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IMPACTS OF PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY KNOWLEDGE: A KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO CONTINUE PROMOTING FAMILY  
LITERACY

By

Trish Sippola

THESIS

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Title of Thesis: IMPACTS OF PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY KNOWLEDGE: A  
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PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY

This thesis by Trish Sippola is recommended for approval by the student's Thesis Committee  
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## Abstract

### IMPACTS OF PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY KNOWLEDGE: A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO CONTINUE PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY

By

Trish Sippola

Learning to read is a complex process in which children have to apply their existing knowledge and experiences in addition to using reading skills such as reading comprehension and decoding abilities. Parents and guardians shape children's first experiences with literacy. Children's interactions with others at home create contexts for learning and children's literacy embedded in everyday life activities. Nineteen kindergarten students and their parents participated in this action research study. Parents were given an open-ended pre and post survey questions about their child and family activities so the researcher could get to know them better. The surveys were a conversation starter and a way to discuss with parents ways to improve their family literacy skills at home. The researcher conducted a year-long classroom inquiry including regular classroom assessments as well as district assessments to examine alphabet knowledge skills. Students were assessed at the beginning of the school year in September to see their base-line abilities in early literacy skills. At the end of the school year, parents' literacy awareness had increased, and students' early literacy skills had also increased. The researcher understood more clearly, how to continue to help parents understand the importance of early literacy skills with the continuing efforts of home literacy activities, one-on-one conversations, and literacy tips to parents.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by the APA publication manual and the Department of Education.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Literacy is one of the most important academic skill areas, because it influences skill acquisition in other academic areas. Learning to read is a complex process in which children have to apply their existing knowledge and experiences in addition to using reading skills such as reading comprehension and decoding abilities (Stanovich, 1986; Clay, 1993). Parents and/or guardians are potentially the most influential people in the early education of their children. Literacy begins at home (Au, 1993). Parents and guardians shape children's first experiences with literacy. Children's interactions with others at home create contexts for learning and children's literacy embedded in everyday life activities (Zygouris-Coe & Center, 2001). As an educator, I want the best for my students, which is for them to become good readers and writers. I am aware of how crucial reading and writing skills are for success. While I assume that parents also want the best for their children, I ask myself, "Do parents understand how important language development is in preparing preschool-age children for later literacy development?" (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

Snow et al. (1991) suggests that measures of the home literacy environment may provide an indication of a child's degree of risk for reading difficulties. For those children with little background of print may turn into a high-risk factor for reading difficulties. Studies have shown that learning to read is strongly associated with a positive home literacy environment (Strickland & Morrow, 1990). A home literacy environment includes the literacy level of the parents, the parents' educational achievement, and the availability of reading materials, among other factors (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). Reading aloud to young children is one of the most important factors in the learning environment of young readers. Children need to see the importance and

function of reading in their own life and in the life of adults and siblings at home. Parents can influence their children's literacy development by creating a literate environment at home by fostering interests, and supporting children's efforts to become readers and writers ( Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 2000).

As an educator, I want to teach parents the skills to be able to provide connections at home between children's early literacy and later literacy development so they can support and facilitate language skills both at home and in the classroom. Through this classroom inquiry, I will explore and describe my efforts to educate my students' parents about how important early literacy skills are to their young children. Alphabet knowledge is a key aspect of children's language development. At-risk students whom I teach will benefit from learning phonemic awareness skills. I will help families learn effective literacy skills to support their child at home.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) statistics for fourth-grade achievement tests have shown no changes in student performance in reading between 1990-2003, with 60% or more of students still scoring "below proficient" ( Berg, et al., 2006; Catts, Fey, Zhang, & Tomblin, 2001). They indicated a set of four variables; letter identification, sentence imitation, phonological awareness, and rapid naming incorporate both early literacy skills and oral language skills. Early reading intervention is costly in time, effort, and money and some children do not require interventions. However, appropriate early interventions can eradicate reading deficits in children with a success rate of 90-95%, if the interventions occur before third grade (Grant, Golden, & Wilson, 2014). Currently, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 69% of Michigan students are not proficient in reading at the beginning of fourth grade (Michigan, 2015). Schools need reliable ways to identify students who

are truly at-risk for reading failures. Alphabet knowledge is one of the strongest unique predictors of children's reading skills and of great interest to developmental and educational researchers (Sénéchal, 2006). There is a need to address the gap in incoming students' school readiness skills and parents' understanding the new expectations. As the curriculum standards increased, I noticed the pattern in students' lack of alphabet knowledge and the lack of knowledge families seemed to have. . A poll in 2013 states only 45% of public school parents had heard of the CCSS (O'Brien, 2013). I started questioning myself and found myself asking, "What can I do to help inform parents of the importance of these early literacy skills?" I have taught students who lack alphabet knowledge and families who lack the knowledge to understand the importance of these skills. Increasing standards

Many educational researchers have provided evidence of a relationship between parents' involvement in elementary school programs and their children's school achievement (Lightfoot, 1978; Epstein, 1983; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Ghosh, 2014). The most accurate predictors of student achievement in school are not family income or social status, but the extent to which the family creates a home environment that encourages learning, communicates high yet reasonable expectations for the child's achievement, and becomes involved in the child's education at school (National PTA, 2000). The importance of early literacy in education is widely recognized. Raised awareness among educators in early childhood is expanding (Jumpstart, 2014). However, as a teacher-researcher, I wondered how I might help my students' families to develop an awareness of the importance of fostering early literacy skills at home.

Today an increasing number of children with special needs are in preschool programs. The highest of children coming from learning disabilities or speech/language disorders

(Woolfolk, 2010). For the most high-risk children, enriched preschool environments can be a deciding factor between success and failure later on in life. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) recommended that children who have been identified as at-risk for reading difficulties should have access to quality early childhood environments that promote language and literacy growth and address reading factors in a rich meaningful, and integrated way. As a teacher-researcher, I wondered how I might work with families to connect language and literacy learning at home and at school.

As a teacher-researcher, I am interested in addressing the gap in incoming students with their school readiness skills and parents not fully understanding the new expectations such as the CCSS. By continuing to research in my own classroom, I can understand how to help families learn the importance of early literacy skills. I have taught students who lack alphabet knowledge and families who lack the knowledge to understand the importance of these skills. I have taught in both the private and public school settings and have witnessed considerable differences between parental support and awareness of early literacy skills with students in regards to children's literacy achievement. I want to provide my students and their families with the knowledge of why early literacy skills are important. Conducting this classroom inquiry, I seek to explore how I can help more families become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Some think for children to know their letters, "it's as easy as pie." However, it can be difficult for children not only to learn their alphabet, but to recognize the letters too. To some children singing the alphabet can be quite easy to learn, but asking them to recognize letters or say letter sounds can evolve slower. Many cultural beliefs affect how much of this learning



occurs before school (Clay, 1998). Within a single neighborhood, there are different variations in family life (Heath, 2012). Therefore, each child coming into kindergarten will each have a different background of his or her alphabet knowledge.

I understand the search for best practices and successful family literacy strategies is not something that is new. Since 1989, the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) has helped more than one million families make educational and economic progress by pioneering and continuously improving family literacy programs. The process of a child learning to read is an experience that starts at birth and continues until the child can read and write conventionally (Labbo & Teale, 1997).

Emergent literacy researchers have already shaped most of what we know about early literacy (Rowe D. W., 2010). Distinguished researcher, Marie Clay, best known for introducing the term “emergent literacy” has guided my thinking. Emergent literacy is a child's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words. The term emergent literacy came from two theories of child development, Piagetian and Vygotsky. The Piagetian theory emphasizes on children learning and discovering literacy through their own attempts at reading and writing (Roskos, Christie, Widman, & Holding, 2010). The Vygotskian theory recognizes that young children learn from their interactions with others (Baker, et al., 1996; Roskos, Christie, Widman, & Holding, 2010). Clay’s research has profoundly changed the way educators have viewed early literacy instruction. Clay (2001) embraced a complex theory of literacy and defined reading as

A message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases power and flexibility the more it is practiced. It is complex because within the directional

constraints of written language, verbal and perceptual behaviors are purposefully directed in some integrated way to the problem of extracting sequences of information from texts to yield meaningful and specific communications. (p. 1)

Marie Clay designed studies to gather empirical evidence collected in controlled conditions, and she grounded her tentative theories resulting in data (Clay, 1998; Doyle, 2013). Through her close observations with students, she documented and processed children's emergent literacy skills; Clay also created strategies for assessing and recording literate processes (Johnston & Goatley, 2014). According to Clay (2001), children develop processing systems (e.g. the syntax of oral language; meanings of words; visual forms of objects, pictures, scenes; making sense of daily activities, and understanding stories) as a result of early life experiences. Throughout Marie Clay's research, she was able to recognize that a percentage of students had difficulty in learning to read.

After much observations and documentation, she collaborated with a group of teachers, who came up with early intervention strategies to distribute among teachers, to aid these students. The basic early literacy components Clay and her team researched were the following: print motivation; vocabulary; print awareness; narrative skills; letter knowledge; and phonological awareness (Clay, 1994). Reading Recovery (RR) (Clay, 1994; Johnston & Goatley, 2014) became the title in which Marie Clay distributed these early intervention strategies among teachers. RR's introduction occurred in New Zealand and since then became picked up by numerous countries, including the United States (Johnston & Goatley, 2014).

Clay's (1993) longitudinal study of 100 New Zealand children were from different classrooms and schools. The participants entered school at the age of five, involved both weekly

and systematic observations of students writing and reading behaviors. Her seminal research collected data within natural classroom settings and a test battery administered at three points over each child's first year of school. In the classrooms where her study took place, the children were engaged in writing personal messages and reading storybooks daily within weeks of entering school. Clay determined that the common curriculum guidelines created instructional consistency across settings (Doyle, 2013).

Emergent literacy also acknowledges that children learn a great deal about literacy before the onset of formal schooling. Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998) proposed that emergent literacy consists of two domains: inside-out skills (e.g., phonological awareness, letter knowledge) and outside-in skills (e.g., language, conceptual knowledge). Both of these domains appear to be influential at different points in time during the reading process. Where outside-in skills are associated with those aspects of children's literacy environments. Since RR's introduction in the United States in 1984 through the end of the 2003-2004 school year, RR has served approximately 1.4 million children in the United States (Rodgers, Gómez-Bellengé, Wang, & Schulz, 2013).

### **Research Question**

How do my actions to work with my students' families on early literacy skills impact my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills?

### **Definition of Terms**

Key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

**Action Research.** A systematic inquiry conducted by teachers with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how they teach and how their students learn (Mertler, 2012).

**Alphabet knowledge.** Knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

**Early literacy skills.** Letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print motivation, & print awareness.

**Emergent literacy.** The reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

**Families.** A group consisting of at least one parent and/or guardian and one or more children living together in a household.

**Family literacy.** In this study, *family literacy* refers to describe a set of interventions related to literacy development of young children; to refer to a set of programs designed to enhance the literacy skills of more than one family member (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Handel, 1999; Wasik et al., 2000).

**Impact.** An effect or influence on someone or something.

**Phonological Awareness.** Awareness that letters or graphemes correspond to speech sounds or phonemes (Goldstein, 2011).

**Response to Intervention (RTI).** A process to make sure students get appropriate research-based instruction and support as soon as possible and that teachers are systematic in documenting what interventions have worked with these students so this information can be used in planning (Woolfolk 2010).

## Significance of the Study

This action research will inform my classroom practice. Teachers engage in four stages of actions when conducting action research, shown below (Mertler, 2012).



*Figure 1 Action Research*

Through this action research, I explored and described my efforts to educate my students' parents about how important early literacy skills are to their young children. Alphabet knowledge is a key aspect of children's language development. At-risk students will benefit in prevention of early literacy skills by learning phonemic awareness skills I will help families learn effective literacy skills to support their child at home (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Action research allowed me to observe and modify my teaching methods to continue assisting parents with early literacy skills.

From my action research, I have been able to consider which intervention skills the parents found helpful. At the beginning of the study, I hypothesized that the parents of my students will be more knowledgeable as to how important early literacy skills are and they will have learned some new techniques to help their child succeed. I have learned new skills to continue working with parents on family literacy.

### **Limitations**

A limitation to this study was parents' self-reporting. Additionally, some students' parents did not participate in helping their child develop reading and/or literacy skills. The students whose parents did not support their learning, there were some students who did not get to take home the literacy take-home bags due to this. However, I did continue to work with those students individually or in small group settings. A second limitation is this study was limited to one kindergarten classroom. The findings from this study are meant to have continued implications for myself as an educator.

### **Chapter Summary and Brief Overview of the Study**

More than one-third of children in the United States enter school with significant differences in language, early literacy skills, and motivation to learn. Language and literacy skills are an essential element of young children's development, allowing interaction with other people and knowledge development in all subject areas (Carter, Chard, & Pool, 2009). I have taught students who lack alphabet knowledge and families who lack the knowledge to understand the importance of these skills due to the curriculum standards having increased. This study sought to focus on how my actions to work with my students' families on early literacy skills impact my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills by helping parents to become aware of the importance of early literacy skills. This year-long action research

study examined one-on-one communication, literacy interventions, and assessments and describes how my actions influenced my understanding of how to continue working with parents. Educators need to acknowledge and identify at-risk readers early on to provide an effective intervention.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Educators need to exhibit strategies and skills to help the reading process in early childhood. As an educator, I can help families by providing resources that help with language and literacy skills. The family can adjust the opportunities within their daily activities they already provide for their child. If families start recognizing common routines in their life, the families are more able to identify learning activities and opportunities to provide for their children. This chapter reviews emergent literacy, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, Common Core State Standards, and family literacy in order to address skills associated with the basics of early reading intervention. Having the appropriate knowledge and strategies will help educators with the basics of early reading intervention (Gersten & Dimino , 2006).

### **Emergent Literacy**

Emergent literacy was first introduced by Marie Clay (1966); it describes how young children interact with books and when reading and writing. Marie Clay's work has influenced classroom instruction in direct and indirect ways (McNaughton, 2014). Her ideas for instruction reflect a dynamic interplay between ideas for Tier 1 classroom teaching which requires high quality classroom teaching, screening, and group interventions (Grant, Golden, & Wilson, 2014) and Tier 2 for teaching that is more specialized which involves targeted interventions. The major theoretical concept of emergent literacy draws on a particular view of the nature of children and children's learning and development (McNaughton, 2014).

Many children are struggling with learning to read in the elementary years, and once children fall behind, children experience difficulty catching up (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Students who finish third grade one or more years behind in basic



reading skills are at-risk in an educational system, which demands grade-level reading ability. Intervention programs should begin in kindergarten to ready at-risk children for the demands of first grade reading instruction (Bloodgood, Morris, & Perney, 2003; Grant, Golden, & Wilson, 2014). Assessments during intervention must explore multiple knowledge sources and literacy experiences including oral language skills; knowledge of letters, words, and sound-letter correspondences; concepts of print; and text reading and writing.

Research findings have consistently documented that children living in low-income households enter school with lower levels of skills necessary for becoming good readers and continue to trail behind their peers (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Heath, 1983). Children growing up in low-income families are more likely to have difficulties with learning to read than children from middle-class families and these gaps in performance begin to appear as early as kindergarten (Clay, 1966; Brizius & Foster, 1993; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005). Many of my students come from low-income households and do not have the necessary knowledge and/or skills to assist their child in acquiring these early literacy skills. As a kindergarten teacher, I see the need for teachers to communicate to families about literacy skills.

### **Alphabet Knowledge**

Alphabet knowledge is the ability to name, distinguish shapes, write, and identify the sounds in the alphabet. Alphabet knowledge is also extremely helpful in enabling phonemic segmentation and understanding the sound-symbol relationships in an alphabetic written language like English or Spanish (Hammill & Bartel, 2004; Hohn & Ehri, 1983; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Children who have significant associations between alphabet knowledge as measured in preschool or kindergarten will do better in reading, spelling, and comprehension in later elementary years (National Early Literacy Panel , 2008). Challenges in acquiring alphabet

knowledge are indicative of later literacy difficulties. Third, learning about the alphabet is a critical component of early literacy instruction (Piasta, 2014). Children who are provided with these alphabet learning opportunities make greater gains in this area (Connor, Morrison, & Slominski, 2006), particularly with respect to learning letter sounds (Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker, & Clancy-Menchetti, 2013; Wagner, 2010).

How many letters of the alphabet should prekindergarten children know when they move into kindergarten? Research has not established any set number of letters, but it would be better aligned with the increased expectations for students to come in knowing at least what the letters of their name are. Additionally, the knowledge of at least 12 of each uppercase and lowercase letters at the end of prekindergarten is desirable. Although young children typically learn certain letters earlier than other letters (e.g., B, X, O, and A are the most readily learned), there is no one sequence for teaching the alphabet that has proven most advantageous (Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006). The order in which different children learn the letters of the alphabet is highly variable. Children have a tendency to learn earliest the letters contained in their own names (especially the initial letter of the first name) (Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006). Features intrinsic to particular letters (their shapes, amount of phonological information in the letter name, etc.) also affect how readily and quickly those letters are learned (Treiman, 2006).

Evidence from Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1992) suggests that increased exposure to letter names and sounds predict children's knowledge of other emergent literacy skills. Through their longitudinal study, Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1992) selected twenty-five children at 20 months of age and investigated predictors of later language and literacy skills. They found the frequency of story reading in the home environment were significant predictors of children's language ability between the ages of 2 ½ and 4 ½. The children's exposure to instruction in letter names

and sounds was a significant predictor of print conventions, invented spelling, and phonological awareness at the age of 4 ½ years. Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1992) suggested children's literacy skills continue to improve by increasing exposure of alphabet knowledge.

McCormick, Stoner, and Duncan (1994) followed thirty-eight children in kindergarten into first grade on a number of measures. Each child was tested with uppercase and lowercase letter-identification tasks and sound 39 awareness tasks (e.g. identify beginning sounds of words) throughout their kindergarten year and first grade. McCormick, Stoner, and Duncan (1994) found that lowercase letter-identification at the beginning of kindergarten and consonant-identification in mid-year kindergarten correlated with first grade reading achievement. Both Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1992) and the McCormick, Stoner, and Duncan (1994) studies relate to my study on how my efforts to work with my students' families on early literacy skills since both studies focused on alphabet knowledge.

### **Phonological Awareness**

One of the most important indicators of early reading skills is phonological awareness skills (Hammill & Bartel, 2004; Schatschneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson, & Foorman, 2004). Through phonological awareness, children learn to associate sounds with symbols and create links to word recognition and decoding skills necessary for reading. Over the last three decades, numerous studies have found a link between phonological awareness and the acquisition of literacy (Blaiklock, 2004; Castles & Coltheart, 2004; Goswami, 2001). Phonological awareness involves the detection and manipulation of sounds at three levels of sound structure: (1) syllables, (2) onsets and rimes, and (3) phonemes. Phonological skills, which are part of procedural skills, are critical in first grade when reading primarily involves learning to decode words, while conceptual knowledge plays a significant role in the higher grades, when

comprehension processes are involved in fluent reading (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The first best predictor of reading achievement is the ability to identify letters and their corresponding sounds represents a significant achievement for preschool and kindergarten children and serves as a cornerstone of their continued literacy development (Griffin, Burns, & Snow, 1998; Adams, Stahl, Osborne, & Lehr, 1998; Wood & McLemore, 2001; Dougherty Stahl, 2014). Phonological awareness such as phonological segmentation ability is one of the strongest predictors of success in learning to read (Muter & Diethelm, 2001).

In a longitudinal project, Lonigan, Burgess, Anthony, and Barker (1998) studied the relation in low to middle-income 2 to 5-year-old children's phonological sensitivity to early reading. They administered a battery of measures of phonological sensitivity and oral-language measures of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Among the older children, they reported significant correlations between oral-language and phonological sensitivity measures. Foy and Mann (2003) found that phoneme awareness appears to be closely linked to instructional aspects of the home literacy environments that operate primarily by enhancing vocabulary and letter knowledge. Phoneme awareness is also increased by parental teaching activities that build on these early reading skills (Foy & Mann, 2003; Frijters, Barron, & Brunello, 2000; Dickinson & Snow, 1987).

A study by Piasta, Purpura, and Wagner (2010) compared a group of preschoolers in the United States who received letter naming (LN) and letter sound (LS) instruction to a comparable group of children who received letter sound instruction. The group learning both LN and LS instruction outperformed the LS instruction group in learning both letter names and letter sounds. Letter-name knowledge is the strongest predictor of a child's knowledge in letter sounds (Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Dougherty Stahl, 2014). Children need the opportunity to practice

generating rhymes and manipulate sounds (blending, deleting, segmenting) to continue to strengthen the development of their phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge.

Phonics involves an understanding of the alphabetic principle (that is, there is a relationship between spoken sounds, letters, or combinations of letters) on which the English language is based (Wood & McLemore, 2001). One-size-fits-all whole class instructional approaches are no longer the best way to teach students, since many classrooms are exhibiting differing levels of alphabet knowledge (Piasta, 2014). The National Reading Panel (NRP) report determined that it was beneficial for letter work and phonological awareness to support each other. Having this phonological awareness enables children to extract letter sounds from within letter names they already know (Dougherty Stahl, 2014).

Literature suggests a strong positive correlation between phonological awareness skills and reading skills development. Children who understand the “alphabetic principle” or have insight that printed words consist of letters that can be mapped to sounds, have achieved an important first step in learning to read and write. Besides, longitudinal studies also show that children who do not have phonological awareness skills have difficulties in reading (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Researchers found in the preschool setting, Response to Intervention (RTI) can be used in two different ways: the first way was to prevent at-risk children for academic failure and second to provide prevention and early intervention for those children who are at-risk for special needs (Blaiklock, 2004).

### **Common Core State Standards**

In 2010, the state of Michigan joined the bandwagon on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), but had not yet to fully adopt them. Since 2010, educators in the state have been expected to use the CCSS as a baseline for standards. The CCSS Initiative is a state-led

effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in partnership with Achieve. Referring to alphabet knowledge, new research suggests setting a goal of knowing at least 18 uppercase and 15 lowercase letters by name at the end of preschool (Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012). However, for kindergarten, the adopted CCSS set expectations that kindergartners will not only recognize and name all uppercase and lowercase letters, but also that they will know the most common sounds for all consonants and both long and short vowels. According to CCSS the goal of the initiative is to define grade level expectations and to prepare students for college and careers. As the National Governors Association (2010) writes:

These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live.

In 2009 a report entitled “Crisis in the Kindergarten,” warned that kindergarten in the United States had radically changed over the past two decades. “Developmentally appropriate learning practices” centered on play, exploration and social interactions had been replaced with highly-prescriptive curricula, test preparation and an explicit focus on academic skill-building. It called for a “reversal of the pushing down of the curriculum that has transformed kindergarten into the first grade” (*Miller & Almon, 2009*). By looking at the table below, we can see the difference in the past years of kindergarten teachers views on the curricula from 1998 to 2010 (*Bassok & Rorem, 2013*).

Table 1 Kindergarten Teacher's Beliefs

<b>learning, 1998 and 2010</b>			
<b>Readiness beliefs (percentage indicating they agree or strongly agree)</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Most children should learn to read in kindergarten	30	80	50***
Parents should make sure their kids know the alphabet before they start kindergarten	29	62	33***
Children who begin formal reading and math instruction in preschool will do better in elementary school	34	64	30***
Attending preschool is very important for success in kindergarten	63	83	20***
Homework should be given to kindergarten children almost every day	35	40	5***
<b>How important do you believe the following characteristics are for a child to be ready for kindergarten? (percentage indicating skill is very important or essential)</b>			
<b>Academic skills</b>			
Knows most letters	19	48	29***
Identifies primary colors and shapes	31	59	28***
Can count to 20	13	35	22***
<b>Self regulation</b>			
Can follow directions	78	91	13***
Sits still and pays attention	61	77	16***
Finishes tasks	54	64	10***
Is not disruptive	79	89	10***
<b>Social skills</b>			
Takes turns and shares	73	86	13***
Is sensitive to others' feelings	62	72	10***
<b>Other skills</b>			
Good problem-solving skills	36	48	12***
Able to use pencil and paint brush	35	68	33***
Communicates verbally	85	92	7***
Knows the English language	47	58	11***

Note: Samples limited to kindergarten teachers in public schools. All means are weighted at the teacher level using appropriate sampling weights. Figures shown are percentages rounded to closest percentage point. Differences in means are designated as follows: \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001.

A poll in 2013 states only 45% of public school parents had heard of the CCSS (O'Brien, 2013). However, educators and parents today are debating these content standards. Some have expressed concerns about direct instruction approaches being decontextualized strategies that are too highly structured and scripted, while others have cautioned placing too much instruction on early literacy skills (Zigler, Singer, & Bishop-Josef, 2004). Another argument is that kindergarten students are not developmentally ready to begin reading in kindergarten, yet the CCSS requires them to begin reading by the end of kindergarten (Carlsson-Paige, Bywater

McLaughlin, & Wolfsheimer Almon, 2015). This argument reflects my classroom well. There are some students ready to read or already starting at the beginning of the year, and still at the end of the school year there are some students who are just not developmentally ready. For these students, their parents have to decide if they are holding them back in kindergarten, because the CCSS requires students to be reading by the end of kindergarten to have success in first grade.

### **Family Literacy**

For the past 30 years, research on family environments has consistently documented the importance of family involvement on student literacy development and achievement (Edwards, 2003; Epstein, 1983; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006). High quality, effective early childhood family literacy programs focus their efforts on enhancing the literacy skills of the entire family while also providing the needed supports and resources so that families can carry out these experiences (RMC Research Corporation, 2001). Knowledge of alphabet upon entry to kindergarten and understanding of letters and sounds at beginning of first grade are strong indicators of children's early reading achievement (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). With many studies, having found this correlation between phonological awareness and the acquisition of literacy RTI should be widespread, used wisely, and effectively in all early childhood classrooms.

Language and literacy skills are essential for the development of young children. I have encountered a continuing lack of parental support in literacy in both the private and public school settings. Most of the families from low-income homes appear to struggle with literacy for several reasons such as possessing limited educations, needing to work multiple jobs, and having little knowledge or access to resources; these are just a few factors that make it difficult to provide a literacy-rich environment (Langford, 2014). The quantity and quality of language and print



exposure a child receives at home has an impact on the child's language and literacy development (Carter, Chard, & Pool, 2009). One-third of children are entering school with significant differences in early literacy skills. On average children in low-income neighborhoods are starting Kindergarten 60% behind their affluent peers (Jumpstart, 2014). Families should make language and literacy a priority in their household. Baker et al. (1996) wrote:

...[H]ome-school partnerships can have a positive effect on literacy if families and teachers together develop ways of communicating and building meaningful curricula that extend the insular classroom community. The key elements of reciprocity and respect ... must be locally interpreted and jointly constructed by parents and teachers. (p. 38)

Family's literacy levels influence whether children develop strong language skills as well as reading and writing skills. Some parents provide a strong foundation for language and literacy at home, having many print materials available and modeling the use of reading, writing, and math in daily life. Regardless of the family's desires for their children's success, some parents, especially those with limited literacy skills or formal education, do not have the knowledge or skills needed to adequately support their children's early language and literacy development. As a result, these children often struggle and do not master literacy skills (Clay, 1994; Grant, Golden, & Wilson, 2014; Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

Many strategies can help families focus on language and literacy skills such as, phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge. When families create opportunities, model reading and language, initiate interaction with the child, and provide recognition language and literacy skills increase (Danridge, Edwards, & Pleasants, 2000). The positive outcomes of providing these strategies are improvements in oral language, vocabulary, print awareness, and letter knowledge.

Families need to maintain a shared enjoyment of literacy and a positive attitude to encourage their children's literacy development (Swick, 2009). It has also been advocated that:

As educators, we must not assume that we can only teach the families how to do school, but that we can learn valuable lessons by coming to know the families, and by taking the time to establish the social relationships necessary to create personal links between households and classrooms (*Gordon & Cooper, 2010*).

Educators should adopt an approach on an understanding that teachers need to instruct parents in school-based literacy and continue to learn new approaches on how to integrate parents' knowledge and resources on school-based literacy skills (Sénéchal & Young, 2008; Danridge, Edwards, & Pleasants, 2000).

## **Summary**

This chapter reviewed emergent literacy, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, Common Core State Standards, and family literacy. Literature demonstrates that early literacy skills are important for early success. Even though the state of Michigan has not fully adopted the CCSS, teachers in my school district are still expected to teach to these standards. This has increased our expectations for our students. However, with many parents not fully understanding the new expectations there is a gap in incoming students with their school readiness skills. By continuing to research, I can understand how to help families learn the importance of early literacy skills. Educators need to exhibit interventions to help the reading process in early childhood. Having the appropriate knowledge and strategies will help educators and families with understanding the importance of early literacy skills and early literacy interventions. I will go more in depth in chapter three on my research and the data collection to support my

understanding of how I can continue to help parents understand the importance of early literacy skills in the future.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of my action research study was to explore and understand how I can help more families become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills, and I have documented how my efforts will affect my ongoing work with families. Since teaching in both private and public schools, I have noticed a difference in the early literacy skills of students and their families. This insight has led me to this action based research project so I can continue to further my understanding on how to help families understand the importance of these early literacy skills. This chapter includes a description of the setting & participants, the content of my research, data collection, data analysis, and provides a chapter summary.

### **Setting and Participants**

As a teacher-researcher, I was fortunate to study my research questions in my general education kindergarten classroom. I teach in a public school setting in Northern Michigan. However, due to lack of space I am unable to be in the elementary building with the rest of my elementary teaching staff. Currently I teach in the Middle/High school, which holds about 700 students, with 19 of them being kindergarteners.

The participants are comprised of my own general education 19 kindergarten students and their parents. I have 12 girls and 7 boys. Their ages range from five to seven years old. All students are Caucasian. Sixteen of the students' in my classroom come from low-income households and receive free/reduced lunch. Only three students in my classroom come from traditional families; meaning the student is living with both their mother and father. The rest of the students come from varying non-traditional homes; meaning the student is living with a single parent; divorced parents, or living with a guardian.

## **Context of the Research**

This study came about due to the fact that over the four years I have been teaching, I have taught several students who lack alphabet knowledge and families who lack the knowledge to understand the importance of these skills. I have taught in both the private and public school settings and have witnessed considerable differences between parental support and awareness of early literacy skills with students in regards to children's literacy achievement.

As I started noticing the pattern in students' lack of alphabet knowledge and the lack of knowledge families seemed to have, I started questioning myself and found myself asking, "What can I do to help inform parents of the importance of these early literacy skills?" I first started conversations with other kindergarten teachers in the area. They also stated they had the same concerns with some of their students.

After many conversations with other educators, I decided I needed to change my instruction, as well as start investigating what else I could do to help these students and families. I have had the opportunity to observe and take notes over the past two years of teaching. However, this year I am putting my action research plan into place. I wanted to provide my students and families with the knowledge of why early literacy skills are important. By conducting this classroom inquiry, I sought to explore how I can help more families become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills.

I conducted my research by involving the parents and/or guardians to become more observant in early literacy skills. At the beginning of the school year, I sent out a "Family Survey" and a "Child Survey" to the families so I could get to know them better. I used these surveys as a conversation starter and a way to discuss with parents ways to improve their family literacy skills at home. During October, I started home reading bags that held books at the level

the student was able to read. The reading bags went home once a week. The parents needed to sign the reading bag log in order to document they read with their child. I sent literacy bags home with early literacy skills tailored to each student's needs. I was able to discuss these skills with parents at our Parent-Teacher Conferences held throughout the year. The conferences took place during November, January, and March. I documented my conversations with parents in my research journal. At the end of the school year, I sent out a post-survey to parents to find out what early literacy intervention strategies that I sent home worked or did not work for them.

### **Data Collection**

I conducted my classroom inquiry including normal classroom assessments as well as our district assessments to examine alphabet knowledge skills. These data sources are part of our regular classroom practice, and identifiable information regarding students will remain anonymous. I assessed the students at the beginning of the school year in September to see their base-line abilities in early literacy skills.

One of the assessments I used identifies how many capital letters, lowercase letters, and the sounds of the alphabet the student knows. The second assessment I used is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Next assessment, which are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade, which my school district mandates. This assessment assesses students on first sound fluency, letter knowledge, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense words and assesses student three times through the year September, January, and May. With the knowledge, I gained from these assessments and my classroom observations, I tailored the literacy bags to the student's highest need. I documented my observations of students in my research journal.

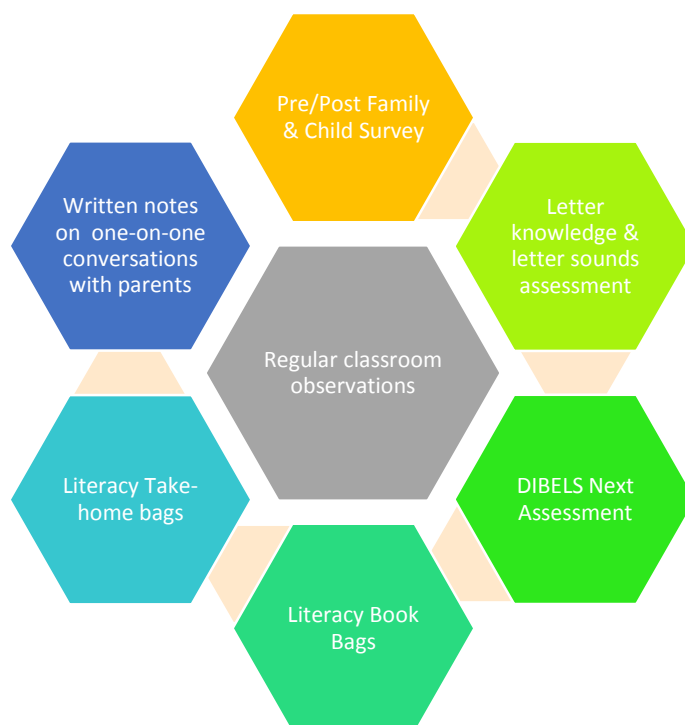


Figure 2 Sources of Data

My data collection timeline is below with explanations of each data source collected following the timeline.

Table 2 Timeline of Data

End of August Beginning of September 2014	Pre-Family Survey & Child Survey
September 2014 – April 2015	Weekly Newsletters sent home with literacy tips
September 2014 – April 2015	Letter knowledge & letter sound assessment
September 2014 – April 2015	Written notes on conversations with parents about their child's literacy skills
October 2014	1 <sup>st</sup> DIBELS Next Assessment
October 4-7, 2014	Written notes on one-on-one conversations with parents during conferences
October 10, 2014	Literacy Book Bags start
January 9, 2015	Literacy Take-home bags
January 19-30, 2015	2 <sup>nd</sup> DIBELS Next Assessment

January 22, 2015	Written notes on one-on-one conversations with parents during conferences
March 27, 2015	Written notes on one-on-one conversations with parents during conferences
April 2015	Post Family Survey

**Family and child survey.** I found a Family and Child Interest survey (Appendix A) from the blog, A Differentiated Kindergarten, which I was able to send to each family during parent orientation. I used these surveys as a conversation starter and a way to discuss with parents ways to improve their family literacy skills at home. All surveys came back except two (N=17).

**Weekly newsletters with literacy tips.** Throughout the school year, I sent home newsletters (Appendix B) every Monday. These newsletters have important information on what we were learning in the classroom. This year I wrote literacy tips that parents could do at home with their child. To be able to use a different literacy tip each week, I used some of my own literacy ideas I have used in the classroom, or I researched literacy tips online to find new ones. This process was a bit time consuming, but once I have a whole year of literacy tips on my newsletters then I can reuse those each year.

**Letter knowledge and letter sounds assessment.** These are normal classroom assessments (Appendix C) to monitor students' knowledge of letters and sounds. These assessments start right away in October and go until the end of the year or until the child knows all letters and sounds. These assessments monitor the progress of capital and lowercase letters, as well as the sounds of all the letters.



**Written notes from one-on-one conversations.** During the school year, I had many conversations with parents about their child's early literacy skills. These conversations were face-to-face either before or after school, on the phone, or during parent-teacher conferences. I used these conversations as a time to get to know the families more and introduce new ideas on how to help their child at home on early literacy skills. During these conversations, I kept notes in my research journal on what we discussed.

**DIBELS Next assessment.** My school district mandates this type of assessment (Appendix D). This assessment assesses students on first sound fluency, letter knowledge, phoneme segmentation, (Hill & Taylor, 2004) and nonsense words and assesses student three times through the year September, January, and May.

**Literacy book bags.** During October, I sent home reading bags (Appendix E) that held books at the reading level the student was able to read. These book bags will go home once a week. The parents of the students will need to sign the reading log in order to document that they read with their child.

**Literacy take-home bags.** Starting in January, I sent home literacy take-home bags on Fridays that have a literacy activity students completed over the weekend with their families and brought back on Monday. The Literacy Bags are designed to fit each student's literacy needs. Inside are literacy games for the student and their family to play (Appendix F).

**Post Parent Survey.** During March, I sent home a Post Parent Survey (Appendix G) to find out what was helpful to parents throughout the school year. With this survey, I was able to see what was most beneficial to parents and least beneficial. I was able to learn from these surveys to help my own understanding of how to continue to help parents.

## Data Analysis

The data collected for this action research is qualitative and the type of data needed was inductive analysis (Mertler, 2012). To analyze the data I used the three-step process for conducting this type of analysis: organization, description, and interpretation (Mertler, 2012). I was able to organize the parent surveys, classroom observations, and student assessments by gathering them and looking for patterns that emerged. Parent survey descriptions were tallied so I could interpret parent responses.

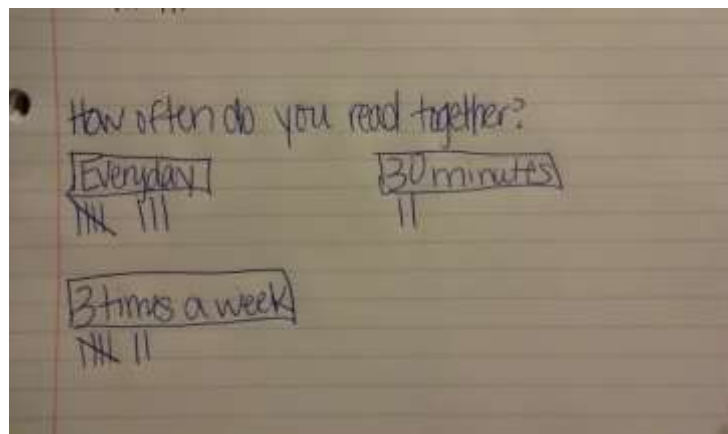


Figure 3 Survey Tally

I then wrote narrative interpretations of the data which helped to me to find the patterns and themes that emerged from the data (Richardson, 1990). Through these steps, I was able to identify patterns and themes that emerged. I considered new ways to help my understanding of how to help parents understand the importance of early literacy skills.

I used an online student generator to randomly assign a number to each student. Each student's identity has been protected and referred to by participant number and/or pseudonym. The surveys handed out at the beginning and the end of the year were open-ended questions for parents to answer. The surveys were organized by coding scheme (Mertler, 2012). The data was

grouped by looking at the similarities and differences between parents, common areas students struggled with, parent responses, and differences in parental support and areas student success. Responses from one-on-one conversations with parents were recorded into a Word document. I read, categorized, and interpreted the responses by coding scheme (Mertler, 2012).

I also looked at student data including letter knowledge and letter sounds by using bar graphs to represent data (Mertler, 2012). Student numbers, number of capital/lowercase letters and letter sounds students knew during the three semesters categorized the data.

## **Summary**

This chapter included a description of the setting & participants, the content of my research, data collection, data analysis, and summary. The qualitative research I conducted focused on how I can help more families in the future become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills. My documentation of my data ensured how my efforts affected my ongoing work with families. In chapter 4, I describe the findings of my data and the patterns and themes that emerged to help understand my question about how will my efforts to work with my students' families on early literacy skills impact my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The objective of this study was to explore and to understand how I could help more families become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills. My goal throughout the study was to understand how my efforts would affect my ongoing work with families on early literacy skills in the future. This chapter includes the themes that emerged through my data analysis: parent educational expectations; effective communication; and literacy interventions. Through various data collection tools, I gathered and analyzed my data to answer my research question: How will my actions to work with my students' families on the importance of early literacy skills impact my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills?

The process of reflecting on what I understood in order to help families on early literacy skills was very eye opening for me. The key themes I came to understand include parents' educational expectations, effective communication, and literacy interventions. Some of these themes I already knew prior to the study; however, I was able to explore them more in depth and more fully understand them as a result of this action research study. I feel very fortunate I was able to experience this exploration with my own classroom and to be able to learn from my experience with my students families.

### **Parent Educational Expectations**

In the beginning of the school year, I handed out a parent and family survey for families to complete and send back. I felt this was a good way to get to know each family and to help with communication. I knew I would see differences in their answers because no family is the

same. However, there were multiple different answers within two of the survey questions that caught my attention.

My understanding of parent's educational views heightened by parent's responses to these questions. As I mentioned earlier, I knew the answers would be different, but reading parent responses made me realize how different each family truly is.

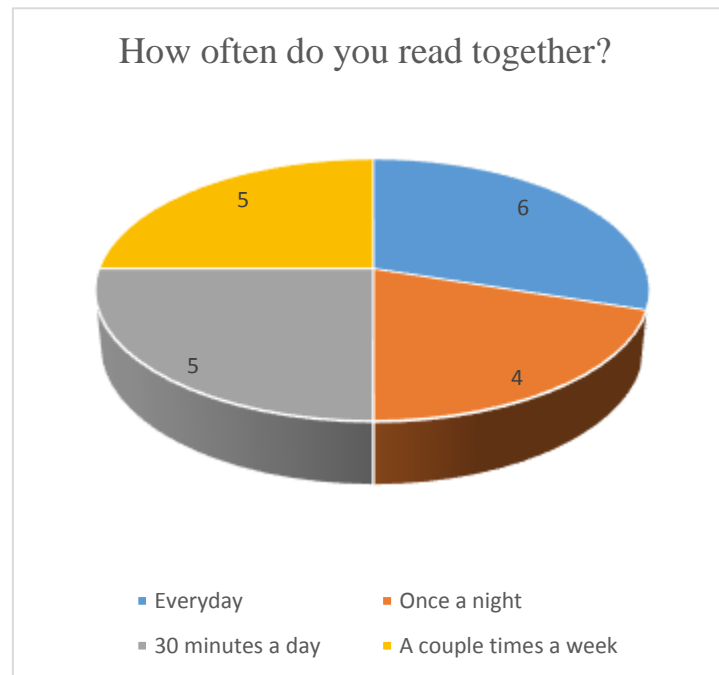


Figure 4 Survey Data

When looking at how often families read together the timeframe ranges from only a couple times a week to everyday. When parents stated they read “every day” or “once a night” their responses could mean they read their child a short book that lasted for maybe five minutes or a couple books that lasted for 15 minutes. Some parents stated they read for 30 minutes a day, which could be, spread out during the day, but regardless of when they read, they know they are reading to their child for at least that amount of time. Parents also stated they read to their child a couple times a week, so these children were only being read to for a very limited amount of time, which made me feel sad that their child didn’t get read to daily by their parents. This saddened me

because as an educator I know children need to be read to daily, even if it is just for 15 minutes. This question helped me understand the information I needed to get out to parents about reading at home with their child. Throughout the year, I was able to send home handouts on the importance of reading and send books for their child to read to them at home.

The second question that raised my awareness was the goals parents had for their child throughout the school year. Parent responses ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other, including learning how to clean up to reading.



Figure 5 Survey Data 2

It was interesting to know what their goal was for their child at the end of kindergarten, but some of the goals parents wrote down were skills their child should have learned or would master towards the middle of kindergarten. Statistics from the Read Aloud website (2015) show that more than one in three children arrive at kindergarten without the skills necessary for lifetime learning. This helped me to understand that I needed to be very specific with families on the

goals we had in kindergarten, as well as making sure to keep families informed on what our education goals were each quarter so there were no surprises at the end of the year.

**One-on-one conversation.** During our open house night, I had a conversation with a parent as she filled out the parent/child survey. When she wrote down her goal for her child, it was being able to learn letters. While this is a goal for kindergarten, however, students need to master letters, letter sounds, and be reading before first grade. I let her know Miranda would learn all her letters and learn how to read by the end of kindergarten. She stated as long as she knew her letters, she would be happy. I proceeded to tell her how kindergarten standards have changed and they are more rigorous, that kindergarten students need to be reading by the end of kindergarten. She seemed surprised and said she wasn't sure her daughter would be ready for these goals. I asked her if Miranda knew how to write her name yet and she stated no. I let her know this was a good goal to start working on at home with Miranda. I assured her we would see how the first month went, since her daughter was one of the younger students in the class. We also talked about how important it is to have a parent/teacher partnership and the different ways she can help her daughter out at home too.

### **Effectively Communicating**

As an educator, I know how important communication is between parents and teachers. The data I collected pointed this out to me even more than I knew at the beginning of the school year. I have always made it a point to allow an inviting communication line between parents and myself. However, with the surveys I handed out at the beginning of the year, I was able to collect information that I used as a conversation starter with parents or a way of calming down a child throughout the first few weeks of school. Below is an example of a question from the survey.



Figure 6 Survey Data 3

Throughout the year, I had multiple ways I communicated with families: one-on-one, phone, or email conversations. By talking and asking questions, I was able to learn background knowledge, family values, learning traits, family activities, and more when needed. This helped me begin to understand where students came from and how each of their families are different. I was also able to communicate how their child was doing in the classroom by talking to parents about their child's progress from my classroom observations and my own classroom assessments. Some parents' questioned the DIBELS assessment since they did not understand what the scores meant. I was able to explain what DIBELS was to them and state that it was a mandated assessment given only three times a year and that I believe it does not always match how they are really doing in the classroom. The one-on-one conversations were very beneficial to my understanding, because I was able to have quality conversations with parents.

**One-on-one conversation.** One of my conversations with a parent was face-to-face after school. I had some concerns for this particular student, Krista, since she was struggling with the very basic skills at the beginning of the year. She came in not knowing how to spell her name, the letters in her name, and only knew seven capital letters and five lowercase letters. I was not receiving any of her math or literacy homework. When I had asked this parent about it one day after school she stated, "I don't have time for her homework. My son is in middle school and his



is more important.” I was so shocked by the statement that I did not know what to say right away. However, I asked her if she could try to do it on the weekends when she would have more time, and she said she would try.

Krista’s parent and I also had a one-on-one conversation during parent teacher conferences at the beginning of the year. During our conversation, I was able to find out some vital family information that was beneficial to help me understand where this family was coming from. Krista was living in a single-parent household; her mom worked long hours, so her brother watched her after school, and he was also having some trouble in school as well. As I had a conversation with Krista’s mother, I could tell she felt bad about not taking the time to work with her daughter. I was able to give her some tips on what she could do at home to increase Krista’s literacy skills, and I gave her the extra time over the weekend to get the homework done. I wanted to make sure she understood this was a partnership between teachers and parents, and by both of us working with her daughter, we would be able to increase her literacy skills to get her to be where she needed to be for kindergarten. I felt good when our conversation was over, but I still was not sure if she would do everything we discussed.

Over the next semester, I did notice progress in Krista’s literacy skills. Although her homework was non-existent, and although her literacy book bags and literacy take-home bags didn’t return to school, I knew her mom was trying the best she could. We had our next one-on-one conversation during the second set of parent-teacher conferences. Krista went from knowing seven capital letters at the beginning of the year to knowing sixteen by the end of January. She also went from knowing five lowercase letters to sixteen lowercase letters. She was also able to write her name correctly, and she knew all the letters in her name. During our conversation, I told the parent I could tell she had been working with Krista at home on literacy skills. She

smiled and stated, “Yes, after dinner instead of having her play video games with her brother, I have been reading to her, and we practice her letters too.”

Throughout my conversations with parents, I began to understand that connecting with parents to make communication a priority requires time, patience, not being afraid to ask parents questions or give them advice, and understanding what each family is going through. During the rest of the school year, I continued to make it a priority to keep this in mind when I talked to parents. This began to help me build a relationship with families throughout the school year, and I was able to understand how much support each student had in his/her home environment.

### **Literacy Interventions**

During the course of the school year, I focused on three specific literacy interventions with parents. The three I choose to use were adding literacy tips and specific literacy skills to work on at home in my newsletters, literacy book bags, and literacy take-home bags. The literacy tips and skills in the newsletters started right away at the beginning of the school year, where the literacy book bags started in October and the literacy take-home bags in January.

**Literacy tips and skills in newsletters.** I send out newsletters to my parents every school year. However, I am never sure if parents are actually reading them or not, but I knew I wanted to add some new literacy tips and skills to help parents at home. Surprisingly, I received some feedback from parents right away about the literacy tips and skills in the newsletter. One parent wrote me a note on the newsletter and said she tried the literacy tip at home with her child and loved it. Another parent stated, “I like how you told me the skills to work on at home, that is very helpful.” I was not sure if I would be able to keep up with different literacy tips throughout the school year, but I did, and now I will be able to use them every year. In April, I sent home the

post-survey and one of my questions asked parents if the newsletter was helpful. All of the responses I received were positive; below are sample responses:

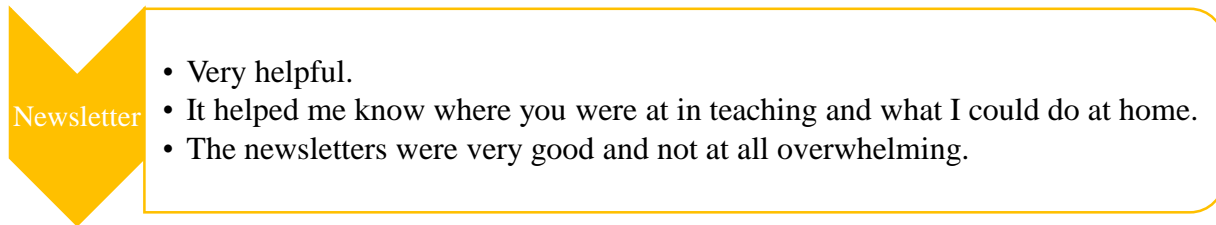


Figure 7 Post Survey Data 1

I began to understand that the literacy tips and skills are helping some families if not all. Since I only heard back from some of my students' families (n=15), I do not know if all my parents are reading the newsletters. Nevertheless, what I do know is that the parents who are reading the newsletters are receiving the literacy tips and skills, and they indicate that these newsletters are making a difference in their household.

**Literacy book bags.** I started sending home the literacy books bags in October. These book bags held books at the reading level the student was able to read. They went home once a week. The parents of the students need to sign the reading log in order to document that they read with their child. As mentioned earlier, I did not receive all book bags back with each child, so not all students (n=4) got to experience this. However, the families who completed the literacy book bags every week (n=15) indicated that they enjoyed seeing the progress their child made in reading throughout the year. Below are some examples of parent comments from the reading logs.

*She read these on her own for the first time! Proud mom 😊*

*He read with expression.*

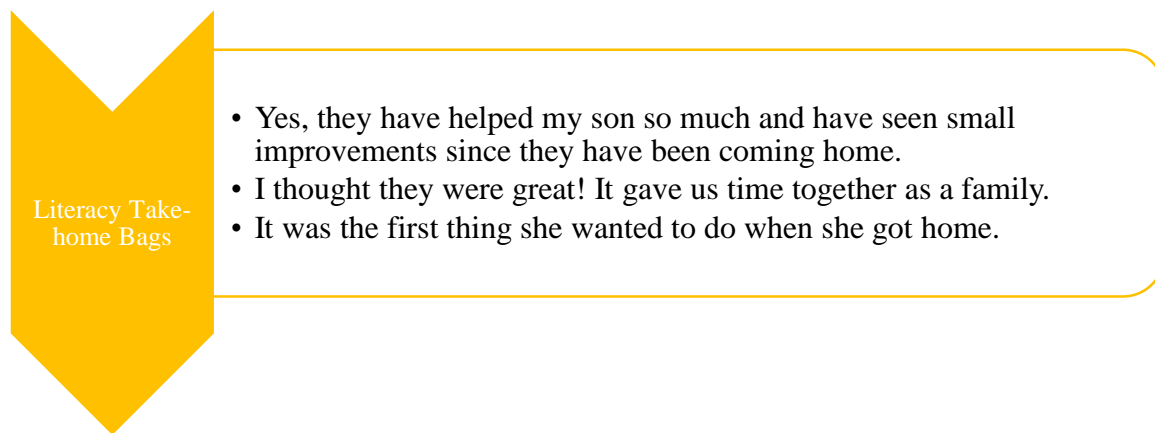
*She is sounding out harder words and when we reread the story, she was able to read them on her own.*

*This book was a little difficult, but we sounded out words together.*

I really enjoyed reading the comments back from parents. It helped me to understand if their child was reading at home as well as they were at school, and it was great to see parents being so proud of their child. This was the first time I used a form where parents could comment, and I believe it helped me as well as parents to continue to have effective communication.

**Literacy take-home bags.** Starting in January, I sent home literacy take-home bags on Fridays that have a literacy activity students completed over the weekend with their families and brought back on Monday. The Literacy Bags are designed to fit each student's literacy needs. Inside were literacy games for the student and their family to play. Last year I wrote a grant for the Excellence in Education Grants and received a donation to purchase early literacy tools for my classroom. The activities I sent home in the literacy bags were purchased from Lakeshore Learning with the grant money. Since this was my first time sending these activities home, I was a little nervous, because I was not sure if I would get all of them back. I sent a letter home to the families explaining what my expectations were for these literacy bags. I made the decision that if they did not come back the student would not be allowed to check another bag out until the first bag returned. I had four students who did not return the literacy bag materials, even after parent communication, so they did not get to participate in this activity. However, they did get to use the literacy games in the classroom during our centers, so they did not miss the opportunity to play the games. One of the challenges I faced was having the time to gather all the materials and have it switched over for every Friday, since not every student returned it on Monday's due date.

With this activity came the understating that despite the challenges, this project was my biggest take-away due to how much the students and parents loved receiving these literacy take-home bags. I was able to see a continued literacy progress in students who took the literacy take-home bags home. When I reviewed my end-of-the-year parent survey this was one of the top activities the parents liked receiving. Below are some of the parent comments:



*Figure 8 Post Survey Data 2*

**One-on-one conversations.** In January, I had a conversation about the literacy take-home bags with Amie's mom. I see Amie's mom every day at pick up time, so we have had wonderful communication, and I knew she would tell me how she felt about the new activities sent home. When I asked her what she thought of the activity sent home the first week she stated, "It was the first thing she wanted to do when she got home. We had a lot of fun playing the game and she did really well." This made me feel great. I knew the hard work I put into getting the literacy bags together was worth it. Amie continued to be excited about what literacy game was in her mail box on Friday afternoons. Amie's literacy skills continued to develop throughout the school year; she is ahead of where she needs to be. The one-on-one conversations such as those with Amie's mom helped me to understand that students' early literacy skills are improving due to the amount of skills they are receiving in school and in their home environment.

In February, during a phone conversation with another parent, she expressed that her son Michael really loved both the literacy book bags and take-home bags. She said they not only played the literacy game once, but multiple times throughout the weekend. At the beginning of the year, Michael struggled with letters and letter sounds, but with effective communication and the correct literacy tools sent home, Michael's progress with letters and letter sounds increased through the year. He also made progress with segmenting words and sight words with the literacy take-home bag intervention activities. Michael's mom and I continued to have conversations throughout the school year. During another phone conversation, she asked if they could keep the literacy take-home bag longer, because she felt he needed more practice on the activity. Throughout the one-on-one conversations with Michael's mom, I learned the importance of discussing each student's progress with their parents, because each student learns at different levels. If I didn't have this conversation with her I wouldn't have known she wanted to keep the literacy bags longer and why she wanted to. By March, Michael had moved up a level in reading and I noticed his early literacy skills such as segmenting words was also increasing in the classroom since he was working on specific early literacy skills in his home environment as well as school. He was beginning to raise his hand more often to answer questions because he felt more confident in his answers.

Through the school year, I had one-on-one or phone conversations with Noah's mom as well. Noah was very low in literacy skills and needed to have at-home literacy interventions to help increase his skills. During a conversation with Noah's mom, she said he is not interested in the activities, and she had a hard time getting him to do them. I told her the following week I would have Noah pick out his activity to go in his literacy take-home bag by giving him some choices. He seemed excited to pick out his activity to take home, so I continued to do that with

him every week. However, Noah was not always interested in the activity when he got home so I told Noah's mom some other activities she could do at home involving his toys too. Noah's mom stated once during a phone conversation that her two-year-old daughter was learning right along with her son, and she realized that she did not work with Noah on these skills when he was younger to prepare him for school. Although Noah has made progress this year, it is not in his best interest to move him on to first grade. Noah's family and I decided it was best to keep Noah back in kindergarten, so he can continue to grow socially and to develop his early literacy skills. I feel confident his parents have the early literacy skills needed to continue to help Noah over the summer.

## **Summary**

This chapter included the findings of my data and the themes that emerged to help me to address my question about how my actions to work with my students' families on early literacy skills affect my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy. The common themes that emerged through an analysis of data were parent educational views, effective communication, and literacy interventions. My objective was to explore and to understand how I could help more families become involved in their child's education in the area of early literacy skills and to consider how I will continue to work with families in the future from what I understood from my data; I go into further detail about my understanding and my future plans in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Through this action research study, I explored my research question: How will my efforts to work with my students' families on early literacy skills affect my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills? I have continued to notice a difference in the early literacy skills of students throughout my first four years of teaching. I was aware that some of my students were not receiving the necessary literacy tools at home, and this is where my motivation to learn how I can help families understand the importance of these skills developed. Since literacy begins at home, I wanted to help parents and/or guardians continue to shape their children's first literacy experiences so the parents can continue to help their child through the development of early literacy skills throughout their child's school years (Zygouris-Coe & Center, 2001). This school year, I was able to provide meaningful literacy interactions with parents through literacy conversations, literacy tips in newsletters, and literacy activities sent home. Through these new literacy tools, I was able to differentiate activities to adhere to specific goals for students and literacy tips for parents. This discussion includes a personal significance on my understanding of how to continue to help families understand the importance of early literacy skills, and what I can do as an educator in the future (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006).

This study took place over a seven-month span during the beginning and middle of the school year in my kindergarten classroom. One limitation was that some parents did not respond to the surveys sent home. . The parents that did not complete the survey could have altered the outcome of findings. A second limitation relates to the open-ended nature of the parent survey question: "How often do you read together?" This question could have been interpreted many



different ways by parents. For instance, some parents may not have included time spent reading signs, cereal boxes, grocery store items, etc. Also, parents' responses could have been interpreted in different ways. For example, "Once per day" could have meant one short book that took three minutes to read, or it may have meant one time of day that included several books over a period of fifteen to thirty minutes. For the next time I ask this question, I will consider changing the question to include examples for the parents to select or a prompt to list the types of things that are read. I will also consider providing scaled time increments such as 5-10 minutes per day or a prompt to list the amount of minutes read per day or per week in order to help me interpret responses. A barrier included students' not bringing back their literacy book bags or take-home bags, possibly due to a lack of responsibility from parents to go through their child's backpack/folder and have their child complete and bring back materials.

Findings from this study indicated that the changes I made this year, which included effective communication with parents, literacy tips, and more literacy activities sent home resulted in increasing parental involvement at home, student excitement, and a basic understanding of what parents want and/or needed to know about early literacy skills. All of these areas are highly important to me, and through my action research, I was able to work on these areas and increase my knowledge of how to continue working with parents.

### **Parent's Educational Expectations Vary from Parent to Parent**

Through my action research, I understood that some parent's educational expectations vary from one another (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Surveys were handed out at the beginning of the school year, and parents were given the opportunity to answer questions about their child, their goal for their child in kindergarten, and many others. One of the questions that raised concerns with me was, "What are your goals for you child in kindergarten?" It was very eye opening for

me to read the multiple answers from parents ranging from learning how to clean up to learning to read. I felt very fortunate I was able to have conversations with parents and have some of them make goals that are in line with the standards of kindergarten curriculum for their child during the school year. A second survey question, “How often do you read together?” I will update next year, so that the question is clear by what I mean by reading together and how it is interpreted by parents. I will put examples next to the question such as the following; reading a book to your child, reading cereal boxes or other items around the house, reading signs on car rides, grocery store items, etc. I want the parents to know that by the question I want to know how often they are reading together with their child. I will add a separate category for how much time is spent on reading, meaning how much time parents spend reading to their child. I will also add another question asking how accessible books are to their child in their household. By asking this question, I will be able to see how many families have access to books and how many need help to access books.

As an educator I know that when the CCSS came out my expectations for my students increased; however, through my action research I found that some of my parents did not know standards had increased or even heard of CCSS (Piasta, 2014). Some experts in early childhood say the standards for young children are developmentally inappropriate (Ravitch, 2013). Some of the parents would agree with this statement and did not feel their child should have to learn everything we needed to in kindergarten, such as learning how to read. I gave parents information about the CCSS and let them know the expectations for our school.

In the future, I will continue to hand out these surveys at the beginning of the school year, because it gave me an inside look at what the parents’ expectations are for their child. It allowed me the opportunity to talk to parents about the goal they had for their child and to discuss with

them how we can reach that goal as a team. Although there were goals parents set that I felt were not ideal for the end of kindergarten, I was able to have conversations with those families and share with them the expectations for kindergarten, since some parents did not know expectations had risen in past years (Bassok & Rorem, 2013; Piasta, 2014). I will also continue to give parents information on the CCSS and have conversations, so they are aware of the expectations in kindergarten (Bassok & Rorem, 2013).

### **Continuing to Communicate Effectively**

The one-on-one conversations I had with parents this year were much better than those in years past. I got to know all of my students' families this school year by phone calls, emails, or face-to-face conversations, and through these actions; I was able to understand each family better. At the beginning of the school year, I sent home the family surveys. This gave me the opportunity to get to know the family at the beginning of the school year (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). I was able to take information from their survey to use during our first conversations together. From these conversations, I was able to tell which families preferred me to communicate with them by phone, email, or face-to-face.

I felt I had a better understanding of my students' families this year by having these conversations, and my students all knew I talked to their families. I understand that by making these connections with parents, it helped me significantly throughout the school year, especially when I needed to discuss both social and academic skills about their child to them (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Since I made strong connections with parents, my level of confidence increased since I was not as nervous discussing concerns. In addition, I felt an accomplishment of teaching not only my students early literacy skills, but teaching parents' effective literacy skills to use at home as well. Even though there were challenges of not being able to reach every family, I still

made it a point to reach out to them multiple times hoping that we would find the right time to have a conversation. I made it a point to meet families at times that worked for the both of us, whether it was before or after school, during a lunch hour, or specials break. Evidence from Epstein (1983) suggested that parental encouragement, activities, and interests at home and parental involvement in schools and classrooms positively influence student achievement. In the future, I will continue make a point to have more one-on-one conversations with families and continue to work with them on meeting times, since this was the time I was able to communicate in person with the families (Epstein, 1983; Baker, et al., 1996).

### **Understanding the Effects of Home Literacy Interventions**

As a kindergarten teacher, I have always sent home literacy book bags with my students as a home literacy activity. However, this year I wanted to try adding more activities to involve more parents in their child's early literacy skills. Research shows that family-school partnerships have a positive impact on student learning (Rowe & Fain, 2013; Epstein, 1983). My focus was to add literacy tips and specific literacy skills to work on at home in my newsletters, literacy book bags, and literacy take-home bags. Family's at-home literacy levels influence whether children develop strong language skills including reading and writing skills (Clay, 1994; Grant, Golden, & Wilson, 2014).

According to my data collected from my action research, all of these literacy interventions had a positive influence on both parents and students. I came to understand that my actions to provide a variety of ways to communicate with parents, and to take into account specific family situations and needs I have increased parents' understanding of how important early literacy skills are by making sure they have at least one way, if not more, to help their child work on early literacy skills at home (Roberts, Jergens, & Burchinal, 2005). I understand that

some parents did not know the importance of early literacy skills, but through the school year became aware of where their child needed to be with the interventions sent home. Even though I was hoping to reach all families through these literacy interventions, not all families acted on the importance of these interventions. Through my data, I understood that I cannot reach all families, but I know that I am trying the best I can by providing them with the materials they need to provide their child with early literacy interventions in their home environment.

I will continue to use these three literacy interventions in the future school years. Although one change I will make for next school year is to send the literacy take-home bags earlier than January; however, I need to get more literacy games in order to have enough for the whole school year. Over the summer, I will continue looking into new ways I can help show families the importance of early literacy skills. I understand communication with families is not only necessary, but it is beneficial for a positive teacher/parent partnership. I encouraged my kindergarten team that we needed to send home letters to next year's kindergarten students about the necessary skills to work on over the summer. We usually give parents this letter at our open house in September, but I suggested to since we already have student names it would be beneficial to parents to start working on early literacy skills over the summer.

### **Changes in My Understanding**

After much reflection on my research question, "How will my efforts to work with my students' families on early literacy skills affect my understanding on how to continue working with families on early literacy skills?" I came to the conclusion of the following overall changes in my understanding; mandated assessments vs. teacher assessments and my plan for the future.

**Mandated assessments vs. teacher assessments.** As I reflected, I thought back to my first year of teaching, when I thought the only assessments I needed to focus on were mandated

assessments. The school district I currently work in and past districts have each mandated the DIBELS assessment. This specific assessment is given three times during the school year: beginning, middle, and end. Part of my teaching evaluation is also scored on how well students do on their DIBELS. Students are assessed on first sound fluency, letter knowledge, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense words. I do not believe DIBELS is the best assessment, especially when students are timed for one minute. I have students that tend to freeze up just because they know I have a timer, and they are overwhelmed when seeing a whole page of letters or words.

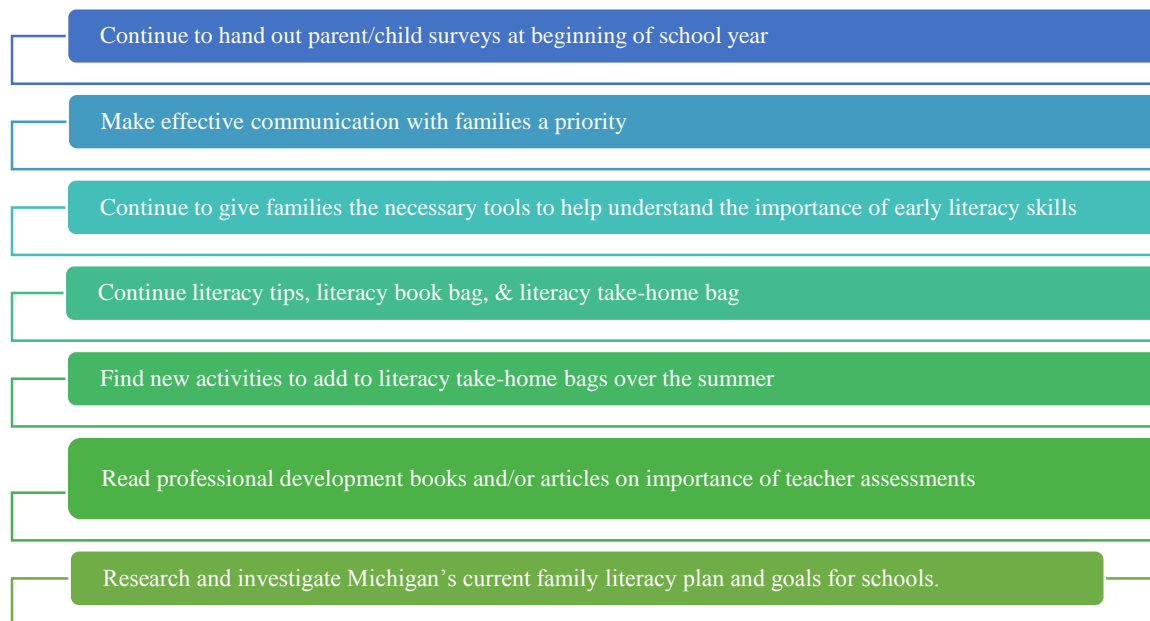
I just assessed all my students on our last DIBELS. When I looked at Amie's composite score, she is considered "below" DIBELS benchmark score of 50, because she missed letter knowledge and nonsense words by just a few points. According to my own classroom assessments and observations, Amie is above grade level, which for kindergarten is a level C. She is currently reading at a level D independently and knew all her letters and letter sounds by November, so I do not consider her to be "below." My action research has confirmed for me that even though a district mandates specific assessments, it is worth it to take the extra time to do my own classroom assessments (Nelson, 2013).

Our district has just mandated yet another new assessment during this school year called the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). This assessment is also given to students three times a year on a computer. The first time my kindergarten students were given the assessment this is how it went: "Click, click, click, I'm done!" They did not take their time, so their scores were horrible. The second time we did the assessment in the spring; I made sure to talk to my kindergarteners about taking their time and listening to the questions before they chose an answer and some scores were better, but still not all of them did their best. Again, this assessment is going to be part of my teacher evaluation.

During my action research, I thought I would use DIBELS as one of my data sources; however, it did not turn out to be where I collected most of my data. My own classroom assessments and observations proved to be the most helpful when having effective one-on-one conversations with families. I still discussed the DIBELS and NWEA scores with families, but I let them know that I knew exactly where their child was in their learning process through my own assessments and observations. In the future, I will continue to give the mandated assessments, but I know that my own assessments are the best tools to use for a “true” student assessment.

### **Plan for the Future**

My action research has been a very empowering experience. My purpose was to explore and to describe my efforts to educate my students’ parents about how important early literacy skills are to their young children. Through my action research, I was able to engage in the four stages of action as I conducted my research: focus, collecting data, analyzing data, and now the plan for the future (Mertler, 2012).



*Figure 9 Plan for Future Chart*

One of the actions I learned from during this study was how important effective communication is with parents. During the one-on-one conversations is where I learned about each family and what I could do as a teacher to help them understand the importance of literacy at home. A recommendation I would give fellow kindergarten teachers is to make effective communication a priority. To do this I used the parent/child surveys to help me get started and from there I continued to have communication with families that suited their needs. The second action I learned from is that the time I took to gather books and literacy games to be sent home with families was well worth it. Yes, it was time consuming, but once I started to see the benefit from the students and parents, I realized I needed to keep the book bag and literacy bag activities going. A recommendation I would give fellow kindergarten teachers is to plan over the summer and look at what types of materials you can gather to make this happen. The third action I learned from my study is that my own teacher assessments and observations are what truly matters. When I first started teaching, I relied highly on the district-mandated assessments.



Through my action research I found that at times a district-mandated test would tell me a student was low academically, but my own classroom assessments/observations would tell me otherwise. However, I still have district-mandated assessments I must use, but I now feel my own classroom assessments and observations can inform me where students are much more efficiently. I would suggest to fellow kindergarten teachers to look closely at both teacher and district-mandated assessments so you can inform parents of where their child truly is academically. I also learned what a true parent/teacher partnership meant and it involves effective communication and truly understanding where their child is academically at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year by teacher assessments and observations.

## **Summary**

This study has demonstrated the significance of helping parents understand the importance of early literacy skills. In the future, I hope to continue focusing on family literacy and to give families the tools to continue to help them understand the importance of early literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006). I believe that by keeping parents informed through effective communication, I can continue to reach most of the parents to address the importance of early literacy skills. With the continuing efforts of home literacy activities, one-on-one conversations, and literacy tips to parents, I feel that I will continue to help families understand the importance of early literacy skills. I enjoyed seeing the excitement from students when they took their literacy activities home. I also loved receiving the comments from parents about what activities they enjoyed the most and what literacy tools assisted them throughout our year. It was a great feeling knowing that I affected the families of my students by teaching them the importance of

family literacy (Brizius & Foster, 1993; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Overall, through my action research, I learned the importance of communicating effectively and taking the time to gather literacy resources for families is worth it. Teacher assessments and observations are crucial to providing reliable information to parents on student academic success and struggles and the true meaning of what a parent/teacher partnership is.

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## APPENDIX A

### Family and Child Interest Survey

Parent Interest Inventory Form found at <http://www.differentiatedkindergarten.com/2014/07/a-printable-freebie-for-getting-to-know.html>

My Family and Me! **Family Survey**

What is your favorite activity to do as a family?

How often do you read together?

What is your favorite book to read together?

What is your favorite app or computer game?

What is your favorite learning app or computer game?

What do you expect from me as your teacher?

**Getting To Know Your Child**  
Help me learn all I need to know to help your child have an enjoyable and successful year.

Your child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

What does your child prefer to be called: \_\_\_\_\_

My child's favorite things

Favorite color: \_\_\_\_\_  
Favorite book: \_\_\_\_\_  
Favorite toy: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other favorites: \_\_\_\_\_

My child is good at: \_\_\_\_\_

My child likes to: (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to stories	<input type="checkbox"/> Draw and color
<input type="checkbox"/> Play alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Play with other children
<input type="checkbox"/> Play outside	<input type="checkbox"/> Play quiet games inside
<input type="checkbox"/> Go to friends house	<input type="checkbox"/> Play make-believe

My child doesn't like to: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like you to know this about my child: \_\_\_\_\_

My child learns best by: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Newsletter

# Delightful December News




### At-home Connection with Reading/Writing

Practice writing the letter "Cc", "Oo", "Gg", "Aa", "Dd", "Ss", "Ii", "Jj" & "Tt" at home.

Have your child write out Christmas Cards to practice writing.

### Skills to work on at home

- Name writing with correct formation (Beginning letter capital & the rest lowercase) Ex. Sara
  - If your child has their first name start practicing their last name.
- Shoelace tying
  - Check out this video for an easy way to help your child.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohOnB\\_h3wIo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohOnB_h3wIo)



### At-home Connection with Math

Practicing counting and writing numbers 0 to 20.

Countdown to Christmas. Set up a place where your child gets to change how many days until Christmas to practice counting backwards.

- Letter/Number identification
- Sight Words
- Writing numbers 0-20.





### Tip of the Week

Put a bunch of sequins on a tray to practice fun sparkly writing. Have your child write letters, words, and numbers in the tray.



# Delightful December News


### Literacy

This week in Superkids we will be finishing the letter "Ii" and starting the letter "Tt". Practice writing and having your child sound out the letters at home.

Continue to practice labeling and short sentence writing.

### Reminders

- I will be out of the Classroom on Tuesday. Please remind your child to be respectful for the substitute.
- Please send in **Gift of Reading** book donations by December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please make sure it is a new book as it will be used for a gift. These books will be used in the Ishpeming Community to help those in need during Christmas.




### Sight Words

"at" & "look"

### Math


We are on Ch. 3 numbers beyond 10.

Practice counting and writing numbers 11-20.



### Calendar

Dec. 17 Christmas Concert at 10:00 in the Auditorium at IHS



## APPENDIX C

### Letter/Letter Sound Assessment

10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100-101-102-103-104-105-106-107-108-109-110-111-112-113-114-115-116-117-118-119-120-121-122-123-124-125-126-127-128-129-130-131-132-133-134-135-136-137-138-139-140-141-142-143-144-145-146-147-148-149-150-151-152-153-154-155-156-157-158-159-160-161-162-163-164-165-166-167-168-169-170-171-172-173-174-175-176-177-178-179-180-181-182-183-184-185-186-187-188-189-190-191-192-193-194-195-196-197-198-199-200-201-202-203-204-205-206-207-208-209-210-211-212-213-214-215-216-217-218-219-220-221-222-223-224-225-226-227-228-229-230-231-232-233-234-235-236-237-238-239-240-241-242-243-244-245-246-247-248-249-250-251-252-253-254-255-256-257-258-259-260-261-262-263-264-265-266-267-268-269-270-271-272-273-274-275-276-277-278-279-280-281-282-283-284-285-286-287-288-289-290-291-292-293-294-295-296-297-298-299-300-301-302-303-304-305-306-307-308-309-310-311-312-313-314-315-316-317-318-319-320-321-322-323-324-325-326-327-328-329-330-331-332-333-334-335-336-337-338-339-340-341-342-343-344-345-346-347-348-349-350-351-352-353-354-355-356-357-358-359-360-361-362-363-364-365-366-367-368-369-370-371-372-373-374-375-376-377-378-379-380-381-382-383-384-385-386-387-388-389-390-391-392-393-394-395-396-397-398-399-400-401-402-403-404-405-406-407-408-409-410-411-412-413-414-415-416-417-418-419-420-421-422-423-424-425-426-427-428-429-430-431-432-433-434-435-436-437-438-439-440-441-442-443-444-445-446-447-448-449-450-451-452-453-454-455-456-457-458-459-460-461-462-463-464-465-466-467-468-469-470-471-472-473-474-475-476-477-478-479-480-481-482-483-484-485-486-487-488-489-490-491-492-493-494-495-496-497-498-499-500-501-502-503-504-505-506-507-508-509-510-511-512-513-514-515-516-517-518-519-520-521-522-523-524-525-526-527-528-529-530-531-532-533-534-535-536-537-538-539-540-541-542-543-544-545-546-547-548-549-550-551-552-553-554-555-556-557-558-559-560-561-562-563-564-565-566-567-568-569-570-571-572-573-574-575-576-577-578-579-580-581-582-583-584-585-586-587-588-589-590-591-592-593-594-595-596-597-598-599-600-601-602-603-604-605-606-607-608-609-610-611-612-613-614-615-616-617-618-619-620-621-622-623-624-625-626-627-628-629-630-631-632-633-634-635-636-637-638-639-640-641-642-643-644-645-646-647-648-649-650-651-652-653-654-655-656-657-658-659-660-661-662-663-664-665-666-667-668-669-670-671-672-673-674-675-676-677-678-679-680-681-682-683-684-685-686-687-688-689-690-691-692-693-694-695-696-697-698-699-700-701-702-703-704-705-706-707-708-709-710-711-712-713-714-715-716-717-718-719-720-721-722-723-724-725-726-727-728-729-730-731-732-733-734-735-736-737-738-739-740-741-742-743-744-745-746-747-748-749-750-751-752-753-754-755-756-757-758-759-760-761-762-763-764-765-766-767-768-769-770-771-772-773-774-775-776-777-778-779-780-781-782-783-784-785-786-787-788-789-790-791-792-793-794-795-796-797-798-799-800-801-802-803-804-805-806-807-808-809-810-811-812-813-814-815-816-817-818-819-820-821-822-823-824-825-826-827-828-829-830-831-832-833-834-835-836-837-838-839-840-841-842-843-844-845-846-847-848-849-850-851-852-853-854-855-856-857-858-859-860-861-862-863-864-865-866-867-868-869-870-871-872-873-874-875-876-877-878-879-880-881-882-883-884-885-886-887-888-889-890-891-892-893-894-895-896-897-898-899-900-901-902-903-904-905-906-907-908-909-910-911-912-913-914-915-916-917-918-919-920-921-922-923-924-925-926-927-928-929-930-931-932-933-934-935-936-937-938-939-940-941-942-943-944-945-946-947-948-949-950-951-952-953-954-955-956-957-958-959-960-961-962-963-964-965-966-967-968-969-970-971-972-973-974-975-976-977-978-979-980-981-982-983-984-985-986-987-988-989-990-991-992-993-994-995-996-997-998-999-1000-1001-1002-1003-1004-1005-1006-1007-1008-1009-1010-1011-1012-1013-1014-1015-1016-1017-1018-1019-1020-1021-1022-1023-1024-1025-1026-1027-1028-1029-1030-1031-1032-1033-1034-1035-1036-1037-1038-1039-1040-1041-1042-1043-1



# APPENDIX D

## DIBELS Next Assessment

<https://dibels.org/dibelsnext.html>

School: Birchview Elementary  
Grade: Kindergarten, End of Year  
Year: 2014-2015  
Class: Sippola K

### Classroom Report



DIBELS Next

		LNF		PSF		NWF				DIBELS COMPOSITE SCORE		
NAME	STUDENT ID	Score	Local Percentile	Score	Local Percentile	CLS	Local Percentile	VWR	Local Percentile	Score	Local Percentile	Score Level
		22	2	34	18	3	< 1	0	13	59	< 1	Well Below Benchmark
		27	6	27	5	16	10	1	31	70	4	Well Below Benchmark
		27	6	43	30	5	2	0	13	75	5	Well Below Benchmark
		23	4	37	22	16	10	0	13	76	7	Well Below Benchmark
		34	16	34	18	26	39	3	45	94	23	Below Benchmark
		47	44	45	36	26	39	1	31	118	36	Below Benchmark
		40	23	63	90	18	15	0	13	121	37	At or Above Benchmark
		57	76	51	64	22	23	5	53	130	48	At or Above Benchmark
		50	54	58	82	25	35	7	63	133	54	At or Above Benchmark
		63	88	45	36	26	39	3	45	134	56	At or Above Benchmark
		55	67	59	84	20	17	4	48	134	56	At or Above Benchmark
		54	64	57	80	26	39	8	64	137	61	At or Above Benchmark
		46	42	72	98	25	35	5	53	143	66	At or Above Benchmark
		54	64	51	64	43	72	11	74	148	70	At or Above Benchmark
		50	54	52	67	47	80	16	92	149	73	At or Above Benchmark
		50	54	64	93	40	66	12	79	154	77	At or Above Benchmark
		62	85	49	61	46	75	13	81	157	80	At or Above Benchmark
		56	71	64	93	38	62	9	66	158	82	At or Above Benchmark
		51	59	47	52	64	95	17	95	162	90	At or Above Benchmark
		83	> 99	64	93	70	96	16	92	217	> 99	At or Above Benchmark
GOAL				40		28				119		
AVERAGE		47.6		50.8		30.1		6.6		128.5		



## APPENDIX F

### Literacy Take-Home Bags

Literacy take-home bag game



Literacy take-home bag inside contents



Literacy take-home bag inside contents



## APPENDIX G

### Post Parent Survey

Parent Survey	
<p>Dear Families,</p> <p>I would like to thank you all for your support in the educational progress of your child. Your children have shown tremendous growth both academically and socially and I know it would not have been possible without your steady support and reinforcement at home.</p> <p>In order for me to continue to grow as an educator, it would be very helpful if you could answer the following questions about your child's literacy experience this year for my thesis.</p> <p>Thanks so much in advance!</p> <p>Mrs. Sipola</p> <p>Did you feel literacy homework (Literacy book bags, Literacy take-home bags) was fair and appropriate for your child's age and grade level?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Did you feel the newsletter was informative and appropriate? Did you like receiving the literacy tips? Is there anything you wish the newsletter had in it that was missing?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>What literacy tool was most helpful to you as a parent? Ex. Reading folders, Literacy tips in the newsletter, Literacy bags, Conversations with me about literacy skills etc.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What was your child's favorite literacy activity we did this year?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Is there anything you feel I should change or add for my classroom next year in order to help parents focus on the importance of literacy skills?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

## APPENDIX H

### One-on-One Conversations Word Document

Student – Miranda

September

Student goal : **being able to learn letters**. Discussed the Kindergarten standards and reinforced that Miranda will learn all her letters and learn how to read by the end of kindergarten.

She stated as long as she learn her letters, she would be happy.

**Discussed Common Core standards** how they have changed and they are more rigorous, that kindergarten students need to be reading by the end of kindergarten. She seemed surprised and said she **missed** her daughter would be ready for these goals.

**Asked if Miranda knew how to write her name yet** and she stated no. I let her know this was a good goal to start working on at home with Miranda. I assured her we would see her the first month next, since her daughter was one of the younger students in the class.

We also talked about how **important it is to have a parent/teacher partnership** and the different ways she can help her daughter out at home too.