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# All-n-One Learning Boxes

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All-n-One Learning Boxes:  
An Approach to Increasing Parents' Confidence in Their Child's Education

by

Sherry Susanne Coleman Starowitz

December 31, 2008

A thesis submitted to the  
Department of Education and Human Development of the  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Education


All-n-One Learning Boxes:

An Approach to Increasing Parents' Confidence in Their Child's Education

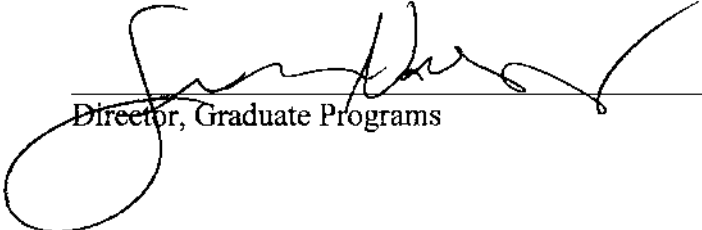
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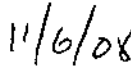
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## Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Review of Literature.....	8
Early Intervention Legislation.....	8
Parents' Perspective on Parental Involvement.....	9
Teachers' Perspective on Parental Involvement.....	12
Importance of Parental Involvement.....	14
Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement.....	17
Summary.....	20
Chapter III: Applications and Evaluation.....	23
Chapter IV: Results.....	29
Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	38
References:.....	43
Appendices:.....	49
Appendix A: Letter of Interest.....	49
Appendix B: Initial Parent Interview.....	50
Appendix C: Final Parent Interview.....	52
Appendix D: Fisher Price Laugh and Learn Piggy Bank Instructions.....	54
Appendix E: Mr. Potato Head's Silly Suitcase Instructions.....	55
Appendix F: Buckaroo Instructions.....	56
Appendix G: Julie's Favorites Instructions.....	57
Appendix H: Farm Puzzle Instructions.....	58
Appendix I: Infantino Jumbo Elephant Shape Sorter Instructions.....	59

Appendix J: Playskool Air-tivity Ball Popper Instructions.....	60
Appendix K: Fisher Price Fish and Learn Instructions.....	61

## Lists of Illustrations

Table 1: Time Spent with Child Daily.....	30
Table 2: Changes in Quality Time.....	31
Table 3: Changes in Frequency of Activities Family A.....	33
Table 4: Changes in Frequency of Activities Family B.....	34
Table 5: Changes in Frequency of Activities Family C.....	35
Table 6: Parental Feedback to Study.....	36

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Education begins at home. Parents have the best opportunity to impact their child's education in the preschool years. Cordry and Wilson (2004) state that, "The American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built" (p.56).

Teachers need to recognize this and offer support and opportunities to increase parental confidence. In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA P.L. 105-17) was amended to include Part C: Early Intervention Services for Children Birth Through Age Two. Not only did it legislate that states must provide service to any child under three years old who meets identifying criteria, it also laid the framework for parental involvement. According to Danaher (2002), Congress identified that one of its needs within the legislation was increasing families' capability to meet the needs of their child. Danaher went on to point out that the amendment looked at developing early intervention services not solely for the child but for the family as a whole.

The Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) was laid out in the amendment to contain a statement of the families' resources and concerns for their child and the major outcomes expected not only for the child but for the entire family as well. Palmer (2006) states that, "In early intervention the family is considered the child's greatest resource. Each child's development is served by supporting his or her family and building on strengths of the family and the child while supporting identified needs" (para. 2).

There is a lot of research to support the belief that parental involvement aids in student success. With a child spending on average 7,490 hours each school year with their parent and only 1,260 hours with their teacher, it is apparent that education cannot occur solely with a teacher at school (Cordry and Wilson 2004). Thegen and Weber (2002) describe the benefits of parental involvement to include improved behavior and school performance, increased educational achievement, and a decrease in juvenile delinquency. They also report that there are positive impacts on families such as increased self-confidence on parenting skills, knowledge of child development, and fewer reports of child abuse and neglect. Cordry and Wilson (2004) add that, "Active parental involvement improves student morals, attitudes, and academic achievement; thus, by taking on an active role, parents reduce their child's risk of failure academically and reduce the chances of dropping out before graduation" (p. 57).

Parental involvement was also addressed in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that was instituted in 2002. Webster (2004) believes that the act addresses the importance of including all parents, especially those who are disadvantaged, in the education of their children. Cordry and Wilson add that the act also includes the notion that parents who take on a more active role and participate with their child's class will see more positive changes in their child's academic progress. (2004)

Knowing that parental involvement is included in legislation and is a key force behind early intervention programming, it leads to the next issue of how to go about obtaining and utilizing parental involvement within the classroom set-up.



Bridgemohan, vanWyk, and van Staden (2005) argue that both written and spoken communication is the key to parental involvement. They go on to note that although communication is so critical, there are many barriers that hinder its effectiveness including distance between school and home, grandparents as care givers, and differences in language and culture.

### Statement of the Problem

This study focused on how to increase parental involvement of parents who have limited resources and limited knowledge of child development. Teachers can not assume that parents have the means or prior knowledge to interact with their child in a way that increases educational success. This study also focused on finding ways to increase parental confidence thus increasing parental involvement. It consisted of interviewing three parents to assess their attitudes and feelings about their involvement with their child's education. The parent and I then looked at the parent's needs and picked from a list of three options of how the teacher could support the parent in the home. After four weeks of the chosen support, the parents were re-interviewed to assess how the intervention helped or hindered their confidence and involvement.

### Rationale

With the knowledge that parental involvement increases student performance and the passing of legislation of the NCLB act and the IDEA that support and encourage parental involvement, why are schools still struggling with this concept? Webster (2004) argues that,

Although parental involvement programs are deemed critical, schools and school districts have selectively chosen not to spend the time and money

required to evaluate parental involvement programs. Hence, little is known about what is actually happening in the field or about the systems failures impeding the implementation of parental involvement in schools.(p. 119)

In my Early Intervention classroom I had become concerned with parental involvement but, as Webster noted, had not given the problem any time or thought until recently. The IDEA amendment forced me to take on a more family-centered approach to my teaching and to optimize parental involvement in my classroom set-up.

My thirteen, two-year old, early intervention students had Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) which incorporated a plan for the entire family to work together. My students would see their speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist and special education teacher in school rather than receiving these services in the home. Without the direct connection to the home, the family component seemed to be easily lost. Notes were written home on a daily basis but only a handful of parents would take the time to read them and respond back. It was difficult with this limited interaction to accurately identify the needs of the parents and create a plan to help increase their confidence with regards to their child's education. I did not feel that it gave me an appropriate amount of time to get to know the family and how I, as a teacher, could have supported the child within their family structure.

As Cordry and Wilson (2004) explained, teachers only have their students for a minimal amount of time each day. My students were with me for two and half hours and then spent the remaining 21.5 hours each day with their families. I could have taught them a skill at school but if it is only taught and followed through during

the brief time in school, the retention level drops dramatically. This led to the issue of how could I support my parents so that they would have the confidence to work with their child at home to meet their specific goals.

### Significance

For this study parental involvement was defined as parents interacting with their child outside of school to a point where they felt comfortable that they knew their child's needs, were meeting their child's needs, and were helping their child progress in their development. During all of my undergraduate and graduate courses on education, there was very little preparation for including parents in their child's learning. I felt that current teacher education focuses on working solely with students. Therefore teachers are not well equipped with practical strategies to facilitate parental involvement. I have made many efforts to foster positive relationships with my parents and have tried to have as open communication as possible but have identified many obstacles that make this more difficult. Many of my parents did not have transportation to the school nor could they write. They may have also had developmental delays themselves and they did not have the economic resources for educational supplies.

I decided to see what I could do as a teacher to expand parental involvement within my classroom. My plan was to work with parents to increase their confidence in carrying over skills taught at school in the home setting. Due to some difficulties my parents faced in their reading and writing skills, I started by conducting a personal home interview with three families that were interested in participating. I asked the

parents about their current level of confidence with working on their child's goals at home and how adequate they felt they were in meeting these goals. I also provided them three options for extra support in the home to help increase their confidence. Over an eight week period I carried out the option that the family had chosen. At the end of my study I conducted another parent interview to see if there have been any changes in the parent's confidence toward their involvement with their child at home and if they saw improvement with their child's progress on their goals. I was able to assess what helped and what hindered their participation in their child's education.

### Summary

Teachers are constantly reflecting and evaluating to see what they could alter to increase student performance. Parental involvement is a common, yet difficult answer. It is seen as so important, especially from an early age, that laws were passed to mandate it within the early intervention program. Even with parental involvement as the main focus of an IFSP, it continues to be a struggle for many teachers. From cultural beliefs, and economic status to parental knowledge and confidence, there seems to be many barriers that hinder parental involvement. The families in every classroom have unique needs that obstruct their ability to be involved in their child's education. The classroom teacher needs to take the time to get to know their families and chose options to increase parental involvement that fit their needs.

My research started with a simple question, "What can I do within my classroom to increase parental involvement?" In order to answer this question I had to first look at my families and their needs. Once parental confidence and resources

were identified, I then had to find a way to meet those needs. I came up with three options so that each parent could pick the one that they felt would best fit their family. All of the families involved opted for signing out toy boxes that had written suggestions of how to use the toy for educational purposes with their child. This idea provided the materials to meet the financial hardship need and also helped increase parental confidence by giving them different ideas of how to interact with their child.

The benefit of parental involvement has been evident for a long time. However, constant change in family structures and dynamics has made it difficult to continue to use the same approach to reach out to parents. With the legislation now mandating parental involvement within the early intervention program, a great deal of research is beginning to be done on this topic. A review of that research is presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Early Intervention Legislation**

In 1997, a need was recognized by Congress to amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) so that it enhanced the ability of families to meet the needs of their infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay (Danaher 2002). On June 4, 1997, President William Clinton signed into law P.L. 105-17, the amendment, including Part C, of IDEA (Trohanis 2002). Under part C, every state is required to service children under the age of three who are experiencing developmental delays or who have a diagnosed physical or mental condition through the early intervention program (Danaher 2002). Palmer (2003) points out that within early intervention, the main resource for children is their families. She goes on to say that the best way to impact a child's development from an early age is to reach out to their families and strengthen their abilities to provide educational opportunities for their children. According to Darling, Gallagher, and Rhodes (2004), "The hallmark of Part C...is that parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities are partners with professionals in their child's development" (p. 5). Part C was driven by the needs of children and families and the documented positive benefits families have in the development of their child (Trohanis 2002). When you build on a family's strengths, you help them to be able to meet the needs of their child.

With the focus on the family as a whole, the written aspect under the law is called the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). According to the New York State

Department of Health (2005) the family piece of the IFSP means, “the plan will focus on your family and the outcomes you hope to reach for your baby or toddler and your family through early intervention” (Step 4 para. 1). The IFSP goes beyond just the child to include the family and identify resources to meet everyone’s needs (Palmer 2003). This shows that parental involvement within the IFSP system is key to its success. The parents have the right to say yes or no to having their child evaluated, and to participating in the program if their child qualifies (New York State Department of Health Your Rights 2005). Without some extent of parental involvement, a child would not be able to receive services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy or physical therapy. Once a child is deemed eligible to receive service the importance of parental involvement continues. Palmer notes that when services are warranted, “These services must be designed in collaboration with the family to enhance both the development of the child and the family’s capacity to meet the needs of the child” (para. 6). Even though parental involvement is written into the law, implementing it in a meaningful way continues to be a struggle for both parents and teachers.

### **Parents’ Perspective on Parental Involvement**

Many teachers are so devoted to their work that it is easy for them to forget that there is life beyond school for their students and their families. Parents face many challenges and potential stressors on a daily basis including but not limited to hours working outside the home, finances, demands from household tasks, extended family needs, and relationships with friends (Keyes 2002). While their child’s

education is important to them, there are many other demands in life that need attention also. Keyes (2002) remarks that many times teachers have the expectation that parents should always be available for meetings and special events. Teachers often forget that even the most involved parents have responsibilities outside of their child and their schooling. Keyes (2002) states, “We (teachers) have to avoid the error of seeing life only from the school’s side as if home simply flowed along smoothly with no problems of their own. The closer we move to parents the more realistic expectations become” (p 181).

Parents of student’s with special needs typically face even more hardships. Bjorck-Akesson, Carlhed and Grunlund (2003) recognize that every family has their own needs that change over time depending on how they look at different situations. As found in Darling, Gallagher, and Rhodes (2004), parents of students with special needs have a lifetime of ever changing hardships in addition to daily life that they are constantly adjusting to. Sometimes parents of children with special needs are also dealing with guilt and self-blame for why their child has a special need (Lefebvure, Pelchat, Proulx, and Reidy 2004).

According to Dallaire, Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, Walker and Wilkins, (2005) there are three types of parental beliefs towards parental involvement with a child’s education. The first is that the parents are ultimately responsible for their child’s education. The second is that the school is ultimately responsible for their child’s education. The last is that the parents and school share responsibility together for their child’s education. How the parents interact with the school varies greatly



depending on how they view education. Keyes (2002) explains that different factors contribute to and influence which of the three parents believe in. What parents experienced when they were younger has a great deal of impact. If their parents took an important role, there is a good chance they will follow suite. On the other hand if they did not feel successful in their educational experience, they may feel inadequate in being involved in their child's education now (Keyes 2002). According to Long (2007) parents may also blame themselves for their child's educational outcomes and are afraid of being judged as bad parents.

Parents of students with special needs report they typically are the ones to identify the need but when it comes time to work on the need, they are left out of the planning and decision making (Dockrell and Lindsay 2004). Even though they are invited to be involved, many parents are insecure with their knowledge compared to the professional teacher (Keyes 2002). They feel powerless and intimidated by the experts and feel as if their involvement would be laughed at (Dockrell et. al, 2004). Dallaire et. al, (2004) argue that many teachers have preconceived notions that parents have the intellectual ability to help their children and understand what is being asked of them by teachers. This leads to a lack of assistance for parents in understanding the IFSP process. It also strengthens some parents' feelings that they can not help their child with school due to their own struggles.

Sometimes parents can not even get past the paperwork to understand what is happening to their child (Goff and Hurth 2002). Many times the educational and legal jargon lead to a lack of understanding by the parent. These parents face the

additional difficulty of interpreting the language and procedures of their child's special education program. Bruder, Fleming, Park, and Whitebread (2007) commented this lack of understanding may lead parents to feel inadequate in being able to support and be involved in the education of their child with a special need. Bruder et. al, go on to state that parents also might not have the knowledge of their rights under the law to be involved within their child's education.

Goff et. al, also believe that the overwhelming paperwork can make the parents feel unintelligent and drive them away from wanting to be involved before they even start. Even though parents might be aware of their child difficulties, they do not always know what they can do to help them (Dockrell et.al, 2004). These authors further argue that, "Unless professionals support them, parents can be exposed, unsuccessful, and frustrated as they struggle to devise effective educational interventions" (2004, p. 232).

### **Teachers' Perspective on Parental Involvement**

With many teachers today commuting to work in communities outside of where they live, there has been a shift in a teacher's ability to relate to their children's family styles. Keyes (2002) acknowledges that teachers do not always have the same sense of belonging to their school as they did back when they lived in the same community. Teachers now work in communities that have different socioeconomic status, ethnicity, cultural beliefs and race from where they live which makes it much more difficult for them to relate to their parents (Keyes 2002). Teachers tend to interpret lower visibility of parents at school as lack of caring or interest in their

child's education. Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) point out that teachers often fail to consider the impact of social, language and cultural differences on a parents comfort level with coming to school. Colombo (2006) found that parents are often ashamed and embarrassed to come to school because of their lack of knowledge of the English language. The difference in cultural and ethnical beliefs may lead to teachers being looked at as superior and more sophisticated by parents, decreasing their comfort level in being involved with their child's education. Wilgus (2005) adds that it is even more difficult now that parents and teachers do not always have the same native language.

Teachers also enter into parental involvement with thoughts and beliefs that are influenced by their own experiences and factors. According to Souto-Manning and Swick (2006), teachers have past childhood experiences as well as recent parental involvement encounters that sway their current attitude towards parental involvement. Souto-Manning et. al, (2006) continues by saying that teachers who have childhood experiences of parents coming in to simply serve cookies and punch at parties may have a difficult time accepting parental involvement from parents who want to take a more active role in the educational process. A teacher may also have been yelled at and intimidated by an assertive parent in a previous year. This might cause the teacher to have a defensive attitude toward parental involvement in the future further decreasing their willingness to see parents as partners in their child's education (Souto-Manning et. al. 2006).

Some teachers even believe that the parents are not able to provide the children with what they need. Wilgus (2005) found that some teachers feel it is their responsibility to correct parents on all of their child-rearing techniques so that it matches that of their professional beliefs. Souto-Manning et. al, (2006) goes on to say that some schools foster an environment of teacher-dominated parental involvement. In these schools it is considered “normal” for a teacher to always be in the decision-making role and the parent is seen as a follower. Brink (2002) discovered that teachers also often fail to validate parent’s concerns when they do not observe what the parent is talking about in school. Even when they do call attention to the parents’ concerns, teachers often lack confidence in parents’ and families’ abilities to carry through with ideas and involvement tips (Brink 2002).

According to Keyes (2002) many teachers feel unappreciated by their parents. They also believe that parents have a severe lack of interest in their child’s education. Keyes (2002) states that many teachers describe parents as, “Adversarial, or apathetic, and always a challenge” (p. 183).

### **Importance of Parental Involvement**

In order to look at the importance of parental involvement, one must first identify what the term means. Barnard (2004) identifies parental involvement as having six different components: parenting, learning at home, communicating with the school, volunteering at school, decision making at school, and collaborating with the community. The research below focuses on learning at home, communicating with the school and volunteering at the school.

Dreissen, Slegers and Smit (2005) state that, “Parental involvement is seen as an important strategy for the advancement of the quality of education” (p. 509).

According to Doan, Gonzalez-DeHass, and Willems (2005), when parents were more involved in their child’s schooling, children had higher grade-point averages and were more engaged in school. A family’s secure and supportive involvement also produces a strong attachment for the child that helps them be able to withstand the stress that sometimes comes with school (Thegen and Weber 2002). Students also reported more effort, concentration, and attention across four main subject areas: mathematics, English, social studies, and science.

Parental involvement has been found to increase students’ sense of well-being, attendance, student attitude towards school, homework readiness, overall grades, and educational aspirations (Doan, Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems 2005). Fan (2001) discovered that the more parental involvement, the more parents had higher expectations for their children. This then led to children not only performing better but accelerating in their academic achievement at a faster rate. Barnard (2003) found that parent involvement had a direct, positive relationship with lowered dropout rates and increased years of school completed. For every year that a parent was involved in their child’s education, the child had a 32% greater likelihood of graduating. Also for every year that a parent was involved, the child stayed in school two months longer. Parental involvement is seen to help children, especially those with special needs, on maintaining skills in order to bring about long-term change and generalization of skills (Jones, Park, Tressell, Unger 2004).

Parental involvement benefits much more than just academic achievement for students. It has been shown to reduce juvenile delinquency and improve a child's behavior in school (Thegen and Weber 2002). Studies have also shown that parental involvement has a positive impact on parents as well. Thegan and Weber (2002) found that parental involvement increases parents' confidence in dealing with their child needs and educational goals. They state that it, "...provides the opportunity for families to effect meaningful change" (p. 5). According to Driessen et. al, (2005) parents report a more positive attitude towards school and more confidence in child-rearing practices. There is a correlation between parental involvement and fewer incidents of child abuse and neglect (Thegen and Weber 2002).

The impact of parental involvement also reaches past the student and their family to the teachers and the district as whole. According to Zygmunt-Fillwalk (2006) teachers who report positive parental involvement within their classroom also report better morale and an increase in job satisfaction. School districts in which home/school collaboration is evident report better student performance and tend to have a better reputation within the community (Zygmunt-Fillwalk 2006).

Some research did uncover negative impacts of parental involvement. Barnard (2004) discovered that sometimes children see their parents coming into school as a negative reflection on themselves. Many times students equate parents coming into school with getting into trouble due to behavior problems. Sometimes students act out when their parent is present in school as a way to gain attention or to show their disapproval (Fan 2001). Schoenfelder, Solek, and Urdan (2007) found

that parents who are involved out of fear of failure may transmit that negative outlook onto their child. According to Barnard (2004), even with the negative outcomes, the benefits of parental involvement severely outweigh the negative.

### **Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement**

As stated by Colombo (2006), “Family involvement has a powerful influence on educational success, but it’s not an equal opportunity practice” (p.316). In order for any parental involvement to occur and be successful, it is imperative that teachers and parents are cognizant of the diversity in cultural values, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background (Keyes 2002). When parents and teachers share common cultural beliefs and language, relationships are made with ease. Colombo (2006) goes on to say that when differences arise, more effort and time is required to bridge those gaps to create positive relationships between teachers and parents. Both sides also need to be aware of their own personal feelings and beliefs towards education that influence their current views. According to Keyes (2002) parents and teachers need to be willing to look at the others’ point of view and talk about differences instead of shutting down.

With all of the hardships parents face in being involved with their child’s education, some research has looked to parents to see what they feel would help. It is important to parents that they can have a secure relationship with the professional involved so that they feel free to express the needs of the family (Bjorck-Akesson et. al, 2003). Barrera and Warner (2003) state that, “All parents need to feel they can give input and be heard... The most effective approach to supporting their

involvement is showing parents you care about their child and family” (p. 26). It is important for parents to have their suggestions and ideas validated so they begin to see that they are cognitively capable of being involved (Bjorck-Akesson et. al, 2003). The more involved teachers allow them to become involved in stating needs and coming up with goals and solutions, the more they will feel appreciated and have a desire to be involved (Dunst 2002).

It becomes a difficult and negative situation when professionals disagree with parents on solutions. Bruder (2007) suggests that parents and educators need to approach these challenges as opportunities to work together to enhance the educational outcomes for the child. According to Lebeure et. al, (2004), “It was important for parents to feel assured about the steps they were taking and to be encouraged to make decisions. They gained confidence by talking about their course of action for the child, and then being reassured that they were doing the right thing” (p. 136). Bjorck-Akesson et. al, (2003) go on to say that parents want support with increasing their confidence so that they do not become dependent on the professional for all of their child’s educational needs.

Research has also shown that parents are more apt to respond if they have been invited to participate (Keyes 2002). Dallaire et. al, (2005) support this by arguing that parents are more likely to become involved when they feel that the teacher and school are truly looking for and valuing their input and support. It is important for teachers to present the invitation in such a way that parents feel welcomed to be involved and that their input will be appreciated. When teachers



invite parents to participate, it is imperative that teachers be aware of the parents' strengths and special circumstances. Offering meetings at different times of the day and providing activities for siblings will allow more parents to attend. If you also offer choices for involvement that capitalize on parents' abilities, they are much more likely to participate (Barrera and Warner 2003). Jones et. al, (2004) also found that parents are more willing to become involved if the invitation has a personal component. There was a higher involvement rate when teachers took the time to talk directly to the parents, especially in person, to explain and physically show the parents what they were talking about. It helped to increase the parents' confidence levels and thus their desire to become involved.

Long (2007) found an increase in parental involvement when teachers took the time to go out into the community to introduce parents to the school and welcome their involvement. Long (2007) suggested that teachers take the time to attend cultural festivals, parades, community picnics, and even local sporting events to show parents that they are eager to work side by side with them. Long continued by saying that then giving parents the opportunity to come to non-typical educational activities could possibly help to ease the nervousness some parents' experience. An idea included "Donuts for Dads" in which working fathers could come to school before work with their child to have breakfast. The same could happen for parents who were able to come on their lunch hour to eat with their child. Long (2007) stated that making parents feel welcome and comfortable is the first step in successful parental involvement programs.

Barrera and Warner (2003) believe that, “Parents want to be good parents, but they do not always have the knowledge or skills to improve their relationship with their child” (p. 26). Educating parents has shown to have an important impact on increasing their involvement (Jones et. al, 2004). Teachers should not look just at quantity of involvement, but also quality. According to Jones et. al, (2004), “Improvements in a caregiver’s knowledge of child development...were related to more responsive and higher quality caregiver-child interactions” (p. 214). Parents of children with special needs may require even more training. Bruder et. al, (2007) found that parents are more likely to take an active role in their child’s special education program when they have had specific training on terminology, what to expect and how to carry out specific parental involvement plans. With the additional trainings, parents reported to be better equipped to advocate for their child and felt that they develop the necessary skills to form effective relationships with their child’s teacher (Bruder et. al, 2007).

## **Summary**

Parental involvement is an integral part of the Individualized Family Service Plan. Public Law 105-17, Part C, of IDEA recognizes the extreme importance and numerous benefits of parental involvement and actually mandates it for Early Intervention services (Trohanis 2002).

Even though it is recognized under the law as imperative to a child’s early educational plan, parental involvement continues to be a struggle for many teachers and parents. Parents face many daily stressors outside of their child’s education that

create barriers to their involvement (Keyes 2002). Parents of children with special needs may have even more difficulty becoming involved. Not only do they have to deal with additional paperwork and terminology, many of them are also dealing with guilt and blame over their child's disability (Lefebvure, Pelchat, Proulx, Reidy 2004).

Parents and teachers also enter into the idea of parental involvement with past experiences that impact their attitudes towards it. Teachers who have had negative experiences in the past may carry on that resentment, fear or anger to current experiences (Souto-Manning et. al, 2006). In the same regards parents who may experienced difficulties as a child or with their other previous children, may enter current situations with a more negative outlook (Keyes 2002).

Souto-Manning et. al, (2006) and Long (2007) agree that the first step in changing parental involvement is to alter the way it is defined. With the increasing cultural, ethnical and language diversity within the classroom, parental involvement needs to be looked at in more than one way. Many parents with differing backgrounds from teachers have been labeled as unsupportive or uncaring when it comes to their child's education (Souto-Manning et. al, 2006). Parental involvement needs to value the parents and acknowledge that every parent has something meaningful and important to add to their child's education (Long 2007). Teachers and parents need to be more aware of the diversity and willing to embrace it with an open-mind (Keyes 2002). Souto-Manning et. al, conclude that even though it would easy to give one solution to parental involvement, it is impossible and would only create another inflexible framework. Parental involvement needs to looked at and

examined by each classroom teacher so that the framework is laid to include the specific cultural, ethnical and language diversity of the class.

## **Chapter III**

### **Applications and Evaluation**

#### **Introduction, Target Group, and Goals**

I taught an Early Intervention classroom in which my students all had Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP). With these plans, not only were therapists and teachers working to assist the child, but also the family as a whole. Under the IFSP many children (ages birth through two) were serviced in their homes where their families could take part in therapy to learn ways to meet their child's needs when therapists were not present. Therapists worked with parents and caregivers to teach them techniques to assist with their child's educational needs during the 23 hours of the day that a therapist was not present. At the age of two, children could have qualified to attend an Early Intervention centerbased program depending on the severity of their needs. When this happened the family component of the IFSP was easily lost due to the fact that the family is not present during class time. In my classroom I tried to foster positive relationships with parents and keep them informed of their child's educational successes but quickly learned of the many hardships in doing so.

The overall goal of the project was to increase parental involvement, specifically time parents spent actively engaging with their child in play. I planned to do this by addressing the barriers of lack of knowledge and lack of supplies or tools. I first identified the families within my classroom who needed more assistance in the area of parental involvement and would be willing to participate. Once the families

had been identified, I then looked at their specific family needs and came up with a plan to help them increase their parental involvement. As every IFSP is individualized for that child's specific needs and abilities, I wanted each plan to be individualized to the families' specific abilities and needs. In order to be successful in increasing parental involvement, I also had to address the goal of increasing parental confidence in dealing with their child's educational needs.

The group that was targeted in this study included the families of students in the centerbased program who did not have any direct home component in their child's IFSP and were not responding to the parental involvement techniques already being implemented within the classroom. The children of these families would come to school each day with the note we sent home the day before still in their backpack. Some of the parents would not check the bag and others, having developmental delays of their own, would have difficulty reading or responding to the note. Some families' home phones would constantly be disconnected or changed, making it difficult to contact them about their child's progress or needs. Other families had very limited resources at home and/or were working long hours leaving limited time for them to follow through with educational suggestions in the home.

## **Participants**

There were three families involved in this study. Each family had children attending my Early Intervention centerbased classroom five days a week. Each child received all their therapies in school with notes homes, phone calls on a weekly basis

and meetings in the home every six months being the only forms of parental involvement attempted prior to my study.

Child A was a two year, nine month old boy. He began in the centerbased class in September and received teacher, speech, and occupational therapy while at school. He lived at home with his mom, and maternal aunt and had frequent contact with his maternal grandparents. Mom worked two jobs and child A attended daycare before and after school each day. Mom reported limited resources, limited time, and lack of knowledge of what to do as barriers to her parental involvement.

Child B was a two year, seven month old girl. She began in the centerbased classroom in July and received teacher, speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy while at school. She lived at home with her brother, mom, dad, and maternal grandmother. Her maternal grandmother was her caregiver while mom and dad were at work during the day. The mother and father reported limited resources, lack of knowledge and difficulty reading as their main concerns when it came to parental involvement.

Child C was a two year, six month old boy. He began in the centerbased program in September and received teacher and speech services while at school. He lived at home with his two brothers and his mom. He attended daycare before and after school with his brothers and had frequent contact with his maternal grandmother. His mom reported limited resources, limited knowledge of what to do with his brother's while she played with him and limited educational experience herself as her barriers to parental involvement.

## **Procedures of the Study / Instruments Used For Study**

To introduce my study to my families and to find families willing to participate, I sent home an interest letter to all my families (see Appendix A) on October 2, 2006. I explained my study, the goals and the procedures and then asked them if they would be interested in participating. For the families that I knew had difficulty reading, I called them and read them the letter over the phone. I then asked if they wanted to participate or not and highlighted their response on the letter. When I sent the letter home, they then knew which one to check and I instructed them to sign and date the letter. I had four families who did not take the letter out of their child's backpack. At the end of the week I called them to let them know it was there. In the end I had three families volunteer to participate, six were not interested, and three did not respond at all to the letter or the phone calls. The three that volunteered were all within the target group.

After the three families were identified, I set up an initial home visit. I went to the house when the parents were available and asked them a series of initial interview questions (see Appendix B). The questions were aimed at finding out what the parents were currently doing at home, how frequently, the obstacles they face and their level of confidence in knowing what their child should be working on. While there were specific questions, there was also time for an open discussion with the families to make sure they were able to share all of their concerns and needs that might not have been covered in the questions.



The interview ended with the final question of how I as their child's teacher could better assist them in the home and increase their parental involvement. I presented each family with three different options that we could personalize to their specific family needs. The options included signing out toys that had written directions of what to do with them, borrowing a 5-10 minute video that showed myself working with their child and then sending home the materials for the family to use, and finally, receiving activity ideas that would work towards their child's goals using common household items. We discussed the benefits and hardships of each idea and then the family picked which one they felt would best meet their needs. For two of the families we took the idea they had selected and made a few modifications that they felt they would need to be successful. The third family did not feel they needed any modifications and we implemented it as stated.

The next step in the study was to implement each family's plan. All three families picked the option to have materials sent home on a weekly basis with instructions of how to use them (see Appendices D-K). On Monday of each week I sent home a box that had a toy or activity, all the materials needed to play, and a laminated instruction card. The instruction card had the picture of the item and then step by step directions as to how they could use the toy to best meet their child's educational needs. I also sent home an extra copy of the instructions and informed the families that if they wanted to keep the copy to use at a later time, they were more than welcome to. Each Wednesday I would call the families to make sure they had

what they needed in the box and to see if they had any questions. I carried this out for four weeks with each family.

Individual family modifications were made for two of the families. For family B, I would send home the instructions on a tape with a tape player as reading was a hardship for the family. For family C, I sent home additional toys that the other siblings could use while the mother worked with her son. I also sent home extra pieces to each activity so that the siblings could participate in the same activity.

At the end of the four weeks I set up a final home interview with each family. I again had a series of questions (see Appendix I) that I asked to assess if and how the toy boxes helped with their parental involvement. I allowed time for an open discussion to make sure that the families could best communicate their overall feelings and attitudes towards parental involvement and continued barriers. I asked each family if they would participate again and because each family said yes, I continued the boxes through January. Two of the three families were eligible to participate in the Christmas Tree program at our school. Each year the nurse would decorate a Christmas tree with tags that identified specific needs of students during the holiday season. Staff would then voluntarily take a tag and fulfill the wish of that family. This year I asked which of the toys/activities the families felt worked the best and then asked that those items be purchased for the families through the Christmas Tree program.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

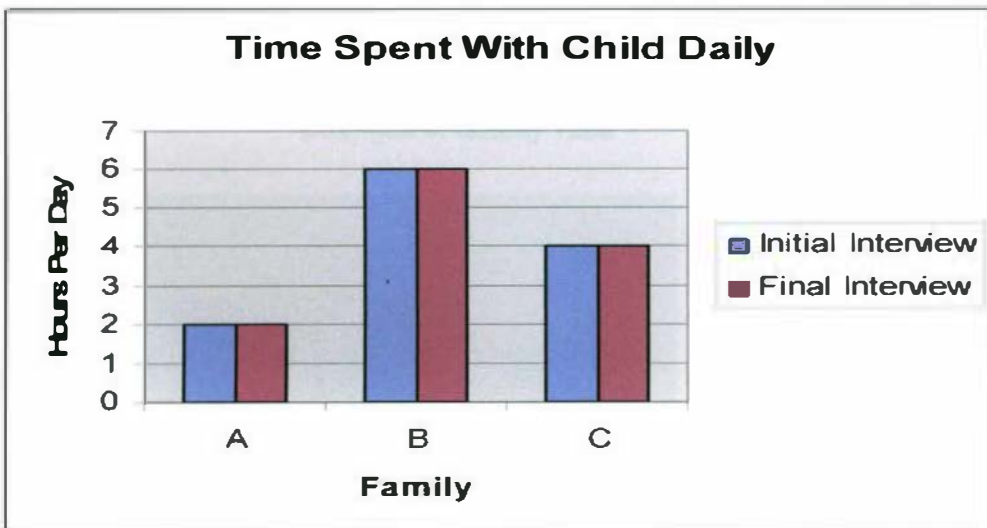
Data was gathered during this study through separate initial and final interviews with each family. The goal of the initial interview was to determine a baseline that could be compared to the parents' answers to the same questions when the study was completed. It also was used to assess each family's needs and hardships so that a specific intervention for the family could be determined and implemented. Each initial and final interview lasted approximately an hour.

The families were asked a series of questions in which they had a choice of four answers. Parents were asked to estimate the time spent engaging with their child in meaningful activities such as reading stories, playing games, completing puzzles, singing, eating meals together, and playing with cause and effect toys. This was measured both at the initial and final interview. At the end of each session the family was given time to express any other thoughts or concerns in an open discussion. After the information from both interviews was gathered, it was then analyzed and graphed. A summary of the data follows.

**Table 1**

Table 1 displays the overall time each parent spent with their child before and after the study was implemented. Parents were instructed to only count hours that their child was awake and under their direct supervision each day as this project aimed at increasing active parental involvement. As this sometimes fluctuated from day to day, parents were asked to estimate an average time for a day.

**Table 1**



According to Table 1, the overall time each parent spent with their child remained constant throughout the study. Family A spent two hours per day with their child both before the study and after the study. Family B spent six hours per day with their child before the study and after the study. Family C spent four hours per day with their child both before the study and after the study.

**Table 2**

Table 2 asked the parents before and after the study if the time that they reported with their child was quality time or not. For the purpose of this study, quality time was defined as time spent working and/or playing close to their child in which the child benefited educational, emotionally, or socially. The parents were asked to rate the amount of time they felt was quality time with the following scale: 1 for no quality time, 2 for not much quality time, 3 for some quality time and 4 for frequent quality time. The scale was the same for both the initial and final interview.

**Table 2**



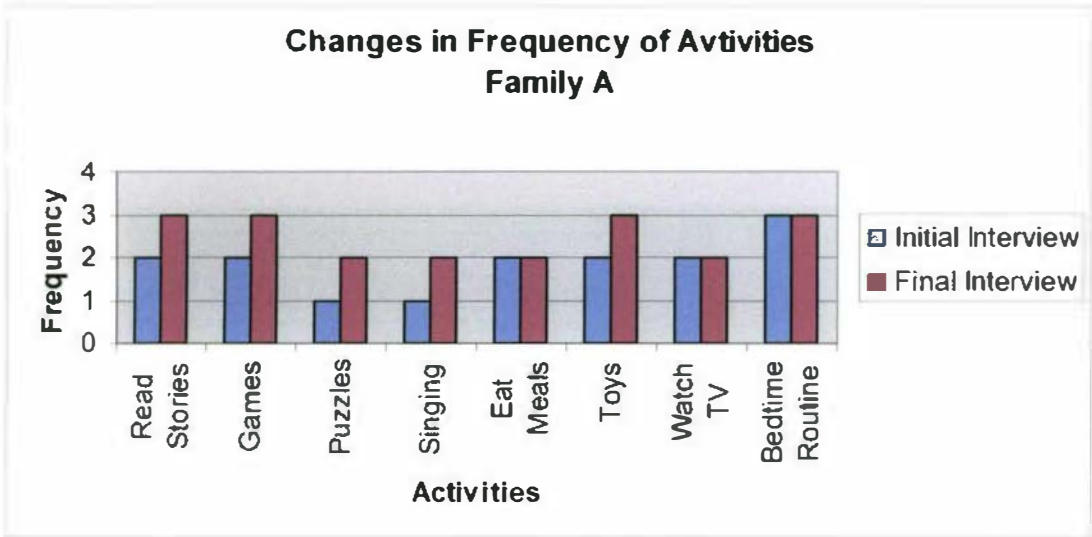
1 = No Quality Time  
2 = Not Much Quality Time  
3 = Some Quality Time  
4 = Frequent Quality Time

According to Table 2, Family A felt they had no quality time with their child before the study and some quality time after the study. Family B went from not much quality time to some quality time and Family C went from not much quality time to frequent quality time. Each of the three families reported some degree of increase in the quality of time they spent with their child.

### **Tables 3, 4 and 5**

Tables 3, 4 and 5 look at the changes in frequency for each family in regards to specific activities. Each family was asked to evaluate how often they engaged in reading stories, turn taking games, puzzles, singing, eating meals, playing with cause/effect toys, watching television, and engaging in a bedtime routine at both the initial and final interview. Each activity had to be done with their child present and interacting with them. At the final interview they were asked to re-evaluate how often they spent quality time with their child and they were given the opportunity to comment on any changes in frequency to specific activities they do with their child. The differences/similarities are presented on the graphs. Table 3 displays the findings for Family A, Table 4 displays the findings for Family B, and Table 5 displays the findings for Family C.

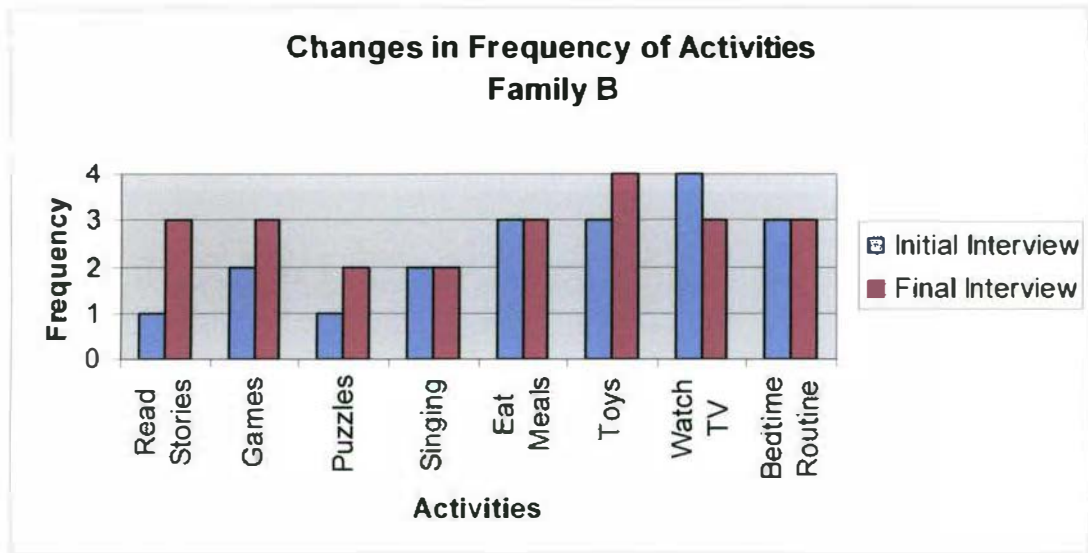
**Table 3**



1 = monthly (occasionally)  
2 = weekly (sometimes)  
3 = daily (frequently)  
4 = hourly (always)

According to Table 3, Family A reported an increase in frequency from weekly to daily with activities of reading stories together, playing games with turn taking, and interacting with their child as they played with everyday toys. Family A also reported an increase from monthly to weekly with activities of matching puzzle pieces and singing songs or dancing to music together. Family A reported no change in the frequency of eating meals together, their child watching television, or participating in a bedtime routine with their child.

**Table 4**



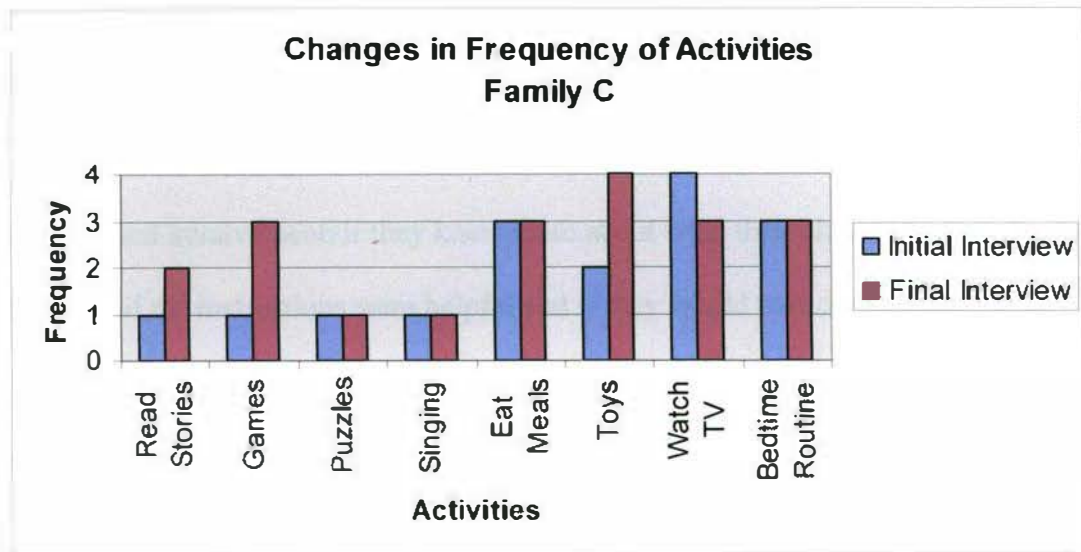
1 = monthly (occasionally)  
2 = weekly (sometimes)  
3 = daily (frequently)  
4 = hourly (always)

**Table 4**

According to Table 4, Family B reported a decrease in the frequency of time their child spent watching television. Before the plan was implemented, they reported that their child watched television hourly while after the intervention it was down to daily. Reading stories together had the largest increase in frequency going from monthly to daily. Family B also reported an increase from weekly to daily in playing games with turn taking, and they also reported an increase from monthly to weekly in completing puzzles together.



**Table 5**



1 = monthly (occasionally)  
2 = weekly (sometimes)  
3 = daily (frequently)  
4 = hourly (always)

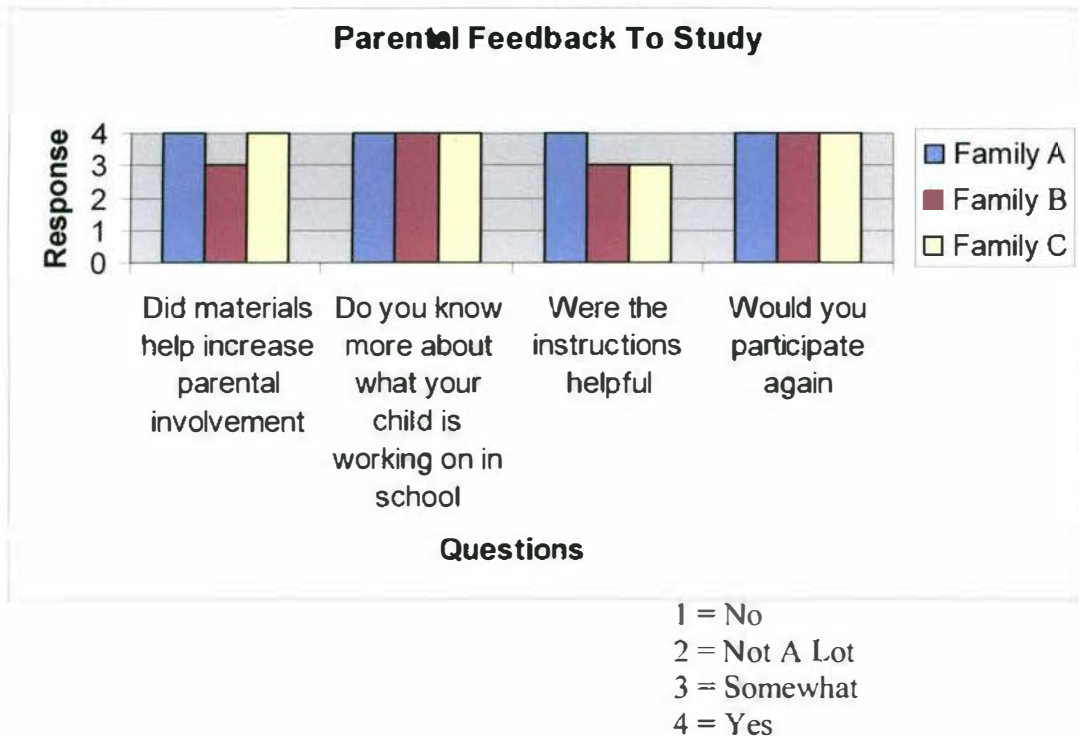
**Table 5**

According to Table 5, Family C reported a decrease in the frequency of time their child spent watching television. Before the plan was implemented, they reported that their child watched television hourly while after the intervention it was down to daily. Playing turn taking games and interacting with their child as they played with toys showed the greatest growth. Family C reported an increase from monthly to daily with playing turn taking games and they reported an increase from weekly to hourly in playing with toys. Family C reported no change in frequency in completing matching puzzles and singing and/or dancing to songs with their child.

**Table 6**

Table 6 displays the responses each family made to four specific questions they were asked at the final interview. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions used, the parents were asked if the materials presented helped increase their parental involvement, if they knew more about what their child was working on in school, if the instructions were helpful and if they would participate again. The parents were given the following scale to rate their response to each question: 1 for no, 2 for not a lot, 3 for somewhat, and 4 for yes.

**Table 6**



According to Table 6, Family A and Family C felt that the materials did help increase their parental involvement. Family B reporting that the materials were

somewhat helpful in increasing their parental involvement. All the families agreed that after participating in the study they all knew more about what their child is working on in school. Families B and C found the instruction cards to be somewhat helpful while family A felt that they were very helpful. All the families agreed that they would participate in the study again and that they now knew more about what their child was working on in school.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### **Discussion**

The main focus of this study was to identify methods to increase parental involvement in the education of students in my classroom. The families who participated had limited resources and educational backgrounds. I initially anticipated being the one to educate the parents. I quickly discovered that they would also educate me in return. With their help I was able to identify methods, beyond simply providing resources, in which I could assist families.

Having the interviews take place within the home setting was very beneficial to this study. As Keyes (2002) commented, parents have many other parental responsibilities in addition to their child's education. Through the home interviews I was able to physically observe some of the hardships they face. While I was visiting Family C the mother was fixing dinner, folding clothes, settling disputes between the boys and answering my questions. Being able to actually see the circumstances parents were dealing with as they interacted with their children helped me as a teacher to modify the plans to better fit their family life style. For Family C it would have been difficult for me to expect the mother to have significant one on one time with her son. To meet this need I created more materials and supplies so that the brothers could also participate.

The home interviews also helped foster a better relationship between myself and the families. Family B thanked me for coming after school hours when they were

home from work. They added that they frequently missed meetings at school because they could not be absent from work to attend. It was noted that the mom from Family A was also much more willing to open up to me when interviewed face to face. My previous conversations over the phone or in the daily note home were very brief with limited responses from mom. During the interview however, she was much more excited to tell me all about what she had tried and what help she felt she needed to be better equipped to help her son meet his educational goals.

The phone call during mid-week to see how everything was going was also very helpful. I previously had notebooks which I used to communicate with parents but noted very limited responses. I learned through the study that my parents do not always have the time to sit and write a note back. Some of my families were also embarrassed about their lack of ability to read the notes and write back. I acquired more information and was able to give more suggestions in one five minute conversation than I could in a week's worth of notes.

The final interview also helped me to learn that my parents have always had the desire to help their child. They just needed more guidance and support. The lack of participation in the parental involvement methods I had previously tried in my classroom led me to the underlying thought that maybe my parents just did not care. The excitement in their voices when they told me what they could do with their child now and the improvements they saw at home quickly helped to eliminate my previous notion. I now agree with Barrera and Warner (2003) that parents desire to be good parents, they just do not always have the means to do so.

## **Recommendations**

While the parental involvement program that I developed and implemented provided the intended results, I have recommendations for future research. The following recommendations should be considered.

In this study, one box was sent home each week. While the parents enjoyed the activity, they did note that their child did not always want to do the same activity each day. I believe that it would be better to send home at least two activities each week that parents could alternate, leading to less disinterest from their child. It could also be altered such that boxes were sent home on Monday and then a new one on Thursday for the weekend to help with variation.

A second recommendation is that more thought needs to be put into finding ways to provide parents with more permanent resources to keep within their home. I was able to help two of the families obtain toys used in the study so that they would own them but I was unable to do it for the third family. Many of the families had very few, if any, educational toys in their home to even attempt parental carryover. While the boxes gave them one opportunity, it is my belief that having more activities accessible to them on a daily basis would create more parental involvement opportunities.

Another recommendation is that there be more training for families about what an IFSP is and their rights under the law. When I met with my families they did not even know that they should be considered and included within their child's plan.

If my parents had any prior experience with other children and special education, it was an IEP where the focus is the child and educational relevance. We can not expect parents to participate if they do not even know what they are participating in. Whether there be information nights, brochures, or one on one meetings, parents need to know what is going on and what their rights are.

Another recommendation would be not to focus on the amount of time a parent has to spend with their child, but the quality of the time they have. My parents did not report having more time to spend with their child after the study but they did report that the time they spent was more beneficial to their child. Parents could spend all day with their child but if they do not know how to interact with them or use that time constructively, there were educational learning opportunities lost.

While there is a wealth of research into teacher's attitudes and feelings toward parental involvement, I feel that there needs to be a greater focus on parental beliefs and thoughts. Many articles are written by teachers or administrators and while they comment on parental attitudes, there is limited first hand information. More articles need to be written or supported by parents as to their thoughts and attitudes towards working with teachers. I learned in this study that we as educators have just as much to learn from families as we have to teach them.

## **Conclusion**

Parents want to do what is best for their child. They just do not always know what that is or how to go about it. For my study I first interviewed parents to get their initial thoughts and help them define their areas of need. I then worked with them to

come up with a plan to address those needs. The plan consisted of sending home boxes of materials and instructions on how to use the materials. The goal was that each family would interact with their child, learning ways to increase their parental involvement. The plan was modified for each individual family in order to maximize their potential results. At the completion of four weeks a final interview was conducted to assess the impact.

Each family reported more quality time spent with their child. They reported more frequent time spent on educational interactions such as reading stories, playing games together and completing puzzles and less on non-interactive activities such as television. The parents reported more confidence in knowing what their child is working on and how to interact with them to reach those goals. They all wanted to participate again and thus the program was extended.

As stated earlier, education begins in the home. We as educators need to support the families and help them identify and locate the resources they need to be involved as parents in their child's education. Once this has occurred, families will thrive on their ability to participate and the benefits to their child will be endless.



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Appendices

Appendix A

October 2, 2006



Hello From School,

I am currently working on a project for my graduate program and I am looking for your help. As the parent of a child in my class, you are the most important part of your child's educational team. At school we work on many skills such as following directions, putting a puzzle together and sitting to read a story. I am sure you would like to work on these same skills at home. For my project I am creating some activities that will help you know what we are doing at school and how you can try it at home. It would require an initial brief home visit followed by a few weeks of activities, and then a final home visit/celebration! Please fill out the form below and return it in your child's backpack. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 344-4404.

Thank You,

Sherry Starowitz

-----  
Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am interested in learning about what my child is working on in school and some activities to try at home and. I would like to set up a home visit to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I am interested at this time.

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial Parent Interview**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How much time do you spend with your child each day?

1-2 Hours

3-4 Hours

5-6 Hours

All Day

2. Do you feel that you have enough time to spend with your child?

Yes

Sometimes

Not Much

No

3. What hardships do you face in spending time with your child?

4. What activities do you and your child do together? How Often?

	Hourly (Always)	Daily (Frequently)	Weekly (Sometimes)	Monthly (Occasionally)
Read Stories				
Turn Taking Games				
Puzzles				
Singing				
Eat Meals				
Cause/Effect Toys				
Watch TV				
Bedtime Routine				



5. Do you feel that have the things you need to play with your child?

Yes                      Sometimes                      Not Always                      No

6. Do you feel that you know what your child is working on in school?

Yes                      Sometimes                      Not Always                      No

7. What could the school do to better assist you at home?

- Signing out toys that will have written suggestions of how to use them at home with your child.
- Borrowing a 5-10 minute video once a week that shows your child working with me on one of their educational goals. The materials used in the video will also be sent home for your use.
- Receiving activity ideas that you can do with their child to work on goals using common household materials.

### **Discussion**

**Final Parent Interview**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

8. How much time did you spend with your child each day?

1-2 Hours                      3-4 Hours                      5-6 Hours                      All Day

9. Do you feel that you had more quality time to spend with your child?

Yes                      Sometimes                      Not Much                      No

10. What hardships did you face in spending time with your child?

11. What new activities do you and your child do together now? How Often?

	Hourly (Always)	Daily (Frequently)	Weekly (Sometimes)	Monthly (Occasionally)
Read Stories				
Turn Taking Games				
Puzzles				
Singing				
Eat Meals				
Cause/Effect Toys				
Watch TV				
Bedtime Routine				

12. Do you feel that having the materials and toys available to you helped increase your involvement with your child?

Yes                      Somewhat                      Not a lot                      Not at all

13. Do you feel that you now know more of what your child is working on in school?

Yes                      Somewhat                      Not a lot                      Not at all

14. How helpful were the instructions in showing you ways to interact with your child?

Very                      Somewhat                      Not a lot                      Not at all

15. Would you participate again?

Yes                                      Maybe                                      No

16. What changes would you suggest for next time?

### **Discussion**

# Fisher Price Laugh And Learn Piggy Bank



1. Take pig out of box.
2. Slide green button towards the pig's tail.
3. Open the door and take the coins out. You hold onto the coins.
4. Put a coin in the pig to show your child how the pig plays music.
5. When your child wants more, touch your nose and tell them "touch nose."
6. If they touch their nose praise them with a coin to put in the pig.
7. If they do not touch their nose help them do it and then praise them with a coin.
8. Repeat steps 5-7 switching between nose, ears, mouth, head, and eyes until the coins are all gone.
9. When all the coins are gone let your child touch the pig's nose and dance to more music.
10. When all done, let child know they did a good job.
11. Put the coins, the pig, and this card back in the box.
12. Return the box to school on Monday.

# Mr. Potato Head's Silly Suitcase



1. Take the pumpkin and Potato Head pieces out of the box.
2. Take the top off of the pumpkin and put the Potato Head pieces in the pumpkin.
3. Tell your child that you are going to be making a pumpkin head today.
4. Have your child close their eyes and stick their hand into the pumpkin. Tell them to pull out a piece
5. Ask your child to name what piece they pulled out (eyes, nose, ears, mouth, hands, hat) and point to where it is on their body.
6. Ask the child where the piece goes on the pumpkin head. Help them push it into the pumpkin.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 until all pieces have been put in the pumpkin.
8. Celebrate the pumpkin face with your child and then tell your child that it is time to clean up.
9. Have your child help you put the pieces back in the box.
10. When all done, let child know they did a good job.
11. Put the potato head pieces and this card back in the box. On Friday throw the pumpkin out.
12. Return the box to school on Monday.

# Buckaroo

Appendix F



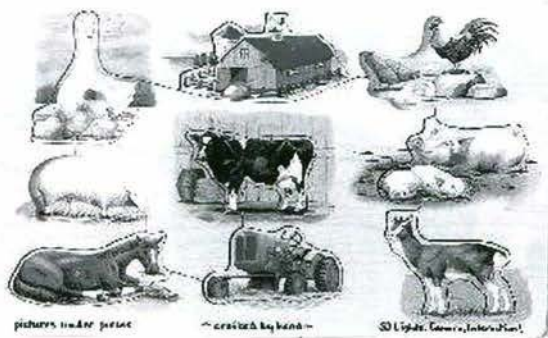
1. Take the pieces out of the box.
2. Sit across from your child and put the horse and pieces between you.
3. Push the horse's tail down until his feet stay down.
4. Put the red saddle on the horse's back.
5. Tell your child that you are going to take turns putting pieces on the horse.
6. Say "My turn," and put one piece on.
7. When your child reaches for a piece, tell them to use their words. If they don't say or sign "turn" show them how. Wait until they say or sign "turn" before letting them put a piece on.
8. Continue back and forth saying "turn" and putting a piece on until the horse suddenly kicks them off.
9. If time allows, try to play 2-3 times per day.
10. When all done, let child know they did a good job.
11. Put the horse, the pieces and this card back in the box.
12. Return the box to school on Monday.

# Julie's Favorites



1. Take CD out of case and put in CD player
2. Plug CD player in
3. Press ⇨ button until you reach 12 (Bop Until You Drop)
4. Press play
5. As the music plays follow the directions sung with your child
6. \* Bounce = Jump  
 Float = Waving arms  
 Jiggle = Swing hips  
 Slow Motion = Take Big Slow Steps  
 Spin = Spin in a circle  
 Bop Until You Drop = Fall to floor
7. When all done, let child know they did a good job
8. Press ⇨ button until you reach 21 (Freeze)
9. When the music starts begin dancing and when the music stops, freeze in place
10. As the music is playing, give your child simple directions to follow  
 Examples: Jump, gallop, clap hands, dance with hands on head, touch toes, tap belly, jump on one foot, spin
11. Praise them for freezing when the music stops
12. When all done, let child know they did a good job
13. You can explore other songs if you would like to
14. Put the CD player, the CD, and this card back in the box
15. Return the box to school on Monday

# Farm Puzzle



1. Take puzzle out of box
2. Dump cotton balls into box
3. Hide the puzzle pieces in the cotton
4. Sing “Old McDonald Had a Farm, EIEIO, and on his farm he had a (STOP)” Let the child now look for a piece in the cotton.
5. When they pull the piece out have them say what animal it is.
6. Continue singing, “EIEO, with a \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, here and a \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, there, here a \_\_\_\_, there a \_\_\_\_, everywhere a \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, Old McDonald had a farm EIEO.”
7. Then you repeat steps 4-6 until all the pieces are put in the puzzle.
8. Encourage your child to help sing and say the animal noises as go.
9. When all done, let child know they did a good job
10. Put the puzzle, the puzzle pieces, the cotton and this card back in the box
11. Return the box to school on Monday

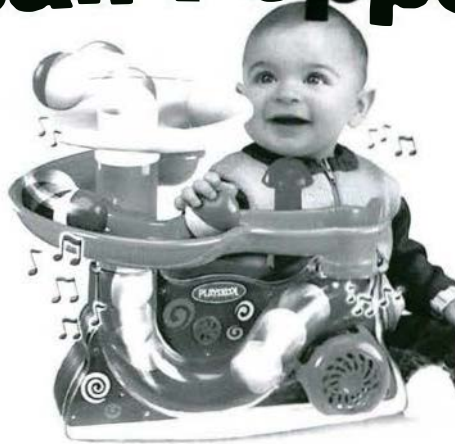


# Infantino Jumbo Elephant Shape Sorter



1. Take elephant out of box.
2. Dump cotton into box.
3. Help your child push the elephant's ears. You start it and then let your child finish.
4. The shapes will come out the elephant's nose.
5. Ask your child to touch their ears'. You can help them by touching your ears. Then ask the child to touch their nose. You can help them by touching your nose.
6. As the child is touching their ears and nose, hide the shapes in the cotton.
7. Have your child dig through the cotton to find a shape.
8. Look to see if the you can see the matching shape on the elephant. If not push the elephants tail until you see the shape.
9. Let them try to put the shape in the elephant. If they are still having trouble after a minute, point to where the shape is suppose to go. Give them one more minute and then help them put it in.
10. Praise your child, even if you had to help.
11. Have child find another shape and repeat steps 8-10 until all the shapes are in the elephant.
12. When all done, let child know they did a good job.
13. Put the shapes, the elephant, the cotton and this card back in the box.
14. Return the box to school on Monday.

# Playskool Air-tivity Ball Popper



1. Take balls out of box and place them in the toy.
2. Turn the toy on by moving switch under red handle to “on.”
3. Help your child push the red handle.
4. Clap, cheer, and/or laugh with child as balls fly.
5. When the toy shuts off, collect the balls.
6. Hold a ball up to show your child but do not give to them.
7. Say, “more,” and wait for child to sign more then give your child the ball.
8. Repeat step 7 until all the balls are back in the toy.
9. Repeat steps 1-7 until you and your child are finished.

# Fisher Price Fish And Learn



1. Take the fish and the boats out of the box.
2. Place the fish face side up and the color side down.
3. Have your child pick who is going first.
4. Take the pole with one hand and catch a fish.
5. Tell your child what color fish and have them repeat.  
(Example: Mommy got a red fish. What color did Mommy get?)
6. Have your child point to the same color boat.  
(Example: Where is the same? Point to the same color?)
7. Help child put the fish in the same color boat.  
(Example: Put with same. Put in boat.)
8. Switch turns and repeat until all the fish are in a boat.