

PARENTAL FACTORS WHICH  
INFLUENCE A CHILD'S  
PERFORMANCE IN READING

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to Department of Teacher Education,  
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Master of Science in Education

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	v
DEDICATION.....	vi
Chapter:	
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM.....	1
Purpose for the Study.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Assumptions.....	2
Limitations.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	3
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	5
Factors Within the Home Which Affect A Child's Reading Achievement.....	5
Factors Related to Parent Involvement with School Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement.....	11
III. PROCEDURE.....	14
Subjects.....	14
Setting.....	15
Data Collection.....	16
Construction of the Instrument.....	17
Administration of the Instrument.....	17
IV. RESULTS.....	19
Presentation of the Results.....	19
Discussion of the Results.....	26
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29

APPENDICES.....	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	37

## LIST OF TABLES

I.	Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's..... Reading Achievement - School A Results are expressed in percents.	20
II.	Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's..... Reading Achievement - School B Results are expressed in percents.	21
III.	Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's..... Reading Achievement - Schools A and B Combined Results are expressed in percents.	22
IV.	Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's ..... Reading Achievement - School A	23
V.	Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's..... Reading Achievement - School B	24
VI.	Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's..... Reading Achievement - Schools A and B Combined	25

## DEDICATIONS

I would like to express my love and thanks to my family for the endless hours spent away from them. Thanks to my husband, John, who spent many evenings slaving over a jar of spaghetti sauce on the stove or at McDonald's. For my daughter, Lauren, who understood, most of the time, that she would just have to ask Dad to help her with her homework. For my other daughter, Lindsey, who understood why I couldn't make it to all of her soccer games, though I was there in spirit. And to my son, Colin, who mostly didn't understand what was going on but knew that Mommy was using the computer so he couldn't.

Christine Hoell

I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to my husband, Dennis. His support and faith in me kept me going when I felt like giving up. I also want to thank Dorothy, my daughter, for not complaining too much when I was absent from her life.

Peggy Back

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

### Purpose for the Study

Schools today have been struggling with the issue of Why Student X Can't Read. As Chapter I reading teachers, the writers of this document are keenly aware of this problem. Students appear to be less prepared, less focused, and less motivated despite the fact that more money is spent on Chapter I, Headstart, Reading Recovery, and other remedial reading programs.

The writers of the proposal were motivated to find out what factors had the greatest effect on a child's reading achievement. The writers discovered that the most influential factor was the parent. Reynolds stated (1992):

*Parent Involvement is considered a critically important component in children's educational and cognitive development. Whether it is helping with homework or visiting school, it is widely believed that Parent Involvement at home, in school, and in the classroom, has a positive influence on academic achievement and school adjustment.*

Based on the authors' research and observations as Chapter I teachers, the authors determined their observations and research findings could be categorized into two areas which affect student reading achievement. The first category concerning parental roles as they affected student reading achievement included motivating a child and providing a stimulating home environment. (Wendelin and Danielson, 1988) The second category which affected a child's reading achievement in school was the extent of the parents'

involvement with the school. This in turn was affected by a parents' own academic experiences and the school's attitude toward encouraging the parents' involvement. (Silvern, 1985)

The writers' purpose for researching these effects on a child's achievement in school was to determine if the research and the authors' observations supported the view that parent involvement does influence a child's performance in reading. If parental involvement does affect a child's performance in reading, the authors could use the data to further support the Chapter I program's goals of increasing parent involvement. A stated goal of that program is to motivate parents to become more involved and supportive of their child's education. In order to accomplish this goal, the factors which could affect a child's reading performance were evaluated individually and in the following two categories: factors which occur within the home, and factors which involve interaction with the school itself.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to analyze what parental factors influence a child's performance in reading.

### **Assumptions**

In order to carry out this study these assumptions were made by the authors. First, the authors assumed that the parents answered the questionnaire and Likert scale honestly. Secondly, it was assumed that they returned the questionnaires and Likert scale in a timely fashion. Thirdly, the authors assumed that the questionnaire and Likert scale measured the



opinions and correctly identified the factors for which they were designed.

### **Limitations**

The authors discovered several limitations affecting this research into parent involvement. The first limitation was sample size since it was limited to the number of Chapter I students in the authors' programs. A second limitation was the accuracy of the responses made by parents on the questionnaires and a Likert scale used to determine attitudes toward school. Another limiting factor was the fact that all parents surveyed had children involved in Chapter I, a remedial reading program. Parents of average and above average reading students were not surveyed. The final limitation was that it was probable that there were contributing factors, other than the influence of parents, to a child's non-success in reading.

### **Definition of Terms**

Remedial Reading Program is a program designed to assist children who consistently perform below grade level in reading.

Chapter I is a federally funded remedial reading program located in qualifying schools based on free and reduced meal statistics and designed to meet the needs of lower income families in order to provide reading intervention.

Parent Involvement "refers to any interactions between a parent and child that may contribute to the child's development or to direct parent participation with a child's school

in the interest of the child" according to Reynolds, 1992 (p.442).

Socioeconomic Status (socioeconomic status) is the financial standing and economic background of an individual or family.

Parenting Style is the approach a parent takes toward discipline, praise, and interaction with their child.

Household Composition is the number of persons living in a household and their relationships to one another.

Parent Expectations are the goals that parents set for their children.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter the literature related to the effects of parental involvement on a child's reading achievement is presented. It is divided into two parts. They are the factors within the home which affect a child's reading achievement and the factors related to the parent's involvement with school which affect a child's reading achievement.

#### **Factors Within the Home Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement**

One factor within the home that affects a child's reading achievement is the expectations of the parent for their child's reading success. Expectations appear to be one function of the family structure. Family structure in the United States is constantly changing. It has been estimated that one half to one third of all children born after 1979 will spend time in a single parent household. (Bumpass and Rindfuss, 1979; Glick, 1979; as cited in the article by Thompson, Alexander and Entwisle; 1988). This fact has seemingly created a situation where parent's expectations for their children are determined by their status in life, and their status in life is determined, in many cases, by their family structure. Parental expectations for their child's success in reading are very important (Shields, Gordon, and Dupree, 1983). Parents are very aware of their own status in life, and their possibilities for advancement, both educationally and financially. These expectations for their own lives can be transferred to their expectations for their child's

success in school. Single parents may have greater time constraints, daily problems and frustrations and fewer resources upon which to depend (Thompson, Alexander and Entwisle, 1988). The goals and expectations these parents set for their children tend to reflect their own expectations about life, and be in a comfortable reachable range, a range which is one that can easily be obtained with minimal effort. Their moderate expectations can be seen in the behaviors of their children. Parents who are able to share child care with another involved adult may have more time for reviewing homework and reading with their child. The household arrangement influenced the parents' expectations and that in turn influenced performance in school. In a study conducted by Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle (1988) they found that single parent's expectations for reading were lower than the parents of other households. It is important that parents communicate their expectations for reading achievement to their children. Findings indicate that story reading with parents and early reading instruction contribute to the development of literacy (Crain-Thoreson and Dale, 1992). There is, however, a distinct difference between high expectations and high pressure. Parents must help students set realistic and short term goals.

Another factor within the home that affects a child's reading achievement is the style used by a parent to discipline, praise and interact with their child. A study by Loveday and Simmons (1988), showed that children's achievement test scores improved after several weeks of parent-child interaction in the home, involving shared reading and playing of reading games. The emphasis of this study was that what parents did with their children in terms of reading activities did not seem to matter as long as parents received instruction and support in how to work with their children on these reading activities. The involvement with their children made a difference in their child's reading achievement. Another study by Shields, Gordon and Dupree (1983) explored the possibility that despite race and socioeconomic status, significant family inputs exist for children who are

successful readers. Their accepted hypothesis stated that there are significant differences in parental practices reported by good and poor readers. Good readers reported receiving money, gifts, praise, outward displays of affection and extra privileges more than poor readers. This study also supported the idea that in the families of good readers the children shared responsibility in the home. The conclusion reached was that families do not have to be middle or upper class for their children to be good readers. Low income families can promote good reading when they use the same parenting style in the home that higher income families use. Parents are usually the most constant and continuous influence on their children (Wadsworth, 1986). In a study by Wadsworth parents of children who attended a preschool were shown to be less punitive, more affectionate, more stimulating and imaginative in dealing with children than parents who did not use the preschool. These children also scored much higher on verbal attainment tests. The study concluded that the mother's stimulating behaviors affected the children's performances. Parenting style is one indicator of a child's success in school. Considerable research indicates that parents of children who achieve well in reading play a very active role in guiding the development of this process (Silvern, 1985).

Research suggests that another factor in determining a child's success in reading is the household arrangement or composition. This has been defined as the number of persons living in a household and their relationships to one another. According to Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle (1988) cognitive performances by children are impaired by some household arrangements, but not by all. The effects are quite uneven, and are not fully understood. The most documented arrangement seems to be the father-absent home, where children tend to do worse on cognitive tests. Even more affected than the cognitive test, is the report card grade. Children from one-parent homes receive lower marks than children from two-parent homes per Scott-Jones; (1984) as cited in the

article by Thompson, Alexander and Entwisle.

The issue of household composition is complex, according to Thompson, Alexander and Entwisle. In a study of poor, black families in Chicago, Kellam, Ensminger, and Turner (1977) found 86 different living arrangements. These living arrangements included many entrances and exits of adult family members. A more crucial factor in determining whether a child will be successful in reading is the type of family arrangement. Ones where the care-giver, typically the mother, is assisted in school-related responsibilities (such as the completion of homework) by her mother or sisters, were more effective than a structure where the mother alone is providing the support. In this case, mother aloneness rather than father-absenteeism was the risk factor. The study by Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle concluded that family composition affected parents' expectations, and in turn, these expectations affect reading achievement. Solo parents tend to have lower expectations for their children, and their children's marks are lower than those of children with two-parent households. Additional adults, not just fathers, tended to help in the child's achievement. This finding was corroborated by Milne, Myers, Rosenthal and Ginsburg (1986). In general, students from one-parent families have lower achievement test scores than students from two-parent families. This was true for both black and white students, in elementary and high schools.

Another factor within the home that affects a child's reading achievement is the socioeconomic status of the family. The socioeconomic status of a household can be affected by several factors which have an impact on a child's reading achievement. In many cases the socioeconomic status of a household of a family is affected positively because both parents are wage earners. Though research tends to be conflicting, it is generally believed that the effect of both parents working is a negative one on the reading achievement of middle-class children from two-parent families (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal

and Ginsberg, 1986). However, many of these studies were conducted in the 1960's or even earlier and do not take into account the greatly increased numbers of mothers in the work force. More recent studies indicate that there may be a negative direct effect on reading achievement of children from two-parent intact families but a positive effect on lower-class and black students (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal and Ginsberg, 1986).

Another variable which is affected by the socioeconomic status of a family is the availability of affordable preschool experiences for the child. Families of low socioeconomic status are less likely to be able to afford such experiences. In the first generation (1948) of parents in a study by Wadsworth (1986) there was not a significant difference in the socioeconomic level of the children who did attend preschool and the children who did not. However, that was not true of the second generation which was studied in 1969. Then it was found that there was a significant difference in the numbers of lower socioeconomic children who did not attend preschool (Wadsworth, 1986). Attending preschool has been shown to greatly increase the verbal attainment skills of children.

Socioeconomic status has also been found to help explain the differences in the educational attainment of Hispanic and black children. Taking into account the disadvantaged background of many of these children may help to explain some of the racial/ethnic differences in educational attainment. Sociological research has focused on the role of socioeconomic background on the transmission of this status from one generation to the next. The socioeconomic status of parents can have a sizable impact on the lifelong goals, achievement and educational attainment (e.g., Blau and Duncan, 1967; Duncan et al., 1972; Featherman and Hauser, 1978; Sewell and Hauser, 1975) according to an article by Ortiz (1986). A significant finding in a study by Manning and Manning (1984), however, was that successful readers from all socioeconomic levels exhibited the

same traits regardless of their status. The traits that were identified included parents who read for pleasure, parents who believe they should help with reading, and parents who check out books from the library.

Another contributing factor affecting reading achievement in the home is the availability of appropriate reading materials. Parents of good readers tend to be in tune with their child's interests and encourage them by purchasing books related to crafts, how-to books, sports and other specialty genres of literature (Shields, Gordon and Dupree, 1983). Exposure to a variety of reading materials at home has been shown to have a positive correlation with proficiency in reading. Studies done in India, where reading materials are not easily accessible to millions of children in rural areas, show that children do not routinely develop an interest in reading (Greaney, 1986). In the article by Greaney, a study by Hess and Holloway (1984) was cited and suggested that preschool children who have been exposed to a variety of reading materials in the home are more likely to be proficient in reading. It is an important role of the parent to provide a home environment which is stimulating and motivates a child to want to read (Wendelin and Danielson, 1988).

In an interesting study by Shields, Gordon and Dupree (1983) it was shown that the type of materials has a significant effect on reading achievement. Though books related to a child's interests had a very positive correlation with reading achievement, conversely, a set of encyclopedias had a significant negative correlation. Parents were seemingly trying to supplement their child's education by obtaining these references, however, the data support the theory that it is the quality and interest-level of the material that is important, not the cost and quantity. The results of the study indicated that families, regardless of income level, produced children with higher levels of reading achievement when materials that were suited to the children, and were tailored to their



interests, were readily available.

The research presented in this section of the authors' study was related to reading achievement and how it was affected by factors within the home. In the next section research related to the parents' involvement with school, both as a student and as parents of students, is presented.

### **Factors Related to Parent Involvement with School Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement**

A factor related to a parent's interaction with school on a child's reading achievement is the parent's educational background. In a study by Ortiz (1986) parents' educations had a direct effect on reading proficiency of black, white and Hispanic students. Reading proficiency steadily increased as the educational attainment of the parents increased. The greatest differences in reading achievement occurred when the parents were college educated. Better educated mothers were also more likely to have more positive maternal behaviors according to Wadsworth (1986). When all factors were taken into consideration when examining verbal attainment scores in children ages 4-8 in the study by Wadsworth, the greatest agent in determining reading achievement was the mother's education. It had a much greater effect than any other single factor. This fact was reiterated by Reynolds (1992) when he stated that parents' education was one of two most effective predictors of a child's achievement in reading.

The second factor related to a parent's interaction with school on a child's reading achievement is involvement in the child's school activities. Since children learn both at

school and at home, parents, children and teachers all share responsibility for the child's learning. A shared vision of the child's literacy learning needs to exist, and parents, children and teachers must work together (Yochum and Miller, 1993).

A study by Thistlewaite and Mason (1993) examined Chapter I Programs and whether student/family factors make a difference. One significant finding was that parents of high achieving students were more interested in having their sons and daughters in the Chapter I Program than parents of low achievers. Another finding in this study was the interest of the parents overall in schooling was higher in the high achieving group.

A study by Gaines (1989) reported that students who worked nightly on reading diaries with their parents for a short period of time had gains on a reading achievement test. The reading diaries were planned by the classroom teacher. Training was offered for the parents. This was a short-term intervention but it was very effective in developing skills and confidence in the children who participated.

A review of related literature by Silvern (1985) stated:

*Extensive evidence is available establishing the crucial role parents play in the general development and education of their children. Furthermore, there is considerable research describing specific parental practices that are related to reading achievement. In addition, informational and training programs designed to instruct parents and to encourage their active participation have been successful.*

Teachers must help by increasing parent involvement in school activities. Successful programs inform and train parents through 1) parent meetings, workshops, and training sessions; 2) development of parent guides and handbooks and information packets; 3) increasing information parents have about the school reading program through written information and parent conferences; and 4) increasing the amount and specificity

of information parents receive about their child's progress in reading (Burgess, 1982; Criscuola, 1979; McLaren, 1965; Neidermeyer, 1969, Raim, 1980; Rupley and Blair, 1975; Swift, 1978; Vukelich, 1978,) as cited in the article by Silvern.

In a closely related article by Reynolds (1992) Reynolds indicated that there is a need for a stronger support for the influence of school involvement from parents. Parent involvement represents a way for parents to invest in their children. Children may, as a result of their parent's interest and activities at school, develop more confidence, show greater motivation, and experience a greater sense of cohesiveness with school that enables them to perform better. Family-school relations may also denote an attitude of optimism among parents that can carry over to their children (Clark, 1983) as cited in an article by Reynolds.

The research presented in this section explained the affects of parental involvement with school on a child's reading achievement. These effects included parents' educational backgrounds and the parents' involvement with their own child's school.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **Subjects**

The subjects were one hundred twenty-six Chapter I students and their parents from two separate elementary schools. All students included in the study were in grades one through three. Additionally, all students had been tested and scored at below grade level in reading achievement. In School A thirty-six of the students and their parents were part of a large urban school district. These students ranged in age from six years to ten years old. The students qualified for a federal reading program by scoring within the bottom forty percentile rank on a nationally norm-referenced test. The school itself qualified for the federally funded reading program by the number of students on free and reduced priced lunches. In School B ninety of the students and their parents were from a much smaller rural community outside of a major urban area. These students also ranged in age from six to ten years. These students were referred by their classroom teachers and were tested on a norm-referenced standardized reading test. To qualify for the program, they had to score in the thirty-sixth percentile or below. School B also qualified for the federally funded reading program based on the number of students on free and reduced price lunches.

## Setting

**School.** The research took place in two elementary schools. In School A, the thirty-six students were enrolled in a school of three hundred twenty students. The school was in a large urban district and was composed of fifty percent black and fifty percent white students. Parental involvement in the school was minimal with most parent's contact with the school coming in the form of notes to teachers or phone calls to teachers. Only one parent was involved in the Parent Teacher Association. The school also had a large population of families who qualified for free and reduced price lunches, about forty-five per cent.

In School B, the ninety students were enrolled in a school of four hundred seventy-five students. The school was located five to seven miles away from a large metropolitan area and was composed of ninety-six percent white students. Parental involvement in the school was moderate with most of the contacts coming in the form of parent conferences, open house and notes to teachers. Eight parents had been involved in the Parent Teacher Organization and their activities. In this school, thirty-four per cent of the student population qualified for free and reduced price lunches.

**Community.** The students in this study who attended School A lived in a large urban area and attended school in a district of approximately sixty-four thousand students. The school was culturally diverse. Most of the parents of the students surveyed had high school diplomas and about half of the parents surveyed had at least some college education. A majority of the students came from families where there were two adults living in the home, but a substantial number had only one adult. Every parent surveyed agreed that they used hugs and kisses to reward their children, but very few agreed that

they used money or gifts. Verbal praise and special trips were also rewards frequently used by parents. Though all the parents surveyed agreed that they expected their child to achieve grade level reading, parents disagreed that their involvement in school activities had an effect on their child's achievement in reading. More than one half of the parents felt that their involvement in school activities had no effect on their child's success in reading. Involvement in school activities did not seem to be a priority of the community.

The ninety students in School B lived in a large community south of a large city and attended a school district with approximately two thousand one hundred students. The school was in transition, changing from a predominantly rural population to a more suburban area. The school was ninety-four percent white. Approximately sixty percent of these parents had high school diplomas and about twenty percent had some college. A large majority of these students came from homes with two adults present. A very small number had single parent homes. The parents indicated that they used hugs and kisses and verbal praise as the primary reward given to their child for success in school. The other rewards of gifts, money and special trips were chosen by about one half of the parents who responded. Fourteen percent of the parents surveyed were not sure, or did not expect their child to achieve grade level reading. Slightly less than one half of these parents felt that their involvement in school activities affected their child's reading achievement. However, thirty percent disagreed with the statement and eighteen parents were undecided.

### **Data Collection**

The authors of this study used two methods to collect data from the parents involved in the study. One method of data collection was a Likert scale used to measure the parents' reaction to the authors' research statements. Each finding described in Chapter 2 of the authors' research was presented to the parents in statement form. Parents

indicated their agreement or disagreement with each statement. (see Appendix A) The second method of data collection was a questionnaire designed to provide the writers with information about the parents' backgrounds, education, home environment, and amount and type of reading activities which take place in the home. Additional socioeconomic information was obtained and classified by determining whether families qualified for free, reduced-price or full-price lunches. (see Appendix B)

### **Construction of the Instrument**

The construction of the Likert scale was based on the authors' research on the factors which affect a child's achievement in reading, both inside and outside of the home. Each major finding during the research was formulated into a statement and presented to the parents. There were ten statements on the Likert scale survey. (see Appendix A)

The construction of the parent questionnaire was based on the research findings on the type of activities taking place in the home which have an effect on reading achievement. Parental education, number of adults in the home, ways children are rewarded, reading materials in the home, and time spent on reading and reading-related activities were all choices on the questionnaire. (see Appendix B)

### **Administration of the Instrument**

Administration of the questionnaire in School A was accomplished during parent-teacher conferences. Each parent who attended the conferences was given the survey and was asked to fill it out and drop it in a box by the door as they left the school. The surveys for the parents who did not attend parent teacher conferences were sent home

with a cover letter explaining the project. These were returned to the office.

Administration of the questionnaire in School B was accomplished by using a parent involvement meeting held at the local library for the students and parents involved in the Chapter I program. Verbal instructions were given to the whole group and the questionnaires were distributed and collected. The next week parent teacher conferences were held and the questionnaires were given to the parents attending those conferences. After the conferences, questionnaires were sent home with a cover letter of instructions to all remaining parents. These were returned to the school during the next few days.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Presentation of the Results**

The results of the research are presented in the following tables:

- Table I: Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's Reading Achievement in School A. Results are expressed in percentages.
- Table II: Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's Reading Achievement in School B. Results are expressed in percentages.
- Table III: Parental Opinions of Research Affecting a Child's Reading Achievement in School A and B Combined. Results are expressed in percentages.
- Table IV: Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement in School A.
- Table V: Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement in School B.
- Table VI: Parental Factors Which Affect a Child's Reading Achievement in School A and B Combined.

Tables I - III were designed as a Likert scale. The tables were divided into six sections. The first section was the research statement to which the parents responded. The next five sections were labelled with the following headings:

- SA - Strongly Agree
- A - Agree
- U - Undecided
- D - Disagree
- SD - Strongly Disagree

**TABLE I****SCHOOL A - PARENTAL OPINIONS OF RESEARCH AFFECTING A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT**

<b>Research Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. I expect my child to achieve grade level reading.	64	36	0	0	0
2. My family's income level affects my child's achievement in reading.	0	8	12	16	64
3. The number of adults in my home affects my child's reading achievement.	0	20	0	16	64
4. Having appropriate reading materials available affects my child's reading achievement.	36	48	0	4	12
5. The way I praise my child affects his/her reading achievement.	36	52	0	4	8
6. Interacting (reading and playing games) with my child can affect his/her reading achievement.	32	56	0	0	12
7. I expect my child to participate in household chores and responsibilities.	48	48	4	0	0
8. These responsibilities can affect his/her reading achievement.	20	32	8	24	16
9. My own educational background affects my child's reading achievement.	16	36	8	20	20
10. My involvement in school activities affects my child's reading achievement.	16	24	20	28	12

**All results are expressed as percentages.**

**TABLE II****SCHOOL B - PARENTAL OPINIONS OF RESEARCH AFFECTING A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT**

<b>Research Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. I expect my child to achieve grade level reading.	52	34	3	9	2
2. My family's income level affects my child's achievement in reading.	2	6	8	36	48
3. The number of adults in my home affects my child's reading achievement.	6	16	9	41	28
4. Having appropriate reading materials available affects my child's reading achievement.	43	41	3	8	5
5. The way I praise my child affects his/her reading achievement.	51	34	5	8	2
6. Interacting (reading and playing games) with my child can affect his/her reading achievement.	43	41	8	6	2
7. I expect my child to participate in household chores and responsibilities.	43	53	2	2	0
8. These responsibilities can affect his/her reading achievement.	17	27	17	20	19
9. My own educational background affects my child's reading achievement.	14	36	9	27	14
10. My involvement in school activities affects my child's reading achievement.	12	30	29	20	9

**All results are expressed as percentages.**

**TABLE III****SCHOOL A & B - PARENTAL OPINIONS OF RESEARCH AFFECTING  
A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT**

<b>Research Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. I expect my child to achieve grade level reading.	55	35	2	7	1
2. My family's income level affects my child's achievement in reading.	1	7	9	30	53
3. The number of adults in my home affects my child's reading achievement.	4	17	7	34	38
4. Having appropriate reading materials available affects my child's reading achievement.	42	43	2	7	7
5. The way I praise my child affects his/her reading achievement.	48	39	3	7	3
6. Interacting (reading and playing games) with my child can affect his/her reading achievement.	41	45	6	4	4
7. I expect my child to participate in household chores and responsibilities.	45	52	2	1	0
8. These responsibilities can affect his/her reading achievement.	18	28	15	21	18
9. My own educational background affects my child's reading achievement.	15	36	9	25	16
10. My involvement in school activities affects my child's reading achievement.	12	28	26	23	11

**All results are expressed as percentages.**

## TABLE IV

### SCHOOL A - PARENTAL FACTORS WHICH AFFECT A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT

Person filling out this questionnaire.

<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
4	21

I spend \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per day with my child in reading related activities.

<b>0-15 min.</b>	<b>15-30 min.</b>	<b>30-45 min.</b>	<b>45-60 min.</b>	<b>Other</b>
3	16	3	2	1

The number of adults in the household are:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
8	16	1

Education of adults in the household (Check one for each adult)

<b>No high school diploma</b>	<b>High School graduate</b>
4	13

<b>Some college</b>	<b>College degree</b>
19	5

Reading materials available in the home (Check as many as apply)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Encyclopedia</b>	<b>Paperbacks</b>	<b>Magazines</b>
18	8	17	21

<b>Craft Books</b>	<b>Picture Books</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Bible</b>
8	25	10	1

Ways in which I praise/reward my child (Check all that apply)

<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Verbal Praise</b>	<b>Special Trip</b>
8	6	23	16

<b>Reading Related Activities</b>	<b>Hugs, Kisses</b>	<b>Other - Displaying Achievements High Fives</b>
9	25	5

I interact with my child's school in the following ways (Check all that apply)

<b>Parent Conferences</b>	<b>Open Houses</b>	<b>Phone Calls</b>	<b>PTA</b>
20	14	15	1

<b>Room Parent</b>	<b>Notes to Teachers</b>	<b>Scheduled Visits</b>	<b>Other</b>
3	18	9	2

## TABLE V

### SCHOOL B - PARENTAL FACTORS WHICH AFFECT A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT

Person filling out this questionnaire.

<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
8	56

I spend \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per day with my child in reading related activities.

<b>0-15 min.</b>	<b>15-30 min.</b>	<b>30-45 min.</b>	<b>45-60 min.</b>	<b>Other</b>
19	26	16	2	4-5 hr.

The number of adults in the household are:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
5	51	4	3	1-5 adults

Education of adults in the household (Check one for each adult)

<b>No high school diploma</b>	<b>High School graduate</b>
17	60

<b>Some college</b>	<b>College degree</b>
20	4

Reading materials available in the home (Check as many as apply)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Encyclopedia</b>	<b>Paperbacks</b>	<b>Magazines</b>
52	40	52	51

<b>Craft Books</b>	<b>Picture Books</b>
28	55

Ways in which I praise/reward my child (Check all that apply)

<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Verbal Praise</b>	<b>Special Trip</b>
29	28	56	28

<b>Reading Related Activities</b>	<b>Hugs, Kisses</b>
15	53

I interact with my child's school in the following ways (Check all that apply)

<b>Parent Conferences</b>	<b>Open Houses</b>	<b>Phone Calls</b>	<b>PTA</b>
50	46	31	8

<b>Room Parent</b>	<b>Notes to Teachers</b>	<b>Scheduled Visits</b>
24	48	10

## TABLE VI

### SCHOOL A & B - PARENTAL FACTORS WHICH AFFECT A CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT

Person filling out this questionnaire.

<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
12	77

I spend \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per day with my child in reading related activities.

<b>0-15 min.</b>	<b>15-30 min.</b>	<b>30-45 min.</b>	<b>45-60 min.</b>	<b>Other</b>
22	42	19	4	2

The number of adults in the household are:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
13	67	5	3	1

Education of adults in the household (Check one for each adult)

<b>No high school diploma</b>	<b>High School graduate</b>
34	112
<b>Some college</b>	<b>College degree</b>
47	13

Reading materials available in the home (Check as many as apply)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Encyclopedia</b>	<b>Paperbacks</b>	<b>Magazines</b>
70	48	69	72
<b>Craft Books</b>	<b>Picture Books</b>	<b>Other</b>	
36	80	16	

Ways in which I praise/reward my child (Check all that apply)

<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Verbal Praise</b>	<b>Special Trip</b>
37	34	79	44
<b>Reading Related Activities</b>	<b>Hugs, Kisses</b>	<b>Other</b>	
24	78	7	

I interact with my child's school in the following ways (Check all that apply)

<b>Parent Conferences</b>	<b>Open Houses</b>	<b>Phone Calls</b>	<b>PTA</b>
70	60	46	9
<b>Room Parent</b>	<b>Notes to Teachers</b>	<b>Scheduled Visits</b>	<b>Other</b>
27	66	19	2

## **Discussion of the Results**

Tables I - III showed the results of the survey of parental opinions of research affecting a child's reading achievement in School A, School B and Schools A and B combined. When the tables were examined, the authors were able to compare the results of this survey with the research reported in this paper.

The parental opinions of research affecting a child's reading achievement in School A were presented in Table I. Results were in sharp contrast to the authors' research in several categories. Parents of all the children in Chapter 1 reading classes agreed that they expected their child to achieve grade level reading. However, ninety-two percent of these parents did not believe that their socioeconomic level had an effect on the achievement of their children. This was in stark contrast to the research which had shown that socioeconomic level had a sizable impact (Ortiz, 1986). Eighty percent of the parents in School A were also in disagreement that the number of adults in the household had an effect on reading achievement. The research, however, had shown this to be a factor which affected a child's reading achievement (Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle, 1988).

Parents were much more likely to agree with the next four statements. Almost all parents agreed that having appropriate materials, praising their child, interacting with their child, and expecting them to participate in household chores could affect their reading achievement. These were all factors which had been identified as ones which affect reading achievement in the authors' research. In the research it was also stated that parents educational background was an important factor (Reynolds, 1992). Parents in School A were divided in their opinions. Fifty-two percent agreed, forty percent



disagreed and eight percent were undecided. A surprising fact was that the male respondents were much more likely to agree with the statement. Seventy-five percent of the male respondents agreed that their educational background affected their child's achievement in reading. The opinion of parents on whether their involvement in school activities had an effect was also split in almost equal halves between those who agreed and those who disagreed. Forty percent agreed, and forty percent disagreed, with twenty percent undecided. Though research by Thistlewaite and Mason (1993) and Yochum and Miller (1993) had shown parent interest and involvement were a factor in a child's reading achievement, parents in School A were not convinced of that.

The parental opinions of research affecting a child's reading achievement in School B were presented in Table II. Some of these results were in contrast to the research reported in this paper. Eighty-four percent of the parents surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that family income level affects a child's reading achievement. In the research the authors found that socioeconomic status of parents played a very important role in the success and achievement of their children (Ortiz, 1986). The parents surveyed also disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the number of adults in the home affected a child's reading achievement. Sixty-eight percent held this view. In an article by Thompson, Alexander and Entwisle it was stated that children from one parent homes receive lower marks than children from two parent homes, which contradicts the opinions of the parents in the survey.

The parental opinions concerning expectations for their child, reading materials in the home, praise for the child, interacting with the child and for participation in household chores and responsibilities were very much in agreement with the research in these areas. Almost fifty percent of the parents surveyed did not believe that their own educational background affected their child's reading achievement. In the research reported, Reynolds (1992) stated that parent's education was one of the two most effective predictors of a

child's achievement in reading. Only thirty-six percent of the parents surveyed believed their involvement in school activities affected their child's achievement in reading. A study by Thistlewaite and Mason (1993) showed that the more interest and involvement the parents displayed in their child's schooling, the higher their children achieved.

Results for both School A and School B were very similar. Parents strongly agreed that their child should achieve at grade level in reading. Parents in both schools did not believe that their socioeconomic level, household composition or educational background had an effect. But the parents in both schools did agree that reading materials, praise, rewards, and chores and responsibilities had an effect on reading achievement.

Tables IV - VI showed the results of the survey of parental factors affecting a child's reading achievement for School A, School B and School A and B combined. In Table IV more than half of the parents in School A spent fifteen to thirty minutes a day working with their children. Only twelve percent spent over forty-five minutes a day and twelve percent spent zero to fifteen minutes a day. Table V reported the results for School B. The parents surveyed indicated that twenty-four percent spent zero to fifteen minutes each day in reading related activities with their child, twenty-nine percent spent fifteen to thirty minutes and thirty-six spent thirty to forty-five minutes. Very few parents worked with their child for forty-five minutes or longer, though one parent reported working four to five hours a day. According to a study by Gaines (1989) even a short period of time spent on reading activities resulted in gains in reading achievement.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Schools today have been struggling with the issue of Why Student X Can't Read. As Chapter I reading teachers, the writers of this document are keenly aware of this problem. Students appear to be less prepared, less focused, and less motivated despite the fact that more money is spent on Chapter I, Headstart, Reading Recovery, and other remedial reading programs.

The writers' purpose for researching the effects on a child's achievement in school was to determine if the research and the authors' observations supported the view that parent involvement does affect a child's performance in reading. If parental involvement does affect a child's performance in reading, the authors could use the data to further support the Chapter I program's goals of increasing parent involvement. A stated goal of that program is to motivate parents to become more involved and supportive of their child's education. In order to accomplish this goal, the factors which could affect a child's reading performance were evaluated individually and in the following two categories: factors which occur within the home, and factors which involve interaction with the school itself.

The purpose of this study was to analyze what parental factors influence a child's performance in reading.

A total of one hundred twenty-six parents of Chapter I students were given the opportunity to react to the research statements found by the authors to influence a child's

performance in reading. Eighty-nine parents did respond. The results were reported on a Likert scale and recorded in tables using percentages. The reactions of the parents were compared to actual research findings. Parents also filled out a questionnaire which surveyed the activities and educational backgrounds of the families involved in the study. These results were recorded on tables.

The results of the study were reported in six tables. Parents tended to agree with statements that referred to rewarding students, expecting them to achieve, interacting with children, and having reading materials in the home. Parents were much more divided on whether the parent's socioeconomic level, number of adults in the home or educational attainment of the parent had an effect. Many parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with all of those statements. The most surprising finding was, however, that many parents did not believe that their interaction with their child's school had an effect on a child's reading achievement.

### **Conclusions**

The authors' conclusion as a result of this study was that most parents truly believe that their child can achieve grade level reading. The problem arises in the parent's lack of understanding of what factors affect their child's progress. Though many parents believed that it was important to have appropriate reading materials in the home, there were many who did not believe it was important. The other factor which has been shown to affect a child's reading achievement was a parent's interaction with the child and their child's school. Many parents did not feel that it was significant, and had not visited the school often, if at all. Very few parents were even involved in the parent-teacher organizations at either school. Parents also did not perceive that their own educational background had any bearing on their child's success in school.

## **Recommendations**

As Chapter I teachers, the authors' of this study feel that it is very important to have a vigorous parent education program. Parents must be taught how and why they must become actively involved in their child's education. It is not enough to make the occasional phone call to a child's teacher to see how he is doing. Parents must be taught and encouraged to become another link in the child's progress. Parents must be taught that it is imperative that they allow and encourage a child to read what they are interested in reading. Parents must be taught that it is of the utmost importance that they have an open dialogue with all the teachers who are involved with their child. The factors which were identified by the authors as ones which affect their child's progress were not meant as excuses, but as a starting point for identifying possible hurdles for the child's reading success so that the problems can be dealt with by parents and teachers together.

Appendix A

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE INDICATE WHETHER YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BY CIRCLING ONE OF THE CHOICES BELOW

SA STRONGLY AGREE

A AGREE

U UNDECIDED

D DISAGREE

SD STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. I EXPECT MY CHILD TO ACHIEVE GRADE LEVEL READING.

SA            A            U            D            SD

2. MY FAMILY'S INCOME LEVEL AFFECTS MY CHILD'S ACHIEVEMENT IN READING.

SA            A            U            D            SD

3. THE NUMBER OF ADULTS IN MY HOME AFFECTS MY CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

4. HAVING APPROPRIATE READING MATERIALS AVAILABLE AFFECTS MY CHILD'S READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

5. THE WAY I PRAISE MY CHILD AFFECTS HIS/HER READING READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

6. INTERACTING (READING AND PLAYING GAMES) WITH MY CHILD CAN AFFECT HIS/HER READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

7. I EXPECT MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

SA            A            U            D            SD

8. THESE RESPONSIBILITIES CAN EFFECT HIS/HER READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

9. MY OWN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AFFECTS MY CHILD'S  
READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD

10. MY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AFFECTS MY CHILD'S  
READING ACHIEVEMENT.

SA            A            U            D            SD



PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following information will help us as we make decisions on the type of parent programs we will offer at the school.

1. Person filling out this questionnaire

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. I spend \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per day with my child in reading related activities.

0 - 15 minutes \_\_\_\_\_

15 - 30 minutes \_\_\_\_\_

30 - 45 minutes \_\_\_\_\_

45 - 60 minutes \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of adults in the household are

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Education of adults in the household (Check one for each adult)

No high school diploma \_\_\_\_\_

High school graduate \_\_\_\_\_

Some college \_\_\_\_\_

College degree \_\_\_\_\_

5. Reading materials available in the home (Check as many as apply)

newspaper \_\_\_\_\_ encyclopedia \_\_\_\_\_ paperbacks \_\_\_\_\_

magazines \_\_\_\_\_ craft books \_\_\_\_\_ picture books \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Ways in which I praise/reward my child (Check all that apply)

gifts \_\_\_\_\_ money \_\_\_\_\_ verbal praise \_\_\_\_\_ special trips \_\_\_\_\_

reading/related activities \_\_\_\_\_ hugs, kisses \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. I interact with my child's school in the following ways (Check all that apply)

Parent conferences \_\_\_\_\_ Open House \_\_\_\_\_ phone calls \_\_\_\_\_

P.T.A. meetings \_\_\_\_\_ room parent \_\_\_\_\_ notes to teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled visits with teachers other than parent conference day \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

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