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## Empowering Families From the Start: Kindergarten Family Nights

### Abstract

There are more two parent working families and single parent families in the 21st century than in any other time period in our history. With this increase in demands put on parents, their children's education is increasingly left to the teachers and faculty the children encounter at school. For children to receive the best education possible, families and educators must therefore work together. This research project examined ways to help families and kindergarten teachers meet the needs of children. One important way is through developing and implementing two developmentally appropriate, hands-on, family night events at a middle class school district in the mid-west. Families had the opportunity to come to school, participate in educational activities related to their children's current school curriculum, and take home activity extensions to enhance their children's educational success at home.

Empowering Families From the Start: Kindergarten Family Nights

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Early Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the degree of

Master's of Arts in Education

With a Major in Early Childhood Education

University of Northern Iowa

By

Melissa M. Teggatz

July 2006

This research project by: Melissa Teggatz

Titled: Empowering Families From the Start: Kindergarten Family Nights

Has been approved as meeting the researcher requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction Education

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## ABSTRACT

There are more two parent working families and single parent families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than in any other time period in our history. With this increase in demands put on parents, their children's education is increasingly left to the teachers and faculty the children encounter at school. For children to receive the best education possible, families and educators must therefore work together. This research project examined ways to help families and kindergarten teachers meet the needs of children. One important way is through developing and implementing two developmentally appropriate, hands-on, family night events at a middle class school district in the mid-west. Families had the opportunity to come to school, participate in educational activities related to their children's current school curriculum, and take home activity extensions to enhance their children's educational success at home.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview of the Project.....	1
Project Description.....	2
Purpose of the Project.....	2
Project Rationale.....	3
Importance of the Project.....	4
Definitions.....	4
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	7
Methodology.....	7
Procedures.....	7
Literature Review.....	9
Background.....	9
Positive Aspects of Family Involvement.....	13
Negative Aspects of Family Involvement.....	17
Benefits for At-Risk Populations.....	19
CHAPTER 3. KINDERGARTEN FAMILY NIGHT PROJECT.....	23
Project.....	23
Designing the Family Nights.....	23

Fall Kindergarten Family Night – November 9, 2005.....	24
Development and Implementation.....	24
Story-Telling Station.....	25
Phonemic Awareness Station.....	24
Math Station.....	26
Parent Evaluation.....	26
Reflection of the first Kindergarten Family Night.....	27
Spring Kindergarten Family Night – April 12, 2006.....	28
Development and Implementation.....	28
Reading Station.....	29
Math Station.....	29
Technology Station.....	30
Parent Evaluation.....	30
Reflection of the Spring Family Night.....	31
CHAPTER 4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32
Summary.....	32
Conclusions.....	34
Recommendations.....	34
REFERENCES.....	36
APPENDIXES.....	38
APPENDIX A: FALL FAMILY NIGHT HANDOUTS.....	38
APPENDIX B: SPRING FAMILY NIGHT HANDOUTS.....	42



APPENDIX C: TEACHER RESOURCES.....	50
APPENDIX D: PARENT EVALUATION FORMS.....	57

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Families of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are busier than ever before. In many two-parent households, both parents work outside the home. According to the Iowa Department of Education (1994), 77% of Iowa families with children under the age of six have both or the only parent(s) working outside of the home. Iowa ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the country for number of parents working outside the home. This coincides with single parent families being more common today than in past generations. With this increase demand on parents, their children's education is increasingly left to teachers at school. For children to receive the best education possible, families and educators must work together. Twenty-first century educators must include parental involvement as part of children's education. Educators need to ask how they can productively and meaningfully involve families in their children's educational journey.

The intent of this project was to help families and kindergarten teachers meet the needs of the children they have together. Families were given tools and resources necessary to enrich their children's academic needs; therefore, their children's entire educational experience will be enhanced.

#### Overview of the Project

The Kindergarten Family Night project addresses the need for involving families in their children's education. For the purpose of this project *family* is defined as an adult who is actively involved in the children's life. The questions this project addressed include: (a) why involve families in young children's education, (b) what does current

research say about family involvement in schools, and (c) what are potential benefits and limitations of implementing kindergarten family nights? The following sections provide a framework for the project including the description, purpose, and rationale.

### *Project Description*

This project consists of the development and implementation of two family nights for the seventy-five kindergarten students served at Terrace Elementary in Ankeny, Iowa and up to two adults who are active in the student's life. The Kindergarten Family Nights included presentations of developmentally appropriate activities conducted by teachers, which the families were able to create and try out. The families took the activities and other extensions home to use with their children.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this project was to provide kindergarten families with tools and resources that can help their children be successful in school. Parents are their children's first teachers. As a Kindergarten teacher, I want to support this parental role by encouraging and stimulating parents to take an active role in their children's education. This may be accomplished by aiding families in creating numerous developmentally appropriate activities and identifying useful extensions that families can do at home with their children. Families also had the opportunity to create educational activities, interact with their children, and learn additional ways to help their children at home, thus improving their children's education.

### *Project Rationale*

Two of Iowa's eight teaching standards (SAI-Iowa, 2004) now promote active family involvement in public educational programs.

STANDARD 1. DEMONSTRATES ABILITY TO ENHANCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS. The teacher

A. Provides evidence of student learning to students, families, and staff.

G. Communicates with students, families, colleagues, and communities effectively and accurately.

STANDARD 8. FULFILLS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ESTABLISHED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT. The teacher

E. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning. (SAI-Iowa (2004).

Iowa Teaching Standards (<http://www.sai-iowa.org/teachingstds.html>)

As a teacher, I have found parents/guardians, as well as other adult family members want to reinforce their children's educational experience, but lack the knowledge on how to most beneficially help their children at home. Most parents are

willing to help their children if they are given specific instructions and the resources necessary to carry out the activity. I have seen student performance, both academically and behaviorally, improve when parents were given the correct tools or resources to work with their children. I believe if educators provide parents with developmentally appropriate educational activities, parents will use them.

### *Importance of the Project*

As the number of two-parent working families and single parent families increase, educators need to do more to encourage and educate families concerning strategies they can use at home to enhance their children's educational experiences. A majority of parents would help their children at home if given the needed resources. Many parents do not know how to help their children at home, and therefore, do not help them at all. One way a few schools are providing parents with needed resources is to schedule family nights in the evening to educate and inform parents of instructional strategies they can use at home. Currently, the Ankeny Community School District does not have a program in place to work with families in this manner. This project provides the Ankeny Community School District with a model of an effective program that they can use in their school district.

### Definitions

Within the literature read for this project, various educational terms were used.

For clarity and understanding the terms below are defined in the following manner:

Developmentally Appropriate Practices: In 1996 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a position statement on

developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for children ages birth through age 8.

Briefly, DAP can be defined as those practices which are both age appropriate and individually appropriate for each child. (Retrieved from:

<http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/PSDAP98.PDF> )

Family: Any person or persons who have direct contact in caring for the well being of the child and who is active in the child's life.

Family Night: A night set aside at school for a specific age group of families to come to school and learn about educational activities and extensions to enhance their school age child's education at home.

Iowa Teaching Standards: These standards are legislatively mandated, and serve as the foundation of the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality law. Sample model descriptors to support the criteria can be found at

<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/tqt/tc/documents.html> (Retrieved from:

<http://www.iowaaea.org/evaluation/1.01-glossary.html#T> )

Shared Reading: Is an interactive reading experience, where the reading process and strategies are demonstrated to children in small or large group settings by an adult. Shared reading provides scaffolding in fostering independent reading at any age level, ability, or in any subject.

Phonemic Awareness: Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to segment and manipulate the sounds of oral language. It is not the same as phonics, which involves knowing how written letters relate to spoken sounds. Activities that develop phonemic

awareness in children provide practice with rhyme and with beginning sounds and syllables (Retrieved from: [http://reading.org/resources/issues/positions\\_phonemic.html](http://reading.org/resources/issues/positions_phonemic.html) )

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

In this section I will share why I became interested in increasing family involvement in my school. I will also review current research and findings from others interested in this topic.

#### Procedures

I began this research project because I wanted to actively involve my students' families in their children's education. I would send home activity ideas and handouts in my newsletters, but was always concerned and wondered if the activities made sense, if the parents had the necessary supplies to carry out the activities, and if the idea even made it into the hands of my students' family members. I wanted to find out what some of the most beneficial ways were to involve my students' families in their children's educational journey and to learn how I could carry those ideas out in my classroom. I also wanted to find research to support my belief of involving families in their children's education. Also this project may serve as a pilot study to get further funding to carry out similar family night events throughout the entire K-5 building where I teach in the future.

My search led me to conversations with two teachers who designed and implemented family nights at their schools. M. Jungman (personal communications April 8, 2004) is a Title One educator who works on a team of five teachers who serve a K-4 building in a neighboring school district to mine. A. Danks (personal communications



April 3, 2004) teaches second grade in a rural school located in Southeast Iowa. These teachers shared with me how their family nights were funded and carried out. In Ms. Jungman's case, Title One funds allotted to her building helped to fund three building wide family nights. At Ms. Jungman's family nights, families rotated in each session through three stations with activities geared towards children in either kindergarten through second grades, or children in third through fourth grades depending on their grade level. Each year the Title One team chose a different community organization to help sponsor the family nights. Two examples of previous sponsors are the Des Moines Symphony and Polk County Conservation. At each family night, the community sponsor designed and implemented a station that families rotated through where they were able to learn more about the given sponsors' organization and/or something educational the sponsor had to offer. Examples of activities previous sponsors held at their station are learning about various instruments in the symphony and what kinds of tracks various Iowa animals leave behind when they walk. In Ms. Danks's school, all grade level and reading support teachers developed their own educational activity to carry out at their family night event. Families got to rotate through various rooms completing activities of their choosing. By combining their ideas with mine and using current research about how best to involve families at school, I created two different family nights in which the kindergarten students of Terrace Elementary in Ankeny, Iowa and their families could participate. First, I will provide a review of the literature regarding family involvement.

## Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this project includes articles dealing with why schools and educators should include families in school sponsored activities, as well as, articles on how to develop effective family involvement activities. This literature review also includes findings from research studies that looked at involving parents in student's education. First I provide background information on family involvement in children's educational experiences. Next I look at the positive and negative aspects of involving families. Finally, I discuss the benefits of federally funded programs for the at-risk population.

### *Background*

Marie App (1997) addressed the question of why we, as educators, should involve families in students' educational journeys. Her response included the following: (a) before a child starts school, one-half of his/her mature intellect has already been formed, (b) findings show when teachers involve families, the families know more about the school, believe the teacher wants them to help, and the parents have better attitudes towards school and their child's teacher, and finally (c) students make higher gains in reading achievement. The Iowa Department of Education (1994) has also found similar benefits to involving families at school. In addition to the benefits App identified, the Iowa Department of Education (1994) stated that parents become more supportive of their children, homework is completed at a higher quality and more regularly, and teacher's morale improves when families are actively involved in their student's education.

Families face numerous barriers that prevent them from becoming actively involved in their children's education. Some of these barriers include, but are not limited to, transportation issues, work schedules, language obstacles, and finances. Even with the barriers families may face when becoming involved with school activities, the families still desire to be included. App (1997) conducted an informal survey with approximately 50 family members in Wisconsin asking them to identify the most beneficial information they could receive to help their children learn in school. Families overwhelmingly responded by saying they want to belong. They wanted to be invited to school, told how they could participate in school activities, and have more contact with their children's teachers. During those contacts, parents wanted teachers to keep their conversations clear and brief, tell parents what strategies they should use when working with their children at home, and what the school's expectations are for their children. Parents also wanted to know about their children's performance, what their children were doing well, and/or what they were not doing well.

Family involvement looks differently and serves a variety of purposes across schools and classrooms. Activities might include parent volunteers aiding students with basic academic skills, donating classroom supplies, holding student-based career discussions, or chaperoning a field trip. Family involvement may also include more elaborate activities such as family education nights, child development classes for parents, educational toy or book lending libraries, and assistance in locating and utilizing community resources (Gage & Workman, 1997). Guideline number five in the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Guidelines for Decisions

About Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (1997)

described the importance of educators working alongside families to understand better the children they teach. Guideline Five addresses teachers and families having a mutual respect and responsibility towards a child's education. This guideline states when good relationships between families and educators are present more accurate and complete information is presented in assisting the needs of the child. Lorenza DiNatale (2002) also spoke highly of the importance of family involvement. She stated, "...decades of research have shown that one of the most accurate predictors of achievement in school is not family income or parents' education level, but the extent to which parents believe they can be key resources in the children's education and become involved at school and in the community" (p. 91).

The Iowa Department of Education in *Parent involvement in education: A resource for parents, educators, and communities* (1994) suggested seven elements educators must consider when attempting to actively involve families at school. These seven elements included: written policies, administrative support, training for staff and parents, a partnership approach, two-way communication, networking information and resources, and evaluation. Overall, educators must remember to keep it simple, keep it relevant, and keep it warm and personal (App, 1997).

When educators have unsubstantiated assumptions about families they serve they may create negative impressions. Kieff and Wellhousen (2000) found that many times educators make assumptions about families they serve regarding the language spoken at home, the make-up of the family, monetary issues, and/or the education of the parents.

These assumptions often create multiple barriers, blocking families' abilities to get involved in planned school activities. A survey was sent to approximately 30,000 PTA presidents and leaders from the National PTA asking members what obstacles they encountered when attempting to involve parents at school. The survey results revealed that the number one reason parents do not become involved is lack of time. Responses on the PTA survey also indicated that parents believe they do not have anything to contribute, they do not understand the school system, there is no child care, they are intimidated, cultural and language differences, and lack of transportation (Iowa Department of Education, 1994).

There are numerous ways educators can avoid making inappropriate assumptions about families they serve that create barriers. One way is to use the family involvement planning worksheet and common barriers and possible modifications checklist Kieff and Wellhousen (2000) developed. Kieff and Wellhousen's Family Involvement Planning Worksheet looks at areas such as family structures, family lifestyles, and family cultures and gives considerations on how to increase family involvement in your planned activities. Kieff and Wellhousen's Common Barriers and Possible Modifications Checklist offers educators the most common barriers families face preventing them from coming to family events. Some of these barriers include: time, transportation, child care, curriculum, and expenses. Included in their checklist one can find modification ideas to increase family participation. App (1997) also suggested that teachers get to know each child on a personal level, make personal contacts with each family every month, and welcome families into the school and their classroom on a regular basis.

As with any educational issue, there are opposing points of view. While I believe the positive aspects of family involvement in education outweigh negative concerns, I must address both sides of the issue. In the following sections I discuss the positive and negative aspects of involving families in their children's educational journey.

### *Positive Aspects of Family Involvement*

Overall program quality improves with active and positive family involvement. In addition, "...programs with a high degree of consistent and meaningful parental involvement usually outperform similar programs without family involvement" (DiNatale, p.91). Families involved in their children's education also promote learning at home beyond the family who is not involved (Schwartz, 1999). Educators also see more positive interactions from families and students who are infused in different areas of education. There are research studies that document the positive benefits of family involvement in regards to children's academic performance. A selection of these articles will be reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Dorothy Strickland (2004) outlined numerous key implications for parents and educators in developing and promoting children's literacy development in *Working with families as partners in early literacy*. Strickland told her readers that phonological awareness begins at an early age through the simple rhymes and chants parents teach their children. Children who fall behind in this area of literacy development are less likely to learn to read easily and continue to have struggles in reading as they grow (Strickland, 2004). Strickland also shared with readers, that children who grow up in language rich environments have greater success in school compared to children who do not. Families

with poor language skills provided less varied vocabulary in their daily conversations; therefore, children in these homes had less opportunity to develop more sophisticated vocabularies than their peers who grew up in language rich environments. The development of vocabulary has a direct correlation with reading achievement.

A few of Strickland's (2004) key implications for parents and educators included: parents and educators play a vital role in developing a child's capacity to learn, there are many informal and fun ways to develop language and literacy, and to use sophisticated and unusual words when appropriate when conversing with children. For educators, she suggested combining parent education with health and social services to help families coordinate some of the demands life has on them. Strickland also urged educators to be patient and flexible when planning parent education and to focus on one key idea at a time with lots of useful suggestions to make application easier for more parents.

Eleonora Vivas (1996) studied the "...effects of a systematic, story-reading-aloud program on a few aspects of language development in preschool and first-grade children" (p.1). Vivas's research followed 222 children who were randomly assigned to three groups for each age group: one group was assigned the Home-Based Experimental group (HB) which was carried out by the parents (N=72), one group was assigned the School-Based Experimental group (SB) which was carried out by the teachers at school (N=84), and 1 group was designated as the control group (N=66). In the control group, the parents interacted with their children in the typical ways they normally would. Most of the children in this Venezuelan study were rarely ever read aloud to by another person prior

to this study. Therefore, the children in the control group were basically never read children's storybooks.

After pretest measures were completed, the children in the experimental groups were read 72 illustrated children's books over the course of 12 weeks. After comparing the results of the pre- and posttests, using the Kruskal-Wallis rank test and calculating when significant differences were found between groups, Vivas found the preschool children in the HB groups scored significantly better ( $U=321.5$ ;  $p<.0003$ ) than the control group in the receptive language test, although they did not show a significant difference ( $U=528.5$ ;  $p<.09$ ) over the SB group. When Vivas looked at the story comprehension scores no significant differences occurred among the groups, but when she did a follow up test 9 months later the gains made by the HB group endured ( $\chi^2_{sup2}=9.48$ ,  $p<.03$ ). In looking at the first grade students, similar results were found. Both the HB and SB groups showed significant gains from the pre to post test. Those gains remained only in the SB program in the nine month follow up study. The opposite was found when comparing the significant gains ( $p<.05$ ) made by both the SB and HB groups in the post story comprehension test, only the HB group retained their gains nine months later.

Vivas found both the children in the HB and the SB experimental groups made significant gains over the children in the control groups. She concluded that listening to stories helped children with their listening skills, improved their comprehension understandings, and gained greater verbal expression.

Morrow and Young (1996) conducted a study to raise awareness of parents and teachers regarding the importance of working together to develop children's literacy



skills. The family literacy program used in this study was The Family WRAP Program (Writing and Reading Appreciation for Parents and Pupils). This program was designed similar to the WRAP (Writing and Reading Appreciation Program) used in the school system. Morrow and Young wanted to provide collaborative activities to connect home and school activities to “determine what impact the family literacy program had on (a) children’s literacy achievement at school; (b) children’s interest in reading and writing based on teachers’ ratings and their participation in literacy activities at home; (c) children’s and adults’ interest in working together at home; (d) the attitudes of teacher, children, and parents toward the family literacy program,” (p.3).

The researchers followed 54 students in an at risk urban public school. Eighteen children were randomly selected from two first, two second, and two third grade classrooms. Nine of these selected students from each grade level served as the experimental group and received both the home-based and school-based programs for one year. The other 27 students served as the control group.

After comparing the pre- and post-test results using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), Morrow and Young found the experimental group scored significantly better on story retelling ( $F(1.53)=20.17, p<.001$ ), story rewriting ( $F(1.53)=41.71, p<.001$ ), probed recall comprehension test ( $F(1.53)=14.99, p<.001$ ) and the California Test of Basic Skills ( $F(1.53)=27.15, p<.001$ ). Through interviews conducted with the children and the families, Morrow and Young found children from the experimental group enjoyed looking at books ( $F(1.53)=6.71, p<.02$ ) and had more interactions with a grown up ( $F(1.53)=10.53, p<.005$ ) than children in the control group. Parents in the experimental

group also reported to interacting with and reading and writing more with their children than the control group parents ( $F(1.53)=13.35, p<.005$ ) and choosing generally to do more things with their children ( $F(1.53)=30.70, p<.001$ ). Morrow and Young concluded that when parents and teachers worked together in a respectful and sensitive way, children's literacy skills improved.

### *Negative Aspects of Family Involvement*

One might think it would be difficult to come up with negative aspects when involving families in their child's education. Yet I found some articles that spoke directly to this issue. DiNatale (2002) wrote about the ability of parent volunteers to maintain confidentiality of student information. In the school setting certain information concerning a student education is confidential. Often times parent volunteers do not know what specific information should remain confidential. If a parent volunteer breeches this confidentiality it could jeopardize a student and his or her family in numerous ways. Finders and Lewis (1994) addressed issues of parents who felt the programs were trying to remediate them. The researchers interviewed parents who did not typically attend school functions. She categorized the parents' anxieties into three areas. The first area addressed the diverse school experiences among parents. Parents with negative school experiences felt that anytime they were called into school, it was to discuss their child's poor performance. Parents may also avoid school because of language barriers or their own lack of written language skills. The second area, time and money constraints, were identified as a primary hurdle for families today. Many families

work extra hours to provide income for the family and cannot take time off from work to visit school without losing needed money or having their job performance rating suffer.

The third and final area concerned the diverse cultural practices of the families. An example would be a Latino child who would be asked to translate for his parents in a conference. This places the child and parents on equal status, contradicting the family hierarchy of the Latino culture. Educators can avoid this dilemma by having a translator available at conferences. There are also some cultures in which families believe they are teaching their children independence by not getting involved in their school activities.

There are also negative aspects regarding family involvement from the educator's standpoint. These ideas come from my own experience and through interviews conducted with Marilyn Jungman, a Title One teacher, and Andrea Danks, a Second Grade teacher. Teachers need extra preparation time to carry out the family involvement activities and these activities typically occur after regular contract hours. This time is often unpaid or uncompensated to educators. Further, the tight educational budgets results in the lack of capital necessary for these activities and other projects may be given higher priorities.

Gage and Workman (1997) stated that focusing on issues of partnership rather than participation and attendance is an alternative view educators should take when looking at family involvement. They also gave readers three conditions that must be met to effectively form family and school partnerships. First, the families and the school must believe they bring something meaningful and valuable to the relationship; second, the families and the school must value the welfare of the child; and finally both parties must believe in a sense of shared responsibility to common goals. Despite the negative factors,

many positive aspects evolve from family involvement in education. As well as considering the overall positive and negative aspects of family involvement in education for the general population, I also considered the benefits for the At-Risk populations educators serve.

### *Benefits for At-Risk Populations*

Head Start is a federally-funded, nationally recognized early childhood program that serves low income families by providing high quality, free education for young children and support for the caregivers of the children the program serves. One critical component of Head Start is educating the parents and improving the home lives of the children they serve. Robert Leik and Mary Anne Chalkley (1990) wanted to find out what kind of impacts different parental involvement programs had in the evaluation of their children's behavior and capabilities and the overall functioning of the family, specifically family stress, adaptability, and coping strategies. They followed two different sets of single mother Head Start families. One set of participants (N=30) were in the enriched group, who were able to participate in special activities throughout the year in addition to regular Head Start programs activities. These included support groups for mothers, computer games that encouraged parent and child interaction, and parent-child group activities. The other group of Head Start participants (N=51) who were in the regular group only participated in typical Head Start activities throughout the year. The control group (N=21) consisted of participants who were on a wait list to attend Head Start. All three groups displayed similar demographics, including mother's age, monthly

income, parent education, sense of self-esteem and control in their lives, and children's competence and social acceptance scores.

Chalkley and Leik (1990) found, after a six month study, through interview sessions with the mothers, the parents in the enriched group spent an average of over one and a half hours per week in enrichment activities with their children; whereas, parents in the regular Head Start program averaged less than an hour per week. When the researchers evaluated the parent's competence and social acceptance of their children, both the enriched and regular groups of parents increased their perceptions of their children's abilities. Contrastly, the control group's evaluations of their children's abilities decreased. The study's greatest findings came in the area of family functioning. Most of the families from all three groups were classified as extreme when the study first began in terms of family dysfunction. By the end of the study, the control group saw a reduction of 25% and the regular Head Start group saw a 40% reduction in extreme family dysfunction. The enriched Head Start group saw the greatest reduction in extreme family dysfunction by a reduction of 78%. Chalkley and Leik concluded that by involving parents in a systematic way in their children's education educators can help make a positive impact on both the children's and families lives.

Even Start is another government-funded program aimed at educating parents how to best work with their children in their educational journeys. Even Start includes early childhood education, adult education, and parent education. A main component of the program is Parent and Child Together (PACT), which teaches parents how to

educationally play with their children. The program also encourages regular contact between the parents and their children's school teachers (Seaman and Young Yoo, 2001).

Don Seaman and Choo Young Yoo (2001) set out to study the impact the Even Start family literacy program had on school dropout rates and involving parents positively in their children's education. The two researchers focused on 13 Even Start programs in Texas, interviewing 313 parents. Their data was broken down into the following four categories (a) how frequently the participants participated in activities related to their literacy skills, (b) their involvement in their children's education, (c) what expectations they had about their children graduating from high school, and (d) how they rated their personal self-esteem. The data revealed the largest gains were seen in reading books (85%), notes to teachers (76%), and prescriptions (81%). Increases were also seen in writing, but were not as significant. Only one-third wrote grocery lists, and another one third wrote notes to their children's teachers.

Parent involvement also increased significantly according to the research conducted by Seaman and Young Yoo (2001). Twenty-nine percent of parents said they visited with their child's teacher on a weekly basis, 20 % meet with the teacher three times a week, and 33% said they visited with the teacher every day. Only 11% reported they did not visit with their child's teacher at all. Homework help was another area considered in this research. Before attending Even Start 28% of the parents never helped their children with their homework, compared with 8% who did not help their children after attending Even Start. Seaman and Young Yoo used a chi-square analysis method and found a decrease in the parents who did not help with homework to be statistically

significant ( $p = .01$ ). The increase in the number of parents who helped their children every day was also equally significant.

After participating in the program Seaman and Young Yoo, asked parents how likely they thought it would be that their child graduated from high school. Twenty-seven percent felt their children were somewhat likely to graduate and sixty percent felt very likely that their children would graduate from high school. Parents also reported to having higher self-esteem after attending the Even Start program. Researchers saw an increase in this category from 21% before attending the program to 54.5% after attending.

Taking into consideration the current literature concerning family involvement in children's education, I concluded that the positive benefits outweigh the negative affects. Vivas (1996), Morrow and Young (1996), Chalkley and Leik (1990), as well as, Seaman and Young Yoo (2001), found that families involved in their children's education to have positive effects on the academic success of the children in their studies. Educators need to be aware of barriers parents face when becoming involved in their children's educational experience, as outlined by App (1997), Strickland (2004), and Kieff and Wellhousen (2000) to reach a majority of the families they serve.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### Project

The following section highlights the development, implementation, and reflective evaluation of my two Kindergarten Family Nights, which I developed for the purpose of this project. I have separated my narrative into four sections beginning with how I determined to design my nights, then describing my first family night in November, and then of my second night that I held in April. I conclude this section with an overall reflective evaluation of my two Kindergarten Family Nights.

#### *Designing the Family Nights*

After the review of the literature, I knew I needed to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of the families we served. This was needed in order to have a successful family night. I wanted to make the family nights as family friendly as I could. I wanted to choose a time when most families could attend, yet be able to have their children in bed at a decent time. I wanted to have the night organized in a way that was informative as well as hands-on. I knew the family nights would have to function in a clear manner that made sense to the families attending. I did not want to overwhelm families with too much information at one time, nor did I want them to go home needing more information to be successful in helping their children at home.



*Fall Kindergarten Family Night - November 9, 2005*

*Development and Implementation.* My first Kindergarten Family Night consisted of three developmentally appropriate early childhood stations where parents and students worked together on activities they could use at home to extend the children's learning. I had five teachers from Terrace Elementary and our school principal volunteer to help me run the stations.

Families were personally invited to come via an invitation handed out during fall conferences from their classroom teacher. A follow-up reminder invitation was sent home with students two days before the event. The personal invitation at conferences led to our great turn out with over 50 percent of our students and families participating. I had 40 students out of our 72 kindergarteners come with 57 adults. I was very excited about our turnout considering this was the first time my school had ever sponsored anything like this. I even had one student who chose to come to family night over Tae Kwon Do! A description of the night follows.

When families arrived at school they were greeted by teachers and each child received a color dot, which later would be used to divide the large group into three smaller groups for participation at the stations. After short introductions, families were guided to their small group locations. Families with red dots went to the library for the story telling station, families with blue dots went to the art room for a phonemic awareness station, and families with the yellow dots stayed in the lunchroom for the math station. Every twenty minutes families rotated to the next station

*Story-Telling Station.* While families were in the library for the story telling station, they heard either our school principal or school librarian read The Napping House by Audrey Wood (1984). Mrs. Lettington and Ms. Krueger modeled a shared reading experience for the parents while the children sat on the floor. They talked about the illustrations, key vocabulary, and had the children participate in answering various questions. Once they were done with the modeled shared reading, families were invited to choose books to read with their children using the new strategies they heard and read about in the handout given to them.

*Phonemic Awareness Station.* When families were in the art room they were able to make Show Me sticks. Show Me sticks consist of two colored circles (one red and the other green) glued to a Popsicle stick. On the red circle is a sad face and on the green circle is a happy face. The Show Me stick can be used for many things, which were outlined in a handout given to the families and modeled for them by the teachers. Some activities one can use the Show Me sticks for are same beginning, middle, or ending sounds, rhyming words, or simple addition facts. When using the Show Me stick children hold the stick flat on the table or floor while the adult orally gives them a direction. An example would be for the adult to say, "I am going to say two words. I want you to show me if the two words have the same beginning sound. Ball.... ....Baby.... Ready, Set, Show" The child then holds up the Show Me stick with the face showing to represent his or her answer. Families were able to create their own faces, cut out the circles and glue them to the stick. Once the Show Me stick was finished, families were able to try out the activities with their children.

*Math Station.* The final station families were able to go to was in the lunchroom for math activities. Here parents were reminded of the important math skills Ankeny Kindergarteners are to have mastered by the end of kindergarten. Parents were given three sets of cards. The flashcards consisted of a set with the numerals 1-15, number words one-fifteen, and number sets 1-15. Families were given a handout of the various ways they could use the cards at home to develop their children's number sense. Families were able to cut out the cards and play number games with their children. After attending all three stations, families gathered in the library for refreshments, to pick out a free, new book the school purchased from Scholastic books to take home and to fill out a feedback survey.

*Parent Evaluation.* At the culmination of the evening, parents were asked to fill out a feedback form containing the following prompts: one thing you learned tonight, a suggestion for our next family night, and any additional comments, while the children picked out their free book.

The following is a sample of the comments I received from parents at the end of the night. Twelve families filled out and turned in a comment sheet. A majority of the families commented on learning academic ideas, such as the phonemic awareness show-me sticks and number activities. Four families commented on things they learned about their specific child, such as their child not being able to cut or how their child is *not shy*. Parents' suggestions included continuing the same types of activities at upcoming family nights, and including writing or first grade prep activities, as well as doing more advertising to get more people to come. The additional comments section included ideas

to expand to other grade levels and numerous “great job” comments. The following are a selection of comments we received.

*Do the activity of reading a book at the library again. My daughter loved it!*

*Everyone did a great job in taking time to make all the families feel good about having our kids at Terrace.*

*Everyone is very interactive with all the kids which make the kids feel important.*

*Great idea! Maybe expand to other grades!*

*I learned many games for my child that he seems to enjoy – better than the workbooks we do at home.*

*I learned better ways to read with my child. Thank you!*

*Next time have more activities.*

*I would like to see more focused on math.*

*Next time give us ideas to help with writing, and preparing for first grade.*

*Reflection of the first Kindergarten Family Night.* I couldn't have been more excited by our turnout or the feedback I was given. Parents and children were excited to be at school and learning new activities they are able to use at home. Seeing the children's eyes when they got to pick out a free, new book to take home made all the hard work worth it.

After looking through the feedback forms, I was encouraged to plan our second Kindergarten Family Night in the spring. I like how I organized the evening by having them split into small groups based on their colored sticker and rotate clockwise through the building. It helped people know where to go and kept traffic flowing so the teachers

had plenty of time to introduce the station and let the families work together before it was time to rotate on to the next. It also allowed the stations to be more evenly split with plenty of room at each place. Even though this worked well, I'd like to meet more of the needs of individual families. I considered offering six stations next time and letting families choose which three to go to based on what they feel they need. I decided to definitely hold the storybook station again and include more math activities. They seemed to be the most popular. I considered adding a writing station, a technology station, or a first grade prep station. I was disappointed in the number of feedback forms we had returned. They were on a table next to the refreshments table for parents to pick up on their own. Next time, I will try handing the forms out directly to parents to see if we get a better response.

#### *Spring Kindergarten Family Night – April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006*

After receiving positive feedback from my Fall Family Night, I decided to keep the same format in the spring. I developed three developmentally appropriate stations based on needs and requests of the parents in our kindergarten classes. I had previously considered doing six different stations and letting families choose where to go, but based on the timeframe of the event and to keep my nights consistent I decided to keep the format I used in the fall. I had three lower elementary teachers, the school librarian, and our school principal volunteer to help run the stations I put together. For this evening, families were able to rotate through a reading, a math, and a technology station.

Families were invited to attend by invitations sent home in their daily folders. All three classroom teachers also sent home reminders in their weekly newsletters. Two

nights before the event a reminder letter was sent home with all Terrace Kindergarten students. Our turn out was once again around 50 percent.

Once families arrived at school, each child received a color dot sticker to designate their group for the evening and their rotation schedule, just as they did in the fall. Each station lasted approximately 20 minutes. After attending all three stations, families rejoined in the lunchroom. Parents were asked to fill out a feedback form and the children were able to choose a new book to take home. Each station is described below.

*Reading Station.* When the families arrived in the library the children were taken to the back of the library for a read aloud session with one of our literacy teachers, while the parents stayed in the front of the library with me for a power point presentation. The power point presentation I gave to the parents was titled How to Help Your Beginning Reader. I developed this power point based on numerous questions I had received from parents during second conferences, through emails, and other conversations. See Appendix C for the complete power point presentation. After presenting the power point, the children were invited to join their families to read books. Some children read to their families, and others listened to stories read to them by their family members.

*Math Station.* The math station was held in the lunchroom. Families were taught the addition game *Shake the Beans*. In *Shake the Beans*, the children shake a predetermined number of two colored red and white bean shaped counters; in this case it was 10. Once the beans are spilled out onto the table the children write down the number of red beans and then the number of white beans. The children then write the numbers

into a number sentence. Families were able to take home ten bean counters, a pad of forms for addition shake the beans and the instructions for the game. The teachers also shared with the families how they can play the game using subtraction sentences. An additional hand out was given to families towards the end of the session explaining how to play other math games using a deck of cards. Families were given the option towards the end of the session to play the card games with their children as well.

*Technology Station.* The final station took place in our computer lab. The school librarian walked parents through the steps to navigate the Ankeny Community School Website. One feature of the school website is the grade level links offered through the media center page. This is a new feature of our website and many parents had not previously been aware of the information available to them and how to access this information. Parents were given a handout listing several age appropriate websites and had time to explore these sites with their children. See Appendix B for a complete list of the websites given to parents.

*Parent Evaluation.* At the end of the evening while the children chose their free book, parents filled out the same feedback form used at the Fall Family Night. This time teachers personally handed out the forms to parents as they returned to the lunchroom at the conclusion of the evening. This time I received 32 completed forms. Thirteen of the families stated they learned new ways to help their child with reading, eighteen families discovered new developmentally appropriate websites for their children, four families commented on the math games and another four families found the leveled book lists really helpful. In the suggestions category, half of the families left the category blank or

said the evening was great the way it was, but three families wanted to see a longer evening planned. Other suggestions included having the family nights on an alternative night other than Wednesday's, offering a better explanation of what was going to occur at the family nights' and to include the specials' teachers, such as music and art. The open ended comments section was the most encouraging. One-third of the families wrote in *thanks*, others wrote things such as, *fun, informative, great review for parents, very organized, loved the activities, and enjoyed the opportunity for my child to show off his skills*. Overall parents reported that they enjoyed the evening learning how to help their beginning reader, ways to use technology to aid in learning at home, and play new math games to strengthen addition skills.

*Reflection of the Spring Family Night.* I had hoped for a greater attendance with my second family night. I believe I did not get a better turn out due to the time of the year. I originally had the night scheduled in March, before spring break, but had to reschedule due to a personal family situation. When planning family nights in the future, I will attempt to schedule them earlier in the spring to hopefully have more families attend. For this night, I did not serve refreshments, like I did in the fall. I chose not to serve refreshments this time due to the extra time and money it took to provide this for the families. I wanted to see if anyone noticed there were no cookies and juice at the end of the evening. No one commented on this, so I have concluded that serving refreshments is not a necessary component of holding a family night.



## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The intent of this research project was to examine the need for involving families in their children's education. To accomplish this purpose, this project addressed the following questions:

1. Why involve families in young children's education?

App (1997) found that when families are involved in their child's education the families know more about school, believe the teacher wants to help, parents have a better attitude towards school, and students make higher gains in reading achievement.

NAEYC Guidelines for Decisions About Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs describes the importance of educators working alongside families to understand better the children they teach (NAEYC, 1997). Finally, in order for Iowa public teachers to earn a favorable evaluation, they must show competency in all eight teaching standards. Two of Iowa's eight teaching standards now promote active family involvement (SAI-IOWA, 2004)

2. What does current research say about family involvement in schools?

Vivas (1996) studied the effects of a systematic, story-reading-aloud program on different aspects of language development in preschool and first-grade children. She found the experimental groups to show significant gains over the control groups in all areas.

Morrow and Young (1996) conducted a study to raise awareness of parents and teachers their importance of working together to develop their children's literacy skills. The study looked into the WARP program and found the experimental group scored significantly better on story retelling, story rewriting, probed recall comprehension and the California Test of Basic Skills than the control group. Their study also reported parents interacting more with their children, and they children having more book interactions than children who participated in the control group.

Chalkley and Leik (1990) researched the benefits of various Head Start programs in the area of family functioning. Their research concluded those participating in an enriched Head Start program saw greater reductions on family dysfunction.

Seaman and Young Yoo (2001) studied the impact of a parent program component of the Even Start program. They found parental involvement increased significantly in correlation with participation in the Even Start parent program.

3. What are potential benefits and limitations of implementing kindergarten family nights?

There are many benefits to implementing kindergarten family nights. They include, but are not limited to, student's greater academic success, positive relationships between parents and teachers, and parents gaining greater knowledge of their children's educational experience. Limitations of implementing kindergarten family nights include extra teacher time which is uncompensated and not reaching the families who have the greatest need.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this research project:

1. Research findings support involving families in their children's education. Family involvement has greater impact on children's academic success than not involving families.
2. Schools need to find various ways to actively involve families in their children's educational journey.
3. Many families want to be involved in their children's education but lack the time, knowledge, and resources to actively become involved.
4. Teachers must consider the barriers families face when becoming involved in their children's educational career in order to provide modifications to better reach more families.
5. Teachers are willing to put in extra time to support the students and their families they educate.

## Recommendations

Based on a review of the literature and reflections of the two kindergarten family nights, the following general recommendations are suggested:

1. Involve multiple teachers in the planning of family activities in order to gain the most ideas and spread out the work load.
2. Plan activities as best you can around other school and community events.
3. Include a guest speaker or community sponsor to gain greater attendance.

4. Provide useful handouts and materials for families to take home and continue using at home.
5. Provide child care for other children not involved in the family night event to better reach more families.

Based on specific reflections of the two kindergarten family nights, the following specific recommendations are suggested for future family nights at Terrace Elementary, in Ankeny, Iowa:

1. Schedule events in late fall after elementary sports seasons conclude and in early spring before elementary sports begin.
2. Hold family nights for multiple grade levels at a time in order to reach more families.
3. Hold family nights on varying nights throughout the year, not only choosing one day of the week, in order to reach families who could not attend on one specific night.
4. Utilize homeroom classrooms, as well as specials areas, to expose families to more areas of the school building.

Through this journey, I have found parents truly want to help their child succeed in school. To some parents this comes easily, to others they've tried all they know, and to some they do not even know where to begin. By holding family nights such as the one I held at Terrace Elementary, parents have the choice to attend or not. If they choose to come they are able to go home with quality activities they can use at home easily to help their child succeed in school. It is another way educators can bridge the gap between the school and the homes of their students.

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APPENDIX A

FALL FAMILY NIGHT HANDOUTS

## Show Me Sticks

The Show Me Sticks have unlimited uses. The ideas listed below are just to get you started. Try them out with any skill your child needs reinforcement with at home. Just remember to say "Ready, Set, Show" and pause for a moment before showing your stick!

•Rhyming

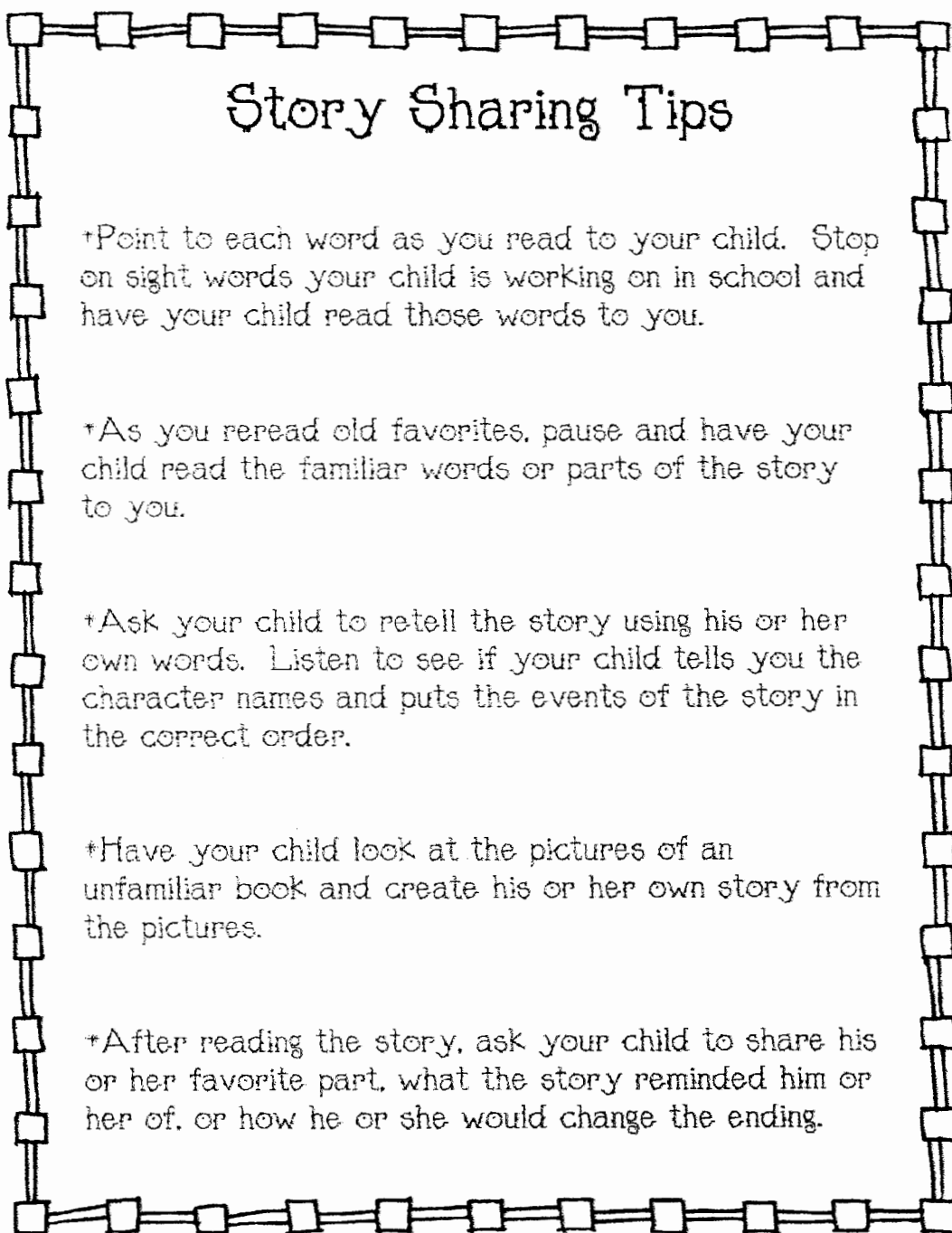
•Same Beginning Sound

•Same Ending Sound

•Same Number of Syllables (parts)

•Simple Addition Facts





## Story Sharing Tips

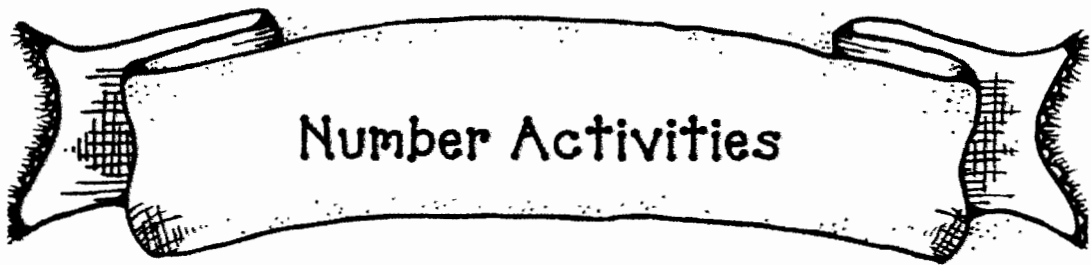
\*Point to each word as you read to your child. Stop on sight words your child is working on in school and have your child read those words to you.

\*As you reread old favorites, pause and have your child read the familiar words or parts of the story to you.

\*Ask your child to retell the story using his or her own words. Listen to see if your child tells you the character names and puts the events of the story in the correct order.

\*Have your child look at the pictures of an unfamiliar book and create his or her own story from the pictures.

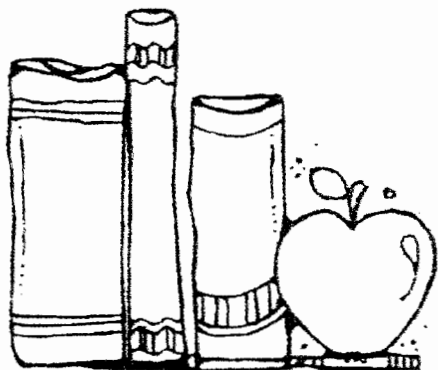
\*After reading the story, ask your child to share his or her favorite part, what the story reminded him or her of, or how he or she would change the ending.



## Number Activities

- \*Play memory using half of the two sets of cards. (number words and number sets, numerals and number words, or number sets and numerals)
- \*Sequence the numbers
- \*Lay out the number sets and have the child match the number word or numeral to the number set
- \*Send your child on a number scavenger hunt. Have your child find a number of like objects on a given card or find the number in the newspaper or in a magazine.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SPRING FAMILY NIGHT HANDOUTS**



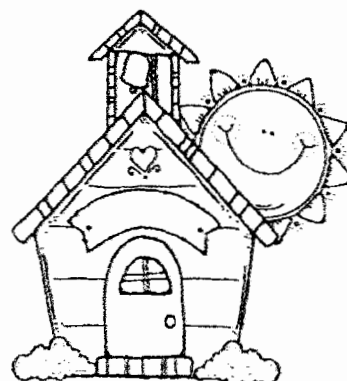
Look at me!  
I can read!

Our goal for Ankeny Kindergarteners is to be reading at level **B** at the end of kindergarten. By the end of **F**irst **G**rade, our goal for students is to be reading at level **H**. These are guidelines. Each child learns to read at a different pace. Use your child's reading template as a guide to know where to begin and then let your child take the lead!

## Leveled Book List

### Levels A-1

Visit  
<http://home.comcast.net/~ngiansante/>  
to find other leveled book lists



## SAMPLE PAGES

If you do not know what level your child is reading at please feel free to email or call your child's teacher and ask! We would be happy to share that information with you!

Home: Leveled Book Lists			
Title	Author	Guided Reading	Grade L
Anno's Counting Book	Anno, Mitsumasa		A
Count and See	Hoban, Tana		A
Dig, Dig	Wood, Leslie		A
Do You Want To Be My Friend?	Carle, Eric		A
Flowers	Hoenecke, Karen		A
Growing Colors	McMillan, Bruce		A
In My Garden	McLean, Moria		A
Look What I Can Do	Aruego, Jose		A
What Do Insects Do?	Canizares, S.& Chanko,P		A
What Has Wheels?	Hoenecke, Karen		A
Cat on the Mat	Wildsmith, Brain		B
Getting There	Young		B
Hats Around the World	Charlesworth, Liza		B
Have you Seen My Cat?	Carle, Eric		B
Have you seen my Duckling?	Tafari, Nancy/Greenwillow		B
Here's Skipper	Salem, Lynn & Stewart, J		B
How Many Fish?	Cohen, Caron Lee		B
I Can Write, Can You?	Stewart, J & Salem, L		B
Look, Look, Look	Hoban, Tana		B
Mommy, Where are You?	Ziefert & Boon		B
Runaway Monkey	Stewart, J & Salem, L		B
So Can I	Facklam, Margery		B
Sunburn	Prokopchak, Ann		B
Two Points	Kennedy, J. & Eaton, A		B
Who Lives in a Tree?	Canizares, Susan et al		B
Who Lives in the Arctic?	Canizares, Susan et al		B
All Fall Down	Wildsmith, Brain		C
Apple Bird	Wildsmith, Brain		C
Apples	Williams, Deborah		C

Bears	Kalman, Bobbie	C
Big Long Animal Song	Artwell, Mike	C
Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?	Martin, Bill	C
Bunny, Bunny	Hall, Kirsten	C
Cats	Williams, Deborah	C
Fox on the Box, the	Gregorich, Barbara	C
Gregory's Dog	Stobbs, William	C
Hi, Word Bird	Moncure, Jane	C
I Have a Watch	Williams, Deborah	C
I See Monkeys	Williams, Deborah	C
I Want a Pet	Gregorich, Barbara	C
I Want To Be a Clown	Johnson, Sharon	C
I Went Walking	Williams, Sue	C
Joshua James Likes Trucks	Petrie, Cztherine	C
Jump Frog	Salem, Lynn	C
Leaves	Hoenecke, Karen	C
Looking for Halloween	Evans, Karen	C
Monsters	Namm, Diane	C
My Dream	Wildsmith, Brain	C
My Kite	Williams, Deborah	C
Now We Can Go	Jonas, Ann	C
Octopus Goes to School	Bordelon, Carolyn	C
One Hunter	Hutchins, Pat	C
Pancakes for Breakfast	dePaloo, Tomie	C
Pancakes, Crackers & Pizza	Eberts, Marjorie	C
Playhouse For Monster, A	Mueller, Virginia	C
Rain	Kalan, R	C
Raindrops	Brimmer, Larry	C
Roll Over	Peek, Merle	C
Sammy at the Farm	Evans, Karen	C
Spots, Feathers, and Curly Tails	Tafari, Nancy/Greenwillow	C
Swing, Swing, Swing	Tuchman, G	C
Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go to Sleep	Dunbar, Joyce	C
Toot, Toot	Wildsmith, Brain	C
Up Went the Goat	Gregorich, Barbara	C

## Shake the Beans Instructions

1. Place the red and white beans in a cup.
2. Gently shake the beans and dump them out on the table in front of you.
3. Count the number of red beans and write that number in the first blank.
4. Count the number of white beans and write that number in the second blank.
5. Add the total number of beans and write the total in the final blank.

\*\*This game can be played with a various amounts of beans. You can purchase additional beans from The Learning Post.

# Shake the Beans

—	+	—	=	—	+	—	=	—
—	+	—	=	—	+	—	=	—
—	+	—	=	—	+	—	=	—
—	+	—	=	—	+	—	=	—
—	+	—	=	—	+	—	=	—





## Other Fun Math Games To Try Out With Your Child

Have a deck of cards? Try these:

### ♥Greater Than/ Less Than

Divide the deck in two piles. Both people flip over one card. Say the number out loud. Person with the greatest number gets both cards. If you flip over the same number, both flip another card and the winner gets all four cards. Play until one person has all the cards. This game may also be played where the lower card wins.

### ♥Double War

Divide the deck into piles, one for each player. Each person flips over two cards. Each person adds his or her cards together. The one with the largest number wins all the cards. If the numbers add up to the same sum, flip two more cards and play the same. Winner takes all cards flipped in that round. The game ends when one person has all the cards.

### ♥Salute

This game is for three players. Sort out the 2,3,4, and 5 cards. Divide the sorted cards between two players face down. Pick one player to be the caller. He/she does not need any cards. The two players with cards hold up one card on their forehead. The caller announces the sum of the two cards and then the players try to guess what number they are holding on their forehead. Once your child is successful with this set of cards begin adding the larger numbers to the deck.

### ♥Make an equation

Flip over two numbered cards. Ask your child to make a number sentence using the two numbers on the card. Have the child practice writing the number sentence. Example If a 2 and a 5 card are flipped over the child could say  $2 + 5 = 7$  OR  $5 - 2 = 3$ .

## Kindergarten Web Sites

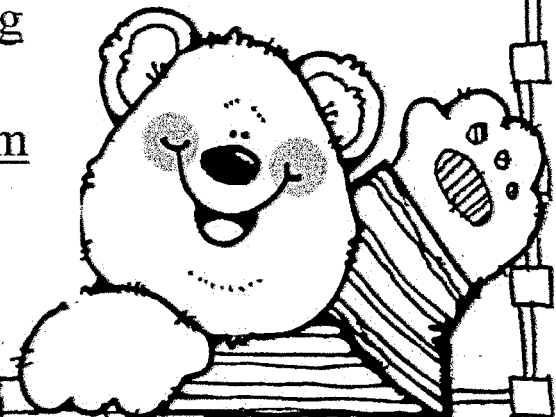
- go to [www.ankeny.k12.ia.us](http://www.ankeny.k12.ia.us), click on Our Schools, click on Terrace Elementary, click on Media Center, click on Grade Level Links

This web page has six different developmentally appropriate sites for your child to explore.

- [http://www.internet4classrooms.com/kindergarten\\_links.htm](http://www.internet4classrooms.com/kindergarten_links.htm)

This site is filled with links to numerous web sites in all the academic areas designed specifically for your kindergarten child.

- [www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org)
- [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)



APPENDIX C  
TEACHER RESOURCES

## Family Night Rotation Schedule

Where everyone starts:

Red Dots in the library.

Yellow Dots in the lunchroom.

Blue Dots in the computer room.

(6:55) First Announcement: It is now time to switch stations. Please listen to the following announcement to hear where your group will go next.

Blue dots please move to the library.

Red dots please move to the lunchroom.

Yellow dots please move to the computer room.

(7:15) Second Announcement: It is now time to switch to your final station. Please listen to the following announcement to hear where your group will move to.

Yellow dots please move to the library.

Red dots please move to the computer room.

Blue Dots please move to the lunchroom.

(7:35) Third Announcement: The third session is now ending. Please go to the lunchroom to pick out your free book and fill out a feedback survey. Thanks for attending our Family Night.

# How To Help Your Beginning Reader

By Melissa Teggatz  
Ankeny Community Schools  
Spring Kindergarten Family Night  
April 12, 2006

## Key Principals to Learn to Read Well

1. Children need to grow up in print rich environments.
2. Children need to have a wide variety of experiences to develop vocabulary and concepts so they will be able to understand and decode material they read.
3. Children need to see adults read and write.
4. Children need to communicate through print.
5. Children need to learn to recognize names of loved ones, key words in their lives, and common sight words.
6. Children need to read their own journals, stories, and messages.

adapted from Greenberg, P.(1998). Some Thoughts about Phonics, Feelings, Don Quirote, Diversity, and Democracy. Teaching Young Children to Read, Write and Spell. Young Children, 53(4), 62.

## 10 Ways You Can Help At Home

- Get your children to talk!
- Help your children understand the story.
- Praise your children.
- Relate the book to your life.
- Ask your children good questions during storybook reading.
- Wait for answers.
- Point to words when you read.
- Take turns reading.
- Choose books carefully.
- Have Fun!

Strickland, D. and Morrow, L. (2000). *Beginning Reading and Writing*. New York: Teachers College Press.

## What if my child gets stuck?

- Wait and see if they can work it out.
- Say, "What sounds are in that word."
- Say, "Read the sentence again and start the tricky word."
- Say, "Think what would make sense."
- Say, "Look at the picture."
- Tell your child the word.

## What if my child makes a mistake?

- If the mistake makes good sense, don't worry about it.
- If the mistake doesn't make sense, wait to see if your child will fix it.
- Say, "Try that again."
- Say, "Did that make sense?"
- Say, "Did what you read look right and sound right?"
- Tell your child the word.

## What should I do before we read a story?

- This is a great time for predicting.
- Talk about the picture on the cover.
- Ask your child what he/she thinks the story will be about.
- During the story ask your child what he/she thinks will happen next or how the story will end.

## What should I do after we read a book?

- Ask your child to retell the story.  
Listen for character names, setting, and the order of main ideas.
  
- Make connections to the story.  
Ask your child questions such as:  
"What does this story remind you of?",  
"Do you remember when....", "Tell me about a time when...."

## Additional Resources

- Ankeny Schools Summer School Programs
- Kirkendall Library Summer Reading Program
- Your Child's Classroom Teacher



## References

Ankeny Community Schools Reading Resource Notebook, 2005-2006

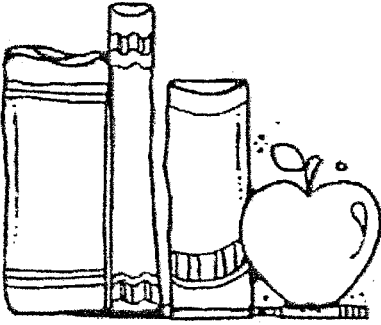
Fountas, I.C., and Pinnell, G.S. (1996). *Guided Reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Greenburg, P. (1998). Some Thoughts about Phonics, Feelings, Don Quixote, Diversity, and Democracy: Teaching Young Children to Read, Write and Spell. *Young Children*, 53(4), 82.

Leveled Books list from: <http://home.comcast.net/~ngiansante/>

Strickland, D. and Morrow, L. (2000). *Beginning Reading and Writing*. New York: Teachers College Press.

APPENDIX D  
PARENT EVALUATION FORMS

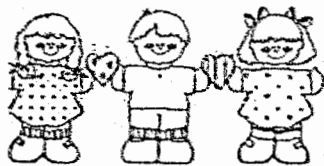


Your thoughts matter  
Please tell us what you  
think!

1. One thing you learned tonight:

2. A suggestion for future family nights:

3. Additional Comments:



Thank you for attending one or both of this years Kindergarten Family Nights. We would like to know how attending has impacted your educational interactions with your child. Please fill out the survey below and return to school by Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. Thanks so much for your input.

Please answer the following questions with the typical week in mind.

1. Which Kindergarten Family Night(s) did you attend?  

Fall	Spring	Both
------	--------	------
  
2. Before attending a Kindergarten Family Night (KFN) how often did you read to your child per week?  

0	1-2	3-4	4+
---	-----	-----	----
  
3. After attending a KFN how often do you read with your child per week?  

0	1-2	3-4	4+
---	-----	-----	----
  
4. Did you engage in pre-, during, and post-reading activities with your child before attending a KFN? These activities would include things such as predicting, retelling, making connections.  

No	Sometimes	Often
----	-----------	-------
  
5. After attending a KFN do you engage in pre-, during, and post-reading activities with your child?  

No	Sometimes	Often
----	-----------	-------
  
6. If you engaged in pre-, during, and post-reading activities before attending do you feel the quality of these interactions has improved?  

No	Somewhat	Yes
----	----------	-----
  
7. Before attending a KFN how often did you engage in math related activities with your child per week?  

0	1-2	3-4	4+
---	-----	-----	----
  
8. After attending a KFN how often do you engage in math related activities with your child per week?  

0	1-2	3-4	4+
---	-----	-----	----
  
9. If you engaged in math related activities before attending a KFN, do you feel the quality of these interactions has improved?  

No	Somewhat	Yes
----	----------	-----
  
10. Overall, how do you feel your educational interactions with your child has changed since attending a KFN?  

Not at all	Some Improvement	A lot of Improvement
------------	------------------	----------------------
  
11. Additional Comments or Reflections from attending a Kindergarten Family Night: