A COMPARISON STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS AND NON-EDUCATORS IN PROMOTING READING AND READING-RELATED SKILLS OF THEIR OWN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Tamecca S. Fitzpatrick, B.A., M.S.

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APPROVED:

Linda Schertz, Major Professor
Patsy Robles-Goodwin, Committee Member
Carol Hagen, Committee Member
Lloyd Kinnison, Committee Member
Ronald Newsom, Interim Chair of the Department of Counseling, Development, and Higher Education
M. Jean Keller, Dean of the College of Education
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies
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The rationale for this study was to evaluate the home literacy environments of educators and non-educators to investigate whether educators provide “richer” home environments than non-educator mothers. This research explores the mothers’ perceptions of their children, views of reading, methods of promoting a positive reading environment, dealing with personal demands and emotions, and their expectations related to promoting reading. The participants in the study are 2 elementary school teachers with preschool children and 2 non-educator mothers with preschool children. Results indicated that being an educator is not an isolated characteristic of providing a rich home environment. The educational attainment of the mother was discovered to have greater influence on home literacy environment than the mother’s profession. Higher educated mothers provided richer home environments than their less educated counterparts.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why do some children excel in reading while others have difficulty from the very beginning? What are families and/or caregivers of successful readers doing differently? Are some individuals better equipped at helping children become successful readers? Do mothers who teach professionally provide their children with specific strategies that can be employed to ensure success for all children? Research has shown that most parents, regardless of their background, want guidance in providing ways to help their children learn better (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Epstein, 1986).

This study compares the home literacy environments of two groups of mothers, to answer the question, do mothers in the field of education provide their children with richer home environments than children of non-educators? The sample population is divided into two groups. The first group consisting of educators defined for this body of work, as those who have completed college coursework and are currently employed and licensed as first through fourth grade, elementary classroom teachers. The second group, non-educators is comprised of mothers from professions other than teaching, who have not been trained or completed coursework related to the field of elementary education.

This body of research findings indicate the home environments of educators are similar to those of other educated parents. Thus, the sampled educators do not provide richer home literacy environments than the non-educator sample. This studies value exists in the examples provided and activities listed of those mothers described as having richer home environments. Since the ability to provide a rich home environment is not isolated to the educator sample, this body of research could be insightful to mothers from various professions.
Literacy Development

Many early philosophers theorized about the literacy development of young children. As with many early childhood education issues, some theorists believe that literacy development is a matter of nature while others attribute it to the way in which a child is nurtured. Frobel, in agreement with Rousseau and Pestalozzi, believed that literacy instruction should take place only when a child is developmentally ready. Morphett and Washburne (1931) supported this postponement of reading instruction until a child is developmentally “old enough.” Their research indicates that children with a mental age of 6 years 6 months perform better on tests of reading achievement than younger participants. Twentieth-century philosophers Piaget and Montessori theorized that the child’s interaction with the world aids in the acquisition of literacy skills, thus supporting nurturing maturation through instruction using a set of prerequisite or reading-related skills.

Early theories and practices support the importance of reading and reading-related skills in children; however, the literacy development of preschoolers has been continuously overlooked. Bredekamp and Copple (1987) stated, “The most critical period of literacy development is from birth to age eight” yet in the United States of America, children begin formal education at age 5, assumedly learning little prior to entering school (p.56). In preparing preschool children for reading, early educators focus primarily on their oral language development under the false assumption that literacy development begins with formal instruction in the first grade. Lonigan, Burgess, and Anthony’s (2000) findings supported that children who begin school with limited reading-related abilities are at a higher risk of entering special education programs than are their typically developing peers.
The Changing View of Literacy Education

Spring (1994) details that since the late 1600s, a person’s level of literacy was directly related to their place in society. Traditionally children of the upper class, attended formal schools, had private tutors, continued on to college and/or traveled abroad to continue their education. While children of the lower class were taught to read solely to ensure they would be able to adhere to the laws of the Bible and the land. The Massachusetts Law of 1642, the earliest law relating to education in Colonial America, mandated families to:

Indeavour to teach by themselves or others, their children & apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the english tongue, & knowledge of the Capital Lawes: upon penaltie of twentie shillings for each neglect therin. Also that all masters of families doe once a week catechize their children and servants in the grounds & principles of Religion (Massachusetts Law of 1642, paragraph 1)

Later the “Old Deluder Satan Law” required the establishment of schools in any community with at least 50 households. These schools were designed specifically for educating students so that they would be able to read civil and biblical laws. Unlike the traditional grammar schools, which prepared only males for college and their place in society, these schools educated male and female children in the community. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the idea of who should be educated was broadened to include all people, regardless of social class, noting everyone should be knowledgeable of the laws of the land, be fluent in English and practice Christianity.

In the early nineteenth century, charity schools and juvenile reformatories were established in response to the increase of poverty and slums, which appeared, as America became an industrialized nation. Spring (1994) states, “Between 1800 and 1835, southern states passed laws making it a crime to educate slaves” (p. 164). Despite the lack of a specific law prohibiting the education of freed slaves, in the North, prejudice and economic conditions
severely limited the number of blacks attending public schools. During and after the Civil War, 1861-1865, the United States was divided into North, or the Union, and the South, or Confederacy. In the North all children, including the freed slaves arriving from the South, were expected to attend school. Yet the Southern states continued the belief that not all children should be educated.

The United States continually modifies methods to ensure the education of all children and adults regardless of social class and/or religion. At the 1989 education summit in Virginia, President George W. Bush, Sr. and several state governors established six National Education Goals. George W. Bush, Sr. and the summits primary focus on literacy continues to be of federal concern with President George W. Bush, Jr. announcing federal initiatives designed to ensure that all children succeed in school. A major component of the President’s education agenda is the focus of resources and attention on early childhood reading initiatives (Wingert & Kantrowitz, 2001). Success in elementary school is largely attributed to success in reading. Students with poor reading skills are three times more likely to fail courses in school, be over age in grade, and have low self-esteem (Frymier, Baarber, Carriero, Denton, Gansneder & Johnson-Lewis, 1992).

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in research on the emergent literacy development of young children (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadded, & Shanahan, 2001; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Morrow, 2001; Richgels 2003; Ruddell, 2002; Sinclair, & Golan 2002; Van Kleeck, 2003). “Emerging literacy refers to the behaviors observed in children when an awareness and understanding of letter sounds relationships begin to develop (Paulson, Kelly, Jepson, vandenPol, Ashmore, Farrier, & Guifoyle, (2004). This research has changed the thinking about early literacy; most parents now recognize that babies begin to
acquire information about literacy at birth and continually build on this information to become readers. Educators are becoming aware that “all children possess the fundamental attributes they need to become literate” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

A review of related literature supports the premise that the home environment and what parents, specifically mothers, do plays a major role in the reading readiness of young children (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Bus, 2001; Calkins, 1997; Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Epstein, 2001; Mason, & McCormick, 1981; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 1984). “The importance of young children’s home environments as a contributor to their emergent literacy is grounded in evidence that their homes serve as a setting in which language and literacy is typically first encountered” (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005). Understandably, some children enter school reading and/or prepared to learn more about reading while others enter school at risk of reading difficulties.

Children face various kinds of risks that expose them to reading difficulties including individual, familial, and demographic risks. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (2000) reported, through no fault of their own, children have problems achieving because they (a) attend low-performing schools; (b) live in poor neighborhoods; (c) speak limited English and/or; (d) speak a dialect of English different from the ones used in school (pp.131-132).

“Parents have long been considered critical to the development of their children’s reading skills. Parents who read with their children can help get them interested in reading at an early age and help model good reading habits” (National Reading Panel, 2000). “Success in reading is thought to begin at home” it is therefore not surprising that parents are continuously advised by educators and politicians to read with their children as often as possible (Mansell, Evans, & Hamilton-Hulak, 2005). Increasing children’s knowledge about the function and nature of
language before kindergarten increases their chance of becoming successful readers and writers. When parents value literacy, provide a home literacy environment that is rich in literacy and language activities and materials, and when the overall home environment is supportive, then children’s emergent literacy abilities are greater (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005, p.207).

Early reading abilities are remarkably stable over time. A 1991 study revealed that 88% of children classified as poor readers at the end of first grade continue to be classified as such through the end of fourth grade (Juel, 1991). Additionally, longitudinal studies have demonstrated the gap between children without reading difficulties and children with reading difficulties remains constant throughout both primary and secondary education (Grades 1-12) (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1994,1996).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2000 places great importance on today’s children acquiring the ability to read on grade level by the third grade. The act aims to close the achievement gap across the curriculum in American schools. As Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), suggested in order to close the gap, all children require instructional environments conducive to learning in the home and the school. The roles of teachers and caregivers are critical in children’s opportunities to become literate. Through assisted experiences, with more experienced readers, children begin to construct the ability to match their thinking with written words. Teachers and caregivers assist in the development of reading and reading-related skills when they demonstrate and explain the reading process to children.

Statement of the Problem

Parents are their child’s first teacher, it is therefore understandable that they must be knowledgeable about how to provide their child with optimal learning environments (Burgess,
Learning to read is a process beginning at birth with language development and continuing throughout life, yet formal education in the United States traditionally begins at 5 years of age. With some individuals believing that formal education is a child’s first exposure to reading and reading-related skills, many children are at risk of future reading difficulties. Children with reading difficulties often struggle as adults and may not be able to function completely in society.

While research has been conducted on the benefits of parents reading with and to their children (Applebee & Mullis, 1998; Burgess, Hetch & Lonigan, 2002; Bus, 2001; Dale, Crain-Thoreson, Notari-Syverson & Cole, 1996; DeBaryshe, 1993; Durkin, 1996, Stahl, & Yaden, 2004) little research has discussed the quality of the interaction. Traditionally, these studies explore the home environment of students living in poverty or those making up the middle class, with little consideration to the influence of the parents’ profession. With the current abstract definition of “quality,” additional research is necessary to provide parents with examples of practices in promoting literacy that are thought to be effective.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores and compares the experiences of educator and non-educator mothers in promoting reading and reading-related skills with their own preschool children. Through this comparison, examples are provided of “rich” home environments as classified by the Nation Center for Learning Disabilities, Home Literacy Checklist. The findings yield between-group similarities of rich home environments of the educator and non-educator groups. Educators were asked to describe two aspects of promoting literacy. One was their professional roles and responsibilities and the second examined the actual teaching strategies and opportunities for
learning provided for their child on a regular basis. Professional questions were omitted with the non-educator participants. Snow et al. (2000) described this as cognitive support, or the family as educator model. The family as educator model focuses on the literacy environment of the home, direct teaching, creating opportunities for reading and related activities, and parental expectations.

Research Question

The following research question guides this study: What are the experiences of elementary school educators and non-educators in promoting the reading and reading related skills of their own preschool children? The following are subsidiary questions:

1. What strategies do mothers use to encourage their children to read?
2. In what ways do mothers provide educational opportunities?
3. What is the home literacy environment like of educators and non-educators?
4. What are the differences and similarities of the home literacy environment of educators and non-educators?
5. Do those professionally trained as educators provide “richer” home environments than those in other professions?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant from a conceptual standpoint in broadening the idea and understanding of what mothers do to promote rich literacy environments in the home. As professionals trained in promoting reading success with their students, examining the home practices of the educator mothers provides insight into their varied early home literacy experiences. The educators selected have received both similar training and have similar educational attainments, yet evaluation of their home environments yields varying results. The
inclusion of non-educator participants provides information and suggestions for those not professionally trained to promote literacy. Comparing the findings of the two groups, mothers are exposed to the varied ways in which they can provide their children with “rich” home literacy environments. This comparison exposes many characteristics common to literacy “rich” home environments of both educators and non-educators.

From a policy standpoint, this study helps mothers answer the following questions as they apply to the home environment:

1. What formal and informal activities have a demonstrated ability to increase early literacy skills?
2. What basic materials are needed to support early literacy development?
3. What facilitates the early literacy development of young children?
4. What are quality interactions, and how do they benefit emergent readers?

While educators often provide suggestions to parents and caregivers regarding what should be done to promote reading and reading-related activities, the activities described are usually discontinued due to time or financial restraints. Many of the suggestions are similar to the school day format and require resources many parents do not have access to. This study examines the in-home experiences of educators’ and non-educators’ mothers in promoting reading and reading-related skills with their own preschool children. Examined are the relationships between the home literacy environment, parental beliefs about reading, child interest in reading, and the development of reading skills. This study aims to answer the question, “Do educators’ provide richer home environments than non-educators”.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section provides definitions of terms used in this study, reviews the literature on literacy development in young children, and provides a brief review of the three important aspects of learning to read and predictors of reading success as identified by previous studies. A brief discussion of literature on home literacy experiences precedes a review of the role of the educator and family in providing opportunities for reading and reading-related activities. The literature review is concluded with a discussion of the Snow et al. (2000) family as educator model.

Definition of Terms

Reading

Reading and literacy are often used as synonyms. The National Literacy Act of 1991, defined literacy for the purpose of the act as “an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential”. Cervero (1985) stated that literacy should be defined as “the ability of individuals to function with a specific social context” (p. 50). He argued that the definition of literacy changes with the specific social context in which an individual finds himself/herself.

Gee (1987) also maintained this but used the term discourse in place of context. He noted that all individuals operate in the primary discourse of face-to-face communication with those close to them and then in secondary discourses beyond the family including schools, workplaces, stores, government offices, businesses and church, among others. His definition of literacy is “control of secondary uses of language (i.e., uses of language in secondary discourses)” (p.23).
Venezky (1999) defined literacy as

a minimal ability to read and write in a designated language, as well as a mindset or way of thinking about the use of reading and writing in everyday life. It differs from simple reading and writing in its assumption of an understanding of the appropriate use of these abilities within a print-based society. (p.19)

Snow et al. (2000) continued this definition of literacy, observing,

The term “literacy” signals recognition of the complex relationships among reading, writing, ways of talking, ways of learning, and ways of knowing. Literacy is not just a cognitive achievement on the part of the child; it is also participation in culturally defined structures of knowledge and communication. (p. 175)

Reading is the part of literacy that allows us to understand and write the printed word. Two of the most widely cited and agreed-upon definitions of reading are the following:

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkenson, 1985). Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among: (a) the reader's existing knowledge; (b) the information suggested by the text being read; and (c) the context of the reading situation (Wixson, Peters, Weber, & Roeber, 1987, citing the new definition of reading for Michigan). Reading is an interactive process in which readers use information from the printed text along with what is in their heads to construct meaning in a given situational context (Pike, Compain, & Mumper, 1997).

**Reading-Related Skills**

Reading-related skills are described in current literature as emergent literacy skills. Emerging literacy includes behaviors observed in children when their awareness and understanding of the letter sound relationship begins to develop, attitudes, knowledge, and skills developed over time by children that lead to reading and writing (Harris & Hodges, 1995;
Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). These skills include decoding letters and their corresponding sounds, linking sounds to words, extracting meaning from words, understanding print production, and using de-contextualized language (Whitehurst & Lonigan 1998; Longian et al., 2000). Emergent literacy also includes recognizing familiar words and showing interest in text (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Ruddell, 2002) Whitehurst et al. (1994) placed these literacy skills into four categories, including language, writing, linguistic awareness, and print concepts. These skills are found to influence early reading as described in the conceptual model of literacy (see Figure1).

Figure 1. Whitehurst et al.’s (1994) conceptual model of literacy.

Emergent literacy encompasses children’s oral language skills, story comprehension, and print concepts, as well as prototypical letter recognition skills (Mason & Allen, 1986). According to Van Kleeck (2003), there are two stages of emergent literacy: meaning focus and print focus. Early parent/child reading interactions often focus on the meaning of the text.
Typically between the ages of 3 and 4 parents help their children combine the meaning focus with the print focus. Emergent literacy consists of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that develop into conventional literacy (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). These early literacy skills include vocabulary knowledge, an awareness of print, knowledge of letters, phonological awareness, and emergent reading (Van Kleeck, 2003).

**Home Literacy Environments**

Senechal & LeFevre (2002) define the home literacy environment as the frequency and nature of literacy-related activities in the home, with particular interest to shared parent-child book reading. Payne, Whitehurst & Angell (1994) indicate that most researchers measure the frequency of shared parent-child book reading, since book reading is considered the most representative activity of the home literacy environment.

**“Literacy rich” Home Environments**

According to Sonnenschein, Brody, & Munsterman, (1996) a home environment can be considered rich when children are read to regularly; children’s book are readily available in the home; adult print materials are available; children are provided space and opportunities to engage with books; children see adults reading, children visit libraries or book store to purchase or check out books; and parents express positive attitudes about reading.

**Phonological Awareness**

The term phonological awareness encompasses and expands upon phonemic awareness, the knowledge that each spoken word can be represented as a sequence of phonemes which are
the phonological speech units that can determine meaning (Snow et al., 1998). Phonological awareness is defined as “the conscious ability to detect and manipulate sounds, access (to) the sound structure of language and an awareness of sounds in spoken words in contrast to written words” (Smith, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998, p.65).

*Word Recognition*

Word recognition refers to linking the printed representation of a word with its meaning (Stanovich, 1991).

*Reading Comprehension*

Perfetti (1985) describes reading comprehension simply means understanding the words and sentences in a text. But, for advanced readers, it also means going beyond the page itself making inferences and predictions, identifying main ideas, detecting an author’s assumptions and biases and so on. The RAND Reading Study Group describes reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.

*Literacy Development in Children*

Three general viewpoints exist in theories of literacy development: the information processing perspective, a socio-cultural perspective, and the whole-language perspective. In the information processing perspective “reading is constructive in the sense that people combine what they see on the printed page with their existing knowledge and beliefs to derive meaning
from text” (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991 p. 231). Reading and writing both involve working memory, prior knowledge, and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies.

The whole language approach emphasizes the use of authentic activities for literacy development. Through immersion, learning is seen as a natural human process requiring only minimal direct instruction. This theory emphasizes the importance of the type of home and school environments in which the child develops. Some theorists have proposed that learning to understand and communicate in written language is, and should be, just as natural a process as learning to understand and communicate in oral language (e.g., Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991; Goodman, 1989; Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Weaver, 1990).

Bergeron (1990) provided the following definition for whole language:

Whole language is a concept that embodies both a philosophy of language development as well as the instruction approaches embedded within, and supportive of, that philosophy. This concept includes the use of real literature and writing in the context of meaningful, functional, and cooperative experiences in order to develop students’ motivation and interest in the process of learning. (p. 319)

The socio-cultural perspective, derived from Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development, describes literacy as being influenced by a child’s social and cultural environments. Social interactions with others shape the child’s concepts of the purposes of literacy. Social interactions with adults scaffold the child’s literacy efforts while sharing cultural beliefs about literacy. Through early exposure to reading and writing, children learn many things about written language (Paris & Cunnigham, 1996; Perez, 1998). They learn the following:

- Print has meaning and conveys information
- Different kinds of print materials serve different purposes
- Spoken language is represented in a consistent way in written language
- Written language includes some predictable elements and conventions. (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2002 p. 305)
This knowledge about the written language provides a foundation for reading and writing known as emergent literacy. Emergent literacy has been described as the earliest phase of literacy development, the time between birth and the period when children read and write conventionally (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Donoghue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Alle, and Campbell (2001) described a seven-stage approach to how students become literate: in which they first acquire literacy skills as others read aloud to them. Through the shared experience children have an emotional interaction with the person reading to them. From this experience they gradually comprehend more and begin to understand how print is used.

Donoghue et al. (2001) continued that, as boys and girls observe others reading and writing, they imitate this behavior as they participate in meaningful activities that are relevant to them” (p3). Through exposure to environmental print children begin to realize that their needs can be met through reading and writing. Third, reading and writing provide social interaction for children. When people reply to them by reading or writing it promotes literacy.

According to Donoghue et al. (2001), children build on their prekindergarten life experiences as background for later reading success. Early exposure to a print rich environment can be reinforced in literacy lessons. Fifth, direct instruction can provide instruction in a child’s acquisition of knowledge when working on a topic of special interest to him/her. The sixth step details that while children understand that they cannot communicate as effectively as the adults around them their reading and writing attempts are important. In the seventh step to becoming literate, children understand that reading and writing are interrelated concepts.

Richgels (2003) provided an overview of emergent literacy in children using the phases of development discussed by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in their 1998 joint position
statement. These phases include awareness and exploration, experimental reading and writing, early reading and writing, transitional reading and writing, and independent and productive reading and writing. He explained that these phases are not sequential, but rather that children move back and forth among the different phases when they are learning to read.

According to Morrow (2001), “Becoming literate is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout life” (p.128). Not everyone goes through the same phases at the same time. Developing readers are thought to first explore the functions of literacy, then the form, and finally the conventions of literacy. Research on the acquisition of reading from a developmental stance has examined children’s knowledge and acquisition of the function, form and structure of print (Ehri, 1979; Gibson & Levin, 1975; Mason, 1980; Mason & McCormick, 1981).

It has been suggested that phonemic awareness may contribute to helping children learn to read; it serves as the key to understanding the English alphabetic principle, the realization that the sounds of spoken English are symbolized using letters in writing (Ehri et al., 2001). A minimal level of phonological awareness is required to begin the process of reading. Basic reading skills then serve as the foundation from which more advanced metalinguistic skills arise (Stanovich, 1986). It remains debatable whether phonological awareness is a prerequisite to word recognition or whether it is interactive and, therefore, is augmented by word recognition.

Understanding the particulars of word recognition is important for two reasons. First, higher order reading skills such as comprehension, vocabulary development, and purposeful, enjoyable reading and writing are dependent on accurate word recognition (Stanovich, 1991). Second, word recognition is central to reading acquisition (Daneman, 1991; Juel, 1991; Stanovich, 1991). Torgesen (1985) described word recognition as a process involving the following steps: The phonological constituents of words must be obtained from their graphic
representations, stored in sequence, and then blended together while the child searches memory for a real word that roughly matches the string of phonemes produced by the blending operations (p.354).

Children’s increasing knowledge base improves their reading comprehension. As they grow older, children become better able to understand what they read, in part because they know more about the topics which they are reading (Byrnes, 1996; Siegler, 1991). Children gain knowledge about structures in both fiction and nonfiction text. As children age, they gain a better understanding of how text are organized, their ability to decipher between fairy tales and factual information improves, helping them make better sense of what they read. The ability to make inferences of the materials read improves. Particularly as children read in the upper grades, they become more adept at drawing inferences and better able to learn new information from what they read (Chall, 1996; Paris & Upton, 1976).

The International Reading Association’s position statement, *Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction* (1999), indicated that there is no one single method or specific combination of methods to teach children how to read. Teachers must have knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and knowledge of the children in their care so that they can create the appropriate balance of methods necessary for the children they teach.

**Predictors of Reading Success**

With the awareness that most reading difficulties do not become evident until first or second grade, when children are at risk of continual reading difficulties (Snow et al., 1998), it is imperative that preschool parents and educators are knowledgeable about early predictors of
reading success. Snow et al. (1998) identified four conditions that contribute to a child’s reading success:

(1) Intellectual and sensory capacities, (2) positive expectations about and experiences with literacy from an early age, (3) support for reading-related activities and attitudes so that he or she is prepared to benefit from early literacy experiences and subsequent formal instruction in school, and (4) instructional environments conducive to learning.(p.100)

The attitudes, beliefs, and values of parents, and educators are passed on to students through daily practices. If the parents or educators have had positive reading experiences they are more likely to positively promote the reading and reading-related activities in children. A child with a positive attitude toward reading is more likely to participate in leisure activities involving reading-related activities.

It is known that reading skills develop best when there is massive practice in reading, and children (like adults) are more likely to read a lot when they enjoy the process of reading as well as its possible practical or informational outcomes. Educators and civic organizations also stress reading for pleasure because they recognize that it is an authentic form of literacy practice (Snow et al., 1998, p. 181).

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) suggested it is not that some children cannot learn to read, instead their lack of intrinsic motivation contributes to their not wanting to read. He continues, “When the experience becomes intrinsically rewarding, students’ motivation is engaged, and they are on their way to a lifetime of self-propelled acquisition of knowledge” (p.133).

Role of the Teacher

Teachers provide experiences and instruction that help children develop reading skills early in their school career. While school districts provide educators with a theoretical
framework for literacy instruction, the teacher will either effectively or ineffectively deliver the instruction. Therefore, educational practices should be research-based, rather than based on past practices alone (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

To promote literacy in the classroom teachers should do the following: (a) serve as coach, model, guide, advocate and instructor; (b) engage in reflective practice, thoughtfully analyzing lessons with the intent of improving teaching methods and strategies; (c) manage classrooms so that instruction is student-centered with age-appropriate activities that promote active involvement; (d) establish a classroom climate that encourages intellectual curiosity and promotes positive attitudes toward learning; (e) ask probing questions to stimulate students’ critical and creative thinking; (f) encourage students to develop as learners without undue anxiety about mistakes; and (g) understand the developmental needs of students.

The role of the teacher is one of decision maker, mentor, and coach. The teacher plans and supports activities that allow children to do those things one naturally does (Routman, 1991). This role includes planning themes, helping students activate the appropriate prior knowledge, and supporting students in reading and responding to the literature in appropriate ways (Martinez & Roser, 1991). In some instances the teacher plans and teaches mini-lessons using the literature as a model for helping students learn a needed strategy or skill (Trachtenburg, 1990). As a mentor, the teacher serves as a model for reading and writing. By reading aloud to students, the teacher models language for them. By supporting students with such activities as shared reading, literature discussion circles, and response activities, the teacher plays the role of coach (Cooper, 1993).
The Home Literacy Experience

Research on home literacy experiences focus on the development of receptive language, emergent literacy and reading achievement (Wood, 2002; Senechal, & LeFevre, 2002; Sinclair, & Golan, 2002; Greenblat, & Glezer, 2000; Sonnenschein, & Munsterman, 2002). For the purpose of the studies discussed, home literacy experiences fall into two categories: informal and formal. Informal experiences are defined as those for which the primary goal is the message contained in the print, not the print per se (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Formal experiences are those in which the focus is on the print, focusing on the letters and sounds.

Theorists have suggested that joint storybook reading helps children develop comprehension and the phonological skills necessary for reading (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). It also contributes directly and indirectly to reading success through the promotion of vocabulary and short-term memory development, which correlates with early reading acquisition. Findings indicate that children who participate in joint storybook reading at home show an increase in receptive language skills. In a 2000 study Greenblat and Glezer examined the differences in parental literacy involvement, noting that family environments are better predictors of school success than family socioeconomic status or social class. Their findings indicated the following:

Two in three pre-school children in their study were read to on average every day. One in four have a book read to them two to three times a week. Less than 10% were read to only once a week or less often.

Joint storybook time exposes children to the conventions and rules of written language and improves their print knowledge. Researchers note that differences in pre-school book exposure will likely lead to differences in reading and reading-related success.
In contrast, Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) examined storybook reading, controlling for economic status. They found that reading is a common practice in middle-income families but less common in low-income families. Close examination of the joint reading interactions of middle-and low-income, preschool children indicates that middle-income parents guide the child’s comprehension using the following: (a) general knowledge of the world, (b) knowledge of literacy conventions, (c) knowledge of narrative structure, and (d) knowledge of how to respond as members of a reading audience.

The authors noted that such modeling strategies occurred although instruction was neither the goal nor the context of story reading. When parents read to their children, they have an opportunity to create a pleasurable reading experience. Children who experience pleasant reading interactions may be motivated to engage in frequent reading interactions.

Wood (2002) discussed the potential contributions of parent-child preschool activities on a child’s early reading skills. Her article examined several components thought necessary for later reading success, such as phoneme deletion, letter sound knowledge, and rhyme alliteration awareness. Several highly reliable tests were used to assess the validity of each tests’ ability to measure later reading success. This article, similar to the Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) article assessed various components of early literacy development at two different stages. Greenblat and Glezer (2002) discussed literacy development and success in regards to socioeconomic status and age of first book exposure. Sinclair and Golan (2002) provided an observational case study of 2-year-olds developing literacy skills.
Role of the Family

Helping children use their literacy learning in a variety of contexts, the home and family involvement enhance what is learned in the classroom. The family’s role in literacy development is well documented (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Purcell-Gates, Allier, & Smith, 1995; Snow et al., 2000; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986). Research supports the concept that parents are their child’s first teacher and the home is the child’s first learning environment (Edwards, 1992; Huey, 1908; Sulzby, 1985). The literacy experiences that take place in the home are vital to children’s intellectual growth (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Studies have investigated homes in which children learn to read before entering school without direct instruction (Durkin 1996: Heath, 1980: Holdway, 1979; Morrow, 1983; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Taylor, 1983: Teale, 1984). This supports the concept that literacy is not a specific skills learned in academic settings; rather, it is a way of thinking that is learned through communication in the family (Heath, 1983). Families communicate this way of thinking orally through conversations and reading aloud to children and physically by providing a print-rich environment.

Previously, research on family practices emphasized “traditional” parents and their effect on the academic achievement of their children. Currently the definition of “parent” has been modified to include any adult responsible for the child: a single parent, mother or father, grandparent, other relative, or foster parent. Research on family practices indicates a broad spectrum of home practices. While some families actively embrace promoting literacy in the home, other families provide their children with only minimal literacy practices.

The investigation of middle-class children who were successful in reading and writing found that they are read to regularly and immersed in a print-rich environment. Their parents
were educated, avid readers who provided positive role models. These successful readers were found to reside in home environments that are predictable, orderly, and nurturing (Snow et al., 1998). Three areas exist in which families’ influence a child’s education: teaching, educational opportunities, and parental background and expectations.

Teaching

Most parents use direct teaching when assisting children with homework. Direct teaching includes showing a child how to write his or her name, answering the child’s questions, reading aloud, assessing the child’s comprehension, and modeling appropriate reading practices. Yet both direct and indirect teachings are important in developing literacy skills. Indirect teaching involves using reading in daily activities such as creating grocery lists, counting change, and reading directions. Like direct teaching, indirect teaching can involve reading aloud to a child.

Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson (1985) describe that reading aloud to a child is the single most important activity a parent can do to build the knowledge required in reading. Trelease (2001) stated that “every time a child is read aloud to, he/she experiences pleasure”. The benefits of children and parents reading aloud together are numerous. Motivating children to read, improving their vocabulary skills and engaging them in conversations are a few of the benefits of reading aloud with children (Bus, 2001; Calkins, 1997).

Reading that consists only of worksheets, repetitive drill, and tests are unpleasant. The more a child is read to, the more that child associates reading with a warm pleasant experience. Trelease (2001) described reading as an accrued skill, which like other accrued skills improves with practice; the more one reads the better one’s skill becomes at it (p. 2). A child’s reading
experiences, whether positive or negative, may determine the extent to which he/she wants to read (Bus, 2001).

**Educational Opportunities**

Educational opportunities include the literacy environment of the home and reading activities aimed at improving the child’s literacy skills. Successful readers are immersed in high literacy environments that include visible reading materials (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988; Hannon, 1995; Morrow, 1983; Nueman, 1997; Sticht & McDonald, 1989; Teale, 1984). They are also exposed to reading, with frequent trips to collect new reading material (Morrow, 1983, 1997; Neuman, 1997). According to Snow et al. (1998) “Because reading is such a complex activity, children need an environment offering rich support and varied learning opportunities for every successive stage of their literacy development” (p.128).

**Parental Background, Expectations and Quality of Interactions**

Teachers often encourage parents to read with their children, yet provide little guidance for the interaction. Theorists suggest that joint storybook reading helps children develop comprehension and phonological skills necessary for reading (Sonnenchein & Munsterman, 2002). It also contributes directly and indirectly to reading success through the promotion of vocabulary and short-term memory development, which correlates with early reading acquisition. Children who participate in joint storybook reading at home show an increase in receptive language skills. Book exposure is an enduring aspect of the home literacy experience that is likely to contribute to a child’s reading performance. Wood (2002) has noted that children
above average at reading received more frequent storybook reading than children who were at or below average.

Research also indicates that what goes on during the interaction may be as important as the frequency of the interaction (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002; Wood, 2002). Reading to and with children has long been correlated with fostering literacy acquisition; research now indicates that dialogue about the book is as important as actually reading the book. These effective quality-reading interactions may be important for fostering children’s interest in reading. This interest in reading may provide a desire to participate in reading activities and contribute to reading development. When parents read to their children, they have an opportunity to create a pleasurable reading experience. Children who experience pleasant reading interactions may be motivated to engage in frequent reading interactions. There is growing awareness that pleasant reading experiences and the child’s interest plays a role in literacy acquisition.

Research findings indicate a correlation between maternal habits and a child’s cognitive development, noting that a “mother’s reading habits influence the early introduction of books to pre-school children” (Greenblat & Glezer, 2000). A parent or caregivers’ educational background and expectations for a child’s success academically and personally have an effect on the child (Coleman et al., 1966; Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989). Snow et al. (2000) found, “Mothers educational level and their aspirations for their children seemed to matter more to children’s achievement than did fathers” (p. 68). They explained that this might have been affected because of the small number of fathers included in the study and/or the greater interaction between the mother and the child.

The home environment and the involvement of the family have a major influence on a child’s early literacy development, whether positive or negative. Family environment is a better
predictor of academic success than socioeconomic status (Greenblat & Glezer, 2000). However, the crucial role of the family in providing early reading-related skills is overlooked in many homes and by some educators. Parents, like educators, want to provide children with the tools necessary for academic success, yet many lack knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in promoting emergent literacy.

Reading is not an innate ability. It does not simply emerge from interactions with more experienced readers in a print-rich environment. Systematic and explicit instruction is necessary for many children to successfully acquire reading. Research indicates that one way children become literate is through language interactions with adults, particularly decontextualized speech (Reese, 1995). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) reported that children who entered kindergarten with richer home literacy environments exhibit higher levels of knowledge and reading skills than children with less rich literacy environments.

According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, home literacy environments are measured by a checklist that counts what literacy materials the child has, and what the mother does with the child to assist in the development or literacy skills. Additional points are assigned for the following: what literacy activities the child sees the parent engaging in, how the parent perceives their literacy skills and how the parent helps or encourages the child. Scores on the home literacy checklist can range from 0 to 37 points. The higher the value of the checklist, the "richer" the home environment is in terms of educational activities and literary resources. Children with higher values on the home literacy checklist scored higher on the reading scale than did children with lower values on the literacy checklist.

“There is a strong and critical relationship between the amount and quality of early language and literacy interactions and experiences and the acquisition of the linguistic skills
necessary for reading” (Keys to Successful Learning, 1999). Children learn through interacting with others, and activities such as reading to children can enhance their reading skills and knowledge (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Snow et al., 1998). The frequency with which children are involved in literacy activities and the benefits on their emergent literacy is a well-researched area (Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; DeBaryshe, 1993; Wells, 1985), yet there remains a need for research on the quality of these literacy experiences (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Traditionally, many early reading difficulties have been attributed to the home environment, yet current research provides converging evidence for a genetic cause of some types of reading disability. Family history is one of the most important risk factors, with 23% to as many as 65% of children who have a parent with reading disability having the same difficulties (Keys to Successful Learning, 1999).

Research studies on the language environment suggest that the quality of adult-child discourse is important, as is the amount of such interactions (Phillips, 1987; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dickinson et al., 1993). Many studies examine the home environment of children at different ages and identified contributors to literacy development (e.g., DeBaryshe, 1993; DeBaryshe et al., 1991; Mason, 1980; Scarborough et al., 1991; Share et al., 1984; Wells, 1985). However, few longitudinal prediction studies evaluating the home language environment in relation to later reading success have derived overall measures of the quality of the preschool home environment. Hess and Holloway (1984) identified five broad areas of family functioning that may influence literacy development:

1. **Value placed on literacy:** by reading themselves and encouraging children to read, parents can demonstrate that they value reading.

2. **Press for achievement:** by expressing their expectations for achievement by their children, providing reading instruction, and responding to children's reading initiations and interest, parents can create a press for achievement.
3. **Availability and instrumental use of reading materials**: literacy experiences are more likely to occur in homes that contain children's books and other reading and writing materials.

4. **Reading with children**: parents can read to preschoolers at bedtime or other times and can listen to schoolchildren's oral reading, providing assistance as needed.

5. **Opportunities for verbal interaction**: A lower quantity of verbal interaction constitutes a risk factor primarily in that it relates closely to lowered child vocabulary scores (Hess & Holloway, 1984 pp 179-181).

Previous researchers have investigated middle-class children who are successful in reading and writing, finding that they are read to regularly and are immersed in a print-rich environment. These children are said to live in a home environment that is predictable, orderly, and nurturing, with high expectations for both the child’s academic success and social behavior (Snow et al., 2000). Most studies on early reading examine success in the classroom or home and focus on singular factors from a particular sample of the population. Little research has been conducted on the experiences of educators in promoting reading and reading-related skills in the home with their own preschool children. There is a need for further research to explore how parents create rich home environments conducive to reading success.

**Family as Educator Model**

In the family as educator model, Snow et al. (2000) compiled information about 31 participating families. The researchers differentiated five variables that past researchers identified as perhaps supporting this model: (a) the literacy environment of the home, (b) direct teaching, (c) creating opportunities to learn, (d) parental education, and (e) parental expectations. The researchers sought to determine family variability along these five variables and the effect variability could have on a child’s reading success.

Literacy environment has been defined as “the combination of parents’ own literacy practices, skills, and preferences with their current and previous provision of literacy to their
children” (Snow et al., 2000, p. 61). This measure was assessed through participant interviews and observer ratings of parental literacy and provisions of literacy. Direct teaching was measured by the frequency with which parents helped with homework and the interactions with the child during that time. It was explained that parents create opportunities to learn through the facilitation of activities, interactions with others, modeling intellectual activities, and having a variety of personal interests.

The findings of Snow et al. (2000) indicate that families rating high on the above-mentioned variables had children with high levels of reading success. The researchers discovered, the most powerful predictors of both word recognition and vocabulary were (a) literacy environment in the home, (b) mother’s education, and (c) mother’s educational expectations for the child” (pp. 67-68). Some of the variables that were expected to be predictors were found not to be, with some unexpected variables having a larger influence on a child’s ability. These variables were labeled as “unrealized predictions” and “unexpected relationships.”

**Unrealized Predictions**

Phenomena categorized as unrealized predictions included father’s influence and parent-child interaction during homework–like task. Snow et al. (2000) indicated that this unrealized prediction was attributable to the small number of father participants in the study. The second phenomenon, parent-child interaction during a homework-like task, had been found to be in conflict with the previous research by McDermott, Goldman, and Varenne (1984). Snow et al. (2000) found it instead to be not only positive but “characterized by the parent’s skill in using the situation as an opportunity to help children succeed and to teach school and literacy skills” (pp.70-71).
Unexpected Relationships

Snow et al. (2000) found that unexpected relationships existed between a child’s reading success and a mother’s participation in activities. They found “That the number of activities the mother reported engaging in outside of her work (social clubs, church groups, union groups, and so on) related strongly both to children’s word recognition and to their vocabulary” (p.71). The researcher explained that the child accompanies his/her mothers to these activities and therefore is exposed to more activities. A child’s interaction with extended family members was also found to have an unexpected relationship on a child’s word recognition. This relationship was attributed to the idea that children were exposed to activities not found in their immediate families.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

This study is loosely modeled on a study conducted by Snow et al. (2000) investigating the connection between the home and school on literacy. While Snow et al. focused on primary students and their early literacy experiences, this study examines the experiences of educator and non-educator mothers in promoting the reading and reading-related skills of their own preschool children.

Using a qualitative approach, a descriptive case study was conducted to explore the characteristics of rich home environments. Patton (2002) stated that a case study may be conducted when “researchers or policymakers are puzzled by particular cases- unusual successes, unusual failures, or dropouts. Detailed case studies of these unusual cases may generate particularly useful information” (p. 99).

Merriam (1998) described the characteristics of qualitative research, unlike quantitative research where the researcher is looking at parts, or variables, of an occurrence, qualitative research looks at the occurrence as it relates to the experiences of the people involved. The findings are then filtered through the researcher instead of an instrument such as a computer. The researcher has physical contact with the subjects, allowing the researcher to be as close to the actual phenomenon as possible. Thus, the researcher looks for a theory that explains the occurrence based on the findings rather than designing the research to support a theory. This allows the researcher to paint a graphic picture of the study using words rather than the more traditional numbers.

The case studies were explored using the three stages of interviews identified by Laferrie: (a) structuring interview, (b) data gathering interview, (c) corroborative interview (Becker,
This interview approach allowed the recording and analysis of the participants’ interactions with their children that appear relevant to promoting reading readiness. By “immersing oneself into another’s world” as described by Clark Moustakes, the researcher sought to understand the participants’ experiences. In accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research, this study did not address questions of why or seek to establish causality; data were collected through natural inquiry with sensitivity to context. Through inductive analysis of these data, patterns, themes, and categories of the participants’ experiences were explored.

Qualitative inquiry has several advantages for investigating the research question. Most importantly, the qualitative unit of analysis allows the researcher to focus in depth on the participants’ experiences, emphasizing the value of the experience instead of attempting to generalize the experiences to be representative of the larger population. Seeking quantification and numerical measurements of variables will not provide understanding into how the above-mentioned phenomenon is experienced. Instead it provides insight in understanding the participant’s perspective of the phenomenon, promoting the reading and reading-related skills of their own preschool children.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the data-collection process (Appendix A). During the structuring interview, participants received an interview protocol letter describing the research purpose and additional details of the interview process (Appendix B).

Participant Selection Criteria

Participants were selected using a non-probability, purposeful sample. Merriam (1998) noted that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover,
understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 61). According to Merriam, there are two forms of purposeful sampling. A unique sample focuses on a unique or rare occurrence, while a convenience sample is recommended when time, money, location, or access to participants are limited.

This study’s participants represent a convenience sample of educators and non-educators in West Tennessee. Participants discussed biographical questions and asked questions of the researcher in the structuring interview, enabling them to develop a sense of trust prior to the data-gathering interview. "An unusual degree of trust is likely to lead to willingness on the part of the subjects to answer the questions carefully and with validity. This is especially advantageous when the questions are of a sensitive nature" (Lull, 1990 p. 53).

From the population of potential participants, a sample population was selected using both general and specific selection criteria. The general selection criteria included (a) the ability to provide rich descriptions about the experience, (b) the ability to adequately communicate the experience, and (c) willingness to fully share the experiences. Specific selection criteria required that the educator participants be (a) a teacher in a public or private elementary school, (b) an early childhood education teacher, (c) the parent of a minimum of one preschool child. Non-educator selection criteria required participants to be (a) the parent of a minimum of one preschool child (b) not currently employed as an early childhood educator, (c) not be trained and or certified as an early childhood educator.
The sample population consisted of 2 elementary school teachers and 2 non-educators with one preschool child in the home. The inclusion of mothers with only one child was designed to control for the influence of other children’s reading and reading-related skills on that of the preschool child’s reading-related activities. Participants were informed of the three face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher in an agreed-upon private location. Information was provided of potential risk associated with participation, including psychological discomfort, loss of time, monetary loss (transportation and childcare), and introspection. Participants were informed of an estimated 20-hour maximum time commitment. This estimated time commitment included all interviews, follow-ups, and time spent considering important thoughts and details of their experiences.

Relevant participant characteristics are described in the discussion as they were described in the interview. This includes the participants’ pseudonyms, child’s age, gender, level of experience with the phenomenon including promoting the reading and reading-related skills of
their own children, and educational background. Information was altered to ensure participants’ confidentiality.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Tonya Blake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Ellie Brilie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Aigne Anike</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Suzette Tyler</td>
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<table>
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<th>Mother’s pseudonym</th>
<th>Child’s pseudonym</th>
<th>Child’s age</th>
<th>Child’s gender</th>
<th>Mothers education level</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>P3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>4 years old</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Data were collected in the three interviews conducted with each participant. An interview guide was constructed to decrease the influence of the interviewer on the participants’ responses. Using the interview guide, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about their experience with the phenomenon. Following the structuring and data gathering interviews the tape recordings were typed into a word document (transcribed). Transcripts were analyzed for the development of a category system (inductive coding). The coding process included reading the transcripts line by line, and dividing the data into meaningful units. These units are then marked with descriptive names or categories. These names or categories are assigned inductive codes and reapplied to appropriate units comprising a master list of codes (Appendix). To improve inter-coder reliability the master list was distributed to a team of professional in the field of education, and the participants for synchronization. The master list reflects only those
codes replicated by the team of professionals and agreed upon by the participants as reflective of their lived experiences.

Data Collection Steps

- Interview guide constructed
- Structuring interview
- Data gathering interview
- Tapes transcribed into word documents
- Transcripts analyzed, coded
- Master code list developed
- Replication/corroborative interview

Interview Guide

An interview guide was constructed to gather the information necessary to understand the participants’ experience using the types of qualitative question as described by Patton (2002), with the exclusion of knowledge questions. Knowledge questions were not used because the phenomenon explores the participants’ experiences of promoting the reading of their own children. Questions and probes used in the interviews were limited to experience/behavior, opinion/value, feeling/emotions, sensory, and background. Background questions as discussed by Patton are “asked to establish criteria.” Experience/behavior questions ask participants to describe observable behaviors, actions, or activities about the experience of the phenomenon. “Please tell me any ways you try to promote reading skills with Tim” provides the participant with the opportunity to share the experiences that elicit reading in her child.
“Please tell me how you view reading” is an opinion and value question asked to increase understanding of the value the participant places on reading. Asking the participant to describe any effects that promoting their child’s reading has had on them emotionally is a feeling/emotion question that asks for a response to the experience of the phenomenon. By asking the question “Please describe for me what Tim is like as a child,” the researcher asks the participant is asked to describe the stimuli experienced in response to a sensory question.

As described by Patton (2002), questions presented in this standard open-ended interview guide have the characteristics necessary for good interview questions. The questions are: (a) open-ended, (b) not dichotomous, (c) lack presuppositions, (d) are singular, (e) are clear, and (f) are not presented as why questions. The questions asked are open-ended in that they do not presuppose the “dimensions, feelings or thoughts of the participants.” There is no evidence of dichotomous questioning, because the questions require rich descriptions versus “yes” or “no” responses. Questions were composed to allow the participant to respond to “any” experience, thus minimizing the presumptions that she has lived the experience. “Why” questions were avoided, as well as questions presenting more than one thought. Questions were also revised to contain phraseology used in the teaching profession. This question format is thought to effectively explore the participants’ experiences and does not require an established knowledge base (Appendix B).

Internal Validity

According to Merriam (1998) triangulation of data sources and member checks are strategies a researcher can used to ensure internal validity. She describes triangulation as “using multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (p. 204). For the
purpose of this study triangulation consisted of participant interviews, home literacy checklist and member checks. Interview data were reviewed and coded by the researcher and replicated by a team of professionals in the field of education. Coding conflicts were discussed and resolved, resulting in the modification or combination of codes into a synchronized list of codes selected by the 5 member team.

Technological Devices

Other materials necessary for completion of this research include but are not limited to the following: (a) a private agreed upon location for the interviews to be conducted, (b) an agreed upon time for the interviews to be conducted, (c) a computer with Word perfect software for transcribing, (d) a hand held tape recorder with a pause button and microphone, and (e) three, 90 minute audio tapes.

A battery-operated, hand-held tape recorder was used to record the interview sessions, with an accompanying 90-minute audiotape. This length of tape accommodates interviews lasting more than the expected 45-minute interval. Tapes were immediately transcribed, and the tape and transcript were stored in separate secure locations. Pseudonyms were used for the participants, and all individuals discussed both in the recorded session and the transcription.

Data Management

According to Reid (1992), data management can be described in three phases: preparation, identification, and manipulation. Data preparation began by transcribing each participant’s data-gathering interview. These typed transcripts included the questions from the
interview guide, probing questions, and the participants’ response to ensure that each response and question was easily located during the data analysis process.

Reid (1992) explained identification as “dividing text data into analytically meaningful and easily locatable segments (p.126). Various segments were identified using a concept map. Using the categories from the concept map, each interview was read, transcribed, and coded. This allowed the researcher to compare segments and cluster similar segments into categories. Merriam (1998) called this labeling of the information coding, explaining it as “nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (p. 164).

In the third phase, manipulation, excerpts of the transcript were cut and placed in folders with an in-vivo-codes identifying which participant made the response. When two or more excerpts communicated the same information, only one was included in the analysis. Each folder was numbered and filed behind a corresponding category as it was completed.

Figure 3. Data management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Manipulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcribing</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Cut &amp; past excerpt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribing</td>
<td>Coded excerpt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>Grouping codes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

A whole text analysis was conducted using the analytic procedures developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). This whole text analysis involves identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns in the data. This type of analysis was conducted to analyze both the surface and deep structural meanings of the text. This analysis used only the initial steps
of a complete grounded theory and required spiraling back and forth between various stages of
the analysis. The steps used are as follows: (a) transcribing the interview, (b) reading the entire
transcript carefully at least twice, (c) excerpting relevant material from the transcript, (d) open
coding of the data using in- vivo-codes (e) comparing codes and clustering similar codes into
categories, (f) examining the content of each category and determining if subcategories can be
developed, and (g) completing member checks. Inductive codes are developed by directly
examining the transcript (for example: "made me sad" is coded with "made me sad"). This type
of researcher constructed coding enjoys a very high rating in the field of qualitative social-
research because it deals with codes and concepts closely orienting at the language of the
explored everyday world.

The first step in the data analysis process involved transcribing the interviews. During the
transcription process particular attention was paid to factors such as the participant’s rate of
speech; level of expressed emotion; tone of voice; and an emphasis on words, phrases, or
sentences. To aid in the analysis, transcripts were typed single-spaced with wide margins and
divided into numerous paragraphs.

Next, each transcript was read entirely during an uninterrupted period, with a subsequent
reading of each transcript occurring 1 day after the initial read. During the first read, the
researcher aimed to gain an overall sense of the participants’ experiences. This involved trying to
be present to the situation as described by the participant, rather than merely being present to
words on a page. The second read allowed consideration to transcript material relevant to the
research question, as well as possible codes for the data. Material revealing any aspect of the
participants’ experience was excerpted, using a line-by-line approach relevant sentences were
highlighted in the transcript.
To complete the coding of the data each excerpt was scrutinized and assigned a code (or codes) to represent the explicit and implicit meaning. This coding required looking not only at the words themselves but also at their meaning to formulate codes that capture the deep structural meaning. In accordance with Strauss, 1987 the guidelines below were used for coding:

a) ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions
b) analyze the data minutely
c) frequently interrupt the coding to develop a theoretical note or memo, and
d) do not assume the relevance of a traditional variable such as age, gender, social class, etc. until the data support it.

A variety of questions were asked in comparing codes and clustering similar codes into categories. What is occurring here? Does it fit into an existing category or does it warrant the development of a new category? Codes were carefully examined and compared for similarities and differences. Categories were assessed according to their internal homogeneity and the completeness/adequacy of the category system.

Lastly, to complete the data analysis, the researcher examined the content of each category to determine if subcategories existed and completed a member check. Merriam (1998) defined member checks as “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (p. 204). Following the corroborative interview, the discussion section was updated to include new data and modifications suggested by the participants, and appropriate changes were made to the analysis.

Limitations of the Methodology

"Qualitative research is a useful mass media tool only when its limitations are recognized" (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997; 1985). Frey and Oishi (1995) suggested an interview
is a purposeful conversation in which the interviewer asks prepared questions and the respondent answers them. Patton (2002) suggested the limitations of interviews:

Include possible distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview. Interview data are also subject to recall error, reactivity of the interviewee to the interviewer, and self-serving responses. (p. 306)

The quality of qualitative data depends on the methodological skills, sensitivity, and integrity of the research. A limitation of the methodology is the researcher’s limited experience as a qualitative researcher. This interview approach can cause confusion either because of the lack of understanding of the question by the informant or by the lack of understanding of the respondent's answer by the interviewer (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). The use of standard open-ended interviews is described by Patton (2002) as the most elementary form of qualitative analysis and limits the ability to probe into questions not anticipated when developing the questionnaire. Other disadvantages also exist, namely in terms of the amount of time needed to collect and analyze the responses (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997).

The use of a prepared interview guide with a fixed question order limits flexibility and gives "little room for unanticipated discoveries" (Breakwell, Hammond, and Fife-Schaw, 1995, p. 231). This requires that the researcher establish rapport with the participants prior to the data-gathering interview to ensure accurate descriptions of their experiences. Qualitative inquiry is reliant on language as a vehicle for representing participants’ lived experiences, yet language is inherently limited in its capacity to communicate human meaning. As Miles and Huberman (1994) noted, “Words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings” (p.56). The interview data collected could be flawed due to the participants’ self-reporting.

The nature of qualitative research presents possible limitations in that this type of research does not have a single correct way of analyzing the data. With no other study to
compare the finding with, the creditability and reliability of the work depend heavily on the experience of the researcher.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The researcher explored the experience of each participant reading and reading-related interactions. Clark Moustakes, (1973) described by “being-in” the participant’s world, the researcher immerses his or herself into the world of another. The researcher sought to understand the participants’ experiences. In accordance with several of the characteristics of qualitative research the interviewer did not address questions of why or seek to establish causality. Data were collected through naturalistic inquiry, with sensitivity to context. Assumptions that each participant’s experience was the same were avoided; rather, they were asked to detail their individual experiences.

Qualitative inquiry has several advantages for investigating the research and subsidiary questions. Most importantly the qualitative unit of analysis allowed the researcher to focus in depth on the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon, emphasizing the value of the experience instead of establishing the facts. This type of inquiry is also beneficial for investigating the research question in that it provides descriptive data useful for understanding the phenomena and seeking the participants’ perspective as one who has experienced the phenomena. Seeking quantification and numerical measurements of variables would not provide understanding into how the above mentioned phenomena are experienced.

Educator 1A “Tonya” and “Blake”

Tonya and Her Perception of Blake

Tonya, a 5 year veteran of a local school district, teaches several subjects to a diverse group of struggling learners. As an educator in a “low performing” school, as indicated by state
standards, she has received extensive literacy training. As a wife, educator, and mother of a 4 year old preschool child, Tonya has concerns about her son’s social and academic development. Tonya stated “Blake is very, he’s very aggressive. He knows what he wants, and he knows when he wants it and hopefully I can gear that to be a very positive instead of turning into something very bad.”

Tonya acknowledges that Blake’s behavior requires guidance, yet she discusses the value of his resistance. Emphasis is placed on shaping Blake into a strong man without accentuating negative behaviors that often accompany strong personality types. Blake’s difficulty in maintaining boundaries is an area of concern for Tonya, who states that “when he wants something, he wants that, and sometimes it’s hard for him to accept no.” While Blake’s impulsiveness is of major concern, his physical stature often makes it difficult for Tonya and others around him to maintain appropriate developmental expectations.

As a large and very determined toddler, Blake’s behavior is often ill perceived as immature. Tonya, who labels Blake’s behavior as aggressive, provides a description that many would describe as a strong personality type. As a child larger than his same-aged peers, Tonya must make a concerted effort to set developmentally appropriate reading goals for Blake, this has led to changes in her understanding of reading and reading acquisition.

**Personal Views of Reading**

Tonya’s understanding of reading acquisition is continually modified, yet the value she places on reading remains consistent. Her professional and academic background supports the high value she places on reading and reading-related skills. Tonya believes that reading should be an enjoyable experience for a child, and she makes an effort to promote positive reading
experiences with her son and students. She believes a strong reading foundation is necessary for successful daily living. The emphasis she places on reading enjoyment guides her approach to promoting reading with her son and students. Tonya is aware that establishing students’ joy of reading requires increasing their comprehension. Tonya states, “Comprehension to me is strictly basic understanding of what you’ve read. You know my understanding and your level of understanding, totally different. But, I mean, we may have the same ideas, but how we express them that level of understanding could be totally different.”

The statement above details Tonya’s recognition of children’s varying rates of development. Allowing for these differences she believes that reading is an individual activity, best taught to a child on his/her own level. Impacted by the frustration of struggling students in her class, she acknowledges her personal limitations. While she will continue to do her personal best to meet the needs of her diverse learners, Tonya communicates that everyone will not become a successful reader.

Sometimes you don’t realize how detrimental it is when students just can’t you know, get it. So you just have to do everything that’s possible to try and gear that child’s thoughts toward comprehending what they’re reading. I guess I used to think that reading was something that if you tried, if you just tried you could do it but, I don’t think I understood that just the will alone to read is not enough.

*Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing His Desire to Read*

The professional training Tonya’s school district provides helps her address the needs of those struggling with reading difficulties. She attempts to promote reading comfort in her son and students by first teaching a variety of prereading strategies.

I always try to make them feel comfortable with what they’re reading and I try to give them an idea of what they’re reading before the reading begins. So we do a lot of preview and predicting in our text whatever it is that we are reading, and I try to activate their prior knowledge about things. So it’s not like we’re jumping into something.
Tonya utilizes a variety of research-based techniques for teaching students with reading difficulties. Thinking maps are used to help struggling readers improve understanding of concepts prior to reading the text, while trade books are used to expose students to unfamiliar themes. Tonya explains that her students, primarily from working class families, are not familiar with many concepts outside of their local community. Trade books increase students’ awareness of ideas commonly unknown to individuals of limited resources and expose children to themes they would otherwise not be aware of.

Working with students of various learning levels, Tonya aims to provide children with personal competence and comfort, providing them with opportunities to practice and build on their existing skills, stating,

So, I like to use a lot of different strategies because using one thing, it either gets old after a minute or it doesn’t work for everything that you have to bring forth to them.

Tonya believes that reading should be presented in a positive light and avoids using reading as a form of punishment, with either Blake or with her students. She wants to increase students’ desire to read through promoting a positive reading environment. Tonya explains that, while Blake is not yet reading, he enjoys the quality time spent with his parents reading to him,

I don’t think he gets it yet, what reading is. Right now it’s just him spending time with mom or dad you know, with a book. He does know what a book is, that’s good and he’s able to point out certain pictures, he’s able to say what those pictures are so…so pictures are context clues and so that’s a skill, so yeah. I try to make it fun for him, it is something that we do together.

Tonya’s home is categorized as a “rich” literacy environment under the National Center for Learning Disabilities criteria. Blake’s room consists of several books, letters, and words. Although many of the words covering his walls are still unfamiliar to him, Tonya hopes they will pique his interest. Children learn through association, and Tonya hopes that Blake will associate the letters on his walls with the objects they represent. Tonya views a positive reading
environment as one in which her son enjoys reading and comprehends the text. She describes once recording a book on tape to save time, yet she decided to quickly discontinue its use once she realized that Blake enjoyed the personal contact not the book. Tonya believes that promoting a positive reading environment for Blake requires encouraging and supporting his personal joy for reading. She says,

> It’s very important to me that he is able to comprehend what he is reading and also have an enjoyment for reading, not just do something just strictly because I have to do it for school, let me go to my room and you know grab a book.

Explaining that she did not come from a home that placed a high value on academic achievement, Tonya feels that her reading acquisition was unduly difficult. To prevent Blake from experiencing similar difficulties Tonya provides several opportunities for him to associated letters and reading in context. Reading is not isolated to Blake’s room; afternoon activities provide teachable moments in which Tonya models reading books and magazines. While Tonya’s free reading time is often limited due to her parental responsibilities, she wants her son to see her personal joy for reading. She believes that by promoting a positive reading environment for Blake she will increase his desire to read. She mimics many of the techniques she finds effective in her classroom, in the reading activities with her son. The desire to read is one that must exist internally, and with this knowledge Tonya understands that she must continually present reading to Blake in a positive light.

**Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading**

According to Tonya,

promoting reading in a positive light is often difficult when working with students all day and dealing with those problems at school not only learning difficulties but behavior problems as well, then coming home to my own child, I am very tired, physically and
sometimes emotionally so sometime I do have to force myself to take the time to read with him.

The reading difficulties of Tonya’s students drive her need to be diligent in promoting Blake’s reading development. “I just don’t feel like it sometimes, but I do have to make that sacrifice.” This sacrifice is “worthwhile” for Tonya because promoting reading brings her personal pleasure.

Tonya’s Reading Related Expectations for Herself and Blake

While her current goals require focusing a disproportionate amount of time “catching up” her students, Tonya notes that, as Blake matures, more of her time and energy will need to focus on him. Currently Tonya is satisfied with Blake’s literacy development, and working with “them [the students] to the best of my ability and hoping that something positive or something is rubbing off on them, to get them excited and wanting to learn”.

Tonya would like to see Blake become a “good reader to succeed and be comfortable with what he reads.” A solid reading foundation is one way she hopes to ensure Blake’s ability to relate to his reading materials.

A great background of many different things I think plays a role in reading as well, like travels and just experiencing different things. I think that helps people become better readers because they get it, they are able to relate to many different things.

Tonya describes her goals in both a personal and a professional context. Noting that her students’ parents depend on her to educate their children, she feels she must constantly do her best as a mother and teacher.
Educator 1B “Ellie” and “Brilie”

Ellie and Her Perception of Brilie

Ellie and 3-year-old Brilie relocated to the area 3 years prior to the study. Besides her husband, Brilie’s father, they do not have any other family in the area. To make up for the lack of biological family involved in Brilie’s rearing Ellie participates in several activities, which allows Brilie to be regularly exposed to a diverse group of people. She describes herself as a young mother who devotes much of her leisure time to fulfilling what she calls her “parental responsibilities.” As a reading recovery teacher Ellie has extensive professional training working with “at risk” student to enhance their reading and reading-related skills. She is a part-time reading recovery teacher and part-time kindergarten teacher.

Ellie expressed initial concern about Brilie temperament, noting that she was a “fussy” baby, who seemed very sensitive to her environment. She has, however, matured into an “easy” toddler. Ellie describes Brilie as a very curious, happy, and intelligent child who gets excited about new things. Ellie remains proud of Brilie’s ability to entertain herself as well as play with others since she rarely has to share toys or her parents’ attention.

Personal View of Reading

“Even though I am the reading recovery teacher I guess I really never think about reading as an isolated thing.” Ellie describes seeing reading as one of many components necessary for success in life. When “I think of reading, I guess I think of all the things that go into it. I feel reading is very important especially to the development of young children.” Ellie describes always having a personal desire to read; she explains that as a small child she remembers wanting to know what things said.
In a professional capacity she thinks of reading as her job, stating, “It is my job to teach my students to read, so I guess you could say I view reading, and my ability to teach others to read, as my contribution to society.” Teaching students to read is building the “foundation for all other subjects. Reading is a great way to gain new knowledge or just for enjoyment.” She believes student who read for their own personal enjoyment comprehend what they read quicker than those forced to read.

Reading provides the chance to explore the world; it is a passport which allows readers to “travel, explore and learn” about things and places that they would otherwise not be exposed to. Ellie’s view of reading has evolved. She explains that as a child she thought the ability to read without difficulty made her superior to struggling readers. She now realizes that this view could not be further from the truth, stating, “I realize that some children having reading difficulties for a variety of reasons, and they are no less than anyone else because of it.”

Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read

Professionally Ellie is trained in a variety of ways to aid her students in becoming comfortable with the reading process. She describes the one-on-one activities done with her students as one way in which she makes reading a personal experience. Ellie says her children enjoy reading when they are active producers in the content of what is read. One such activity involves helping the students develop a story, cutting their story into sentence strips, and “reading” the student-produced strips. This activity helps students become more comfortable with the reading process, since many of them remember what they said in their story. Not only does this activity improve the student storytelling skill but it allows them to understand the connections between reading and writing.
Working with students on various reading levels, Ellie provides a variety of reading materials and opportunities to read in her class. Reading activities in the home are also encouraged. She states,

I stress the importance of reading daily to my parents. I show them that reading is fun. I also have reading nights to try and promote the home literacy environment. I actually show parents things they can do with their children at home. I really try to let parents and students know that their parents and I are working together to help them become better readers.

Ellie recognizes that promoting reading comfort requires her to modify her approach to reading both at home and in her classroom. She describes the following in regards to promoting reading with Brilie: “I read with her before naps and every night before bed to help her settle down. During the summer we also read several times throughout the day. Sometimes I read a magazine while she reads a book, so she can see me reading.” Now that Brilie has developed prereading skills Ellie says she can focus on her actually reading.

Maintaining children’s attention is a method Ellie uses to promote a comfortable reading environment. “I’m trying to incorporate more non-fiction. I traditionally think young children enjoy fiction, but after finding and reading several non-fiction books with my daughter I realize they not only allow for shared reading but they provide factual information that children can benefit from.”

Ellie encourages parents to search for childcare and schools with literacy programs that mimic their literacy beliefs and values. She notes that her professional responsibilities detract from reading opportunities with Brilie, placing her in a print rich childcare environment was carefully considered as a means of increasing her desire to be literate.

The daycare provides her with several reading experiences during the day including shared reading and story times, I make sure to ask her everyday what she did at school, I ask specific questions about the stories read and then try to connect them to the things we do at home or to a story we read together.”
Ellie encourages the use of nontraditional reading materials as a way to increase students’ desire to read. Parents are encouraged to purchase magazines and cookbooks and to write personal notes to their children. Her classroom library contains student-generated books and poems. While she notes that students are not able to read or comprehend everything another student has placed in the library, she hopes difficult material will provide teachable moments in which she or another student can assist.

Cognizant of the relationship between positive reading experiences and the increased desire to read, Ellie attempts to make reading fun with her daughter and students. “We have a class mascot, Bingo the Bear, who goes home with each child for a weekend.” Students write what Bingo did over the weekend in his journal and read what he did previous weekends. “Children fearful of reading failure often begin to associate books with negative experiences, but because they really have an interest in what is on the pages, they are motivated to read..” Ellie notes the importance of using various reading materials and feels that providing students with successful reading experiences increases their desire to read.

**Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading**

As an educator overwhelmed by the feeling of responsibility for the academic success and development of so many children, Ellie struggles to meet the needs of her students and her daughter. While working with Brilie has been demanding, Ellie says,

I don’t think it has been difficult, she is my daughter so I know it is something I need, something I have to do... while I enjoy reading with her I just don’t feel like I do it enough, like I don’t have enough time.

Remaining positive allows Ellie to fulfill her parental and professional responsibilities.
According to Ellie, the “lack of time” is the main obstacle she faces at home and in the classroom. By requesting and receiving the assistance of others Ellie can ensure that each child receives the reading activities he/she needs. Depending on others for assistance forces Ellie to accept that various techniques can be as effective as her chosen approach. Time constraints also limit the amount of time in which Ellie is able to read for her own pleasure. She describes reading magazines while her students or daughter reads a book, for her personal enjoyment and as model for leisure reading. “Being a parent and a teacher requires sacrifice, but I knew that when I entered the field and when I decided to have Brilie, so I can’t complain now.”

Ellie enjoys the reading interaction that she shares with Brilie, saying “It’s been great. We get to spend quality time together and there are many wonderful books that we share together.” Yet her interactions with her students do not illicit the same emotions. Frustrated with the lack of home literacy activities, Ellie describes agitation when the limited time she has with students is “wasted” reviewing skills that should be covered with parents as homework. Ellie expresses frustration with parents who do not take the time to read to or with their children. “Knowing that I have difficulty taking the time to read to my child but I make the sacrifice makes matters even worse when many of my students’ parents are at home all day.”

Ellie’s Reading Related Expectations for Herself and Brilie

Ellie hopes to continually provide Brilie with positive reading experiences to aid in her development of a positive attitude about reading. “I want to be continually invested in her academically, particularly in reading.” Ellie feels that as Brilie matures she “might not need” to read with her, but hopefully she will want to continue to share the experience. “I hope that she
enjoys reading and makes it a life-long habit. I pray that she has strong reading teachers who will continue to encourage her at school as I do at home.”

Non-educator 2A “Aigne” and “Anike

Aigne and Her Perception of Anike

Aigne, mother of one 4-year-old preschool child, has no professional training in the field of education. As a full-time employed mother, Aigne has advanced in her profession as a seasoned abstractor with a state agency. Initially an entry-level employee, she entered her field with 12 college hours toward a bachelors degree in human resources. Aigne and Anike reside in a working-class community where Anike attends a school categorized as “low performing” by the state of Tennessee. Aigne describes her only child Anike as “a child who craves social contact.” Aigne’s extensive work requirements leave Anike “up to her own devices when she is at home. She is quite adept at entertaining herself for extended periods of time, and reading is one of the things she does for entertainment.”

Personal View of Reading

“Reading for me is as essential as food or water. Reading is what I do when I eat, when I am bored or when one of my favorite authors has a new book published.” As a child growing up, Aigne recalls being the only child allowed to read at the dinner table. She describes reading as entertainment as well as a gateway to knowledge and an escape from her life. As a collector of books Aigne collects both fiction and nonfiction books by Black authors. Giving books as gifts Aigne views her joy of reading as a gift that she can share with those around her.
Aigne views reading as a way to discover new things about a variety of subjects. Reading is not only a source of gathering new information, it is used as a source of entertainment. Anike’s television viewing is minimal; she is encouraged to read for information, pleasure, and relaxation. In our society of instant gratification, reading and books are viewed by Aigne as a creative way of teaching patience. “Reading a book requires a degree of patience that watching television does not; if Anike wants to know how the story ends she must read the book in its entirety.” While she has always had an appreciation for reading Aigne states that as a mother she must “treasure any minute that I [she] can steal to read.” Although the scope and number of books she reads has changed, Aigne insists that her view of reading remains the same “it is an essential aspect of my [her] life.”

Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read

Anike has an extensive “library” containing books on various and sundry subjects as well as story and picture books. These books address bodily functions, health, science, nature and “anything she [Anike] may someday develop an interest in or need as a resource.” Aigne reads to Anike and listens to her as she maneuvers the earliest stages of becoming an emergent reader.

“Comfort is gained with practice.” Giving Anike several opportunities to read within the home as well as a model of reading comfort and enjoyment is described by Aigne as her best method of encouraging reading and establishing reading comfort. “Since I read all the time, including during meals, she has been exposed to people reading all her life. I promote reading comfort by example and by making books very, very accessible.” Anike is encouraged to “look things up” when she has a question, “This way she will learn how to find answers for herself and how to use books as a resource tool.”
Anike’s daily activities include several opportunities to read, with the “purchase of several different genres of reading materials… there is always something that she will pick up.” Aigne describes purchasing “various writing tools, colored paper and things that encourage her [Anike] to write more, which also promotes and increases the desire to read.” Anike likes sharing her reading activities with her mom. “She knows I [Aigne] am impressed by that.” Encouraging reading and responding positively to Anike’s reading attempts is described by Aigne as the most effective means to ensure a joy for reading.

**Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading**

Meeting the needs of an emergent reader has presented several challenges for Aigne. As a self-proclaimed non-teacher with limited patience for children, Aigne was forced to deal with her personal feelings of anger, panic, and frustration. While the process has not skewed her personal view of reading, Aigne notes that she struggles daily with the need, and inability, to assist Anike’s reading development. She admittedly ‘threw money at the problem, by hiring tutors, paying for expensive childcare, and buying Hooked on Phonics.” Believing that reading development is a continual process Aigne expects that the personal demands for promoting reading will increase as Anike enters school.

Aigne describes an array of emotions in response to promoting Anike’s reading.

I was angry for quite a while because I was paying so much for childcare and I felt that they were not doing their jobs as far as my child’s reading was concerned. I was angry at the teachers, angry at the school and angry at her for not learning. I was also angry at myself for not being able to teach her myself.

Aigne believes that Anike simply would not learn how to read until she started daycare. “I am not a teacher and I don’t have much patience with children so it was very frustrating for me to have this child who could not read, but obviously loved books.”
Anike was turning 4 and “I was beginning to panic and think she was going to be illiterate in a house full of books.” Panic and frustration led to the purchase of several reading tutorial programs and tutors. With limited personal success and a growing frustration for the school’s inability to teach Anike to read, Aigne requested the assistance of a family friend. “Eventually, the friend, using the Hooked on Phonics program taught her how to read in 20 minutes.” Anike’s learning to read provides Aigne with an overwhelming since of pleasure and relief that her child will develop a personal passion for learning.

Aigne’s Reading Related Expectations for Herself and Anike

Aigne is striving to develop the necessary patience to assist Anike in her reading acquisition. She would like to see Anike attempt to read more challenging books and continue to do “a lot of not so obvious reading activities.” Aigne’s goal is to make “her [Anike] self-sufficient in all aspects of her life, which can be accomplished through reading.” Aigne plans to broaden the scope of her personal library as a model to encourage Anike’s interest in a broad array of reading genres.

Non-educator 2B “Suzette” and “Tyler”

Suzette and Her Perception of Tyler

Suzette and 4-year-old Tyler have lived in Shelby County for 2 years. As a career woman Suzette depends on extended family to assist in Tyler’s upbringing. While attending graduate school for her masters degree, she describes a living arrangement in which, while she was also in the home, Tyler’s grandparents became his primary caregivers. After graduation, Suzette and Tyler transitioned into a new home. In an attempt to keep “something in Tyler’s life consistent”
Suzette remained near her parents so that Tyler could remain in his current extended day daycare program. Suzette currently works full time and takes night classes 2 nights each week toward a doctoral degree. She states that the “sacrifices being made now are to ensure our future success.”

With a large portion of his day spent in childcare or with his elderly grandparents, Tyler is described as “a very independent and affectionate child. He is very helpful and resilient even during times that are less appealing for him. He is very intelligent and intuitive.” Tyler’s grandparents’ idea of raising a child includes developing many of the skills in him that his mother now describes as independent. Tyler, who is described as socially advanced for his young age, irons his own cloths, baths and dresses himself, and prepares his own meals. Suzette notes that these skills were mastered under the watchful eye of his grandmother, and “now he cares for himself just as good as I do.”

*Personal View of Reading*

“Reading is a very important factor in childrearing for me. It is because of reading that I believe my child acts with maturity. My parents made sure his days were spent reading.” Suzette believes that reading is necessary for academic success and thus financial freedom. Without the ability to read or participate in this “reading-rich society” Suzette believes that she and Tyler would be destined for a life of poverty.

“Personally, I believe reading provides insight into various realms of knowledge that may have not been required by simply being a voyeur or a listener.” Suzette’s view of reading has changed as a natural progression of life. Her view of reading has changed. She states, “The purpose of reading has changed.” Professionally and academically reading experiences are
focused on obtaining information, but her appreciation remains reading for pleasure. “I believe that reading for pleasure or interest has assisted and expanded the importance of reading.”

Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read

Tyler has been a witness to his mother’s continuing education all of his life. “He has always seen me reading and studying. There have been times when his bedtime stories were from my textbook.” Suzette began very early promoting reading with Tyler. She began reading to him in the womb, and after birth she continued purchasing and reading books to stimulate his development. When Tyler was 2, Suzette began presenting letters and numbers. His grandparents also promote his reading. His grandmother encourages daily practice using environmental print. “Tyler spends a lot of time with my parents, and they are always talking to him about print; my mother has the boy helping with the cooking so he can learn from the recipes.” Suzette has continued many of the reading practices learned from her parents. Understanding that Tyler enjoys reading the recipes “he gets to eat whatever we make so he wants to be sure it is right.”

Reading to Tyler daily Suzette practiced pronouncing letters and gradually progressed to recognizing basic sight words. By age 3 and a half Tyler was reading simple sentences, signs, and poems. Suzette then realized that if Tyler was to become comfortable with reading, it was important for him to develop his own purpose and interest for reading. She now allows him to explore and discover other purposes for reading. Ultimately she “discovered that a child needs to read because they want to read, not because they feel forced to read.”

Suzette believes that increasing a children’s desire to read requires providing them with interesting materials and other sources to pique their interest. Books are “brought to life” to stimulate Tyler’s mind. Family time is spent seeking opportunities for him to learn from a variety
of sources. Hands-on experiences are one way in which a positive reading environment is encouraged. When Tyler completes a book Suzette takes him on a field trip to provide an opportunity for reinforcement. Noting that she is not always able to take Tyler on a field trip, she modifies his reading list to pre-expose him to the field trips his daycare plans.

Tyler is encouraged to seek answers to his questions through various mediums. “If he has a question he can research the answer in his books, on the Internet or at the library.” Suzette continually models reading to Tyler. In her profession it is imperative that she remain current on policies and procedures. “I believe that if he sees that I read as a professional then he too will read to become a professional. Or at least have a frame of mind of what it takes to be a professional.”

**Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading**

As an active parent in her child’s learning, Suzette remains in constant contact with Tyler’s teachers. “I want them to know that I am doing my job at home and I expect nothing less from them at school.” One major demand described in working with Tyler is prioritizing an already full schedule. “Reading with my child is a priority so that meant a lot of things were pushed aside. Scheduling and planning became a necessity for me.” This time scheduling and planning require Suzette to constantly multitask. “Physically, I found that promoting reading involves a lot of stamina.” Ensuring that the reading foundation is in place to make the environment conducive to reading takes effort. While this can be emotionally draining Suzette appreciates the demands of promoting Tyler’s reading, finding that it has taught her “how to relax and relate to other demands encountered in everyday life.” The constant demand aids
Suzette’s understanding that reading is more than obtaining information. The joy of reading with Tyler makes it something that she does not only out of necessity, but also for pleasure.

**Suzette’s Reading-related Expectations for Herself and Tyler**

Suzette expects Tyler to read more for comprehension and develop analytical skills through various materials presented to him. Understanding that her guidance is necessary for Tyler’s development, Suzette plans to allow Tyler to explore and develop reading skills. She hopes that he will one day become independent in acquiring skills needed to develop as a person and a successful reader.

**Analysis of Group 1 Educators (E)**

**Tonya and Ellie and Their Perceptions of Their Children**

Tonya and Ellie have many similarities in their perception of their children, their professional and personal goals, and responsibilities. Tonya and Ellie describe what they perceive to be positive and negative attributes when asked to detail their perceptions of their own child. The description of their children emphasized observable characteristics that the children exhibit. Ellie describes Brilie as a happy, intelligent child who has overcome the obstacle of being a “fussy baby” to become a typical toddler. Tonya describes Blake as a strong-willed child, denoting her ability to shape this into a positive characteristic.

Evident is their shared profession and rearing of a preschool child in what they perceive as a literacy-rich environment. Both are seasoned educators, working with “at risk” children with an expressed theme of personal and professional responsibilities to promote literacy. With similar educational backgrounds the educator participants have earned bachelor’s degrees in
early childhood education and taught more than 3 years. The literacy training hours received represents a commonality of time invested in continuing education hours, contributing to their promoting reading and reading-related skills.

As mothers their familial responsibilities are similar, with the two educator participants being the primary caregivers for their children and responsible for all household duties. Considering their personal and professional responsibilities, time constraints require Tonya and Ellie to “sacrifice” both physically and emotionally. As educators both women are motivated by their students’ struggles to make the necessary sacrifices to aid their children in becoming successful readers.

Between-group differences in Group 1 remain limited and are isolated to non-influential factors such as their child’s age and gender. Characteristics unrelated to the exploration of the phenomena are not discussed but may present several differences between the participants and their perceptions of their children.

Tonya and Ellie’s Views of Reading

Tonya and Ellie describe constantly modified views of reading. As children reared in drastically different homes both women detail early views of reading different from the views currently held. In contrast to Ellie’s view Tonya expresses the belief that not every child can be a successful reader. Tonya teaches reading as an individual activity, isolated from other subject matter. Ellie and Tonya, with their vastly different views on this fundamental aspect, have many commonalities. Both view reading as the foundation for all subjects and express that as educators it is their responsibility to teach their students to read. While both women encourage a homeschool connection, sharing the responsibility for their students’ literacy development with
parents, they acknowledge the need to teach parents how to actively participate in their child’s education.

Aware of their criticism of parents, both Tonya and Ellie, while currently making sacrifices to promote literacy in their home, believe a majority of their time and attention is focused on their students. As their own children mature both participants acknowledge that they will require additional assistance. Working daily with students with reading difficulties the educator participants acknowledge that their home practices are influenced by what they experience at school. There is also an expressed commonality in employing childcare that partners in educating their children.

**Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read**

Ellie and Tonya promote reading comfort by assisting children with personal competence and numerous opportunities to practice and build on their existing skills. Both participants acknowledge that their additional training contributes to their ability to personalize their students’ and their own children’s reading acquisition. Tonya details many research-based activities to enhance understandability and promote reading comfort. Ellie encourages the use of student-generated materials to promote comfort and enhance the connection between reading and writing. Consistent is the belief that reading comfort contributes to a child is literacy development.

Tonya and Ellie share fundamental views on promoting a positive reading environment. Describing alternative methods to immersing children in print rich environments both value piquing children’s interest and modeling the reading process to promote positive reading environments. There is group consensus that the desire to read can be increased through the use
of various materials of interest to the child. The participants described their views of a positive reading environment in which the personal desire to read exists versus an obligation.

*Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading*

Ellie and Tonya discuss time management as their greatest personal struggle associated with the emergent literacy. Ellie has requested the assistance of her students’ parents and her husband to deal with the personal demand. Presenting vastly different opinions of promoting literacy with students, Tonya expresses personal enjoyment in promoting literacy with her son and students. While Ellie enjoys the reading process with her daughter she expresses frustration and agitation in the lack of parental support in promoting reading with her students.

*Reading-related Expectations*

Tonya and Ellie express drastic differences in their expectations for themselves and their children related to reading. Tonya believes that she will need to spend more time in the future with Blake to promote reading comfort, and Ellie believes that Brilie will want and require fewer shared literacy experiences. Ellie acknowledges that she will continually be invested in Brilie’s education, specifically reading.

*Analysis of Group 2 Non-educators (NE)*

*Aigne and Suzette and Their Perceptions of Their Children*

Aigne and Suzette are full-time working mothers of 4-year-olds. Neither woman is professionally trained as an educator. These 2 participants represent vastly different spectrums of non-educator mothers. Aigne entered the workforce after completing 12 hours toward a
bachelor’s degree with no immediate plan to return to college, while Suzette recently completed her first semester as a doctoral student. The two women vary in the types of communities in which they reside and the types of daycare program their children attend. Suzette and Aigne also rear their children using varied resources in their family and communities.

Suzette enrolled Tyler in an extended day daycare while she works 50 plus hours a week. Two nights a week are also spent with his grandparents while Suzette attends night classes. Suzette describes her son as an independent child, able to tend to many of his daily needs. She attributes his intelligence to reading at an early age. At three years old he can read simple sentences, recipes, signs, and poems.

Aigne’s 4-year-old daughter is also able to read simple sentences. Anike uses reading as a form of entertainment. As the only child of a full-time working mother, Anike is described by her mother as a child who craves social attention. Geographically distant from extended family, Aigne attempts to balance the rearing of her child while trying to advance professionally. She acknowledges that Anike is often left “up to her own devices… and is quite adept at entertaining herself.” While Suzette and Aigne represent two very diverse mothers not professionally trained as educators, they express many similarities in their views of reading.

_Aigne and Suzette’s Views of Reading_

In describing their views of reading, both Aigne and Suzette believe it to be a source for gaining new information. Viewing reading as essential for personal success both mothers want their children’s reading experiences to be pleasurable. Aigne describes her personal joy of reading as a gift she can share with others, and she views reading as entertainment and relaxation. Aigne suggests that reading teaches patience that cannot be taught watching
television or playing video games. A book cannot be read in a single sitting; therefore, the reader must be willing to delay gratification until the book is complete. Aigne’s view of reading has remained consistent over time while Suzette reports that her view of reading continues to change.

As the purpose of reading changes Suzette modifies her view of reading. As a doctoral student Suzette reads for information. With limited leisure time, she acknowledges that reading for pleasure is a luxury she cannot afford. Suzette views reading as necessary for academic freedom and a precursor for what she describes as financial freedom. She views her educational attainment as a means of “carving out a place for my family in a better socioeconomic group, a group in which I do not have to struggle to pay my bills, or Tyler’s private school tuition.”

Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read

Aigne and Suzette detail many ways they promote reading comfort with their children. Both women stress the importance of children enjoying reading and thus wanting to participate in frequent reading and reading-related activities. As a student, Suzette’s son Tyler is privy to his mother’s daily study session, including reading. Aigne’s daughter Anike is also a witness to and participant in daily leisure reading and reading-related activities.

While both acknowledge that practice improves reading comfort, their reading approaches vary. Suzette utilized environmental print to expose Tyler to numbers and letters at age 2. She believes by allowing Tyler to develop his own purpose for reading he will develop reading comfort. Aigne provides Anike with numerous sources of reading and writing material, with the belief that by strengthening the reading and writing connection Anike will gain comfort in both. Through immersion Suzette and Aigne strive to increase their child’s desire and opportunities to improve their literacy.
Suzette and Aigne view a positive reading environment as providing a variety of resources of interest to the child, and they felt that an advanced reader can model reading and promote positive reading experiences. Suzette describes promoting a positive reading environment by “bringing books to life.” She emphasizes the benefits of hands-on experiences and making real-world connections to print materials. She brings real-world connections to the things Tyler reads, often using community resources such as local libraries, museums, and parent groups.

Aigne, who encourages the connection between reading and writing, provides Anike’s hands-on experiences at local grocery stores and shops. After making a grocery list with her mom Anike assists with grocery shopping, reading the list, and locating the items in the store. Aigne verbally praises Anike when she makes correct selections and uses mistakes as teachable moments. With limited resources Aigne believes parental approval is her best way to promote a positive reading environment and increase Anike’s desire to read. Anike “likes telling me [Aigne] about things she reads because she knows that I am impressed by that.”

Personal Demands and Emotions Associated With Promoting Reading

Both Aigne and Suzette believe that finding the time to read with their children is their greatest personal demand. The lack of time has shaped the way in which each woman provides reading and reading-related activities with their children. Aigne’s time constraints have led to many of the emotions she encountered in promoting reading. Describing feelings of anger, panic, and frustration, Aigne details feeling the school had not fulfilled its responsibility. “I was angry at the teachers, angry at the school and angry at HER for not learning. I was also angry at myself for not being able to teach her myself.”
Frustration grew when Aigne’s personal joy of reading was not enough to teach Anike to read. “Throwing money at the problem” only increased her frustration further as Anike’s personal library grew and her ability to read did not. Panic set in when Aigne began “thinking that she [Anike] was going to be illiterate in a house full of books!!” Emotionally drained, Suzette reports the need to prioritize an already full schedule. Working to promote her son’s reading, Suzette finds, helps her plan other areas of her life. “I try to plan everything I can around Tyler; I cannot plan work or school but everything else is on his time.”

Reading-related Expectations

Both women describe future expectations for their children that will promote independence and self-sufficiency through reading. Independence in reading requires Tyler and Anike to develop both their purposes and desires to read. They describe self-sufficiency as their child’s ability to continually read and comprehend without assistance. Suzette hopes Tyler will develop analytical skills and improve reading comprehension. Aigne’s expectations of Anike include the inclusion of more challenging reading and “not so obvious reading activities.” Aigne hopes to develop the necessary patience to assist Anike in her journey to become a successful reader.

Comparing and Contrasting Groups 1(E) & 2(NE)

The Participants and Their Perceptions of Their Children

What parents know about children's development is positively related to their skills in designing a supportive learning environment and to their ability to interact in ways that stimulate development (Himelstein, Graham & Weiner, 1991). The 4 women participating in this study
have many similarities and differences. As working mothers they have several common threads, including the need to balance professional and familial responsibilities. They represent the diversity of women comprising the workforce today. They are diverse in age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. With a mean age of 32 this sample population represents five ethnic groups; African American, Asian American, Latin American, Pacific Islander, and White. They represent a vast array of educational attainment, ranging from one semester of college work to one semester of doctoral work. Professions represented include two educators, an abstractor, and an office administrator.

While each participant has an independent perception of her child the descriptions follow similar patterns. Both groups described their child’s observable personality traits with specific mention of their perception of the described trait. In Group 1, the educators described both the positive and negative character traits of their children, while Group 2, the non-educators, described either a positive or a negative. The practice of labeling problem behavior may be disabling, even self-fulfilling. Such labeling may be very common in family settings (Covell & Abramovitch, 1987; Harter, 1982; Phillips, 1987). Powell (1991) concluded that children's intellectual performance is better when mothers hold accurate judgments about their child's intellectual abilities. Parents’ knowledge of difficult developmental phases can help them provide for their children's needs while preventing abuse.

Participants’ Views of Reading

Parents' attitudes toward reading influence their children's positive attitudes toward reading. Children whose parents received a good education were interested in books and had many books at home (Morrow, 1983). There is a between-group consensus viewing reading as a
necessary component to academic success. Research findings indicate that when teachers come to believe that children do not have the ability to read because of one or more failures on tests, children may doubt their ability in reading and may never succeed in reading (Murphy, Shannon, Johnston, & Hansen, 1998). Thus, educator participant Tonya’s expressed belief that not every child can be a successful reader likely adversely affects her attempts to promote student success. Each participant highly values reading and shares these views with their children through conversations, activities, practices, and attitudes.

Promoting a Positive Reading Environment and Increasing the Desire to Read

Both groups describe providing their children numerous opportunities to participate in developmentally appropriate reading activities. Each reports modeling reading and reading-related activities for their child. According to Aigne (NE) “If she sees that I enjoy reading she is more likely to read.” She describes purchasing materials in an attempt to promote Anike’s reading. Suzette (NE), like the educators, describes the use of various activities, community resources, and a limited number of purchased materials. “Tyler’s personal library is constantly changing; if the library has it, then he can read it. If there is a book he just can’t live without I will buy it for him, but he really doesn’t ask me to do that too often.” Using many inexpensive methods these two groups describe ways to “bring books to life.” Activities that help children build their vocabulary and comprehension will benefit their overall proficiency and comfort level with reading. A child’s attitude toward reading influences his/her desire to read. If they do not like reading or think reading is boring, children’s negative attitudes toward reading will hinder their reading improvement. In an effort to maintain their child’s interest, the participants of both groups provide various types of reading-related activities and material. While differences of
approach in promoting reading are clear cut, they are not isolated to a particular group. Distinctions are made instead based on educational attainment.

With a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, Suzette (NE), Tonya(E), and Ellie (E) represent the vast majority of “parents who have high levels of education.” Carr and Borkowski’s (1989) indicated that parents who understand that their child’s development are better able to create an appropriate environment for their child's growth and learning. They are also more likely to avoid the mistake of over concentrating on academic skills by neglecting other important developing skills. They know that a well-rounded development is best for their child's future success.

*Personal Demands and Emotions Associated with Promoting Reading*

Between-group comparison findings indicate that the lack of time is the greatest personal demand faced by both educators and non-educators in promoting reading. The non-educator group also described a lack of effective skills for teaching reading as a major obstacle. Tonya (E) and Suzette (NE) report personal satisfaction in promoting their children’s reading. Aigne(NE) and Ellie(E) both express frustration in depending on others to assist in the reading development of children for whom they feel personally responsible. Ellie’s frustration is compounded with agitation, because her personal pleas for home literacy opportunities are ignored. Aigne, a non-educator participant, expresses anger as her strongest emotion in dealing with promoting Anike’s reading. Her inability to teach her child to read forced Aigne to accept her limitations. The anger, frustration, and agitation described by Aigne and Ellie are common emotions associated with a loss of control and sources of stress.

The participants detail coping strategies to assist in their ability to continually meet the demands of promoting reading. Taking personal time to enjoy reading was the most widely used
coping strategies. Physical activities such as running or walking and sharing the responsibility with another able person also helped in the continuation of reading promotion. Although sharing the responsibility of promoting reading was described by 2 participants as a means of dealing with stress, the remaining 2 identified it as a source of stress.

Reading-related Expectations

"It is clear that high achieving children tend to come from families which have high expectations for them, and who consequently are likely to 'set standards' and to make greater demands at an earlier age" (Boocock, 1972, p. 60). While each participant has reading related expectations for her child, the non-educator group details expectations of independence. Group 2 (NE) parents expect their children to continually develop their literacy skills with little or no assistance or guidance from their parent.

Group 1 (E) participants present different approaches to meeting their expectations for their child’s reading development. Tonya believes she will need to spend additional time with Blake to enhance his future reading development. Ellie believes that Brilie will desire less assistance from her yet notes she will continually be involved in Brilie’s education. As parents invested in the education of their children, the sample population acknowledges that children’s literacy development is a continual life-long process that requires some degree of assistance from a more knowledgeable person.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Parental experiences in promoting reading and reading-related skills receive little attention in the development of children’s literacy. This study examined the factors that contribute to a mother’s experience promoting literacy with her own preschool child: her perceptions of her child, personal views of reading, increasing the desire to read, demands and emotions and reading-related expectations for self and child.

Mothers Use Different Strategies to Encourage Their Children to Read

Mothers in this study employed a variety of strategies to motivate their children to read. Each participant detailed daily reading activities with their child as the single most important strategy used to encourage reading. The richer home literacy environments have reading activities including the following: (a) encouraging the focusing on the meaning of the text, (b) using pre reading strategies (predicting and previewing), (c) discussing content, and (d) developmentally appropriate materials and practices.

The participants described providing their children with a variety of reading materials including magazines, recipes, books of various levels and genres and student-generated materials. Modeling daily reading activities for their children and students, these parents and teachers believe, as the research confirms, that witnessing others enjoyment of reading helps children view reading as a pleasurable activity.
Every Mother Can Provide Educational Opportunities

Mothers provide educational opportunities for their children in every decision they make, from the childcare selected books purchased or selected from the library to the types of activities to which children are exposed. The mothers in this study provide educational opportunities using both traditional and non-traditional reading resources. Participants with higher levels of education utilized a variety of free and low-cost community resources. They detailed providing educational opportunities using household activities, grocery store, and local shop items. Their descriptions provide insight into daily activities that all parents can utilize regardless of socioeconomic status. The lower educated parent described the use of costly resources in lieu of personal experience and patience deemed necessary for her child’s reading development. McQuillan (1998) insisted that teaching reading methods was less important than children's access to books.

The Home Literacy Environment of Educators and Non-educators

Findings indicate that similarities exist in “rich” literacy environments of educators and non-educators. Each participant’s home environment provides a diverse selection of books on various levels, traditional and non-traditional reading and writing materials, and read-aloud opportunities. Three of the four participants, Tonya, Ellie and Suzette: (a) have the recommended 25 or more books present in the home, (b) express a desire for their child’s academic and personal success, and the belief that success is possible, (c) strive to meet the personal demands necessary to promote reading and reading related activities, (d) provide their child with a variety of interesting materials on various reading levels, (e) model their personal value of reading for their children, (f) spend quality time promoting their home literacy environment, (g) view
reading as fundamental for continual academic success, and (h) believe reading comfort is a necessary component in promoting a positive reading environment and increasing the desire to read.

Do Those Professionally Trained as Educators Provide “Richer” Home Environments Than Those in Other Professions?

Influenced by Suzette, a non-educator, exceeding the criteria of a rich home environment, the researcher cannot conclude that educators provide “richer” home environments as a result of their profession. Participants with similar educational background were found to have similar home environments, regardless of profession. While the between-group similarities are numerous, noticeable differences exist in the parental approach to promoting reading and reading-related skills. The researcher concludes that between-group differences do not exist on the selection criteria of educator or non-educator.

Educational attainment was found to be an unrealized influence on the home literacy environment. A more highly educated participant group, comprised of Tonya, Ellie and Suzette, was found to be similar in their home environments. The more highly educated participants expressed an understanding of the relationship between a child’s physical, emotional, and cognitive development. This understanding contributes to their ability to establish developmentally appropriate reading expectations for their children.

Increasing Early Literacy Skills

The techniques used by the study’s participants are as varied as the children themselves. To increase literacy skills the participants described providing numerous opportunities for children to practice and enhance new skills. These varied activities focus on children’s
development in the following areas: (a) symbolic development, (b) expressive language, (c) receptive language, (d) written language, and (e) knowledge of print and books. Activities that prepare young children for learning to read emphasize counting, number concepts, letter names, shapes, and sounds, phonological and phonemic awareness, models of adult interest in literacy, and independent and cooperative literacy activities (Snow et al., 1998).

Supporting Early Literacy Development

A positive correlation exists between a child’s early experience in reading and his/her attitude toward reading. A positive attitude toward reading increases a child’s desire to read. McQuillan (1998) concluded, the amount and quality of students' access to reading materials is highly related to the amount of reading they engage in and the amount of reading is the most important determinant of reading achievement. Supporting literacy in the home requires a variety of high- interest reading and writing materials. This includes magazines, newspapers, books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, pencils, color pencils, paper, chalk, and other reference materials of interests to the child.

Access to books alone, as Aigne found, is not enough to promote a child’s emergent literacy; a more knowledgeable person must facilitate this development. The home literacy environments of the more highly educated group had a caregiver who spends time facilitating the child’s literacy development with daily reading opportunities. During these interactions mothers read to their children, listened to their children read, or allowed their children to view them reading. These activities help children establish a positive view of reading. Aigne provides Anike with various reading materials and encourages reading, yet few quality reading interactions are a part of their daily routine.
What Are Quality Interactions?

A home environment that promotes literacy through quality interactions consists of more than various books and writing supplies and a person to facilitate. The quality of the interactions a child has impacts his/her acquisition of the skills necessary for reading. Quality interaction is direct involvement with individuals that develops cognition, language and self-esteem, and it transfers values (Cummins & Krashen, 1993). These interactions give children the opportunity to gain feedback by asking questions, exploring ideas, and sharing feelings and emotions. The information obtained during quality interactions with others provides children with the foundation for literacy development. A quality interaction influences a child’s attitude toward reading, provides the child with personal reading experiences, increases his/her confidence in reading, and promotes a positive reading environment.

Implications for Further Research

This body of research concludes that no relationship exists between a parent’s profession and his/her experiences in promoting the reading and reading-related skills with their preschool children. There is little evidence that mothers professionally trained to promote literacy provide a “richer” home environment than mothers in other professions. Each home environment explored in this study is classified as rich; however, the more highly educated group met and exceeded the U.S. Department of Educations five criteria. This study confirms findings from Donoghue’s (2001) study describing a seven-stage approach to how students become literate.

The children in this study progressed through the stages as described by first having an emotional interaction with the person reading to them. At 3 and 4 years of age the participants have progressed to the second stage of imitating reading and writing behaviors modeled by their
mothers. The mothers reported that their children view reading and writing as social activities, and many have begun to build on these pre-kindergarten skills through direct instruction. Four-year-olds Anike, Tyler, and Blake are in vastly different stages of their reading development and confirm that everyone does not progress through the stages of reading development at the same age or rate.

Ellie’s discussion of incorporating fiction in her child’s reading is supported by research noting that children gain knowledge about structures in both fiction and nonfiction text. She described waiting until her daughter was developmentally ready to introduce fiction text, showing that as children age, their ability to decipher between fairy tales and factual information improves, helping them make better sense of what they read. The different approaches used by the study’s participants to obtain the predictors of reading success are supported by the International Reading Association’s finding that there is no one single method or specific combination of methods to teach children how to read.

Further research is needed to address the discrepancies between this and previous research findings attributing reading differences to socioeconomic status. These discrepancies may be attributable to the small sample size of the current study and the inclusion of participants all meeting the U.S. Department of Education’s criteria as rich home environments. Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) reported that reading is a common practice in middle-income families but less common in low-income families. In light of the current findings, additional research is needed to evaluate the influence of parental educational attainment on reading practices. Controlling for education instead of socioeconomic status, a reproduction of the Greenblat and Glezer (2000) study would examine the effects of parental educational attainment on age of first book exposure, literacy development and reading success. Further
research is suggested to corroborate this study’s finding that more highly educated mothers provide rich home environments with developmentally appropriate expectations based on their academic achievement, regardless of profession.

This study’s finding would be generalizable to a larger population by comparing participant groups not meeting the U.S. Department of Educations criteria of a rich home literacy environment to richer home environments, using quantitative research. These results would warrant implications of the differences between the two home environments and suggestions to improve homes not classified as rich. The use of a longitudinal study observing the home environments before the child enters school and continuing until he/she reaches third grade allows a researcher to explore the experiences of mothers with successful readers defined by traditional measures of academic performance.

The difficulties experienced by struggling readers will continue to be a major concern to parents and educators. The exploration of rich home environments that produce successful readers provides insight into educational theories in action. The ability to provide a rich home environment is not isolated to educators. According to this study’s findings, increasing a mother’s education it is possible to increase her child’s reading and reading-related skills.
APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM
Consent Form

I am aware that the present study involves research to investigate the experiences of an elementary school teacher in promoting the reading skill in her own preschool child. Through the use of an interview format, I will be asked to describe my experiences in as much detail as possible. I understand that the present study is being completed by Tamecca Fitzpatrick as a requirement for the pursuing an Ed.D in Early Childhood Education at the University of North Texas. I also understand that Tamecca Fitzpatrick is working under the supervision of Dr. Linda Schertz of the Department of Development, Family Studies and Early Childhood Education at the University of North Texas.

I agree to participate in the study and I am willing to share my experiences with Tamecca Fitzpatrick. I am aware that my participation in the study will involve three interviews and a final meeting. The first of these interviews, which will be approximately 40 to 60 minutes in length, will be tape recorded and then transcribed for later analysis. A second interview of approximately 30 to 60 minutes will involve discussing Tamecca Fitzpatrick’s understanding of my experiences. During the third meeting, Tamecca Fitzpatrick will present the findings of the research to me. I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I choose to withdraw from the study, any information about me and any data that I have provided will be destroyed. I have been informed that the risk associated with participating in this study are minimal and I am aware that if I have questions about any aspect of the study or that in the event of a research-related injury, I can contact Dr. Linda Schertz at (940) 565-2956. If I should have any questions about my rights as a research participant, I can contact the UNT IRB board for the Protection of Human Research Participants at (940) 565-3940. I understand that The University of North Texas does not have funds budgeted to compensate for any injury, damages, or other expenses that I might incur as a result of participating in this study.

I am aware that only Tamecca Fitzpatrick will know my identity, and that of any individuals, whom I discuss. I am also aware that the information collected during this study will be kept confidential within the limits allowed by law. When transcribing the taped interview Tamecca Fitzpatrick will use pseudonyms (i.e., false names) for my name and for the names of any individuals who I discuss. These pseudonyms will also be used in preparing a written report of the study. Any details in the interview recording that might identify me or any individuals whom I discuss will also be altered during the transcription process. Tamecca Fitzpatrick will be the only individual with access to the tape-recorded interview and the interview transcript, and these will be stored in a secure place. I understand that when Tamecca Fitzpatrick has completed the study, she will discuss the research findings with me and provide me with a written report of the findings. I also understand that the data collected from me during this study may be used by Tamecca Fitzpatrick for other research purposes or for developing a paper for presentation or publication.

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Research Participant    Date

______________________________
Printed Name

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Researcher     Date

______________________________
Printed Name
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

Dear (Participant),

By having the opportunity to interview you, I hope to learn more about your experiences as an elementary school teacher in promoting the reading and reading related skills with your own preschool child. My interest in exploring this topic stems from my own experiences as an educator and my desire to understand how our profession influences our home learning environments.

Your participation in this study will involve three interviews with me. The first interview, which we are doing today, gives us the opportunity to become better acquainted and learn more about each other’s backgrounds. It also allows me to explain the nature of my research and my reasons for selecting you, and to answer any questions that you might have.

Before our second interview takes place, I would like you to take some time to think about your experiences as they relate to the topic that we are exploring. Think about the experiences that you have had with your child. Some of your experiences may stand out more in your mind than others. For each of these experiences, think about the thoughts, feelings, and any bodily sensations that you experienced at that time. I would also like you to reflect on the circumstances and the physical setting for each of these experiences. As you think about your experiences from time to time, you may want to write down any important thoughts or details so that you can refer to them during our next interview.

During our second interview, I will ask you a number of questions that you can respond to in whatever way you feel is most appropriate. Please describe your experiences in as much detail as possible. It is important that you describe your actual experiences, just as they happened for you. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers: I want to learn about your experiences, whatever they may be for you. Essentially, what I am hoping for from you is complete honesty.

During our third interview, we will examine my understanding of your experiences. More specifically, after I have completed analyzing the data from our second interview, you will have an opportunity to evaluate how accurately and complete my analysis has captured your experiences.

After I have completed the study, I will share my findings with you and provide you with a written report of these findings. I also want to mention again that your participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity will be kept confidential at all times and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide that you no longer wish to participate in the study, all information about you will be destroyed. If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss anything else with me, please do not hesitate to call me at xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Tamecca Fitzpatrick
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Interview Guide: What are the experiences of an elementary school teacher in promoting the reading and reading related skills in her own preschool child?

A. _________ (the child)
I would like to start by having you think about______.
1. Please describe for me what ______is like as a child.

B. Reading
Now I would like to have you think about what reading means to you.
2. Please tell me how do you view reading?
   Please tell me about any changes that have occurred over time in your view of reading.

C. Reading with grade 1 students
Now I would like to shift our focus and explore any reading strategies you use with your first grade students.
3. Please tell me about any ways that you try to promote reading related skills with your first grade students.
4. Please describe any ways that you try to motivate your students to read.

D. Reading with_______
Now I would like you to think about reading with_______.
5. Could you please describe your experiences promoting reading with ________?
   Please describe any changes that have occurred over time in your approach to ____’s reading development.
6. Please tell me about any ways that you have tried to motivate_______ to read.
7. Please tell me about any difficulties experienced in working to promote ____’s reading.
   Please describe any demands working with _______reading has placed on you.
8. Please describe for me any ways you have tried to deal with these difficulties.

E. Personal demands and coping
Now I would like to shift our focus and explore any effects that promoting reading with ____has had on you personally.
9. Please describe any effects that promoting ____’s reading has had on you emotionally.
    Please describe any effects it has had on your view of reading.
10. Please describe any effects that promoting ____’s reading has had on you professionally.
    Please describe any changes that have occurred over time in your practices in the classroom.
11. Please describe any physical effects promoting reading in ______ has had on you.
12. In what ways, if any have you been affected by promoting _______’s reading development?
    Please describe any ways in which you have tried to deal with these effects (if negatively affected)

F. Goals
Please take a moment to think about any reading related goals you might have for ___.

13. Please describe any reading goals that you have for _____ in the future.
14. Please describe any personal goals you have for promoting reading with ____ in the future.

G. Other information
Now I would like you to think about your experience as a mother promoting reading in a preschool child

15. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know?
APPENDIX D

HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT CHECKLISTS
Tonya and Blake’s Home Literacy Environment Checklist

True/False

What the child has…
The child has at least one alphabet book. True
The child has magnetized alphabet to play with. True
The child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has paper readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing. True
The child has at least one rhyme book. True
The child has more than one rhyme book. True
The child has at least 10 picture books. True
The child has at least 20 picture books. True
The child has at least 50 picture books. True
The child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer. True
The child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet True

What the mother does…
Reads a picture book with their child at least once a week. True
Reads a picture book with their child at least four times a week. True
Teaches new words to their child at least once a week. True
Teaches a new word to their child nearly every day. True
Has detailed and informative conversation with their child at least once a week. True
Has detailed and informative conversations with their child nearly every day. True
Helps the child learn nursery rhymes. True
Encourages their child to tell them what he or she wants using complete sentences. True
Takes the child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months. True

What the child sees the mother doing…
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or newspapers at least once a week. True
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or the newspaper nearly every day. True

Mother view of reading…
Mother perceives herself as a good reader. True
Mother perceives herself to have a large vocabulary. True
Mother began reading picture books with her child before he or she was a year old. True
Mother enjoys reading picture books with her child. True
Mother expects that their child will work to his or her potential in school. True

Now or in the past, the mother encourages or helps her child…
Mother encourages the child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes. True
Mother encourages the child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading. True
Mother helps the child learn to sing or say the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write letters of the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write his or her name. True
Mother helps the child learn to write other people’s names. True
Mother helps the child learn how to rhyme. True
Mother helps the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make. True
## Ellie and Brilie’s Home Literacy Environment Checklist

### What the child has…
- The child has at least one alphabet book. **True**
- The child has magnetized alphabet to play with. **True**
- The child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing. **True**
- The child has paper readily available for writing and drawing. **True**
- The child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing. **True**
- The child has at least one rhyme book. **True**
- The child has more than one rhyme book. **True**
- The child has at least 10 picture books. **True**
- The child has at least 20 picture books. **True**
- The child has at least 50 picture books. **True**
- The child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer. **True**
- The child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet **True**

### What the mother does …
- Reads a picture book with their child at least once a week. **True**
- Reads a picture book with their child at least four times a week. **True**
- Teaches new words to their child at least once a week. **True**
- Teaches a new word to their child nearly every day. **True**
- Has detailed and informative conversation with their child at least once a week. **True**
- Has detailed and informative conversations with their child nearly every day. **True**
- Helps the child learn nursery rhymes. **True**
- Encourages their child to tell them what he or she wants using complete sentences. **True**
- Takes the child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months. **True**

### What the child sees the mother doing…
- The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or newspapers at least once a week. **True**
- The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or the newspaper nearly every day. **True**

### Mother view of reading…
- Mother perceives herself as a good reader. **True**
- Mother perceives herself to have a large vocabulary. **True**
- Mother began reading picture books with her child before he or she was a year old. **True**
- Mother enjoys reading picture books with her child. **True**
- Mother expects that their child will work to his or her potential in school. **True**

### Now or in the past, the mother encourages or helps her child…
- Mother encourages the child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes. **True**
- Mother encourages the child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn to sing or say the alphabet. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn to write letters of the alphabet. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn to write his or her name. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn to write other people’s names. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn how to rhyme. **True**
- Mother helps the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make. **True**
Aigne and Anike’s Home Literacy Environment Checklist

What the child has…
The child has at least one alphabet book. True
The child has magnetized alphabet to play with. False
The child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has paper readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing. True
The child has at least one rhyme book. True
The child has more than one rhyme book. True
The child has at least 10 picture books. True
The child has at least 20 picture books. True
The child has at least 50 picture books. False
The child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer. False
The child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet True

What the mother does…
Reads a picture book with their child at least once a week. True
Reads a picture book with their child at least four times a week. False
Teaches new words to their child at least once a week. True
Teaches a new word to their child nearly every day. False
Has detailed and informative conversation with their child at least once a week. True
Has detailed and informative conversations with their child nearly every day. False
Helps the child learn nursery rhymes. True
Encourages their child to tell them what he or she wants using complete sentences. True
Takes the child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months. True

What the child sees the mother doing…
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or newspapers at least once a week. True
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or the newspaper nearly every day. True

Mother view of reading…
Mother perceives herself as a good reader. True
Mother perceives herself to have a large vocabulary. True
Mother began reading picture books with her child before he or she was a year old. False
Mother enjoys reading picture books with her child. False
Mother expects that their child will work to his or her potential in school. True

Now or in the past, the mother encourages or helps her child…
Mother encourages the child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes. False
Mother encourages the child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading. False
Mother helps the child learn to sing or say the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write letters of the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write his or her name. True
Mother helps the child learn to write other people’s names. False
Mother helps the child learn how to rhyme. True
Mother helps the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make. True
APPENDIX G

SUZETTE AND TYLER’S HOME LITERACY EVIRONMENT
Suzette and Tyler’s Home Literacy Environment Checklist

True/False

What the child has…
The child has at least one alphabet book. True
The child has magnetized alphabet to play with. True
The child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has paper readily available for writing and drawing. True
The child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing. True
The child has at least one rhyme book. True
The child has more than one rhyme book. True
The child has at least 10 picture books. True
The child has at least 20 picture books. True
The child has at least 50 picture books. True
The child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer. True
The child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet True

What the mother does …
Reads a picture book with their child at least once a week. True
Reads a picture book with their child at least four times a week. True
Teaches new words to their child at least once a week. True
Teaches a new word to their child nearly every day. True
Has detailed and informative conversation with their child at least once a week. True
Has detailed and informative conversations with their child nearly every day. False
Helps the child learn nursery rhymes. True
Encourages their child to tell them what he or she wants using complete sentences. True
Takes the child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months. True

What the child sees the mother doing…
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or newspapers at least once a week. True
The child sees the mother reading books, magazines or the newspaper nearly every day. True

Mother view of reading…
Mother perceives herself as a good reader. False
Mother perceives herself to have a large vocabulary. True
Mother began reading picture books with her child before he or she was a year old. True
Mother enjoys reading picture books with her child. True
Mother expects that their child will work to his or her potential in school. True

Now or in the past, the mother encourages or helps her child…
Mother encourages the child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes. True
Mother encourages the child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and
beginning reading. True
Mother helps the child learn to sing or say the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write letters of the alphabet. True
Mother helps the child learn to write his or her name. True
Mother helps the child learn to write other people’s names. True
Mother helps the child learn how to rhyme. True
Mother helps the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make. True
APPENDIX H

HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST RESULTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What the child has…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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</tr>
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<td>What the mother does …</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

TRANSCRIPT MASTER CODES
Child has a strong personality
Strives to positively shape child’s behavior
Physical size can lean to inappropriate advanced developmental expectations
Reading is highly valued
Reading is important for daily living
Understanding of reading has changed
Reading difficulties require extra effort
Comprehension is critical for reading
Defines reading
Multiple pre-reading strategies are used
Acknowledges varying rates of acquisition
Modifies strategies to maintain student interest
Provides opportunities to practice
Recall is a technique for dealing with difficulties
Strategies are adapted to meet diverse learning needs
Aims to motivate intrinsically
Extrinsically rewards students for personal progress
Reading must be self motivated, academic progress indicator of skills
Motivates students with personal challenges
Uses several strategies to establish a reading background
School motivated personal reading background
Feels strongly about child’s reading development
Student difficulties increase desire for their child’s reading success
Desires child be a self motivated successful reader
Emotions make it difficult to teach own child to read
Print rich environment used to promote reading
Modeling pre-reading skills to promotes reading
Quality time used to motivate reading
Happy about emerging skills
Angry about emerging skills
Discontinued strategies that did not work
Promotes a positive association with reading
Fear of perceived reading difficulties
Modified reading as child progressed
Professional life influences experiences with child
Puts personal needs aside for child’s benefit
Promoting reading is her parental duty
A clear mind and full attention is necessary for reading with child
Physical exercise coping strategy for meeting demands
Positive emotions associated with child’s reading development
Negative emotions associated with child’s reading development
Realizes personal limitation of teaching reading
Not seeking immediate results with child’s reading
Professional training beneficial to child’s progress
Books used to increase students knowledge base
Promoting child’s reading is time consuming
Hopes efforts will have lasting affects
Goal to provide rich reading background
Does not expect success in everything
Strong sense of responsibility to child and students
Increased attention and effort to continue child’s progress
Expressed expectation for child’s future
Aware of areas of needed improvement
Personally responsible for developing and enhancing reading
Modifying view of reading
Reading is highly valued
Comprehension is critical for reading
Emphasizes reading for pleasure
Reading is a passport to traveling with ones mind
Modeling reading behaviors is vital for teachers and parents
Provides opportunities to practice
Misses opportunities for personal leisure reading
Varies genres of reading materials to peak and maintain interest
Uses several strategies to establish a reading background
Suggests daily activities for students parents
Uses enjoyable and interesting activities to motivate reading
Strives to scaffold pre-existing literacy skills
View childcare/school as a partner in literacy development
Expressed belief that her attitude influences child’s reading practices

Expressed belief that her attitude influences student and parents reading practices

Attempts to make real world connections to what is read

Time constraints influence her home literacy practices

Enlists the assistance of others to promote the home literacy environment

Views shared reading activities as quality time

Quality time used to motivate daughters reading

Child’s enjoyment of books is personally rewarding

Expressed expectation for child’s future
REFERENCES


