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Parental assistance in children's reading in the home

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PARENTAL ASSISTANCE IN CHILDREN'S READING IN THE HOME

By

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

The literature reviewed in this thesis shows that many successful reading programmes have been carried out by parents and teachers working together, sharing the responsibility for developing children's reading skills. Research studies have also shown that parents want more feedback and assistance on how to help their children with reading.

The purpose of this study was to investigate two areas of home reading, that is parents reading to their children and children reading to their parents. The study examined what parents said they did with their children when their children read to them. It also examined the frequency with which parents read stories to their children and the beliefs that parents had about this practice. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 149 parents of children in Grades 2, 3 and 4 in one non-government primary school.

The data indicated that many parents in this study did not encourage their children to practise before reading aloud, encouraged the use of sounding out as the main strategy for recognizing difficult words and immediately prompted their children to correct any mistakes made. The results suggested that these parents may have been influenced by their own educational experiences in reading from 15-25 years ago. Nevertheless, a number of parents in this study appeared to be aware of changes in reading methods adopted in schools in the past 5-10 years and said that they were using a wider range of procedures and strategies

with their children. The majority of children were read stories several times a week, although some children were read stories less frequently. Many of the parents were apparently aware of the benefits of reading stories to their children, such as developing a positive attitude towards reading and modelling reading behaviours.

The study highlighted the need for teachers to take the initiative in providing more information and guidance to parents to keep them informed of school reading policies and of recent research in reading. With this in mind, it is the intention of the researcher to follow up this study with a parent/teacher information session.

Declaration

"I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text."

Signed Date 23-3-95

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Background

Learning to read and enjoying reading are two significant objectives for pupils of any primary school. One reason why schools place an emphasis on reading and writing is the need for children to learn these skills in order to function effectively in a literate culture (Rivalland, 1989; Henderson, 1993; Rasinski and Fredericks, 1991). However, many children leave school with reading levels which do not meet the demands of society. As educators, it is necessary for us to improve this situation by considering both the school and home learning environments because "joint action between home and school can produce greater gains to the child's progress at school than either school or home working alone" (McNaughton, Glynn, and Robinson, 1981, p.71). Many successful programmes have been carried out by parents and teachers working together, sharing the responsibility for developing children's reading skills.

Children's initial exposure to printed material frequently occurs when significant people read stories aloud to them in the home environment. "When a parent reads with a child literacy learning occurs...but much is still unknown about what factors bring about this literacy growth" (Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992, p.1). Parents continue to be involved in their children's literacy development when their children begin school. After school has been started it is likely that parents will not only read to their children but they will also listen to their children read aloud. A survey conducted by Becker and Epstein (1982), with teachers of children in Grades 1, 3,

and 5, revealed that these teachers frequently asked parents to read to their children or to listen to their children read. Many reading programmes in the early years of schooling include children reading aloud to their parents on a regular basis. This provides very important reading practise on a one-to-one level which can not practically be provided by the classroom teacher on a daily basis. Children need time to practise reading in order to become fluent and competent readers (Allington, 1977; Clay, 1979; Samuels, Schermer and Reinking, 1992; Stanovich, 1986; Trelease, 1989). For those children who would not choose to read, frequent practice at home provides regular opportunities for reading. Reading on a one-to-one level often demands that the child pay more attention to the text than reading in a large group situation. Furthermore, one-to-one 'instruction' allows for monitoring of the reading situation and the provision of positive and constructive feedback to the reader (McNaughton et al., 1981, p.11). This may be contrasted with chorus reading in small or large groups which McNaughton et al. (1981) suggest may hinder progress by creating opportunities for practising and strengthening undetected errors. Thus, it can be seen that children reading at home to their parents is a common and important practice in the early years of schooling.

Significance of the Study

Previous studies have shown that parents want more feedback and assistance on how to help their children with reading (Breiling, 1976; Builder, 1982; Kemp, 1985, 1987). Whenever parents are involved in the reading practices of their children, it seems important that they are not just asked to read to their children or

listen to their children read as these requests can be interpreted by parents in many different ways. As Ollila and Mayfield (1992, p. 35) point out: "It is important to make advice to parents specific enough to be useful. Advising parents to 'read to your child' or 'talk with your child' may not convey sufficient information." Information useful to parents may include the length of each reading session, strategies to use when difficulties occur and particular aspects of the book/story to discuss. It is not uncommon for parents to adopt the role of tester or corrector, rather than listener when their children read orally to them (Builder, 1982, p.221). There is also a need to reassure parents and provide assistance to them in order to eliminate any anxiety, tension and/or frustration (by the children and/or parents) which may be felt during some home reading sessions (Bartlett, Hall and Neale, 1984; Bates and Navin, 1986; Builder, 1980; Hourcade and Richardson, 1987; Kemp, 1985; Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981; Nicholson, 1980). These feelings may well create negative attitudes to reading (Builder, 1982). Therefore, it is important for schools to inform parents of their reading policies and programmes (Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; Nicholson, 1980).

When asked their opinions about a number of reading matters the parents involved in a survey by Nicholson (1980) revealed that they were "interested in their children's reading progress but were not aware of the teaching strategies that they could use to reinforce school learning" (p. 19). It seems that greater communication between home and school would help to resolve this problem.

Purpose of the Study

In order to maintain and improve the home-school link in relation to reading, it is useful to know what parents are already doing with their children. The purpose of this study is to identify what parents say they do with children, in Grades 2, 3, and 4, when they are reading at home. It seeks to examine two areas of home reading, namely: adults or siblings reading to children and children reading to parents. Studies in this area have tended to focus on remedial readers, and sometimes on older readers, and what parents do to help them read more efficiently. This study examines the home reading practices of parents who have children at a range of reading levels. As a result of the study it is hoped that the teachers at the school will be more able to assist the young students in developing their reading skills through improved parent-teacher communication on the subject.

Plan of Thesis

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature concerning the reading development of young children with particular reference to the home environment. The chapter begins with an introduction on parental involvement in children learning to read, followed by an outline of models of reading which are relevant to this study, and then detailed discussion on parents reading to their children and children reading to their parents. The chapter concludes with a summary and the research questions which are addressed in this study.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the study. It describes the subjects and procedures and also explains how the instrument, a questionnaire, was developed. The chapter includes an explanation of how the questionnaire data was analysed and concludes with a summary of the procedures used to carry out data collection.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the results from the questionnaire data and related discussion. It includes a summary of the demographic data. Each section of this chapter addresses one or more research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the general findings of this study and it acknowledges the limitations that apply. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the implications for further research and for educational practice.

Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Parental Involvement in Children Learning to Read - An Introduction

Parental involvement in children's education is not a new concept and in recent years several documented programmes have focussed on family literacy. Whilst family literacy programmes vary in the way they are implemented, all aim to provide literacy experiences that are not only of benefit to children but are of value to all members of a family (Cairney, 1994; Handel, 1992; Smith, 1991). Developing the literacy of all family members is now becoming necessary in some families because of intergenerational literacy problems, literacy problems which are passed from one generation to the next (Cairney, 1994; Handel, 1992). Studies of low income families by Goldenburg (cited in Cairney, 1994, p.270) "have shown that parents, who often have limited needs for literacy, may not encourage the literacy practices of their children, thus setting up an intergenerational pattern of literacy difficulties." It seems necessary therefore to examine family variables as well as school variables in any discussion of early literacy acquisition.

Research has indicated that the home backgrounds of children and their school performance are closely linked (Cairney and Munsie, 1992; Spreadbury, 1994). Cairney and Munsie (1992) indicate that school factors (such as class size and teaching methods), only have a relatively small impact on students' achievement at school, but "differences in family backgrounds have a far more significant impact on student achievement" (p.3). Spreadbury (1994)

discusses several studies which have shown that literacy activities carried out in the home before children begin school can contribute to children's initial performance in reading at school. Activities of parents in the preschool home environment which have been found to be directly responsible for children's success in reading at school include: reading to children, discussing books with children, providing a variety of reading and writing materials, and modelling reading (Spreadbury, 1994).

Many parents continue to be involved or would like to be involved in their children's literacy activities when their children start school. Parents may be involved when teachers ask them to read to their children or to listen to their children read, particularly in the early years of schooling (Becker and Epstein, 1982). McNaughton et al., (1981) have shown that these practices are valuable and that assisting children in becoming competent readers is a responsibility most successfully carried out when home and school work together. Many of the studies to be discussed in this literature review involved schools and parents working together in partnerships to assist children in learning to read. However, Cairney (1994) cautions that when educational institutions claim that parents are 'involved' or are considered 'partners' in their children's education, parent involvement may be used in a very narrow sense to describe what parents can do to help teachers, such as providing assistance in the classroom, rather than being used to describe equal partnerships between parents and schools in the education of children. Despite this caution there is evidence to suggest that when the home and school contexts are linked, there may be

positive outcomes. The reading contexts of the home and school will now be discussed.

Firstly, when looking at the home reading context, research has shown that parents can help children develop their reading skills by reading aloud to them (Adams, 1990; Clay, 1991; Dombey, 1992; Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992; Elley, 1989; Flood, 1977; Spreadbury, 1994; Strickland and Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1989; Wells, 1982) and by listening to them read aloud (Bartlett et al., 1984; Breiling, 1976; Hannon and Jackson, 1987; McNaughton et al., 1981; Shuck, Ulsh and Platt, 1983; Tizard, Schofield and Hewison, 1982). Parental involvement in listening to children read and in reading to children will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Secondly, when looking at the school reading context, educators of young children use their knowledge of child development and how children learn to read when structuring reading programmes. It seems important for teachers to share some of this knowledge about reading, language and child development with parents and to be prepared to listen to them and respond to what they have to say. It is likely that parents who have an understanding of teachers' ideas about the reading process and how children learn to read are better equipped to assist their children with reading than are parents who don't have this knowledge. A study on parental involvement in children's reading by Hewison (1982, p.162) indicated that "given appropriate advice and support, most parents are capable of being, not only willing and able, but also effective helpers of their children." Similarly, Bartlett et al. (1984, p.177) found that parents who were involved in the direct teaching of

reading to their children were so highly motivated when they were provided with information on the reading process that they continued to use the skills they gained after the initial project was finished.

The literature indicates that parents can and do play an important part in their children's reading education. However, how parents approach reading with their children in the home may depend on their own educational experience and their knowledge of how people learn to read. It seems that if parents have knowledge of the reading process then they may be better equipped to assist their children with reading. This may be particularly important at the present time because approaches to reading have changed significantly in the past 20 years and parents may not be aware of these changes or they may be aware of the changes but may not understand them. The foundations for these different approaches to teaching reading are often based on models of reading. The models of reading that are relevant to this particular study will now be discussed. These models will be referred to throughout this thesis when examining approaches to assisting children with reading.

Models of Reading

Some of the models of reading which have influenced reading practices are outlined below. As more information has become available about the way people read, old models have been updated or discarded.

Lipson and Wixson (1991, p.7) and Sloan and Whitehead (1986, p.5) have claimed that bottom-up reading models emphasize that reading is controlled by the print on the page. According to these models of reading, the reader makes sense of the text by starting with the smallest units, the letters, and then working up through 'higher' levels of analysis, ie: the letter clusters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and finally the whole text. Activities which focus almost exclusively on letter recognition and word analysis form part of instructional approaches which are associated with bottom-up models of reading (Lipson and Wixson, 1991, p.8). It is likely that the parents of children currently at primary school in Western Australia were taught to read by teachers who followed or were influenced by bottom-up models of reading.

In contrast, top-down models depict reading as an activity which begins with the reader's prior knowledge so that a reader only uses the text as necessary to confirm predictions and to generate new hypotheses. A feature of these models is that meaning resides within the reader (Lipson and Wixson, 1991; Sloan and Whitehead, 1986). In these models it is meaning, not the accuracy of word identification, which is most important, even in the earliest stages of learning to read. Whole language and language experience activities are instructional approaches associated with top-down models of reading (Lipson and Wixson, 1991, p.10).

Interactive models view reading as a process in which both bottom-up and top-down processing can occur at the same time. Lipson and Wixson (1991, p.11) suggest that interactive models emphasize that meaning is gained when the reader uses prior knowledge and

visual information from the text simultaneously, sometimes relying on one more than the other, depending on the reading situation at a particular point in time. These models acknowledge that accurate word identification and meaning are both important components of the reading process and that the reader, the text and the context interact in order for the reading process to occur.

One particular interactive model of reading is the schema theory. "In this view reading is seen as an active process of constructing meaning by connecting old knowledge with new information encountered in text" (Pearson, Roehler, Dole and Duffy, 1992, p.149). This theory is based around a reader's schemata which are the abstract units of a person's memory, carefully organized for easy reference. Schemata are continuously changing and being shaped by the experiences in a person's life, including the experiences gained through reading. "As sentences are read, schemata are activated, evaluated, and refined or discarded (Rumelhart, 1980, p.43). In this way the schema theory of reading is an interactive view where the reader's prior knowledge and the print on the page work simultaneously in order for the reading process to occur.

The socio-cultural perspective of reading also contains the elements of interactive models but further suggests that if readers are going to be prepared for all demands of society they need to be able to do more than just decode and gain meaning from the written text. A successful reader needs to develop four related roles, these being: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst (Freebody, 1992). The roles of code-breaker (reading the words on

the page) and text-participant (being able to construct meaning from the text) have been discussed in the models of reading which have been outlined already. However, the socio-cultural perspective on reading suggests that effective readers also need to be able to use the text in order to participate in relevant social activities (text-user) and to be able to critically analyse a text (text-analyst). Freebody (1992) argues that all four roles of the reader should be considered at all levels of reading development if teachers [and parents] are to assist children in becoming successful readers in a demanding society. As stated by Freebody, "We are no more successful readers if we are prey to manipulative texts than we are if we cannot decode." (1992, p.58).

Traves (1992) also believes a 'properly' literate person is one who has "an extended and enriched control over their life and environment" (p.77) whereby their literacy "strengthens their capacity for rational thought and enables them more effectively to use their knowledge and experience in the critical analysis and evaluation of the world" (p.77). A somewhat similar view is portrayed by Adams and Bruck (1993, p.119-120) who believe productive reading involves more than just literally comprehending the text. Rather, a reader needs to analyse, evaluate and reflect on the author's message as a part of the reading process. The socio-cultural perspective therefore, is an extension of the interactive view of reading in that it considers interaction between the text, the reader, and the context, but also includes the way in which the reader interprets and makes use of the text.

The language policy of the school involved in the present study follows an interactive view of reading. However, individual teachers at the school implement reading programmes which may be influenced by different models because their own beliefs influence their interpretation of the language policy.

Parents and teachers may have different views of reading and so may have different ideas as to how reading should be taught. Allington and Broikou (cited in Henderson, 1993, p.122) suggest that often a major difficulty with reading programmes for failing readers, in particular, is the lack of consistency in approaches to reading when learners work with class teacher, support teacher, teacher aides, parents and peers. Communication between these people is vital if the child is to have a consistent approach to learning.

Examining models of reading is a useful starting point in a discussion on reading because the underlying beliefs of parents and teachers about the reading process are derived from models of reading (although one might not be consciously aware of this), and these in turn affect how parents and teachers listen to children read and how they read to children. For the purpose of the present study, a variety of approaches to listening to children read will be examined. The approaches in the study are drawn from all of the above mentioned perspectives of reading: bottom-up models, top-down models, interactive models, and the socio-cultural perspective.

Parents Reading to Their Children

This section of the literature review will now examine the research literature on parents reading to their children. The older members of families can play an important role in children's literacy development by reading stories to the younger children. Spreadbury (1994) found that parents from all educational and socioeconomic levels were "highly competent at facilitating their children's literacy learning during parent-child reading aloud sessions in the home" (p. 24). Reading stories to young children has been shown to be an activity that can contribute to the development of children's reading skills (Adams, 1990; Clay, 1991; Dombey, 1992; Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992; Elley, 1989; Flood, 1977; Spreadbury, 1994; Strickland and Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1989; Wells, 1982). When children listen to stories they acquire new vocabulary (Elley, 1989) and they develop an understanding of story language, "children who have been read to a great deal will already know, in some way, that the language of books is different from the language that they speak" (Clay, 1991, p.28). This view is also shared by Wells (1982, p.146-147). Listening to stories also provides a foundation for understanding concepts of print and for developing print awareness, although these may not be realized until the child learns to read (Clay, 1991; Strickland and Morrow, 1989; Wells, 1982). Probably even more importantly, "children who have been read to during their early years associate reading with pleasure and follow models of reading behaviour" (Strickland and Morrow, 1989, p.322).

In addition to these direct benefits to the development of children's reading skills, Wells (1982) argues that the most important benefit

of hearing stories is being able to pay attention to the message and understand the message without sharing the immediate context with the writer. Wells refers to this as 'disembedded language' and believes that being able to deal with this kind of language is a useful skill to have at school because so much of the curriculum is introduced through books or through teachers' spoken words (p.151).

The development of children's comprehension skills may be one important benefit of reading stories to children. Wells (1982, p.148-149) suggests that discussion can aid comprehension, but it should not be restricted by checking facts and recalling detail, rather it should include discussion of the context and it should be related to the children's experiences. Flood (1977) suggests that discussion is important before, during and after reading stories with children. He found 6 aspects of story-reading sessions that were significantly related to children's pre-reading skills, which were: warm-up preparatory questions asked by the parents, the total number of words spoken by the child, the number of questions answered by the child, the number of questions asked by the child, positive reinforcement by the parents, and post-story evaluative questions asked by the parents (Flood, 1977, p.865-866). However, Flood (1977) also believes that the discussion of some stories in some situations may not necessarily enhance children's understanding and that if children show they have enjoyed and understood a story, asking them questions may be of little benefit (p. 867).

Elkins and Spreadbury (1992) have also suggest that it is the interaction or discussion between the adult and child that facilitates the child's reading development when a parent reads to a child (p.15). Their study showed that "the amount of time a parent spends reading to a child correlates with that child's self concept which in turn correlates with the reading scores at both 6 and 8 years of age" (Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992, p.16). Both of these aspects of parental story reading, time spent reading and discussion, appear to be very important to reading development. This view is also supported by Flood (1977) and Ollila and Mayfield (cited in Samuels and Farstrup, 1992). Also, Flood (1977, p.867) points out that it is important for parents to use their children's responses to questions as a guide to their interest and level of understanding and cautions that they should not over-question their children.

Repeated readings of familiar stories have been found by Martinez and Roser (cited in Spreadbury, 1994, p. 21) to result in approximately twice the amount of talk between children and adults and that children made more spontaneous comments when a book was familiar, but asked more questions when a book was unfamiliar. It is not uncommon for children to ask adults to read some stories again and again. It appears that repeated readings of favourite stories may further enhance children's understanding of the stories and further enhance the development of their reading skills.

Elley (1989) and Senechal and Cornell (1993) examined possible benefits to children's vocabulary development when discussion of

reading material occurred. However, it appeared that children acquired vocabulary through story sessions with adults regardless of whether discussion and/or explanations occurred. In such cases the context of the new vocabulary was sufficient to produce a clear understanding without the related discussion. Nevertheless, it is possible that results could have been different with difficult reading material or with a story in which the vocabulary was used in an unfamiliar context. Elley (1989) found that "the features that best predicted whether a particular word would be learned were frequency of the word in the text, depiction of the word in illustrations, and the amount of redundancy in the surrounding context" (p.174).

Research on parents reading to their children clearly indicates that children derive some benefit from the activity. However, much is still to be discovered about exactly what is learnt and how the learning comes about. It appears that discussion of reading material helps to develop children's comprehension and contributes to the development of their reading skills, but whether discussion assists in enhancing children's vocabulary remains unclear.

Children Reading to Their Parents

This section of the literature review will now examine the research on children reading to their parents. Numerous studies have been conducted to assess the value of parental involvement in their children's reading education after their children have started school. Many of these studies have been based on below average or remedial readers. Consideration of the home environment is

particularly important for these children because of the need for them to 'catch up' and improve their reading skills. However, it does not mean that we can forget the more able readers, who need to extend their reading skills.

Traditionally, remedial reading programmes have not involved parents (Builder, 1980). However, this is changing. Research has shown the value of involving parents in their children's reading education (Bartlett et al., 1984; Breiling, 1976; Hannon and Jackson, 1987; Hewison,1988; McNaughton et al., 1981; Tizard et al., 1982). Several different approaches to parental involvement in children's reading education will be discussed, these include: training parents as reading tutors, counselling parents, and establishing reading at home programmes.

McNaughton et al. (1981) and Bartlett et al. (1984) have demonstrated that parents can be successfully involved in remedial reading programmes for their children by being trained as reading tutors in the home. Their research involved training parents in giving their children praise for effort even when errors were made and to give clues to their children to help them solve reading problems as they arose. These programmes particularly emphasized reading in a supportive environment and provided very specific training to parents.

Studies by Bates and Navin (1986) and Builder (1980) have indicated the benefits of working directly with parents of remedial readers in a counselling setting. The counselling sessions for parents resulted in improvements in their children's reading

attitudes and performances. Another approach taken to help children who experienced difficulty in reading involved sending home lists of 15 words every two weeks in a game format, designed around the students' interests (Hourcade and Richardson, 1987). This programme was successful in improving the word recognition skills of learning disabled children. *Parents Encourage Pupils (PEP)*, a successful project by Shuck, Ulsh and Platt (1983), involved children in Grades 3-5, who were below-average readers, in completing additional reading at school and in home-tutoring sessions with their parents. The home-tutoring sessions consisted of a variety of individually structured activities such as reading from a book, learning word lists and playing games.

A study by Breiling (1976), involved children of various ability levels who were at schools which ran compensatory programs for the disadvantaged. The study, which was based on a survey filled out by the parents, started with parent meetings and later included a reading at home programme. As reported by the parents and as shown on reading tests (during the period of time of the involvement with the parents) many children (about 75%) made progress in their reading ability and many had improved attitudes to the task. However, the author suggests that these gains could have been influenced by increased teacher motivation as a response to the increased parent involvement. If this were so, it could be considered as another benefit of the programme rather than a limitation. A similar study by Hannon and Jackson (1987) successfully increased parental involvement in children's reading education through a low-key, home-visiting programme which

assisted parents in establishing home-reading sessions with their children.

Tizard et al. (1982) initiated a two year study which involved reading intervention with 6-8 year-old children in two separate contexts: children reading at home to their parents and children receiving supplementary teacher help at school. The part of the project which involved parents differed from the projects by McNaughton et al. (1981) and Bartlett et al. (1984) in that parents were not trained to use any particular method when listening to their children read. Results from this study suggest that some children may benefit more by reading at home to their parents on a one-to-one basis than when they receive supplementary teacher help at school in small groups. This was also found to be a lasting effect with some children in a three year follow-up after the completion of the study (Hewison, 1988). Identifying the specific reasons for the success of the home-reading programme was not possible within the scope of the study, although Hewison (1988, p.190) suggests that increased motivation of children, parents and school staff was likely to have been a contributing factor. It seems that it may be more beneficial to the students to implement home-reading programmes than to use teaching time at school to implement supplementary reading programmes. This view is also shared by Breiling (1976).

Not all reports of home-reading relationships are as positive as those described above. Briggs (cited in Cairney 1994, p. 265) points out that "parent involvement programs are often shallow, ineffectual, confusing and frustrating to both parents and teachers".

Kemp (1985) found that many parents of children who were experiencing difficulties in literacy and were involved in a parent training programme (known as *PTP*) felt anxious about teaching their children at home due to unpleasant and seemingly unsuccessful past experiences in helping their children at home and that they were reluctant to approach the school about their children's problems. Kemp (1985) also found that the working class parents involved in the study felt that they lacked the time to give their children assistance at home. Furthermore, studies by Moss (cited in Furniss, 1993) indicated that lack of acceptance for parental involvement as being fundamental for children's education and the fact that many teachers feel threatened by too much parental involvement may be obstacles in some schools to developing successful parent involvement programmes.

It is clear that a variety of approaches which involve parents and educators working together as partners in children's education have been successful in the short-term and possibly also in the long-term. Nevertheless, developing home-school partnerships appears to be an area of children's education that needs to be carefully planned and structured in order to ensure positive outcomes.

Specific aspects of home-reading programmes will now be examined in more detail. The areas to be discussed are: length of reading sessions, oral and silent reading, rehearsal before reading aloud, strategies encouraged when children have difficulty reading, parents' responses to errors in oral reading, praise, and discussion of reading material.

Length of Reading Sessions

The length of oral reading sessions when children read to their parents is often discussed in relation to home-reading programmes. The *PACT* (Parents, Children and Teachers) reading programme (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984) recommended to parents that reading sessions should be kept short, about 10-15 minutes. Hannon and Jackson (1987) recommended parents to use their children's interest level as a guide for length of oral reading sessions. Bartlett et al. (1984) report that parents involved in a home reading project commented that 10 minutes was the preferred length of time for reading sessions. A parent reading survey (of parents with children aged 8 to 12 years old) undertaken by Builder (1991) examined mothers' individual beliefs and knowledge about reading. Findings showed that at least 15 per cent of the sample of children involved may have been reading for longer than suitable for their ability level (based on 20 minutes as suitable for good readers, 15 minutes for average readers and 10 minutes for poor readers). The mothers were not asked what they believed was the ideal length of time for their children to read silently. The recommendations for how long children should read aloud in each session in these home reading programmes did not seem to be based on research findings, although reasons for children reading for specific periods of time were given.

Oral and Silent Reading

Many reports on home reading programmes discuss oral reading but not silent reading. In the parent reading survey by Builder

(1991), findings revealed that the majority of mothers (79%) believed children should do most of their reading orally (aloud). However, it is useful to remember that "silent reading practice is just as much reading as is oral reading" (Sloan and Latham, 1981, p.133). During a person's lifetime a lot more silent reading will be done than oral reading. Therefore, it seems that silent reading could be an important aspect of reading at home. However, without some practice in oral reading it seems that it would be difficult to guide children and help them develop useful silent reading strategies. Clay (1991, p.251) claims that:

> Oral reading by both children and mature readers results in greater ability to recognize and understand written words and sentences, particularly when the text is difficult. Also, data available on self-correction behaviour suggests that young children respond, hear their errors and correct them when they read aloud.

The literature thus suggests that both reading aloud and reading silently are factors to be taken into account in home reading programmes because each of these appears to be beneficial to children's long-term reading development.

Practice

Most parents (70%) from Builder's survey (1991) believed that children should not practise before reading aloud. However, Builder (p.34) claims that poor readers who are not given the opportunity to practise before reading aloud may find the reading task unnecessarily difficult; and if given the opportunity to rehearse a text these children can read more confidently, with

improved expression and better fluency. Builder (p.34) also claims that "rehearsal...provides the ideal opportunity for them [children] to solve problems for themselves [ie self-correct], and thereby learn to become more independent." Clay (1991) also advocates self-correction as important for reading progress. Studies by Clay in 1967 revealed that children who had "the courage to make mistakes, the 'ear' to recognize that an error had occurred, the patience to search for confirmation... were the characteristics of children who made good progress in their first year of reading" (Clay, 1991, p.304).

Many parents in Builder's survey (1991) believed that children should not practise before reading aloud. Nevertheless, it seems that children may in fact benefit from practice before reading to their parents.

Strategies

Whilst children read aloud, parents and teachers may encourage them to use any number of strategies when problems arise, such as sounding out the word, looking at the pictures, guessing the word or reading the sentence again. These strategies may assist the children with decoding the 'difficult' words on a page. Also, a child may use a combination of strategies to solve reading problems. The 'naturally' good reader picks up clues from a variety of sources, the illustrations, the title of the story, a few familiar words, knowledge of letter, word and sentence structures and more than a few inspired guesses (Butler, 1986, p.196). Adults who help children with their reading may encourage the use of any or all of these strategies. However, the particular strategies encouraged by

individual parents may well depend upon the view of reading they hold. Results from a survey by Nicholson (1980) indicate that parents may "differ considerably in the kinds of help they give" (p. 20). The most common strategy adopted by parents in this survey was to ask the child to sound out the word. Other strategies included looking for clues in the text and telling the children the correct word.

Bartlett et al. (1984, p.175) suggested to parents that they should provide a clue, such as looking at the first letter, reading on or missing out the word, to help their children correct an error or help them to read a difficult word, and then if this failed, to tell their children the word. In their pilot study of untrained parents in the *Mangere Home and School Project*, McNaughton et al. (1981) found that the parents on average picked up or attended to a high percentage of their children's errors (88.8%) and rarely provided enough time for their children to self-correct. The parents prompted or gave clues to help their children correct the errors 28% of the time, but the children's subsequent attempts to correct were successful only 21% of the time. All children showed dependence on the person 'listening' to them read and the parents were assuming a role of tester and corrector. These findings were used as the starting point for the training of parents in the *Mangere Home and School Project*. One of the aims of the project was to encourage parents, with children who were seriously behind in reading, to use different strategies in different situations. For example, when a child stopped at a word and said nothing the parent would ask the child to read the sentence again or read on to the end of the sentence (p.31-33). Words attempted by the child

but read incorrectly were dealt with by prompting the child to correct the word using the "context of the story, or the meaning of the word in relation to the rest of the sentence or story" (p.33), which is comparable to having an informed guess at the word. The focus when helping children with difficult words in this project was on parents providing prompts or clues, rather than immediately telling children the words. The long term aim was for the children to develop strategies which they could use independently, without being prompted by an adult. However, in contrast, Hannon and Jackson (1987, p.185) advised parents "to smooth out difficulties by telling children words they didn't know and to repeat the whole sentence containing the word". While this strategy allows meaning to be maintained, it does not assist children in becoming independent in their reading.

Bartlett et al. (1984, p.174) claim that as children read they need to take risks and as they do, errors are likely to occur. Children's errors should not be seen as mistakes which attract criticism but should be capitalized on as teaching opportunities (Bartlett et al., 1984; McNaughton et al., 1981). Allowing time for a child to self-correct before providing help is another important strategy when children are reading aloud (Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981; van Laar, 1989). Once again this can assist children in becoming more independent readers.

Praise

Praise has also been a factor in many successful home reading programmes such as *PACT* (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984,), the *Managere Home and School Project* (McNaughton et al., 1981),

RANT (Reading Association of the Northern Territory) Parents' Workshops (Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985) and in a study by Bartlett et al. (1984). These programmes all encouraged parents to emphasize attempts to read words by rewarding their children with praise. If necessary, parents were then encouraged to suggest clues to help decode difficult words, rather than pointing out mistakes. In the pilot study by McNaughton et al. (1981), one parent praised her child approximately six times per 10 minute session but other parents provided praise on average less than three times per session. The amount of praise increased after the *Mangere Home and School Project* was implemented. Giving praise for children's effort was also encouraged in the home-visiting programme by Hannon and Jackson (1987).

Discussion

Discussion of the reading material is also considered to be of importance in home reading programmes. If discussion is a contributing factor to literacy development when parents read to their children (Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992; Flood, 1977; Wells, 1982) then it seems that similar benefits are likely if discussion takes place when children read to their parents. Talking about a book proved to be useful in the *PACT* reading project (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984). Parents involved in the *Mangere Home and School Project* (McNaughton et al., 1981, p.33) were trained to introduce a book or story by discussing it with their child and to ask questions about what had occurred in the story after their child had read. The use of this strategy to enhance the reading achievement of the children was based upon an earlier study by Wong and McNaughton (cited in McNaughton et al. 1981, p.11) where a child

with reading difficulties improved in accuracy of reading and self-correction rate through the use of simple introductions to stories. A more recent initiative, *Partnership for Family Reading* (Handel, 1992), involved parents in workshops which included how to use prediction questions prior to reading to initiate discussion about a story (p. 120).

In relation to parents reading to children, Flood (1977, p.866) suggests that a child seems to benefit more by being involved in the direction of the discussion than by being required to merely answer the questions asked by parents. This is also likely to apply when children read to their parents. Butler (1986, p.195) makes the point that "reading should be a shared experience, to which child and adult both contribute", particularly when the child is reading aloud, lacks confidence and feels that it is a test situation where the adult is always checking for errors.

Summary

Parents as *partners* in the teaching of reading is a relatively new area of research. However, over a short time, a great deal of literature has been written about parents as educators of their own children and "indications are that parent involvement will continue to be a growth area in the 1990's" (Mayfield and Ollila, 1992, p.204). There has been a variety of successful research projects, both overseas and in Australia, which involved parents in assisting their children in learning to read, although there appears to have been less research into the specific benefits of parents reading stories to their children. Much of the literature on children reading

to their parents is based on remedial readers. It is likely that this aspect has been widely explored because of concern for children who are weak readers. The majority of children, who are of average or above-average reading ability, have not been given the same attention.

The present study seeks to examine the practices adopted by parents of children of all ability levels when their young children read to them. It also examines the frequency of story reading to children and the beliefs that parents have about this practice. The following Research Questions are addressed through the use of a questionnaire sent to the parents of all children in Grades 2, 3, and 4 in one school.

Research Questions

1. How long do children spend each night, on average, doing reading homework?

2. What do parents say they do when their children are reading at home? Specifically:
   (a) Do parents allow their children to practise reading on their own before listening to them read aloud?
   (b) To what extent do parents discuss reading material with their children?
   (c) What do parents do when their children misread the text but it still makes sense?

(d) What do parents do when their children misread the text so that it doesn't make sense?

(e) Do parents praise and/or reward their children for reading correctly?

(f) Do parents praise their children if they correct a mistake made during reading?

(g) What strategies do parents encourage their children to use when they have difficulty reading aloud?

(h) Do parents encourage children to observe punctuation marks?

3. Who is usually involved in children's reading homework?

4. (a) How frequently do children have stories read to them?
   (b) Do parents believe that reading stories to their children will help them to become good readers?

5. In relation to Research Questions 1, 2(a), 2(f) and 4(a), are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are in Grades 2, 3, or 4?

6. In relation to Research Questions 1, 2(a), 2(f) and 4(a), are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are of different reading abilities?

Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It describes the subjects and procedures and explains how the instrument, a questionnaire, was developed. It also includes an explanation of how the questionnaire data was analysed.

Subjects

The research questions were investigated through the use of a questionnaire which was sent to 167 parents of children in Grades 2-4 at an independent, Anglican school on the fringe of the Perth metropolitan area, Western Australia. The students who attend the school are drawn from a wide catchment area. Of the 167 questionnaires sent out 149 were returned, giving an 89% response rate.

Instrument

Questionnaires can be a low cost, quick means of collecting information from a large sample (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991). It has been claimed that there may be disadvantages in the use of questionnaires in that the response rate and respondent motivation can be low (Best & Kahn, 1993). However, in the present study a high response rate and high respondent motivation were expected since the parents of children at the school are generally highly involved in school activities, in maintaining a close school community and in their children's education. Therefore, a

questionnaire was considered a highly appropriate method of data collection for this study.

No existing questionnaire could be found which addressed all of the research questions. Builder (1991) designed a *Parent Reading Survey* but this was concerned more with parents' beliefs about reading than what they actually did with their children. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher for this study (see Appendix B).

Questionnaire Design

A preliminary version of the questionnaire used in the present study (see Appendix A) was piloted with parents who had children of the same age as the study group but who attended different schools. The pilot study was undertaken in order to establish validity of the questionnaire. The preliminary questionnaire was modified slightly after piloting, in accordance with the responses of the parents who participated in the pilot study. These modifications are discussed under the heading of *Procedure*, later in this chapter. The modified version of the questionnaire was then used in the main study and will now be described.

Structure of the Final Questionnaire

The final questionnaire (see Appendix B) contains 21 questions, structured in one of three ways. Questions 1-5 and question 17 are closed questions and have a range of responses for parents to select from; questions 6-16 are also closed questions and have a five point scale as follows: always, nearly always, about half the time, not

very often and never, which was adapted from Hook (1981, p.174); and questions 18 to 21 require short, written responses and are therefore open-ended. The structure for each question was chosen carefully to match the type of response required. An 'other' category is provided for any questions where it was reasoned that the parents may like to add their own comments.

The questionnaire has general questions at the beginning, specific questions in the middle section and open-ended questions at the end. Questions which had similar structures and which were on similar topics were grouped together wherever possible for ease of answering.

The 21 questions address several aspects of home reading as follows: the person usually involved with the children's reading homework, the length of time children spend doing reading homework, practice before reading aloud, discussion of reading material, parents' responses to errors in oral reading, praise and reward during oral reading, reading strategies encouraged by parents, attention to punctuation during oral reading, and frequency of story reading to children. These aspects were taken from various home-reading programmes which were discussed in the *Review of Literature*. Each section of the final questionnaire will now be discussed.

Section 1, Questions 1-3

The first section of the questionnaire deals with demographic data and is important in gaining an overall picture of the sample group.

Question 1 asks parents to specify the grade of their youngest child, in Grades 2-4. This information was used in the analysis of Research Question 5: *Are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are in Grades 2, 3, or 4?* This question was asked in the areas of: length of time children spend doing reading homework, praise when a mistake in oral reading is corrected, practising before reading aloud, and the frequency of story reading to children.

Question 2 asks parents to indicate if they have teacher training in any area. This information was deemed necessary as teacher training could have some effect on the way parents deal with their children's reading in the home.

Question 3 asks parents to indicate the person who is usually involved with their children's reading homework. This question relates to Research Question 3: *Who is usually involved in children's reading homework?* It was found in the literature that mothers are usually more involved in their children's home reading activities than fathers (Builder, 1980; Rivalland, 1994).

Section 2, Questions 4 and 5

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Question 1: *How long do children spend each night, on average, doing reading homework?* Question 4 deals with reading homework completed orally, and question 5 deals with reading homework completed silently. Both oral reading and silent reading appear to be important for the progress and development of children's reading skills (Clay 1991; Sloan and Latham, 1981).

Section 3, Questions 6-8

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Question 2(b): *To what extent do parents discuss reading material with their children?* Question 6 deals with discussion before reading aloud and silently, question 7 deals with discussion during reading aloud and silently, and question 8 deals with discussion after reading aloud and silently. The importance of discussion of reading material has been examined in the literature on home reading in terms of parents reading to children and in terms of children reading to parents (Butler, 1986; Elkins and Spreadbury,1992; Flood, 1977; Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984; McNaughton et al.,1981; Wells, 1982).

Section 4, Questions 9-11

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Questions 2(a): *Do parents allow their children to practise reading on their own before listening to them read aloud?*, 2(f): *Do parents praise their children if they correct a mistake made during reading?*, and 2(h): *Do parents encourage children to observe punctuation marks?* Question 9 deals with rehearsal before reading aloud. Builder (1991), found that 70% of parents believed children should not practise before reading aloud. However, if children read on their own before reading aloud they have the opportunity to self-correct when something doesn't make sense or when they believe a mistake has been made. Studies by Clay revealed that children who could self-correct made good progress in reading (1991, p.304). Question 10 deals with praise after a mistake has been corrected during oral reading. Many recent home reading

programmes have encouraged parents to use mistakes in reading as teaching opportunities and to praise children for correcting these mistakes (Bartlett et al., 1984; Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984; Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981). Question 11 deals with attention to punctuation during oral reading. Burns, Roe, and Ross (1988, p.212) claim that following punctuation assists in maintaining meaning while reading aloud.

Section 5, Question 12

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Question 2(e): *Do parents praise and/or reward their children for reading correctly?* Question 12 contains 4 items (and an 'other' item) which deal with praise during and after correct reading, and reward after correct reading. Praising children, (as discussed in respect to question 10 in the questionnaire), has been shown to play a significant role in many home-reading programmes (Bartlett et al., 1984; Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984; Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981). McNaughton et al. (1981, p.11) suggest that praise and reward are similar in that they are both positive consequences, although praise is a verbal form of recognition and reward involves some kind of action, such as being given a token or being allowed to participate in a desirable event.

Section 6, Questions 13-14

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Questions 2(c): *What do parents do when their children misread the text but it still makes sense?* and 2(d):*What do parents do when their children misread the text so that it doesn't make sense?* Each of questions 13 and 14 contain 5 items and the 'other' item. Question 13 deals

with errors that make sense and question 14 deals with errors that do not make sense. Both questions contain 5 items concerned with how parents respond to children's errors in oral reading, these being: ignoring a mistake, immediately telling children the correct word, delaying telling children the correct word, immediately encouraging children to correct the mistake themselves and delaying encouragment for children to correct the mistake themselves.

If parents immediately respond to errors, children do not have an opportunity to self-correct. However, by delaying their response children do have this opportunity. If children are to become independent readers they need time to self-correct when errors occur (Allington, 1977; Clay, 1991; Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981; van Laar, 1989). If children are told the correct word when an error has occurred they can not apply their own reading strategies to the situation but if they are encouraged to correct the mistake themselves then they can attempt to use their reading strategies to help solve the problem.

Section 7, Questions 15-16

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Question 2(g): *What strategies do parents encourage their children to use when they have difficulty reading aloud?* Question 15 deals with reading strategies encouraged by parents when children come to a word, stop and say nothing, and question 16 deals with reading strategies encouraged by parents when children have difficulty reading a word and only read part of it. Question 15 contains 7 items and question 16 contains 8 items. Each of these questions also includes

the 'other' item. Five items in questions 15 and 16 examine particular strategies which parents may encourage their children to use, which are: looking at the pictures, leaving the word out, starting to read the sentence again, guessing the word, and sounding out the word. These strategies can be practised by children on their own during silent or oral reading and they have the potential to help children to become independent readers. Of these strategies, the first four are predominantly reader-driven and could be said to follow a top-down model of reading (Lipson & Wixson, 1991, p.10), the fifth is text-driven and could be said to follow a bottom-up model of reading (Lipson & Wixson, 1991, p. 8). Two items in questions 15 and 16 examine strategies used by the parents but not by the children, which are: sounding out the word for the children and telling the children the word. These two strategies require the intervention of another person and can not be used by children on their own. Question 16 includes an extra item which relates to encouraging the children to keep trying.

Section 8, Questions 17 and 18

This section of the questionnaire relates to Research Questions 4(a): *How frequently do children have stories read to them?* and 4(b): *Do parents believe that reading stories to their children will help them to become good readers?* The questionnaire includes two items (questions 17 and 18) about parents and/or other people reading to children in the home environment. The literature shows that there can be many benefits when parents read to their children from an early age (Adams, 1990; Clay, 1991; Dombey,1992; Elkins and Spreadbury, 1992; Elley, 1989; Strickland and Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1989). These benefits include enhancing

vocabulary acquisition (Elley, 1989; Senechal & Cornell, 1993) and preparing children for learning to read (Clay, 1991; Elkins & Spreadbury, 1992; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1989).

Section 9, Questions 19-21

This section of the questionnaire contains open-ended questions and was included to confirm and expand parents' responses to the closed questions. Question 19 deals with discussion of reading material, question 20 deals with providing help when children read aloud, and question 21 allows parents to make any further comments about their children's home reading.

It has been mentioned that there are three closed questions (numbers 6, 7, and 8) in the questionnaire which examine the frequency and timing of parents' discussion of reading material with their children. Question 19 in this open-ended section of the questionnaire further examines discussion of reading material and asks parents to write the kinds of things they discuss with their children. Question 20 asks parents what they believe are the best ways of helping their children with reading aloud. This question was included to provide parents with the opportunity to expand on any aspect of home reading in relation to reading aloud which they feel is important. Question 21 allows parents to make any other comments about home reading. It gives them the opportunity to add anything which may not be examined in the questionnaire and/or to clarify any of their responses to particular questions.

Procedure

The Pilot Study

The preliminary questionnaire was piloted in the year preceding the study. Principals of two schools, who were known to the researcher, were contacted by telephone and asked if they would find 5-6 parents willing to complete the questionnaire. A further two parents who were known to the researcher and one parent who was a lecturer at Edith Cowan University also completed the questionnaire. A total of 11 preliminary questionnaires were included in the pilot study.

Following this procedure, the questionnaire was modified slightly according to the responses of the parents who participated in the pilot study. The five-point scale used for questions 6-16 was altered slightly in that 'hardly ever' was changed to 'not very often' as two parents indicated that they were reluctant to choose 'hardly ever' because they felt it was virtually like saying they 'never' carried out the particular behaviour. The wording 'not very often' was felt to be less restrictive.

Question 2, relating to the children's date of birth, was deleted as the information was not deemed necessary for this study because the results were examined in terms of grade level rather than age. A question was also added, Question 3 in the final questionnaire, asking parents to indicate the person usually involved in their children's reading homework. The reason for adding this question was to investigate the proportion of mothers and fathers involved.

Question 12 in the preliminary questionnaire (regarding praise and reward for correct oral reading) was expanded because many parents in the pilot study were unsure of what was meant by praise and/or reward. This was clarified by providing examples of praise (saying "Well done") and reward (giving a sticker). Also, two parents in the pilot study pointed out that 'I praise my child' could mean after reading and/or during reading and that it could cause some confusion. It was therefore expanded into two separate items: 'I praise my child while he/she reads', and 'I praise my child after he/she has read'.

Individual items in questions 12-16 were allocated a letter symbol as it was reasoned that they would provide a quick and more accurate reference when analysing and discussing results. Also, if parents wished to comment on a particular item they could refer directly and accurately to that item by using the question number and the letter of the item. Page numbers were also added to the final questionnaire for the same reasons.

For ease in responding to the short answer section of the questionnaire, question 17 parts (b) and (c) in the final qustionnaire became a separate question, renumbered as question 18. Question 20 in the preliminary questionnaire was reworded slightly from 'Do you have any other comments about what you do when your child reads?' to 'Would you like to make any other comments about reading that your child does at home?' as it was reasoned that parents may then make more general comments about their children's home reading experiences.

The cover letter to parents remained the same in the final questionnaire except the afternoon times to contact the researcher with any queries was changed slightly from 'after 3:05p.m.' to 'after 3:30p.m.' and 'I am usually at school until about 4:00p.m.' was deleted as it was not deemed necessary. Also, the return date, Friday 11th March, was added to the final questionnaire. The instructions remained the same except that the reference 'Hook, 1981, p.174' was deleted as this was not relevant.

There were a few minor changes to the general appearance of the questionnaire. The style of type was changed only because the researcher began using another computer with a different programme. Therefore, the questionnaire was retyped. The instructions at the top of the pages or leading up to a set of questions were underlined in the final questionnaire so they stood apart from the questions. To improve readability, questions 6-8 were spread out more in the final questionnaire as they looked cluttered in the preliminary questionnaire. Since modifications to the preliminary questionnaire were minor it was unnecessary to have another pilot study to trial the final questionnaire.

Distribution and Collection of the Final Questionnaire

Early in Term One of the school year (February, 1994) parents with children in Grades 2, 3, and 4 were informed of the nature of the study during a parent-teacher information evening. This parent-teacher information evening consisted of each class teacher conducting his/her own 'talk' with parents of children in his/her class in 1994. All parents who attended the evening were addressed at the one time. Approximately 75% of families were

represented by a parent on the evening. The reseacher, who is a teacher at the school, approached the teachers of Grades 2-4 before the information evening and gave them an outline of the study and its aims. The teachers were then handed a brief, written introduction to the study (see Appendix C). They were given the choice of either reading this directly to the parents or using it as a guide to introduce the study to parents during the information evening. Letters (see Appendix D) were then sent to parents in the students' homework diaries, which all students take home every day, seeking the parents' involvement in completing the questionnaires and informing them of the date they would be sent home. One week later, all parents of children in Grades 2, 3, and 4 at the school were invited to complete the final questionnaire at home and return it to their children's class teachers in the homework diaries. The parents had one week in which to return them. Two families who were away on holidays were not given questionnaires. The questionnaires were given code numbers which made it possible to follow up those that were unreturned with reminder letters. These letters (see Appendix E) invited interested parents to return the questionnaires within the next few days.

Data Collected From Class Teachers

In order to address Research Question 6: *Are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are of different reading abilities?*, each child involved in the study was rated by his/her class teacher as of weak, average, or above average reading ability. The ratings were based on individual teachers' perceptions, not on any standardized tests. This

information was gathered in the year prior to the study because the children's teachers for the new school year had only known the children for a few weeks, as the questionnaire was sent out at the beginning of March. By doing this, the information was considered to be more accurate than if the new teachers had rated the children. However, 13 new children, in Grades 2, 3, or 4 who were recently enrolled at the school, were rated by their class teachers in the same year that the study took place. These ratings were matched to the appropriate questionnaires through the use of the code numbers.

Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The responses to the questionnaire were entered and analysed in an *SPSS for Windows* data file. Responses to questions 6 to 16 were given a code number as follows:

always	nearly always	about half the time	not very often	never
5	4	3	2	1

For ease of data presentation the responses to many questions were recoded and presented as follows:

always or nearly always	about half the time	not very often or never
3	2	1

Where this has been done full tables of responses are provided in Appendix G. Further, responses to questions 4 and 5 on the questionnaire, regarding the length of time children spend doing

reading homework, aloud and silently, each night, were allocated the following codes:

0-5mins	6-10mins	11-15mins	16-20mins	more than 20mins
1	2	3	4	5

Similarly, responses to question 17 on the questionnaire, regarding the frequency of story reading to children, were allocated the following codes:

never	less than once a week	once a week	several times a week	every day
1	2	3	4	5

Similar codes were used in Analysis of Variance tests which were performed in order to answer Research Question 5: *Are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are in Grades 2, 3, or 4?* and Research Question 6: *Are there any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children are of different reading abilities?* Research Question 5 was posed in order to investigate any significant differences in results between those parents who had children in different grades, and Research Question 6 was posed in order to investigate any significant differences between those parents who had children of different ability levels. Four selected areas of the questionnaire were examined in this way through the use of Analysis of Variance. These areas were: the frequency of story reading to children; length of time children spend doing reading homework; praise when a mistake in oral reading is corrected; and practising before reading aloud. The first two used the relative

codes of 1-5 and the latter two used the 'reduced' codes of 1-3. Analysis of Variance was limited to these four areas because there is always a degree of error possible when using statistical tests (Best & Kahn, 1993) and the more tests used, the more likely it is that chance results may occur. Based on a significance level of .05, there is a 1 in 20 chance of concluding that there is a difference between groups when there is actually no difference. Therefore, by limiting the number of Analysis of Variance tests, the possibility of a chance result is reduced.

For questions 18 to 21, which required short, written answers, categories of responses were created from the data by grouping similar types of responses. A tally was used to record each respondent's answers. A respondent's answers to a particular question may have been allocated to more than one category. For example, in response to question 19, *If you discuss a book with your child what kinds of things do you discuss?,* one parent's responses may have been allocated to categories such as the *author, illustrations* and *characters.*

Open-ended question number 21, *Would you like to make any other comments about reading that your child does at home?,* was an optional question to which 89 parents (60%) chose to write comments in the space provided. While these comments were very interesting many did not appear to be directly relevant to this study. Therefore, only those comments which were considered relevant to the study were included in the data analysis.

Excluded Questionnaire Data

Of the 149 questionnaires returned, 6 had a large number of incomplete responses. Three of these had many incomplete parts between questions 12 and 16. Therefore the data from these 3 questionnaires were not used in the analysis of questions 12 to 16. However, the data from these 3 questionnaires were included in the analysis of questions 1 to 11 and questions 17 to 21 because the information in these sections was complete on 2 questionnaires and 79% complete on the 3rd questionnaire. One of the 3 parents commented that their child was "not able to read", which probably explains why some questions were not answered on that particular questionnaire, as they would not have appeared to be relevant. Of the remaining three questionnaires with a large number of incomplete responses, two questionnaires had many parts of questions 15 and 16 incomplete, so in the same way, data from these two questionnaires were not used in the analysis of questions 15 and 16, but they were used for all other questions. The last incomplete questionnaire had no responses on the page containing question 15, so data from this questionnaire were not used in the analysis of question 15.

Four responses to various questions on other questionnaires were classified as invalid or non-responses because two boxes in one question were selected, where only one should have been selected. There were 19 missing responses to open-ended questions 18 to 20 and 54 missing responses to individual items across the questionnaires between questions 1 and 17. Nevertheless, as there were 44 individual items from question 1 through to question 17 this meant that there were only one or two missing responses per

item, on average. Also, one answer to question 18, part b, was considered invalid because the answer did not make sense within the context of the question.

Summary

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire designed by the researcher. Each item in the questionnaire has been justified and has been discussed in relation to the research questions. In addition to the questionnaire, information regarding reading ability levels of children were collected from class teachers. One hundred and forty-nine parents of children in Grades 2-4 participated in the study. This chapter also outlined the procedure for piloting the preliminary questionnaire, the procedure for refining, distributing and collecting the final questionnaire, and the procedure for analysing the final questionnaire data.

Chapter 4
Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the questionnaire data and related discussion. It also includes a summary of the demographic data. Each section addresses one or more research questions and is subdivided into *Results* and *Discussion.* Results and discussion in several areas of home reading are presented and appear in the following order: the length of time spent doing reading homework; practising before reading aloud; discussion of reading material; parents' responses to errors in oral reading; praise and reward during oral reading; reading strategies encouraged by parents; attention to punctuation during oral reading; the people involved in children's reading homework; and reading stories to children. The chapter concludes with a summary of results, which outlines the major findings of the study. It should be noted that results are based on responses given by parents about what they did with their children. As such, the results are based on what parents said they did with their children, which may perhaps differ from what they actually did.

Demographic Data / Description of Sample

Results

Parents who had more than one child of school age were asked to respond in terms of their youngest child in Grades 2-4 at school. There were 51 respondents (34%) with a child in Grade 2, 52 (35%) with a child in Grade 3, and 46 (31%) with a child in Grade 4.

Children were rated by their class teachers as weak, average or above-average in ability and these ratings were matched to the questionnaires through the use of code numbers. There were 36 respondents (24%) whose children were rated by their teachers as being of weak ability, 56 (38%) whose children were rated as being of average ability, and 57 (38%) whose children were rated as being of above average ability by their teachers.

Thirty eight parents (26%) indicated that they had some type of teacher training and of these, 23 (16%) had early childhood or primary training. One hundred and eleven (74%) had no teacher training.

Length of Time Spent Doing Reading Homework

The first Research Question asked how long children spent each night, on average, doing reading homework.

Results

Results are displayed in Table 4.1. It can be seen that well over half of all children in the study were reading for 0-10 minutes each night both orally (71%) and silently (62%), as reported by their parents. Few children (8%) were reading aloud for longer than 15 minutes per night. However, 18% of the children were reading silently for more than 15 minutes each night.

Table 4.1

Length of Time Children Spent Doing Reading Homework Each Night

Length of Time	Aloud (%)	Silent (%)
0-5min	32	34
6-10min	39	28
11-15min	22	19
16-20min	7	7
more than 20min	1	11
no response	0	1

N = 149

Also, one parent wrote, "You can't make children read for longer than they are interested or if they don't like the book", in response to question number 21 on the questionnaire, *Would you like to make any other comments about reading that your child does at home?*

Discussion

These results indicate that the majority of children were engaged in both oral and silent reading as part of their homework. The literature shows that both oral and silent reading play important roles in children's reading development. Reading aloud has been shown to be important for helping children develop useful reading strategies and in helping children to hear and correct errors if they occur (Clay, 1991, p. 251). Reading aloud also provides valuable practice on a one-to-one level (McNaughton et al., 1981, p.11). In contrast, reading silently is an independent skill but one which still needs to be developed through practice and experience (Sloan and

Latham, 1981, p.133). While approximately one third of children from this sample read silently for only 0-5 minutes each night, just over one third of children read silently for more than 10 minutes each night. It must be remembered that this was only reading homework and did not include other silent reading which may have occurred in the home.

Reading aloud to an audience would be difficult to maintain for long periods of time, although people frequently read silently for many hours at a time. This is reflected in the results, in that the percentage of children who were said by their parents to read for longer than 15 minutes was lower for reading aloud (8%) than it was for reading silently (18%). Some information in the literature on length of time spent reading aloud suggests that oral reading sessions should be kept short, somewhere between 10-15 minutes (Bartlett et al., 1984; Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984).

The fact that one third of the children reportedly spent 5 minutes or less on oral reading and one third of the children reportedly spent 5 minutes or less on silent reading could be some cause for concern by the children's teachers, given that home reading at this particular school forms an integral part of the language programme and is set every weeknight by the class teachers. Perhaps more detailed guidelines about length of time spent doing reading homework needs to be established for some parents and some children might well benefit from their parents being more aware of the advantages of doing reading homework, such as reading practice on a one-to-one level.

Significant Differences Between Children of Different Grades and of Different Abilities

In relation to the length of time spent doing reading homework, Research Question 5 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were in Grades 2, 3, or 4. Research Question 6 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were of different reading abilities.

Results

It should be noted that the mean scores given below do not directly indicate the amount of time spent reading, but they do relate to the data analysis codes of 1-5, which were explained in the Methodology chapter under the heading of *Analysis of Questionnaire Data.*

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that the difference in the time spent reading aloud by children in Grade 2 ($M = 2.16$), children in Grade 3 ($M = 2.21$) and children in Grade 4 ($M = 1.80$), approached but did not reach significance $F(2,146) = 2.69$, $p = .07$. However, there was a significant difference in the time spent reading silently by children in Grade 2 ($M = 1.84$), children in Grade 3 ($M = 2.36$) and children in Grade 4 ($M = 2.82$), $F(2,144) = 7.27$, $p = .001$. A Scheffe test indicated that children in Grade 4 were doing more silent reading homework than children in Grade 2.

A one-way Analysis of Variance also revealed that there was no significant difference in the time spent reading aloud by children of a weaker reading ability ($M = 2.08$), children of an average reading

ability (M = 2.14) and children of an above-average reading ability (M = 1.98), F (2,146) = .41, p = .66. However, there was a significant difference in the time spent reading silently by children of a weaker reading ability (M = 1.74), children of an average reading ability (M = 2.27) and children of an above-average reading ability (M = 2.75), F (2, 144) = 6.99, p = .001. A Scheffe test indicated that children of an above-average ability were doing more silent reading homework than children of a weaker ability.

Discussion

The results of the Analysis of Variance tests indicate that the children in Grade 4 were doing more silent reading homework than the children in Grade 2. It is possible that this increase in length of time spent doing silent reading homework from Grade 2 to Grade 4 could continue as children get older. There may also be a particular age where the increase in time spent doing silent reading homework starts to level off.

It is not surprising that children in Grade 4 were doing significantly more silent reading homework than children in Grade 2 because, as children get older and become more independent in their reading, it would be expected that they would do more silent reading. In fact, Builder (1991, p. 33) claims that "children of primary-school age need to increase the proportion of time spent reading silently as they progress through their school years." As children become more proficient they are likely to move from reading picture books to reading longer stories and novels which can hold a reader's attention for longer periods of time. Also, it may be that the teachers of the older children were setting homework which

demanded more silent reading than oral reading.

Significant differences in time spent doing reading homework occurred between the ability levels for silent reading but not for oral reading, a result similar to that for grade levels. Children of an above-average reading ability were doing significantly more silent reading homework than children of a weaker reading ability. It seems that reading is a skill which is developed through practice at reading (Allington, 1977; Clay, 1979; Samuels, Schermer and Reinking, 1992; Stanovich, 1986; Trelease, 1989). Thus, the above-average readers, who were doing more reading homework, would be likely to improve further, while the weaker readers, who were doing less reading homework, would be likely to fall further behind their more able peers. Stanovich (1986) suggests that this is a case of "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer". However, it must be remembered that the results of this part of the study only considered reading homework and did not take into consideration other reading completed at home or at school. It is not possible to ascertain in this study whether the increased time spent doing silent reading homework resulted in children being more able readers, or if those children read more because they were better at the task. Stanovich (1986) has suggested that it is likely that the relationship between reading ability and time spent reading is reciprocal.

Practising Before Reading Aloud

Research Question 2(a) asked if parents allowed their children to practise reading on their own before listening to them read aloud.

Results

Ninety-three parents (62%) reported that they hardly ever or never allowed their children to practise reading, 20 (13%) reported allowing them to practise about half the time, and 34 (23%) reported nearly always or always allowing them to practise. Two respondents (1%) did not answer the question.

Discussion

The results show that just under two-thirds of the parents (62%) did not allow their children to practise prior to reading aloud, on a regular basis. Similarly, a parent reading survey by Builder (1991) revealed that most parents (70%) believed that children should not practise before reading orally.

Builder (1991, p.34) claims that rehearsal of a text before reading aloud to an audience helps to improve expression and fluency. It is possible that parents may be concerned that if they allow their children to practise reading the text on their own, then they will not know whether their children experience initial difficulties with the text and can overcome these on their own. Nevertheless, self-correction is an independent reading skill which can be developed during the initial practice (Builder, 1991), and the ability to self-correct when errors occur is important for children's reading progress (Clay, 1991). It is also important to note that young

readers, of the age of those in this study, seem to pick up more errors when they read aloud than when they read silently because they are hearing the errors (Clay, 1991, p.251) and may pick up a discrepancy between what they hear and what they see on the page. It thus seems that young readers may derive more benefit from rehearsing the text aloud than from rehearsing the text silently.

Unprepared oral reading may be valuable in the diagnosis and remediation of reading weaknesses. However, class teachers or specialist reading teachers are the people usually involved in such procedures. Therefore, it may not be appropriate for parents also to adopt the role of tester or corrector when teachers ask them to listen to their children read (Builder, 1982, p.221). Eventually children will not be able to rely on their parents or other adults for help when they have difficulty reading. By providing them with the opportunity to practise before reading to an audience, adults may be assisting children to become more independent in their reading.

Significant Differences Between Children of Different Grades and of Different Abilities

In relation to practising before reading aloud, Research Question 5 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were in Grades 2, 3, or 4. Research Question 6 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were of different reading abilities.

Results

It should be noted that the mean scores given below relate to the data analysis codes of 1-3, which were explained in the Methodology chapter under the heading of *Analysis of Questionnaire Data.*

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency with which parents allowed their children to practise before reading aloud for children in Grade 2 ($M = 1.86$), children in Grade 3 ($M = 1.44$) and children in Grade 4 ($M = 1.49$), $F(2,144) = 3.84$, $p = .02$. A Scheffe test indicated that the parents of children in Grade 2 allowed their children to practise more often before reading aloud than did parents of children in Grade 3.

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency with which parents allowed their children to practise before reading aloud for children of a weaker reading ability ($M = 1.76$), children of an average reading ability ($M = 1.79$) and children of an above-average reading ability ($M = 1.32$), $F(2, 144) = 5.60$, $p = .004$. A Scheffe test indicated that the children of a weaker ability were allowed to practise more often than children of an above-average ability. Children of an average ability were also allowed to practise more often than children of an above-average ability.

Discussion

The results indicate that parents of children in Grade 2 allowed their children to practise more often before reading aloud than did

parents of children in Grade 3. Also, children of an average or a weaker ability (as categorized by their teachers), were allowed to practise more often than children of an above-average ability (as categorized by their teachers). It is the children of average and weaker ability levels who may need more practice before reading aloud in order to complete the reading task more confidently and fluently. However, it seems that the frequency of practice is still very low for the children of average and weaker abilities, and even lower for the children of above-average abilities, as indicated by the mean scores of 1.76 for children of weaker abilities, 1.79 for children of average abilities, and 1.32 for children of above-average abilities. A mean score of 1.0 would indicate that the parents on average allowed their children to practise not very often or never, a score of 2.0 would indicate that the parents on average allowed their children to practise about half the time, and a mean score of 3.0 would indicate that the parents on average allowed their children to practise nearly always or always. Therefore, the mean scores for weaker readers and average readers of 1.76 and 1.79 respectively fall a little below 'about half the time', which appears to indicate that on average these children were allowed to practise less than half the time.

While children of above-average abilities may not need as many opportunities to rehearse texts as weaker and average readers it is important to remember that the Grades 2-4, which are the focus of this study, can be very influential years in children's schooling. Further, it is likely that most children would feel more confident if they were familiar with the text before reading it aloud to their parents than if they were not.

Discussion of Reading Material

Research Question 2(b) asked to what extent parents discussed reading material with their children.

Results

Figure 4.1 shows the frequency and timing of parents' discussion of reading material with their children, as reported by the parents. Parents were asked to include all reading situations, not just reading homework.

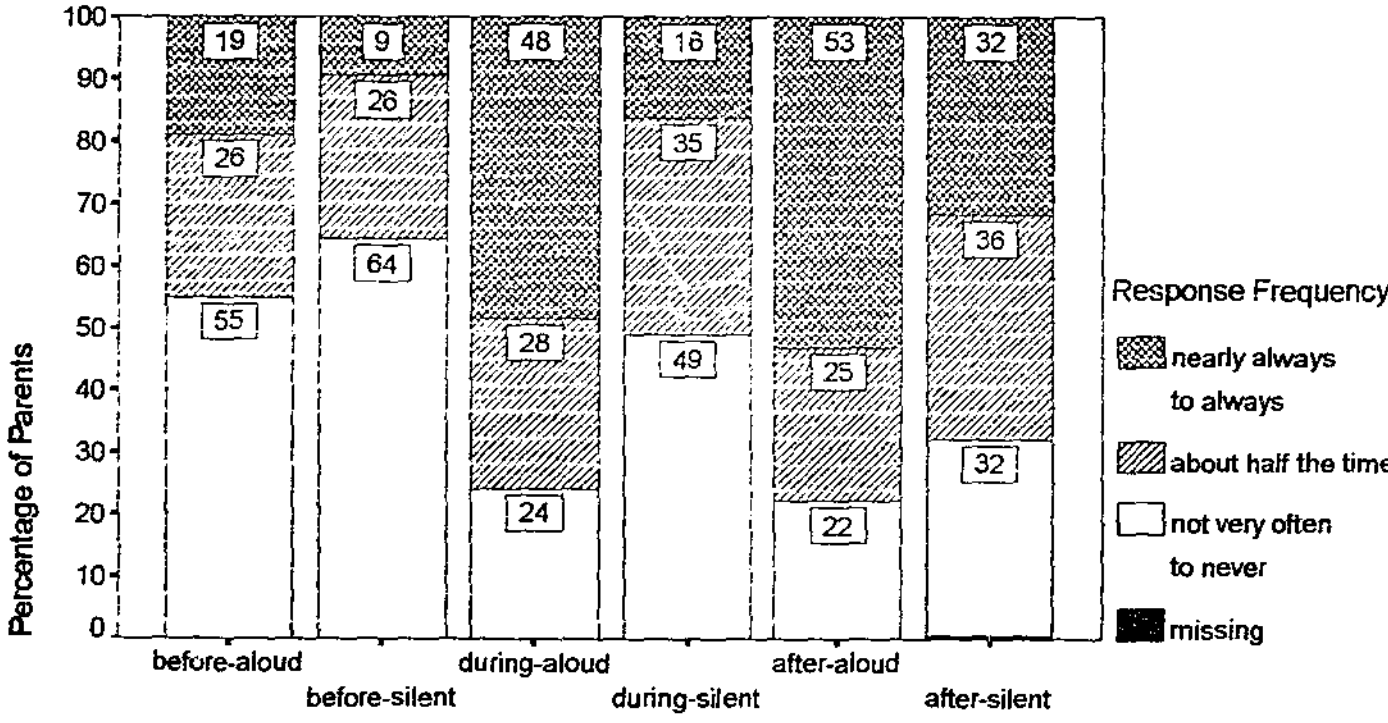

Figure 4.1. Percentages of parents who discussed reading material with their children before, during, and after silent reading and reading aloud.

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, 48% of parents nearly always or always discussed a book or story during the time when their children read aloud and 53% of parents did the same after their children had read aloud. Less discussion occurred when children read silently. The least amount of discussion occurred before children read, either aloud or silently. Only 19% of parents nearly always or always discussed a book before their children read aloud and only 9% of parents did so when their children read silently. At all of these 3 stages of reading (before, during and after), for both oral and silent reading, 25-36% of parents discussed the book or story about half the time.

Table 4.2 shows the parents' responses to question 19 on the questionnaire, *If you discuss a book with your child what kinds of things do you discuss?* The responses of many parents indicated that they discussed several topics.

Further topics not listed in Table 4.2 but discussed by 4 or fewer parents were as follows: what they would do in the same situation; comparing it to other stories; applying non-fiction information to real life; rhyming words; length of story; dedication; blurb; publishing details; what sort of people the book was written for; why the book was chosen; and how to 'sound out' new words. Four respondents (3%) did not answer the question.

Discussion

Figure 4.1 indicates that more discussion of reading material occurred during and after reading aloud than before reading aloud. Many parents (68%) discussed a book about half the time or more,

Table 4.2
The Most Common Topics Discussed by Parents and Children When Reading Books Together

Topic of Discussion	Number of Responses
events in story or facts in book	75
characters	43
feelings (favourite, happy, sad, and/or interesting parts)	42
illustrations	38
interesting/new concepts, words and/or phrases	26
morals or special messages	24
actions and/or attitudes of characters	19
author	18
predicting what might happen next	17
relevance to own life	15
type of book (eg. non-fiction, fiction, humorous, serious)	13
illustrator	12
why things happened and/or consequences	10
ending	8
setting	8
cover page (including title)	8
alternate endings	7
anything child comments on or asks about	6

N = 145 Many parents discussed more than one topic.

after their child had read silently. In contrast, few parents discussed a book before their child read either silently or aloud.

At all three stages of the reading session; before, during, and after; discussion occurred more often when children were reading aloud than when they were reading silently. This result is not unexpected, as when parents listen to their children read aloud they would be more likely to follow the story with their children and discuss it, than when their children read silently. When children read silently no attention is required from the adult unless the child initiates it, and therefore it is quite likely that parents would not discuss a story read silently.

Comprehension can be developed by discussing reading material (Carr and Ogle, 1987; Wells, 1982). A child's knowledge on a particular topic can be activated before reading when discussion occurs before reading takes place. Discussion before reading helps to activate schema about the topic or theme of the book which, in turn, can assist children in making predictions as they read and can also assist in comprehension of the text. Activating appropriate schema allows children to "relate incoming information to already known information" (Wallace, 1992, p.33). Further, discussion before reading may provide parents with an idea of how much their children already know about the subject of a book. Parents may then have a better idea of how much prompting may be required if their children experience difficulties reading the text. (See the following section, *Parents' Responses to Errors in Oral Reading*, for further discussion on prompting.)

Many reading strategies such as *Reciprocal Teaching* (Palincsar and Brown, cited in Lipson and Wixson, 1991, p.488), *Know-Want to Know-Learned* or *K-W-L* (Carr and Ogle, 1987), *Directed-Reading-Thinking Activity* or *DRTA* (Stauffer, cited in Lipson and Wixson, 1991, p.579), *Experience-Text Relationship* or *ETR* (Au, 1979), and *Discussion-Aided Analytical Reading* or *DAAR* (Sloan and Latham, 1981, p.242) involve discussion and prediction before, during and after reading. All of these strategies engage children in making realistic predictions prior to reading and discussing predictions during and after reading. They also encourage students to be actively involved in their reading. Similar strategies were used in the *Partnership for Family Reading Program* (Handel, 1992) in which parents were trained to encourage their children to make predictions prior to reading as well as being trained in the use of other reading comprehension strategies.

The researchers involved in two home reading programmes, *PACT* (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984) and the *Mangere Home and School Project* (McNaughton et al., 1981), found that discussion of reading material was useful in enhancing children's reading development. Discussion of the text after reading may help to promote reflection and critical thinking, which are important aspects of becoming a successful reader (Freebody, 1992; Goldenberg, 1992).

In spite of the large amount of research which indicates the benefits of discussion before, during and after reading, some parents in the present study appeared to be involved in discussion during and after reading but few appeared to be involved in

discussion before reading; and other parents in the present study appeared to be involved in little to no discussion at all.

Not only are the timing and frequency of discussion important, but the topics discussed are also important for the development of reading and comprehension skills. Burns, Roe and Ross (1988, p.230) describe four levels of comprehension, these being: literal, which involves ideas that are directly stated in the text; interpretive, which extends to inferring information which is not directly stated in the text; critical, which involves evaluating the text; and creative, which requires extension of ideas beyond those in the text. Thus, comprehension is much more than just taking in the ideas stated in the text. Freebody (1992), Traves (1992) and Adams and Bruck (1993) believe that a literate individual should be able to comprehend at all levels.

Figure 4.2 indicates that four of the five most common topics of discussion: *events in the story; characters; illustrations; and interesting/new concepts, words and /or phrases*; were most likely based on literal aspects of the text. Only one of the five most common topics, *feelings*, was appears to be based on inferential and/or creative aspects of the text. However, it is possible that when parents and children discussed events in the story, characters, illustrations or interesting words and phrases, some interpretive or critical discussion may have taken place. Without knowing the direction of the discussions it is impossible to say exactly how much literal, interpretive, critical or creative discussion occurred. A few other topics of discussion identified by the parents suggest that interpretive and/or critical aspects of the text were

discussed by some parents, these topics were: *morals or special messages, predicting what might happen next and why things happened and/or consequences.* Creative and critical thinking may well have occurred when some parents and children discussed *alternate endings* and *relevance to own life.* All other topics were likely to be more literal than interpretive, critical or creative.

Parents' Responses to Errors in Oral Reading

Research Question 2(c) asked what parents did when their children misread the text but it still made sense.

Results

Figure 4.2 shows how parents reported that they responded to their children's errors in oral reading that did make sense. The number of subjects included in Figure 4.2 is 146. Three other missing responses are not shown, one in part (a), and two in part (c).

As can be seen in Figure 4.2, when children made errors in oral reading that made sense, 33% of parents always or nearly always immediately told their children the correct word and 12% of parents did the same at the end of the sentence. Fifty three percent of parents always or nearly always encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves as soon as it occurred and 23% of parents always or nearly always encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves at the end of the sentence in which the error occurred. Sixty nine percent of parents not very often or never ignored the mistake.

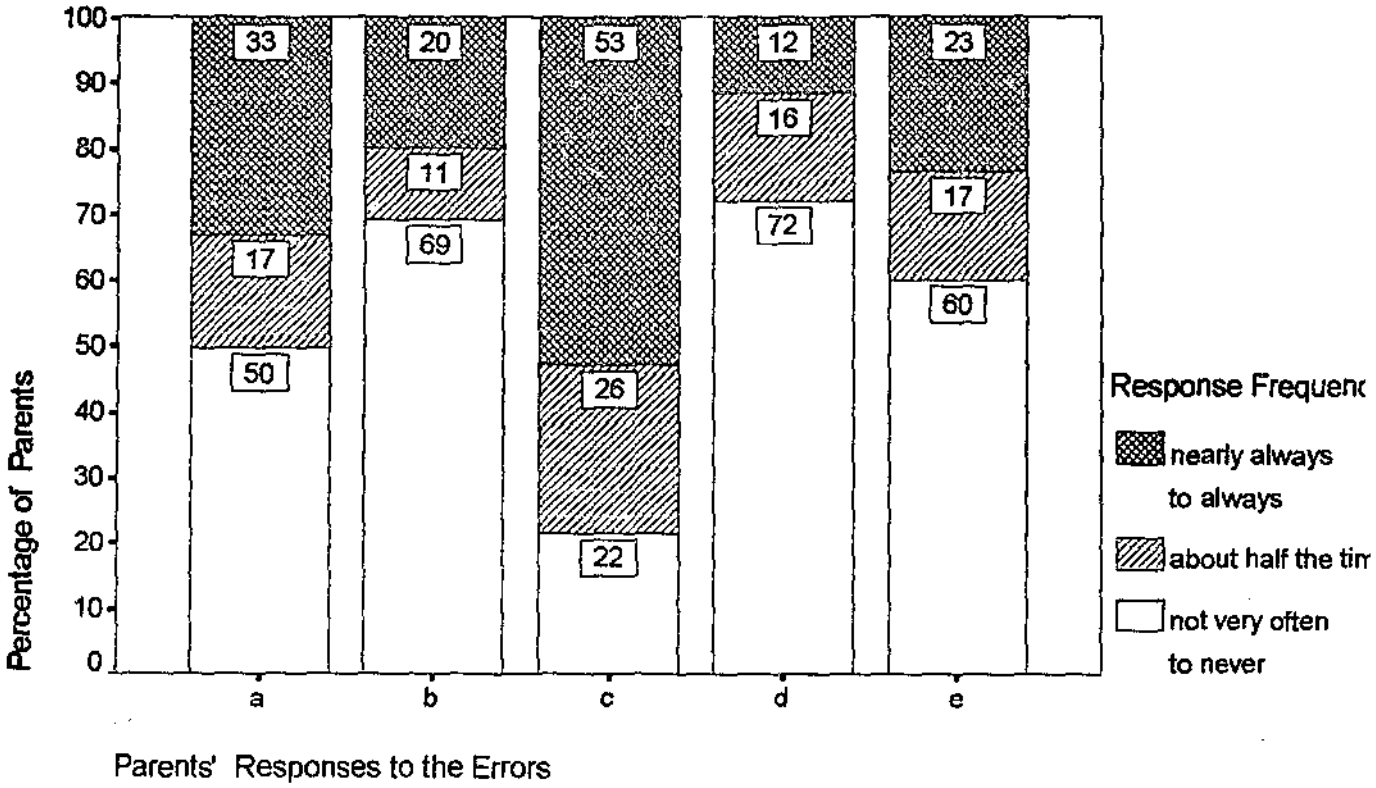

Figure 4.2. How parents responded to their children's errors in oral reading that made sense.

Note: a - parents immediately told their children the word;

b - parents ignored the mistake;

c - parents immediately encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves;

d - parents waited until the end of the sentence and then told their children the word;

e - parents waited until the end of the sentence and then encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves.

In addition, in answer to open-ended question number 20 on the questionnaire: *What do you think are the best ways of helping your child with reading aloud?*, one parent wrote, "telling them the word

teaches them nothing", and another parent wrote, "when stuck on words wait - they often correct words themselves and sound out words. Talk about the subject - they may work out what the word should be."

Discussion

Figure 4.2 indicates that only 20% of parents nearly always or always ignored a mistake when an error made sense (column b), which suggests that these parents placed more emphasis on meaning than on word identification. In relation to reading models, these 20% of parents were apparently influenced by either a top-down model (where meaning is more important than accurate word identification), or an interactive model (where meaning and accurate word identification are both important). The results also indicate that 69% of parents never or not very often ignored a mistake when an error made sense. This suggests that the majority of parents either placed more importance on word identification than meaning (showing they were influenced by a bottom-up model of reading) or they placed importance on both word identification and meaning (showing they were influenced by an interactive model of reading).

Figure 4.2 indicates that more parents immediately attended to errors (columns 'a' and 'c') than parents who waited until the end of a sentence before attending to errors (columns 'd' and 'e'). When parents immediately correct or point out errors, children are not given time to self-correct. If time is allowed for self-correction before providing children with help then they are more likely to become independent readers (Allington, 1977; Clay, 1991;

Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981; van Laar, 1989). Allington (1977, p.59) suggests that parents should not continually interrupt children as they read, and that asking children if something made sense is the only interruption actually necessary.

As indicated in Figure 4.2, column 'c', the most common response by parents to errors that made sense was to encourage their children to correct the mistakes immediately themselves. In other words, the children were being prompted by their parents to correct the mistakes. Prompting children after a mistake was made, rather than telling them the correct word, was a successful strategy encouraged in home reading projects by McNaughton et el. (1981), and Bartlett et al. (1984). Parents involved in these projects were only to tell their children the correct word if the children's attempts after prompting had not been successful. Further, in the study by McNaughton et al. (1981) parents were encouraged to wait for self correction, rather than to prompt immediately. If parents were to continually tell their children the correct word each time a difficulty arose, then children would not be given opportunities to practise their own strategies for solving difficult words, and therefore their development as independent readers would be hindered.

Research Question 2(d) asked what parents did when their children misread the text so that it didn't make sense.

Results

Figure 4.3 shows how parents reported that they responded to their children's errors in oral reading that didn't make sense. The number of subjects included in Figure 4.3 is 146. Six other missing responses are not shown, one in part (a), two in part (b), two in part (d), and one in part (e).

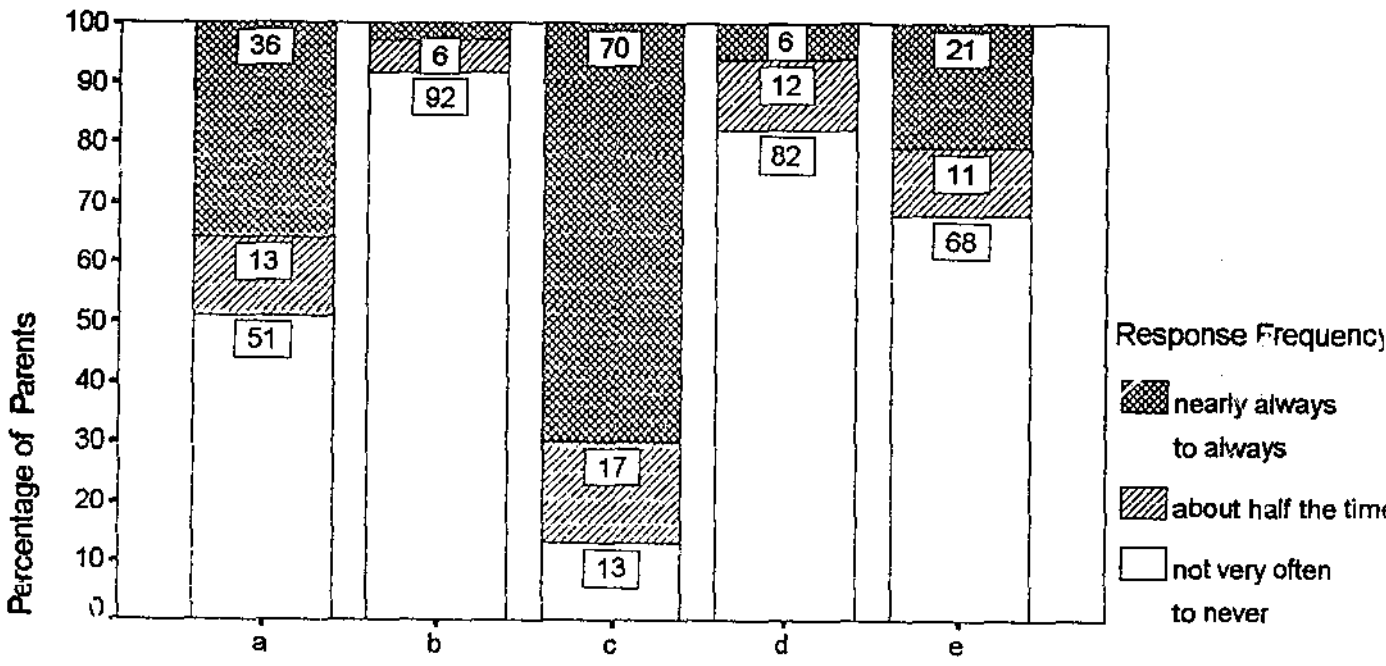

Figure 4.3. How parents responded to their childen's errors in oral reading that didn't make sense.

Note: a - parents immediately told their children the word;

b - parents ignored the mistake;

c - parents immediately encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves;

d - parents waited until the end of the sentence and then told their children the word;

e - parents waited until the end of the sentence and then encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves.

As can be seen in Figure 4.3, 36% of parents always or nearly always immediately told their children the correct word when an error that didn't make sense occurred and 6% of parents did the same at the end of the sentence. Seventy percent of parents always or nearly always encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves as soon as it occurred and 21% of parents always or nearly always encouraged their children to correct the mistake themselves at the end of the sentence in which the error occurred. Ninety two percent of parents not very often or never ignored the mistake.

Discussion

When comparing Figure 4.3 with Figure 4.2, there is a similar overall pattern of parents' responses to errors that made sense and parents' responses to errors that didn't make sense. (The smallest variation was a difference of 1% [column 'a', response 'not very often to never'] and the greatest variation was a difference of 23% [column 'b', response 'not very often to never']). Nevertheless, the patterns of responses are more extreme in Figure 4.3.

Column 'b' of Figures 4.2 and 4.3 indicate that more parents nearly always or always ignored errors that did make sense (20%) than errors that didn't make sense (less than 5%). These results suggest that some parents were more concerned with meaning than with exact word identification.

Figure 4.3 indicates, for errors that didn't make sense, that far more parents immediately attended to the errors (columns 'a' and 'c') than waited until the end of a sentence before attending to the

errors (columns 'd' and 'e'). This result is similar to that for errors which made sense. However, more children were given time to self-correct when an error made sense than when an error didn't make sense. If children's attention is immediately drawn to an error, then they are denied the opportunity to self-correct.

As shown in Figure 4.3, prompting children to correct a mistake immediately was by far the most common response to errors that didn't make sense (column 'c'), a strategy used by 87% of parents at least half of the time. Immediately telling children the correct word was the next most common response (column 'a'), a strategy used by 49% of parents at least half of the time. The third most common response was prompting children to correct errors at the end of a sentence (column 'e'), which was used by 32% of parents at least half of the time. If children are prompted or given clues to help them identify a difficult word, without actually being told the word, then they can attempt to use their reading strategies to help solve the problem. If these strategies are practised during home reading it is likely that the children would be able to use them without being prompted by an adult, thus enabling them to become independent readers. This was the approach used by McNaughton et al. in the *Mangere Home and School Project* (1981).

Praise and Reward During Oral Reading

Research Question 2(e) asked if parents praised and/or rewarded their children for reading correctly.

Results

Table 4.3 shows the reported frequency and timing of parental praise and reward for oral reading. It indicates that the majority of parents always or nearly always praised their children during (81%) and after (94%) reading aloud. Very few parents (4%) always or nearly always rewarded their children after reading and few (8%) rewarded their children about half the time after reading.

Thirteen parents wrote comments about praise or reward in the 'other' section for this question. Five parents indicated that cuddles or hugs were used to reward their children; one parent indicated that more books were bought for his/her child; one parent let his/her child choose another book to read or have it read aloud; one parent played games with his/her child after reading; one parent had a 'point system' which was used; one parent encouraged the other parent or sister of the child to give praise and special recognition for the reading; one parent shared the child's efforts with another family member or friend; one parent thanked the child for sharing the story; and one other parent wrote that a 'special reward' may have been given for tackling something difficult.

In addition, in response to question 20 in the questionnaire, *What do you think are the best ways of helping your child with reading aloud?*, 44 parents (30%) indicated that they felt praise and/or encouragement were important.

Table 4.3

Percentage of Parents Who Praised or Rewarded Their Children for Correct Oral Reading

Frequency	Praise During Reading (%)	Praise After Reading (%)	Reward After Reading (%)
Nearly Always or Always	81	94	4
About Half the Time	8	5	8
Not Very Often or Never	12	1	88

N = 146

Research Question 2(f) asked if parents praised their children if they corrected a mistake made during reading.

Results

One hundred and thirty five parents (91%) indicated they nearly always or always praised their children when they corrected a mistake, 9 (6%) indicated they praised their children for correcting mistakes about half the time, and 4 (3%) indicated they hardly ever or never praised their children for correcting mistakes. One respondent (1%) did not answer the question.

Discussion

Table 4.3 indicates that praise for correct reading both during (81%) and after (94%) reading appeared to be very common. However, 12% of parents said that they rarely or never praised their children during reading. Most parents (91%) also said that they usually praised their children for correcting mistakes. Only 3% hardly ever or never praised their children for correcting mistakes. As has been shown in the literature review, praise has been an important part of many successful home reading programmes (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984; Mackenzie and Amiet, 1985; McNaughton et al., 1981). However, McNaughton et al. (1981) found that untrained parents gave very little praise to their children. It is possible that the parents in the present study felt that they were frequently praising their children when in fact they were not doing it as often as they thought. It is also possible that the present sample of parents praised their children more than the parents in McNaughton et al's. sample.

While Table 4.3 indicates that very few parents (4%) rewarded their children after they had read correctly, the comments made by 13 parents suggest that many more children may actually have been rewarded in personal ways, such as being given hugs or being read a story. Some parents may not have considered these personal forms of recognition as actual rewards because they are not materialistic in nature, unlike the example provided in the questionnaire, *giving a sticker.*

Significant Differences Between Children of Different Grades and of Different Abilities

In relation to praise when a mistake in oral reading was corrected, Research Question 5 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were in Grades 2, 3, or 4. Research Question 6 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were of different reading abilities.

Results

It should be noted that the mean scores given below relate to the data analysis codes 1-3, which were explained in the Methodology chapter under the heading of *Analysis of Questionnaire Data.*

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was a significant difference in the amount of praise given to children when a mistake was corrected for children in Grade 2 ($M = 2.98$), children in Grade 3 ($M = 2.77$) and children in Grade 4 ($M = 2.91$), $F(2,145) = 3.92$, $p = .02$. A Scheffe test indicated that children in Grade 2 were receiving significantly more praise than children in Grade 3.

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was no significant difference in the amount of praise given to children when a mistake was corrected by children of a weaker reading ability ($M = 2.89$), children of an average reading ability ($M = 2.89$) and children of an above-average reading ability ($M = 2.88$), $F(2,145) = .02$, $p = .98$.

Discussion

Children across the three ability levels were receiving very similar amounts of praise from their parents for correcting mistakes. However, children in Grade 3 were receiving significantly less praise for correcting mistakes than children in Grade 2. There is no obvious reason why children in Grade 3 would have received less praise. It could perhaps be because the particular parents in this study with Grade 3 children expected more of their children and as a result they gave them less praise for their efforts than parents with Grade 2 children.

Reading Strategies Encouraged by Parents

Research Question 2(g) asked what strategies parents encouraged their children to use when having difficulty reading aloud.

Results

Table 4.4 shows the strategies which parents said they encouraged when their children had difficulty reading aloud. It indicates that the most common strategy encouraged by parents when their children were having difficulty reading aloud was for the child to have a go at sounding out the word (78% of parents nearly always or always encouraged the use of this strategy when children stopped and said nothing; and 76% of parents nearly always or always encouraged the use of this strategy when children read only part of a word).

Table 4.4
Strategies Encouraged by Parents When Their Children Had Difficulty Reading Aloud

Strategy	Frequency of Response			
	never or not very often (%)	about half the time (%)	nearly always or always(%)	missing (%)
When Children Stopped and Said Nothing				
child looks at the pictures	41	22	35	1
child starts sentence again	53	26	21	1
child guesses the word	54	14	30	2
parent sounds out the word	57	21	21	1
child sounds out the word	6	15	78	1
parent tells child the word	63	23	12	2
child leaves the word out	95	4	0	1
N = 143				
When Children Read Only Part of a Word				
child looks at the pictures	45	19	35	1
child starts sentence again	50	22	27	1
child guesses the word	57	19	22	1
parent sounds out the word	56	25	18	1
child sounds out the word	5	17	76	2
parent tells child the word	62	24	12	1
child leaves the word out	93	3	2	2
child encouraged to keep trying	7	12	79	1
N = 144				

The least common strategy encouraged by parents was for the child to leave the word out (95% of parents never or not very often encouraged the use of this strategy when children stopped and said nothing; and 93% of parents never or not very often encouraged the use of this strategy when children read only part of a word).

Close to half of all parents never or not very often encouraged their children to look at the pictures, start the sentence again or guess the word (41%, 53%, and 54% respectively did this when their children stopped and said nothing; and 45%, 50%, and 57% respectively did this when their children only read part of a word). Only a minority of parents nearly always or always encouraged their children to look at the pictures, start the sentence again or guess the word (35%, 21%, and 30% respectively did this when their children stopped and said nothing; and 35%, 27%, and 22% respectively did this when their children read only part of a word).

Discussion

The results indicate that encouraging children to sound out difficult words was the most popular strategy used by parents to help their children overcome reading difficulties. Similarly, a parent opinion survey by Nicholson (1980) revealed that approximately half of the sample of parents encouraged their children to sound out words as an initial strategy for solving problems (p. 20). These results are also similar to, but not as high as, those indicated by Builder (1991, p.34), who found that 91% of parents believed sounding-out should be used by children for working out unknown words.

The results indicate that most parents closely followed a bottom-up model of reading because they frequently encouraged their children to use the text-driven strategy of sounding-out words and less frequently encouraged the use of reader-driven strategies, such as starting the sentence again or guessing the word. Most of these parents probably learnt to read when bottom-up reading models influenced reading education and it is likely that they encouraged their children to read in a way similar to that in which they were taught.

Around one-fifth of the parents encouraged their children to sound-out words half of the time or less and around one-fifth always or nearly always encouraged their children to look at the pictures, start the sentence again or guess the word. This result suggests that approximately one-fifth of the parents in this study may follow an interactive view of reading because they encouraged strategies which require a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing.

There were 23 parents (15%) who had teacher training in the early childhood or primary areas, training which is concerned with children of the same age group as those in this study. The teacher training of these parents is very likely to have had an influence on the way they responded to their children's errors in oral reading.

The home-reading programmes by Bartlett et al. (1984) and McNaughton et al. (1981) trained parents to encourage the use of strategies which required a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing (following the interactive model of reading). Parents

were trained to encourage strategies which required bottom-up processing, such as sounding out the word, only when a mistake that made sense was made.

It appears that children may benefit more when they are encouraged to use strategies which do not interrupt the flow of meaning any more than necessary. These strategies include starting the sentence again or guessing the word in times of difficulty and using different strategies in different situations, rather than relying only on sounding out to identify difficult words, which tends to interrupt the flow of meaning.

Attention to Punctuation During Oral Reading

Research Question 2(h) asked if parents encouraged their children to observe punctuation marks.

Results

One hundred and seven parents (72%) indicated that they always or nearly always encouraged their children to pause at the commas and full stops, 14 (9%) encouraged their children to pause about half the time, and 27 (18%) not very often or never encouraged their children to pause at full stops and commas. One respondent (1%) did not answer the question. In addition, in response to open-ended question 20 on the questionnaire, *What do you think are the best ways of helping your child with reading aloud?*, one parent indicated how he/she felt about punctuation, "while our child reads aloud we explain the importance of punctuation in the flow of

meaning". Another parent, in response to open-ended question 21, *Would you like to make any other comments about reading that your child does at home?*, wrote, "I think it is very important that a child understands what he is reading, so punctuation and explanation of words is important".

Discussion

The majority of parents (72%) were frequently encouraging their children to observe punctuation marks as they read aloud. It is possible that the 18% of parents who rarely drew their children's attention to the punctuation marks did not need to do so because their children observed the punctuation on their own, without any prompting from their parents. As two parents indicated, following punctuation marks is important to the meaning of the text and if children are not observing commas and full stops then it is important that parents draw their children's attention to them, to ensure that meaning is maintained.

The People Involved in Children's Reading Homework

Research Question 3 asked who was usually involved in children's reading homework.

Results

Parents were asked in question 3 of the questionnaire to specify the person usually involved with their children when they did reading homework. Parents could choose from the following responses: mother, father, or other. Some parents selected the

'other' category and wrote that the child's mother and father were equally involved. As a number of parents did this, another category was created to incorporate these responses. Results are as follows: in 29 families (20%) mothers and fathers were equally involved with their child's reading homework; in a further 4 families (3%) fathers were usually involved; in 112 families (75%) mothers were usually involved; and 3 respondents (2%) indicated in the 'other' response that the child's mother, father, grandparent and/or babysitter were involved at different times. One respondent (1%) did not answer the question.

Discussion

The results indicate that in this study mothers were the parent usually involved in children's reading homework in 75% of families. This result is consistent with figures reported by Builder (1980, p.215) in regard to the number of mothers and fathers involved in an educational counselling programme for parents of poor readers. In that programme there were 51 parents involved, and of these, 82% were mothers and 18% were fathers. Rivalland (1994) also found that across 23 case studies of families, "it was most often the mothers who monitored the children's homework, listened to their children read, and who checked and evaluated their children's work in progress" (p.288). Similarly, Kemp (1985) reported that during a parent training program (known as *PTP*) 80% of participants were mothers.

Reading Stories to Children

Research Question 4(a) asked how frequently children had stories read to them and Research Question 4(b) asked if parents believed that reading stories to their children helped them to become good readers.

Results

Forty two parents (28%) indicated that their children had stories read to them every day, 63 (42%) children had stories read to them several times a week, 23 (15%) were read stories once a week, 10 (7%) were read stories less than once a week, and 2 (1%) indicated that their children never had stories read to them. The questionnaire also provided an 'other' category, which 5 parents (3%) selected. Three of these parents indicated that their children preferred to read to themselves and the remaining 2 parents indicated they read to their children approximately twice a week. Four parents (3%) did not respond to the question.

In addition, under the 'other' section of question 17 or in response to question 18, five parents made pertinent comments about older children reading more on their own. One parent of a child in Grade 3 wrote, "We read to them less now that they read themselves". Four parents with children in Grade 4 wrote similar comments, which were: "At a younger age I read stories every night. She now often prefers to read silently."; "Since my child was old enough to look at pictures she has had stories read to her this only stopped

last year when she wanted to read by herself."; "[Story reading has] reduced as she has got older"; and "Likes to read by herself".

One hundred and forty-four parents answered 'Yes' they did think that reading stories to children helped them to become good readers. However, 2 of these parents indicated that they felt it depended on the particular child; one wrote, "I think in theory it does, but I'm not so sure in practice as he still isn't keen to have a go on his own." The other wrote, "Reading stories...must help towards becoming a good reader. However, it does not explain why one child is a poor reader despite being read to equally as much as his brother and sister." Four parents answered 'No' they didn't think it helped and of these, one wrote "I think this depends on the child. A child with an underlying specific learning difficulty/difficulties may love listening to someone reading to them but lack the ability to develop independent reading skills no matter how much you read to them." Another wrote, "I think it encourages them to love books and to enjoy reading but doesn't necessarily make them good readers." Another parent wrote "Not sure", and also added in response to question 21 (which allowed parents to make any further comments), "We visit the library and get books regularly, but he still has no interest in reading".

Parents were also asked to suggest reasons for their answers. Broad categories were formed on the basis of the reasons given. Results can be seen in Table 4.5. Other comments which did not fit these broad categories were also made, a full list of which are provided in Appendix G. Nine respondents (6%) did not answer the question.

Table 4.5
The Most Common Reasons Why Parents Believed Reading Stories Helped Their Children to Become Good Readers

Reason	Responses (%)
develops an interest in reading and/or a positive attitude towards reading	50
models expression	22
reading can be seen as an important and/or enjoyable part of everyday life	13
helps with word recognition	11
extends children's vocabulary	11
provides a better understanding of written language (eg. structure of sentences, word meanings, comprehension)	9

N = 140 Many parents gave more than one reason.

Discussion

Many parents (70%) reported that their children were read stories every day or several times each week. A further 15% of children were reportedly having stories read to them once a week, on average. According to Adams (1990), Clay (1991), Dombey (1992), Elkins and Spreadbury (1992), Elley (1989), Strickland and Morrow (1989), Trelease (1989), and Wells (1982), reading stories to young children is a positive activity because it can contribute to the development of children's reading skills.

The comments made by parents about why they believed reading stories to their children would help them to become good readers

were in many cases similar to those investigated or proposed by various researchers. For instance, Strickland and Morrow (1989, p.322), suggested that possibly the greatest benefits of reading stories to young children were for modelling reading behaviours to them and for children to recognize that reading is a pleasurable activity. Similarly, 50% of parents in this study indicated that they believed reading stories to their children helped to develop an interest in and/or a positive attitude towards reading, and 22% of parents indicated that they believed it modelled expression. Studies by Elley (1989) and Senechal and Cornell (1993) suggested that children can acquire vocabulary through story sessions and 11% of parents in the present study indicated that they believed reading stories extended their children's vocabulary. Similarly, Trelease (1989) suggested several benefits of reading aloud to children, as it exposes them to:

- a positive reading model;
- new information;
- the pleasures of reading;
- rich vocabulary;
- good sentence and story grammar;
- a book he or she might not otherwise be exposed to;
- fully textured lives outside the student's own experience;
- the English language spoken in a manner distinctly different from that in a television show. (p.202)

Many of the parents' comments were very similar to those listed above. However, a few parents seemed doubtful about the benefits of reading stories to their children because their children still had

no interest in reading or were struggling to learn to read despite being read to since they were young.

Significant Differences Between Children of Different Grades and of Different Abilities

In relation to frequency of story reading to children, Research Question 5 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were in Grades 2, 3, or 4. Research Question 6 asked if there were any significant differences between the responses of parents whose children were of different reading abilities.

Results

It should be noted that the mean scores given below relate to the data analysis codes 1-5, which were explained in the Methodology chapter under the heading of *Analysis of Questionnaire Data.*

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was a significant difference in the frequency of story reading to children in Grade 2 ($\underline{M} = 4.32$), children in Grade 3 ($\underline{M} = 4.22$) and children in Grade 4 ($\underline{M} = 3.45$), $\underline{F}(2,142) = 11.90$, $\underline{p} = .001$. A Scheffe test indicated that the children in Grade 4 were being read stories significantly less frequently than children in Grades 2 and 3.

A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed that there was no significant difference in the frequency of story reading to children of a weaker reading ability ($\underline{M} = 4.03$), children of an average

reading ability (M = 3.98) and children of an above-average reading ability (M = 4.05), $F(2,142) = .07$, $p = .93$.

Discussion

The parents of children in Grade 4 indicated that they (or other people) were reading significantly less frequently to their children than parents of children in Grades 2 and 3. This result is not unexpected as one would imagine that the older children in Grade 4 would be doing more independent reading than the younger children. Some parents of older children also indicated that their children preferred to read more often by themselves, rather than having a parent read to them.

Research has indicated that reading stories to young children contributes to the development of children's reading skills. Therefore, it is possible that children of weaker reading abilities may not have been read to as often as children of average or above-average reading abilities. Nevertheless, the results of the present study indicated that there was no significant difference in the frequency of story reading to children of different reading abilities. It appears that although the weaker readers in this study were read stories as often as average and above-average readers, reading them stories did not apparently make enough impact on its own to assist these children in becoming as good at reading as their more-able peers. The comments and responses made by some parents of weaker readers suggest that these parents continued to read to their children despite being tentative about how much it was benefiting them. These results suggest that reading stories to

young children is only one variable that contributes to children's reading development.

Summary of Results

The following summary is based on what parents said they did at home with their children.

In 20% of families, mothers and fathers were equally involved in their children's reading homework. However, in 75% of families mothers were more often involved than fathers.

Most children spent 0-15 minutes each night doing oral reading homework; only 8% spent longer than 15 minutes each night. Most children also read silently for 0-15 minutes each night although, 18% of children spent 15 minutes or more doing silent reading homework. Children in Grade 4 spent significantly more time doing silent reading homework than children in Grade 2. Also, children of an above-average reading ability were doing significantly more silent reading homework than children of a weaker reading ability. There were no significant differences in results for oral reading homework between grades or ability levels.

Well over half of the parents never or hardly ever allowed their children to practise reading on their own before reading aloud, whilst nearly a quarter always or nearly always allowed their children to practise.

Nearly half of the parents said that they always or nearly always discussed a book or story during the time when their children read aloud and just over half of the parents did the same after their children had read aloud. Few parents discussed books before their children read either aloud or silently. Events in a story (or facts in a book) formed the most common topic of discussion. Many parents discussed several topics.

Just over half of the parents nearly always or always encouraged children to immediately correct mistakes that made sense and nearly a quarter of the parents nearly always or always waited until the end of a sentence before encouraging their children to correct the mistakes. Twenty percent of parents nearly always or always ignored mistakes that made sense, but less than 5% nearly always or always ignored mistakes that didn't make sense. It was more common for parents to immediately attend to errors than waiting until the end of a sentence before attending to them, for both errors that made sense and errors that didn't make sense.

The majority of parents said they praised their children during and after reading correctly and after mistakes were corrected but few said that they rewarded their children for reading correctly.

The most common strategy encouraged by parents when their children were having difficulty reading aloud was for the child to have a go at sounding out the word. The least common strategy encouraged by parents was for the child to leave the word out. Looking at the pictures, starting the sentence again, guessing the

word and telling the child the word were strategies encouraged by some parents some of the time.

Most parents encouraged their children to pause at commas and full stops as they read aloud.

Seventy percent of parents said that their children were read stories every day or several times a week. A further 15% of children were having stories read to them once a week, on average. Children in Grade 2 and in Grade 3 were read stories significantly more often than children in Grade 4.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the general findings of this study and it acknowledges the limitations that apply. It concludes with a discussion on the implications for further research and for educational practice, which include feedback to the parents who took part in the study and to the children's teachers.

Concluding Discussion

Children Reading to Parents

According to the information given by parents in this study, many were apparently adopting procedures and encouraging strategies that were common in schools 15-20 years ago, but which are less common today. These include not encouraging their children to practise before reading aloud; using sounding out as the main strategy for solving difficult words; and immediately prompting children to correct mistakes. These parents appeared to be influenced by their own educational experiences in reading. Many seemed to embrace a bottom-up model of reading, most likely because this model would have influenced their own early reading instruction. Nevertheless, a number of parents in this study appeared to be aware of changes in reading methods adopted in schools in the past 5-10 years and said they were using a variety of different procedures and strategies at home with their children.

Approaches to teaching reading have changed considerably over the past 20 years, so it seems important to inform parents of these

changes as they play an important role in the education of their own children. Also, it has been shown that children benefit when school and home work together (McNaughton et al., 1981; Tizard et al., 1982; Breiling, 1976; Bartlett et al., 1984). Furthermore, research in reading has shown that some children are likely to make better progress under certain methods of home reading instruction than under remedial reading programmes established in schools (Hewison, 1988).

Parents Reading to Children

Many parents in this study were apparently aware of the benefits of reading stories to their children, such as, developing a positive attitude towards reading and modelling reading behaviours. Most of them also demonstrated this apparent awareness of the importance of reading to children by taking part in regular story reading sessions with them.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to this study.

1. Accurate collection of the data relied fully on parents' ability and willingness to complete the questionnaires honestly and carefully. It has been noted throughout the *Results and Discussion* chapter that all data is based on what parents said they did. No checks were made to ascertain if the parents actually did what they indicated on the questionnaires. Initially it was planned that the questionnaires would be followed up with interviews and observations of reading practices in the home, but because of an 89% response rate it

was decided that there was already an abundance of information for a study of this size. Therefore the interviews and observations did not proceed.

2. The children were rated as weak, average or above average readers by their class teachers, rather than by a formal reading test. This was considered reliable for this study because wherever possible the teachers rated the children at the end of the school year, when they were most aware of each child's reading ability in their class. However, the information can not be directly compared to other studies where reading levels were based on formal tests.

3. The data were collected in one school outside the metropolitan area and is relevant to the parents involved in the study, but it can not be generalised to the larger population, nor can it be generalised to other age groups of students within the school. The school involved in the present study is a low-fee, Anglican school which encourages a high level of parent involvement. If the study was replicated across a variety of schools it is possible that different results would be found in different types of schools.

Implications for Further Research

This study has shown a need for more extensive research into the area of home reading. It would be useful to replicate this study in other schools in a variety of districts in order to gain a wider picture of what parents say they do with regard to children's

reading in the home setting. Also, interviews with parents and observing what parents actually do at home with their children would provide more in-depth information than that available in this study. Furthermore, the school involved in this study could implement a more closely monitored home-reading programme and assess any associated gains in the children's rate of progress, confidence, and/or ability.

Implications for Educational Practice

The *Review of Literature* and results obtained from this study seem to indicate that parents at this particular school could benefit from a programme of more guided involvement in their children's reading education, which should in turn lead to benefits for the children. In order to achieve this, the school may need to develop a more detailed home reading policy. Also, teachers must take the initiative in providing more information and guidance to parents to keep them up to date with school reading policies and with research on reading. It is the researcher's intention to begin to achieve this by sharing the results of the present study with the parents and also sharing points of interest from previous studies in the literature. A parent meeting providing time for parents to further discuss their views and for teachers to explain in more detail what they do in their classrooms would appear to be beneficial to these parents.

While all results will be available to parents if they wish to read them, the parent programme will only include a brief summary of the results, as follows:

Mothers were more often involved in children's reading homework than fathers.

Most children were spending 0-15 minutes each night doing oral and/or silent reading homework. More silent reading was being done in the older grades.

Nearly a quarter of the parents always or nearly always allowed their children to practise on their own before reading aloud.

Parents frequently discussed books with their children during and after reading, but few parents did so before reading books. A wide variety of topics was discussed. A list of these topics discussed before, during, and after reading will be provided to parents.

Sounding out words was the most common strategy encouraged by parents when children were having difficulty reading and the least common strategy was for the child to leave the word out. Looking at the pictures, starting the sentence again, guessing the word and telling the child the word were strategies encouraged by some parents some of the time. It was more common for parents to encourage children to correct mistakes immediately than to wait until the end of a sentence.

The majority of parents praised their children during and after reading correctly and after mistakes were corrected and only a few said that they rewarded their children for reading correctly.

The majority of children were having stories read to them several times a week, and some of the children were read stories once a week.

The aim of the parent program will be:

1) to show parents that as teachers we respect and appreciate what they are already doing at home to assist their children with

reading.

2) to provide up-to-date information on reading for them to make use of at their own discretion.

It will not be a session where parents are told what they should be doing. Rather parents will be provided with ideas for a variety of strategies to try at home with their children, some of which they will already be using. Parents will also be encouraged to share strategies that they find work well with their children.

Following the parent programme, the school's home reading programmes may need to be more closely monitored through more regular parent-teacher meetings to enable discussion of strategies and procedures being adopted at home and at school. As time is always a limiting factor in implementing educational programmes, these parent-teacher meetings need not occur on a one-to-one level with all parents. Group meetings may be sufficient and it may be that one parent's concerns are similar to another's. Wider involvement of parents in their children's reading education in the early years of schooling is of utmost importance, especially to avoid the situation of "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer", or children who practise reading regularly improving rapidly and those who only receive minimal practice falling further behind their more able peers (Stanovich, 1986). Finally, it seems that parents could benefit from increased awareness of the importance of regular home reading sessions (that is parents reading to children and children reading to parents) and of a wide range of reading strategies to use with their children.

This study has highlighted the need for teachers to take the initiative in providing more information and guidance to parents to keep them informed of school reading policies and of recent research in reading.

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Appendix A

Preliminary Questionnaire for the Present Study.

READING QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire is about reading that your child does at home. We are still discovering how children learn to read because children learn to read in many different ways. The purpose of this questionnaire is to search for answers to what parents actually do with their children when they are reading at home. All parents with children in grades 2,3 or 4 at Frederick Irwin Anglican Community School have been invited to complete the questionnaire.

The results from the questionnaire will provide information about ways in which parents help their children with reading. These results should assist teachers in enhancing the home-school link in reading programmes. I will also be asking teachers to provide information about children's reading at school. The questionnaire will take you only 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to come in and ask me at school or ring the school on 5816777 to speak to me before 8:30a.m. or after 3:05p.m. (I am usually at school until about 4:00p.m.).

It is guaranteed that the information you provide will remain confidential. You will notice that your questionnaire has been given a code. This code will be used for purposes of examining the results. Your code will be used to locate your name if your questionnaire is not returned or if you indicate that you are available for an interview.

Please return the questionnaire to your child's class teacher in the envelope provided. I will then collect the questionnaires from all the teachers. The results from the questionnaire will be available to you if you wish to see them. I would like to thank you for providing your time to complete the questionnaire. Without your help this kind of research would not be possible.

Yours sincerely,

KAREN LYONS

INSTRUCTIONS

If you have more than one child between the age of six and eight, please answer the questionnaire using your youngest child within this age group. For example, if you have a three year old, a six year old and an eight year old, please answer the questions with your six year old in mind only. The parent most frequently involved with your child's reading homework should answer the questionnaire.

Please answer all questions in the questionnaire, otherwise the results will be invalid. Please answer each question honestly. Respond with what you ACTUALLY do with your child not what you think you should do. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions.

Many questions focus on what you do when your child experiences difficulties while reading. If your child rarely has problems with reading please answer the questions by writing what you would do if your child is reading a difficult book beyond his/her reading ability.

Most questions require you to tick an appropriate box, please be careful that only one box for each question is ticked unless otherwise stated. The scale ALWAYS, NEARLY ALWAYS, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, HARDLY EVER and NEVER has been used for most questions (from Hook, 1981, p.174). Please answer the example question below.

I eat breakfast in the morning. (tick one)

Some questions require you to write short answers. Please think about these questions very carefully.

Code_____

1. My child is now in (tick one)

☐ Grade 2 ☐ Grade 3 ☐ Grade 4

2. Please indicate your child's date of birth ____/____/____

3. Please indicate if you have had teacher training in any of the following areas (tick as many as appropriate).

☐ Early Childhood
☐ Primary
☐ Secondary
☐ Other (please specify)_____
☐ No teacher training

QUESTIONS 4 AND 5 REFER TO READING HOMEWORK THAT YOUR CHILD BRINGS HOME FROM SCHOOL.

4. On average my child reads ALOUD for (tick one)

☐ 0-5 minutes each night
☐ 6-10 minutes each night
☐ 11-15 minutes each night
☐ 16-20 minutes each night
☐ more than 20 minutes each night (please specify average length of time) _____

5. On average my child reads SILENTLY for (tick one)

☐ 0-5 minutes each night
☐ 6-10 minutes each night
☐ 11-15 minutes each night
☐ 16-20 minutes each night
☐ more than 20 minutes each night (please specify average length of time) _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO ANY READING THAT YOUR CHILD DOES, NOT ONLY READING HOMEWORK. THEY REFER TO READING ALOUD AND READING SILENTLY. (EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS HAS TWO PARTS)

6. I discuss with my child what the book/story could be about BEFORE he/she reads it.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

7. AS my child reads I discuss the story or information with him/her.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

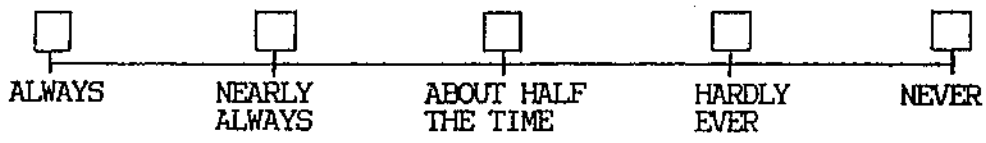
8. AFTER reading, my child and I talk about what happened in the story or what the book was about.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

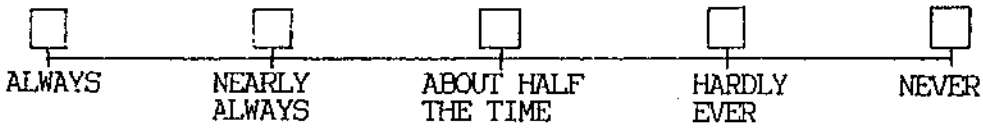
Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REFER TO READING ALOUD. THEY APPLY TO ANY READING THAT YOUR CHILD DOES, NOT ONLY READING HOMEWORK.

9. I allow my child to practise reading before I listen to him/her read aloud. (tick one)



10. I praise my child if he/she corrects a mistake made during reading. (tick one)

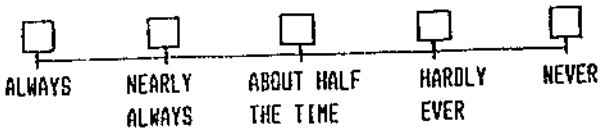


11. I encourage my child to pause at the commas and full stops. (tick one)

12. If my child reads correctly,

I continue listening. (tick one)

I praise my child. (tick one)



I reward my child after reading. (tick one)

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

_____

13. If my child reads a word aloud <u>which makes sense but is not the exact word</u> in the book.

I immediately tell my child the word. (tick one)

I ignore the mistake. (tick one)

I encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

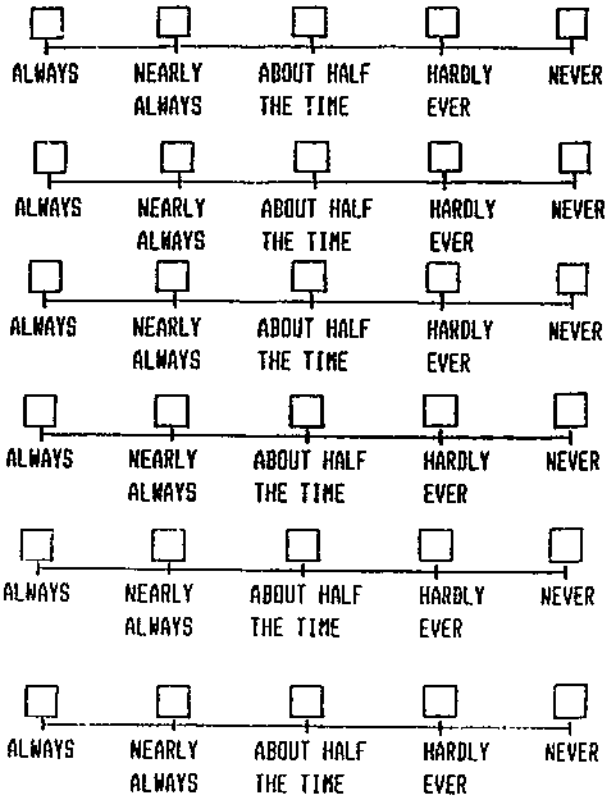
I wait until the end of the sentence and then tell my child the correct word. (tick one)

I wait until the end of the sentence and then encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

Other (please specify)

_____

_____



14. If my child reads a word aloud <u>which does not make sense</u>.

I immediately tell my child the word. (tick one)

I ignore the mistake. (tick one)

I encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

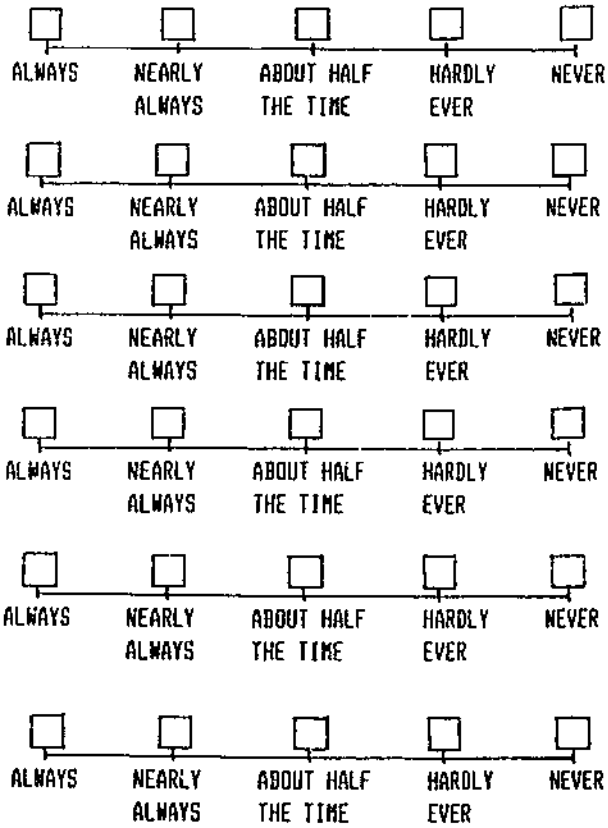
I wait until the end of the sentence and then tell my child the correct word. (tick one)

I wait until the end of the sentence and then encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

Other (please specify)

_____

_____



15. If my child comes to a word, stops and says nothing,

I encourage my child to look at the pictures in the book. (tick one)

I ask my child to start reading the sentence again. (tick one)

I encourage my child to guess the word. (tick one)

I sound out the word for him/her. (tick one,

I encourage him/her to sound out the word. (tick one)

I tell him/her the word. (tick one)

I encourage him/her to leave it out. (tick one)

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

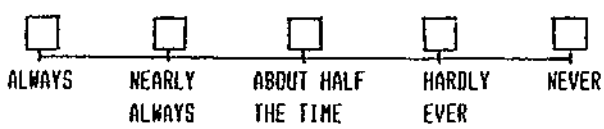
_____

16. If my child is having difficulty reading a word and only reads part of it,

I encourage my child to look at the pictures in the book. (tick one)

I ask my child to start reading the sentence again. (tick one)

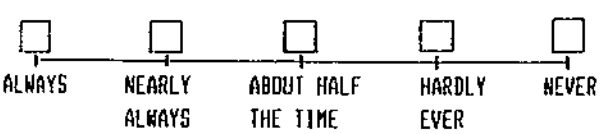
I encourage my child to guess the word. (tick one)



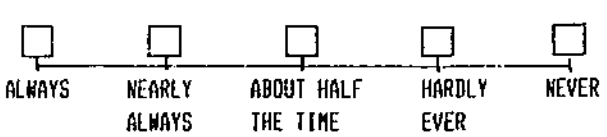
I sound out the word for him/her. (tick one)

I encourage him/her to sound out the word. (tick one)

I tell him/her the word. (tick one)



I encourage him/her to leave it out. (tick one)



I encourage him/her to keep trying. (tick one)

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

_____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO ANY READING SITUATIONS, NOT JUST READING HOMEWORK. PLEASE WRITE SHORT ANSWERS TO THESE WHERE SPACE IS PROVIDED.

17.A. We read stories to our child (include stories read by anyone in the home). (tick one)

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Several times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Less than once a week
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other (please specify)_____

_____

B. Do you think reading stories to your child helps him/her to become a good reader?

☐ YES ☐ NO

C. Suggest reasons for your answer to part B if possible.

_____

_____

_____

18. If you discuss a book with your child what kinds of things do you discuss?

_____

_____

_____

19. What do you think are the best ways of helping your child with reading aloud?

_____

_____

_____

20. Do you have any other comments about what you do when your child reads?

_____

_____

_____

Are you willing to follow up your questionnaire with an interview of 15-20 minutes?

☐ YES ☐ NO

PLEASE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS. THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Appendix B

Final Questionnaire

READING QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parents,

The following questionnaire is about reading that your child does at home. We are still discovering how children learn to read because children learn to read in many different ways. The purpose of this questionnaire is to search for answers to what parents actually do with their children when they are reading at home. All parents with children in grades 2, 3 or 4 at Frederick Irwin Anglican Community School have been invited to complete the questionnaire.

The results from the questionnaire will provide information about ways in which parents help their children with reading. These results should assist teachers in enhancing the home-school link in reading programmes. I will also be asking teachers to provide information about children's reading at school. The questionnaire will take you only 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to come in and ask me at school or ring the school on 581 6777 to speak to me before 8:30a.m. or after 3:30p.m.

It is guaranteed that the information you provide will remain confidential. You will notice that your questionnaire has been given a code. This code will be used for purposes of examining the results. Your code will be used to locate your name if your questionnaire is not returned or if you indicate that you are available for an interview.

Please return the questionnaire to your child's class teacher by Friday 11th March. I will then collect them from all the teachers. The results from the questionnaire will be available to you if you wish to see them. I would like to thank you for providing your time to complete the questionnaire. Without your help this kind of research would not be possible.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Lyons

INSTRUCTIONS

If you have more than one child between the age of six and eight, please answer the questionnaire using your youngest child within this age group. For example, if you have a three year old, a six year old and an eight year old, please answer the questions with your six year old in mind only. The parent most frequently involved with your child's reading homework should answer the questionnaire.

Please answer all questions in the questionnaire, otherwise the results will be invalid. Please answer each question honestly. Respond with what you ACTUALLY do with your child not what you think you should do. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions.

Many questions focus on what you do when your child experiences difficulties while reading. If your child rarely has problems with reading please answer the questions by writing what you would do if your child is reading a difficult book beyond his/her reading ability.

Most questions require you to tick an appropriate box, please be careful that only one box for each question is ticked unless otherwise stated. The scale ALWAYS, NEARLY ALWAYS, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, NOT VERY OFTEN and NEVER has been used for most questions. Please answer the example question below.

I eat breakfast in the morning. (tick one)

ALWAYS	NEARLY ALWAYS	ABOUT HALF THE TIME	NOT VERY OFTEN	NEVER

Some questions require you to write short answers. Please think about these questions very carefully.

Code_____

1. My child is now in (tick one)

☐ Grade 2 ☐ Grade 3 ☐ Grade 4

2. Please indicate if you have had teacher training in any of the following areas (tick as many as appropriate).

☐ No teacher training
☐ Early Childhood
☐ Primary
☐ Secondary
☐ Other (please specify)_____

3. Please indicate who is usually involved with your child's reading homework. (tick one)

☐ Child's father
☐ Child's mother
☐ Other (please specify)_____

QUESTIONS 4 AND 5 REFER TO ANY READING HOMEWORK THAT YOUR CHILD BRINGS HOME FROM SCHOOL.

4. On average my child reads ALOUD for (tick one)

☐ 0-5 minutes each night
☐ 6-10 minutes each night
☐ 11-15 minutes each night
☐ 16-20 minutes each night
☐ more than 20 minutes each night (please specify average length of time)_____

5. On average my child reads SILENTLY for (tick one)

☐ 0-5 minutes each night
☐ 6-10 minutes each night
☐ 11-15 minutes each night
☐ 16-20 minutes each night
☐ more than 20 minutes each night (please specify average length of time)_____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO ANY READING THAT YOUR CHILD DOES, NOT ONLY READING HOMEWORK. THEY REFER TO READING ALOUD AND READING SILENTLY. (EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS HAS TWO PARTS)

6. I discuss with my child what the book/story could be about BEFORE he/she reads it.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

7. AS my child reads I discuss the story or information with him/her.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION APPLIES TO ANY READING THAT YOUR CHILD DOES, NOT ONLY READING HOMEWORK. IT REFERS TO READING ALOUD AND READING SILENTLY. (THIS QUESTION HAS TWO PARTS)

8. AFTER reading, my child and I talk about what happened in the story or what the book was about.

Part A : When my child reads aloud (tick one)

Part B : When my child reads silently (tick one)

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REFER TO READING ALOUD. THEY APPLY TO ANY READING THAT YOUR CHILD DOES, NOT ONLY READING HOMEWORK.

9. I allow my child to practise reading before I listen to him/her read aloud. (tick one)

10. I praise my child if he/she corrects a mistake made during reading. (tick one)

11. I encourage my child to pause at the commas and full stops. (tick one)

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS HAVE SEVERAL PARTS, PLEASE ANSWER EACH PART SEPARATELY.

12. If my child reads correctly :

A. I continue listening. (tick one)

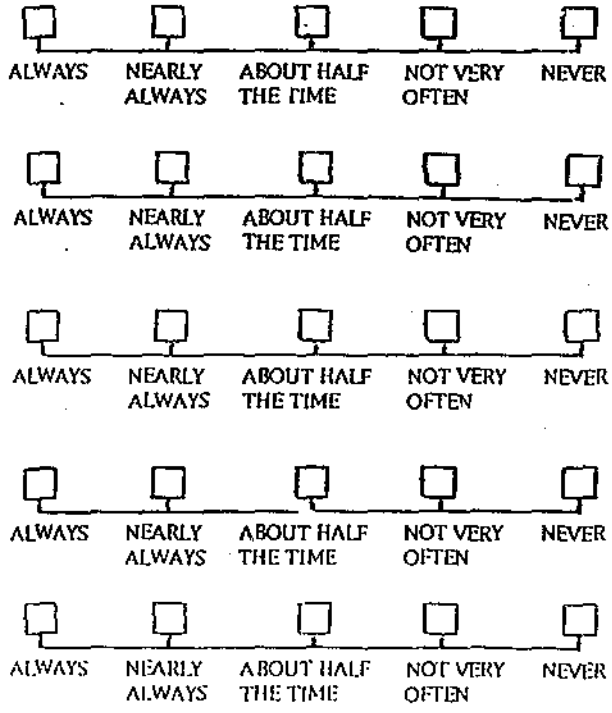
B. I praise my child while he/she reads. e.g. saying well done. (tick one)

C. I praise my child after he/she has read. e.g. saying well done. (tick one)

D. I reward my child after reading. e.g. giving a sticker. (tick one)

E. Other (please specify)

_____



13. If my child reads a word aloud which makes sense but is not the exact word in the book :

A. I immediately tell my child the word. (tick one)

B. I ignore the mistake. (tick one)

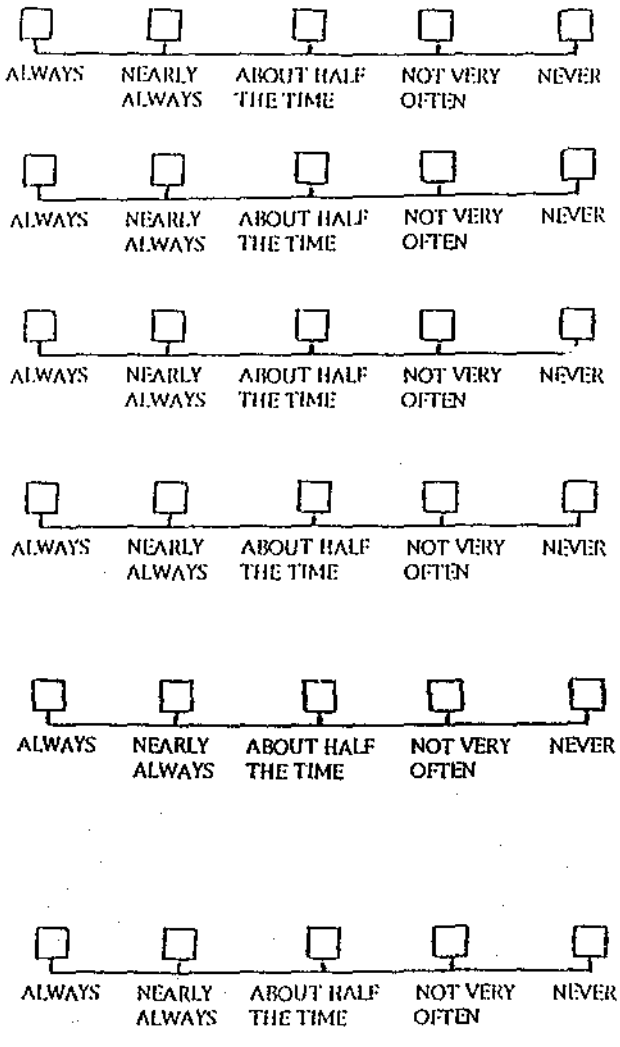
C. I immediately encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

D. I wait until the end of the sentence and then tell my child the correct word. (tick one)

E. I wait until the end of the sentence and then encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

F. Other (please specify)

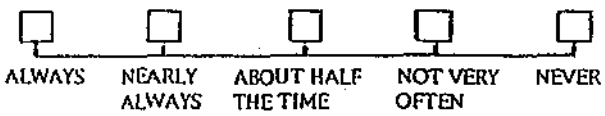
_____



THE FOLLOWING QUESTION HAS SEVERAL PARTS, PLEASE ANSWER EACH PART SEPARATELY.

14. If my child reads a word aloud which does not make sense :

A. I immediately tell my child the word. (tick one)



B. I ignore the mistake. (tick one)

C. I immediately encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

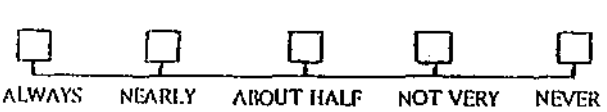
D. I wait until the end of the sentence and then tell my child the correct word. (tick one)

E. I wait until the end of the sentence and then encourage my child to correct the mistake him/herself. (tick one)

F. Other (please specify)

_____

_____



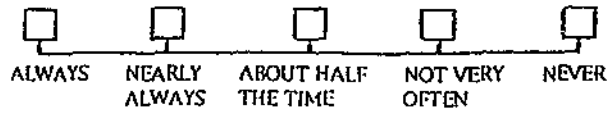
THIS QUESTION HAS SEVERAL PARTS, PLEASE ANSWER EACH PART SEPARATELY.

15. If my child comes to a word, stops and says nothing :

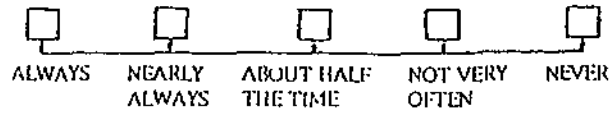
A. I encourage my child to look at the pictures in the book. (tick one)

B. I ask my child to start reading the sentence again. (tick one)

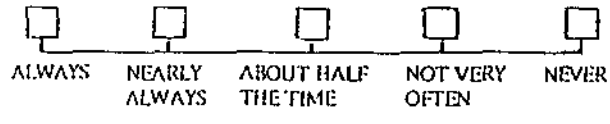
C. I encourage my child to guess the word. (tick one)



D. I sound out the word for him/her. (tick one)

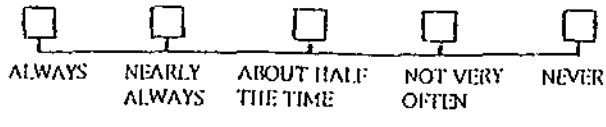


E. I encourage him/her to sound out the word. (tick one)



F. I tell him/her the word. (tick one)

G. I encourage him/her to leave it out. (tick one)



H. Other (please specify)

_____

_____

_____

THIS QUESTION HAS SEVERAL PARTS PLEASE ANSWER EACH PART SEPARATELY.

16. If my child is having difficulty reading a word and only reads part of it :

	ALWAYS	NEARLY ALWAYS	ABOUT HALF THE TIME	NOT VERY OFTEN	NEVER
A. I encourage my child to look at the pictures in the book. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. I ask my child to start reading the sentence again. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. I encourage my child to guess the word. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. I sound out the word for him/her. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. I encourage him/her to sound out the word. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. I tell him/her the word. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. I encourage him/her to leave it out. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. I encourage him/her to keep trying. (tick one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Other (please specify) ____________ ____________ ____________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO ANY READING SITUATIONS, NOT JUST READING HOMEWORK. PLEASE WRITE SHORT ANSWERS TO THESE WHERE SPACE IS PROVIDED.

17. We read stories to our child (include stories read by anyone in the home). (tick one)

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Several times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Less than once a week
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

18. Do you think reading stories to your child helps him/her to become a good reader?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Please suggest reasons for your answer.

_____

_____

_____

19. If you discuss a book with your child what kinds of things do you discuss?

_____

_____

_____

20. What do you think are the best ways of helping your child with reading aloud?

_____

_____

_____

21. Would you like to make any other comments about reading that your child does at home?

_____

_____

_____

Are you willing to follow up your questionnaire with an interview of 15-20 minutes?

☐ YES ☐ NO

PLEASE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS. THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Appendix C

Introduction to the Study, Used During the Parent-Teacher Information Evening

I have a special request from Karen Lyons, one of our year three teachers.

Karen is studying for her 4th year, Bachelor of Education. As a part of her study she is required to carry out a research project. For this she has designed a questionnaire about home reading. As her focus is on early childhood, she will be inviting all parents with children in grades 2, 3, and 4 at school to complete the questionnaire in the next few weeks. They will be sent home in your children's diaries.

The questionnaire has been trialled with parents from other schools in the local community and all who completed it had positive comments.

The research is being carried out under the supervision of a lecturer at Edith Cowan University. If you choose to assist Karen with the study, all the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and you will not have to put your name on the questionnaire.

Karen hopes that the results will assist teachers at our school in enhancing the home-school link in reading programmes. If you have any questions please see Karen in 3L and she will be more than happy to answer them. Your help in this research will be greatly appreciated.

Appendix D

Letter to Parents as an Introduction to the Questionnaire.

2 March 1994

Dear Parents,

I am seeking your help in a study of how parents assist their 6-8 year old children with reading in the home. Your child's class teacher would have mentioned this during the parent information evening.

On Friday I will be sending you a questionnaire via your child's homework diary. I would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire and return it by Friday 11th March in your child's homework diary. I will collect the questionnaires from your child's class teacher.

All information which you supply will be treated as confidential. The results of the questionnaire will be available to you if you wish to see them. It is guaranteed that the information you provide will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your questionnaire will not be passed on to any other source.

The research is being supervised through Edith Cowan University, and has been discussed in detail with the Head of Primary, Mrs Sandra Mc Cullough and approved by The Principal, Mr Geoffrey Arnold.

Should you wish to find out further information about this study please feel free to come in and ask me before or after school or ring me at school between 3.10 and 4.00p.m. on 581 6777.

I look forward to receiving your help,

Yours Sincerely,

Karen Lyons

Appendix E

Reminder Letter to Parents to Return the Questionnaire

14 March 1994

Dear Parents,

As you are aware I am currently collecting the reading questionnaires sent home a few weeks ago. If you would like to respond to the questionnaire could you please send it to school with your child no later than Wednesday 16th March so that I can begin to collate the results.

If you have already sent the questionnaire to school thank you for doing so and please disregard this letter. If you did not receive your questionnaire or you have misplaced it, please let me know and I will send home another copy.

Yours Sincerely,

Karen Lyons

Appendix F

Permission and Thank you Letter to Parents

20 June 1994

Dear Parents,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for completing the Reading Questionnaire in term one. If you offered your time for an interview I also thank you, however as I have a large quantity of information in the questionnaire already and because the study is only a small one I will not be proceeding with the interviews.

I am currently working on the results of the questionnaire, however before I continue any further and write a research report I must have your permission to do so, as a matter of formality. Could you please take a few minutes to complete the slip below and return it to your child's class teacher.

Thank you for your assistance with this research.

Yours Sincerely,

Karen Lyons

.....

I_____, understand that my responses on the Reading Questionnaire will remain confidential. I also understand the purpose of the study and I give my permission for Miss Karen Lyons to use the material in my questionnaire for her research.

signed_____ date_____

Appendix G

Detailed Tables of Results From Chapter 4.

The following abbreviations apply to many of these tables.

N = Never

NO = Not Very Often

H = About Half the Time

NA = Nearly Always

A = Always

M = Missing Responses

Frequency With Which Parents Allowed Their Children to Practise Reading on Their Own Before Listening to Them Read Aloud

Frequency	Responses (%)
Never	22
Not Very Often	41
About Half the Time	13
Nearly Always	15
Always	7
No Response	1

N = 149

Percentages of Parents Who Discussed Reading Material With Their Children Before, During, and After Silent Reading and Reading Aloud

Timing of Discussion	Frequency of Response					
	N(%)	NO(%)	H(%)	NA(%)	A(%)	M (%)
When Children Read Aloud						
Before Reading	12	43	26	15	4	0
During Reading	3	21	28	32	16	0
After Reading	3	20	25	37	16	0
When Children Read Silently						
Before Reading	15	50	26	8	1	0
During Reading	13	36	35	14	2	0
After Reading	7	25	36	26	6	1

N = 149

How Parents Responded to Their Children's Errors in Oral Reading

Type of Response	Frequency of Response					
	N(%)	NO(%)	H(%)	NA(%)	A(%)	M (%)
When the Errors Made Sense						
immediately tell child the word	13	37	17	12	21	1
ignore the mistake	42	27	11	16	4	0
immediately encourage the child to correct the mistake	4	17	25	21	31	1
tell the child the word at the end of that sentence	39	33	16	8	3	0
encourage the child to correct the mistake at the end of that sentence	28	32	16	16	7	0
When the Errors Did Not Make Sense						
immediately tell child the word	17	34	13	14	21	1
ignore the mistake	62	29	6	3	0	1
immediately encourage the child to correct the mistake	3	10	17	34	35	0
tell the child the word at the end of that sentence	36	44	12	3	3	1
encourage the child to correct the mistake at the end of that sentence	28	40	11	16	5	1

N = 146

Strategies Encouraged by Parents When Their Children Had Difficulty Reading Aloud

Strategy	Frequency of Response					
	N(%)	NO(%)	H(%)	NA(%)	A(%)	M(%)
When Children Stopped and Said Nothing						
child looks at the pictures	10	31	22	20	15	1
child starts sentence again	19	34	26	13	8	1
child guesses the word	22	32	14	15	15	2
parent sounds out the word	13	44	21	13	8	1
child sounds out the word	0	6	15	32	46	1
parent tells child the word	9	54	23	8	4	2
child leaves the word out	82	13	4	0	0	1
N = 143						
When Children Read Only Part of a Word						
child looks at the pictures	14	31	19	21	14	1
child starts sentence again	20	30	22	19	8	1
child guesses the word	26	31	19	10	12	1
parent sounds out the word	14	42	25	12	6	1
child sounds out the word	1	4	17	30	46	2
parent tells child the word	12	50	24	8	4	1
child leaves the word out	79	14	3	2	0	2
child encouraged to keep trying	1	6	12	27	52	1
N = 144						

Percentage of Parents Who Praised or Rewarded Their Children for Correct Oral Reading

Frequency	Praise During Reading (%)	Praise After Reading (%)	Reward After Reading (%)
Always	53	77	3
Nearly Always	27	16	1
About Half the Time	8	5	8
Not Very Often	11	1	39
Never	1	1	49

N = 146

Frequency With Which Parents Encouraged Their Children To Pause at Commas and Full Stops as They Read Orally

Frequency	Responses (%)
Never	3
Not Very Often	15
About Half the Time	9
Nearly Always	31
Always	41
No Response	1

N = 149

Reasons Why Parents Believed Reading Stories to Their Children Helped Them to Become Good Readers

Reason	Responses (%)
develops an interest in reading and/or a positive attitude towards reading	50
models expression	22
reading can be seen as an important and/or enjoyable part of everyday life	13
helps with word recognition	11
extends children's vocabulary	11
provides a better understanding of written language (eg. structure of sentences, word meanings, comprehension)	9
models adult enjoyment of stories	7
models appropriate reading skills	5
encourages imagination	3
provides experiences beyond personal experiences	3
provides exposure to written language	3
helps with pronunciation of words	3
children hear stories which are too difficult for them to read	3
develops an interest in a subject	2
expands understanding of what a story is	2
broadens experience of reading material	2
learning rhymes and lymerics	1
develops an interest in language/words	1
makes reading more interesting	1
develops respect for books	1
encourages regular reading	1
develops a feel for books	1
introduces new authors and books	1
helps in learning to blend sounds	1
shows that print contains meaning	1
shows a source of information other than the television	1
allows children to read along and practise skills	1
no response	6

N = 149 Many parents gave more than one reason.