

EFFECTS OF READ-ALoud TRAINING FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH A DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

by

Tanya D. Schmidt

Previous research supporting read-alouds within the family home focused on the impact of read-alouds on older children who are without developmental delays or disabilities. An intervention was done with two families enrolled within a Birth to Three Program. The families were observed before, during, and after the intervention occurred. After the initial observation, the two families were given strategies that they could try during read-alouds with their child. Read-aloud sessions were videotaped and inter-rater reliability was obtained. The frequencies of specific behaviors by the parent were recorded as well as notes regarding themes during the read-aloud sessions. The results indicated that the frequency of parent behaviors varied and randomly increased after the first read-aloud session where baseline data was obtained.

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COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Sellie J. Kytava Advisor
2-23-2010 Date Approved

Stacey Skiff Member
2-23-2010 Date Approved

Denise M. Clark Member
2/23/10 Date Approved

PROVOST AND VICE
CHANCELLOR

J. R. K.
2/26/2010
Date Approved

FORMAT APPROVAL

Julie Kumbier
12/11/2009
Date Approved

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Children develop their literacy skills from being read to, from telling stories, and from writing original stories that include the reading patterns. Therefore, the read-aloud forms a critical element in a child's literacy development. The read-aloud is the oral reading of a story to a young child. According to one research article, the most studied aspect of home literacy involves shared book reading or read-alouds (Georgiou, Kirby, Parrila, Stephenson, 2008). Lane and Wright (2007) claimed read-alouds produce endless benefits and comprise the "single most important reading activity."

Many effective strategies exist to promote an effective read-aloud session. Much of the research supports the following strategies: adult pointing to print, asking questions of the child, applying text to real-life experiences, referring to illustrations, using props/puppets for clarification of the text, defining a word within the text, and making a prediction of what will occur next (Darling, 2005).

Rask and Williams (2003) found in their research the importance of play in a child's learning and development. Since play begins in the home, it is then important to equip parents with the necessary strategies to read aloud with their child. It is critical that all children, including children with developmental delays or disabilities, become engaged in activities, experiences, and opportunities that promote and teach literacy skills (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how read-aloud strategy training for parents with a young child with a developmental delay affects the quality of the read-aloud. A review of the literature on this topic was also completed. Strategies and techniques were given to two families within a county's Birth to Three Program to assist them in their read-aloud sessions. The results of this study could be utilized to inform families in the future that are enrolled in the Birth to Three Program as well as professionals in the early childhood field. Much research exists on the impact of reading aloud to older children, but not with younger children.

Research Question

How does read-aloud strategy training for parents with a young child with a developmental delay affect the quality of the read-aloud?

Definition of Terms

Read-Aloud: Activity of a parent reading a storybook orally to his or her child.

Birth to Three Program: A program that is noted in the Wisconsin state law, that is directed at meeting the developmental needs of eligible children and their families as these needs relate to the child's individual development.

Service Coordinator: A Service Coordinator is a professional within the Birth to Three Program that coordinates services for enrolled families. This professional assists the families in scheduling meetings and service visits and also in locating resources.

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher: This professional has at least a 4-year bachelor degree in early childhood special education. He or she is an employee of the Birth to Three Program and works with children on various developmental skills.

Developmental Delay: A developmental delay is present when a child demonstrates skills behind what would be considered typical for his or her age. In Birth to Three, a child would qualify for services with a delay of 25% in one or more areas of development.

Interrater Reliability: The process of at least one other professional taking data at the same time as the original research to ensure results are consistent.

Biases/Limitations

In this study, the educational background of both data evaluators was in early childhood special education and elementary education and both completed coursework that emphasizes the importance of reading aloud to a young child. Both evaluators had an obvious bias towards the importance of the read-aloud so both were aware of not exaggerating the data for a positive outcome. This researcher had previously known the two participating families so there may have been some bias due to a previous standing relationship with the families. Both researchers did not allow this bias to change notes taken during observations or in determining data results and themes. Any potential bias was countered by triangulation, credibility, and inter-rater reliability checks. There may have been some limitations due to the limited number of participants. The large amount of data collected through both designs, however, demonstrated what creates a quality read-aloud.

Significance of the Study/Summary

In summary, research has shown the read-aloud to be crucial in a child's early learning development. Much of this early learning begins at home with a child's family. For this study, families were given tools to enhance read-aloud sessions with their child with a developmental delay or disability. While they were observed, specific behaviors noted included: (a) adult pointing to print, (b) asking questions of the child, (c) applying text to real-life experiences, (d) referring to illustrations, (e) using props/puppets for clarification of the text, (f) defining a word within the text, and (g) making a prediction of what will occur next (Darling, 2005). Notes also were taken in regard to what else occurs during the read-aloud session. An inter-rater also took notes for the same sessions and triangulation of the data occurred to form themes to constitute an effective read-aloud.

Little research has been done with children below the age of three. This study investigated whether giving families the strategies to enhance read-aloud sessions will actually do that. A review of literature in Chapter II gave examples of what would be deemed appropriate research-based treatments.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Justice, Pence, and Pullen (2008, p. 855) defined emergent literacy as a “term used to describe the precursory knowledge, skills, and attitudes about reading and writing that young children develop prior to formal literacy instruction, generally during the preschool years.” Similarly, other researchers equated emergent literacy with “reading and writing knowledge and behavior of children who are not yet conventionally literate” (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnel, 2008, p. 210). Justice, Pence, and Pullen (2008) indicated that many studies have examined the emergent literacy skills necessary to predict reading achievement at later ages in the elementary grades.

Current research indicates that children’s visual attention to print increases as adults make references to print during storybook reading. A study by Justice, Pence, and Pullen (2008) revealed that children spend approximately 4% of the time actually looking at the print in a storybook. The 4% divided evenly with 2% attending to contextualized print and 2% on narrative print. Those researchers concluded that children do not spend much time looking at print during storybook reading and spend more time focused on illustrations. Their findings support an understanding of why there is little association between children’s print-based skills and the frequency with which they are read to. The study also supported a need to use more clear teaching methods with young children to increase their attention to print during storybook reading. The researchers further

recommended that children also should be exposed to print more within other early childhood activities.

Justice, Pence, and Pullen (2008) indicated that children's visual attention to print significantly increased when adults used both explicit verbal and non-verbal print references during story book reading. The non-verbal references utilized by adults proved more effective than the verbal references. Non-verbal references included adults gesturing toward print, tracking the print, and pointing to print. Verbal references designed to improve children's attention to print included commenting on print and questioning about print.

Children develop their literacy skills from being read to, from telling stories, and from writing original stories that include the reading patterns. Therefore, the read-aloud forms a critical element in a child's literacy development. The read-aloud is the reading aloud of a story to a young child. According to one research article, the most studied aspect of home literacy involves shared book reading or read-alouds (Georgiou, Kirby, Parrila, & Stephenson, 2008). Since reading for enjoyment is an important reason for read-alouds, one study urged parents to tell their children frequently about the enjoyment involved in reading (Fisher, Flood, Frey, & Lapp, 2004).

Family Literacy

Teaching vocabulary and language creates the foundation for children learning how to read and write. A recent study demonstrated that from age three and up, children need to learn at least 2,500 new words per year. Neuman (2006) claimed that when

parents and teachers use the strategies suggested, they are building foundational literacy skills for children's lifelong learning. Neuman (2006) recommended strategies to improve vocabulary to build literacy skills. This study recommended (a) encouraging children to become active participants in conversations, (b) using oral storytelling, (c) pulling words and vocabulary from picture books, (d) including show and tell to build on oral language and vocabulary skills, and (e) sharing songs and rhymes.

Lane and Wright (2007) provided suggestions for parents during read alouds with their children. They suggested that parents make reading aloud a positive experience where children are allowed to look at and point to pictures and words during the read aloud. Parents also should help their children make connections between stories and their own lives and encourage their children to expand on ideas within stories. Parents should ask their children questions during readings, and encourage their children to ask questions about the stories as well. They should provide wait time after they ask a question or make a comment to give their children an opportunity to participate during read alouds. Parents also should attempt to use words that their children already know when explaining a new idea or word. Finally the authors advised that parents be shown how to make references to the print to encourage print awareness ideas to their children.

Interactive shared book reading is "a general practice that adults may use when reading with children and is intended to enhance young children's language and literacy skills" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007). It generally includes an adult reading to a child or a small group of children and using a mixture of techniques to promote child engagement in the text. Three studies, conducted by What Works Clearinghouse in 2007,

examined the intervention effects on children's oral language, print knowledge, and early reading and writing. The researchers found interactive shared book reading to exert mixed effects on oral language, but no apparent effects on print knowledge. They hypothesized, however, that shared book reading would produce positive effects on early reading/writing.

McGee and Schickedanz (2007) indicated that the most effective read aloud contained active and interactive child participation. This means that children actively ask questions, answer questions, and make predictions. Their study also found other activities that encourage child involvement including (a) retelling or dramatizing stories, (b) reading many books on a similar topic and making objects/props available for children to explore, (c) reading a book repeatedly, (d) giving brief definitions for some words while reading aloud and encouraging children to use those words, and (e) describing illustrations.

Shared book reading differs slightly from interactive shared book reading. Shared book reading is a "general practice aimed at enhancing young children's language and literacy skills and their appreciation of books" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006). Shared book reading generally includes an adult reading a book to either one child or a small group of children without requiring extensive exchanges from them. What Works Clearinghouse reported on the results of three studies conducted in 2006 that examined the intervention effects on children's oral language and phonological processing. Shared book reading produced variable effects on oral language and probable positive effects on phonological processing.

Lane and Wright (2007) claimed read-alouds produce endless benefits and comprise the “single most important reading activity.” According to an article by Fisher, Flood, Frey, and Lapp (2004), teachers use read-alouds to encourage their students to read and to build their current knowledge about a particular topic. Teachers themselves listed elementary read-alouds as one of their favorite memories. Middle school students reported similar favorite memories. Current research and practice in schools continue to support the use of read-alouds as a significant element of instruction across all ages. The Commission on Reading stated that “The single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). During read-alouds, educators model reading strategies and demonstrate ways in which the language of the text differs from spoken language. Read-alouds develop children’s understanding of the patterns and organization of written language. They gain knowledge of new terminology and ideas as they are exposed to an assortment of genres in their written form (Fisher, Flood, Frey & Lapp, 2004).

Research connects a “literacy-enriched home environment” to children’s learning of literacy skills (Dolejs & Huang, 2007). The type of literacy activities that parents use with their children generalize across languages, nationalities, and socio-economic boundaries (Andrews, Conlon, & Hood, 2008). Indeed, Andrews, Conlon, and Hood (2008) claim the following:

Reading should not be dismissed in favor of formal teaching practices. Parent-child reading is related to greater vocabulary development, which others have

shown is an important predictor of later reading comprehension. Depending on a positive socio-emotional context, parent-child reading is also important in fostering the child's own motivation, which has important long-term consequences for their reading as well. (p. 266)

Fisher, Flood, Frey, and Lapp (2004) identified seven components of effective interactive read-alouds in their research:

1. Chosen books must match a child's interests and their developmental, emotional and social levels.
2. Educators should preview and practice selections.
3. Educators should establish a clear purpose for the read-aloud.
4. The reader should model fluent oral reading.
5. The reader should use animation and expression.
6. The reader should stop occasionally and considerately question the children about the details of the text.
7. Connections should be made between independent reading and writing.

Research has shown that a child's preschool experiences play a significant role on literacy learning and that the home environment greatly influences the emergence of literacy (Rask & Williams, 2003). Play has become a popular way in recent years for children to naturally learn literacy skills. Through play, children learn to make sense of the world and learn new ideas, concepts, and skills. Within play, children develop an understanding of the function and influence of the written word through discovery, hypothesis raising or questioning, and experimentation. Research by Rask and Williams

(2003) supported the significance for early literacy play activities within everyday contexts in the family home. Activities at home that supported emergent literacy development included:

- structured games and activities;
- rhyming and phonics games;
- commercially produced games;
- letter games;
- alphabet puzzles;
- informative games that form part of family rituals (music in the car, jingles on television, reading environmental print);
- the engagement in play or literacy activities inspired by story or poetry readings;
- planned imaginative play; and
- children imitating their older siblings.

Although the research by Rask and Williams (2003) was limited by a small number of participants, it still demonstrated the importance of imaginative play as a way of learning in the preschool years.

According to Saracho and Spodek (2006), “Literacy interactions, strategies, and activities in the children’s play environment can facilitate their acquisition of literacy.” Play experiences allow children to engage in opportunities to utilize language in literate ways and to use literacy as they have seen it practiced in their environments. These authors maintained that the interactions between literacy and play have been developed

and understood through constructivist theories. Piaget developed his theory on how children acquire knowledge through developmental stages in early childhood development (Piaget, 1972). Vygotsky's focus was more on symbolic play and how children learn through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1935). Bronfenbrenner developed his own ecological theory. All three researchers concluded that children grow and develop in relation to their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Literacy can be viewed as a social practice perspective in which children learn literacy through their family members (Anderson & Mui, 2008).

Fathers are also able to promote the development of literacy skills at home. Research by Saracho (2007) demonstrated that fathers can read books to their children that are appropriately chosen, engage their children in discussions about books they have read, create a list of books their children have read, and encourage their children to read even more. Saracho (2007) discovered that children who had actively involved fathers performed better in school, had higher self-esteem, and healthier relationships with other children. Father involvement positively impacts their children's personal and academic success. Strategies fathers may utilize when reading with their children include: (a) being prepared to engage in a literacy activity, (b) allowing children to share what they are interested in, (c) including newspapers and magazines in literacy activities, (d) creating characters by varying voice pitch while reading, (e) introducing reading based on various interests, and (f) utilizing community events that are focused on including fathers (Saracho, 2007).

Reading Theatre

Reading Theatre is a learning activity where the participants actively interpret a written text orally. In other words, they essentially use props, puppets, or other materials from their environment to make the text come to life in the form of a “play.” Doleis and Huang (2007) indicated that parents may become frustrated with storybook time when their children are not interested. They believed that giving parents other tools to improve storytelling time would lead to children becoming excited about the activity! The researchers indicated that constructivist learning consists of building knowledge and comprehension and not simply receiving it. During the course of active rather than passive learning, learners realize their own responses and ideas. Learners generate their own understanding, reflect on their own interpretation, and generalize and apply rather than regurgitate what they learning. Researchers consider this type of active learning more comprehensive and lifelong (Doleis & Huang, 2007). The Reading Theatre approach encourages children’s active involvement and where participants interpret a written text orally. In other words, they essentially use props, etc. to make the text come to life in the form of a “play.” These researchers argued that after teaching this approach to parents, parents found that they felt more informed and prepared to engage their child in literacy activities.

Benefits of Family Involvement, Reading Aloud, and Family Literacy

A study by Georgiou, Kirby, Parrila, and Stephenson (2008) produced results that showed that children who are read to positively correlated with children’s letter

knowledge and kindergarten word reading. Children who were directly taught letter names, sounds, and how to read words at home correlated positively with strong reading skills. Children who were taught at home before entering school were more advanced in their development of phonological sensitivity, letter knowledge, and word reading. Research also has demonstrated the importance of read-alouds for children who are both first- and second- language speakers. Finally, read-alouds assist in the growth of oral language (Fisher, Flood, Frey, & Lapp, 2004).

Studies reveal that children's understanding of how print is used, as well as having knowledge of letters, affects children's ability to read once they reach the primary grades (Darling, 2005). If a child's home involves a literacy-rich environment, children tend to demonstrate higher level reading skills and knowledge when they enter kindergarten. Conversely, children that do not experience literacy-rich environments fail to demonstrate higher-level reading skills and knowledge.

It is important to promote literacy activities at home before entering kindergarten. To promote phonemic awareness, parents can (a) sing alphabet songs with their child; (b) read stories of the child's choosing; (c) help their child clap the beats or syllables in words; (d) point out letters, particularly letters from the child's name; (e) play with language and rhymes, and (f) sing songs that manipulate phonemes. Phonetic awareness is a child's ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes, or sounds that possess meaning (Darling, 2005)

Phonics is defined as the relationship between the sounds in a language and the letters that are utilized to represent those sounds. To promote phonics instruction, parents

should encourage their child to (a) point to words and say them aloud while writing, (b) listen to their child read, (c) help their child sort words, (d) help their child define larger words by breaking them into smaller chunks, and (e) play spelling and word games.

The ability to read or sound out words indicates fluency. In regards to promoting fluency, Darling (2005) recommended that parents:

- read aloud often and encourage their child to read aloud;
- allow their child to choose books to read;
- reread favorite books;
- model reading for enjoyment;
- act out a book or story;
- help their child learn and use new words; and
- talk with their child when they go to the library about how to choose books that are interesting and at an appropriate skill level.

When looking at improving children's vocabulary development, parents ought to (a) read aloud a variety of topics, (b) talk with their child about daily events and about books as they read together, (c) talk about illustrations and text and how they relate to one another, and (d) help their child learn new words that relate to their child's interests.

Darling recommended strategies to promote comprehension development as well, which relates to a child's vocabulary development. Strategies included (a) encouraging parents to ask their child to predict what may happen next in a storybook; (b) ask who, what, where, when, and why questions about a book; (c) ask their child questions about a book's topic before reading; and (d) ask their child about the main idea in a book.

In order to promote print concepts, parents should (a) point out the title and author's name before reading a book, (b) talk about where the words are on a page and how to read left to right, (c) play games to match lowercase and uppercase letters, (d) expose their child to various types of print, and (e) make a book with their child. These activities promote children's learning of print concepts during a read-aloud.

Darling (2005) also provided recommendations to assist in promoting children's writing development. She suggested that parents be encouraged to (a) provide writing tools, (b) prompt their child to write his/her name, (c) ask their child to name letters or words aloud while writing, and (d) plan a time for their child to practice writing daily. Writing directly relates to other literacy development as a child learns to read text.

A longitudinal study by Burchinal, Jurgens, and Roberts (2005) examined various aspects of what promotes literacy development. They looked at frequency of book readings, child interest during book readings, maternal book reading strategies, maternal sensitivity, and overall home environment. This study determined that mothers who utilized more book reading strategies had children who have higher vocabulary scores over time between age three and entry into kindergarten.

According to research by Bartanusz and Sulova (2003), the way children are spoken to influences the development of their language. Their research included observing and coding the interactions between parents and child during read alouds. While observing, they recorded the frequency of assertive speech acts (whose function is to describe a state of the world), expressive speech acts (relating to expression of the reader's psychological state or translating the child's state of mind, and directives

(demands for attention, information requests, and attention directions). Their conclusions indicated that fathers appeared to expect more from children than mothers and that it would be interesting to study non-verbal behaviors (proximity, touching, looks, and gesturing) during read aloud activities (Bartanusz & Sulova, 2003).

Literacy Impacts on Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities

Children with significant physical and speech delays may experience difficulties in reading due to dissimilar or limited literacy experiences, limited phonological processing abilities, or a deficit in valuable reading strategies. Children who have significant delays in physical and speech development typically have different literacy experiences due to limited mobility which can make it difficult to manipulate books. Children may not possess the ability to ask questions, request information, and engage in interactive conversation about reading materials. Children may also miss out on literacy activities due to lower expectations, time that is necessary for therapies, and barriers within the physical environment. Coleman-Martin and Heller (2007) presented three studies that demonstrated the success of the Non-Verbal Reading Approach for children with delays in physical and speech development. This approach has proven to be effective in teaching this group of children how to decode and identify words.

Hawken, Johnston, and McDonnell (2008) discovered that more than one in three children experience considerable difficulty in learning to read. At the same time, a significant correlation exists between the skills with which children enter school and their later academic performance. Other research indicates that if children are not given

literacy experiences until school-age that it can severely limit the reading and writing levels they ultimately accomplish (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2008). It is critical that all children, including children with developmental delays or disabilities, become engaged in activities, experiences, and opportunities that promote and teach literacy skills (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2008). A review of literature by Hawken, Johnston, and McDonnell (2008) found that creating a literacy-rich environment included providing opportunities for children to learn book knowledge and appreciation, acquire print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and practice early writing. This review of literature demonstrated that children with disabilities and developmental delays may experience more limited access to literacy opportunities. Specific strategies for working with children with motor delays, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and communication delays were recommended by the authors.

Gaps in Research

While most educators agree that regular read-alouds are beneficial on a regular basis, the specifics on how to actually conduct the read-alouds remain less clear. Most research on read-alouds reports only the outcomes of read-alouds and not how to implement them properly. The research rarely includes a section on the processes that educators should utilize to do a read-aloud, particularly for younger children. “Read-alouds model expressive, enthusiastic reading, transmit the pleasure of reading, and invite listeners to be readers (Fisher, Flood, Frey, & Lapp, 2004, p. 8). Reading aloud is one of the ways that educators can promote literacy for children of any age. Read-alouds

introduce children to the enjoyment of reading and the skill of listening while developing their vocabulary, pragmatic backgrounds, concepts of print, and story (Fisher, Flood, Frey, & Lapp, 2004) but the majority of research out there does not indicate how this should be done to best enhance literacy development.

Most family literacy and read-aloud studies focused on older school age children and only a few studies centered on children at the early childhood level (Georgiou, Kirby, Parrila, & Stephenson, 2008). Thus, the focus of this research involves an exploration of the strategies that parents can utilize to improve the quality of read aloud activities. Strategies that are currently utilized for children ages three to five as well as in kindergarten may be generalized for children from birth to age three. So how does parental training on read alouds impact the quality of the read aloud?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Participants included two families who were enrolled in the county's Birth to Three Program. Each family included one child that had qualified for Birth to Three services due to a developmental delay or diagnosed disability. Both families had already been receiving services through the Birth to Three Program and this researcher was their Service Coordinator and Early Childhood Special Education Teacher.

The first family, who will be called the K family, consisted of a single working mother, an older five-year-old brother, and a two-year-old girl that received physical therapy on a weekly basis. She had been receiving services through Birth to Three since infancy per a diagnosis of spina bifida at birth. She turned three 9 months after the intervention began. The K girl was reevaluated every 2 months by the early childhood teacher. Her time was spent between her mother's home and father's home. In this study, the mother participated in the study and the father did not. The K family lived in a duplex in a middle-class neighborhood.

The second family, who will be called the G family, consisted of a stay-at home mother, a full-time working father, a six-year-old son, a five-year-old daughter, a four-year-old son, and a two-year-old daughter. The two-year-old daughter had been receiving speech therapy for approximately 7 months due to a speech and language delay. The only diagnosis was a developmental delay. The G girl turned three only 3 months

after the intervention began. After the school year began, this girl spent entire days at home with her mother while her siblings were in school. Family G lived in an upper-class neighborhood and they owned their home.

Both families were given the option of becoming involved in the study. It was emphasized that the families' choice to participate or not to participate would not influence their children's receipt of services. Both families were willing to give their time to participate in this study and also to videotape themselves during read-aloud sessions three times per week unless being observed.

Setting

The intervention occurred within the families' homes. The families were provided the training to enhance read-alouds, as well as the video equipment to record their family read-aloud sessions. The families chose the locations in their home for where read-alouds occurred.

Consent

A letter of informed consent was given to each family prior to beginning participation in the study (see Appendix A). It was verbally reviewed with them to ensure complete understanding of the form and the study in which they were to participate. This consent form was created to be in compliance with the Internal Review Board (IRB). A copy of the letter from the IRB may be viewed in Appendix F.

Materials/Tools

Each family needed a video camera. Family G utilized their own video camera and one was provided to Family K at no cost. Materials necessary for the study included information in the form of a hand-out that was given to the families (see Appendix B). The hand-out included strategies and techniques that may help enhance read-aloud sessions. Each hand-out was reviewed verbally with each family. Both families also were given a recorded video of this researcher demonstrating each strategy from the hand-out with a four-year-old child.

The protocol contained in Appendix C was used during observations in person and via video tape. Both the author of this study and an inter-rater with an educational background in education collected data on the frequency of specific behaviors. In addition, both data collectors evaluated qualitative data for emergent themes. The inter-rater was trained to record the study's frequency data and to analyze data for ethnographic themes.

Design/Procedure

This study utilized a single subject design. The participants were chosen based on their enrollment in the county's Birth to Three Program. The two families involved had a child that qualified for services through Birth to Three due to a developmental delay or diagnosed disability. Baseline data was collected via an in-person observation of a read aloud between a parent and their child or observation of a taped read-aloud session. After the parental training session, data was collected for a 6-week period with the parents

videotaping read-aloud sessions three times a week. The data collected included the frequency counts of the adult pointing to print, asking questions of the child, applying text to real-life experiences, referring to illustrations, using props/puppets for clarification of the text, defining a word within the text, and making a prediction of what will occur next. Inter-rater reliability was computed on one third of all observations. A protocol itemizing the enhanced read-aloud components was used by both raters (see Appendix C). Results were displayed on graphs to record any changes that may have occurred from the beginning of the study to the end.

This study also included a qualitative design in the form of frequent observations before, during, and after the intervention. Read-aloud sessions were observed three times per week either in person or through a videotape that the families recorded. Inter-rater reliability was obtained with another professional with a background in early childhood education. Both the researcher and the inter-rater noted themes that occurred throughout the read-aloud and triangulation occurred to discover common themes. The inter-rater observed one out of three observations through use of a videotape.

Observations

Observations were conducted before, during, and after the intervention both in-person and via video-tape. The families videotaped their read-aloud sessions three times per week, unless this researcher was present. An inter-rater observed the read-aloud sessions one out of three times through the viewing of the videotapes. An observation

protocol was utilized so that the researcher and inter-rater could record the frequency of specific behaviors (see Appendix C).

Analyzing the Data

The data gathered from the single-subject design was analyzed and displayed on graphs (see Appendix D). The frequencies of each activity being observed was totaled and put on a graph to display any changes that occurred from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

The data gathered from the qualitative design was analyzed through triangulation of the data between the researcher and inter-rater. Common themes were formulated that both the researcher and inter-rater recorded during observations of the read-aloud activities. The results were discussed in the results section in a narrative form.

Validity

Many studies have established the validity of a single-subject research design (Justice, Pence, & Pullen, 2008). In addition, this study was conducted by an early childhood professional. The inter-rater had background in education and was well-trained in the data collection techniques.

Validity of qualitative design was shown through the credibility of the research and both data collectors had a background in education. Videotaping also was used to triangulate data and form themes.

Reliability

Inter-rater reliability was obtained with the single-subject design. The inter-rater was a professional with a background in education. She observed one out of three video tapings of read-aloud sessions, which came to one time per week during the 6-week intervention. The inter-rater tallied frequencies of the specified read-aloud activities. These frequency numbers were compared with the researcher's findings to determine reliability.

Inter-rater reliability also was obtained within the qualitative design. The inter-rater observed one out of three video tapings of read-aloud sessions. The inter-rater wrote down any themes that she observed through the read-aloud that indicated a positive read-aloud session. The inter-rater's observations were used to triangulate data with the researcher's data to form common themes that may increase the quality of a read-aloud.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Based on a mixed-methods design, this study investigated whether parent training would affect the quality of a read-aloud session with a child with a developmental delay. Each of the two families videotaped themselves reading one book to their two-year-old daughter with a developmental delay three times per week. The initial session was videotaped before read-aloud strategies were given to the families. Both families were given a DVD of strategies being modeled, but both were unable to utilize the DVD in their DVD players due to technical difficulties. Family G took 2 weeks longer than Family K to complete their sessions. They committed to videotaping three sessions over the course of 6 weeks. Both families ended with 18 sessions in total. Family K videotaped most of the sessions with the video camera propped up on a table. Family G's sessions were videotaped by another person. Both families had the mother reading stories aloud exclusively. The videotapes were then viewed by a researcher and inter-rater with a background in education.

Frequency Data Results

The data collected included the frequency counts of the adult pointing to print, asking questions of the child, applying text to real-life experiences, referring to illustrations, using props/puppets for clarification of the text, defining a word within the text, and making a prediction of what will occur next. The inter-rater viewed and

collected data for 6 of the 18 sessions. The data for all read-aloud sessions are in Appendix E. The sessions listed in the tables include sessions one through 18 for both families. Each number represents the total number of occurrences of the specified behavior on the left side of the table. The first session on each table included the videotaping of baseline data, or in other words, videotaping the families before the intervention occurred. The final column indicates the average of each behavior across read-aloud sessions. According to both tables, the frequency of many behaviors increased following the intervention after the first read-aloud session. Frequencies of discrete behaviors, however, varied throughout the entire intervention. As both tables illustrate, the most commonly occurring behaviors for both Family G and Family K include the adult asking questions and the adult referring to a picture. Both families were least likely to use props or puppets, define a word within the text, or make a prediction.

Trends in Data

The graphs following this section provide a visual of how frequencies of activities varied throughout the intervention. Family G was displayed in blue while Family K was displayed in red. By being displayed on graphs, any changes from the intervention are observable and frequencies can be compared between the two families. For Family G, the frequencies of behaviors spiked immediately following the collection of baseline data and intervention in the areas of: pointing to print, asking a question, applying experiences, and referring to a picture. Overall, great spikes existed in frequencies with all behaviors due to sessions where behaviors were not demonstrated at all. While frequencies were increased during various sessions with Family G, the final session frequencies were not higher than the first baseline read-aloud session. They were higher with the behaviors of asking a question, referring to a picture, using props/puppets, and making a prediction. Although the frequencies were not necessarily all higher during the final read-aloud session, the frequencies were all at some point higher than the original baseline data.

Family G demonstrated lower frequencies of behaviors overall in comparison to Family K. This is shown once again through the following graphs of data. However, Family K demonstrated steady gains in most behaviors including: pointing to print, asking a question, applying experiences, and referring to a picture. All of these behaviors were increased from the baseline data to the final read-aloud session. Like Family K, Family G demonstrated some spikes with some behaviors due to the behaviors sometimes not being demonstrated during a read-aloud session at all. These behaviors with spikes in

data included defining a word and making a prediction. Family G demonstrated less abrupt spikes in data compared to Family K and showed a more gradual growth. The trend lines on each graph indicate the averages of frequency data collected, which shows that the intervention had little to no impact on the frequencies of read-aloud behaviors. However, the specific data displayed with line graphs shows that the frequencies varied throughout the intervention.

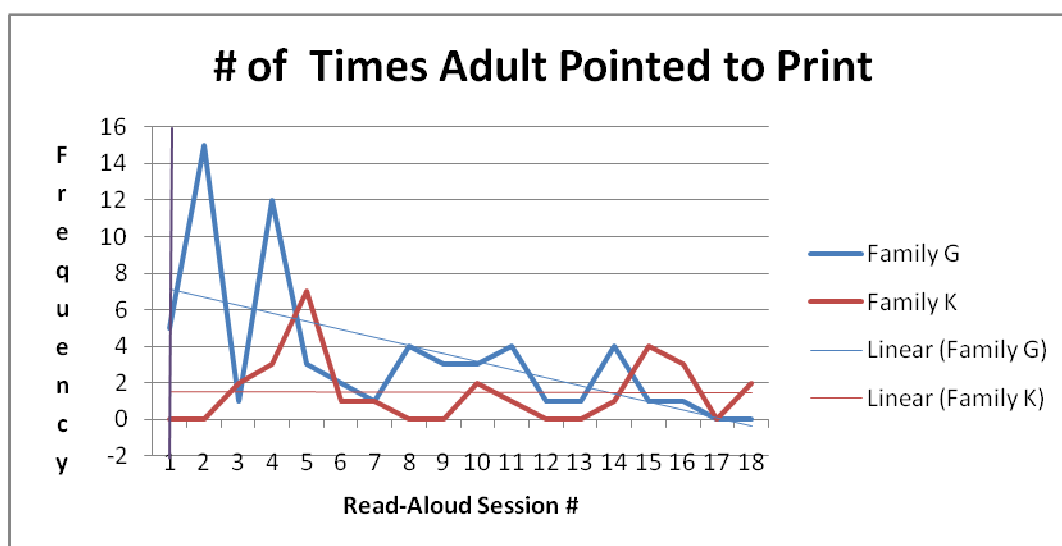


Figure 1. Pointing to print.

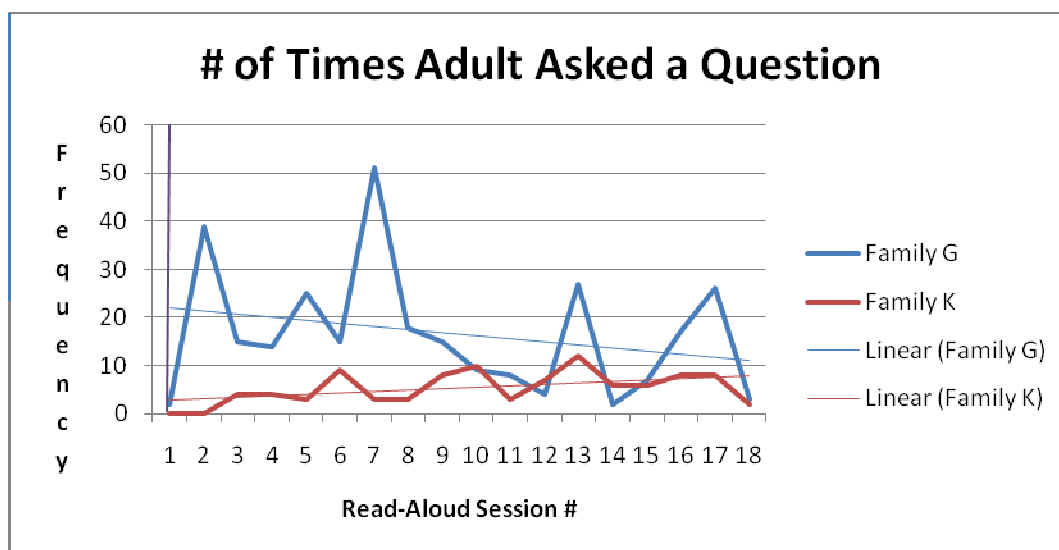


Figure 2. Asking a question.

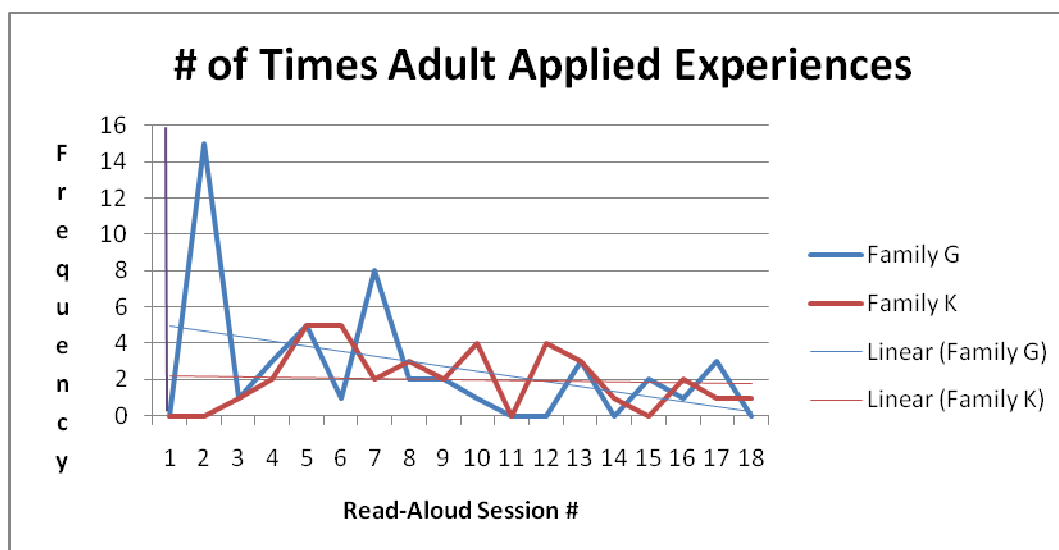


Figure 3. Applying experiences.

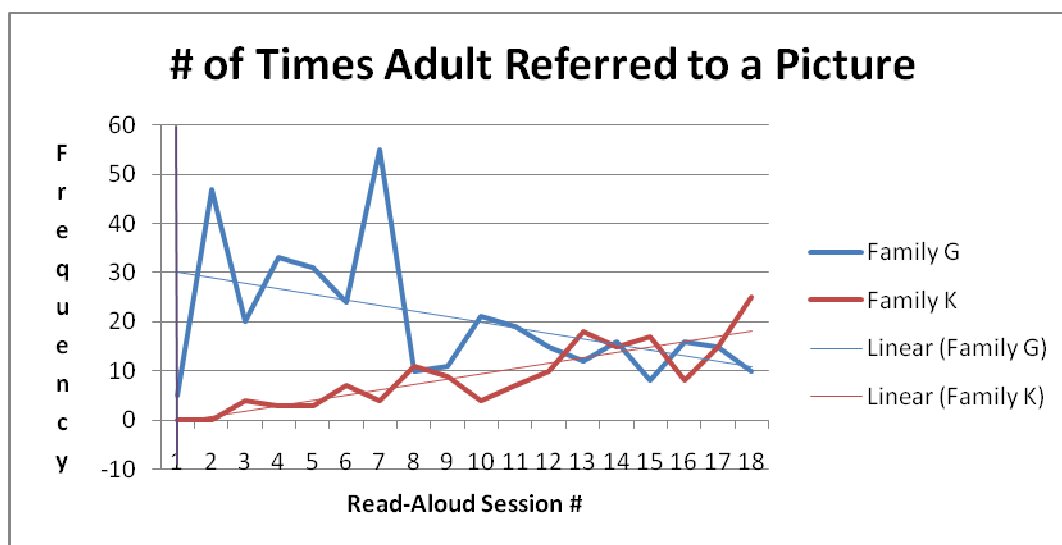


Figure 4. Referring to a picture.

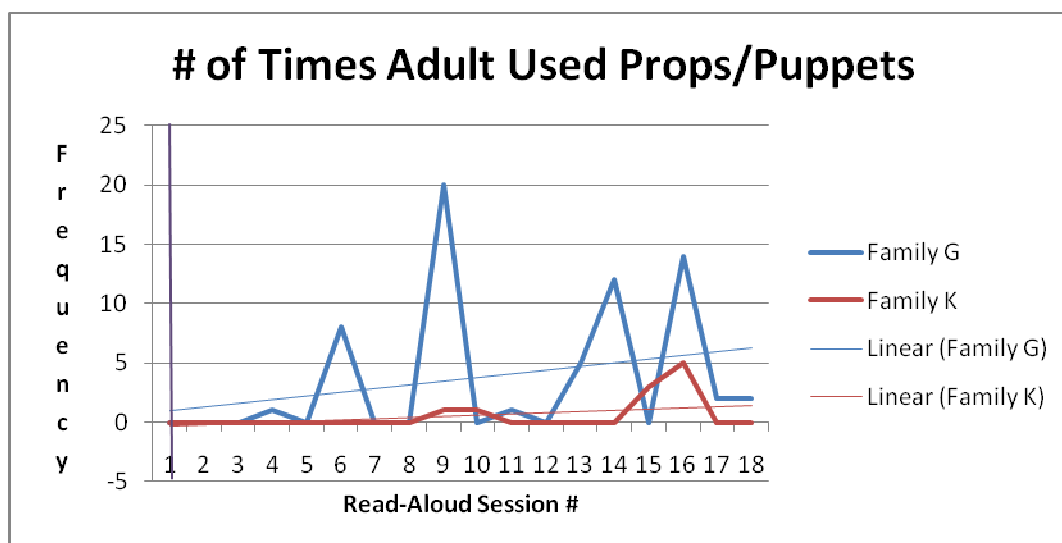


Figure 5. Using props/puppets.

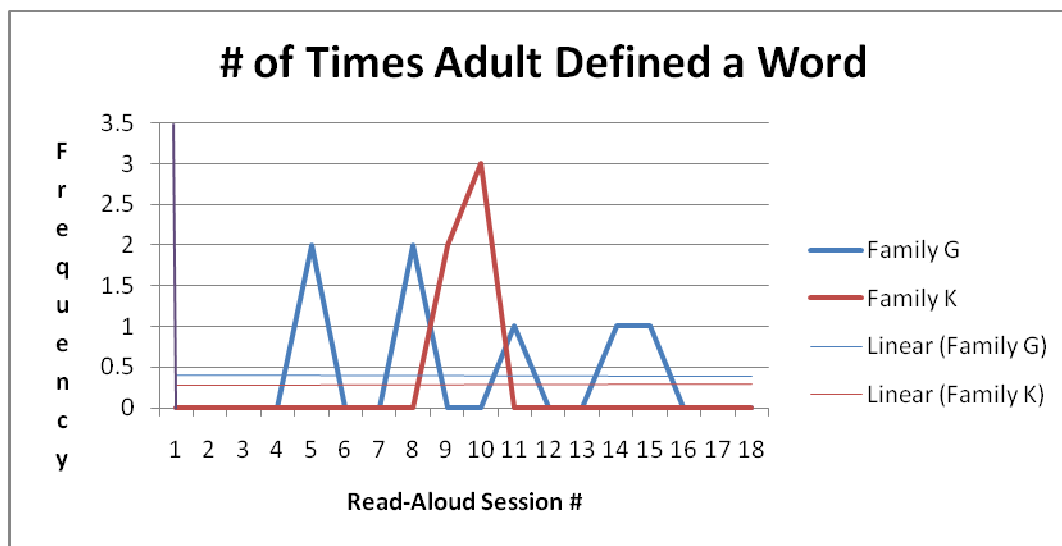


Figure 6. Defining a word.

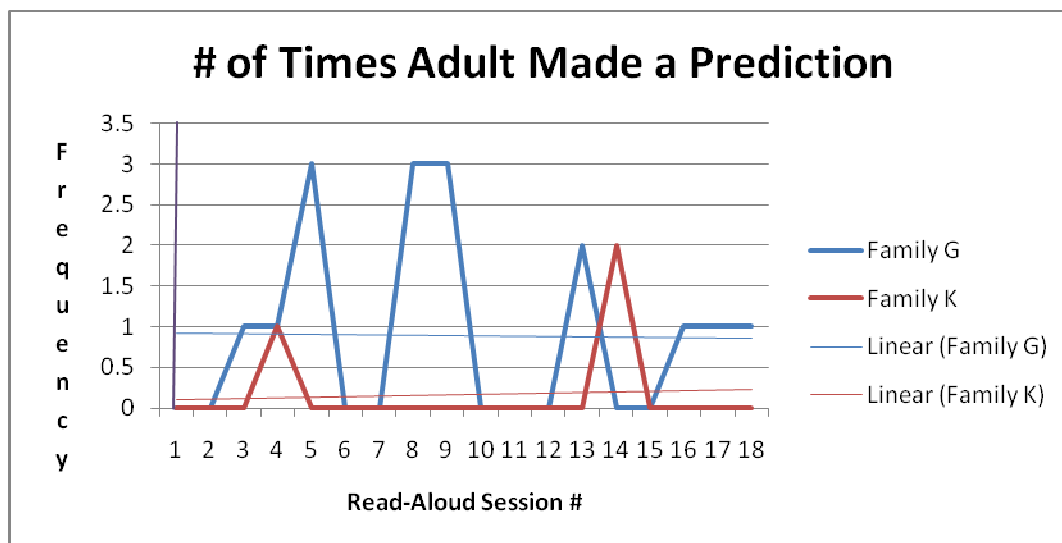


Figure 7. Making a prediction

Inter-rater Reliability Data

Inter-rater reliability data was obtained by viewing 6 of the 18 read-aloud sessions for each family. Overall, inter-rater reliability for both families averaged 90%. The percentages ranged from 78 to 100%. For more specific inter-rater reliability percentages, refer to Appendix D. In instances where the video was unclear, resulting in an inter-rater reliability percentage of less than 50%, both inter-raters watched the video together to reach a consensus on whether or not the specific behavior occurred.

Common Themes

Through the viewing of the videotapes, the inter-rater and primary researcher noted common themes throughout the read-aloud sessions that appeared to enhance the read-aloud sessions. For Family K, inflection was utilized throughout the read-aloud sessions and the mother pointed to illustrations frequently. This mother also asked her daughter many questions and asked her to find many pictures. She also asked her from time to time to turn the page or said "the end" after the story was complete. Notably, the read-aloud sessions took place on a bed or in a chair. The child was either sitting in her mother's lap or cuddling up next to her. The child became noticeably more engaged when her mother created sound effects and changed her voice with each character. The child's attention span was obviously longer for shorter, more age-appropriate books. There were occasions that books were longer with more words and the child was noted to be less interested in comparison to shorter books that contained nursery rhymes or songs. At times, this parent varied her voice to create new voices for each character. When this

occurred, the child was noticeably more engaged. If props were utilized, the child also became more interested. However, props were only utilized when the prop/puppet came with the book (Barney puppet with book).

The mother for Family G also demonstrated a lot of inflection in her voice and she also used a lot of hand gestures to enhance the read-aloud. She allowed and encouraged her daughter to turn the pages and involved her daughter in the story by asking questions and relating the story to real-life experiences. An example was while the mother was reading a book that contained a picture of a pumpkin and she asked her daughter "Remember when we went into our garden and you picked a pumpkin?" The mother also said "the end" at the end of a book and "beep" at times when it was time to turn a page. Illustrations were utilized to enhance and teach throughout each story and the mother paused frequently to allow her daughter to complete phrases. The mother also demonstrated the ability to redirect her daughter back to the story when she became distracted by using a lot more inflection in her voice to interest the child in the book once again. The family read all their stories on a couch or in a bed. This child was also always sitting in her mother's lap or cuddled up next to her during read-aloud sessions. Family G also utilized sound effects, but unlike Family K, read many books with songs and nursery rhymes. This allowed more actions and gestures within those read-aloud sessions. When these types of books were read, the child became engaged and would read or sing along more frequently.

In this study, both families rarely utilized props, defined terms, or made predictions during read-aloud sessions. Read-aloud sessions were upbeat and both families appeared to enjoy read-aloud sessions. Common themes emerged as other strategies utilized by both families which included: adult utilized gestures or various voices for characters, chose more age-appropriate books including length and concept appropriate for age and development, and adult discussed the actual make-up of the book (pages, cover, title page, the beginning and end, reading left to right). All of these strategies were observed throughout read-aloud sessions with both families and appeared to enhance the read-aloud sessions.

Upon completion, both families were asked how the intervention went. Both families felt that some suggestions were more helpful than others and that their daughters enjoyed the read-aloud sessions. They were not distracted by the video camera and became accustomed to its presence. Both families thought it was fun to review the tapes and see the progress. The suggestions and strategies helped them become more aware of effective read-aloud strategies that they could use with their daughters. Both felt there were reading “spots” around the house that worked best for read-aloud sessions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Strengths

Little research previously existed in looking at children at such a young age in regards to read-aloud sessions. Research also rarely targeted the parents in an intervention rather than the children. This study filled a gap in current research. The results indicated that parent training increased the number of positive intervention strategies they used during read-aloud sessions.

Many sessions were videotaped, 18 in total, to look at the progress from the beginning baseline data to the end of the intervention. When looking at the data in Appendix E, it is evident that the frequency of behaviors increased after the first read-aloud session where baseline data was obtained. This study did not necessarily look at the first session to the last session, but the growth from beginning to end. Some behaviors may have been higher with some read-aloud sessions than others depending on the chosen book for that session. For example, some books worked better with props or puppets to enhance the read-aloud session.

Limitations

Due to the fact that the families videotaped the majority of their read-aloud sessions, difficulties existed for the researcher and inter-rater to observe what was happening. It was sometimes very difficult to tell if the mother was pointing to an

illustration and at times, the mother read so quickly that it was difficult to keep up with tallying the frequencies. This was resolved between the research and inter-rater and inter-rater percentages ranged from 78 to 100%. The sample size of the study included only two families and therefore the results cannot be generalized. There was also only one session during which baseline data was obtained.

Implications for Practitioners

This study produced substantial results indicating that giving parents strategies helps increase frequencies of positive behaviors during read-aloud sessions. Even though both families had a daughter with a developmental delay, this did not seem to affect either family in engaging their daughter in a read-aloud session. Family G did have an background in education which likely caused this family to produce higher frequencies of behaviors than Family K. Both families used many of the read-aloud strategies given to them. Other early childhood educators also may find parent training a useful and productive means of promoting early literacy in children with disabilities.

The video modeling the read-aloud sessions may be utilized in the future for other families who may or may not have a child with a developmental delay or disability. Videos will enhance the read-aloud strategies that were given to families and help them apply those strategies more in the future as they are able visualize what each strategy looks like. The read-aloud strategy hand-out also proved useful to families and also may be utilized in the future. The data showed that some suggestions were more applicable than others since both families referred to illustrations and asked questions more than any

other strategies. Both families reported after the intervention that they enjoyed the intervention which included reading to their child.

Recommendations for Future Research

Results of this study suggest a number of future directions for research aimed at understanding read-aloud sessions with a parent and child. A longitudinal follow-up to see if the families continued with the strategies given to them would be beneficial. Overall, both families increased their usage of strategies at certain points during the intervention and in front of a video camera, so it would be beneficial to see if both families continue to utilize those strategies in the future. The trend lines may also indicate that a need for on-going parental training rather than a one-time training session. Additional baseline data would also help in showing the changes from the intervention.

A video was created of the strategies being modeled, but both families were unable to use it due to technological problems. This video would have been better if it had worked properly, but since it did not, it will be corrected so that it may be utilized with other families in the future. It also would be beneficial to do a more in-depth study that would include giving further training periodically throughout the intervention. In this particular study, training only occurred at the beginning so that the cause and effect of the intervention could be studied specifically. Different strategies also would be beneficial to study. In this study, both families rarely utilized props, defined terms, or made predictions during read-aloud sessions. In the future, those strategies could be replaced with other strategies that emerged as themes in this study such as utilizing

gestures and changing pitch of voice for various characters, choosing more age-appropriate books, or talking about the actual make-up of the book (pages, cover, beginning and end, title pages). A child's attention span for read-aloud sessions could also be explored more in future research in relation to strategies utilized and books chosen for read-aloud sessions.

Advice to future practitioners also would include utilizing a larger sample size. A pitfall to avoid includes avoiding families videotaping read-aloud sessions from the front. They must videotape from behind the person reading so that the researchers are able to see what is occurring on the pages of the book.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT DOCUMENT

Tanya Schmidt, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, is conducting a study for a graduate degree in special education. The study looks at how read-aloud strategy training for parents with a young child with a developmental delay affects the quality of the read-aloud.

I would appreciate your family's participation in this study. I will share instructional techniques, information, and tools with you to enhance read-aloud time with your child.

During the study, I will observe you and your child during read-alouds in your home twice. I will observe you before I give you the strategies and again at the end of six weeks. I will be taking notes during these observations and form themes of what activities promote quality read-alouds. I will also be looking for specific behaviors from which I had given you information. In addition, I will ask you to videotape your read-alouds three times a week for six weeks. Another professional will be reviewing the videotapes to ensure reliability of results.

The information I gather will be recorded in anonymous form. I will not release any information about your family in a way that could identify you.

I do not anticipate that the study will present any medical or social risk to you, other than the inconvenience of the extra time required for the training, observations, and videotaping. Participation in this study may not benefit you directly.

Once the study is completed, I would be glad to send the results to you. Thank you for your time.

If you have any complaints or questions about your treatment as a participant in this study, please call or write:

Chair, Institutional Review Board
For Protection of Human Participants
c/o Grants Office
UW Oshkosh
Oshkosh, WI 54901
920/424-3215

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the nature of the study. I understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I have not waived any legal or

APPENDIX A (Continued)

human right and that I may contact the researcher at the University of Oshkosh (Tanya Schmidt 920-251-2947) at any time. I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I may refuse to participate or I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. In addition, I understand that if I have any concerns about my treatment during the study, I can contact the researchers at any time.

Parent SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME	DATE
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Child SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME	DATE
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APPENDIX B

Family Hand-Outs

Directions: Try the following activities with your child while reading with him or her!

*Point to the print as you read it. Use your finger to point to each word as you read it. Also try to talk about letters as you are reading!

*Ask your child questions while you are reading. Do not be afraid to stop during the story and ask a question to help your child understand what you are reading to him or her.

*Apply the story to real-life experiences that your child will understand. If you are reading a storybook about picnics, relate the story to a time when you took your child on a picnic! Or, take your child on a picnic and read the story again! It will make more sense to your child if it is something that he or she experienced!

*Refer to illustrations while you are reading a story. This means either pointing to the picture as you are reading about it, or stopping and talking/explaining the picture in the story. The pictures give your child a visual representation about what you are reading and can further enhance your child's understanding of the story.

*Use props, puppets, etc. to help clarify the text. This will really help your child understand the text and also remember the experience of reading with you. The more fun you make it, the better! Feel free to even give characters different voices!

*Stop and define words while you are reading. If there is a word that you know is new to your child, take a moment to stop and explain it. Remember to use words that your child will understand.

*Make a prediction of what may occur next. You can do this by you making the prediction or asking your child to make the prediction. He or she is young to be thinking this abstractly, so may not be able to make a prediction on his or her own. By you modeling this activity, it will eventually cause your child to learn how to do this as well.

FINALLY, HAVE FUN WITH READING WITH YOUR CHILD!!!

APPENDIX C

Observation Protocol

Directions: Put a tally in the box next to the activity each time it occurs within a read-aloud session.

Adult pointing to print	
Adult asking questions of child	
Adult applying text to real-life experiences	

APPENDIX C (Continued)

Adult referring to illustrations	
Adult using props/puppets for clarification of the text	
Adult defining a word within the text	
Adult making prediction of what will occur next	

APPENDIX D

Inter-rater Reliability Percentages

Family G

Session #	1	4	7	10	13	18	Average %
Adult points to print	80	92	100	100	100	100	95
Adult asks questions	100	100	76	67	96	67	84
Adult applies experiences	100	67	100	100	75	100	90
Adult refers to picture	60	91	100	62	55	100	78
Adult uses props/puppets	100	50	100	100	100	50	83
Adult defines a word	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Adult makes a prediction	100	100	100	100	50	100	92

* Data is a percentage

Family K

Session #	1	4	7	10	13	18	Average %
Adult points to print	100	67	100	67	100	67	84
Adult asks questions	100	50	75	77	100	100	84
Adult applies experiences	100	100	50	100	75	100	88
Adult refers to picture	100	100	50	94	89	100	87
Adult uses props/puppets	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Adult defines a word	100	100	100	60	100	100	93
Adult makes a prediction	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Data is a percentage

APPENDIX E

Table E-1

Family G Data

Session #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Av.
Adult points to print	5	15	1	12	3	2	1	4	3	3	4	1	1	4	1	1	0	0	3.4
Adult asks questions	2	39	15	14	25	15	51	18	15	9	8	4	27	2	7	17	26	3	16.5
Adult applies experiences	0	15	1	3	5	1	8	2	2	1	0	0	3	0	2	1	3	0	2.6
Adult refers to picture	5	47	20	33	31	24	55	10	11	21	19	15	12	16	8	16	15	10	20.4
Adult uses props/puppets	0	0	0	1	0	8	0	0	20	0	1	0	5	12	0	14	2	2	3.6
Adults defines a word	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	.4
Adult makes a prediction	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	.9

APPENDIX E (Continued)

Table E-2

Family K Data

Session #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Av.
Adult points to print	0	0	2	3	7	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	4	3	0	2	1.5
Adult asks questions	0	0	4	4	3	9	3	3	8	10	3	7	12	6	6	8	8	2	5.3
Adult applies experiences	0	0	1	2	5	5	2	3	2	4	0	4	3	1	0	2	1	1	2.0
Adult refers to picture	0	0	4	3	3	7	4	11	9	4	7	10	18	15	17	8	15	25	8.9
Adult uses props/puppets	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	0	.6
Adults defines a word	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.3
Adult makes a prediction	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	.2

APPENDIX F



August 20, 2009

Ms. Tanya Schmidt
19 S. Kayser St.
Fond du Lac, WI 54935

Dear Ms. Schmidt:

On behalf of the UW Oshkosh Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Participants (IRB), I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved for the following research: Read-Aloud Strategy Training for Parents.

Your research has been categorized as NON-EXEMPT, which means it is subject to compliance with federal regulations and University policy regarding the use of human participants as described in the IRB application material. Your protocol is approved for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. A new application must be submitted to continue this research beyond the period of approval. In addition, you must retain all records relating to this research for at least three years after the project's completion.

Please note that it is the principal investigator's responsibility to promptly report to the IRB Committee any changes in the research project, whether these changes occur prior to undertaking, or during the research. In addition, if harm or discomfort to anyone becomes apparent during the research, the principal investigator must contact the IRB Committee Chairperson. Harm or discomfort includes, but is not limited to, adverse reactions to psychology experiments, biologics, radioisotopes, labeled drugs, or to medical or other devices used. Please contact me if you have any questions (PH# 920/424-7172 or e-mail: rauscher@uwosh.edu).

Sincerely,

Dr. Frances Rauscher
Dr. Frances Rauscher
IRB Chair

cc: Billie Jo Rylance/Stacey Skoning
1637

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