The Effects of the Fast Start Program on the Reading Achievement of Emergent and Beginning Readers: A Replication and Extension

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THE EFFECTS OF THE FAST START PROGRAM ON THE READING

ACHIEVEMENT OF EMERGENT AND BEGINNING READERS: A REPLICATION

AND EXTENSION

by

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Abstract

This study replicated the Stevenson (2001) study to determine the effectiveness of the Fast Start parent tutoring program on student success in reading achievement. The current study attempted to enlarge the original study’s sample size, include kindergarten students in the program, and determine the optimal length of training time for parents needed. Additionally, data gathered from the parent participants were analyzed including parent’s perceptions of the program, their confidence level in tutoring their child, and the parents’ level of mastery of the concepts of tutoring before working with their child.

At the beginning of the school year, 36 kindergarten parent-student dyads and 52 first grade parent-student dyads were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups or the control group for an 11-week study. Parents in the first treatment group received one hour of training and parents in treatment two received two hours of training. Students in both treatment groups received homework material published by Scholastic (Padak & Rasinski, 2005) consisting of poems and differentiated emergent and beginning reading activities and materials. Parents in the control group did not receive training and the students in the control group received poems to take home without the activities.

Fall pretest scores from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were compared to winter DIBELS scores. Raw score results did not show statistically significant reading gains for the treatment groups, however, more growth was evident in the treatment groups when the instructional recommendation level for each student and their level of being at risk was considered. Parents and students had favorable comments about the program. Parents receiving two training sessions had a higher level of confidence to tutor their child than those who attended only one session.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Learning to read is one of the most important accomplishments of an elementary student. For most children, this task is often pleasurable and not particularly challenging. However, for some, the job of learning to read can be painful and unrewarding.

The ability to read is necessary to achieve success in modern society. Demands for children to be literate are much greater today than in the past. Without a high school education and the ability to read higher level content, it is difficult to be employable in today’s economy. Students must respond to these demands. Recent studies reported by Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) confirm that students who fail to become skilled readers by the end of third grade have little chance of graduating from high school.

Excellent instruction in the early grades is imperative to prevent reading failure in students. In a longitudinal study of 54 children, Juel (1988) concluded that the probability of poor readers in first grade becoming average readers by grade four was only .13. Meyer, Wood, Hart, and Felton (1998) also conducted a longitudinal study and found that students who struggled with word identification in third grade failed to show significant improvement with the same skill by the end of eighth grade. Clearly, educators need to recognize the importance of helping students achieve adequate reading goals by the end of third grade.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report on reading ability, the nation’s average reading score of 217 (scale: 0-500) for students in
grade four was only one point higher in 2005 than in 2003 and two points higher than it was in 1992 (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). Unfortunately, this does not constitute a significant difference in the scores of fourth graders who performed at or above the “Basic” level between the years 2003 and 2005. The assessment is an estimate of a student’s basic comprehension at the age of nine. The 2005 fourth grade assessment revealed the average test score for Oregon students, the location of the current study, to be 217, which is equal to the national average of public schools. At grade four, 38% of Oregon students were below the basic achievement level, and this score has not changed significantly in the last seven years.

Not only are there many risk factors that can be predictors to failure in reading, there are factors predictable of reading success. Snow et al. (1998) suggest that one’s basic health and intellectual abilities, background experiences with literacy, support in activities and attitudes related to reading and school, and having an appropriate instructional environment for learning can all contribute to the success a child will have in reading. Many of these factors related to reading success begin with the home literacy environment.

Evidence clearly suggests that families have a significant role in the academic success of their children. The annual synthesis of research published in 2002 by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory on the impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement states, without considering a household’s income or background, students with involved families are more likely to: receive better grades and enroll in advanced programs; pass classes; have better school attendance; have better behavior and social skills; and graduate from high school and attend college (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Schools must work together with teachers and families to
support student learning.

Statement of the problem

The primary purpose of this study is to replicate and extend the previous quantitative study of Stevenson (2001) using the parent tutoring program referred to as Fast Start to determine its effects on the reading achievement of emergent and beginning readers in comparison to students whose parents do not receive the Fast Start training and materials. Stevenson’s study, conducted with thirty first-grade students, demonstrated that those who scored in the lower half of the pre-test reading range were significantly affected by the Fast Start program. The program, which included differentiated homework materials and weekly follow-up contact with parents, began with a one-hour training session for parents. The current study will seek to increase the sample size being studied, include kindergarten students as well as first-grade, include an additional treatment group that will receive a second session of parent training, and address the issue of students whose reading ability is above the Fast Start material. Since Stevenson’s study in 2001, Scholastic, Incorporated has published *Fast Start for Early Readers*, a paperback book that includes directions for introducing the program to parents and all of the poems and activities necessary to implement the program (Padak & Rasinski, 2005). This study will also consider the efficacy of the published materials.

The concept for the Fast Start program was originally assessed through an informal pilot study conducted at Kent State University. The subjects were children who were attending the university’s reading clinic and their parents. At the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, Rasinski (1994, November) presented a paper which shared the results of this systematic parental involvement program designed to build fluency in
early readers. The program consisted of parents reading to the child, paired reading, listening to the child read, and included game-like activities designed to improve fluency through the practice of phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition skills. Stevenson’s (2001) dissertation tested Rasinski’s theories of parent involvement in tutoring and the Fast Start program model in a school setting. The positive results of this study led to the designing and publishing of a collection of poems and materials available for purchase through Scholastic, Incorporated (Padak & Rasinski, 2005). Research is clear about the benefits of parent involvement and learning at home increasing student achievement, but the best methods and materials for parents to use and how parents should be trained has still not been established (Epstein, 2001; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000).

The importance of replication in educational research is essential to obtaining evidence about the effectiveness of educational materials and methods (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). It is through the process of replication that ideas are evaluated, extended, verified by others in the scientific community, and the findings generalized. The practice of replication and the sharing of data allow researchers to “build upon their designs, create and revise measures, and study different populations for purposes of developing new theories” (Schneider, 2004, p. 1471).

Hypothesis

The students in the treatment groups whose parents receive training in tutoring and the Fast Start materials will display statistically significant gains in reading skills as measured by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) than the students in the control group who did not receive the training or materials. Students in the
second treatment group whose parents receive two sessions of training will have higher scores than both the control group and the first treatment group.

Research questions

Specifically, this study will be used to answer the following questions:

1. Will Scholastic’s Fast Start for Early Readers parent tutoring program produce similar results as the Stevenson (2001) study?

2. Is there a significant difference in reading achievement outcome between the students whose parents have received one session of training and those who received two sessions of training?

3. Will extending Stevenson’s (2001) study by enlarging the sample size and expanding to include kindergarten students, focusing on emergent and beginning readers, change the outcome of the study?

Secondary descriptive questions to be answered:

4. What are the parent’s perceptions of the Fast Start program using the survey form published by Scholastic?

5. What will the parents’ confidence level be as they begin to tutor their child?

6. How well will the parents have mastered the concepts of tutoring before beginning to work with their child?

Definition of terms

Fast Start – designed to improve children’s literacy, Fast Start is a “research-proven” homework program based on the principles of reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension that involves the training of parents to tutor their child in reading. The

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) – an assessment system designed to be an efficient and reliable tool for formatively assessing the Big Ideas (phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) in early literacy (Good, Kaminski, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001).

Lexile Framework – a scale for measuring text difficulty and reader ability formulated by MetaMetrics, Inc. (Schnick, 2000). The lexile framework is used to select appropriately leveled reading material for students. When a child’s lexile (calculated reading ability) and the lexile of a text (calculated text difficulty) are the same measure, comprehension can be estimated to be at seventy-five percent. The lexile framework can be located at www.lexile.com.

Parent Involvement as Defined by No Child Left Behind Act – Participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring: parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning, parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school, and parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

**Limitations and delimitations**

The most obvious limitation to this study is that it requires parent participants to be volunteers and therefore, the sample becomes self-selected. To encourage parents to volunteer, free babysitting will be offered for their children and snacks will be served. A
choice of training session times will be offered for the parents' convenience, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

Motivation for parents to complete the program could also be a potential limitation. Efforts will be made to communicate regularly with parents through face-to-face conversations, emails, and phone calls to encourage continued participation. An ice cream party for those who finish the program will be offered as an incentive.

Another limitation to the study is related to the self-reporting of the parents' time spent tutoring. Fast Start parents will be asked to maintain a log recording the amount of time spent each night in tutoring their child. No efforts will be made to verify the time recorded on their log sheets. Parents included in the training group will also be asked to complete a questionnaire designed to determine how well they mastered the Fast Start training. Although it will be anonymous, no effort will be made to see that answers are not changed.

Although the program itself is a vehicle for communication with the parents, another limitation to the study is the question of whether the phone calls and communication between the researcher and the parents drives the outcome of the study or whether it is a combination of the materials and communication. This study will not attempt to distinguish the impact of continued communication with the parents outside of the use of the materials.

A delimitation of the study is that all of the students will be from the same elementary school where the researcher is employed. Parent involvement at this school may be higher than other schools in the district; therefore, it may not be possible to generalize the findings to all elementary schools in the district.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Research over the past decade has consistently demonstrated that parent involvement in children’s education leads to higher student achievement. According to Epstein (2001), the encouragement, involvement, and interest that parents show at home significantly affects student achievement. Snow et al. (1998) suggest that parents who interact with their children on a regular basis can have a significant impact on their child’s literacy development. The synthesis of research done by Westberg, Shanahan, and Uribe (2004) suggests that positive correlations in this area are found for children who are struggling as readers as well as those learning at a normal rate. Westberg et al. also found that involving parents in their children’s education has been shown to be effective for families from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Parent involvement in schools is not a new concept in education. However, higher student standards and teacher expectations that are compounded by decreasing funds have motivated schools and teachers to look for new and innovative methods to utilize parents as resources in education.

Vinograd-Bausell, Bausell, Proctor, and Chandler (1986) state that two variables contributing to student achievement are low student-to-teacher ratios and time on task. A teacher who trains and encourages parents to tutor their children one-on-one after school is one way to utilize this knowledge. However, a successful program that involves parents in their children’s learning, whether it is through interactive homework or training parents and providing materials, requires the time and ability to design materials and organize schedules. This can often be a challenge for teachers. On-going research continues to
examine the most effective methods of parent involvement in the development of reading (Janiak, 2003, April). Teachers must use current research information to find ways to maximize this valuable resource.

The literature review will begin with the theoretical perspectives considered in parent involvement that include the relationships between schools, community, and families. The next two sections review the major components of parent involvement models and the importance parent involvement plays in education. Specific studies that have recently been completed are discussed next followed by a more in-depth review of Stevenson's (2001) study of Fast Start. The concluding sections discuss research recommendations from recent studies and a final summary of the literature.

Theoretical perspectives of parent involvement

According to Kazdin (2000), Bronfenbrenner, cofounder of Head Start, developed the ecological systems theory that is the foundation for much of the research on parent involvement. This theory studies a child's development by considering complex layers of the systems of relationships in a child's environment. The theory suggests that the interactions between family, community and the larger society continue to be felt throughout the layers and affect the child's development. Bronfenbrenner (1985) reports that social changes in America are limiting the number of positive interactions with children, but social institutions, including schools, are capable of reorganizing themselves to provide more positive support for children.

A second social theory that provides educators with an understanding of the influence and connection between families and schools has been developed by Coleman (1987). He suggests that as more mothers leave the home to work and neighborhood
organizations devoted to working with children decline, the valuable relationships between adults and children change. The framework of his theory is based on developing social networks through teachers and parents communicating with each other to support children in their learning and education. Coleman defines "social capital" as the "norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child’s growing up" (p. 36). Teachers and parents build "social capital" through networking to communicate common expectations and messages. This is used to improve the attitudes, behaviors, and academic success of students.

A study conducted by Comer and Haynes (1991) found that involving parents in a meaningful way with their children’s schooling can improve the educational development of students. Comer, along with a team from the Yale Child Study Center, studied parent involvement from a social ecological framework in order to gain insight into the interactions of parents as a component of the school’s social system. Considering child development theories as well as psychology and behavioral sciences, the team determined that "difficult interactions between staff and students led to low levels of school success for both and a difficult and uncomfortable school climate, which resulted in limited parental involvement and often negative parent-staff interactions" (p. 272). To change the climate of the school and allow for the mutual support of parents and staff, the team developed a nine-step program to bring about positive interaction among the members of the school structure. Parents, along with representatives of all school stakeholders, became members in planning and managing a comprehensive school plan, staff development, and assessing and modifying the plan as needed. Parents were encouraged to be involved where they believed they could be effective and at a level of participation which was comfortable for
Comer concluded that parent involvement is most effective when the school works to improve relationships between the adults who have significant roles in student’s lives.

According to Epstein’s (1997) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, the ideal framework for successful partnerships between schools, families, and communities places the student at the center of the model. Though the student is essentially seen as the one in control of his or her education and potential success, partnership of community, family, and schools can be designed to “engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own successes” (p. 8). In practice, the theory states that schools work to create a more family-like environment where students are respected as individuals. Families are supportive of schools and partner to build school-like families. Communities work with families and schools to support programs and events, and families and schools become community-minded. Epstein suggests that schools can choose how they want to integrate the three major influences of school, family, and community through intentional communication and integration. By creating interaction between the three spheres, students’ chances for success in school are maximized.

Parent involvement models

Several models of parent involvement have been developed and studied in the past thirty years. One of the most widely studied is that of Epstein and her colleagues from the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children’s Learning located at Johns Hopkins University. Recognizing the shared responsibility and interests of parents, teachers, and community, Epstein (1995) suggests creating partnerships with the goal of helping students succeed in school and in life. Epstein’s model includes six typologies of
parent involvement. A comprehensive partnership program would include activities in each of these areas: Type 1: Parenting—schools helping families develop and improve the parenting skills that are the basic obligation of parents; Type 2: Communicating—schools working to improve their obligation to communicate with parents through newsletters, conferences, and other forms of communication; Type 3: Volunteering—parents and community members supporting schools by attending activities, helping in the school, and being involved at school; Type 4: Learning at Home—families work to support students by helping with academic activities and giving guidance about college and careers; Type 5: Decision Making—parents become involved in advisory roles and participate in school governance; Type 6: Collaborating with the Community—community organizations and businesses share ideas and resources with the schools (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Epstein et al., 2002).

In addition to Epstein’s model, Lunenburg and Irby (2002, August) examined seven other models or approaches to parent and community involvement that represent examples of different strategies and activities for schools to use in developing partnerships with families and communities. Lunenburg and Irby conclude that there is no one particular model that will fit all situations and that school leaders should choose a model to design a framework for a parent partnership program that will best fit their individual needs. According to the authors, some of the important strategies to consider when initiating a parent involvement program are to consider developing a center on families partnership based on Epstein’s typologies, establishing parent centers and parent cooperatives, consider focusing on technology, accelerated schools, and giving parents options and choices for public education.
Importance of parental involvement in education

Through collaboration with researchers in the area of parent involvement and other national leaders, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) developed standards for involving parents in 1997. National PTA has encouraged other educational and family organizations to endorse their standards and has been successful in working with federal legislatures to include them in education laws. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which in January 2002 became reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), bases its definition of parent involvement on the standards developed by National PTA (2006). Section 1118 of NCLB requires schools receiving Title 1 funds to develop a parental involvement policy that assists parents in understanding the standards and assessments that determine their child’s progress and helps parents understand how they can help their children. Teacher education programs are also recognizing the need to involve parents in their child’s education. Organizations such as the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the Association of Teacher Educators are seeing the need for having parent involvement theories and strategies taught as necessary components of teacher education programs and have developed professional standards of practice for family, school, and community partnerships.

As stated by Epstein et al. (2002), parental involvement is the one area in educational research upon which there is the most agreement. According to the authors, earlier research by Epstein shows that the fourth type of parent involvement, learning at home, results in higher gains in student skills and abilities, better homework completion along with a more positive attitude and improved self-concept, and a more integrated view
of parents, home, teacher, and school. In this updated model of parent involvement, the authors have redefined “help” at home to refer more to monitoring, giving encouragement and assistance with practicing skills as opposed to teaching new materials or concepts.

Recent parent tutoring in reading

Snow et al. (1998) report that the research on parents and their interaction with children show that parent responses to questions during literacy activities can play an important part in the acquisition of early reading skills. They further suggest that studies by Whitehurst (1994) and Teale (1978) report an increase in children’s literacy scores when parents are actually taught to be more responsive during activities such as shared reading. The authors report that programs designed to encourage home literacy increase literacy achievement in school and show a positive increase in parents’ expectation in the education of their children and attitude concerning their achievement. At the conclusion of the report, the authors recommend that research continue in this area in order to discover the best strategies for working with parents and teachers to support children in their reading development.

Toomey (1993) reviewed over 40 quasi-experimental studies on parents listening to their children read at home. Toomey was careful to make the distinction between studies in which parents were trained to listen (monitor) by offering explanations and corrections, modeling, and monitoring and studies in which the parents only listened to the reader. The results of the review indicated that reading scores were not significantly affected by parents who simply listened to their child read and that training parents to monitor student reading could bring about improvement in reader interest, motivation, and achievement.

The findings were similar in a study conducted by LeFevre and Senechal (1999). In
this longitudinal study, parents of kindergarten and first grade children who frequently read storybooks to their children were asked if they also spent time directly teaching reading and writing skills. Using checklists and questionnaires from parents over a period of five years, the authors determined that not all parents who read to their children spent time teaching them to read and that different literacy experiences played different roles in the development of reading and writing. Storybook reading was linked to oral language skills while the amount of time parents directly taught reading and writing skills was linked to written language skills. Because the reading pre-skills of phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle are important predictors of success, the authors’ implication is that children who begin first grade with these skills already in place will be most likely to succeed in reading.

Jordan, Snow, and Porche (2000) found that parents who were provided with information on how to engage their children in literacy activities at home not only reported satisfaction with the opportunity to be involved in their child’s education, but their children made significant gains in language scores as well. Although effect sizes for improvement from pretest to posttest on sound ($d = .32$) and print ($d = .07$) were small, the language composite of $d = .64$ indicates a moderate effect. Children who were low achievers made the largest gains. This research project, called Project EASE, included 177 students in 8 kindergarten classes who received intervention and 71 students in 3 kindergarten classes as the control group. The parents were instructed over five sessions in various methods of encouraging comprehension and vocabulary improvement and in ways to involve children in practicing emergent literacy skills like the alphabetic principle and phonemic awareness. The researchers concluded that this study demonstrated the potential for schools to engage
parents in promoting literacy development.

An experimental study conducted by Vinograd-Bausell, Bausell, Willis, Chandler (1986) randomly assigned one group of parents to begin a home tutoring program while waiting to begin treatment for the control group two weeks later. The study found that the parents assigned to tutor were both willing and able to teach their children at home when provided the opportunity. These parents of first grade special education students (N = 41) were provided with low-cost curriculum materials to use at home, giving the child more time on task. The parents were not trained to use the materials nor were they supervised. The study showed statistically significant growth (p < .001) in learning occurred when compared to the control group and that there were no adverse effects observed. Vinograd-Bausell et al. suggest this information not be ignored since the academic growth made was significant and economically feasible.

The research conducted by Faires (2000) supports the conclusions of Vinograd-Bausell et al. (1986). In his experimental study, Faires found that when the parents of low-ability first grade readers were given the opportunity to help their children academically, the parents became both active and capable. Faires cites the research of Toomey (1993) and concludes that listening to children read is not enough, therefore, the parents in this study received training in the Reading Recovery® model. The training sessions were also a time for parents to share their thoughts and ideas. Faires reports that the purpose of the training was not to have parents diagnose reading strengths and weaknesses, but to provide ways of being supportive of their reading development. Although the sample sizes in this study were admittedly small, the posttest scores showed students in the experimental group averaged a gain of 4.5 points in reading level (ES = 2.76) while the control group averaged
2 points ($ES = 1.17$). The results suggest that parent-training programs can be advantageous and can be provided at a minimal expense.

Miller and Narrett (1995, August) conducted an experimental study to determine the influence of parent feedback about student reading progress on the reading achievement of second and third grade students. The study took place over a period of 15 weeks and included 61 students and their parents. Using the strategy of paired reading, parents were trained to engage with their children while listening to them read. One treatment group received bi-weekly feedback from a Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) along with the paired reading. A second treatment group received paired reading training without the feedback, and a third received only the feedback from the CBM. The control group did not use paired reading or receive the ongoing feedback. The results showed that neither the paired reading nor the ongoing feedback influenced reading achievement. The authors suggest some of the possible reasons for this outcome may be the length of the training session (only 75 minutes), the possibility that parents did not have a clear understanding of the feedback graphs, or those parents had not implemented the program as intended.

Similar to the previous research and also using a pretest/posttest design, Ellis (1996, March) conducted a study in which the parents of second and third grade children attended twelve weekly training sessions focusing on teaching the techniques of paired reading, relaxed reading, comprehension questions, and praise and encouragement. The researcher states that many parents requested to learn strategies used in the classroom to teach reading skills, therefore, they were taught word recognition and phonics games to play at home. Ellis’ study showed statistically significant improvement in the reading of graded passages, although not in graded word lists or in comprehension. Ellis noted the need to differentiate
techniques used at home based on ability level and family preferences. Because the author found parents to be willing to participate in their children's learning and capable of improving reading ability, she recommends more experimental research be done in this area.

A recent meta-analysis on parent tutoring prepared by Erion (2006) synthesized all of the research between 1970 and 2004 in which parents were involved in tutoring their own child in one of the basic academic areas. The author identified 37 experimental design studies that fit the criterion of parents or other members of the family tutoring school-age participants with the dependent variable being an academic skill. Twenty of the reports were group design studies with the mean weighted effect size calculated to be +0.55. Of the group design studies, eight focused on reading comprehension, two on word recognition, three on reading fluency, and the remaining were either math skills or a combination of basic academic skills. Twelve of the 13 studies analyzed in the three areas of reading were conducted at the primary level. The unbiased effect size for these studies ranged from .33 to 3.35.

One aspect of Erion's (2006) study analyzed seven different treatment features in the 37 studies to determine the extent of parent training that was given and the manner in which any follow-up consultation was conducted. The study looked at the length of the treatment, whether written instructions, modeling, or supervised practice were provided, the length of the parent training session, whether there were opportunities for parents to ask questions on an on-going basis, and whether there was progress monitoring data collected and provided to parents. The duration of the parent training sessions was the only treatment feature shown to have a significant effect on academic outcome. Twenty-five of the studies
included data on the length of training. Those that provided a minimum of two hours of training for parents were found to be more effective than studies with only one hour of parent training.

The Fast Start tutoring program

Since the reports of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the National Research Council’s Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998), reading researchers have recognized the importance of reading fluency. Recent research has enlarged the concept of fluency to include not only word recognition, but comprehension processes as well (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). In his book, The Fluent Reader, Rasinski (2003) presents evidence that oral reading benefits students by building word recognition skills and improving fluency and comprehension in addition to being fun, building confidence and community, strengthening decoding skills, and connecting spoken and written language. The 1992 study of Postlewaite and Ross (as cited in Rasinski, 2003) linked higher reading achievement with oral reading in the home. Rasinski (1994, November) presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association on a family involvement program he developed called “Fast Start” to improve fluency in first grade readers. In this paper, he described a program that taught parents to use the neurological impress method with their child, which is simply a method of sitting next to the child and having the child listen to the tutor read while looking at the text. Parents are also taught paired reading, repeated readings of highly predictable text, and word and sentence activities using the text. The activities focus on developing word recognition and fluency.

In 2001, Stevenson conducted research for his dissertation at Ohio State University
under the guidance of Rasinski to determine the efficacy of the Fast Start program. Using an experimental group design, Stevenson randomly assigned 30 first grade students to either an experimental group or control group for an eleven-week period. Fifteen parents were provided a training session and follow-up materials and activities for their child. The parents were to tutor their child for 10 minutes each school night using the materials provided. Stevenson made weekly attempts to communicate with the parents in the treatment group to answer questions and offer assistance. The results of his study showed significant effects for students who had scored in the lower half of the pretest. The study also states that the program was well received by both parents and students and that the majority of the parents involved reported gaining confidence in tutoring their children. Other findings showed that tutoring a minimum of 10 to 12 minutes per day appeared to be enough time to produce significant effects and that no difference in scores was observed when separated by gender.

In March of 2005, Padak and Rasinski published a reproducible book called “Fast Start” that contains all of the materials needed to implement a parent tutoring program for emergent and beginning readers. It includes the information for the parent training session, letters to parents, reading material to copy and send home with activities for parents to use with readers at three different ability levels in phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, and motivational incentives.

As stated by Padak and Rasinski (2005) methods of parental tutoring and the materials used in their program are based upon the fluency studies of Rasinski and Hoffman (2003), Kuhn and Stahl (2003), and Rasinski and Padak (1998). This research reveals that fluency is an important building block of a successful early reading program.
and a strategy that can be taught to beginning readers. These foundational concepts have been confirmed by the National Reading Panel (2000).

Padak and Rasinski (2005) refer to some of the earlier studies in fluency conducted by Samuels (1979) concluding that skills gained from the repeated readings of passages transfer to new and unfamiliar texts. Besides helping improve a reader’s fluency, repeated readings have also been found to improve word recognition and comprehension.

Rasinski and Stevenson (2005) base the parent tutoring components of their program material on the following foundations gained from the synthesis of information from studies done by Crimms, Christenson, and Neidermeyer (as cited in Rasinski and Stevenson, 2005):

1. The materials must be sensible to parents.
2. The materials must be developmentally appropriate for the child.
3. The materials must relate to the classroom curriculum.
4. The program must be easy to learn in a short period of time.
5. The program must not require a lot of parent time to implement.
6. The materials must focus on the students’ needs.
7. The program must be structured and yet allow for individual needs of both the family and the student.
8. The parents must receive ongoing communication and family support.
9. Parent training for the program should have opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback.
10. Parents should be taught reinforcement strategies to use in the tutoring process.
11. The program should begin at the start of the year and continue more than 10 weeks.

12. The measurement of outcomes should be related to both school curriculum and tutoring materials.

Recommendations for further research

All studies showed parents were willing to participate and able to be trained to teach their children. Westberg, Shanahan, and Uribe (2004) and Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) believe parent tutoring programs should be aligned with the school curricula and use evidence-based programs and strategies. Vinograd-Bausell et al. (1986) caution that the curriculum needs to be simple enough for parents to use successfully. Snow et al. also believes further research should examine the best strategies to support both teachers and parents.

Toomey (1993) questioned the minimum amount of time necessary to train parents. Erion (2006) suggests that programs are more effective when they spend at least two hours on training parents. Faires (2000) and Erion recommend parents have a certain level of confidence in their tutoring skills before they begin teaching.

Recommendations from Stevenson (2001) for further research include the participation of kindergarten students, finding more difficult materials and strategies for skilled readers, utilizing a larger sample size, and a follow-up study that includes a measure of comprehension. Jordan, Snow, and Porsche (2000) also recommend longitudinal studies. Miller and Narrett (1995, August) and Erion (1994), along with Stevenson (2001), suggest students be present for part of the training. Erion and Stevenson also recommend more studies be experimental group designs using random assignment to treatment and control
groups and utilizing a pretest/posttest. Miller and Narrett, on the other hand, recommend more individualized programs in the future.

**Conclusions from the literature review**

Interest in parent involvement and specifically parent tutoring continues to grow in the fields of both education and psychology. Researchers agree that partnering with parents in the area of literacy increases parent's expectations for their child, increases motivation and interest in reading, and raises students' achievement level. Though most parent tutoring studies have positive results, quality research is limited. Conclusions are often difficult to draw because many of the studies lack integrity of treatment and design.

From the literature reviewed, there are several conclusions that can be made. First, one can expect the largest gains in academic growth to be made by the lower achievers. It can also be concluded that parent involvement needs to be more explicit than paired reading, obtaining feedback information, and simply listening to children read. It appears clear that the parent training should include the teaching of skills taught in the classroom including phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and concepts of fluency and they should be at the child’s level. Lastly, the duration of the training should be long enough to master the skills being taught. Erion (2006) suggests this not be less than two hours.

One reason many teachers have not implemented a training program for parents to tutor their children has to do with time it requires to locate and create the materials and supplies necessary to provide a quality program. In addition, many teachers may feel they do not have the time to devote to planning and implementing the training session. The Fast Start program appears to have all of the necessary components prepared for a quality
parent tutoring program. The cost is minimal, but the question remains if the program will meet the needs of the students, the parents, and the teachers.
CHAPTER 3

Methods

The primary purpose of this study was to replicate and extend the previous quantitative study of Stevenson (2001) using the newly published parent tutoring program called Fast Start to determine its effects on the reading achievement of emergent and beginning readers in comparison to students whose parents do not receive the Fast Start training and materials.

Setting

The school district where the research was conducted is located in a suburban Oregon community with a population of approximately 20,000 people. It is near a large metropolitan city, but retains a more rural atmosphere being close to forests and farmlands. Census data obtained from the U. S. Census Bureau (2000) indicates that in 2000, 82% of the residents obtained a high school diploma or higher with 13.4% of the residents holding a college degree and an additional 7.3% holding a graduate degree. The census also shows that 10.6% of the residents speak a language at home other than English. The majority of these families speak Spanish. With 95.1% of those over age 16 in the community employed, 25.8% of the employed residents were in management, professional, and related occupations; 25.9% in sales and office occupations; 18.3% in production, transportation, and material moving; 11.1% in construction, extraction, and maintenance; and 1.6% in farming, fishing, and forestry. The leading industry of the community is manufacturing followed closely by education, health, and social services. Retail trade is third. The median
household income according to the census is $44,206. Single unit homes account for 63.7% of the housing units.

The school district for this study includes six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The district enrollment at the end of September was 5170 students. The present study was conducted at one of the K-5 elementary schools. At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, the elementary school’s enrollment was 436. Of the 436 students, 89.5% were white, non-Hispanic; .9% of the students were black, non-Hispanic; 7.5% percent of the students were Hispanic; .9% of the students were Asian or Pacific Islander; and 1.1% were American Indian or Alaskan Native. While five of the six elementary schools in the district have between 5% and 12% Hispanic students, one of the schools has an enrollment of 38.6% Hispanic students. Thirteen percent of the district enrollment is Hispanic. Free or reduced lunches were received by 114 (25.4%) of the students attending the participating school. Other elementary schools in the district range from 13.3% to 62% free and reduced lunches.

The elementary school from which the student participants were selected received a “strong” rating on the 2005-2006 Oregon Report Card in academic achievement and student performance. This rating has been maintained since 2000. In the 2005-2006 school year, 95% of the third and fifth grade students met the Oregon Reading Knowledge and Skills Standards. The 2005-2006 state average was 88%. The elementary school’s score was up from 93% of third and fifth grade students meeting the reading standard the previous year. The district average reading score for third and fifth grade in 2005-2006 was also 95%. Although these scores seem high, the state is currently in the process of
determining new performance level descriptors for standards to align the benchmarks to the revised content standards.

Participants

This study involved two types of participants, parent participants and student participants. In an effort to replicate and extend the study of Stevenson (2001) the participants for this study were the parents of kindergarten and first grade students at the school and their children. The researcher served as the reading specialist at the host school of this research study. The kindergarten at the host school has three half-day classes. Two kindergarten classes meet in the morning and one session of kindergarten meets in the afternoon. There were 61 kindergarten students enrolled at the time of the study. First grade has four classrooms for an additional 84 students. The researcher anticipated 80 to 90 of the 145 enrolled students would have parents volunteer to be included in the study.

A brief presentation by the researcher explaining the research program was made at the kindergarten ice cream social the Thursday evening before kindergarten began. Next, letters went home with the students in their packets of information on the first day of school describing the study and asking them to participate (see Appendix A). Included with the letter was a form to sign and return to the school showing agreement to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The researcher was also available on the evening of Open House to discuss the study and answer any questions reluctant parents might have had. A second letter was sent home with students to families who did not respond to the first letter, as parents are sometimes overwhelmed with the school literature that arrives home the first few weeks of school (see Appendix C). An attempt was made through follow-up telephone calls or other communication to contact those who did not respond to the letters sent home.
All students of the parent volunteers were considered part of the research study. Because the study requested volunteers as participants, the ability to generalize the findings to the entire population may be limited. Although a convenience sampling was used, the results may be representative of other schools in the district as well as other local suburban schools with similar populations. After collecting letters of agreement to participate, reading pretest scores of the students were ranked and leveled into three groups by ability. Randomized block procedure was used to provide an equal number of students at the three reading abilities in each group. The student participants were placed into two treatment groups and one control group, each of equal size. Parents were notified as to the placement of their child through letters mailed to their homes (see Appendices D and E).

**Human subjects safeguarding**

The researcher had access to the student data in her role as the reading specialist. This information was shared only with the teachers of the students and their parents as is generally practiced by the school. Survey information from the parents was kept anonymous. The results of the study will be made available to both the parents and the teachers at the end of the study.

Issues of concern are availability of time for parents to attend training sessions and the possible need for babysitting. The issue of time was dealt with by offering a choice of afternoon or evening training sessions. Because of parent schedules and requests, several training sessions were offered to accommodate all parents. The training session was video taped in the event that it was impossible for a parent to attend. Babysitting was provided for the scheduled training sessions. Snacks were available for the children and small prizes for attendance were given.
**Instrumentation/Materials**

A pretest and posttest was administered to each of the student participants. The researcher and two trained educational assistants administered the pretests. One of the trained assistants administered all of the posttests. The school where the research was conducted uses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to screen its students three times a year. DIBELS is an assessment system designed to help prevent reading failure in young students by predicting the success of student achievement through on-going assessments and providing appropriate goals. It is intended to document students' foundational skills in reading to determine whether their current instruction is adequate or whether intervention is needed to maintain a trajectory towards their reading goal. The purpose is to identify problems and modify instruction before students fail to meet standards. The assessment measures students' ability in the foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, oral reading fluency, and comprehension that are necessary to becoming a proficient reader (Good et al., 2001). These foundational skills are the same areas that are taught through the Fast Start program. Screening reports are available from the DIBELS pretest scores identifying each student's instructional recommendation as either intensive, strategic, or benchmark. According to the DIBELS Decision Rules (Good, Simmons, Kame'enui, Kaminski, & Wallin, 2002), the odds are in favor of students meeting the subsequent benchmark goal if they receive a recommendation of Benchmark. The report states that when the odds are in favor of meeting a goal, 80% of the students with this designation will achieve the next goal. A student receiving a recommendation of strategic instruction is considered to be at some risk and has approximately a 50% chance of meeting the next benchmark goal. The
student designated as intensive is considered at risk, and the odds of achieving the subsequent goal are approximately 20% or less. These levels of recommendation were used for placing an equal number of students at each level in the treatment and control groups.

At the kindergarten level, the DIBELS fall assessment measures letter naming fluency (LNF) and initial sound fluency (ISF). By winter of kindergarten, phoneme segmentation fluency (PSF) and nonsense word fluency (NWF) are measured as well. At the first grade level in fall, DIBELS assesses letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency. During the winter screening assessment, the letter naming fluency is dropped and an oral reading fluency (ORF) is added with a retell fluency (RT) component. Progress monitoring forms are available to use between the screening periods. According to a report by Good, Wallin, Simmons, Kame‘enui, and Kaminski (2002), administering the LNF standardized measure takes about one minute and has a one-month, alternate form reliability of .88. The PSF test takes about two minutes and has a two-week, alternate-form reliability of .88. The NWF measure of the alphabetic principle also takes about two minutes and has a one-month alternate-form reliability of .83 in January of first grade. The ORF measures reading fluency and consists of reading three one-minute probes of graded passages. The middle score is recorded. The median alternate-form reliability coefficient for second grade passages is .94.

Knowing that research has established a strong link between phonological awareness and reading acquisition, Hintze, Ryan, and Stoner (2003) conducted a study to determine the degree to which DIBELS correlates to the Comprehensive Test of
Phonological Processing (CTOPP). The participants were 86 randomly selected kindergarten students selected from a school district in a midsize city. The researchers determined that DIBELS and the CTOPP, which is norm-referenced and considered a reliable and valid measure of phonological processing, to show "moderate to strong correlations with all subtest and composite scores" (p. 554). The study found the correlation between the Phonological Awareness Composite of the CTOPP to be .53, .53, and .60 for LNF, PSF, and ISF, respectively. Elliott, Lee, and Tollefson (2001) also studied the reliability and validity of the DIBELS assessment. These authors extended a previous DIBELS study utilizing a larger and more diverse sample of kindergarten students. The results confirmed a strong correlation of .70 between DIBELS and the Skills Cluster of the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery—Revised. The authors support the use of DIBELS at the kindergarten level on these findings and further recommend its use because it is easily administered and scored, it is quick to use, and it adapts well to curriculum.

For parent training, a power-point presentation was designed to instruct the parents on implementing the homework strategies. It followed the suggestions laid out in the Fast Start book (see Appendix F). Before training began, a questionnaire similar to Stevenson’s (2001) was completed by the parents in the treatment group to determine basic demographic information including which parent would be working with the child, with which parent the child resides, and if any of the adults performing the tutoring have had formal training in education (see Appendix G). Parents were also shown the Fast Start Log and encouraged to record the time spent on the strategies at home to determine if the amount of time spent tutoring is significant in reading achievement. The reading specialist
modeled implementing the activities with a child of one of the parents attending. Afterwards, parents had time to practice some of the activities and strategies with their child. Following the first training session, parents were asked to complete a brief anonymous quiz to determine their understanding of the tutoring process and strategies involved. Additionally, parents were asked to indicate their level of confidence in tutoring their child on a Likert scale of 1 to 10 (see Appendix H). The second training session extended the information of the first session and included instruction on student expectations and locating appropriate reading materials for children, including the lexile framework (see Appendix I). Parents attending the second training were asked again to indicate on a Likert scale their confidence level in tutoring their child in reading. At the end of the study, parents in both treatment groups were asked to complete the survey found in Fast Start to determine their perceptions of the program (see Appendix J).

Research design

This research used a mixed methods design. The experimental portion of the study used a pretest/posttest design with two treatment groups and a control group. This is the design recommended by most researchers in the literature review. Students were randomly assigned to one of the three groups using a randomized block procedure. The student's pretest DIBELS scores were ranked within the two grade levels, and based on this data, equal numbers of students from the high, middle, and low development categories, and kindergarten and first grade, were randomly distributed in each of the treatment groups or control group. This allowed the researcher to analyze changes in achievement over the time of the study between the control group, those whose parents had one training session and those whose parents had two training sessions. It also
allowed for comparisons between the three levels of learners and between kindergarten and first grade.

The parents in both of the experimental groups received instruction in the Fast Start parent tutoring program. They also received regular communication to discuss any problems or questions. The classroom teacher or researcher was available for communication. To document communication, teachers and the researcher kept a log. The control group received the same poem to practice reading as the other groups, but did not have the suggested activities and materials or the parent training to supplement it. Parents in the control group were asked to complete a survey that helped determine the types of literacy activities their children experienced (see Appendix K). The second experimental group received the same materials as the first, but also had an additional session of training. In the second training, parents had the opportunity to learn about more strategies and concepts being used in the classroom to teach reading, how to help their child select developmentally appropriate reading material using the lexile framework, and answer any questions they may have had. The treatment continued for 11 weeks.

In order to gain insights into the perceived efficacy of the Fast Start program by parents, descriptive data was gathered through surveys and information gained from parents with questions during the study. The researcher collected this information and attempted to identify any themes.

Role of the researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was as a participant observer. As reading specialist for the school, the researcher was involved in the assessment of the students and
the training of the parents. Communication between the teachers was continual, and the researcher helped the teachers stay in contact with the parents in the treatment groups to answer questions and assist as needed. The researcher and two educational assistants administered the pre-tests for all the students. Because of the researcher’s knowledge of which students were in the treatment and control groups, and to increase reliability, one educational assistant blind to the composition of the groups completed all of the posttest assessments.

Data Analysis

Pretest and posttest DIBELS scores were entered into the DIBELS data system and reports were generated to compute the instructional recommendation of each student. Comparisons were made to show growth over the time of the study at each of the three levels of distribution.

Pretest scores were entered in Microsoft Office Excel and ranked at the beginning of the study. Kindergarten and first grade scores were kept separate. After 11 weeks of treatment, posttest scores and nominal demographic information were entered in Excel. From Excel, the pre and posttest data was imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. To determine the effect of Fast Start on reading achievement, a one-way analysis of variance was used to evaluate the relationships among the control group, the Fast Start group receiving one training session, and the Fast Start group receiving two training sessions.

Qualitative data were analyzed by themes in what worked well for parents, what questions they had, and what would help make the program better. The overall efficacy of
the program was determined from the perspective of student scores and parent evaluations.

Procedure

The research began in August by obtaining approval from George Fox University and the District Office to complete the study. A presentation was given to the school principal and the kindergarten and first grade teachers to explain the Fast Start program. The teachers were informed of their role in the study. In September, letters were mailed to each of the parents asking them to participate in the study. The researcher was available at the kindergarten ice cream social and at the Open House to talk to parents about the study and answer any questions they might have. In the middle of September, a second letter was sent home to those who had not signed letters of agreement to participate. At this same time, DIBELS was administered to all of the kindergarten and first grade students as a screening assessment. The researcher and a teaching assistant did all of the testing.

By the first of October, the agreement letters of participation had been collected and students were ranked according to their raw DIBELS scores. A randomized sampling block procedure was used to ensure students at all reading levels would be included in each treatment group. Letters were then mailed to parents informing them of their child’s placement. Parents who had students selected for one of the treatment groups were invited to attend one of three sessions of training. Two of these were in the evening and the third was held right after school. Babysitting was provided. Teachers began sending home the Fast Start poems and activities. They were asked to follow up with communication to parents in the study.
During the fourth week of the study, a second training was offered for those parents in treatment two. Again, three sessions were offered and babysitting was available for all sessions. Only half of the parents attended one of these sessions. The remainder of the parents attended in small groups or met individually with the researcher. During the fifth week of the study, it was decided to administer a word list to the students. Reading Recovery’s® high frequency word list of 22 words was selected for the assessment.

In mid January, the DIBELS winter benchmark assessment was administered along with the list of 22 core words. The same teaching assistant who assessed for the pretest administered all of the DIBELS assessments. Surveys were sent home to all parents in the study in their child’s homework folder.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the Fast Start parent tutoring program on beginning readers. Replicating the 2001 study of Stevenson, the hypotheses was that significant gains in reading achievement would be made if a larger sample size was used that included kindergarten students and the published Fast Start materials were used for the training and homework. Also hypothesized was that the treatment group receiving two training sessions would perform higher than both the control group and the group receiving only one training session. The parent-student dyads assigned to the two treatment groups received interventions including parent training, regular communication with the teacher or reading specialist, and differentiated reading homework and materials. The findings of this study will begin with the demographic information on the treatment group families followed by the results of the parent’s mastery of concepts of tutoring at the beginning of the intervention. The confidence scale will be summarized and information regarding the reading logs will be examined. Quantitative information will then be reported on the pre and posttest, including descriptive statistics followed by correlations among the three sample groups. Finally, qualitative information from the parent surveys will be reported.

One hundred forty-five kindergarten and first grade students were enrolled in fall at the elementary school where the study was conducted. The parents of 91 students agreed to participate in the study. Two of the students agreeing to be in the study moved out of the district and one opted to be home-schooled before the study began leaving 88 students in
the study. Fifty-two beginning first grade students and thirty-six beginning kindergarten students were assigned through a randomized stratified sampling procedure into two treatment groups or a control group based on three levels of pretest DIBELS score recommendations (see Table 1). There were four sets of twins in the study and two pairs of siblings. These students were assigned to the same treatment or control groups. The two treatment groups received parent training in Fast Start and the differentiated materials provided in the program. One treatment group received a second training during the fourth and fifth weeks to learn more about tutoring their child in the areas of phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Parents attending the second training session were also made aware of district fluency goals and other expectations in phonics. They were instructed in how to access and use the lexile framework and directed as to where they could find helpful resources and materials on-line and in the school building.

The distribution of students in table 1 shows that there are 30 students in the treatment one group and 29 students in both treatment two and the control group. Because the students are at two different grade levels, one of the limitations of the study was that the sample size was reduced when looking at scores by grade level. There were only twelve kindergarten student participants in each of the three groups and 17-18 student participants in the first grade group.
Table 1

Distribution of Treatment Groups and Grade Level by DIBELS Instructional Recommendation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark Level</th>
<th>DIBELS Instructional Level</th>
<th>Treatment 1 (n = 30)</th>
<th>Treatment 2 (n = 29)</th>
<th>Control Group (n = 29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic Information on Families in Treatment Groups

Fifty parents attended one of the three training sessions offered or met with the researcher/reading specialist by special appointment. Four parents were unable to attend any of the first training sessions, so they were given a video recorded at one of the training sessions to view at home. The parents completed a family questionnaire at the first training session (see Appendix G). From the 50 questionnaires returned, the information indicated that 43 of the parents were married and seven were single. Thirty-one of the families responded that both the mother and father would be involved in the tutoring and two showed that a grandmother would be helping as well. Fourteen of the families indicated that the mother would be the primary tutor, and five indicated that the mother along with
the aunt, uncle, or grandmother would be participating in the tutoring. All but one of the fathers was employed full-time (one father worked 30 hours per week) and 24 indicated working over 40 hours per week. The survey showed nineteen of the mothers did not work outside the home, 23 worked part-time, and eight mothers worked full-time. At the beginning of the study, 20 of the families had two children, 18 had three, six had four, and five families had only one child. Seven of the parents indicated that at least one parent or grandparent had some formal training in education. Two of the parents were teachers in the same school district.

When asked about any special concerns parents might have concerning the study and their child, five parents commented. One parent noted that their kindergarten child had recently been diagnosed with psoriasis, and another noted the father would be out of town for a month. One parent of a first grade student stated that her child was adjusting to a new stepfather and that they were in the process of moving to another home. The parent of a kindergarten child indicated her child was quite shy and that she might not perform well on an assessment. In addition, one family was concerned about their child’s adjustment to a new school for first grade.

**Parent’s Mastery of Concepts of Tutoring and Confidence Level**

At the first training, parents completed a brief anonymous quiz to determine their understanding of the Fast Start tutoring process and strategies involved (see Appendix H). This included questions on their understanding of phonemic awareness skills such as stretching out words and counting the sounds, the difference between short and long vowel sounds, rhyming, word families, and syllables. Parents also had to identify suffixes and generate a compound word. Finally, parents were asked to answer a question on a Likert
scale that indicated their confidence level in tutoring their child in reading. Forty-eight parents returned the quiz. The quiz was intended to be non-threatening; therefore, the parents were coached for several of the questions throughout the training. Parents were encouraged to ask someone next to them if they were unsure of an answer. The results of the quiz demonstrated that the main area of confusion for parents was in segmenting words and counting the phonemes. Thirteen questions were answered incorrectly in this area. The second area of difficulty for parents was in defining rhyming words and the difference between rhyming words and word families. Nine questions were missed in these areas.

The Likert scale, which measured parent’s confidence levels in tutoring, was on a scale from one to 10. The range of confidence reported after the first training was between two and 10 with a mean confidence level of 8.4. Parents who attended the second session of training were asked again to rate their level of confidence to tutor their child to see if it had improved (see Figure 1). All twenty-five parents attending the training returned their ratings. The range improved to a low of seven to a maximum of 10 (see Figure 2). The mean confidence level after the second training was 8.8.
Figure 1. Level of confidence to tutor child after one training session. Parent Likert scale rating indicating confidence level in parent tutoring ($n = 52$).

Figure 2. Parent Likert scale rating indicating confidence level in parent tutoring after two sessions of training ($n = 25$).
Information Regarding Reading Logs

Parents in the two treatment groups were given weekly reading logs from the Fast Start materials to record the amount of time they tutored their child each week. These were to be returned with other class homework at the end of the week. Eighteen of the 30 students in treatment group one returned their reading logs regularly, seven failed to return three or four logs throughout the study, while five of the students returned them less than 50% of the time. All five students who did not return their homework at least five times out of the 11 weeks were considered by the DIBELS pre-assessment to be below benchmark in the fall. One of them was recommended by DIBELS to receive intensive instruction in reading and the other four were recommended to receive strategic instruction. In the second treatment group, only 14 of 29 students returned their reading logs consistently with nine of them failing to return logs three to four times and six of the students returning fewer than 50% of the logs. Again, one of the six not returning the reading log was identified as needing intensive intervention and the other five as needing strategic intervention. Students in the first treatment group averaged 45 minutes of actual recorded Fast Start reading and activities per week, and the second treatment group averaged 43 minutes per week. Reading times remained consistent throughout the study.

The control group received the same poem to read as students in treatment one and two, however, they were not required to complete or return a reading log. All students were assigned other homework in different content areas like math and handwriting, but only the treatment groups were responsible for recording the time spent on the Fast Start poem and activities.

As the 11-week study progressed, the researcher attempted to contact the parents of
students who did not return the Fast Start logs to see if there were any problems. One parent considered dropping out of the study as she had a kindergartner and a first grade student in the study and was finding it difficult to complete the homework as a single mom with four children, two being preschoolers. Although she agreed to remain in the study, reading logs were not regularly returned. Another mother of a kindergarten student had infant twins when the study began and then had to return to work full-time. Although she never asked to be taken out of the study, a Fast Start log was returned only once. Another mother of twins reported difficulty finding the time to work with her girls as their family schedule was full and the homework, including work other than Fast Start, was overwhelming for the parents and the girls. Finding the time to study with her child during the process of moving was stated by another mother. Like two other parents, this mother also struggled with developing a parent-tutor relationship with her child that was conducive to learning. Five of the parent-student dyads did not fully understand the importance of parents being involved with homework and studying, and therefore did not begin returning Fast Start logs until the last three weeks of the study.

Quantitative Data

For this study, the DIBELS scores will be considered from three perspectives. First, the raw scores from fall to winter having both pretest and posttest scores will be analyzed using statistical software, next the benchmark status on each test will be discussed, and finally the instructional recommendations for students will be compared in each group. DIBELS subtests are given at different times with each having a different scale of scores and each reaching ceiling effects at different times. Because of this and the fact that not all tests are given all through the year in kindergarten and first grade, it is difficult to look at
growth from the beginning to the middle of the year at these grade levels. For these reasons, only ISF and LNF in kindergarten was statistically analyzed and LNF, PSF, and NWF in first grade. Additionally, the core word lists were analyzed at both grades.

A one-way analysis of variance was used to evaluate the relationship between the Fast Start program and reading achievement. The independent variable was the Fast Start program. This variable was at three different levels: treatment one received one hour of parent training and differentiated homework materials, treatment two received two hours of parent training and differentiated homework materials, and the control group received only the reading passage for homework. The dependent variables were DIBELS and the Core Word posttest. A univariate analysis of variance was conducted. The test was run multiple times with the different subtests of DIBELS and the Core Words. It was assumed the dependent variable was normally distributed in each of the three groups.

Descriptive statistics for each of the kindergarten pretest and posttests are shown in Appendix L. The first ANOVA analysis compared the three different groups of kindergarten ISF scores. The second test compared the three groups of LNF scores and the third compared core words (see Appendices M1, M2, and M3). The three tests did not achieve statistical significance at a .05 level of confidence with \( F(2, 32) = .97; F(2,32) = .18; \) and \( F(2,32) = .19 \) respectively.

The same analysis was applied to LNF, PSF, NWF, and the core word list at the first grade level (see Appendices N1, N2, N3, and N4). Again, the ANOVA was not significant at a .05 level of confidence with \( F(2, 48) = .02; F(2,48) = .03; F(2,48) = .06; \) and \( F(2,48) = .08 \) respectively. The main hypothesis stated that the students in the treatment groups whose parents received training in tutoring and the Fast Start materials
would display statistically significant gains in reading skills as measured by DIBELS than
the students in the control group who did not receive the training or materials. The study
did not find the Fast Start parent tutoring program and student achievement in reading to be
significantly related. The main hypothesis is rejected.

Another method of looking at reading growth of students using DIBELS data is to
compare the number of students who are meeting the assessment goals each assessment
period. According to the decision rules as reported in Technical Report # 11 of the Center
for Competence Using Intensive Treatments Schoolwide (Good, Simmons et al., 2002),
each DIBELS subtest score is given an indicator of risk based on longitudinal predictive
data. An indicator of low risk (if the measure was taken before the benchmark goal) or an
indicator of established (if the measure is a benchmark assessment) indicates the odds are
in favor of the student achieving the subsequent goal, meaning 80% of the students with
this indicator would meet the next goal. The report further determines that students
receiving the at risk or deficit indicator would have the odds against them for meeting the
next goal. Approximately 20% or less of the students receiving this indicator would
achieve the next goal. The middle category is referred to as some risk before a goal and
emerging at benchmark. Approximately 50% of the students in this category are on track to
meet the next goal.

Requirements for meeting the DIBELS fall goals for kindergarten students are eight
initial sounds per minute (ISF) and eight letters named per minute (LNF). The goal for first
grade in the fall is 37 letters named in a minute (LNF), 35 phonemes segmented in a minute
(PSF), and 24 sounds read in a minute (NWF). In winter, the DIBELS benchmark goals are
raised and additional tests are administered at both kindergarten and first grade. For
kindergarten students, the new goals are 25 initial sounds (ISF) and 27 letter names (LNF).

The new kindergarten assessments of phoneme segmenting (PSF) and nonsense word fluency for letter sounds (NWF) are given with benchmark goals of 18 and 13 respectively. At the first grade level, the LNF assessment is not repeated in winter and the PSF goal remains at 35. New goals of 50 NWF and 20 ORF are added. Retell scores are not factored in the instructional recommendation equation.

Two assessments, the PSF, which is a phonemic awareness skill, and NWF, which is an alphabetic principle skill, were administered to the kindergarten students in the winter for the first time. Figure 3 shows 92% of the students in treatment one and two are on target for meeting the next PSF goal while only 83% in the control group are on target. Similarly, the NWF score shows 83% in treatment one and 75% in treatment two have odds in favor of meeting the next goal, while only 67% in the control group are on target. It is interesting to note that treatment two would be at 100% low risk in both PSF and NWF if only those students who returned 50% or more of their reading logs remained in the data.
Figure 3. Kindergarten winter PSF and NWF scores. Percent of students in each group by level of risk. Treatment 1 (n=12), Treatment 2 (n=12), Control (n=12).

In first grade, the ORF is the only assessment not administered in the fall that is considered in the instructional recommendation calculation. Figure 4 shows the percentages of students in each group at each level of risk. Again, it is interesting to note that those with indicators of at risk in the two treatment groups did not return their reading logs at least 50% of the time.
The third way to analyze the DIBELS data is to look at the instructional recommendation indicated by DIBELS. This measure is intended to be a guideline for teachers on how much extra support a student is likely to need to remain on target to meet the subsequent benchmark goal. The decision rules and specific cutoff scores for this measure can be found in Technical Report #11 (Good, Simmons et al., 2002). An overall recommendation of *Benchmark* indicates the student is at grade level. Again, this suggests approximately 80% of the students with this recommendation will meet subsequent goals.

An instructional recommendation of *Intensive* indicates a child needs substantial intervention in order to meet the next goal. Only about 20% of the students receiving this recommendation are expected to meet the next goal without considerable intervention. The recommendation of *Strategic* marks the area where a clear prediction for success is not possible. The recommendation for this indicator is for the students to receive some form of additional intervention. Figure 5 shows the complete distribution of instructional
recommendations for the two treatment groups and the control group after the pretest. As can be seen, 18 students in treatment one met the DIBELS fall benchmark, 17 in treatment 2, and 18 in the control group.

![Figure 5. Kindergarten and First Grade DIBELS Pretest Instructional Recommendations. Treatment 1 (n=30), Treatment 2 (n=29), Control (n=29).](image)

Data in Figure 6 reflects the number of students in each group at the three levels of recommendations after the DIBELS posttest. As can be seen from the figures 5 and 6, treatment one gained two students at the benchmark level, treatment two gained five, and the control group lost one benchmark student. Again, it is interesting to note that those in treatment one and treatment two at the intensive recommendation, did not return Fast Start homework more than one or two times.
A second question the study attempted to answer was whether there would be a significant difference in reading achievement between the students whose parents received one session of training and those who received two sessions of training. Figures 5 and 6 show the change in the percent of benchmark students in treatment one whose parents had one hour of training to be 60% to 67%. Treatment two benchmark students rose from 59% to 76% after their parents attended two hours of training. Although this is positive growth, it is not enough to be statistically significant.

This study also examined the inclusion of kindergarten students in the Fast Start program. The results of the study showed more academic achievement growth for the kindergarten students in the second treatment group, however, these results did not prove to be statistically significant. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the number and percent of students at each recommendation level for the kindergarten pre and posttests.
First grade showed more positive growth in the two treatment groups than did kindergarten. Again, the change was not statistically significant. It is interesting to note that both of the treatment groups showed improvement at the benchmark and intensive
recommendation levels while the control group improved slightly in only one area (see Figures 9 and 10).

*Figure 9.* First grade DIBELS pretest Instructional Recommendations. Treatment 1 (n=18), Treatment 2 (n=17), Control (n=17).

*Figure 10.* First grade DIBELS posttest Instructional Recommendations. Treatment 1 (n=18), Treatment 2 (n=17), Control (n=17).

The interaction of parent tutoring on the low, average, and high reading groups as
determined from the pretest was also analyzed in terms of instructional recommendation.

As was seen in Table 1, in treatment one, 10 benchmark students were assigned to the high group and eight were assigned to the middle level. Only five students were at the strategic level, two were placed in the middle group and three in the low group. Additionally, seven students recommended for intensive instruction were assigned to the low level.

Treatment two began with 17 students meeting the fall benchmark. Ten of these students were placed in the high level and seven were placed in the middle level along with three recommended at the strategic level. Six other students designated as strategic and three intensive students made up the low level.

The control group was similar to the two treatment groups with 18 students meeting benchmark, 10 assigned to the high level and eight to the middle. The control group had six strategic recommendations, two in the middle level and four in the low level. Five students were labeled as needing intensive instruction, and they were assigned to the low distribution level.

Combining the students in kindergarten and first grade, in the high distribution level 10 students in treatment one and 10 students in treatment two remained at the benchmark level. While 10 students began at benchmark in the control group, one dropped down to a strategic recommendation after the posttest (see Figure 11). At the middle level, scores remained static for treatment two where pretest and posttest scores showed seven students were at benchmark and three were strategic. Treatment one and the control group demonstrated some change with eight students in the middle group at benchmark and two at strategic for the pretest and seven at benchmark and three at strategic after the posttest (see Figure 12).
Figure 11. High distribution level for kindergarten and first grade. Pretest and posttest scores showing the number of students at each DIBELS Instructional Recommendation level at the high reading level distribution.

Figure 12. Middle distribution level for kindergarten and first grade. Pretest and posttest scores showing the number of students at each DIBELS Instructional Recommendation level at the middle reading level distribution.
The most change was seen at the lowest distribution level as shown in Figure 13.

Treatment one pretest recommendations indicated three students in the low level were strategic and seven were intensive. After the study, this improved to three students meeting benchmark goal, six at the strategic level, and only one remaining at the intensive recommendation. Treatment two pretest recommendations showed six students at strategic and four at intensive. Among the three groups at the low level, the most growth was shown by treatment two, which improved to five students meeting benchmark goals, two students at the strategic recommendation and two remaining intensive. The control group showed the least improvement in the low distribution level. Four students began at strategic and five at the intensive level. After the posttest, only one achieved benchmark level while six were at strategic and two remained needing intensive instruction.

Figure 13. Low distribution level for kindergarten and first grade. Pretest and posttest scores showing the number of students at each DIBELS Instructional Recommendation level at the low reading level distribution.
Treatment Groups Survey and Conference Data

A secondary research question of the study addressed the parent's perception of the Fast Start program published by Scholastic. This was addressed through a survey at the end of the study as well as through conversations and emails throughout the 11 weeks. Parents representing 16 of the student participants in treatment one and parents representing 24 student participants in treatment two returned completed surveys. From the two treatment groups, parents having students in the low third of the pretest distribution returned 14 surveys, 13 had children in the middle pretest distribution, and 13 had children in the upper third of the distribution. The parents of 15 kindergarten students and 25 first grade students completed surveys. Thus, respondents of the survey represented all of the students.

The survey distributed to the parents was part of the Fast Start publication designed as an instrument to improve the program's benefits with each use. In addition to the seven questions on the survey, parents were asked by the researcher to comment on what they found most beneficial in the training sessions and how much time they engaged their children in literacy activities at home.

The first five questions on the survey were answered on a three-point Likert scale and were designed to determine the parent's satisfaction with the program and the perceived satisfaction of their child. It can be seen from Figure 14 that children in both kindergarten and first grade enjoyed the poems and sessions. Figure 14 shows that most parents believed their child liked the Fast Start sessions. More parents of first grade students reported their child enjoyed the sessions than parents of kindergarten children. Only one parent marked the survey indicating their child did not enjoy the sessions. This parent reported her son did "not like reading" and did not "care for homework."
Figure 14. Parent’s perception of their child’s Fast Start session.

Some of the explanations reported by parents regarding their children liking the sessions and the poems were “he enjoyed the poems he didn’t already know,” “the repetition helped,” “we liked getting a new one every week,” and “they were fun to do with dad.” One parent mentioned that the poems were easy for their child but that “they helped build his confidence.” Another parent reported that although the poems were familiar, it was good for her child to “look for patterns and point to the words.”

The second question of the survey asked parents if they enjoyed the Fast Start sessions (see Figure 15). Sixty-three percent of the surveys returned showed the parents definitely enjoyed the sessions while 35% reported they “somewhat” enjoyed them. More kindergarten parents reported enjoying the sessions than parents of first grade students. One parent reported they did not enjoy engaging in the homework sessions.
2. Did you enjoy the Fast Start sessions?

![Bar chart showing responses to question: Yes 14, Somewhat 10, No 1.]

Figure 15. Parent’s perception of their Fast Start session.

Written responses to parents enjoying the poems and sessions were varied. By the middle of the study, sixteen first grade students who were already reading received a second passage in addition to the Fast Start poem. The additional passage was either a more challenging poem or a nonfiction passage with comprehension questions. It is clear from the survey that parents did not consider this part of the program even though it was intended to be an accommodation to the program. Three parents of first grade students mentioned they struggled with the poems being repetitive while one kindergarten parent said the repetition helped her daughter. Four parents reported their children became “bored” with the poems that were too familiar and that they had difficulty keeping the activities “fun and exciting enough” to interest or challenge their child. One mother of a high first grade reader stated although she found the poems “tedious,” her son enjoyed them. Three parents wrote they appreciated the one-on-one time with their child, while another said it was difficult to find “alone time” with just one child. Figure 16 records the parent’s perception of their child’s enjoyment of the poems.
One parent stated in an email, “This is what first grade homework should be like.” The same parent enjoyed the fact that the program was “relational and flexible” as the parent was able to use the child’s response to direct the activity. One parent was a kindergarten teacher and asked how she could implement the program at the school where she worked. On the other hand, a repeated theme from some parents was a need for more poems that were unfamiliar to the children. Three parents commented that they had difficulty knowing if their children were reading or reciting the poetry. Three parents reported the poems were too easy for their child. One parent mentioned they enjoyed the thematic poems at Christmas time and others mentioned the “more difficult” and “less familiar” poems were better.

Thirty-one parents reported their child enjoyed the Fast Start activities (see Figure 17). Comments such as “he loved the word play activities,” and “they [the twins] were very into the activities” were common. One parent said, “He really enjoyed stretching the words and I think that helped him with sounding out words he doesn’t know.” Four parents commented that their child particularly enjoyed the rhyming activities. Four parents also
mentioned the word wall, flash card games, and word recognition activities were fun for their child. One parent listed solving riddles was a favorite, and one mother really appreciated the activities involving syllables, nouns, verbs, and compound words for her kindergarten child. Imitating mom by playing “teacher” was reported by another parent as being a fun activity. Only two parents reported their children did not like the activities. One parent who reported her child did not like the activities stated it was because her child did not like reading or homework, although she did feel Fast Start had helped him learn to sound out words. The other parent of a first grade student commented that he failed to see the connection between the activities and reading.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 17.** Parent’s perception of their child’s enjoyment of the word play activities.

The parents of 24 children definitely felt the Fast Start program made a difference in their child’s reading (see Figure 18). Only one parent did not believe the program benefited their child. It is interesting to note that 58% of the responses from treatment one were positive (yes) and 77% of the responses from treatment two were positive (yes).
Figure 18. Parent’s perception of the difference Fast Start made in their child’s reading.

Ninety-eight percent of the parents responding to the survey reported that Fast Start either had made a difference or had made somewhat of a difference in their child’s reading. Three parents commented that they felt their child’s success was due to the combined efforts of school, home, and Fast Start. One parent said, “The program gave me ideas and examples of how to support my child’s progress.” Another reported that her daughter was reading better than her other three children had in kindergarten and that she definitely thought the program helped. One family stated that the training and reading materials made them “more dedicated to reading daily and more aware of his skills.” A mother of first grade twins stated, “Both girls benefited from Fast Start a lot.” Another first grade parent stated the program made a “big difference” in their child and they intended to continue using it after the study. Other comments made by parents who had children already reading were that Fast Start “made a difference with word use and sentence structure,” and it “identified a few weak areas” in their child’s reading. Both of these parents stated Fast Start made reading “fun.” In general, parents believed the program improved their child’s ability to rhyme, segment words, recognize beginning and ending sounds, sound out words, and it
built confidence in their child as a reader.

When asked about problems parents encountered with Fast Start, 24 parents either responded with “none” or made no comment. Two parents stated they felt the program was well organized. In contrast, two parents reported the poems were occasionally “boring” and the activities “repetitious.” Five parents mentioned children memorizing the poems being a problem and three said the poems and activities were “too easy” and it was difficult for parents to extend the activities for their more capable readers. Two parents commented on their own difficulty in being consistent with tutoring their child each day.

Responses to suggestions for making the program better could be categorized into suggestions for poem selection and recommendations for activities. Suggestions for the poems included finding poems that were not as familiar to the students, incorporating longer poems for the first grade students, and finding poems that were more challenging for the better readers. Two parents suggested using a combination of short stories and poems. Another idea was to include more poems for some children, and one parent suggested binding the poems rather than sending them home individually. A common theme was to include more levels of poetry as well as more levels of activities. Parents of both kindergarten and first grade children who had higher achieving children felt the activities were not challenging or extensive enough. Although some parents were able to modify the program to accommodate their child’s needs, others stated they lacked the creativity to make appropriate modifications that were challenging and engaging.

The intent of the final question on the survey was to determine the components of the training sessions parents found most beneficial. Parents in the first treatment group who attended only one training session reported the demonstration of implementing the program
with a child and showing how it could be fun was the most beneficial. One survey mentioned learning ideas on dissecting words, finding suffixes, learning about vowel sounds and compound words as being useful. Three parents mentioned providing examples and explanations of the activities as being helpful. Two surveys said it was good “to learn how to be a better and more effective teacher,” while one mentioned the benefit of learning the methods and language teachers are using in the class so they can be reinforced in the home. One parent commented that the training session was “very detailed and made easy for anyone to do.” Three parents simply stated that “all” of the training was beneficial.

Five of the surveys from the second treatment group reported that they found the second training session most beneficial. Parents mentioned they appreciated the materials given to them at the second training that gave specific strategies for teaching the different components of reading. Two parents wrote that it was good to learn positive and fun ways to teach children at home. Two other surveys mentioned simply the “basics” of learning to teach reading as helpful, while others reported the benefits of learning the more specific components of reading. Parents listed information on phonemic awareness skills, the lexile framework, and knowledge of the standards and expectations at the different grades levels as being helpful. Learning how to be involved in the process of learning to read and to recognize what my child “is capable of doing and what he is ready for next,” was stated by one parent as a benefit. Another parent mentioned it was good reinforcement to hear the importance of the parental role in learning to read and that parents are valued in the learning process.
Control Group Survey Data

Parents of the control group were asked to respond anonymously to a survey identifying the types of literacy activities occurring in their homes. Eighteen of the 28 parents in the control group responded to the questionnaire. The survey consisted of a list of 18 various methods of involving children in literacy activities and scoring their child’s participation in them on a 5-point Likert scale. The activities most commonly responded to were in the areas of parents reading to their children and children reading to their parents and practicing assigned spelling words with their child. Fifteen parents stated they often or usually read letters and words to their child. Nineteen responses showed children often or usually read words and letters to their parents. Thirteen parents reported they often or usually read with their child from the school library while sixteen parents reported practicing assigned spelling words. Other areas that were practiced by most at home were reading books and environmental print, writing words and letters, and playing traditional board games. Only seven children often or almost always watched educational television programs and only three recorded writing letters or emails to friends either often or frequently.

The survey included the opportunity for parents to add additional information about other literacy activities in which their child was involved with an open-ended question. One parent said their child read books to younger siblings and one parent noted that her child often dictates stories to her mother and adds words to her drawings. Another parent mentioned crossword puzzles, word searches, and another recorded using Hooked on Phonics. All of the parents responding to the survey reported that their child usually completed and returned the homework sent home by their teacher.
The survey concluded with a question about the average amount of time spent on these activities during the week. It was reported that the control group spent between 45 minutes and 2 hours or more engaging in literacy activities in a typical week with an average of approximately 97 minutes. The treatment groups spent an average of 43-45 minutes on Fast Start and an additional average of 45 minutes on other literacy activities. This suggests the control group spent approximately 10 minutes per week more than the treatment groups on reading and other literacy activities at home.

Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to answer the following three questions:

1. Will Scholastic’s Fast Start for Early Readers parent tutoring program produce similar results as the Stevenson (2001) study?

2. Is there a significant difference in reading achievement outcome between the students whose parents have received one session of training and those who received two sessions of training?

3. Will extending Stevenson’s (2001) study by enlarging the sample size and expanding to include kindergarten students, focusing on emergent and beginning readers, change the outcome of the study?

Like the Stevenson study, the findings of the current study did not result in statistical significance when data from all of the students was analyzed. Although the Stevenson study reported statistical significance at the lower level of distribution, because of the low numbers at this level statistical analyses were not computed for this study. However, other DIBELS data including indicators of risk and instructional recommendations did show more growth in the two treatment groups than in the control
group and particularly at the lower level of distribution. Significant differences in achievement between treatment one and treatment two were not shown, however, treatment two showed more growth than treatment one and the control group when looking at the overall instructional recommendations. Kindergarten students were also found to benefit from the Fast Start program, particularly those who were assigned to treatment two.

Secondary descriptive questions the study was designed to answer were:

4. What are the parent’s perceptions of the Fast Start program using the survey form published by Scholastic?

5. What will the parents’ confidence level be as they begin to tutor their child?

6. How well will the parents have mastered the concepts of tutoring before beginning to work with their child?

Data collected from the parent survey published in the Fast Start book indicated the majority of the parents of both kindergarten and first grade students enjoyed participating in the Fast Start program. Most parents also believed their children enjoyed Fast Start and reading the poems with a higher percentage of parents of first grade students feeling stronger about their child’s enjoyment. All but the parents of two children stated their child enjoyed the word play activities. The majority of parents believed the materials and training helped their child learn to read.

Most parents were fairly confident to tutor their child, but confidence increased after a second training session. Parents attending the second training benefited from learning more about the expectations for students and more specific ideas on how to help their child learn to read. Not all parents had a concrete understanding of some of the concepts taught in the materials before the training sessions. Most areas of confusion were
in segmenting words and counting phonemes. Another area of confusion for parents was in understanding the difference between rhyming words and words in the same word family. Taking the quiz following the training session enabled parents to ask questions and clarify some of important concepts before beginning the tutoring process.
CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Research has shown that partnering with parents in the area of literacy increases parent’s expectations for their child, increases the child’s motivation and interest in reading, and raises students’ achievement level. The Fast Start program developed by Padak and Rasinski (2005) appears to meet the requirements of a quality research-based tutoring program to assist schools in partnering with parents to become tutors in reading. As recommended by research, the program teaches parents to give appropriate feedback to their children, provides instruction at their level, and reinforces the concepts taught in the classroom.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effects of Fast Start on the reading achievement of emergent and beginning readers in comparison to students whose parents did not receive the Fast Start training and materials. The results of the study indicate the group of students whose parents received two training sessions along with the Fast Start materials achieved greater success in reading than those whose parents received only one training session with the materials. Both groups of students receiving the training and the materials performed better than the group who received neither training nor materials.

Original research conducted by Stevenson (2001) on the Fast Start program recommended further studies include a larger sample size, include kindergarten students, find more difficult passages for established readers, and implement a follow-up study that includes a measure of comprehension. The current study attempted to incorporate these
Conclusions from Quantitative Data

To begin this study, students were randomly selected and assigned to three different treatment groups by three levels of ability as determined by their DIBELS pretest scores. As can be seen in appendices L and O, comparable pretest mean scores for each group were achieved for the various subtests. After the posttest, the data from the DIBELS and core word assessments for the current study were analyzed. The findings did not show a statistical difference between the two treatment groups and the control group when ANOVA was conducted. This was similar to the findings of the Stevenson (2001) study. Although Stevenson’s study did report statistical significance in the lower half of the students, for the purposes of this study it was determined the sample size was too small to statistically analyze the data in this group.

When looking at the raw scores of the subtests in this study, there are two possible reasons why reading gains were not significant. One possible reason the DIBELS subtest scores did not increase for some children from fall to winter may be because of the ceiling effects that come into play in the assessing of phonemic awareness skills. There is little evidence to indicate a higher score on these measures will result in improved reading outcomes after a student meets the benchmark scores on ISF and PSF. The same is true for LNF. Students who have high PSF or NWF scores in the fall will occasionally show small increases in winter testing, but their ORF will be at or above benchmark in the winter. This may be because the ceiling in that area has been reached for them or because they are more focused on finding “real” words. Along the same idea, 11 weeks may not have been enough time to have students who were established as beginning readers in the fall to make
the major gains necessary to show substantial improvement.

Two other methods of analyzing the DIBELS data were considered in this study. The second method compared the level at which students were at risk among groups for the winter assessments not administered in the fall. The kindergarten outcome showed treatments one and two had 92% of their students achieving a low risk indicator while the control group had 83% at low risk. Treatments one and two also had more students at low risk for NWF than the control group with 83%, 75% and 67% at low risk respectively. The results were equally impressive at the first grade level. The first grade winter ORF scores showed 67% of the students in treatment one and 65% of the students in treatment two were at low risk for meeting the next benchmark while 59% of the students in the control group were at low risk. A recent study by Sandvik (2006) reports ORF to be a better predictor of reading achievement than phonemic awareness skills, indicating the importance of this outcome.

The third method of analyzing the DIBELS data is by instructional recommendation. Impressive gains were made by the students in treatment two. This group improved from 17 students meeting benchmark goals in the fall to 22 students meeting benchmark in the winter. Treatment one also improved with 18 students beginning at benchmark in the fall and 20 attaining benchmarks goals in the winter. The control group, however, did not show gains. This group began with 18 students at benchmark in the fall, but after the winter assessment, 17 students remained at benchmark. It appears that the Fast Start program and parent training made a difference in the reading achievement of students in both kindergarten and first grade.

From the reading log data gathered and recorded over the 11 weeks, it can be
concluded that the parent-student dyads who actually recorded their study time and returned the logs had more success than those who did not. Despite the uneven participation of the parents and students in the treatment groups, the results still favored the treatment groups. However, when the students who returned less than 50% of the reading logs were taken out of the analysis, all of the students in both treatment groups were at either the strategic or benchmark level. All of the students from the treatment and control groups who were identified as needing intensive instruction after the pretest were given additional support in school. After the 11 weeks, the only students remaining at the intensive level were in the control group or they had not been active participants in the Fast Start program.

Conclusions from Qualitative Data

Like the Stevenson (2001) study, the current study also determined from the survey data and the assessment data that students who were already established as beginning readers did not benefit as much from the Fast Start poems. Supplemental material was required for reading passages, although many of the ideas from the activities and the information from the training sessions were still reported to be beneficial. The program materials appear to be best suited for kindergarten students and for early readers in first grade.

Survey information revealed that most parents and students enjoyed the activities and that parents believed they were able to help their child learn to read with the help of Fast Start. Several parents commented that the poems were often too easy for their child and that longer and more difficult passages would have been appreciated. The activities were generally well liked, although some parents had difficulty making the materials
interesting after more than a few days with the same poem. Sixteen of the parent-student dyads received additional poems or non-fiction passages each week to supplement the Fast Start poem. Although this was intended to be an extension of the Fast Start program, it does not appear the parents realized or considered this as they completed their survey.

Survey information gathered from the control group parents showed that students who did not receive the Fast Start activities spent approximately 10 minutes per week more on literacy activities than the two treatment groups. Since more students in the treatment groups met the winter benchmark than in the control group, this would indicate that the Fast Start program is a better use of both parent and student time.

The quiz administered to the parents attending the first training session worked well as a method for determining if parents understood the concepts necessary to tutor their child. The questions gave parents a better understanding of the complexity of learning to read and served as a springboard for asking other questions. Parents who had two training sessions were more confident in tutoring their child and most likely had higher expectations for them after being informed of the state and district goals in reading and the goals for each of the benchmarks. Parents stated the materials they received at the second training session were helpful as well as the suggestions for teaching the specific components of reading. Again, the improvement of treatment two in both the instructional recommendations of the kindergarten and first graders and the ORF scores of the first graders indicate that the second training session was an important component in increasing the reading achievement of the students. This strengthens the research compiled by Erion (2006) which showed the importance of training sessions having a duration of at least two hours to be most effective. Follow-up for parents was also stated in the research as being
important. The Fast Start materials recommend teachers contact three parents a week to see how the tutoring is going and answer any questions. Over an 11-week period, this would mean that parents would be contacted a maximum of two times for a class of 20 students. Although this is plenty of collaboration for most parents, other parents need more encouragement and follow-up training than this. It is clear from the study that returning completed reading logs is an important component of the Fast Start program. Eleven students did not regularly return reading logs. Perhaps more time encouraging, advising, and collaborating with parents would improve this component.

The information collected from the surveys indicates that there were some areas of confusion for parents. One parent commented on the relationship between the activities and reading and another stated her child did not like to do homework. Perhaps if the survey had been completed in the middle of the study or if parents had been contacted more frequently, the few negative comments that were reported could have been avoided.

The majority of the parents attending at least the first training session commented on the benefits of observing an adult demonstrate the process of tutoring a child. This also supports previous research, which states the importance of modeling how to tutor for parents. Other comments from parents centered on the benefits of learning how to be an effective teacher for their child and at the same time making reading fun.

**Implications**

The current study was conducted at an elementary school of predominately White, middle class students. All seven of the teachers of kindergarten and first grade had students participating in the study. Like four of the other elementary schools in the district, the host school’s second largest ethnic group is Hispanic, making up between 2%-12% of the
student population. Only one elementary school in the district has a significantly different population with approximately 38% Hispanic students. Fast Start appears to be a program that other schools in the district would benefit from implementing. Suggestions are included in the Fast Start book for including the participation of limited-English proficient families in the program. The Fast Start program appears to be an excellent choice for schools that desire to partner with parents for student success in reading. The cost is nominal, the materials are convenient to prepare, and the results are positive.

Because of the success of the Fast Start program in the host school, a small amount of money has been placed in the budget to implement the program next year. Funds will be designated to provide support to teachers in contacting parents on a regular basis by a classified employee. Since good communication with parents and full participation by them was seen as an important component of the program, more effort will be made to encourage their partnership.

The theories of Bronfenbenner (Kazdin, 2000) and Coleman (1987) were supported in this study. As Brofenbenner (1985) suggests, social changes in America have limited the number of positive interactions adults have with children, however, schools are capable of reorganizing themselves to become more supportive to children. Through the Fast Start training sessions and the regular communication with parents and teachers, relationships were built between the adults and children that were valuable for the students. Parents and teachers were able to share common language and expectations for children. In keeping with the theory of Coleman, this relationship built "social capital" which helped to improve the attitudes, behaviors, and academic success of the students. The results of these relationships can be seen as evidenced through those parents who returned the reading logs
consistently and the academic growth of their children. As Coleman states, as more mothers are working full time today, social networks need to be developed through the schools and community to support the education of children. This became evident in the current study as the mother of a first grade student in treatment two began working at night five weeks into the study. The researcher was given permission to contact the first-grader’s babysitter, the uncle of the student and a senior at the local high school. The uncle agreed to take on the role of parent tutor and spent several lunch hours meeting with the researcher to complete the two hours of training. This tutoring effort became his senior project. The young tutor was later recognized by the school board for his efforts in helping his niece learn to read. This type of mutual support from the school, home, and community is an example of Epstein’s (1997) model of the overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein’s theory places the student at the center of the model, and families, schools, and communities partner and support each other to maximize the child’s academic success.

Recommendations for further research

Although efforts were made to implement the recommendations of Stevenson’s (2001) original study, there are several areas that should be considered in future studies. The current study attempted to increase the sample size, however, further research should include more students at the lower distribution level in first grade and more students in kindergarten at all distribution levels since these are the areas in which most growth was shown. The current study had only six students in first grade at the lowest level in each treatment group and only 12 kindergarten students in each treatment group. The sample size in each of the distribution level groups was not large enough to determine statistical significance at the .05 level.
Another recommendation of Stevenson (2001) was to follow up the study with an assessment that measured comprehension. This is an important recommendation. The recommendation for Fast Start is to begin in the training and parent tutoring in the fall. Unfortunately, most students are not reading fluently enough after 11 weeks of school to be assessed accurately using the DIBELS assessment for retell. Although the students in the current study will be assessed in the spring and the results compared, the scores will not be available for inclusion in this study. A yearlong study with a comprehension measure would be optimal. It would also be of interest to follow the students into the third grade, especially those at the lower levels of distribution.

In addition to a larger sample size and a follow-up assessment, it would be interesting to implement the program district wide. Although all of the parent-student dyads in the current study were English speaking, it would be interesting to include schools with more students who are English language learners. If results are found to be positive, it may be a program parents could help monitor and an important component of a district or school’s parent involvement plan.

Finally, researchers may want to locate or write specific materials that are more challenging for the higher functioning readers to be included in further research. Much of the attraction of the Fast Start program to teachers is that it addresses the needs of most students in the classroom by differentiating the activities. Higher-level materials are needed that coincide with the Fast Start format and research-based training and methods to make it useful and convenient for teachers. A follow-up to Fast Start containing more challenging and longer poems or short stories with some of the same kinds of fluency activities as well as activities in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension would be appreciated by
teachers and parents.
References


Janiak, R. (2003, April). *Empowering parents as reading tutors: An example of a family*


York.


Appendix A

Letter to Parents Inviting Them to Participate in Study
Dear Crater Kindergarten and First Grade Parents,

My name is Mrs. Mears and I am the Reading Specialist at Crater. I am also a doctorate student at George Fox University where I am conducting a research project designed to assess the effectiveness of a parent involvement and homework program called Fast Start. The program was developed by Dr. Timothy Rasinski from Kent State University and was recently published by the Scholastic company. The program involves training parents to tutor their kindergarten and first grade children in reading using the homework materials provided in the program.

This research will:
- inform our school if the Fast Start program increases reading achievement
- determine the usefulness of the program to both teachers and parents
- determine how beneficial parent training is for students

To test this program, we will randomly divide all those who volunteer to participate into three equal groups. Two of the groups will become part of the study by beginning Fast Start training in September. These groups will receive weekly packets that include reading activities and poems to read with your child. A second training session will be offered to one of the two groups in October. All participants in both groups will also be asked to keep a weekly reading log that shows the amount of time spent working with their child (ten minutes per weekday is recommended) as well as a follow-up survey. The study will continue until Christmas break.

The third group of students, the control group, will begin the year receiving the regular classroom homework without the parent training or additional materials. This group will be contacted once during the fall and asked for information about home reading and writing activities through a survey.

All students will be assessed in September using the DIBELS reading assessment before the study begins. This test is part of our school’s regular monitoring program and will be given by either myself or other trained staff. All of the students will be assessed again after 11 or 12 weeks to determine the effectiveness of the Fast Start program.

If you are interested in participating in the research study, you may sign the enclosed letter. Please return the form to Crater within the next week. It may be given to the reading teacher or to your child’s teacher.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me or the school principal, Mr. Milner, at 503-554-4650. My advisor at George Fox University is Dr. Doreen Blackburn and can be reached at 503-554-2839.

Sincerely,

Pam Mears
Reading Specialist

Kevin Milner
Principal
Appendix B

Agreement to Participate in Parental Involvement Study
Agreement to Participate in Parental Involvement Study

By participating in the study, I am agreeing to:

If selected for the study group...
- Attend a one-hour parent training session with my student
- Attend a second training session if selected
- Participate in the Fast Start Homework program (designed to take about 10 minutes each week night)
- Keep a log of the amount of time spent on Fast Start

If not selected for the study group...
- Participate in the classroom's normal homework program
- Complete a survey on reading/writing activities at home

Remember:
- If the program is found to be effective, another training session will be offered in January for all parents.
- You may retract consent at any time.

A choice of two training sessions will be offered in September for your convenience. One will meet after school at 3:00 and the other will meet at 7:00 in the evening. Babysitting will be offered for your kindergarten/first grade student for the first half hour, and then your student will join us for the second half of the training. We will also provide babysitting for other children if necessary.

Please return this form to your child's teacher or to the school secretary.

If you have any questions, Mrs. Mears can be reached at 503-554-4979 or mearsp@newberg.k12.or.us

Yes, I would like to participate in the research study for the Fast Start program.

__________________________
(signature)

__________________________
(date)

Teacher: Derry Hardin
Thorsell Coolen
Smith Scott
Beausoliel
Appendix C

Second Letter to Parents Inviting Them to Participate in Study
Be part of the parent involvement study...

It’s not too late to volunteer!
Learn research-based methods for teaching your child to read in a positive atmosphere.

Help Newberg teachers find the best methods for involving family and community to improve student success.

Perhaps you have some of the same questions other parents have been asking...

**Question:** What if I have twins, triplets or a kindergartener and a first grader?

**Answer:** You are a perfect candidate for this study! We will make certain your children get in the same group!

**Question:** What if my child doesn’t know his letter names or sounds?

**Answer:** This study is just for you! We anticipate these students will make the most growth.

**Question:** What if my child is already a reader and is reading me out of house and home?

**Answer:** This is great! We will show you how to find “just right” books. By learning how to use the Lexile Framework to locate titles in your child’s independent or instructional reading range, you can help your child build fluency and keep him challenged.

**Question:** What if there is a possibility I will be unable to attend the training?

**Answer:** Although we hope you can join us for training, snacks and door prizes, we will videotape the sessions and you can view them in your home.

As usual, all homework will be developmentally appropriate for your child. Crater teachers work hard to see that all children’s individual needs are met.

Contact Pam Mears with any questions: 503-554-4650  
mears@newberg.k12.or.us
Appendix D

Letter Informing Parents of Treatment Group Selection
Dear Crater Kindergarten and First Grade Parents,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the parent-involvement research we are conducting with the kindergarten and first grade students at Crater.

As stated in the first letter, parents were to be randomly assigned to one of three groups. The second experimental group will have two training sessions and the materials to participate in the Fast Start program.

You have been randomly assigned to the second experimental group. The dates for the first session are printed below—there will be two evening choices and an after school choice. Each session will last about one hour. **We would like you to bring your kindergarten or first grade student to the session that best fits your schedule.** If you choose the after-school session, your child can remain at school. The second training session will be scheduled in a couple of weeks.

Child-care will be provided during both sessions. Your student will join the training meeting for the last half of the training so you will be able to practice the methods with your child. If you need child-care for children other than your student, please include that information on the return portion of this letter and mail it in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible.

**Remember:**

- You only need to attend one of these sessions. Please choose the one that is most convenient for you and your student.

- If none of these dates work for you, do not worry. Please call or email me to make optional arrangements.

- You may retract consent at any time.

- If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 503-554-4650 or email me at mearsp@newberg.k12.or.us

Thanks again for your willingness to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

Pam Mears
Reading Specialist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October</td>
<td>at 6:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| or
| Tuesday, October | at 3:15 p.m.  |
| or
| Tuesday, October | at 6:30 p.m.  |
Appendix E

Letter Informing Parents of Treatment Group Selection
Dear Crater Kindergarten and First Grade Parents,

Thank you for your interest in participating in the parent involvement research we are doing with the kindergarten and first grade students at Crater.

As stated in the first letter, we are randomly dividing those who have agreed to be part of the study into three equal groups. The first group will get one session of training and the materials to complete the program, the second group will get two sessions of training and the materials, and the third group will be contacted to help us assess the kinds of literacy activities that are occurring in your home.

Based on the random assignment, you were assigned to the control group. This means you will not be asked to attend the training sessions at this time. Your child will receive the same reading passages for homework without the supplemental materials. You will also be contacted in the next few weeks to help us determine the types of literacy activities occurring in your home which could benefit your child in learning to read.

Activities like reading to your child, taking trips to the library, playing educational games designed to promote reading or writing, direct teaching of reading or writing skills, pointing out words in the environment, doing activities suggested by your child’s teacher, and many other activities will be of interest to the study.

As stated before, if the Fast Start program is found to be more effective than these above-mentioned activities, the training sessions will be offered again after the first of the New Year.

Again, thank you for your willingness to be involved, and please feel free to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Pam Mears
Reading Specialist
503-554-4650
Appendix F

Training Session One Power Point
Parents as Partners

Fast Start Parent Training
October 2006

To partner:
• Implies a relationship, frequently between two people, in which each has equal status and a certain independence but also implicit or formal obligations to the other or others.

Theoretical model:
Partnerships are designed to help students produce their own successes.
faSt Start

• An easy-to-do, research-based program that has been proven to make a significant difference in children’s reading.
• It takes only 10 minutes each night of the week.
• There are 2 parts: reading the poems, and doing the activities together.

The FaSt Start Routine:
1. Read to your child.
2. Read with your child.
3. Listen to your child read.
4. Choose an activity or two.

1. Read to your Child...
• Sit together comfortably
• Read the poem to your child several times pointing to the words as you read.
• Model fluent reading. Children need to hear what good reading should sound like.
2. Read with your child...
- Read the poem aloud with your child several times.
- Choral reading is a supportive way to introduce a new text.
- Do not be concerned if your child misses a word or two.

3. Listen to your Child read...
- Listen to your child read the poem to you several times.
- Offer praise for success and help when necessary.
- If your child stumbles on a word, wait a second or two and then simply say the word.

4. Do an activity or two:
- Keep the atmosphere game-like and relaxed.
- Check off the activities as you do them.
- Repeat the same activities until your child is confident doing them.
Follow this routine at least two days in a row with each poem.

Record your time on the log sheet after each session.

Activities

Looking at Words and Letters
Developing basic reading and word concepts

• Ask your child to count the lines (or words) in the poem. Ask him or her to point at each line as it is counted.
Slide 13

- Clap the syllables in a word.
- Say the words in the poem while clapping your hands.
- Ask questions about the words: How many words in a particular line? Which line has the most words? Which line has the fewest words?

---

Slide 14

- Say a letter of the alphabet. Ask your child to find all the times that a particular letter is used in the poem. Repeat for other letters.
- Point to a word. Ask your child to tell you the letter that begins the word. Then ask him or her to tell you what letter ends the word. Repeat with several words.

---

Slide 15

Playing with Sounds
Developing basic phonics skills

- Say two words from the poem. Ask your child to tell you if the words rhyme with one another. Repeat with several pairs of words.
- Find a simple rhyming word. Ask your child to say some words that rhyme with that word. List the words on a paper and practice reading them.
Slide 16

- Stretch out a word from the poem. Ask your child to tell you what word it is, or to find the word in the poem.
- Say two words from the poem. Ask your child if they start with the same sound. Repeat several times with other word pairs. Later, do the same thing with ending sounds.

Slide 17

Beginning to Read

Reinforcing phonics concepts and developing word recognition skills

- Using slips of paper, make a deck of word cards. Save in an envelope.
- Together, select a word or two from the poem to put on the cards. Practice reading and playing games with them.

Slide 18

- Ask your child to find words that rhyme and list them on a sheet of paper. Ask your child to think of more words that share the letter pattern: ran, pan, fan, can. Write them down and practice reading them.
Ask your child to find and circle words that:
• have suffixes [-ing, -ed, -es]
• have short or long vowel sounds (make their first or second sound)
• are compound words (contain two smaller words such as sidewalk)
• are people (or places, or colors, animals, etc.)

Create a "word wall"
• Choose several words from the poem to record on a large sheet of paper. These can be difficult words or favorites. The words can be categorized (i.e. nouns and not nouns)
• Play "I SPY" with the words.
• Use the "word-finder"

Remember:
• Share your enthusiasm!
• Give your child the word when he/she is stuck.
• or...tell them to "get your mouth ready to make the first sound" and then tell them the rest of the word.
• Praise them for good work.
• Review previous day's words and poem.
Most of all...

• Have fun with your child!

• Thank you for participating in the study!
Appendix G

Fast Start Participants Family Information
Fast Start Participants Family Information Fall 2006

1. Name of Child: ______________________________ Grade: ___

2. Name of Parents: ______________________________

3. Marital Status of Parents: ______________________________

4. With which parent does the child reside? ______________________________

5. Number and ages of siblings in the home where child resides: _______

6. Parent Phone Numbers:
   Mother: (H) __________________________ (other) _______________________
   Father: (H) __________________________ (other) _______________________

7. Number of hours per week engaged in work outside of the home:
   Mother: ________  Father: ________

8. What is the most convenient place, time, and day for the researcher, Mrs. Mears, to call and answer any questions or concerns?

9. Who will be doing the home tutoring? Circle all that apply:
   Mother  Father  Other: ______________________________

10. Do any of the people doing the tutoring have any formal training in education?

11. Are there any situations or concerns of which the researcher should be aware?

                                                       ✨✨✨
Appendix H

Training Session One Quiz and Level of Confidence Form
Training “Fun Sheet”

Mark T for True or F for False

1. ____ When reading to your child, you should both be comfortable.
2. ____ The Fast Start poem should not be read more than once so the child does not get bored.
3. ____ The adult should read with good expression.
4. ____ It is helpful to point to the words as you read.
5. ____ Part of the Fast Start program is reading to your child, reading with your child, and listening to your child read.
6. ____ Word families have the same spelling at the end.
7. ____ Syllables are the number of “beats” in a word.
8. ____ Telephone has 4 syllables.
9. ____ Rhyming words sound the same at the end.
10. ____ The words bait and ate do not rhyme.
11. ____ There are 3 separate sounds in the word bat.
12. ____ There are 3 separate sounds in church.
13. Write a compound word: ____________________
14. Circle the suffixes: dishes playing fished
15. Another way to say the “short” vowel sound is to say its ____________________ sound.
16. Circle the word that has a “long” vowel sound: cat crate
17. Please circle a number on the scale that indicates how confident you feel to tutor your child in reading?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not confident Very Confident
Appendix I

Training Session Two Power Point
Parents as Partners
Part 2

Fast Start Parent Training
November 2006

Five "Big Ideas"

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Phonemic Awareness

- The ability to segment and manipulate sounds in words.
- Rhyming
- Identifying pictures that begin with the same sound
- Blending sounds into words (/t/-in or /i/-in/)
- Deleting a sound and saying the rest of the word (say mat without the /m/)
- Segmenting words into sounds ('stretching' them out)
Phonics or Alphabetic Principle

- Understanding the letter-sound associations
- 84% of English words are phonetically regular (can be sounded out)
- 26 letters combine to make about 44 English sounds
- There are 71 most common ways to spell the sounds

Fluency or automaticity

- Reading that is smooth and conversational
- Includes accuracy, speed, comprehension, and expression
- Needs to be automatic because it requires multi-tasking: decoding and comprehension

Prerequisites to fluency:
1. Decoding skills—being to "sound out" words
2. Knowledge of a bank of sight words
3. Using background knowledge

- Fluency results in increased reading comprehension
Fluency is increased by reading
- Matthew effect
- Repeated readings
- State standards
- Reading at the child’s level
- Locating appropriate material:
  - Lexile www.lexile.com
  - Adapted Fry Method

Vocabulary
- Vocabulary words are labels for concepts
- Words must be understood in order to get meaning from the text
  - opposites
  - synonyms
  - explanations and descriptions

Comprehension
- the process of constructing meaning from text
  - Background knowledge and experiences can increase comprehension
  - making predictions
  - rereading
  - previewing
  - asking a question
  - using pictures for clues
  - retelling
Reading with your child

1. Introduction

   - Explain the purpose of the reading session.
   - Set clear expectations for the child.
   - Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

2. Reading Underlined Words and Sentences

   - Use highlighters to underline key words or sentences.
   - Discuss the meaning of these words or sentences.
   - Practice reading aloud with the child to reinforce comprehension.

3. Encourage Independent Reading

   - Read with the child and model independent reading.
   - Provide age-appropriate reading materials.
   - Monitor progress and adjust reading level as needed.

4. Foster a Love for Reading

   - Read a variety of materials together.
   - Create a dedicated reading space.
   - Celebrate achievements and milestones.

Websites:

- Scholastic: http://www.scholastic.com
- Teach a Child to Read: http://www.teachachildtoread.com
- Reading.com: http://www.reading.com
- PBS Kids: http://pbskids.org
- Scholastic Parents: http://www.scholastic.comgetParents

5. Practice phonics and sight words with the child.

6. Read fluently and with expression, speed, and confidence.

7. Set a routine for reading sessions.

8. Encourage the child to read independently.

9. Celebrate the child's reading milestones.
Appendix J

Treatment Groups Fast Start Parent Survey
Dear Families:

Now that the Fast Start study is coming to an end, I would like your opinion of the Fast Start Program, the nightly poetry reading and word play activities you have been doing with your child. Your feedback will help me refine the program for the rest of the year and for next year's class. Thank you for participating in the study! Please watch for further information on the outcome of the study.

Sincerely,

------------------------------------ FAST START SURVEY ------------------------------------

Parent's Name: ___________________ Child's Name: ________________

1. Did your child like the Fast Start sessions?
   _____ yes _____ somewhat _____ no
   Please explain.

2. Did you enjoy the Fast Start sessions?
   _____ yes _____ somewhat _____ no
   Please explain.

3. Did your child enjoy the poems?
   _____ yes _____ somewhat _____ no
   Please explain.

4. Did your child enjoy the word play activities?
   _____ yes _____ somewhat _____ no
   Please explain.

5. Do you think Fast Start has made a difference in your child's reading?
   _____ yes _____ somewhat _____ no
   Please explain.

6. What problems did you have with Fast Start?

7. How can I make the program better?

Thank you for participating in the study. Please watch for further information on the outcome of the study.

In addition to the Fast Start Survey, please comment on the following:

1. What part of the parent training was most beneficial?

2. How much time would you estimate you spent reading to, reading with, listening to your child read and doing reading activities with your child per week?
   ___________ minutes
Appendix K

Control Group Survey
Dear Parents,

As part of the *Fast Start* research project on parent involvement, we would like you to complete this survey on literacy activities occurring in the home. Please take a few moments to let us know the types of activities being done in homes.

This information is anonymous, so you do not need to include your name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate how often literacy activities occur at home with your child by circling the number that best represents your opinion:</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I read letters/words to my child.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My child reads letters/words to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My child gets books at the local library.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My child writes letters or words.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My child plays games that require reading.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My child uses the computer for educational purposes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I read books with my child from the school library.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My child plays traditional board games with me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My child watches educational television programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My child reads environmental print (store names, cereal boxes, ads, etc.).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My child reads Sunday School materials.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My child writes emails or letters to family members or friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My child practices spelling words when they are assigned.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I read books to my child.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. My child reads books to me.  1 2 3 4 5

16. My child reads independently.  1 2 3 4 5

17. My child reads silently while I read aloud to him/her.  1 2 3 4 5

18. My child completes homework sent home by his/her teacher.  1 2 3 4 5

19. Please list any other literacy activities in which your child has recently participated:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

20. About how much time did you spend in a typical week doing these activities? Circle the time that is the best estimate:

Less than 2 hours
15 min.  15 min.  30 minutes  45 min.  1 hour  1.5 hour  or more

Please put this completed form in the enclosed envelope and return it to your child’s teacher or the school secretary. Remember, this information will be used only for research purposes.

Thank you for your help,

Mrs. Mears
Reading Specialist
Crater Elementary  503-554-4979 or 503-701-0729
Appendix L

Kindergarten Descriptive Statistics
L1. Descriptive Statistics for Kindergarten Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>ISF</th>
<th>LNF</th>
<th>Core Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

L2. Descriptive Statistics for Kindergarten Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>ISF</th>
<th>LNF</th>
<th>PSF</th>
<th>NWF</th>
<th>Core Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32.08</td>
<td>39.42</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>37.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>14.37</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>19.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26.08</td>
<td>36.83</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>27.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>14.86</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28.42</td>
<td>36.42</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>18.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M

Kindergarten Univariate Tests
### M1. Kindergarten ISF Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>200.722</td>
<td>100.361</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>3300.785</td>
<td>103.150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

### M2. Kindergarten LNF Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>37.313</td>
<td>18.657</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.835</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>3295.954</td>
<td>102.999</td>
<td></td>
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The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

### M3. Kindergarten Core Words Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>2.364</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>201.866</td>
<td>6.308</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.
Appendix N

First Grade Univariate Tests
N1. First Grade LNF Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>3.610</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.805</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>5844.817</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>121.767</td>
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</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

N2. First Grade PSF Univariate Tests

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<tr>
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<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.900</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>2977.811</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62.038</td>
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</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

N3. First Grade NWF Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>34.580</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17.290</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>14635.370</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>304.904</td>
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</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

N4. First Grade Core Word Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
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<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>52.999</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.104</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

The F tests the effect of Condition. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.
### O1. Descriptive Statistics for First Grade Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>LNF</th>
<th>PSF</th>
<th>NWF</th>
<th>Core Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>39.67</td>
<td>27.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>19.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>38.82</td>
<td>36.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>16.07</td>
<td>33.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>12.98</td>
<td>32.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### O2. Descriptive Statistics for First Grade Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>LNF</th>
<th>PSF</th>
<th>NWF</th>
<th>ORF</th>
<th>Core Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>58.39</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>64.33</td>
<td>38.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>14.23</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>22.12</td>
<td>28.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>64.65</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>70.76</td>
<td>44.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>34.69</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>62.53</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>69.06</td>
<td>39.76</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>31.68</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>