded related to the behaviors observed; for example, “listening skills, speaking skills, technology-related.” The basis for the indicators on the observation checklist was derived from the curriculum framework: ELLIS software, and Side-by-Side.
I used the constant comparative method of analysis that helped me focus on “the range of plausibility, to avoid taking one stand or stance toward the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 65). The initial categories were established from the concepts embedded in each interview question. Each individual case was analyzed by sentence and coded by interview question in the initial categories. I analyzed each interviewee response in each category in detail and created sub-categories along the level of properties and dimensions. The microanalysis allowed me to consider alternative explanations, including in vivo concepts. As the concepts emerged within each sub category, I classified them according to the interviewee interpretations. From this conceptual mode of analysis, dominant themes emerged revealing the tenets on which a theory of parental learning and transference of learning to support their children’s learning could be based.

Data from the observation checklists were coded using frequency counts of behaviors and were used to triangulate the findings from the interview process. The data gathered from the observation checklists were tallied on a spreadsheet and noted to the various codes in order to triangulate the findings from the interviews to substantiate the specific skills identified, as well as the patterns and relationships established from the respondents. The indicators were further substantiated through the alignment with the lesson plans by identifying the skills or concepts being
taught during the observed lessons. I employed descriptive detail, classification, and interpretation in order to answer the research questions:

1. Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

2. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3. What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?
CHAPTER 4
INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS

Description of the Data

The purpose of the investigation was to describe a family literacy program attempting to teach the adult English language learners (ELL) the knowledge and skills that would allow them to support their children’s learning at home. The methodology employed was a multi-case study. Information regarding the program’s efforts to teach the English language, to provide information about the school culture, and to learn about the native cultures represented by the participants in the second year of the program was gathered, along with the demographic information. The data were gathered through: interviews with fourteen Hispanic adults and one Thai adult, field observations, and lesson plans. The research was focused on the interview responses and observations of the fourteen adult learners. In addition, ten of the participants were observed over the twelve week period and the results were analyzed as were the lesson plans utilized during the same time period. The research findings are reported in a narrative format with evidence supporting each theoretical assumption. Comments from the interview respondents related to the major findings and the themes that emerged are included to substantiate the findings.
As the principal investigator and Superintendent of Allen Independent School District, I analyzed the Allen Family Literacy Program in order to verify that the structure of the program was research-based and that the curriculum and instruction and program framework were meeting the needs of our minority parents seeking to learn the English language. Additionally, I sought to determine what strategies parents employed at home to support their children and whether their participation in the program enhanced their abilities to work with their children at home. Districts have decreased funding for programs not mandated by the State of Texas and must maximize every dollar spent; thus, Allen ISD needed verification that we were spending our parents’ time wisely in the literacy program, a community technology literacy lab. The research conducted answered these three questions:

1. Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

2. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3. What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?
Prior research declared the importance of parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and cultural support. The literature review revealed successful intergenerational literacy programs for communities where there was a large population of English language learners (ELL) many of whom were in the low-socioeconomic strata. Parents were involved in their children’s learning in formal and informal activities. Formal activities were those planned by the school to which parents were invited to attend and participate. Informal activities were defined as those in which parents engaged at home with their children. In either of these settings, limited English speaking parents needed knowledge and skills to access the educational system and looked to the school for the support they needed. However, the research did not identify the specific knowledge and skills that minority parents need to learn to support their child’s learning; nor, was research found for suburban districts that do not have a large minority population on which to base programming decisions.

Evidence in the literature also substantiated the need for cultural knowledge on the part of educators in order to connect with the minority learner. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes the importance of the native culture and a willingness to accept alternative perspectives. “It may mean changing what we think, what we say, and how we behave. But the reward is assisting families who need someone who can help them bridge two disparate cultures” (Lynch, 1997, p.48). My investigation identified
specific knowledge of the American culture that participants need to support their child’s learning and how their inability to speak the new language impacted their attitudes about themselves. In order to obtain the most in-depth knowledge of the adult learners in regards to the Allen Family Literacy Program, I chose to interview and observe only those who were participants in the second year of the program. The literature review guided the formulation of my questions as I focused the interview questions on formal and informal activities and on specific knowledge and skills learned in the three segments of the community technology literacy lab: computer lab, real-life skills, and literacy classroom (teacher directed). I asked questions about culture: native culture, U.S. culture, and if and how the community understands the parent’s native culture. I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) and concluded with, “Is there anything I have not asked you about the program that you would like for me to know?”

The goals of the curricula used in the program determined the behaviors articulated on the observation checklist. (Appendix B) The observers were trained in how to observe and understand how the elicited behaviors would look. The ten observers were selected based on their classroom experience and the fact that they were interning as future administrators. I met with the observers at the beginning of the project and explained the purpose of the study, how I would be conducting my
interviews and how the participants were chosen for the study. Ten parents out of the original group of twenty-four volunteered to participate in the observation phase of the study. I explained the program coordinator would be their contact person for the 10 observers, and we discussed that the observer should be seated far enough away to see, yet not hover over, the learner in an effort to be as incidental as possible in the classroom. In addition to checking whether the behavior was observed or not observed, the observers had the opportunity to write notes in the margin regarding any observations of the learner that did not specifically align with the behavior indicators on the checklist. The data generated from their notes enriched the overall project.

District Information

Allen ISD is comprised of fifteen campuses. Ten of the campuses are elementary (pre-kindergarten through sixth grades), two are middle schools (grades seven through eight), one is a ninth grade center, one is a high school (grades ten through twelve), and one is an alternative school. The rapidly growing suburban school district includes approximately twenty-nine square miles, a student enrollment of 12,585, and approximately 1,300 total staff members, which includes more than 850 professional staff members.

Allen Independent School District (AISD) has an enrollment of 12,585 according to the 2002-2003 fall collection for the Public Education
Information Management System (PEIMS). Included in the total student population are 813 students, or 6.5%, designated economically disadvantaged, derived from students whose parents’ income qualifies the students for free or reduced lunch prices. The ethnic distribution of the student population is comprised of 78.5% white/ non-Hispanic, 8.6% Hispanic, 7.2% African American, 5.8% other, which includes Asian students.

From the year 2000 to the year 2002, the ESL student population grew from 146 to 463. AISD offered English as a Second Language (ESL) to students K-12 and a bilingual program for kindergarten and first grade students, with plans for expansion through fifth grade by 2006. The district initiated the adult ESL community technology literacy lab in order to reach our minority families who were from many different countries including Egypt, Colombia, Venezuela, South Korea, Mexico, Ethiopia and China. There were 23 different languages represented in the student population.

Description of Context and Informants

The investigation was conducted at Ford Middle School where the Allen Family Literacy Program was held every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The classes for adults were held in classrooms in one hallway and classes for the children were held in a different hallway. There were two computer labs utilized by the adults and five additional classroom for the literacy and real-life components. A
classroom teacher and a lab manager were in the computer lab with the adult learners. Each participant worked on individual programs based on his or her placement or benchmark tests within the Ellis software program. Each participant was engaged with the computer for forty-five minutes. When the segment was completed, the adult learners rotated to the teacher-directed literacy classroom. The learners were seated at desks and the teacher presented the English skills lesson. The setting did not include small group instruction, but did involve the learners in strategies that allowed them to model the skills to be learned; such as, role-playing, pronunciation, or questioning techniques. The teacher-directed setting provided opportunities for student initiated reinforcement of skills. The adult learners had a brief break before beginning the real-life skills segment which was conducted in the same classroom and was an extension of the skills lesson in the literacy segment. The learners applied the information acquired in a practical situation; such as, asking questions of school personnel with regard to their child’s grades. The real-life segment was learner-centered and the curriculum was aligned with the immediate needs of the learners. I worked with the Program Coordinator to determine the room in which we would conduct the interviews and selected a conference room central to the adult classrooms. I also chose the conference room in which to conduct the initial meeting so that there
would be some familiarity with the setting when the interviewees came in individually.

The room had a conference table and comfortable chairs and was an excellent size for the original meeting of twenty-four people. We selected an area at the end of the conference table for the interviews with the recorder at a nearby table. I sat across from the participant who sat next to the translator. I had met each of the participants individually during the organization meeting and greeted the individuals at the door when they came in for the interview. I elected to interview only the adult learners who were in their second year of the program. They had attended Ford Middle School in year one and were generally very comfortable in the school. If the interviewee appeared to be nervous, we talked on a personal level about families until there was more of a comfort level before beginning the questioning. Each interview took at least thirty minutes with four of the fourteen interviews taking forty-five minutes.

The interviewees consisted of nine women and five men. Four of the fourteen had professional jobs in their home country, but only two of the four had professional jobs in America. The group consisted of thirteen Hispanic and one Thai individual ranging in age from parents with very young children to grandparents living with their children. I found each individual to be very interesting and was captivated by their stories of coming to the U.S. Most of them spoke of leaving the security of their
homeland because of the opportunities their children would have in the United States. When asked if his knowledge of U.S. culture had increased, one parent stated, “Yes! I love it! I had an opportunity to come to America when I was young, but didn’t come. Instead I stayed in my country and began my own business (a pool hall) and I made a lot of money in my country. I had to sell my business to come to America. We came here for our children because America is a good country. Now, I have to work for someone else, but I don’t care because it is best for my sons.” One of the mothers interviewed talked about her own education: “My father only made me and my sisters (thirteen brothers and sisters) go through the fourth grade. He said we only needed to read and write enough to read the signs on the bus or in town so that we wouldn’t get lost. Nothing else mattered in school.” He told her she would be a wife and stay home and take care of the children. “I am excited to be in America and am learning from my sons and growing up with them.”

Methodological Approach

Prior to my research project, my perspective as the Allen Superintendent of Schools of the Family Community Night program initiated in our district was a holistic view. I was aware of the grant that originally funded the program in the 2002-2003 school year and its purpose: to involve the parents of our English Language Learner (ELL) students in the learning process alongside their children. Initially, the
district’s only in-kind contribution was to contribute the use of the middle school facility and the computer hardware to run the software which would be purchased with grant funds. At the time, I was also well aware of the growing number of ELL students in the district. We saw an increase from under 100 to 400 in one year due to proper identification and increased programming, as well as, new growth. Since the district is a fast-growing one, approximately 10% student growth per year, we were accustomed to managing the implications of such growth. But because the state does not fund parent education, we were not addressing the needs of our ELL parents and were not prepared to manage the high growth of this population.

As we approached the second year of the program, the grant funds were depleted, and we learned we did not receive the grant for year two. We then began to look for additional funding sources. I knew that the program had doubled during the first year and that we had approximately 200 additional interested participants. We investigated and found there was no other program offered free of charge that reached out to educating our adult ELL in the English language. I pursued a partnership with the City of Allen to fund the program. The Program Coordinator and the Director of ESL/Bilingual Programs presented the Family Community Night, a community technology literacy lab, to the Community Development Corporation (CDC) Board in an attempt to secure funds from
the city to pay for the staff needed to expand the program from year one. The CDC Board does not typically fund anything except “brick and mortar” but was interested in the program because of the employability aspect of the ELL as they learned the English language. Our presentation to them included the goals of the program and highlighted the adult software program objectives depicting the various real-life situations in which an ELL might find himself; i.e., the grocery store, the bank, the school, etc.

After several weeks of deliberation on their budget, the City of Allen agreed to fund the program staff for approximately $45,000 for the 2003-2004 school year. As we approached the conclusion of year one, I also decided to conduct a qualitative study on the program participants in hopes of determining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes the parents used to support their child’s learning and what aspects of the curriculum assisted them in doing so. Knowing that our funding was fragile, I knew we would need to refine the program to be sure our desired outcomes were closely aligned with our strategies.

I determined that a study of the adults who were participating in the program for the second year would offer a more in-depth knowledge of the program. I would be conducting my data gathering in the spring of 2003; therefore, students who began in the fall of 2002 may not be as confident or knowledgeable as those students who would be completing their fourth full semester. Because of my position in the district I was able to obtain a
list of the participants in their second year from the Director of ESL/Bilingual and realized there were twenty-four parents still involved. I requested permission to conduct the study from the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and informed her of the scope of the study. Upon receipt of the district’s permission and the nod of approval from the university, I needed to meet and hire a translator for the interviews to be conducted. I visited with a classroom aide with the high school ESL program and found her to be fluent in English and Spanish. She also had a heart for helping our ELL parents and students and I personally contracted with her to assist me.

I remained alert throughout the process to maintaining ethical behavior and alert to perceptions the participants could have in regard to my position in the district. It was important as the principal investigator that I did not use positional power to influence participation or to influence the work of the observers. I entered into a respectful one-on-one relationship with the participants and remained open to interpreting their responses objectively.

The translator and I worked with the Family Night Program Coordinator to schedule an initial meeting with the twenty-four participants. Prior to the meeting I met with the translator to review the consent form that I would be sharing on the first evening meeting. I had already had it translated into Spanish. I verified that the participants who
did not speak Spanish were fluent enough in English to participate. I emphasized the points of this being a voluntary study and of each person’s ability to opt out of the study at any time. I also emphasized the confidentiality of the interviews and observation data that would be gathered. We talked about the need for any translation to be as true to the comments as possible. The translator was so intent on helping me in order to help the program that she was adamant that she would take no pay for her services. I explained that I would not feel right about not paying her for her time and expertise and finally we settled on my paying her half up front and half upon completion. She is a delightful, polite, and intelligent individual.

The night of our initial group meeting, I met each individual as he or she arrived, shook hands, and visited through the translator in an effort to learn the first name, at least, of each parent there. When the entire group was present, I introduced myself again and shared the information about the program. I explained that each interview would be conducted in the room in which we were meeting and there would be the translator, my assistant, and I present. Each interview would be recorded, and the tapes would be stored in my office until the study was complete and then destroyed. I answered clarifying questions through the translator and explained the consent form. Each participant would receive a copy of the consent form which stated the participant understood it was voluntary and
that the participant could opt out of the study at any time. I did not realize how important the copy would be to them. The translator communicated to me that they were generally reluctant to sign anything in this country out of fear they did not fully understand what they were signing. We spent a great deal of time reviewing the consent form, at which time, all participants except two consented to be interviewed.

The next phase was to explain that ten volunteers out of the now twenty-two were needed to be observed. We reviewed the types of questions on the checklist and explained who the observers were and where they would be in the classes. The participants asked if the teachers would be notified so that the other class members would not think anything was wrong with the participants being observed. We explained that they were chosen because of being in the program for the second year, and we could certainly explain that to the teachers. One gentleman in the class appeared to be a leader in the group. I met him when he arrived that evening and learned that he was a chemical engineer in his former country, but was now teaching Spanish GED classes at a neighboring district. He was very open in our first meeting and shared his enthusiasm about our program. Without being asked, he began to talk with the other participants in small groups in an effort to explain further about being observed. He and his wife were fluent Spanish and English
speakers. At the conclusion of this segment, we needed ten volunteers and ten participants quickly signed the list.

As we concluded the meeting, several stayed and talked with the translator and me. Their comments let me know they felt good about the study because the results could help us improve and sustain the program. As two women left one stated, “I want to help because you are a nice lady.” She affirmed for me that it is not what you say but how you say it that really matters. My respect for and connection with this group of people were important outcomes for my first meeting.

The only problem I encountered during data collection was not being able to interview the intended number. Of the twenty-two who signed the consent form to be interviewed, four additional ones opted not to be interviewed. Four others were unable to come because of relocating or job schedules. The Program Coordinator tried to contact the individuals who no longer were coming, and it was through her investigations that we learned of the reasons for their absence from the program. Thus, I interviewed a total of fourteen. The observers encountered the same challenge, and some were unable to observe their participant all six times. Seven observers were able to observe their participants five out of the six times. Of the remaining three, two observers observed the participants once and one participant took a job and was unable to attend.
Review of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures for this qualitative multi-case study incorporated the following: audio-taped interviews using a protocol of adult learners in the second year of the family literacy program; observations of adult learners in each segment of the family literacy program, and lesson plans collected from the teachers. The interviews and observations were conducted over a twelve-week period.

Data Analysis Procedures

The interviews were recorded by an assistant who typed the responses as spoken by the participant and/or the translator and the script was verified by the audiotapes used to record the interviews. The analysis process began by entering the data into the NUD-ist software program with the initial codes derived from the concepts in the questions from the interview protocol. The initial codes included:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/ opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community view of culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Computer access</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Computer lab class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy skills class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real-life skills class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework help</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher or learner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comfort level in school visit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology lab skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific English skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicate with teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handwritten notes from the observers were also coded by the concept or behavior observed. A percentage identifying what the percentage of the total possible time the behavior could have been observed was calculated. Then, the actual percentage of time the behavior was observed was recorded. The constant comparative method was used to identify concepts and compare according to their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Themes emerged from the detailed description within each case or interview and cross-case analysis provided the opportunity to analyze themes across the multi-cases:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language learner perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes/ Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interpretations of the cases or the lessons learned are articulated in the data interpretation component and identified the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes and what aspects of the curriculum they use to support their children at home. I defined knowledge as the cognitive mastery and comprehension of a concept. Skills represented the ability to apply the knowledge in everyday or real-life situations. Attitudes were observed on a continuum from no knowledge of a concept to competency in applying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Linguistics</th>
<th>Prior Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Curriculum/Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Real-life</td>
<td>Ways to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Impact on family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Impact on learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the concept. Attitude is an influence at either end because it affects the
learning process negatively or positively.

The data gathered from the observation checklists were tallied on
a spreadsheet and noted to the various codes in order to triangulate the
findings from the interviews to substantiate the specific skills identified, as
well as the patterns and relationships established from the respondents.

Interpretation of the Data

In this study, I have developed four theoretical assumptions supported
by data from the interviews and observations that answer the three
research questions.

Research Question 1: Prior to their participation in the computer
technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their
children succeed in school?

Theoretical Assumption 1: Educational level of the minority parent
in his or her home country impacts the success of learning the English
language.

The interview questions that elicited responses on prior factors that
impact learning included: 1) What was your level of education in your
native country? Your spouse’s education level (if I was not interviewing
both parents)? 2) How many years of formal education in the United
States? 3) What is your marital status? 4) What is your occupation? What
is your spouse’s occupation? 5) What is your native country?
The education level data reflected twenty-three individuals whose education level was identified through the interview, nine of whom were spouses and did not participate in the program. The data indicated that three males and three females attended school through the elementary grades in their home country. A total of twelve individuals, five males and seven females, attended secondary school. Five of the individuals, four males and one female, reported receiving university level education. One of the males was from the United States and a spouse of a participant in the program. None of the actual fourteen participants who were interviewed received formal education in the U.S. Thirteen of the participants were married and one was single.

Of the twenty-three responses to the occupational status of the mother and/or father, only two were professionals. One male spouse, a U.S. citizen, who graduated from a university in the United States with an engineering degree, was a manager and one male who graduated from a university in his native country was a Spanish GED teacher for a school district. Of the remaining twenty-two, two were manual laborers, four were technicians, four worked in a restaurant, one worked in a day care, one was a mechanic, one was a house cleaner, and seven, all females, were stay-at-home mothers.

The nations of origin were five from Peru, South America, and two from Colombia, South America. Six were from Mexico and one was from
Thailand. I asked this interview question to gather factual data, but found significance in the way the participants viewed themselves in the United States and viewed their minority peers in the U.S. One gentleman who attended the university in South America stated, “I found here at the lab there were not all professional people. My first impression was when I saw all the people here and they were not professionals. They were Mexican people who come from low socio-economic levels. The professional people stay in Mexico. The differences between Mexican people and South America – it is not easy to get here from South America and we have to plan to come, we can afford to come and are able to function here better. We know that when we come we cannot go back. We cannot come and go like people from Mexico who come and go over the border.”

He compared his observation of coming to the lab where some people were educated and some were not with U.S. schools for his children. “In education, here everyone seems to be even. In Peru they teach about religion in school and not here. It is important because in Peru they teach about religion – here all children come to same school and on weekend, you can take your children to church of your choice. It is important for the kids. I like how everything is even in the school. It doesn’t matter how much money you have, your kids are even with the others. Not like it is outside the school.”
The evidence found in the data supports the theoretical assumption that the educational level of the minority parent in his or her native country impacts the success of learning the English language. The more educated participants, eight of whom attended or completed secondary school, and two university graduates particularly liked the fast-pace of the computer program. “Learning the computer is one of the most important things we have learned. The programs we use here – we like it. It makes learning fast and improves our pronunciation. The new words help us to learn more. The computer is like a ‘teacher with a whip.’” This gentleman was the most confident of all the informants. In the initial group meeting, he took a leadership role translating to others as a form of encouragement to be interviewed because their input could improve the program.

He further commented, “The computer program is great, but the teacher teaches differently – she teaches grammar and all the tricks that you cannot get on the computer – a good combination. Teachers need to understand the level their students are on. Some have limited education and some are educated. That is why it is important to have different levels. Expectations from the student is different. When that happens your program will grow and people will not get discouraged and leave.”

A female participant who attended the university in her native country and supervised teachers there was very analytical in describing her needs for language acquisition. “I come to the lab to learn English –
but I am more interested in the sounds. In Spanish it is different than when you speak English. The way Americans say certain sounds and speak so fast is difficult to learn. I like the computer and hope to learn to speak like the Americans. I want to be able to say A, B, C, and D (she made these sounds in English) like the Americans do. My granddaughter teaches me slowly how to say the English words like 'spi-der-man.’’ As she spoke this word slowly and said each syllable, she walked her hand down her arm like a spider and shared that this is the way her granddaughter taught her to speak.

Another gentleman who attended secondary school in his native country said, “I am smart. I learn better on the computer. With the teacher it is not good – in the classroom everyone should try and speak English. But everyone talks in lots of languages and does not use the English. Everyone is on a different level. I learn pronunciation and grammar in the computer lab. I think the program in the lab may be good, but not for beginners.”

The least educated group, four who had attended only elementary school in their native countries, had different perspectives on their learning. “Education is so important to me. I had thirteen brothers and sisters. My dad only made me and my sisters go through the fourth grade. He said I would be a wife and stay home and take care of the children. All I needed to know was to read the signs on the bus so I would not get lost
if I went to the city. We came to America for my children to learn. I am learning from them and growing up with them.”

Another female participant with only elementary education stated the computer class has not been a good experience because they go too fast. “The structure of the questions is hard for me to learn. It is too advanced for me. In the English class with the teacher it is great. The teacher is very patient and takes time with us. The English I learn from the teacher is better than what I learn in the computer lab. The computer lab is too difficult for me. The words on the CD are not words I use.”

One woman who only attended elementary school in her native country was very shy. She stated, “I have a hard time learning English and doesn’t feel like I am learning enough. The other students know more than I do and I don’t ask any questions. When I did ask questions and the teacher tried to explain, I didn’t understand what she was talking about. I feel like it is my problem and can’t really say anything is wrong with the program.”

Every participant interviewed expressed great passion for being in the United States to raise their children:

- “We came here because our country is good, but the university is too expensive. I always worked for myself in my country. Now, I have to work for someone else. I don’t care because it is good for my sons.”
• “I want my son to learn in America. When I came here I felt like I didn’t know many things and I felt lost. But I am learning this is a wonderful place and I am trying to read and I am learning from the lab lots of things.”

• “I am married to an American woman, but I don’t understand the culture. The classes have helped me and help me raise our son.”

• “My wife and I decided to come here for our children not for ourselves. I participate in my children’s life twenty-four hours a day – I have been here two years. I am very glad to be here now that I am working and teaching. I taught in Colombia in engineering. My wife and I are partnering with the children and my children and I are much closer now that we are here. I am doing the most important job of my life now – taking care of our children while my wife works in an American plant like she did in Colombia. I feel like a support person between my wife and children and I am taking on the hard part of change for my family. Every family that comes to America has change in their family.”

Summary of Findings: Learning English was important to each participant. Each learner brought different skills to the lessons as was reflected in his or her own education in the native country. The perceptions of the participants mirrored the belief that an education in the U.S. would provide freedom and opportunities that an education in their
native countries would not. Their perceptions were based on their own educational experiences in their native countries. Each participant reflected on how they were learning and what elements of the family literacy night were frustrating to them whether in computer lab or teacher-directed classroom. The predominant finding is that the participants desired diagnostic testing so that they and the teacher knew exactly on what level they should begin working. Whether it was a self-paced program in the computer labor or teacher-directed class, the students wanted lessons that were on their level of learning: basic, moderate or advanced.

The evidence also showed that these minority families came to the U.S. regardless of their marital status, their occupation, their education level, or their nation of origin so that their children could grow up in the United States and receive an education better than their own.

The findings are triangulated by the member check. The research solicits informants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretation (Creswell, 1998). I shared the finding that it seemed their educational level in their home country impacted their learning in the family literacy program and asked, “How important do you think your schooling in your home country is to your learning the English language?”

- “I attended the university in my country and I have an advantage over some. I learned some English in secondary and at the
university. There was no English in elementary school. I have read books in English there and so I have better grammar and writing. For me the emphasis needs to be on speaking the language.”

- “Education is very important. I only went through the seventh grade and I can tell a difference now from those who went to the secondary or university. Everything is new! It takes me longer to learn because it is all new to me.” Others in the room nodded and agreed it was difficult because everything is new to them.

- “Even though I went to school to the ninth grade, it has been a long time since I went. The learning of English is very difficult and I work hard to learn it. The program is helping me now and I am reading more. I would be sorry if the program was not here.”

- “I attended the secondary and some university and the ‘procedures for learning’ are already set. Like at the university I learned how to learn and that makes learning here in the lab easier. For me, I need a lot of practice.”

Research Question 2: What are the a) knowledge, b) skills, and c) attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?
Knowledge and Skills: The following two theoretical assumptions and supporting data answer the knowledge and skills components of research question 2:

Theoretical Assumption 2a: Minority parents attend the family literacy program to acquire the English language and perceive the acquisition of language as their primary purpose in order to support their child’s learning.

The interview question that most effectively elicited participant responses that identified the knowledge and skills necessary to learn the English language and support their child’s learning included:

- Has participation in the program given you specific English skills to support your child’s learning? If so, how?

The knowledge and skills identified in the data necessary for parents to learn in acquiring the English language involve: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking, and listening. The informants viewed both the literacy classroom and the computer lab as effective in helping them gain knowledge and learn skills and they recognized pace as a factor in their learning. The participants expressed the need to learn some skills more than others. Their comments supported the skills identified and helped me understand the difficulties the minority learners face in any setting.
“In the teacher directed classes, my teacher is so nice and we get along well. She is a kind person and we enjoy studying together – we laugh. We are learning English and getting to know people. Step by step this teacher is helping me. I would like to learn fast, but I have to have patience because it is not easy. I forget the words and the verbs, but I continue working and I don’t stop. I am able to talk with others in the community and I feel comfortable.”

“I am learning some, but I need more practice in conversation. We have a lot of examples but we don’t practice enough. It would be more helpful to me to have a bilingual person the first year, but the second year it would be better to have an English speaking person to talk with, which will force me to speak in English.”

“With the teacher it is not as good – in the classroom everyone should try and speak English. But everyone talks in lots of languages and does not use the English. So I don’t learn nothing with the teacher, but the computer helps me. Pronunciation, grammar, writing is all important to me.”

“I like the computer because I can listen over and over and learn how to pronounce the words.”
• “We need to learn more about grammar. Grammar is the most important in helping with our children at home – vowels and pronunciation.

• “The computer lab is too advanced for me. The words on the CD are not words I use. I get disappointed because I cannot do what some students do that are more advanced. The English class with the teacher is great. The teacher is very patient and takes time with use. The English words I learn from the teacher is better because they are words I use.”

• “I was expecting to have a test this year where I could see where I was, but that didn’t happen. I need more dynamics with English – pronunciation, grammar and conversation. The most helpful thing is having someone to listen to me and help me. The computer is helpful in hearing the words again and again. We are having more time to practice writing.”

• “I need to know grammar and how to say the words. With the teacher we talk and we read and write and learn how to say the words.

The knowledge of the English language and the strategies employed by the participants to utilize that knowledge directly affect their abilities to support their child’s learning. As in theoretical assumption 1, the participants’ educational experiences in their native countries had a
direct relationship to their ability to learn. The specific skills communicated by the majority of the participants as being paramount to their success in the program were pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking and listening. Pronunciation was a pivotal skill because correct pronunciation of vocabulary that the participant had learned boosted the confidence of the ELL to use the language and the confidence to acquire new vocabulary. The participant sought to correctly pronounce vocabulary words already learned. I further explored these commonalities by analyzing participants’ learning as it affects their efforts in supporting their child’s learning. My study showed that the educational level of the participants in their native country impacts the success of learning the English language. I further explored the impact of the level of education on acquiring knowledge and comprehension by comparing two individuals who had attained different levels of education as they described comprehension. The investigation provided the link between how they themselves learned the English language and the message they communicate to their children about the difficulties they encountered in their learning process. Within the brain the learner creates a “scaffold” for building the knowledge in a way that he or she comprehends the new learning. Sometimes I think we take comprehending and understanding for granted, particularly when the learner is an adult. We say to ourselves, “Surely, they have an understanding of this simple concept because they
are adults and have had many experiences that have led them to comprehend this idea or concept.”

As the interviewer and as an educator, I have been re-introduced to the importance of the learning component, or comprehension, of the “teaching and learning” cycle. I state often, “If the children aren’t learning, the teacher isn’t teaching.” I believe this concept holds true for the learner in every situation, no matter the age of the learner. This study has allowed me to visualize comprehension in a different way through the informants’ own language and thought. The interview questions that seem to elicit the responses from the adult English language learners (ELL) that articulate their thinking and perspective of comprehension included: 1) What skills have you learned in the computer lab and in the teacher-directed classroom?; and, 2) Has participation in the community technology literacy lab given you specific skills that are helping you learn English? The participants seem to view the questions as an opportunity to explain their own learning style and ability and do so in their own words.

One of the learners responding to the question about skills learned in the computer lab and in the teacher-directed classroom explained the ELLIS software program. “I think it is great! I learn and understand because the computer is like a ‘teacher that has a whip.’ It forces you to go over and over again until you understand it.” He talked further about the importance of asking questions when one does not understand what
the computer is teaching. He was impatient with his classmates who “come and take a seat and not ask. They expect everything to come from the teacher or from the computer. The teacher will assume if they don’t ask, then they are understanding.” This informant was a gentleman from South America where he was a chemical engineer. He was highly educated and articulate. In America, he is a stay-at-home dad who teaches Spanish GED in an adult GED class. He sacrificed his career in order to move his wife and children to give them “freedom and opportunities.”

Another participant was a woman from Mexico, whose schooling took her only through the elementary grades, responded to the question about specific skills learned to help her in the English language. She stated that she loved the English class with the teacher. “The teacher takes time with us. She always has games and ways for us to learn. I learn pronunciation more than grammar. When I try to learn grammar ‘my head just shuts off.’” As she articulated how her head shuts off not allowing her to comprehend, she placed her hand by her head, opened her hand and snapped it shut. She laughed at her description and herself.

These descriptive perspectives on comprehension are very important to the educators in the Allen Family Literacy Program and to me, the researcher. I observed that each of the learners was describing the connections he or she was making in his or her brains with English
grammar. Each brought different prior knowledge to the lesson which enabled comprehension or which made incomprehensible what was being taught. The educated chemical engineer enjoyed the steady faster-paced computer program that allowed him to work at his own pace like a “teacher with a whip.” The woman had little education and seemed to have hit a brick wall, “my head just shuts off” and could not absorb or understand the grammar. Without the proper foundation or scaffold in place, comprehension and retention will not occur.

Additional observations of the participants and their interview responses support the notion that the more educated individuals are learning faster and seem to enjoy both the computer-lab and teacher directed lessons. The participants who have little education are sometimes frustrated by the computer program. One other participant who attended one year beyond elementary school stated that the computer class went too fast for her. “The structure of the questions is too hard for me to learn and too advanced for me.” However, this learner liked the teacher-directed class. “The teacher is very patient and takes time with the class. The English I learn from the teacher is better than what I learn in the computer lab because she teaches words I use.”

The participants’ time is very valuable. For the most part, these adult learners work all day outside the home and make the extra effort to be in class two nights a week and work at home on their assignments.
We must know the learners and meet them at their level of learning. One female participant who attended secondary school in Peru knows she needs to learn more English. “I am learning, but I am not learning enough. I work all day in an American company and suffer at work because I do not know the language enough. I go home at night with a headache from stress, but I come to class anyway hoping for a better life.” Observing and hearing these responses, leads me to conclude that time and effort in pre-testing the learner to determine prior knowledge in both the native language and English language will provide valuable information, whereby the needs of the learner will be met. Additionally, the teachers in the program need additional education in being responsive to the cultures of these students, as well as in strategies diagnosing the learner’s prior knowledge.

Summary of Findings: The (a) knowledge and (b) skills for acquisition of the English language identified in the research included: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking, and listening. In order to triangulate the findings I conducted a member check session with the informants. Ten of the fourteen informants met with me and with the translator for a two hour discussion to review the information and findings of the study. I shared the concepts I derived from the interviews and shared excerpts from the interview transcripts. I listed the specific English skills that surfaced during the interview process and asked the informants
to choose the ones on which the program should concentrate more time. All informants stated that pronunciation and conversation, or speaking, were the most important skills. Seven of the ten stated that listening was important to their success in learning the language because of the repetition needed for better pronunciation and structure. Six of the participants stated that grammar and writing were necessary and that additional practice time was needed for these skills. I probed further by questioning the participants about school culture to verify that there were no other skills the participants identified as important to supporting their children’s learning at home other than the communication skills. The conversations among the participants and responses to me verified that the parents needed to acquire the English language to support their children’s learning.

Throughout the interviews the participants frequently spoke about their feelings and allowed me to thoroughly explore the attitudes associated with minority parents’ quest to learn the English language and support their child’s learning at home.

The adult English language learners perceived themselves to be learners at school in the family literacy program, but they also perceived themselves to be learners at home.

Theoretical Assumption 2b: Parents assume they must know more than the child to be the “teacher” and support their child’s learning.
An assumption that emerged is that parents believe they must know more in order to be the tutor at home. In identifying attitudes that minority parents have learned and then use to influence their child’s learning at home, I had an assumption of what that learning would really look like at home based on my own experience of helping my children at home as they went through school. I realize in reflection on this assumption that I was a teacher, and that I knew the skills and how to teach them to my own children. I did know more about the subject matter than my children did. I did not articulate my assumption because I did not discover that I assumed what the learning would look like until I began to analyze the responses to the two-part question: 1) Do you help your child with his or her homework? 2) Do you consider yourself the teacher or learner? For additional elaboration if the participant had not already shared, I would ask, “How does that make you feel?”

I anticipated that the minority parents who were participating in year two of the family literacy program would be confident when working with their children at home. In part, evidence supports that the participants did support their children’s learning by providing a homework setting, showing a willingness to listen to their children read, and by providing access to a computer at home. Nine of the fourteen informants had access to a computer at home and five did not. All of the participants either provided a homework setting or listened to their children read or
tutored them in math. Six of the fourteen participants tutored their children in math and their comments exhibited a confidence in their own knowledge of math: “Yes, I help in math because that is the same.” “The children teach me English. Sometimes they laugh when I speak. I speak to them in Thai and to help them I try to speak in English, but I can help them with math.”

My conclusion is that the minority parents interviewed did not feel confident in helping their children with homework unless they were fluent in English or if they knew more than their children; i.e., “I help my first grader and my pre-kindergartener, but my older child’s work is too hard.” The parents’ attitudes toward being the learner instead of the teacher in a tutorial setting at home were predominantly negative. The inability to communicate fluently in reading, speaking or writing brought about feelings of sadness and of inferiority:

- “My child is the teacher and this makes me feel bad because I cannot help my children with reading.”
- “My child teaches me and sometimes I feel frustrated because I do not know English enough. I can’t help him like I did in Peru.”
- “My daughter reads to me, but she doesn’t want me to help her read. She says, ‘Okay, Mama, let me do this.’”
Other parents felt they were poor parents or were experiencing a loss of control of their children because they did not know more than their children:

- “My children are my teachers. I feel really bad when I can’t help them. I feel like a bad mama. My kids think I am a good mama because I take care of them and because they are learning many things in school.”

- “Sometimes I am the learner and sometimes the teacher. My son helps me to learn. I do not feel good when he helps me because he is only eight years old and so I don’t push him to teach me things.”

- “I cannot teach my children and they are not very patient with teaching me – that makes me very sad. If I ask questions they will answer but do not give me much help. I feel bad because when the children talk on the phone, I do not understand. Sometimes they try to trick me and that makes me feel bad because they don’t want to tell me the truth.”

One mother who attended college in Colombia before moving to America stated, “Sometimes my children help me – more my son than my daughter. When I have to do homework for my job and write things, my son will help me. He uses better sentences. He is in the fifth grade and is learning a lot about writing. The children feel important that they can
help.” The attitude reflected in this parent’s perspective does not fit the majority of the thinking concerning tutoring in English at home. This participant was more fluent in English than the other interviewees, which could be a factor in her positive attitude toward learning from her children.

Summary of Findings: All of the adult learners supported their children’s learning by providing a setting for homework and either listened to their children read or tutored them in math. Math support was viewed as culturally neutral and offered a platform for the parents to feel success in tutoring their children during homework time. The adults are more learners than teachers in the home setting. Their perceptions of themselves as the learner in the home setting as they work to support their child’s learning at home is a motivating factor for attending the family literacy program and the dedication of time and energy to learning the English language. They focus on learning the literacy skills identified in the data in order to accelerate their learning of the English language.

Attitudes: The following theoretical assumption answers the attitudes component of research question 2:

Theoretical Assumption 3: Attitudes are reflected on a continuum from the least competent in the English language to mastery of the language.
As I embarked on this research project to identify attitudes that influence minority parents learning the English language in an effort to support their child’s learning, I did not realize how deeply the participants felt about the issue of language acquisition. Throughout the interview process, the informants spoke time and time again of their feelings. The findings show that their feelings or attitudes were directly impacted by their incompetence or competence of the English language. The questions that elicited the most definitive data that produced the theme of feelings included: 1) In what formal activities (school or Parent-Teacher Association sponsored) do you participate in your child’s school? 2) Of the following informal activities, in which do you participate often: checking homework, reading and/or listening to your child read, tutoring your child, providing a setting for homework, provide guidance for homework, playing learning games, teaching child native language. 3) Are you able to help your child with homework assignments? 4) What skills have you learned in the computer lab, in the literacy classroom, or in the real-life skills classroom that have helped you work with your child at home? 5) Are you able to communicate with your child’s teacher?

The responses articulated the informants’ description of how they felt at home as they supported their children’s learning and as they participated as a learner in the three classroom settings of the community technology literacy lab:
• If I ask questions, they will answer but do not give me much help. I feel bad because when the children talk to each other and will not tell me what they are saying, that makes me feel bad. Sometimes they try to trick me because they don’t want to tell me the truth. That makes me feel bad that I am their mother and cannot even understand them.”

• “I want to be a good role model and a good father for my son. I feel very well here (lab) where the people give us an opportunity to improve our knowledge. It is my goal to be better in speaking English.”

• “My child teaches me and sometimes I feel frustrated because I can’t help him the same like I did in Peru.”

• “Our son felt like an orphan in Colombia because his father worked all the time. Now in America he is spending time with him. Learning the language has helped us explain things to our son about his homework.”

• “I cannot help with homework and this makes me feel bad.”

• “I am trying to learn English and it is hard and I felt lost. I try to read and I am learning from this lab lots of things.”

• “I cannot communicate my child’s teacher because I am embarrassed not to know all of the words. I love this school and I
feel comfortable here and I am thankful that I have a chance to be here.”

- “I go on field trips with my children at school. I feel so shy, but I go even if I can’t understand all of the English.”

- “I feel comfortable now to go to my child’s school because I can understand the English.”

- “I am trying to learn about computers, but I am still afraid and do not always know how to ask the teacher about the computer.”

- “I feel like I need to learn more English. I am learning but not enough. I have lots of problems with pronunciation. I keep coming here (the lab) to learn English and I am hoping for a better life.”

- “My wife has a nursing certificate from our home country, but now we both work for the same pager company. Her English is not too good and she is timid.”

- “We are learning English. Step by step my teacher is helping me – I would like to learn fast, but I have to be patient because it is not easy. I forget the words and the verbs, but I continue working and I don’t stop. I am able to talk with others in the community in English and I feel comfortable.”

- “I feel better than I use to. I make a lot of mistakes but I feel sure enough to talk to the teachers.”
• “Participation in the lab has helped me in helping my children and I am more comfortable to go to their school.”

• “We get disappointed in class because some of us cannot do what some students do that are more advanced.”

• “I could go to my child’s school now because now that I have participated in the lab and know more English, I am not afraid.”

• “This lab is teaching him to learn the language. I am not afraid to talk here because there are others with the same problem. I feel comfortable here and no one will laugh.”

• “I come here to learn the language so I will have hope.”

I triangulated the informants’ responses through the interview with the translator who assisted with the interview process. The responses supported the assumption that their attitudes of hope, feeling lost, feeling comfortable, or feeling confident were directly associated with their level of mastery of the English language. These feelings of competency or inadequacy are conveyed to their children and have a direct impact on the support of the child in the same way that the prior educational experiences of the parent affected the parents’ ability to support their child’s education.

I further explored the concept during my interview with the translator who assisted me in the orientation, in each interview, and during the member check meeting which was held at the conclusion of the study to verify the findings with the informants.
My interview with the translator was scheduled at the conclusion of gathering data. The translator, a Hispanic woman around forty years of age, worked as an instructional paraprofessional in an ESL class at the high school. She was educated and had strong feelings herself about helping others to assimilate into the community of Allen. I first asked her about her own feelings of working with me on this project and asked her to describe her impression of our first meeting.

“I was worried about accepting the job of translator because I was not one hundred percent confident about my abilities. My major concern was that I might leave something out and my vocabulary in my second language of English might not be rich enough. When I met with you the first time and I realized we were going to try to help these parents, I was not intimidated.” The translator stated the she really did not know what kind of person I was but knew I was the superintendent of the district. Before our first meeting she thought a lot about what “impression I would give you” and that the chemistry between us was important to her. It was important to her that I took time to understand her as a person and that my “temperament was soft and warming.” She knew then that if she did make a mistake I would be patient. My projection in the first meeting verified for the translator if we could “work together or not.” The connection in negotiating the relationship with the translator and her feelings toward me were indicative of the participants and the confidence level they had in
speaking English in situations where others may speak at a mastery level of the English language and how their confidence levels impacted their attitudes. The translator talked more about her feelings in regard to the interviews.

"I was confident in listening to the participants because I knew my education level would be greater than theirs or at least the same. I am confident in speaking my own language of Spanish and since there was only one participant not a Spanish speaker I felt good. The challenge was to be at a level of speaking English with you (the researcher). I was more concerned about how I was projecting to you." She observed that just as I had to sometimes restate the idea or question to her, she in turn had to restate or express the idea differently to the participants.

The translator allowed the participants to speak freely in their native language. At times the participants wanted to respond to me in English and did so. However, if the question elicited an issue about which they were passionate, they quickly reverted to their native language to more definitively explain their feelings. In reflecting on the interview process, I realize the need for a connection to the minority parents in order to validate that someone personally cares about them. The translator shared that Hispanic people need a personal contact with them. They expect to have someone to listen to them. "If I come to clean your house, don’t tell me do this and do that. Make a personal comment to me first and to me it
will mean, ‘You are valued.’ We need to feel this in our program here.”

She stated that the reality is that these minority parents already know the consequences to them if they do not learn the language. They are already at a disadvantage for not being U.S. citizens and not having the language just makes it worse. They want to count on themselves to make a living and be independent, but they cannot if they do not know the language.

The translator shared that “if they want to go to a museum they worry that they will do something wrong. They do not want to get into trouble, so they just won’t go. Therefore, their world is limited. They are ‘like the ants that go in the same direction all in a line.’ They will find a store where the manager will let them speak their language and so they will go to work, to that store, and then to home. Everyday it is the same because they feel confident in that world. Maybe they will go to another home where they speak their language. It will be that way until they learn to speak English and can have confidence to live in the world. That is why this program ‘is like a beautiful present.’”

The assumption was further supported by the evidence from the informants in the member check reflection. I shared that I had heard comments from the participants about feeling afraid to ask questions, feeling concerned about going to their child’s school, and comments about feeling confident and good about learning the language. I asked them to respond about the association of their feelings and their ability to speak
the English language. Their responses were offered often simultaneously as they listened to each other’s comments. The consensus of the group was represented by a gentleman who emphatically responded: “It is all about the language! If we can’t speak English, we can’t do anything. It doesn’t matter if you understand our culture or not. We must know English. We will be more confident about ourselves when we can speak and understand like Americans.”

Summary of Findings: The findings support the assumption that attitudes are greatly impacted by the learners’ ability to speak the English language. The adult English language learners react to being placed in situations that are foreign to them and may have feelings of fear and lack of confidence. The most important objective of a program is to assist adult ELL to speak, read, and write the English language. Support and encouragement are essential for buoying the learner who has difficulty in language acquisition and may choose to leave the program before reaching a level of competency in English. Self-confidence of the learners grew as competency in the language improved; thus, producing feelings of hope and opportunities to better support their child in school.

Research Question 3: What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?
Theoretical Assumption 4: To the adult ELL direct instruction in English language is the most important aspect of the curriculum. Their learning is maximized by creating a context of cultural support.

The assumption was explored through three venues of curriculum and instruction: the computer lab, the teacher-directed classroom, and the context for cultural support/real-life skills program.

The family literacy program utilized two curriculum programs for teaching the English language to the adult learners. The curriculum utilized during the teacher-directed literacy instruction had extension activities for each lesson that applied to real-life skills and was practiced during the real-life skills segment. Both the software program in the computer lab and the literacy curriculum used in teacher-directed instruction supported direct teaching of the students. The sample lesson plans from the curricula on the nights the adult learners were observed clearly stated student outcomes that exemplified direct teaching of objectives for language acquisition:

- The student will demonstrate the use of new vocabulary, construct sentences, verbally and written, indicating understanding and application.
- The student will engage in interactive lessons using the software practicing listening and speaking acquiring new vocabulary.
• The student will learn proper pronunciation by using tongue twisters and commonly mispronounced sounds.

• The student will increase situational vocabulary and knowledge using the Ellis software self-paced program.

• The student will demonstrate correct use of verb tenses through practicing in collaborative groups.

• The student will learn prepositions of place and review the idiom of the night: bury your head in the sand.

The sample lessons from the teacher-directed real-life skills segment focused on the actual needs of the students and varied from teacher to teacher. The lessons appeared applicable to daily living:

• The student will learn the names and store sections of ten foods and cut out foods and state the names.

• The student will learn the U.S. holiday, Valentine’s Day and how it is celebrated in the schools by the children.

• The student will learn the different items for hygiene and where to purchase them in the grocery store.

• The student will learn about the people that work in a school and what they do; e.g., school nurse, assistant principal, principal, or counselor.

The real-life skills lessons were not always viewed as the most important use of the learners’ time. One comment was: “We spent time
cutting out things. I do not need to know how to use scissors. I need to practice saying the vocabulary or learn things about the law.” The most meaningful lessons were those through which the adult learners shared actual situations that occurred to them during the week; such as, procedures for taking medications received at the pharmacy, what was expected of the parents when their child went on a field trip, received detention, or had a project due. The skills from the computer lab and the literacy classroom were applied in the real-life skills segment as the adult learners communicated to gain knowledge about individual situations or challenges.

The community technology literacy lab offered classes on Tuesday and Thursday nights from six o’clock to eight o’clock. The time spent each night by the participants was valuable to each one of them. They expressed their frustrations regarding curriculum and instruction and offered gratitude for the aspects of the curriculum and instruction that helped them to achieve success. The questions that elicited definitive responses included: 1) Has participation in the computer lab given you specific computer skills? 2) Has participation in the family literacy program given you specific literacy or learning skills? 3) Has your participation helped you to understand the school’s policies and rules and in teaching your child how to be a student? 4) What skills have you learned in the
computer lab, in the literacy classroom, or in the real-life skills classroom that have helped you work with your child at home?

Curriculum and Instruction

Computer lab: Technology was viewed as an instructional strategy to learn the English language. Of the fourteen participants, nine had computers at home and of the nine all had access to the Internet. Five actually used the Internet at home, two used it sometimes, and two did not use it at all. All of the nine stated their children used the computer at home. The observers who observed ten of the participants on six different evenings in each of the segments: computer lab, literacy classroom, and real-life skills class, found that eighty-nine percent of the time the learners observed required little or no assistance in the lab and could log on with no assistance. Ninety-three percent of the time the learners used the mouse and keyboard with no assistance and remained on task ninety-three percent of the time. However, the learners sought assistance from the instructor or peers only twenty-two percent of the time and collaboration and interaction were only observed one percent of the time.

At a meeting to debrief with the observers in the sixth week of the twelve week observation period, the group discussed observing some feelings of frustration on the part of a few of the participants regarding the difficulty of the software program. For the more advanced participants, the computer was engaging, but for those who were not moving at a fast
pace, it appeared they were intimidated to ask questions and in one case
did not appear to be able to move from one level to the next. The
observer comments were corroborated by the interview comments such
as:

- “The computer lab is too difficult for me. I need to know words like
table, apple and other fruit.”
- “I don’t understand the computer and am afraid to ask questions. I
can only do the introduction and I stay there the whole night.”

At this juncture, I shared the concerns with the Director of
ESL/Bilingual Programs and as an immediate response she discussed the
observations with the Program Coordinator and they added a software
program to the lab, “Oxford Picture Dictionary,” that was more basic than
the Ellis software. On the first night of the new software program, one of
the learners who had exhibited frustration with the Ellis software was
observed working with the new CD and was engaged in the learning. This
additional level was appropriate for some learners.

The director and coordinator further determined that a survey of all of
the adult learners would produce necessary feedback to verify if the
program was meeting the needs or the learners or not. The survey
consisted of eight questions (Appendix C) and provided the opportunity
for comments and suggestions.
I reviewed the comments made by all of the participants to triangulate the findings in regard to the computer lab:

- “I like the computer class, but they don’t give us enough time to practice.”
- “I would like to spend more time in the computer lab. I am happy to come every night.”
- “I think we could learn more if we had classes four nights a week.”
- “I like the computer lab and could go longer.”
- “I want more time in the computer lab.”

The field observations and the comments from the district survey triangulated the attitudes toward the computer lab that the participants articulated below:

- “I like working on the computer. I am more comfortable with the computer because I can repeat as much as I need. The teacher in the other classroom speaks too fast and doesn’t repeat the words exactly the same each time. The computer teacher prepares a lesson plan and we practice and then take a test. I always know how I am doing the lab. In the teacher class we don’t have a test and I don’t know how I am doing.”
- “I knew how to use a computer before I came here, but I have learned more here. I listen to words and learn to read and take tests. I know grammar and how to pronounce the vocabulary. In
the teacher class we talk and read. We write and learn how to say things. There is not much time to share and talk with others. I only have one friend who speaks Thai who I can talk with at the program.”

- “I don’t understand the computer very much and I am afraid to ask questions. It is easier in the teacher class to talk to others and ask questions. One time I stayed on the introduction the whole night. The teacher tried to explain and show me but I didn’t understand what he was talking about.”

- “Working in the lab is good here. The computer teacher has everything set and I don’t have to deal with anything.”

- I am trying to learn the computer. I can turn the computer on and off, use the mouse, and do searches. I am more confident when I practice at home now.”

- “I have learned to do searches and I look at maps and learn about trips at home with my son.”

- “I can turn the computer on but I forget what I learn from class to class. I want to learn more, but the program is hard and my work on the computer is limited. I don’t ask for help because my friends are learning in the lab. I think I am not learning as much as my friends because their English is better.”
• “I have learned pronunciation and grammar in the computer lab. I have learned basic skills such as turning the computer on and off, starting the program, and how to do searches, but I know the rest of the class does not know as much. Last year I had a friend from Colombia who sat next to me and helped me learn. My friend could speak Spanish and so I could ask him questions in Spanish. It is hard to know how to ask the questions in English when you do not know the language enough.”

Additional comments and suggestions from the observers verified that the students were engaged in the learning process:

• “In computer lab, made notes in binder and used electronic dictionary to problem solve”

• “She was first on the computer and started to work immediately.”

• “Moves through computer programs quickly; seems comfortable with technology”

• “Students need a comprehensive introduction to using the computer before they begin using the software program.”

• “The program would be more powerful if the students were working on the exact level that meets their needs.”

• “Helpful to have a bilingual teacher or volunteer to answer questions in the lab”
Summary of Findings: The instructional setting of the computer lab engages adult learners in language acquisition. Learning to use technology is the same regardless of the native language. The actual skills are “culture neutral” and are mastered quickly. The technology skills adults need to support their children at home are using the mouse, searching the Internet, and logging on to a program. The software program selected for use is important and should be: self-paced and diagnostic with a comprehensive scope that addresses the needs of all learners from basic to advanced, and offered as “any time” training.

The English language learners responded positively to the benchmark testing and the ability to repeat the vocabulary and focus on the correct pronunciation. The instructional setting where each learner was assigned to a computer did not provide an environment for collaboration as is evidenced in the field observations. For some learners who needed additional assistance, this instructional setting was frustrating at times because they are unable to ask questions of their peers, and their lack of the English language prohibited them from asking the appropriate questions of the teacher and from seeking the help needed to progress in the program.

To corroborate the observations in the lab and the participants’ comments, the informants offered the following information during the member check meeting:
• “I can help my children at home depending on their age. I can help my eight year old easily, but sometimes my twelve year old is too advanced. The computer is something I know about and we use the Internet together. I know how to support him with his homework on the computer and know how to search to help him get information.”

• “The main difference in the teacher class and the computer lab is that the computer gives us tests so we know where we are. I like it because I can work on my level. The only problem is that everyone is busy doing their own lesson and if I have a question the teacher does not know Spanish and so I don’t know how to get help.”

• “The computer lab gives us good practice. I would like the lab to be open more hours so that I could come practice whenever I can get here. When the time changed I can’t get here on time because I do construction in Fort Worth and we work long hours now.”

• “I would like to have the same software at home for the whole summer. Then I could practice more often.”

Although the computer lab offers specific and direct instruction, the setting is not conducive for practicing pronunciation through conversation with others. The lab does not provide the opportunity to initiate a conversation or apply all of the skills learned in the lab.
Teacher-directed: This multi-case study has shown evidence that to the English language learner conversation skills and pronunciation skills are essential to support their child’s learning. Within the teacher-directed instructional setting for both the literacy classroom and the real-life skills class, the English language learner had the opportunity to practice correct pronunciation in everyday conversations while learning real-life skills. The participants interacted with their teacher and with their peers and practiced everyday use of the language in the literacy class. Data gathered from the field observations indicate that the teacher-directed instructional setting was the preferred context for collaboration and interaction and was observed seventy-four percent of the time in the teacher-directed class. It was in this instructional setting that participants were observed reading and responding to written material eighty-five percent of the time. Seventy-eight percent of the time participants were observed role-playing, holding dialogues, and repeating the language. Interview comments support the teacher-directed instructional setting and suggestions identify the need for more time to practice conversations. The comments below support the findings:

• “I learn more from the teacher than in the computer lab. I do not feel like I can ask questions in the lab – no one is talking.”

• “In the teacher classroom I am learning some, but I need more practice in conversation. We have a lot of examples but we don’t
practice. It would be more helpful to me to have a bilingual person the first year, but the second year it would be better to have an English speaking person to talk with, which would force me to speak in English."

- “Most of the time I don’t want to come because I am tired…but I come to school and the teacher is so nice and so good that when the class is done, I never feel like I should have stayed home. Many things I learn in class help me to speak English.”

- “With the teacher we talk and we read and learn how to say something.”

- “I learn more with the teacher because I can ask questions with the teacher.”

Summary of Findings: The teacher is an important component to a family literacy program. The adult English language learners need time to practice conversation and need very direct instruction that follows a lesson plan and incorporates learning about the U.S. culture and school rules. Opportunities for learning how to access the educational system and the community are important aspects of the curriculum that parents must know to help their child at school. Verification of the findings from the informants’ group meeting, member checks, include:

- “Yes, one-on-one conversation with English speakers is important. We can also practice student to student.”
• We need a bilingual teacher for the very basic student, but we need to only speak English in class.”

• “We need sequence in the teacher classroom like in the computer lab. We need tests to show us where we are in the teacher class like the computer lab. We do not need the teacher to talk about things that are not important to learning English.”

• “Involve all the students, including those who are shy and feel like they do not know enough English to speak. I suggest the teacher talk about something everyone know; like about the United States and Iraq and then let everyone tell their opinion.”

Context of Cultural Support: The ELL viewed learning the English language as their most important step to integrate into the U.S. culture and spoke mainly of themselves as learners. They were dedicated to attending classes primarily for their own language acquisition. There was a sense of urgency to accelerate their learning in order to attain the same level of language acquisition as their children. In addition to the challenge of learning a new language, however, the parents realized that they lacked the knowledge of all of the rules of the schools and of the laws and customs of the United States. The teacher-directed class also offered cultural support through the real-life skills curriculum component.

The interview questions that elicited responses about culture included:

1) Do you teach your child about your native culture? In what ways do
you teach him or her? 2) Has your knowledge of the American culture increased? 3) Do you feel the community understands your culture?

The participants demonstrated the need to understand more about the American culture and in what ways they could contribute. The participants appeared to believe it was their responsibility to make the first step toward integrating into the U.S. culture and were not as passionate as anticipated about the community understanding their own culture, but more passionate about learning the English language which enabled them to master the real-life skills. They expressed their immediate need to learn about the rules of the school in order to be the parent and guide of their children and responded to the questions: 1) In what ways do you teach your child about the school and how to be a student? 2) Has your participation helped you understand the school’s policies and rules?

The minority families were affected by the parents’ inabilitys to speak the language as fluently as the children and to understand the consequences for their children if rules were broken at school. There was fear of “I don’t know what I don’t know.” Participants’ interview responses reflected these findings:

• “I attended lunch with my grandchild – it is so different than in Peru. Peru has more discipline at lunch. I was surprised because the teacher doesn’t even eat with the kids. I expected to see more supervision during lunch time.”
• “I teach my children to behave and be respectful to others. There are many things I don’t know…like rules. Like fighting – in Mexico it is not important if children want to fight and they fight back. My youngest child has many problems in school. He knows better but there are still problems because he grew up in Mexico. I didn’t know they couldn’t go to school with cigarettes or hit someone back. Also, no weapons allowed and I know that. My oldest son has helped me understand the rules.”

• “I remember the first day they went to school – we stayed with them – and explained it would be very different and they would have to follow the rules like they do at home. We have learned a lot of rules and this program has helped me understand the schools.”

• “I understand the rules in the schools and have learned mostly from my children. The program is helping slowly but I would like to get more familiar with everything – like the government.”

• “The schools are not too different than in Thailand except they have spanking in Thailand.”

• “We don’t teach our children about the rules because we do not know all of them. The children have learned by themselves at school.”

• “We need ten minutes of every class where we learn about a rule from the school or the community, like immigration or citizenship.”
Culture, their native culture, the community’s perception of their native culture, and the U.S. culture, are all encompassing for the minority parents. Twelve of the fourteen participants taught their native culture to their children. Of the two who did not teach the native culture one stated, “I want my children to learn about the American people and their culture.” The other parent wanted his son to learn both languages and stated, “It is important to learn English but to preserve the native language. I do not want my son to speak mixed languages ‘Spanglish’, but to be bilingual.” The participants spoke freely about teaching their native culture, but were more reserved in responding to the question: Do you feel the community understands your culture?

- “In some aspects the community understands my culture. The Americans have more rights than in Peru.”
- “Sometimes we are adults who feel like children. The teacher is good but would be better if we had bilingual teachers. The key is for the teacher to understand our language. I do believe the American people do not believe how low the education of all of these people is. I teach GED Spanish and get all the way on their level. We need to meet students at the level they are.”
- “I have learned about the American culture and things like how to get help when I am injured. I have learned about leases and apartments and how to read the newspaper better.”
• “In my country people think when services are free, they are not really good. In our country we don’t have these kinds of opportunities. There is so much here free. If it is free, there must be something wrong with that. We would be willing to pay for more advanced classes after this year. We couldn’t pay too much. It is like raising children, if you give them everything they do not appreciate things.”

• “I feel like my friends in the community understand me and my culture. We have friends from both countries and that helps, but sometimes it is hard. My wife is American and she understands my culture and understands Spanish easier than I understand English.”

• “Most people just say ‘hello’ and don’t have much conversation with me.”

• “We decided to buy a house in Allen because of the schools. I was very surprised. Someone visited as soon as we arrived. It was really nice and was the first time this has happened to me. Some of my friends are Americans and some are Mexicans. My kids are really nice and my house is nice. We receive neighbors into our house. Our neighbors don’t talk much about our culture. They suppose we are Mexicans not South Americans.”

• “I feel like I cannot express to Americans about my life.”
• “People do not understand. I wish they understood better. They look at Thai people and think we are different.”

• “My husband has friends who are Americans and we invite them to our home. They like the way we cook and the way the family stay together.”

Amidst learning a new language, the participants are dealing with perceptions of their own culture and often do not receive the validation of their “funds of knowledge” associated with their upbringing. (Moll, 1992). I assumed all the answers would be about the perceptions of U.S. citizens to their own native cultures and noted the following response which was a new finding for me:

• “Sometimes I try to tell about my country and some people (not all) don’t care about it. I met some Cuban people and they only care about their culture. Americans are nice but they have their own problems. We have worked here about eighteen months. I don’t always feel well about Americans because I think they discriminate at my job. But I just work harder and study hard to improve. I know who I am and know my skills. I know I will reach my goals.”

The finding further substantiated the need for minority parents to receive validation of their culture, not only from U.S. citizens, but from other minority cultures, as well.
In my final debriefing meeting with the observers, who were working on their internship for their administrative certification, I asked them to respond to the questions: 1) After observing this program, what insight have you gained from viewing another culture?

- “This program gave great insight into the many views and aspects the language of another culture has in shaping an individual’s education. It allowed me to see that different cultures celebrate different holidays and these holidays are sacred to them.”

- “I observed the importance the various cultures place on education. They attended two times a week for two hours a night. Many of the students worked during the day and attended at night. One got up at 3:30 a.m. to be at work by 4:30 a.m. and still came to class at night.”

- “The participants place a high value on education. They were eager to learn the English language and to perfect the skills they had already acquired.”

- “The insight I gained from viewing another culture was related to the students’ respect of the teacher and the students’ willingness to take risks in learning. Often I questioned whether or not some students held back responding orally in class due to their comfort in taking a risk in class or due to their cultural upbringing of respecting the teacher.”
Summary of Findings: Minority parents knew what was important in their own culture that they wanted their children to know. They taught their children the customs, the native language, and the history of their native country. They taught their children those elements of their culture that would connect them to the previous generation. Unlike their comprehensive perspective of their native culture, the minority parents dissected the U.S. culture. They wanted to know first and foremost about the rules and laws, customs were incidental. There was a compelling need to learn what was illegal in this country, the rules their children must abide by and what the consequences were for breaking the rules, and how to communicate within the culture to keep from embarrassing themselves. The participants’ desired knowledge of the U.S. culture was a narrow scope. This overshadowed what we perceived as the most important aspects of our U.S. culture should be taught such as, history, customs, food, or holidays.

Major Findings

The purpose of the study was to identify the aspects of parental involvement and learning in a community technology literacy lab parents use to influence the academic and social performance of their children. The findings had implications for identifying specific programs and learning situations that accelerate the learning in schools with growing ELL populations and offered replicable program options for suburban
districts that are establishing programs that serve small numbers initially but need to expand with rapidly growing ELL and bilingual populations. The significance of the study provides the essential program framework for an effective parental involvement program to which school districts may allocate local dollars efficiently and maximize the adult learners’ time in order to support the teaching and learning necessary to improve student success.

This study was significant because the findings added to the body of research by identifying specific knowledge, skills and attitudes parents use to support their child’s learning and the attributes of the instructional setting that maximize the learners’ time and effort to master the English language. Two overarching findings emerged from the data: 1) Minority parents view learning the English language as the number one priority in being able to support their child’s learning at home. 2) Minority parents want instruction in *relevant* real-life skills that enable them to support their children in the educational system and enable them to function within the community. Specific findings support the two major findings and answered the research questions:

1. Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?
2. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3. What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?

Adult English language learners felt a sense of urgency to learn the English language. In the Allen community, the minority population was truly a minority. The minority families were overwhelmed in the total immersion of being placed in a community where they did not know the language; therefore, day-to-day survival became the focus and superceded the learning of any irrelevant knowledge. The reality that any other curriculum other than direct teaching of the English language was deemed unnecessary by the participants in order to support their child’s learning in the school or home was an important finding for program development in suburban schools. Each adult learner brought their prior knowledge and education to the threshold of learning the new language. The adult learners were highly capable of identifying their needs based on what they knew about their native language, but lacked the transferring agent, the English language, which allowed them to construct their thinking in order to analyze and prioritize their needs in learning the new language.
Research Question 1: Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

Specific Findings:

Students’ prior education level impacted their ability to learn and comprehend the new language. Adult English language learners need diagnostic testing and leveled lessons that meet the learners where they are in the learning process. Diagnostic testing in their native language to determine their educational level, diagnostic testing to determine their literacy level in their native language, and in diagnostic testing to determine their literacy level in the English language will provide specific information to allow the student to begin language acquisition on a level at which he or she can be successful.

Research Question 2: What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

Specific Findings:

- The adult English language learner identified the following language skills as essential for them to be able to support their child’s learning at home. The skills were prioritized by time allocation necessary to meet the needs of the adult English language learner: pronunciation, listening, grammar and
vocabulary, and writing. Time was valuable and the pace at which
the participants learned impacted the overall progress that the
participants made meeting only four hours a week. The
participants desired not only to maximize every minute of
instruction learning the language but wanted access to instruction
more than two nights a week.

- Minority parents supported their child’s learning at home with
strategies that were viewed “culturally neutral”; such as math and
technology. Six participants tutored their children in math and nine
of the fourteen provided computer access and Internet connection
for their children at home. Of these nine participants six used
technology to support their child’s learning at home and identified
using the mouse, searching the Internet, and accessing software
programs as necessary skills they learned in the lab and utilized to
support their child’s learning at home. All fourteen participants
provided a setting for homework, either listened to their child read,
read to their child, or tutored their children in math. The
participants were motivated to learn English so that they were
competent in the ability to fully support their child in the English
language. Their comments reflected their inability to check their
child’s homework and to monitor their social activities such as, talking on the phone with their friends or attending social events.

- The attitudes of the adult English language learner participants were affected by their competency levels in English language acquisition. Their self-image was negatively impacted or positively impacted based on their ability to read and speak the English language. Personally connecting with the learner was critical, and the teachers offered the support and encouragement when the learner was struggling with the new language. The relationship between teacher and learner encouraged attendance of the adult ELL.

The findings support that the acquisition of the English language and the communication skills embedded within competency of the language were identified by the participants as necessary to support their children’s success in school. I did consider that the majority of the participants (12 of 13) were Latino and only one was Asian and qualify the conclusion based on the homogeneity of the study. A more diverse group of participants may have provided other findings. In addition, social class was not explored. An analysis of rural versus urban and socioeconomic status may have impacted the findings.
Research Question 3: What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?

Specific Findings:

- The English language learners were focused primarily on learning the English language in order to support their child’s learning. The participants exhibited a sense of urgency in becoming competent in the language in order to access the educational system and the community. Two different instructional settings were identified that accelerated their learning: the computer lab and the teacher-directed classroom. 1) The computer lab was diagnostic which provided the students the ability to check their progress through benchmark assessments and to repeat the pronunciations and much needed mastery of basic vocabulary. The pace of the instruction was controlled by the student and allowed each participant to maximize his or her learning. The participants desired access to the computers for “any time” learning and needed access to the language software to be used in their home. The computer lab did not provide opportunities for dialogue with the teacher or their peers without interrupting another student’s pace or attention to his or her own learning. 2) The teacher-directed instructional setting was appropriate for the participants to practice
speaking and listening with other adult learners and one-on-one conversation with the teacher. The research data revealed pronunciation and conversation as the predominant skills in language acquisition that the participants believed were necessary. The relationships that developed with the teacher and between the participants affected their attitudes toward learning and toward their motivation to attend the program. The participants wanted to be included in class discussions in order to practice speaking and listening and wanted to be validated by the teacher even if their language skills were at the emergent level. The participants wanted to be placed on the curriculum level at which they could be successful and wanted benchmark assessments and pre and post testing to verify their progress.

- Within the teacher directed classroom, the participants identified the need for learning about aspects of the U.S. culture. The participants identified specific information they need to learn from the real-life curriculum component. Even though, the participants taught their children about the history, language, and customs of their native country, the participants wanted focused instruction on the rules and consequences of the schools and the laws of the government and how to access the community; e.g., medical care, banking, lease agreements and immigration requirements. They
identified the need for contact people within the community who could offer them assistance. The lack of English language limited their world to only those places and people in the community that could understand their native language. Customs, such as, holidays, food, and history were secondary to their need.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe a family literacy program attempting to teach the adult English language learners (ELL) the knowledge and skills that would allow them to support their children’s learning at home. The methodology employed was a multi-case study. Information regarding the program’s efforts to teach the English language and the school and U.S. cultures, along with demographic information, was gathered from participants in the second year of the family literacy program. The information was gathered through adult English language learner interviews, field observations, and lesson plans.

Specific purposes of the study were to determine:

1. Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

2. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

3. What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?
The information in this chapter is reported in the following ways: (a) a summary and specific analysis of the major findings related to research questions one, two, and three; (b) conclusions based on the findings; (c) implications for practice; (d) recommendations for further study; and (e) meta-analysis of the project.

Summary of Major Findings – Research Question 1: Prior to their participation in the computer technology literacy lab, what factors influenced parents to help their children succeed in school?

The educational level the participants received in their native countries influenced parents’ support of their children at home.

Data regarding education level of participants:

- The majority of the participants (8 of 14) attended secondary school. Five of the eight completed secondary school.
- Three participants attended only elementary school and three participants attended the university. Two of the three who attended the university graduated with a degree.

Specific Analysis of the Finding: The lower the parents’ educational level, the less they were able to benefit from the literacy program to help their children succeed in school. Acquiring the English language, which the participants reported as the foundation of supporting their children at home, included:

1. Exposure to the English language
2. Motivation for immigrants to provide educational opportunity for children derived from their own education or lack of education in their native country.

3. Opportunities to develop procedures for learning in a school setting

The procedures for learning go beyond the cognitive learning. The procedures include the rituals of school and the cultural beliefs and norms acquired from attending school (Epstein, 1987). The length of time spent in an educational institution in their native countries provided the parents the understanding of how education works and the proper protocol gained only by experiencing the educational system.

Summary of Major Findings – Research Question 2: What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes parents learn by their participation in a community technology literacy lab that will help them support their child’s learning?

Knowledge and Skills: The adult English language learner identified the primary purpose in attending the community technology literacy lab as acquiring the English language to be able to support their child’s learning at home. They identified the language skills essential to the learning and identified the order in which instructional time should be allocated from greatest to least:

- Pronunciation and conversation (or speaking)
• Listening (repetition for better pronunciation and structure)
• Grammar and writing

Specific Analysis of the Finding: Participants emphasized the importance of the pace at which language acquisition and learning the identified skills occurred. In lieu of a formal assessment, the participants were observed as identifying their own needs and levels of learning: too advanced, too fast, need more of a particular skill.

Attitudes: The following observations were made of the participants’ attitudes about their ability to help support their child’s learning at home as it involved the English language.

• The adult English language learners (6 of 14) expressed confidence and felt good either about themselves as the teacher/tutor of their children or interpreted as a positive opportunity for their children to tutor them with the English language.

• The adult English language learners (8 of 14) expressed negative feelings about themselves in regard to their inability to help tutor their child in reading homework at home. They mentioned feelings of sadness and feeling bad or confused. The adult ELL even questioned their ability to parent and guide their children who could speak the English language when they, as parents, could not.
Six of the 14 reported tutoring their children in math and five of those did not feel confident in tutoring in English beyond the first grade curriculum.

The participant’s attitudes toward themselves moved form negative to positive as they improved their English language acquisition. The participants used the word “hope” in describing the context of the family literacy program that they needed in order to overcome their helplessness and expand their world.

Specific Analysis of Finding: Participants revealed their feelings of inadequacy resulting from their inability to speak the English language and guide their children through the educational system and their inability to assimilate into the predominantly white, affluent, English-speaking suburban community.

Summary of Major Findings – Research Question 3: What aspects of the curriculum and instruction of the community technology literacy lab do parents use to support their children’s success in school?

The following observations were made about the aspects of the curriculum and instruction that impacted the participants and their ability to support their child’s learning at home:

- Technology skills taught within the curriculum and identified by the participants as skills transferring to other settings
included using the mouse, searching the Internet, and accessing software programs.

- The participants identified the components of the software curriculum that supported their individual success and influenced their ability to acquire the English language skills necessary to support their child at home include: (1) diagnostic placement assessments, including benchmark assessments, (2) pronunciation and vocabulary repetition, seeing, listening and speaking; (3) continuous individual engagement with the computer.

- Participants following the curriculum in the teacher-directed literacy program engaged in one-on-one conversation with the teacher and with peers, which offered the practice they desired. This collaborative instructional setting allowed the participants to build a relationship with the teacher and with peers, particularly of their own native language who offered support and encouragement to continue learning the language and to attend regularly.

- The participants wanted benchmark assessment in order to monitor their own progress in the literacy classroom.

- Real-life skills identified by the participants as the most critical to their assimilation into the community and their
ability to support their child’s learning in school included learning the rules and consequences of the school and acquiring a better understanding of the discipline, laws of the United States, and ways to access medical care, banking, lease agreements, and immigration requirements, among others.

Specific Analysis of the Finding: Participants needed a prescribed curriculum in language acquisition delivered in an instructional setting that offered technology experiences supported by a relationship with their teacher who had the ability to understand and address their culturally based essential needs.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to determine how a community technology literacy lab influenced and assisted parents to support their child’s learning. The results of my case study reflected existing research findings in parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and cultural support and extended the research by incorporating those aspects into the attributes of a program for English language learners. The study concluded the following:

1. In the family literacy program that was studied, the only prior factor that appeared to influence parents’ ability to support their child’s learning was the educational level of the participant.
The parents’ ability to access the learning presented in the technology lab and in the teacher-directed literacy class was hindered or supported by their own educational level and experiences in school. The higher the education level attained prior to participation, the greater the ability to learn the English language and use it to support their children’s learning at home. The existing research findings specified that the education level of the mother impacted the child’s reading proficiency (Kirsch and Jungleblut, 1986) and that variations in family background accounted for far more variation in school achievement than did variations in school characteristics (Coleman, 1987). The defining factor was how their education level impacted their ability to acquire the English language. Regardless of the other factors such as, marital status, occupation, and other variations in family background, all participants based their ability to support their child’s learning on their ability to master the English language.

2. Certain knowledge and skills do help the participants to support their child’s learning.

Knowledge and Skills: Earlier studies support my conclusions that pronunciation, conversation, listening, grammar and writing are essential skills that the participants use to support their child’s learning. Garza (1987) identified issues of key communication skills, the use of Spanish to facilitate comprehension, information
on how schools operate, and ideas for helping children with their school work as essential to a program as did this case study. Teaching parents the skills identified in my study supports the conclusion that learning the English language helps parents most in supporting their child’s learning. In Paratore’s study the instruction was provided to parents, not children, “based on the premise that as parents improve their own literacy, the skills, and knowledge they gain will promote literacy learning among their children” (Paratore, 2001. p.19).

Attitudes:  When parents help their children learn at home they nurture attitudes in themselves and in their children that are crucial to achievement (Henderson, 1988). In my study, the attitudes of the participants, the adult learners, were directly affected by their ability to master the English language in order to be able to parent or guide their children through the educational system in the U.S. The confidence gained by learning the English language was transferred into the home where the children were nurtured and supported in their own challenges of acquiring English language skills. ELL parents feel frustrated because they do not understand how to help their children with homework tasks and feel a general sense of helplessness (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Frustration and
feelings of helplessness were evident in my study as parents felt isolated and questioned their ability to parent based on their inability to support their child’s learning.

3. The curriculum supported the learning; however, the instruction was vital to modeling the procedures for learning that the participants used to support their children’s success in school.

The strategies the participants learned in order to acquire the new language provided the understanding necessary for the parents to support their child as he or she also learned the English language. Lapp reported that as parents participate in their children’s education and gain insight about the curriculum, the school procedures, and the cultures of their children’s peers and teachers, the parents are able to connect parenting practices with classroom practices (Lapp, 1996). The family literacy program offered the participants a school setting where the participants learned about school practices. The learning opportunity supported Delgado-Gaitan’s research that familiarity with the educational system helps them shepherd their children through the school system (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). The family literacy program offered to adult English language learners in this study provided a formal activity that included otherwise marginalized people (Lopez, 2001).

To offer further verification of the conclusions, the observers who are currently classroom teachers responded to the question: Now that
you have observed the family literacy program, do you view the program as helping parents support their child’s learning? All ten of the observers responded “Yes” and their explanations included:

- “The program included practice of not only English language vocabulary, but also using English correctly and learning about cultural practices in our community that their child might encounter in his or her classroom learning environment. The adult ESL lesson could lead to discussions at home, thus supporting the child’s learning at school.”

- “The adult ESL program does support the child’s learning in school. If the parents are willing to learn the English language and practice it in their home, it will empower their children to become bilingual with greater ease and success.”

- “The program supports the child’s learning because the parents are using the same tools and as a parent starts to understand the language, he or she is better equipped to help with assignments at home.”

- “I believe the program supports a child’s learning in various ways. If the students see that learning is a priority in their parents, then I believe the positive attitude will transfer to their children. As the parents’ English increases the parents will be able to assist their children in academic learning.”
• “The program assists the students in practicing the English language that is being modeled by the adults as they learn the language.”

• “This program would be beneficial for all ESL parents. It would not only help them develop the English language, but would also serve as a support for them in communicating with their child’s teachers. It also seems to make them feel more comfortable in the school environment, which might get them more involved in their children’s education at school.”

The Texas Education Code mandates that children identified as limited English proficient shall be offered programs that enable them to “become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition of the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language and English” (TEC 29.051).

The State of Texas supports the mandate with funding that follows English language learner students. The challenge remains to offer program support for the parents of these children. Offering a setting for minority parents who are faced with the challenge of learning the English language reinforces the respect of their culture and an opportunity to learn from each other as each parent learns the English language and ways to support their children in school.

Implications for Practice
Based on the findings of the study, the following components are recommended to be included in a community technology literacy lab for English language learners:

1. Because the adult English language learners’ time for learning the language is limited, literacy programs need to obtain information on the educational level for each adult ELL in order to determine the language proficiency ability prior to beginning instruction in the English language. The application process should include identifying the level of education the adult learner attained in his or her native country.

2. Increased amount of time dedicated to correct pronunciation and opportunities for conversation practice in a risk-free environment needs to be integrated into the program segments in a family literacy program for adult ELL. Methods of monitoring may need to be incorporated so that corrections in mispronunciation are immediate. Personal headsets and recorders that simulate a language lab and affordable language acquisition software for English language learners to be utilized on home computers are strategies that may be employed.

3. Adding a segment to a family literacy program that teaches the parent how to read with a child may encourage adult ELL parents to read with their child. Adding strategies to address varied language
needs to a campus or district communication plan may increase minority parental involvement. Automated phone systems that automatically call targeted groups of parents to report daily activities or important events to minority parents and using a document library of various languages to communicate in languages for which a translator may not be available are communication strategies that may be employed by a campus, district, or family literacy program.

4. Staff development in multicultural awareness may support the teachers in their efforts to connect with ELL parents and children. Making personal connections, encouraging phone calls, and setting up a mentorship system whereby role models who have overcome the language barrier may give confidence to ELL parents who are struggling with the new language.

Extension of the school year will address the need for sustained repetitive sessions for language acquisition. Breaks in the summer interrupt the reinforcement of the new language learning and family routines.

5. To accelerate learning the new language for ELL parents, provisions for “any time” learning through technology may be provided by a school district or community.
• Access at a public library where language acquisition software is available and a multi-cultural section of the library to encourage reading.

• Computer labs open four nights a week for adult ELL and children to reinforce their learning and provide access to cultural support such as, newspapers in the native language

• District or community purchase of license software available for ELL parents to check out for home use

• Instruction in computer literacy, basic to advanced, including computer applications, spreadsheets, and on-line support groups

• Provide video-conferencing with native speakers of the native language of ELL parents

6. Benchmark testing in the literacy program may provide the ELL parents the opportunity to monitor their own progress and set goals for individual learning. Attaining incremental goals may improve self-confidence of the learner and encourage mastery of the new language.

7. Continued development of relevant real-life skills in a family literacy program may occur in order to meet the urgent needs of the minority parent. Relevant resource-based classes may include:

• Classes for citizenship
• Sessions for parents with school personnel to teach the school rules and student code of conduct and the consequences for breaking the rules

• Parent-Teacher Association workshops for increasing minority parent representation on PTA councils and campus or district site-based decision making committees

• Community involvement may be increased by offering liaisons to League of Unified Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Chamber of Commerce, and civic groups

Recommendations for Further Study

1. A study on how the power structure of the ELL family is affected when the parents do not speak English and the children do.

2. A study could be replicated in various size districts to determine whether the size of the district affects the program and its outcomes.

3. A study could be replicated in a district where the minority population is the majority of the community and/ or school.

4. A study could be conducted in a district where staff development to encourage culturally responsive teaching significantly affects student achievement.

5. A study to identify children’s perceptions of how their parents support their academic success, particularly as parental support is related to parents’ English language acquisition.
Meta-Analysis of the Project

Conducting this research project has left a powerful impression on me as an educator. During my five years as a superintendent, the accountability system has become more comprehensive and more stringent. Quantitative data have driven decisions in programming and in curriculum and instruction; thus, driving staffing decisions. My qualitative project has enabled me to experience a different dimension in analyzing our programs.

I realized the value in learner feedback in a one-on-one setting where the learner can be open about the instruction, the setting, and teacher, and the curriculum. I have learned that verbal feedback from the learner is just as important as the quantitative data we use to diagnose the learner and adjust the instruction. I have also reaffirmed the impact we have on our students. My study allowed me to hear directly from the adult learners about their fears, their confidence levels, their gratitude and their suggestions. Interviewing gave the students an opportunity to reflect and offer their insights about the program that I would otherwise never have known. We will definitely make adjustments to our program based on the suggestions given, which will not only strengthen the instruction but maximize our funding by working smarter not harder.

Conducting this research project has impacted my professional growth like no other professional development I have ever experienced.
Qualitative research is the epitome of higher level thinking with the emphasis on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. My personality and thought processes lend themselves to being involved with people and analyzing situations. Reading about qualitative research and then applying what I read gave me a depth of knowledge in another dimension. I will encourage anyone to pursue a qualitative study, and I have gained insight that will impact my approach to program evaluation in my district.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parental Involvement

Formal Activities:

1. In which formal activities do you participate in your child's school?
   PTA - membership, meetings
   Parent-teacher conferences
   PTA sponsored parenting workshops
   Curriculum night
   Meet the Teacher Night

2. If participation is indicated, ask if they participated prior to becoming involved in the community technology literacy lab.

Informal Activities:

1. Of the following informal activities, in which do you participate often (3 or more times per week):
   Checking homework
   Reading and/or listening to child read
   Tutoring child
   Providing a setting for homework
   Providing guidance for homework
   Monitoring child's progress in homework
   Playing learning games
   Teaching child native language
   Other ________________

2. On activities indicated, ask if they did that activity with their child prior to becoming involved in the community technology literacy lab.

Cultural Support

1. Parent Level of Education - Elementary school, middle school, high school, years of college, graduate school
   Mother
   Father

2. How many years of formal education in the United States, if any?

3. Marital Status
4. Occupation - Husband
   Occupation - Wife

5. Nation of origin

6. How has participation in the community technology literacy lab given you opportunities to help your child learn?

7. Do you teach your child about your native culture? In what ways do you teach him or her?

8. Has your knowledge about American culture increased?

9. In what ways do you teach your child about the school and how to be a student? Has your participation helped you understand the school’s expectations, policies, and rules and in teaching your child about how to be a student?

10. Do you feel the community understands your culture?

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Do you have other access to a computer at home or work? To the Internet?

2. In what ways has the computer you have been using allowed you to help or not help you in working with your child?

3. What skills have you learned in the computer lab, in the literacy classroom, or in the real-life skills classroom that have helped you work with your child at home?

4. Are you able to help your child with homework assignments? Would you consider yourself the teacher or the learner when you work with your child at home?

5. Has participation in the community technology literacy lab made you more comfortable in visiting your child’s school? If yes, in what ways are you more comfortable, the number of visits, type of visits?

6. Has participation in the community technology literacy lab given you specific computer technology skills? If yes, please list.
7. Has participation in the community technology literacy lab given you specific literacy or learning skills? If yes, please list.

8. Are you able to communicate with your child's teacher?
APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Computer Lab</th>
<th>Literacy Skills Application</th>
<th>Real-Life Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Works collaboratively and/or interacts with others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problem solves/seeks alternatives/takes risks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identifies learning strategies; monitors own learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Repeats, retells, recounts, role play, holds dialogues, makes formal presentations, interacts with others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reads and responds to various types of written materials</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Writes various types of text (short answer, single or multiple paragraph compositions, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Uses higher order thinking skills to process information, research, analyze, describe, etc.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Uses/manipulates materials and resources</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Makes eye contact with instructor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Makes eye contact with peers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Asks questions for clarification</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shares evidence of extended learning outside the classroom</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Requires little or no assistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Seeks assistance from instructor or peers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Offers assistance to peers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Logs on with no assistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Uses mouse and keyboard with no assistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Stays on task</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Allen Independent School District
Family Literacy Program

In February 2003, surveys were distributed to participants in the Family Literacy program. The purpose of the surveys was to gather feedback from the families being served so that we might offer the best program possible. The questions and responses are listed below. The comments that were submitted are listed below this summary of responses. If comments were written in Spanish, these are followed by a translation. A total of 70 of these surveys were returned for tabulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the Family Literacy Program going well for you?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you feel that your English is improving as a result of your</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in this program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you feel that you are made to feel welcome and treated</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectfully when you come to school each night?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you plan to finish the year in the Family Literacy</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is meeting at night OK for you and your family?</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are the computer Lab and ELLIS software just right for you?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Would you recommend this program to a friend?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Overall, are you satisfied with the Family Literacy Program?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


SEDL, (February 2002) (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory News), Vol. XIV. Family and Community Connections with School, One Child at a Time, Leslie Holt, 3-7.


