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IMPROVING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE USE OF READING APPS

Evelyn McAdams Lemons

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Bethel University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education.

Saint Paul, MN
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Abstract

A qualitative case study was conducted in a rural Title I school in the Piedmont of North Carolina using a pre and post-intervention survey and participant interviews, during the summer of 2016. The intervention was a workshop for parents to show them how to use online reading apps at home to help their child with reading. The goal was to determine if that workshop would improve parental engagement. The study found that the one time offering of the workshop for parents did improve parental engagement. The summary of the findings for the study are described in chapter four. Practical recommendations that can be widely used in schools by both principals and teachers and also by future researchers are shared in chapter five.

The intervention was a one-time workshop for parents taught in the computer laboratory of the school. The workshop was taught by two first grade teachers. The content of the workshop was very specific and hands-on for parents, and the subject was to demonstrate the “top ten reading tools” that parents could use at home and provide an explanation of why parents should continue this important work through the summer. For the study, the researcher used a pre-intervention survey, post-intervention survey, then face-to-face interviews with the participants one month after the workshop to collect data on how useful the information was to the parents and to see if their level of parental engagement had changed after having one month to practice what they had learned. The study began one week before the end of the school year to engage parents at home over the summer.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my parents Howard Haley McAdams, Sr. and Dorothy Evelyn McAdams, who taught me to use the gifts the Lord has given me to help all the people I can by their faithful example. Their faith in me launched me into my career as a college student unafraid to face the future when I left home for college right after I had just turned 18 years old. This degree concludes my fourth college degree. All these years later, at the age of 51, I still thank the Lord for the lessons my parents taught me in hard work, faith, love, persistence, endurance and hope for a better day. In honor of my husband Jeffrey Lemons who has sacrificed much time with me while I worked on this advanced degree. His encouragement and patience with this whole process has been steadfast from the beginning to the end and I am so blessed and thankful to have had his support at home.

Also in honor of our son Joey Lemons and daughter-in-law Katie Lemons. Both Joey and Katie have been cheering me on through the years of going back to school and congratulating me on the small successes along the way.

In honor of my siblings Ronnie McAdams, Connie McAdams
Howard Haley McAdams, Jr. and Della McAdams Reeves.

In memory also of my father-in-law Cleo Lemons and in honor of my mother-in-law Ruby Lemons.

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Dr. Robert Johnson

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Mrs. Katie Lemons

Former Teachers: Mr. Tommy Leonard who taught me in Horticulture at Orange High School

and encouraged me to excel in the Future Farmers of America. When he retired, it was

my honor to fill his position for three years at Orange High School until I went through a

call to full time ministry and went back to school, and then became a full time pastor.

Mr. Charles Watters who taught me in the sixth grade to pursue excellence, never give up

and treat everyone with respect.

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List of Abbreviations and Pseudonyms

AR	Accelerated Reading
SES	Socio-Economic Status
BOG	Beginning of Grade: score on reading achievement test
EOG	End of Grade: score on reading achievement test
BOG	Beginning of grade score: Level 3 proficiency in reading
BOG	Beginning of grade score reading achievement test
EOG	End of grade score on reading achievement test
Lyons Elementary	Pseudonym for the selected school for the study, rural elementary school in the Piedmont of North Carolina
Green School District	Pseudonym for the selected district for the Piedmont of North Carolina
Superintendent One	Retired superintendent pseudonym
Superintendent Two	Current superintendent pseudonym
Principal One	Pseudonym Lyons Elementary Principal
Principal Two	High School principal in the Green District pseudonym
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
RTA	Read to Achieve

Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

The importance of reading and the 2016 state of reading achievement in North Carolina in grade three is the topic to be explored for the background of this study. Almost half of grade three students in North Carolina were not able to read at grade level by the end of the 2014-2015 school year. The most recent state law to address this concern in reading education is North Carolina's House Bill 950, Session Law 2012-142. Teachers and school administrators are working hard to help children in North Carolina read at grade level, yet there is still a great need with nearly 40% of students in the state currently reading below grade level in third grade. For the school year of 2014-2015, there were 70,148 third grade students who demonstrated reading proficiency on Beginning of Grade Reading Test Level 3 (BOG3), End of Grade Reading Test (EOG), or the End of Grade Reading Test Level 3 (EOG3). These are the reading tests administered at the beginning of grade 3 (BOG) and at the end of grade 3 (EOG) that are used by the state of North Carolina to determine if a student is reading at a level of mastery that the state considers proficient. Students were able to retest where he/she scored Level 2 or lower, which put the state at 59.3% of third graders reading on the level of proficiency (NCDPI, 2016). There are five levels that the reading scores are scored and rated for proficiency. Level 1 and Level 2 are considered below an acceptable rate of proficiency. Level 3 is acceptable. Level 4 and Level 5 are strong levels of proficiency. For a student to be at grade level they need to be reading at a Level 3 or above. The Green School District during 2014-2015 had 263 third grade students with a reading proficiency level of 60% at EOG. Green School District is in close alignment with the scores for the state in reading which both stand in need for great improvement in

reading proficiency. One potential solution to improve reading proficiency would be to involve parent volunteers. Teachers and administrators are looking for new possible solutions to help children learn to read on grade level and educators are going back to the idea of parental engagement as appealing because parents do make a difference (NCDPI, 2016).

Green School District is making a significant effort to incorporate technology into the way educators teach students. The District's goal is to prepare students for careers in the future that will require computer literacy, (Superintendent One, personal communication, November 18, 2015).

Green School District received a \$200,000 grant in 2015 to purchase one-to-one devices for one high school. The school purchased 450 Chrome Books and issued them to students and teachers in the fall of the 2015-2016 school year. This is the only school in the district that has funding for one-to-one devices for each student to use in class. Extensive professional development has been offered for each teacher to learn how to incorporate the technology into the teaching of their given subject matter (Principal Two, personal communication, April 4, 2016). Principal One communicated that even though it is great to use technology to help teach a lesson, the use of technology is not going to make an ineffective teacher good. Good teaching skills are still required to make use of technology. School administrators would need to set aside funds to adequately train teachers to use and incorporate the given technology into their daily teaching (Principal One, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

North Carolina and Green School District are placing more and more emphasis on the role parents can play in helping their child be successful in school. No Child Left Behind legislation helped draw more attention to the role of parents' participation in education (Helge Sen, 2012). Due to the changing context of modern families, the use of the term "parent" in the

current study includes adults who are helping raise children in the home, such as foster parents, guardians, and grandparents.

Parental engagement is needed for students to be successful in school and the understanding that parents are vital to children's learning has been a building block in education for many years (Finn, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). The topic of parental engagement has been the subject of research for a long period of time. Looking for ways to improve parental engagement is not a new idea. Martin (2011) notes in her work as a teacher and researcher, that parental involvement changes when parents are given clear instructions and expectations are specifically spelled out. A positive approach toward parental engagement is to work from the perspective that parents want what is best for their children and want to be involved (Martin, 2011). Although parents want to help their child be successful, there are obstacles for some parents, such as being a single parent, working more than one job, not having a high-school diploma, food, heat, and medical care insecurities (Celano & Neuman, 2010; Gifford et al., 2010; Martin, 2011; Pemberton, 2011). In addition to obstacles, some parents want to help but have not been successful in navigating good communication with teachers. For other parents, their own poor literacy skills are a barrier to helping their child with reading at home (Noe, 2012).

School administrators want more parents engaged for the benefit of the student. There is not a simple solution on how to get more parents enthusiastically engaged with their student's work. The impact of parental engagement in the process of learning to read is great enough that more research is needed to explore how to get parents engaged who may or may not be interested in their child's learning. Parental support of early literacy is seen as a building block for future academic success. Research shows the connection between early literacy skills and success later

in school (McCarthy, 2000; DeCusati, 2004; Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Krieder & Simpkins, 2004; Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). These studies were conducted to look for the best ways schools could include parents in their children's education to improve reading achievement (McCarthy, 2000; DeCusati, 2004; Dearing et al., 2004; Baker et al., 2001)

The term "digital natives" is used to describe the children of the coming generation that have been exposed to some form of smart technology from a very early age (Thomas, 2011). It is common for children entering school to have some computer skills that their parents may have not yet mastered. All families are not skilled in being able to use technology or resources that may already be available to their family for free, like online reading apps. More technology is available to parents than they may have the skill level to use, and thus help their children at home with school work, like improving reading. The Green School District has an up-to-date website with links available for parents to use as resources to help them tutor their child in reading at home. For parents that do not have much experience using computers, the paradigm of thinking that the parent is tracking everything online may not be accurate and may be unintentionally contributing to a breakdown in communication between the teacher and the parent. Teachers may believe that parents are tracking emails regularly, when in reality, that may not be the case (Mapp, 1999). A lack of computer literacy on the part of parents can hinder good communication with a classroom teacher who uses email as the primary means to communicate to parents.

The school selected for this study is Lyons Elementary School. Lyons is a Title I school in a rural area of the county. The EOG reading scores in 2014-2015 showed 59% of grade three students were proficient in reading (NCDPI, 2015). The average reading scores in third grade for all elementary schools in the county was 59.8% proficient (NCDPI, 2015). Lyons

Elementary School was chosen for the study because of the school's rural location, its Title I status, and correlation between grade three reading achievement scores with the county. The North Carolina state average for third grade reading is 59% proficient (NCDPI, 2015). One factor to consider about the North Carolina third grade reading average is the recent adoption of Common Core State Standards and the changes in testing due to the new standards. When a new curriculum is adopted, it is common to see test scores go down initially as teachers learn how to teach the new curriculum (Principal One, personal communication, April 4, 2016). Additionally, students must learn and adjust to being tested in new ways on new curriculum standards.

Some parents face barriers to engage in strong support to their child's education in ways that educators see in the classroom. Therefore, the work of this study was to determine if an intervention, such as providing parents with a workshop to teach them how to use email and online reading apps may help them become more engaged with their child's reading.

Statement of the Problem

Forty-one percent of grade three North Carolina students were not reading at grade level by the end of the 2014-2015 school year. As a result, legislators and stakeholders have noticed and are looking for ways to bring improvement to third grade reading proficiency across the state. Early parental engagement with student learning is better than later, so the current study seeks to give first grade parents hands on tools that may impact reading achievement by the third grade reading test (Clay, 1985). Parental engagement is a positive influence on student achievement across grade levels (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). However, not all parents are engaged parents. There is a gap of support for some students, and there are unmet needs for others. Teachers and principals are being asked to do more with less financial support in the state of North Carolina. It is worth the time invested in

the topic of parental engagement in the hopes of helping find a simple intervention that assists parents in becoming more engaged with helping their child learn to read. Providing opportunities for parents to improve online skills may help parents become more engaged with their child's reading, which could in the long term, impact the child's academic success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to look for ways to engage parents of first graders, who are learning to read, by using technology and reading resources available to parents online with their child at home. The study's goal is to seek to build stronger communication with parents and teachers by offering parents training in using reading apps and email. The study did investigate whether or not this simple approach helped improve parental engagement.

Rationale

First grade teachers need as much time to work directly with students in the classroom as possible. Therefore, 90 minutes of uninterrupted time to teach reading is their daily goal. This goal is shaped by the guidelines of the current Green School District curriculum being used for the 2015-2016 school year in North Carolina. Many first grade teachers may not have a teaching assistant in the classroom to give extra support in reading to students who are struggling.

Involving parents to assist their child in school work is a significant contributing factor to a child's success in school (Brown, Denton, Kelly, & Neal, 1999; Clay, 1985; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005a; Fleming, 2012; Huggins, 2011). Granfield and Smith (1995) performed a study with 11 parents of first grade children who were already highly involved in their child's classroom, to determine the impact of doing a one hour training workshop with the parents on parental attitudes towards helping their child with reading at home. Several findings were presented including: parent frustration levels decreased after attending the

workshop, the quantity of time parents spent reading with their child decreased after the workshop, all the parents used the strategies they were taught at the workshop, and parent's felt that their children's attitudes towards reading were better after the parent participated in the workshop. It was a surprising finding in the study to note that the quantity of time parents spent with their children decreased after the parent participated in the workshop. It was noted with the information learned at the workshop; parents may have used their time more efficiently with the time they were giving at home to their child. The capacity to use their time at home more efficiently with their child was seen as a positive impact of the workshop participation. In the end, even a one hour brief meeting talking with parents about how they can help their child with reading at home was shown to be beneficial.

The rationale of this study is not to undermine the work that is already being done by the teacher in working with the parent, or the instruction that is taking place daily in the classroom, but to provide additional support to the teacher to be able to give more one-on-one time to parents who want to increase their skills in how to help their child in reading at home. It is important to parents that their child has an adult that cares about their reading. Parents are looking for the opportunity to build relationships with educators that may extend longer than one school year (Allen, & Kinloch, 2013).

Mapp (1999) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the perceptions of parents labeled "hard to reach." The study looked at parental involvement in their children's education and the factors that influence their engagement, which included 220 low Socio Economic Status; (SES), children over a two year period. Mapp (1999) determined that building relationships between parents and teachers, and a school climate that offered a warm atmosphere of hospitality to the parents, were all necessary elements to facilitate "hard to reach" parents getting engaged

with their child's work at school. Mapp's work underscores the importance of building a relationship between the teacher and the parent in a way that is established on respect, and the teacher showing parents that have great value to add to their child's education. The study develops on the concept of building a relationship with the parent by training parents through a workshop taught by first grade teachers. Not only does the intervention offer the potential to put the needed materials in the hands of parents who want to help their child learn to read, it also offers the opportunity for parents to learn how to use email to improve communication with the teacher, which is very important (Mapp, 1999).

Importance of parental engagement. The practice of parents engaging with their child at home to help with school work is not a new concept. Parental involvement is positively associated with children's reading success (Darling, 2008). The importance of parental engagement is well researched to show that parents who are involved with their child's school work can have a positive impact on their child's achievement, grades, and test scores (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et.al, 2005; Wang, Wildman, & Calhoun, 1996). An increase in family involvement is associated with an increase in literacy performance especially in low SES students (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). Finn (1998) points to three specific behaviors that parents can perform with their child to improve school performance including: organizing the child's time, helping with homework, and discussing school activities and lessons. Parental involvement can also be as simple as modeling reading in front of their children and answering a child's questions on what they are reading, in addition to helping with homework (Dearing et al., 2006; Padak & Rasinski, 2007).

Most parents want their children to be successful readers, but some parents are not skilled in providing reading strategies or activities to promote reading at home (Richardson, Miller,

Richardson, & Sacks, 2008). Meeting the needs of parents in poverty, where they are at, may include looking for ways to support the work that the parents do at home in reading with their children and provide resources like literacy bags to include books, games, flash cards, art supplies and activity sheets (Richardson, Miller, Richardson, & Sacks, 2008). The strategy behind the Family Literacy Bags project was to help parents who are struggling to teach their children to read (Dever & Burts, 2002). The Literacy Bag project sought to fill in a gap of reading supplies to parents. The use of the Family Literacy Bags did increase parental involvement in book reading and helped promote children's interest in literacy activities at home (Dever & Burts, 2002). One shortfall of the Family Literacy Bags project was if a parent could not read the materials sent home with the child, the parent still could have a hard time modeling reading in front of them. Even with materials in hand, some parents needed more skill with their own reading to be able to help their children's reading. Parental involvement was improved overall with the Family Literacy Bags project, but this did not have a means to engage parents who were poor readers themselves.

One meta-analysis reports the effects of parental involvement on urban elementary school students' achievement (Jeynes, 2005). The Jeynes report represented 41 studies that investigated the relationship between academic achievement of urban elementary school children and involvement of parents in their schooling. There was a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. The magnitude of the study was notable with quantitative data being collected from over 20,000 research participants. The correlation, measured in degrees, the association between parental involvement and student achievement for urban elementary students and their parents. Jeynes defined parental involvement as school-sponsored initiatives designed to encourage parents to participate in their children's education.

Consequently, only parents who participated in ways defined by the school were included in the Jeynes study, excluding parents who may be involved in their children's education in ways not recognized or defined by school officials (Jeynes, 2005). The breadth of data from the study indicates that parental involvement makes a significant impact on student achievement. The data collected helps understand the strong impact parents can have on student achievement when parents participate in ways that are defined by the school. Understanding the findings of the Jeynes study still leaves questions that a qualitative case study method could address by looking for the parents perspective on their engagement in their children's school work at home. The use of a qualitative case study for the methodology allows for exploring more than the deficit theory of what parents may be missing. Epstein's frame of reference for parental involvement brings the approach that parents have something to offer even if they do not step foot into the classroom (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). This study moves away from seeing parents, with a deficit that needs to be fixed and moves towards greater understanding in building the relationship with parents as partners in the educational process with the school administrators and teachers. The purpose of this training is to have more tools and better communication with parents. The strategy of being able to get to the voice of the parents themselves and to hear their story of what is helpful for them to be engaged in their child's education was useful to learn how to build better communication with parents. Qualitative research methods provide themes and key words that give insight for the school administrator and teachers. This information can then be used to build even stronger ties with better communication.

A high school reading teacher noted that not all parents of her students communicate with her through email. The teacher stated that it would be a great help to her to be able to email parents a note with follow-up information on what students could access online at home (Teacher

One, personal communication, April, 17, 2015). Based on face-to-face communication from several first grade teachers, an additional research question was added to address the need for basic computer skills to help improve communication between the reading teachers and the parents. The two first grade teachers who were participating in the study also gave input as the research questions were being drafted. They shared that only a handful of parents communicate with them on a regular basis through email.

Hackett-Villaobos (2013) used a qualitative study to focus on how beginning teachers attain skills to engage families in the educational process. The intervention used for the study was a pre-service training for beginning teachers and focused on how to effectively engage with families. The data collected during this study included documentation of in-depth interviews, document analysis, and teacher reflective journals. Using action research and case study methodology, the study reports that professional development opportunities for beginning teachers do in fact increase teacher-family engagement (Hackett-Villaobos, 2013).

Research Questions

The research questions target one method to improve parental engagement.

Three research questions guided this study. They are:

RQ1. To what extent will parental engagement in the reading process improve when parents receive training on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online?

RQ2. To what extent does communication improve between parents and teachers when parents receive training in how to use email?

RQ3. What are the most important factors influencing parental change in engagement?

Significance of the Study

The focus of this study is the impact of doing an intervention with parents to improve parental engagement by offering a workshop on computer skills and teaching parents to use the “top ten reading tools.” The purpose of this study is to measure the potential impact the workshop could have on parental engagement. If the study does show a significant positive impact on parental engagement, this intervention would be able to be replicated in schools across the state and nation by first grade teachers.

The 2016 climate of education in North Carolina is one of shrinking financial resources for schools. Principals and teachers are being held accountable, more than ever, to improve student achievement in reading without increasing costs. To be able to put one effective tool in the hands of principals and teachers that they know will help parents work with their students at home in reading is worth the time. Also, the potential impact of improving parental engagement, especially in reading with their child at a young age, can have a long lasting impact through high school and graduation (Pennock, S., personal communication, October 22, 2014). This study could have a significant impact on the academic success a student will have over the course of his or her educational career.

Barriers to Parental Engagement

This study is one small step towards a greater understanding of how to remove barriers that may keep parents from being as involved with their child at school as they would like to be. A study with 22,000 parents of ethnically diverse kindergarten through fifth grade students was conducted with surveys across the United States (Richman-Prakash, West, & Denton, 2002). The goal was to identify barriers that stood in the way of parental involvement. The parents who participated were from low Socio Economic Status (SES). The greatest barrier hindering

parental involvement was the parents' ability to take time from work to attend meetings at the school that were not conveniently scheduled. This research is contrary to the notion or belief that parents who live in poverty are uncaring about their children's education. The large sample size for this study is important to give greater understanding that parents with limited financial resources do care about the education of their children even though they may not be able to participate in ways defined by educators. To avoid the problem of not being able to reach working parents during the daytime with the proposed intervention, the time of day was chosen deliberately for late in the afternoon when most parents would have time to travel home from work. The current study did not create a barrier for working parents that kept them from being able to participate in the workshop due to the workshop being offered during common work hours during the day.

Impact of poverty on parental engagement. Parents from low SES are less likely to read to their children at home (Hong, 2012). Duncan and Magnuson (2005) found that in the United States, children in low SES are three times more likely to have fewer books than children in higher SES families. Children living in poverty experience less shared reading than children from middle or higher income families (Hart & Risely, 1995). Poverty is the largest correlate of reading achievement according to Cunningham (2006) in her article "High-Poverty Schools That Beat the Odds." Neuman (2006) shared that children from low-income families score on average 60% below children from higher income families and that once the children from poverty fall behind in school, they tend to stay behind.

People in the public may believe that parents from high-poverty urban households are not interested in their children's reading, that they are uncaring, and are not competent to teach their children reading (Compton-Lilly, 2000; Purcell-Gates, 1995). However public perception has

been challenged by the findings of ethnographic research (Compton-Lilly, 2000; Purcell-Gates et al., 1995). In the Compton-Lilly study (2000), interview data with parents of first grade students over a nine month period of time suggested that parents do place a high value on reading and they expected teachers to have high expectations of their students. Similarly, the work of Purcell-Gates et al., (1995) explored the possibility that children who live in low income inner city families experience no or very few literacy events in their homes. Some of the children in their study had numerous literacy events going on in their low income inner city homes, and others had fewer literacy events. Purcell-Gates et al., (1995) suggested that deficiencies in family literacy practices rather than poverty seemed to affect the children's literacy development. Mapp (1999) also did work that sheds insight on the complexity and stereotypes associated with parents in poverty. The research she conducted did not support the common stereotype that a family in poverty does not have literacy development activities occurring in the home environment. Rather, Mapp (1999) helps give understanding that all families in poverty are not to be lumped into one big category to make broad general statements that are going to apply to all families. Even in the low SES families that she studied, some did have literacy practices at home and some did not.

Home environments and poverty. Home environment such as family income, educational materials and resources, and parental involvement play an essential role in the academic achievement of students K-12 (Bhattacharya, 2010; Wamba, 2012). Home environment has a strong relationship especially in reading achievement (Modglin & Molfese, 2003). The particularly stimulating home environments include age appropriate books, computers, or musical instruments, and parents that involve themselves in their child's education

like discussing school related issues, which often strengthen the child's reading achievement (Eamon, 2005; Parcel & Dufur, 2001).

Helping parents learn how to become more engaged with their child through reading could have a lasting impact on student academic success for the rest of their years in school. The current study addressed the schedules of working parents by offering the workshop after work hours and also locating the workshop at the school to make sure the resource offered is geographically close to those who are being invited to participate. The rural setting of the intervention brings extra challenges regarding the lack of free Internet access that is easily available to parents. The local volunteer fire department does have free Internet. The local library does have Internet and computers available but the drive is about 12 miles from the school, and the distance could be a barrier even though the resource there is free. If parents work in a nearby town, they may have the opportunity to stop at the local library on their way home from work to check for messages on email on the computers in the public library. The best solution would be for stronger county-wide availability to reliable Internet services at home at a reasonable cost, but that option is not available in the more rural areas of Green School District.

Recommendations for future research are reported in Chapter Five of this study. In the meantime, school administrators are looking for interventions that could be used immediately to improve parental engagement with parents who do want to help their children, and also to improve reading achievement across the board.

This research stands to help build a stronger bridge of communication between parents, teachers, and school volunteers to meet specific needs of students regarding improving first grade reading achievement (Kupzyk, 2012).

Definition of Terms

See list of abbreviations on page 13 of the document.

Assumptions and Limitations

The study is a case study in one specific location, with one school, in one state with a small number of parents of first graders, one second grade parent, and one kindergarten parent. The findings of this study provided insight into what may or may not help this small group of parents in this particular setting, but the findings cannot necessarily be generalized to the larger population. Technology brings the tablet and other one-to-one devices to the table as valuable learning tools for the future. Parents in the current study may or may not be familiar with using a computer for educational purposes. If the parents who participate in the study do enjoy the learning of new skills to be able to access reading apps online for their child, the parent still may have limited financial resources to be able to buy a computer or a tablet to use at home with their child. The county as a whole has large areas that do not have easy access to be able to connect to the Internet even if the parent can afford to do so. Lack of ease to access the Internet can be a limiting factor for some parents who may participate in this study. Also, finances can impact the further use of what parents learn in this study because they may not be able to afford the computer or another device to use at home, or they may not be able to afford the Internet if they do have access.

Other limitations. Only the intervention taught by the teachers is being studied.

The parents may learn new skills that they want to use with the students, but the students may lack the motivation to want to learn anything new, due to the end of the school year in June of 2016. The length of the training is limited to one session for about an hour and a half. More time could be invested in the training of parents to potentially show more of an impact on

parental engagement. This short time frame has been selected to use with this group of parents due to the time of day and also the level of current parental engagement which is minimal. To offer something new to parents in training, it is better to set them up for success with a reasonable amount of information being given to them at one time, rather than over loading the parents with more than they could retain and the parent could have a negative experience. The parents would be less likely to try to use the apps that are being taught to them if they are frustrated or overloaded during the training time with the teachers.

Only reading apps are being studied and there may be great benefit to expand the instruction to parents to also include math as an area that they could use apps with their children at home. Possibly only parents that have transportation to come to the workshop were represented in the study, so those that are not able to afford transportation may not be represented in the case study sample.

Nature of Study

The focus of this qualitative study is investigating the impact of a workshop given by two first grade teachers to help parents use computers to be able to help their child with reading at home. The studies on parental engagement show a powerful positive impact on student achievement (Ecklund & Lamon, 2008). Being able to apply a simple intervention using a workshop taught by two first grade teachers to improve parental engagement could easily be replicated. If the school frequently communicates with parents all at one time through a group email, but several parents do not currently use email, there could be a breakdown of communication. The potential to have more communication with parents through email was illuminated by three current teachers who teach reading and have the desire to be able to build stronger communication with parents through email. The current study includes offering a

workshop to all the first grade parents of one elementary school. Two first grade teachers taught the workshop to parents on how to use ten reading apps and email. The parents were given a survey before the workshop and again about one month after the workshop to provide the opportunity to express how the workshop may have helped them with open ended survey questions. The second survey was sent to the parents through the mail. Also after the parents had one month to practice using what they learned in the workshop, one-to-one interviews to follow up with each parent who participated were done and the interviews were recorded. Using the data gained from the parents' perspective on the surveys, and from the one-on-one interviews, themes and insights were gleaned and recorded as research findings.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter Two of the study gives an in depth review of the literature. Chapter Three covers the methodology of the case study used in great detail. Chapter Four reports how the methodology unfolded during the study and the findings of the data after it was analyzed. Chapter Five summarizes the findings and describes ways a future researcher could add to the work with additional studies. Recommendations are shared by the researcher in how to apply the findings currently to the field of education.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

In North Carolina, reading scores for students across the state are a great concern for stakeholders in the field of education, parents, students, and legislators. For a number of years, North Carolina has kept records of student achievement in reading. The current status in reading achievement indicates that slightly above half of the third grade students are reading at grade level by the end of the school year. Funding in education has been cut over the last several years due to the sagging economy and a shrinking tax income for the functions of state government. The population of North Carolina has grown over the last 10 years. Teachers' salaries have gone from 24th place in the nation in 2006-2007 to 47th in the nation in 2013-2014 (NCDPI). The amount of textbook funding per student has changed from \$68.00 per student in 2008 -2009 to \$15.00 per student 2014-2015 (NCDPI, 2016 Budget). Most teachers are currently not using updated textbooks in their class across the state because of the cost. Teachers and principals are being asked to do more with less, repeatedly (Principal Two, personal communication, April 12, 2016). One place teachers can ask for additional help with their students is to go straight to the parents. Parents may care a great deal about their child's achievement in school and want to see their child succeed but may not have any prior experience in developing relationships with educators. If a parent has had a negative experience with a school, they may not be eager to want to build a relationship with their child's teacher and may not see the need for good communication with the teacher (Mapp, 1999).

Legislation Impacting Parental Engagement on the Federal Level

A pivotal piece of legislation was passed in 1965 known as The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.). The ESEA of 1965 created educational requirements at the federal level for state implementation. For the first time, federal law mandated minimum family involvement for Title I schools. Now for decades, schools have been required to give thought and practice to family involvement for Title I schools (ESEA,1965). In 2001, the ESEA of 1965 was re-authorized and extended. The 2002 version of the law, revamping ESEA of 1965, has become known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Klein, 2015). The law required schools to develop strategies and provide services to increase achievement for all students. NCLB gave directives on how schools were to engage parents, especially those receiving Title I funds.

Parental involvement is specifically described in NCLB as follows:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities by ensuring parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning was spelled out specifically by NCLB, 2001:

SEC. 1118. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

(A) involve parents in the joint development of the plan under section 1112, and the process of school review and improvement under section 1116;

(B) provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;

(C) build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement as described in subsection (e);

(D) coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under this part with parental involvement strategies under other programs, such as the Head Start program, Reading

First program, Early Reading First program, Even Start program, Parents as Teachers program, and Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and State-run preschool programs;

(E) conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the schools served under this part, including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background), and use the findings of such evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies described in this section; and

(F) involve parents in the activities of the schools served under this part.

One way that Title I impacts parental engagement is that policy specifies schools should be held to strict requirements for parental engagement which includes a written plan for how parents are invited to be involved in schools. References are found in Section 1118 of NCLB to provide instructions for ways parents can be involved with their children at school.

Collaboration records of the school and parents are part of the annual assessment and evaluation of parental involvement at the school level. The law mandates that school districts monitor the activities of Title I schools in the implementation process (Hackett-Villalobos, 2013).

Legislation Impacting Parental Engagement on the State level in North Carolina

In North Carolina, legislation was passed in 2012 called the “Excellent Public Schools Act.” Part IA of this legislation is called North Carolina Read to Achieve Program. 115C-83.1A states: “The goal of the State is to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success” (House Bill 950, Session Law 2012, p. 38). The application of this law came into effect in the spring of 2014. This law also brings a change in determining whether or not a third grade

student will be promoted to fourth grade or retained in third grade. If a third grade student is not proficient in reading at the end of the school year as demonstrated on a State-approved standardized test, the State Board of Education shall require that student be retained in the third grade, as stated in this same law.

There are five specific exemptions to this rule stated within the law of House Bill 950 (p. 41). The law also creates a new requirement for students not proficient in reading to attend a mandatory summer reading camp. The reading camp is established with reading interventions to be used that are research-based to help students improve in reading achievement so they can pass the standardized reading test given to them again at the end of the reading camp. If the student does not pass the State-approved standardized test, or present a portfolio of evidence that the student demonstrates third grade reading proficiency, the student will be retained and will not be promoted to fourth grade. The subject of reading at third grade level has drawn much attention because almost half of the students in North Carolina are not able to read at a level marked proficient by the end of third grade. So for third grade students across the state, this one benchmark is key to being able to tell if students are ready to move on in their school work and be promoted to fourth grade. Legislators passed a law to try to make improvements across the state to get thousands of students help in reading so they could be at grade level by the end of third grade. Parents, schools administrators, and teachers struggle to understand the new law changes and how it will impact students. Improvement in reading achievement is a theme and an expectation that is setting the pace in education in the state of North Carolina in 2016 (NCDPI, 2016).

Reading Interventions

A strong movement both in legislation and in education in North Carolina has shifted the thinking of leaders in the state to get as many students reading at grade level as possible. Marie Clay, a literacy pioneer, proposed the most cost efficient measure is early intervention (1966; Superintendent One, 2015). Researchers, school administrators, and teachers have known, based on research studies, that early intervention for at-risk students has a positive impact on student academic success (Clay, 1966; Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012; Christenson, 2010). The gap is in practical application at the local school level with teachers helping parents learn about how to support their child's learning at home. Some parents are eager to learn and can provide a positive environment at home and do important work with their children to help them get ready to read. However, for parents who live in poverty, the financial capacity to provide a home environment that is conducive to learning with children's books and time to spend with children reading is a true life challenge for families.

Students in poverty have a track record of falling behind in reading at grade level (Clark, Poulton, & National, 2011). Numerous studies have been done to show how important parent involvement in the child's learning is to reading achievement (Cairney & Munsie, 1993; Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012; Christenson, 2010; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005b; Granfield & Smith, 1995; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). The state of North Carolina is currently experiencing much media attention on the topic of students being able to read on grade level as new standards were passed at the state level and went into effect for the spring of 2014 related to third grade students being able to read on grade level.

Reading interventions can be delivered to the student who is a struggling reader in a number of ways. Three ways students receive help include: a classroom teacher or trained

reading specialist, one-on-one from a tutor, or from the parent, functioning in the role of a reading tutor to their own child. Each way is well researched as teachers, parents, and administrators continue the quest to look for the best way to offer reading interventions to students who are struggling to read. Additional research based interventions include: effectiveness of specific reading interventions that reading specialists and classroom teachers used on a daily basis (Wanzek et al., 2010; Wanzek et al., 2013; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007; Blachman et al., 2004, Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education, 2009; Chambers et al., 2011; Cratty, 2012; Gattis et al., 2010). Scholars do not agree on which of the previous reading interventions is the best. One of the many ways to deliver reading interventions to students who are struggling is by inviting the parent to help the child with reading at home. For the current study, the use of a workshop to train parents how to help with reading at home was used to determine if parental engagement improves.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

One of the reasons parents get involved with their child's education is because they see helping with homework as part of the parental role (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000). Parental involvement is a significant contributing factor to student success in school (Epstein, 1995). The literature supports the benefits of parents becoming engaged in their children's education and the benefits include higher student achievement; improved student attendance rates; improved student attitudes toward school; improved communication pathways between home and school; and improved relationships between parents, students, and teachers (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jaynes, 2003). There has to be some means to educate parents and teachers on how important the work of parental engagement is and the benefit for students. "When programs are offered in

the communities where families live or within their children's schools, mutual-support networks are more likely to emerge by almost 20%" (Webster-Stratton, 1997, p. 162).

An important distinction in Epstein's work, (1995) is that parental involvement has a positive impact on student achievement despite race, culture, and class differences. Her findings challenged the deficit perspective school administrators and teachers may have had of parents and instead she suggested that parents have something valuable to offer their children that can be used when parents, school officials, and teachers become partners. Pointing to a gap in the perspective that is commonly found, Jackson (2010) writes that "researchers, policymakers and educators have not taken the time to ask parents about their involvement in their children's education that could strengthen parental partnership efforts" (p.26). Parents, students, and school administrators have the large task of understanding how to build bridges of effective communication and solid positive relationships with all (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000). The literature base suggests what schools can do to involve parents (Jackson, 2010). She also notes that much of the research expounds on the educator's perspective and reveals how parents can serve the interests of the school, but may not necessarily serve the interest of the parent. When school officials expect parents to be involved in the school in ways that are defined by teachers and school, it may limit the potential of parents (Lareau & Harvat, 1999). In Epstein's work (1995), she makes strides in helping school administrators and teachers begin to look at parental engagement through the lens of parents.

Parental Involvement

There is a strong undercurrent in legislation in North Carolina regarding how to get as many students reading at grade level as possible. The earlier the intervention in reading the better; and early is precisely the most cost efficient time to do an intervention as proposed by children's literacy pioneer Marie Clay (1966) and affirmed by Superintendent One (Superintendent One, personal communication, November 15, 2015). Researchers, school administrators, and teachers have known based on research studies that early intervention for at-risk students has a positive impact on student academic success. There is a gap in practical application for parents helping students at the local school level. Some parents are eager learners and can provide a positive environment at home and do important work with their children. Parents help them get ready to learn to read and provide helpful resources to their children like books and spending time reading them with their children. However for some parents, particularly the ones who live in poverty, the desire may be present to help their child, but the parent could lack literacy skills to read with their children or fail to provide reading materials at home to supplement the reading work at school. Poverty brings extra life challenges to parents that are not easy to overcome.

Barriers to parental involvement were also the topic of study by Jackson (2010). She found factors that hinder the development of relationships with parents include: educator perceptions of parents, the level of training of educators, and educator effectiveness in establishing relationships with parents. Jackson (2010) also concurred with Lareau and Horvat (1999) that factors impacting whether a parent chooses to engage in their child's education includes the parent's relationship with the school staff, the parent's own prior school experience, and the parent's values regarding education. Jackson (2010) also writes that one barrier parent

partnerships include conflict in the way teachers perceive parents, and the way parents perceive themselves in the role of their children's education (Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Allington and Cunningham (2007) conclude that families send their children to school to be taught and many families view teaching as the responsibility of the school. A striking observation from their work is that they contended that working-class families viewed homework as shifting the workload of the school onto the parents. According to Allington and Cunningham, parents viewed the homework shift as the teacher not having done a good job of teaching during the school day and that the teacher or school should provide additional help to complete the homework. They noted the parallel view from the blue-collar work life where there was no homework expected for their children. Parents believed if a child could not finish their work at school in the regular school day, then the child could complete the work the next day at school, which aligned with a typical way of managing a heavy work load in their blue-collar jobs.

Role of tutors. One-to-one tutoring is documented to yield better results in reading than working in groups (Vellutino et al., 1996). Tutoring one-to-one alone is not sufficient to see a gain in reading proficiency (Pinnell et al., 1994). Current studies call for more research related to how effective parents can be as tutors (Kupzyk, 2012). In a face-to-face meeting with a reading curriculum specialist, the specialist noted that having a structure in place to train parents to tutor their children in reading would be helpful. Studies show that not all researchers are in agreement with the most effective reading strategies (Kupzyk, 2012; Warren, 2009; Houg, 2012).

Shared reading as a research based intervention to use with apps. Shared reading is found to be effective in increasing children's oral language skills when they are exposed to rich language vocabulary during shared story time delivered by either teachers or parents (Crain-

Thoreson & Dale, 1999; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield Dyer, & Samwel, 1999; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Shared reading provides an opportunity to teach a variety of early literacy skills since it involves active participation from the parent and the child (Ezell & Justice, 2000). Shared reading has been researched with children from two to six years old over the last ten years and has shown a positive effect on oral language development that is a cornerstone component of emergent literacy (Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehursts, & Epstein, 1994; Crain-Thoreson et al., 1999; Dale, Crain-Thoreson, Notari-Syverson, & Cole, 1996; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Whitehurst, Epstein et al., 1988, 1999). Rather the current work is to explore how to help parents who are not engaged, or are minimally engaged, to become more engaged if they are given tools with specific instructions to use with current technology.

Training of parents as reading tutors. The intent of the current study is to build on the understanding that parents are used as tutors and to look for ways to help parents use online tools like reading apps to help their child. One-to-one reading tutoring is documented to yield better results than working in groups (Vellutino et al., 1996). However, tutoring one-to-one alone is not sufficient to see a student gain in reading proficiency (Pinnell et al., 1994). Current studies call for more research related to how effective parents can be as tutors (Kupzyk, 2012). Studies show that not all researchers are in agreement about the most effective reading strategies (Warren, 2009; Houg, 2012; Kupzyk, 2012;).

Engaging parents. The positive correlation between parental engagement and student achievement is foundational to understanding why parents, school administrators, and legislators have a strong interest in seeing more work in the area of parental engagement (Principal One, personal communications, May 10, 2014; Principal Two, personal communications, February 19,

2016; & Superintendent One, personal communications, January 15, 2014; Fan & Chen, 2001). In their work, Fan and Chen researched parental engagement in depth using a meta-analysis involving 25 studies and identified 92 correlation coefficients between parental involvement and student academic achievement. As researchers look for data that is evidence-based showing parental engagement is closely tied to student achievement, Fan and Chen's work is a cornerstone of research in parental engagement. Quantitative data yielded results that were readily measured, given in tables and reports show the strength of the correlation between particular kinds of support a parent offers. The strength of the parent's engagement is tied to their student's achievement. The current study moves beyond putting data in a chart with numerical correlations, to a qualitative approach to study why a parent becomes more engaged. Through the use of the qualitative case study, participating parents were given the opportunity to describe barriers to their involvement that may bring deep insight for school administrators to be able to remove some barriers to parental engagement. The qualitative nature of this study makes a difference in parents choosing to engage in the intervention, rather than focusing on numbers to describe parental perception. The research is clear that having a parent engaged is a benefit to the student for their academic success. The gap of knowledge that school administrators and teachers search to find is how to get parents more engaged in their children's education if the parent is marginally connected to the school or does not feel connected to the school at all. The work of the current study was to explore if parent perceptions change when using an intervention with parents, in the school where their child attends.

Deficit theory. Traditionally, most school's approach to understanding parental involvement relies on a deficit model that assumes that parents are limited in the ways they can help their children with achievement (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). The deficit model does not

allow parents to be treated as equal partners in their children's education by school officials, and in contrast this model assumes that there is something wrong with parents that school officials can overcome with training (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). They also write that in the deficit theory school officials would have values to impose on the parents like, "things successful parents do." If parents failed to fit into the mold of what the school officials assumed that parents should be doing, then the thinking of an "us" and "them" system of communicating with parents was perpetuated. School officials often pre-determine the ways parents can serve in the school, and if the parents do serve in these roles, the parents are considered involved and if they do not serve in these roles the parents would be considered "hard to reach" (Mapp, 1999).

A shift in deficit theory came with Epstein's work in 1992 which described the many different ways a parent could offer support to their child outside of the classroom. Involving parents to help their child in school is a significant contributing factor to a child's success as many researchers have made a strong connection between parental engagement and student achievement (Brown, Denton, Kelly, & Neal, 1999; Clay, 1985; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005a; Fleming, 2012; Huggins, 2011). It is helpful to be clear on what is meant by parental engagement. Various aspects of the parent-child relationship can be included when defining parental engagement. Examples include helping with homework, providing enrichment experiences, encouraging school attendance, and reading to children (Ringenberg, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, & Kramer, 2005). Another way to define parental engagement has to do with the parents' involvement with the school and is called parent-school relationship (Ringenberg et al., 2005). According to Epstein (1992), parental involvement has six major facets: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. One of the basic obligations for families is to provide for the

safety and health of their children (Ashbaugh, 2009). The school counts on the parents to provide an atmosphere at home that supports learning when working with the framework that Epstein provides for parental engagement. However, some parents struggle to meet the health and safety needs of their children and do not have the capacity to provide an atmosphere at home that is conducive to learning (Ashbaugh, 2009). Knowing that parental engagement is well researched and helps students be successful in school does not mean that all parents buy into that understanding of parenting. Teachers can serve as the contact point for training parents in how to help their children in school (Kupzyk, 2012). The time that a teacher has to devote to communicating with parents is limited. While a teacher is in front of the class teaching, it is not an option for that teacher to also be on the phone trying to communicate with a parent about how their child is doing in school. A classroom teacher has a limited amount of time at the end of the school day to try to reach parents. If a call from the teacher falls at a particular time when the parent works, there could be a gap in communication due to a scheduling problem. The work in Kupzyk's dissertation (2012) also validates the need for more structured tutoring, showing that simply asking parents to read at home with their children is not enough instruction for them. She also found that after using specific training with parents including video, a handbook, and meeting with the teacher, the parents used more evidence-based tutoring strategies at home with their children during their reading time together (Kupzyk, 2012). Her work helped teacher's gain greater understanding regarding the need to be as specific as possible in giving the parents directions on the kind of help to give their child at home with reading homework. This study builds on the knowledge regarding giving parents specific instructions on how they can help their child with reading at home. This study will help the parent make the best use of their time in helping their child and may afford the parent more specific up-to-date skills related to reading

apps currently available. Giving parents specific training in the computer workshop provided them with the opportunity to be in better communication with their child's teacher in hopes that parental engagement may improve.

Importance of communication between teachers and parents. The current study offered parents who wanted to learn how to use email the opportunity to learn to do this one basic computer skill to help build better communication between the parent, teacher, and principal. In addressing the research questions for this study, experts in the field were consulted to formulate good survey questions based on their knowledge of the subject matter and their knowledge of how to write valid survey questions. The experts included six classroom teachers who taught reading at the elementary and high school levels, one elementary level reading specialist, two school superintendents in North Carolina, three Communities in Schools consultants who work with economically disadvantaged students daily, two principals, one instructional coach, and three university professors. The input given from these experts in the field was vital in helping shape the research questions to include the use of email as a tool of communication. Email was chosen because it is used by educators with such ease and frequency. The experts in the field noted that the same ease and frequency of communication back from parents is a current barrier to stronger communication between the school and parents. These experts also reviewed parent surveys. With the feedback from these experts, questions were added, deleted, and modified.

Research Supporting Case Study Method

Kupzyk (2012) studied in her dissertation how teachers could train parents as tutors to improve oral reading fluency. Seven parents were trained in her research using behavior skill and video modeling to assist parents in learning how to help their children with reading at home. Kupzyk's work calls for more research in a natural setting to more closely examine the

conditions needed for successful implementation of parent tutoring programs and the effect on student outcomes. In a case study dissertation by Jackson (2010), she sought the parents' perspective on parental involvement in education because she found a void in the literature on parental engagement that was actually from the parents' view. Her case study involved 15 African American parents with semi-structured interviews seeking insights from the parents themselves on parental engagement. The case study method is one way to be able to research, in a live setting, where parents and teachers can meet face-to-face and deep thought can be invited and shared regarding the parents' own perceptions of how engaged they are with their child in teaching them to read.

Jackson (2010) used a qualitative case study to investigate parental involvement from the parents' perspective. She noted that much of the research on parental engagement is written from the deficit theory point of view and also from the view of the school administrator or teacher, not from the view-point of the parents. Building on Jackson's work where she employed in-depth interviews with parents as her methodology, the current study also incorporated Epstein's understanding of parental engagement to look for ways to build relationships with parents as partners. The case study lends itself to being able to go in great detail and depth to find out more from the parent's perspective on why a particular intervention is helpful to them or why it is not. The school participating could be better equipped to increase parental engagement by learning to meet the needs of parents where they are and also offer simple tools for parents to use that helps them in their work with their child at home. The case study was an appropriate method to use in the current study because it used a bounded system for the study (Merriam, 2009). The methodology of the case study allowed the researcher to "fence

in” what was studied using in-depth descriptions of the parent’s perceptions and an analysis of the bounded system (Merriam, 2009).

Using qualitative research to conduct a case study, Mapp (1999) examined the perceptions of parents that school administrators had labeled as “hard to reach.” Mapp found that building relationships between parents and teachers, as well as a school climate that welcomed parents into the school at any time, were identified as necessary elements to promote involvement of these parents. She noted that parents were genuinely concerned about helping their children achieve success in school. In this study, parents realized that their involvement was critical to helping their children achieve, and parents were involved in their children’s education in non-traditional ways. The factors Mapp identified as barriers to their involvement related to how they were valued and respected when they chose to enter the school as well as their own experiences with school; the level of involvement they experienced from their parents as students; and other time commitments and personal responsibilities. Respectful, caring relationships that were established with staff members increased parents’ desire to engage in their children’s educational development. This study was conducted over a two-year period with 220 low SES children. The method of data collection was one-on-one parent interviews in one elementary school. The findings of that study also suggested the importance of school personnel not only emphasizing programs that bring parents to the school, but the relationships that must be developed with parents in order for them to successfully engage in parental involvement practices (Jackson, 2010).

Noe (2012) did a study on parental engagement seeking a method to be able to more effectively engage parents. He conducted a case study that involved three children in the first year and four children in the second year for a total sample size of seven for the whole case

study. All of the children were from low SES families. Five of the seven children did benefit and show a gain in one or both measures related to phonological awareness. Noe's study (2012) also used a consumer satisfaction survey to get an impression from the participants if they thought this reading intervention at home was helpful.

Parent and school partnerships. The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) published a list of "10 Truths About Parent Involvement (PTA, 2015). Two of these truths are pertinent to this study on parent engagement. One point the National PTA makes on parental involvement is that it is an ongoing process and not a series of events. The second point that applies to this study is that parents are more likely to become involved when: they understand that they should be involved, they feel capable of making a contribution, and they feel invited by the school and their children to be involved (Houston, Blankstein, & Cole, 2010). All of this knowledge about what is good for the child and how the parent can help at home will not be maximized unless parents, teachers, and administrators join in the journey of educating children as a team effort and excellent communication is established. Great communication can help build trust between the schools, parents, and child to help parents get engaged and stay engaged. Trust and relationship building are key components to being able to work with parents as partners in helping their children be successful in school (Houston, Blankstein, & Cole, 2010).

Research supporting methodology selected. Qualitative research was the methodology used in this study because it is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help understand and explain the meaning of real life events with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) suggests that:

every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design. In the most elementary sense, the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data

to a study's initial research questions and ultimately, to its conclusions. Colloquially, a research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between "here" and "there" may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data (p. 20).

Addressing the summer slide. Researchers Kim and White (2011) address the topic of summer reading loss as a way to reduce the achievement gap between low-income and middle-income children. The phenomenon of summer reading loss is well known to educators, but proposed solutions have not proven to be effective or are costly (Kim & White, 2011). Due to cost of both facility operation and staffing, summer school is not practical for school systems that are facing financial hardships. One idea that has been researched by Richard Allington and his colleagues (2010) was to hand out books to low income students. In a randomized study conducted over the duration of three summers, from 2001 to 2004, with 1330 low income participants, children were given books to read over the summer. Children got 12 books each year to be able to read over the course of the summer at home. The study also used a control group of students that received no books over the three summers. The study showed a small but statistically significant improvement in children's reading skills, particularly among the low income level children.

Anne McGill-Franzen of the University of Tennessee states that a meta-analysis of 39 studies of the effects of summer periods on reading achievement found that middle-class students gain a couple of months' worth of achievement each summer, while low SES students lose an average of three or more months (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2012). Both note that when schools are in session, low-SES students gain at the same rate as middle-class students.

Allington, also of the University of Tennessee, explains that the summer slide may account for more than two years' worth of achievement by the time students are in middle school. The way Allington makes sense of this dynamic is by pointing out that "poor kids don't read during the summer, and middle-class kids do" (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2012).

Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013), call for professional development for teachers on using the classroom library to engage students in reading. They note the tremendous influence teachers have in motivating students to read, comparing that influence to be as much or even more than that of the parents. One final point they shared in their work emphasized letting students pick what they wanted to read over the summer to help avoid the "summer slide." In this study, teachers had the opportunity to explain to parents how to use reading apps for the rest of the school year. Teachers also explained to parents how to use the information in regards to reading over the summer with their children. The goal was to help them keep students engaged enough to hopefully prevent the "summer slide." The methodology of engaging parents through offering a workshop could take place at any time during the school year. However the timing of this study in early May lends itself to an even greater potential impact on reading achievement if the parent learns the importance of keeping their child engaged in reading over the summer. The focus of the intervention is to improve parental engagement with a potential side benefit coming to the student who received instruction at home from their parent not only over the coming summer, but over the next several years as they continue to build reading skills.

Summary

Parental engagement is one way teachers and school administrators can influence more student success in reading at home. Some parents may want to be engaged with their child in helping them learn to read, but may not understand why their influence is so important. The intervention of inviting parents to participate in a workshop, led by two first grade teachers, instructing parents how to use computer technology at home, to help engage their child in reading, to improve their child's success in reading is being studied to see if parent perceptions of engagement change with the intervention. This study investigated if there are barriers that could be easily eliminated to promote a stronger bond between the parent and the teacher with better communication, and in the long term, benefit the student.

Chapter III: Methodology

Philosophy and Justification

The current study was conducted at Lyons Elementary School in Green School District North Carolina in May of 2016. No information was given regarding the principal, the teachers participating, or any of the parents in the research. Pseudonyms were used for the names of real people involved in the study. All participants were given the appropriate informed consent documentation to approve and sign before any research began. Prior to the workshop, the first grade teachers communicated to let all the first grade parents know of the opportunity to come to the computer workshop to learn more about reading apps, the “top ten reading tools”, and how to use email. The researcher assisted the teachers in setting up the workshop. Parents were asked to give written informed consent about participating in the study before the workshop begins. The first survey on parental engagement was given at the first meeting with the parents. The second survey was mailed to parents with a self-addressed stamped envelope back to the researcher four weeks after the workshop. After giving the parents four weeks to practice using the interventions at home, the researcher then asked them to complete a second survey and set up face-to-face appointments with the parents to complete follow up questions. The follow-up questions were used to gain more detailed information on what may have helped bring a positive change in parental engagement through the workshop. The face-to-face interviews were recorded on an audio cassette to facilitate accurate transcribing at a later time. The location for the face-to-face interviews was at Lyons Elementary School unless an alternate site was necessary to meet a parent’s work schedule. The alternate site was at an office at Chestnut Grove United Methodist Church. When the parents completed the second survey and completed the face-to-face

interview, a book for the parent to be able to read with their child at home was given as a reward for participation by the researcher.

There are similarities in Noe's (2012) study to the intervention in this study in that they both focused on how to do an intervention with parents. The current study was also using a small number of parents as a case study and the impact of the intervention on parental engagement. This study built on previous research showing that parental engagement is important for student success (Brown, Denton, Kelly, & Neal, 1999; Clay, 1985; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Fleming, 2012; Huggins, 2011). Researchers are not in agreement on the one best method to use as an intervention with parents on how to improve parental engagement

Marie Clay was a pioneer in early reading intervention and is one of the most influential researchers in moving educators to do reading interventions with students who are at risk of falling behind as early as the need is detected (Clay, 1966). Knowing that parental engagement is fundamental, the research for this study was a case study using a small number of parents to see if a first grade classroom teacher trains parents on computer skills and email could help parents become more engaged with their child in reading. The choice of this intervention and method is based on ease of access to a particular school. The specific methodology of using a qualitative study to measure parental perceptions with a small number of parents lends itself to being able to tell the story of the parents and how perceptions may change with the intervention of a workshop. A survey at the time of the workshop and as follow-up four weeks after the workshop, gave parents the opportunity to tell their story of potential barriers to engagement that may not have been anticipated by the teacher or administrators. This information could help educators in the way they go about inviting parents to join in the learning process of reading with

their child through the use of computer apps at home. By asking the parents for a small amount of their time, and making the site of the workshop the school where their child attended in the evening after work hours, the teachers had the opportunity to give participants face-to-face instruction in how to help at home. The researcher used the computer laboratory at the school to work with parents on computer skills. If the use of a workshop for parents did show an improvement in parental engagement the work in this study could be replicated on a larger scale.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study. They were:

RQ1. To what extent will parental engagement in the reading process improve when parents receive training on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online?

RQ2. To what extent does communication improve between parents and teachers when parents receive training in how to use email?

RQ3. What are the most important factors influencing parental change in engagement?

Since the work of this study was to see if the intervention of working with parents in the workshop helped improve parental engagement, the topic to be studied was the change in parental perceptions and what may or may not cause those parental perceptions to change with the intervention that was offered. The work of this qualitative study lends itself to detailed descriptive work due to the nature of the soft data. Key words, themes, and trends were tracked to determine the changes that may have happened in parental perceptions of their engagement through the use of surveys and individual face-to-face interviews. The study of parental perceptions is a good fit to use with a qualitative case study because the kind of data that is needed to see what caused the change in parental perceptions of their engagement are being investigated with open ended questions. This study sought to uncover what parents had to say

about what may or may not have helped in how they see themselves as engaged parents by participating in the intervention of the workshop offered. Data collected during this study was analyzed to discover concepts and relationships in raw data, and organized by concepts and relationships by theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the case study, the researcher looked for a theory, which Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe as “a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 15).

Joyce Epstein is the most published author in this field and has thoroughly articulated her theory of parental involvement into the most commonly used definition of parental involvement (Ringenberg, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, & Kramer, (2005). Epstein (1992) organizes her framework for parental involvement into six constructs that include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parenting refers to creating a home environment that is conducive for the child as a learner. Communicating refers to home-school communication specifically about the child’s academic progress, school programs, and other information that pertains to the child’s academic success. Volunteering includes a variety of school activities when the parent is present whether it is in the classroom or larger school activities. Learning at home reflects the parent’s attitudes towards encouraging their child as a student by actively helping the student with homework and encouraging the student to work hard in school. Decision-making reflects the degree that a parent seeks to be involved to actively participate in shaping the school environment (Epstein, 1992). Collaborating with the community is the degree to which parents know about and use community resources that are both formal and informal to support their child’s progress in learning. Learning at home and collaborating with the community are two pieces of parental

engagement described by Epstein that was involved in the current study as the parent works with the child at home, and also has the opportunity to communicate more with the teacher through the workshop that is offered. The current study investigated if the parental engagement with reading at home and communication with the teacher improves after the intervention of the workshop, according to the parents perceptions. Epstein's work helps frame the concept of the different ways parents can be engaged with their student. The current study does not attempt to have an impact on all six categories of parental engagement that Epstein describes.

Parenting refers to creating a home environment that is conducive for the child as a learner. Communicating refers to home-school communication specifically about the child's academic progress, school programs, and other information that pertains to the child's academic success. Volunteering includes a variety of school activities when the parent is present whether it is in the classroom or larger school activities. Learning at home reflects the parent's attitudes towards encouraging their child as a student by actively helping the student with homework and encouraging the student to work hard in school. Decision-making reflects the degree that a parent seeks to be involved to actively participate in shaping the school environment (Epstein, 1992). Collaborating with the community is the degree to which parents know about and use community resources that are both formal and informal to support their child's progress in learning. Learning at home and collaborating with the community are two pieces of parental engagement described by Epstein that were involved in the current study as the parent worked with the child at home, and also had the opportunity to communicate more with the teacher through the workshop offered. The current study investigated if parental engagement with reading at home and communication with the teacher improved after the workshop intervention according to the parents perceptions. Epstein's work helps frame the concept of the different

ways parents can engage with their student. The current study does not attempt to have an impact on all six constructs of parental engagement that Epstein describes.

Variables

Independent variable. The independent variable is the stimulus or input that the researcher chooses to manipulate. The intervention of using a workshop with parents is the stimulus. Books were not given to the parents during the study, but two books were given to the parents as an exit gift after they had completed the surveys and face-to-face interview at the end of the study. For the workshop, the teachers prepared a one page handout with the reading app websites and basic instructions on how to use them, as well as suggestions for using email as a communication tool. Parents took the handout with them at the end of the workshop. The reading apps studied were demonstrated on desktop computers by going online to websites that could be used from any device connected to the Internet and able to display information from a website. The selected reading apps were web-based and work on computers, tablets, or smartphones. During the intervention, the teachers addressed the summer slide and suggested using reading apps they were demonstrating to help students prevent and summer decline in reading ability.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable is the response or the output, and it can be measured or counted. The level of parental engagement is the dependent variable and was measured with the use of a survey and individual follow up interviews in this study.

Research Design Strategy

Case study. The study was a case study designed to use a qualitative survey and interviews to investigate changes in parental engagement. The advantage to using a case study to determine what may influence changes in parental engagement allowed the researcher to give a

rich detailed description in words. Those who participated in the intervention may lend insight into causes of change that may not be anticipated and the participants were able to expound on their answers. Merriam (1998) describes three important characteristics about a researcher when conducting a qualitative study. First, the researcher seeks to understand the participant from the participant's perspective, rather than as an outsider. The researcher, secondly, must possess the ability to adapt to the circumstance and respond to the non-verbal cues of the person being interviewed. Since qualitative studies require fieldwork, the third characteristic of a qualitative researcher is that the researcher goes physically to the participants at the site of the research in order to observe behavior occurring in the natural setting. Using the information gained from the raw data, gleaned from the surveys and the face-to-face interviews for themes and clues, the researcher used the data to build an understanding of a phenomenon using concepts that emerged rather than testing an existing theory. The final product was a rich description using words, not numerical data, to describe the change that may or may not have occurred in parental perceptions as they self-report on the surveys and in the face-to-face interviews. To conduct research in an ethical manner, all the appropriate steps for pre-approval from the school system granting the degree, Bethel University, of St. Paul Minnesota, and the Green School District school system where the study was conducted, and all necessary approval documents were signed before research began. All Internal Review Board (IRB) approvals were done in advance of any work with families in the study.

The data was collected from parents by the means of a pre-intervention survey. Parents were given the opportunity to fill out the survey ahead of the workshop and bring it completed, or complete the survey immediately prior to the workshop on the night that they arrived for the class that the teachers were presenting to them. A post-survey was also given to the parents in

the form of a hard copy after the parents had time to practice what they have been taught through the intervention. The post-survey was mailed to the parents two weeks after the intervention with a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to return. More data was collected in a face-to-face follow up interview with each parent participating set up by one-on-one appointments with the researcher at the school the students attend. The study provided a safe public environment for parents participating within the study and working with the researcher. The primary site and the alternate site both were public meeting places where other adults were also present. An alternate site was not needed. As the data was collected, each interview was coded with pseudonyms of Participant One, Participant Two, etc. The real parent names were not published and all data was kept in a secure location, locked, where only the researcher had access to the data. Maxwell (2005) writes that the main strategy for categorizing data in qualitative research has a key component and that is in the coding process. As a theme emerges from the raw data, it was assigned a code. Codes were compared as new themes developed and notes were made as new themes and new codes came forth. The themes and codes were used to examine in-depth relationships that may develop into a larger concept as the data was interpreted. The data was interpreted as each interview was conducted and codes and themes were marked if the same concepts were repeated by the parents.

Measures

No information that personally identifies a student or a teacher was printed in the research. The real name and locations of the school were not used and the pseudonym of Lyons Elementary was used in place of the real name of the school. Confidentiality of those participating in the study was maintained and files were kept locked in a secure location so only the researcher had access to the confidential information. No parent names were used in the

study. Parents were assigned a participant number and were informed before any research began, so they gave informed written consent. The setting for the research was an elementary school in Green School District, North Carolina. The county has a history of being strong in tobacco farming. With the decline of farming, many county residents commute to local towns and communities for work. All participants including the Green superintendent and principal were given the appropriate informed consent documents for their approval prior to any research beginning.

In the survey, qualitative data was collected from parents representing one grade using one local elementary school. The instruments used including the follow up questions, were pilot tested by two principals and two reading teachers. The method was a pre and post survey that compared the answers from before the intervention and then after the parents have had one month to practice what they learned in the workshop. Open-ended questions were used for both of the pre and post survey to gather data from the parents as is consistent with case study work using qualitative methodology. The use of individual face-to-face interviews allowed for greater depth of telling the story and potential barriers that the survey may not detect or adequately measure. Setting the current study in motion involved two first grade teachers preparing to teach 10 reading apps to parents that the teachers would like parents to be able to access and use online with their child at home. The principal sent a written letter home to the parents to invite them to the workshop.

All the parents in the class were given the same opportunity to participate in the computer instruction offered by the teacher. Parents were given one month to practice the skills learned in both how to use email and how to use the top ten reading apps at home with their child. In North Carolina, the state-wide current practice with students is to give a four-week reading intervention

in the summer to try to improve reading achievement through summer camps. Giving parents the same amount of time to show whether or not the workshop had helped improve parental engagement was based on a reasonable amount of time that was the current practice with students in reading across the state. At the end of the four week time frame, the researcher met with the parents to give the post-intervention survey and open ended follow-up questions on a one-to-one basis.

The researcher performed individual face-to-face interviews with eight parents to glean additional information regarding any important factors that may have influenced their engagement in the reading process. First grade teachers selected ten applications they believe to be most useful for parents at home.

Sampling Design

The sample n is the number of parents of students who are in the first grade classes being invited to participate in the study for a total of 46 parents being invited to participate. The sample n total was eight parents, from one K-5 elementary school in the northern Piedmont of North Carolina. Parents were not pulled as a random sample to participate in the intervention. All of the parents of two first grade classes in one school were invited to participate in the study. In the current study, the goal for n was 10 parents as a minimum number to participate, with 15 parents being the optimum number of participants. The researcher used purposive selection to determine which parents were chosen to be invited to participate in the study. The sample was gathered deliberately with a purpose in mind of getting as broad of a perspective represented as possible regarding the gender of the parents, students, and their SES (Vogt, 2007). All of the participants in the workshop were given the first pre-intervention survey.

Setting

The setting for the intervention was one rural elementary school with between 150 and 200 students in North Carolina. There were 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools in the Green School District. In Lyons Elementary School where there is a high rate of rural poverty, in the 2014-2015 school years, 20 out of 26 kindergarten students were tested in reading before they started school and scored two levels below where the state expects kindergarten students to begin. Even with excellent reading instruction where a student makes a full year of progress in reading one grade level at the time, these 20 students still have the strong possibility of reading below grade level in the third grade. For these 20 students who started two grade levels below, a leap in progress that would exceed the normal reading achievement of one grade level per year would have to happen to even get these students on grade level by third grade. For a student that starts two grade levels behind in reading in kindergarten, the chances of that student being able to make gains to reach grade level is nearly impossible to achieve.

Data Collection Procedures

Parents were given an invitation by the principal to see if they wanted to participate in the study. A letter was sent home in the child's back pack first by the school principal to let the parent indicate if they would like to participate in the study. There was only one group to receive the intervention and no control group. There are two first grade classes in this school and both first grade classes were invited to participate in the study.

Care was taken to keep all information related to the study that could identify a family or student confidential. No names of participants in the intervention were shared in the reports of the findings. The hard copy survey was given before the intervention at the first meeting with the parents, and again at the conclusion of the four week intervention with the parents, using a

post-intervention survey. The second survey was sent in a self-addressed stamped envelope back to the work address of the researcher. The surveys were given to the parents in the form of a hard copy.

For the intervention, the parents filled out the surveys and listened to the lesson on what reading resources are available online. The survey instrument used was submitted in advance for expert review for clarification of survey questions. No instructional time during the school day was requested. Parents were given instruction by a first grade teacher on one specific basic computer skill on how to use email to see if that improved their engagement regarding the reading process with their child through improved communication. Once the parents completed both surveys a one-to-one interview was scheduled with each parent to go over additional open ended questions to gain more information about what may have helped the parent become more engaged as a result of having participated in the workshop. Notes were taken and the interviews were recorded with an audio cassette recorder to be able to more accurately transcribe the notes for data analysis. An N size of 10 to 15 makes the use of a statistical approach very unreliable with a high margin of error. The point of the research was to look for a difference in whether or not the intervention had an impact on parental engagement but not to prove that point with statistics.

Reliability according to Yin (1994) is described as the process to minimize errors and biases in a study in the event that another researcher wants to conduct the same study at a different point in time. Yin (1994) describes the work of a strong case study to include a case study protocol. For example, when the survey is to be given to the parents, the survey should be given to them at the same time, and each parent should be given the same explanation for what the study is about and the same clear instructions regarding what is expected of each parent as

they run the intervention at home over a four week period of time. All the parents participating received the same survey for the pre-intervention survey. The parents who were purposively selected received the post-intervention survey. All the parents in the sample with a maximum of 15 participants would be given the same follow up questions. To increase reliability, a detailed account of procedures is helpful if another researcher wanted to conduct this same study at some point in the future. The intervention was what was being measured, so to build a strong case study, research requires that the procedures be clear and that the same intervention was given to each parent participating. Careful documentation as data was collected also gave stronger reliability to the study. Follow up questions with the parents were recorded for the researcher to be able to give detailed accounts of what the parents reported.

Internal validity deals with the researcher making inferences based on the data that was collected and whether or not the inferences from the data was stated correctly as well as using correct terminology in the survey and interview questions (Pemberton, 2010). Doing a case study required the researcher being able to interpret data collected to make inferences (Yin, 2003). Internal validity can be enhanced by organizing the data for each case to create a chain of evidence that can be followed from each data source.

External validity addresses whether a study's findings can be generalized beyond the immediate case that was being studied (Pemberton, 2010). It is the extent to which the findings of the study can be held true for other cases with different people, in another place, at a later time (Yin, 1994). External validity in this study was established by detailing procedures and methods used in this exploratory case study which another researcher could use to replicate the study, at another location, at another time. The findings were connected to Epstein's theory, the theoretical framework for this study, of how a parent engages with their child at home to provide

support for academic success rather than being able to generalize the findings to a broader population.

Treatment fidelity was checked by the researcher by observing the first grade teachers to make sure the same information was given to all the parents in the presentation of the top ten reading resources online.

Data Analysis

The data was taken from the parent surveys and the face-to-face interviews and recorded. The interviews were transcribed word by word and also documented. Once all the raw data from the information that the parents shared was recorded, the next step was to begin to look for themes in the data that emerged. The themes were sorted and codes were assigned to separate themes as they emerged. The process of analyzing the data was a process of discovering what kind of insight the parents bring to the study as they shared from their perspective about how the workshop may have helped them become more engaged or not. The researcher looked for repetition of words or phrases to help form a theme as the data was analyzed. Looking at surveys using words as raw data required careful reading by the researcher to look for subtle clues into any kind of insight that a parent may have brought forth. One parent may bring out a deep level of insight into the dynamic being studied, yet that parent could be the only parent who shared that particular insight. Using a case study allowed all the data to be analyzed carefully. Every insight did not have to fit into a specific theme. One insight that was magnificent held enough ground that it was able to stand on its own to be reported as a finding. The detail of the survey instrument and the way the questions were asked with open ended questions, invited the parents to give insight in their own words. Once the last interview with each parent in the study was transcribed from the audio cassette tape, each participant was given a number to code the

surveys and to match the surveys with the appropriate cassette tape. The cassette tapes were labeled by the participant number and did not have personally identifiable information written on the tape. All the raw data including the cassette tapes were kept for a maximum of two years by the researcher, at which time the data was destroyed. All information that was collected during the study was handled confidentially and kept in a locked, safe location.

Limitations of Methodology

There are limitations in being able to generalize the findings of this study to the general population because a small sample that is not randomly selected was used for this study. It was not within the scope of this study to look for correlations between improvement in parental engagement and the potential impact on reading achievement scores. Using a small number of parents in one school, in one grade, in one location also limited the ability to be able to generalize the findings to a broad population. Willis (2013) writes that one of the most common criticisms of using the methodology of the case study are three inter-related issues of methodological rigor, researcher subjectivity, and external validity. With further comment, Willis also writes that case studies have become a synonym to “anything goes.” The absence of systematic procedures for case study research Yin (2009) observed, is traditionally the area of greatest concern.

Regarding construct validity, Willis writes that there are concerns regarding reliability and the ability to replicate a single case study. This limitation goes with qualitative research in general where the work involves interpretation of soft data, as well as searches for meaning, reasons, and understandings within the data. One of the greatest arguments against the use of the case study methodology has to do with external validity or generalizability (Willis, 2013). The heart of that criticism asks the question, “How is it that one case can reliably offer anything

beyond the particular” (Willis, 2013, p.5)? The criticism is duly noted, but the purpose of doing a case study is to look in great detail without claiming that the same findings in a particular case was true for the population at large. It is clearly stated in case study research that the work is not intended to draw conclusions that can be extrapolated to large groups of other people in other places. The research aim of this study is to answer the question about what may bring about change in parental engagement and why. Both of these questions are appropriate for case study research, even though there are clearly limitations to this method.

Ethical Considerations

It was essential that parents sign an informed consent document. All the documentation for the informed consent was given to all the parents participating. Parents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and they were free to choose to participate in the study as well as free to choose not to participate in the study. All of the requirements to conduct the study in an ethical manner were met and Bethel University gave approval to the research project before the research began. The intervention did not pose a known risk to parents who chose to participate in the study. The parent workshop was taught in the school computer laboratory where there was no known immediate danger to anyone participating. The same is true for the parents who gave face-to-face follow up interviews with the researcher. The interviews were scheduled according to the parents’ work schedule to meet the researcher at the school for the face-to-face interview after the workshop. Parents were the subjects being studied in this intervention not the students. The researcher did take care to keep information involved in the study confidential. The data collected during the study was kept in a secure location, locked and the only person that had access to the data was the researcher. Pseudonyms for the

participants were used. Pseudonyms were used for the names of professionals in the community that participated in the study.

Research Bias

The researcher has a strong interest in helping families in poverty help their children learn to read. Growing up in a small rural community on a family farm, reading was treasured as the door to the future. Having the experience of living on a farm and in a community that was built on family farms and small business, the researcher developed a heart to help children in rural communities that live in poverty especially in the area of reading. The researcher's grandmother Dorsett and grandfather Dorsett ran a country store in Efland North Carolina, and once a week the local library sent the book mobile to stop at their store. The researcher's grandmother would pick ten new books each week for her granddaughter, now the researcher, to enjoy and fostered a love for reading for the researcher at a very early age. This love for the rural community was pivotal in the researcher's first career in teaching. The researcher taught high school agriculture at Orange High School in Hillsborough North Carolina from 1987 to 1990 before starting a career in full time ministry. Serving as an ordained Elder, which includes being a full time United Methodist pastor in rural communities in Western North Carolina for 24 years has shaped the researchers world view to be sensitive to the educational needs of rural communities. With excellence in reading achievement being one solution to help children overcome rural poverty and the impact that it has on families, the drive behind this dissertation project has been to look for ways to strengthen support for parents who want to help their children in reading who may have very few resources at hand to do so.

Conclusion

The work of this study was to give an intervention to a small group of parents to engage them with the use of computer technology to see if the intervention, as it is delivered by two first grade teachers, had an impact on how parents perceive their engagement with their child's reading at home. Using a case study, a small number of parents were surveyed and interviewed face-to-face to be able to go in depth in conversation with the parents, searching for a greater understanding of why their level of engagement may have changed with the information that was taught to them during the workshop or why their engagement level may not have changed at all.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

A case study was conducted in a rural high poverty school using a pre and post-intervention survey and participant interviews. The intervention consisted of offering a workshop for parents to show them how to use reading apps online at home to help their child with reading. Parental engagement was the main factor being examined to see if a one-time workshop for parents would make them feel more engaged.

The study was conducted at the very end of the school year with eight parents and grandparents who responded to the invitation to participate. The researcher did have difficulty getting enough parents to respond to be able to run the case study. There was a great effort of cooperation by the principal, the two teachers leading the workshop, and the researcher to recruit enough parents to run the study. Simply advertising the study to all the first grade parents in the school, offering refreshments with the workshop, and offering parents two free books if they completed the study was not enough to entice a strong number of parents to sign on to participate. The key to getting parents to agree to participate in the study was personal phone calls by the two teachers who were leading the workshop and also personal phone calls by the researcher to potential participants. With the combined efforts of the principal, the two workshop instructors and the researcher, four parents and four grandparents agreed to participate in the study and completed the study. Having secured a commitment from enough parents and grandparents to run the study, the intervention was taught as scheduled.

Procedures as the Study Unfolded

Timeline of the research.

- May 13, 2016 Researcher received final approval from Bethel IRB team.

- May 13, 2016 Researcher has conversation with school principal and two teachers who taught the workshop to set the date for the workshop. All agreed to set the workshop date for Tuesday, May 31, 2016.
- May 13, 2016 Letter that had been drafted was sent home with students to tell the parents about the workshop that was coming and the letter asked the parents to reply back if they were interested. Electronic communication to parents from the principal began as soon as the researcher gained approval to move forward. Timing was a key element to be able to run the intervention before the end of the school year so participants would be able to practice what they had learned over the summer. Principal sent out a school phone tree message explaining the workshop details for participants. He did the same using the school Facebook page. The next week, three participants out of 46 replied that they were interested.
- May 23, 2016 Researcher communicated with the principal and the teachers to see if there was any interest in the workshop offered. Six parents responded to the first round of invitations. The teachers both made lists of students they thought could benefit from the extra help over the summer and parents that they thought would be inclined to participate and gave the information to the researcher. The two teachers made several calls to parents themselves to help generate interest in the workshop and to get more participants to buy in.
- May 23, 2016 Eight parents were called to remind them of the date of the workshop (May 31, 2016). The workshop was the day after Memorial Day.
- May 30, 2016 The researcher gave calls, texts, or emails to participants to remind them of the workshop. If the parent was not at home, the researcher left a message.

- May 31, 2016 A light supper was provided by the researcher at 4:30 pm in the school library. When parents arrived, they were handed an informed consent form, were given time to read the form, and sign it. The researcher took the time to explain what the informed consent form was for, and asked the participants to sign the form and return it. Next, the parents were given the pre-intervention survey to complete. The participants filled out all of the paper work and returned it.
- May 31, 2016 The workshop was conducted in the computer laboratory. The school principal gave a welcome and the workshop began. The researcher provided a timeline for the process, telling participants that in a couple of weeks, they would be contacted through mail and asked to complete an additional survey.
- June 9, 2016 was the last day of school for students.
- June 11, 2016 the researcher mailed the post-intervention survey including a self-addressed stamped envelope to encourage a good rate of return.
- July 8, 2016 the new school superintendent visited the school for the first time and encouraged researcher to press on with the research, offering full support where needed.
- July 11, 2016 The school received a new principal on July 1, 2016 whom the researcher met on July 11, 2016 and requested permission to continue the research work at the school. The principal agreed to let the researcher continue the work under the same terms as previous principal. Even though the work had already been previously approved by school superintendent and the school principal, with new staff, new permission to continue was needed. The people who were in charge of giving the researcher permission to do the study changed while the study was already

in progress, so an important step to keep the work moving forward was to secure permission from the new staff in these key positions. The researcher used the phone from the school to contact participants so the name of the school would show on the caller-ID. Appointments were set to begin on Monday, July 11, 2016. All of the participants in the workshop used email.

- July 18, 2016 One participant called the researcher to learn if it was too late to do the interview and to get the two free books. An appointment was set on July 21, 2016 and the participant completed the interview.
- July 21, 2016 Researcher went to the school to conduct interviews, do follow up calls to participants, and to send email reminders that the work was close to being completed. Participants who had not yet responded got an additional phone call and email on Thursday, July 21, 2016. The researcher sent a letter by email and copied that letter in the form of a hard copy, to go along with the questions for the participant interview through the U.S. mail. Participants who had not yet been interviewed were requested to contact the researcher by email or by phone to set up the face-to-face time, or they could complete the survey by mail and return it in a self-addressed stamped envelope, sent to the researcher's work address. The letter gave the participants until July 31, 2016 to communicate back with the researcher to complete the interview and receive the two free books for participating. These details are explained to show the level of difficulty the researcher experienced in getting back in touch with parents who had already agreed to complete the study to finish out the work. Extensive effort was required to get the last four parents to come in for the

final face-to-face interview. Collecting the data, even from a small number of participants, was difficult.

- July 31, 2016 One more participant responded in writing to the personal interview questions and returned the completed survey questions in the mail to the researcher.

The gathering of the research data ended on July 31, 2016.

Findings

The findings represented in this chapter are organized by the research questions. For clarity, the research questions used in the study are below.

RQ1. To what extent will parental engagement in the reading process improve when parents receive training on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online?

RQ2. To what extent does communication improve between parents and teachers when parents receive training in how to use email?

RQ3. What are the most important factors influencing parental change in engagement?

RQ1 finding. The findings gleaned from analyzing the data are grouped in the order of the research questions. A total of eight participants completed the study. Half of those who participated in the study were grandparents to the child in school. The researcher refers to the parents and grandparents who participated in the study as participants. All of the participants felt well prepared to help their child with his/her reading at home and all of the participants had Internet access at home. The kinds of technology used at home by the three male students and five female students are represented in Table 4.1. Only two of the eight students represented in the study were on free or reduced price lunch. The school is a Title I school with a high percentage of students who receive free or reduced price lunch. The percentage of students in the school who receive free or reduced price lunch averaged 62%, much higher than the 25%

represented by the participants in the study. All of the participants in the study were female, with half of them being the child's mother and the other half being the child's grandmother.

Based on the findings from the pre and post-intervention surveys, all of the participants in the study said that taking a workshop on how to use specific apps for helping their child with reading at home would be helpful, except for one grandparent who teaches reading to her granddaughter at home on a daily basis. Several of the questions on these two instruments were repeated questions. The findings are described in both summary styles as well as by table. There was a strong desire from the participants to learn how to use reading apps with their child at home. All of the study participants indicated that they wanted to understand more clearly about what the teacher would like the participant to be doing with their child at home to help them with reading.

All the participants reported that they felt better equipped to communicate with the teachers after the workshop and several participants mentioned that they had not considered how much better it would be to email the teacher rather than to call during the school day. The workshop instructors had explained that during the day, except for their planning period and lunch time, the teachers were in front of a group of students teaching and were not easily reached by phone. The workshop leaders encouraged the participants to email them if they had questions and explained that the teacher would check email several times during the day and could offer a quicker reply back to the participant if they had a question. The teachers leading the workshop were clear that they wanted to protect the time they had with their students face-to-face as uninterrupted instructional time for the whole class. Before the workshop, the majority of the participants, five out of the eight, said that they would not likely email a question to the child's teacher. In the interviews, half of the participants communicated that they would be more likely

to email a question to the teacher after participating in the workshop. Only one participant changed their mind after the workshop to indicate they would be more likely to email the teacher a question.

The workshop occurred one week before the end of the school year. Several participants said they had not emailed the teacher over the summer because school was out, but that when students started back to school in the fall, they would be more likely to try to communicate with the teacher through email and felt like a door of communication to the teacher had been opened, even if the student was heading into a class with a different teacher than the two who led the workshop. So the email communication improvement was not observed in the data collected, but there was a change in attitude towards more willingness to communicate with the teachers through email.

The school principal came at the beginning of the workshop to greet the participants and thanked them for coming. He also gave encouraging remarks for participating in the study and reviewed the ways the participants could communicate directly with the principal at any time. The teachers and the researcher prepared a light meal for the participants to share as they were completing the paperwork to begin the workshop. Informal conversation flowed easily. There was a warmth and welcoming tone that helped set the stage for the teachers to better share with the participants the desire to communicate with them even more and even better than in the past school year. The participants were so eager to learn about the reading apps that the students had been using in the classroom all year, it created an energy in the room as the students sometimes sat on the lap of their parent/grandparent and helped as the workshop unfolded. For communication to improve, the participants need to feel wanted in the school and welcome and both of these ingredients were present in the room the evening of the workshop.

Summary of findings. The participants each had a strong working definition of what it meant to be an engaged participant. The participants were highly engaged during the workshop and kept up with what the teacher was doing on the Smart Board while they worked on the same items on a computer in front of them. If there was any question during the class, the instructor would pause and help the participant get to the site where she was working. Participants all shared the same positive view of how the workshop had impacted their feeling more connected to their child's learning, the teacher, and the school. Participants expressed a strong desire to keep up with what was going on with their child's learning. Whether the news was good or bad, the participants did indicate they wanted to be frequently informed about what was going on with their child. Some participants expressed that they did not know there were websites they could use at home with their child on reading and found that the most helpful part of the whole workshop. The specific "how to" instructions were very well received by all of the participants. During the workshop, the participants were able to track with the instructor and keep up. Some of the students sat with their parent/grandparent and helped the parent/grandparent find what the instructor was teaching about if the participant was experiencing a technology delay. The dynamic of watching the students work with the parents/grandparents during the workshop was not anticipated, as the workshop was intended for the parents/grandparents. Some participants came by the school to pick up their children after school and then attended the workshop. These parents had the care of the student as their responsibility during the workshop. The participants asked if their child could sit with them, and the instructors agreed that it would be good for the participant and the student to watch together. Four out of the eight participants had their child with them during the workshop. More of the findings are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.1

RQ1 Summary of Findings with References to Tables in Appendix

Question Number	RQ1 Researcher’s Summary of Findings	Table
Pre-Intervention Survey Q13 What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent/guardian in your child’s school work?	Participants have a strong working definition of what it means to be an engaged parent and articulated in their own words what that meant to them. Parents explained that being engaged meant keeping up with what their child was doing in school and offering to help their child at home with school work.	4.14
Post-Intervention Q13 How did the workshop on the top ten reading apps for you to use with your child at home help you feel more connected to your child’s reading at home and the teachers?	Participants were highly engaged with the process of receiving training on reading apps and reflecting on how that process has been helpful. This particular question is at the heart of the study. All of the answers were positive in some way reflecting on how the workshop helped the participant feel more engaged.	4.16
Post-Intervention Q14 What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent in your child’s school work?	Participants expressed a strong interest in keeping up with what their child was doing academically. Participants wanted to hear from the teacher about what was going on with their child good or bad.	4.16
Post-Intervention Survey Q17 How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?	All of the participants were engaged with helping their children with reading at home. Even the student who had a tutor in reading over the summer was still getting help during the family trips out of town for summer vacation. All of the families represented in the study had a high level of engagement with reading either one-on-one with their child, or the child was getting one-on-one help with reading from a tutor. Researcher noticed a high level of support for reading at home with a high priority by the participants to set aside time to work on reading with their child.	4.13

Question Number	RQ1 Researcher's Summary of Findings	Table
Parent Interview Q1 What resources do you draw upon to help your child with their reading?	Participants used a variety of resources at home with books being the most common resource available to all participants. Some participants used reading apps and the computer as a resource, and one participant employed the services of a tutor to help her son with reading over the summer.	4.15
Parent Interview Q2 What kinds of things do you say at home about school?	Participants made positive comments on a regular basis at home regarding the importance of school and learning.	No Table
Parent Interview Q13 What part of the workshop has had the biggest influence on your decision to try to become more engaged or not?	Learning about the resources available through the websites at the workshop was helpful, and it was also seen as a benefit to improve communication between the participants and the teachers through the workshop itself.	4.7
Parent Interview Q16 What were the specific things you have found to be the most useful since you have had the chance to practice using the reading apps at home?	The participants reported that the directions on how to use the websites were very useful. The websites were easy to access and fun for their child to use, which made encouraging their child to do reading activities an easier task.	4.8
Parent Interview Q18 If we wanted to offer a similar workshop to parents again, is there anything you could share that could make our next workshop even better?	One observation given by a participant is that a follow-up class or follow up workshop would be helpful. This class was a starting place for some participants using technology. For those participants this was their first time understanding that they were invited to learn and use technology at home to help their child with reading. One participant suggested that the school offer a follow-up workshop along the same line as the first class to give the participants a better chance to succeed in the computer applications.	4.20

RQ2 finding. The workshop instructors communicated both verbally and non-verbally their offer of hospitality. Their presentation, posture, body language with non-verbal cues, gestures, tone, and comments were inviting to participants and gave the message that the teachers genuinely want to build communication. There was a positive and inviting spirit in the way the material was communicated to the participants. This is an important finding regarding how the

school communicates to parents. The way the teachers presented the lesson was with warmth and hospitality, not just providing the content.

The research question targets communication, specifically through the use of email. However, a finding not expected along the lines of communication was how open the participants were to learn from the teachers. The participants followed along on a computer as the teacher gave the lesson using a Smart Board screen. There was no lack of interest on the part of the participants to learn new tools for better communication. So for the eight participants who attended, this was a very small total number of participants compared to the impact the study could have had with a high rate of participation from all 46 of the parents invited. The average class size for the four classes invited to participate in the study was 18 students. It was difficult to communicate to the participants that the workshop was going to happen. The workshop was held the day after a Memorial Day weekend where participants may have traveled and that could have kept the number of participants down. But the challenge to communicate with the participants that the workshop was going to be held was steep.

The time the researcher invested in the internship also lent itself to building vital relationships. By spending time with teachers, the principal, and with participants at events outside of the school day, the researcher began to build trust in vital relationships with the teachers who were leading the workshop and with the principal.

All the participants from the study said they learned there were free reading apps available that they could use at home to help their child with reading. After the workshop, in the short time-span of one month, half of the participants said they had tried using the apps at home. Two more participants said that the summer had been busy with vacations but that they would be using the reading apps in the two weeks prior to school starting to help their child gear back into

school thinking again and get ready for the new school year. All of the participants who had used the reading apps said the reading apps were helpful to their child. Another common theme the participants used describing the reading apps were “fun.” The apps help make reading more fun for the student as well as for the participant which made the reading time together more enjoyable for both the parents and the students.

Summary of findings. The findings from the next section of survey relate to RQ2 and how the workshop may or may not have helped improve communication between parents and teachers regarding the use of email.

Parent Interview Q7: In what way has communication improved between you and the teacher since the workshop?

All but one of the participants responded favorably that they would make a phone call to the teacher if their child was having difficulty with reading. One participant already had a pattern of speaking with the teacher on a regular face-to-face basis when she came to pick up her child from school.

Pre-Intervention Survey Q9: I would be likely to email my child’s teacher.

Prior to the workshop, only two out of the eight participants said that they would be likely to email their child’s teacher. Five out of the eight participants said that they do not use email regularly as a means of communication. All of the participants had access to the Internet at home, so lack of Internet access was not a barrier. Even though participants indicated that they would be likely to email the child’s teacher, the answers did not correspond with the participant’s responses regarding their regular use of email for routine communication. If a participant reported that they were likely to use email to contact a teacher, but they did not use

email regularly, there was room for doubt as to whether or not the participant would actually use email to contact teachers.

Pre-Intervention Q10: I use email regularly as a means of routine communication.

Even with the findings indicating that five out of the eight participants did not use email regularly, the teachers communicated clearly during the workshop how much easier it is for them to answer questions through the use of email rather than a phone call because the teachers have most of their day filled with active teaching time. The participants responded positively during the workshop as they learned this information, and one participant remarked at the workshop, “I have never thought about that.” In the fall as a new school year begins, an increased use of email by participants may be the result of the learning, but how they carried this information into the fall semester was not within the scope of this study. Because this study fell at the very end of the school year, the teachers indicated they did not have a chance to see an improvement in email communication and the participants replied in the same manner. It was already after the school year when the participants had time to begin working on the websites from the handouts they received at the workshop. The students had already been dismissed for summer and there was no one available at the school for them to communicate by email. The researcher did share her email at the workshop to be able to answer participant’s questions during the summer, but no participants emailed the researcher with further questions.

Table 4.2

RQ2 Pre-Intervention Survey Q9 Using Email to Communicate with Teacher and Pre-Intervention Q10 on Regular Use of Email

Participant	Pre-Intervention Survey Q9 I would be likely to email my child's teacher.	Pre-Intervention Q10 I use email regularly as a means of routine communication.
Participant 1	Yes	No
Participant 2	Yes	Yes
Participant 3	Yes	Yes
Participant 4	No	No
Participant 5	Yes	No
Participant 6	Yes	No
Participant 7	Yes	Yes
Participant 8	No	No
Conclusion	In Q9, several parents/grandparents indicated they would be likely to email their child's teacher. In Q10, five out of eight participants indicated that they do not use email regularly as a means of communication. If the school sends regular emails to parents, there may be a breakdown in communication with the parents not opening the emails or not using email regularly. All eight of the parents listed an email address where they could be contacted during the study, yet five of the eight parents indicated they were not likely to use email to communicate with the teacher.	

The Summary of Findings in Table 4.3 clarifies that the insight gained on the use of email is helpful information for the school to know regarding the timing of future workshops. Because the workshop fell at the end of the school year, participants did not use email with the teachers because school was no longer in session. Another important finding regarding the participant's use of email was that each participant did have Internet access and did list an email address on the pre-survey information. However, five out of the eight participants said that they did not use email regularly. Even though a participant had an email address it did not mean that the participant checked email often or used it regularly as a means of communication. When the

instructors explained that for most of the school day, they were not available to speak by phone because they were standing in front of the class teaching, one participant replied during the workshop, “I had never thought about that.” Communication for the coming school year may show improvement through the better use of email by participants.

Table 4.3

RQ2 Summary of Finding with Table References

Question Number	Summary of Findings	Table
Parent Interview Q7 In what way has communication improved between you and the teacher since the workshop?	Participants did not try to email the teachers during the summer because the workshop fell at the end of the school year. However, there was a positive tone in the pathway of communication that created a new confidence on the part of the participants to be able to more easily communicate with teachers than before the workshop.	4.21
Pre-Intervention Survey Q9 I would be likely to email my child's teacher.	Several parents/grandparents indicated they would be likely to email their child's teacher.	4.7
Pre-Intervention Q10 I use email regularly as a means of routine communication.	Five out of eight participants indicated that they do not use email regularly as a means of communication. If the school sends regular emails to participants, there may be a breakdown in communication with the participants not opening the emails or not using email regularly. All eight of the participants listed an email address where they could be contacted at during the study, yet five of the eight participants indicated they were not likely to use email regularly.	4.7

RQ3 finding 1. Parents participated clearly communicated that tracking along with the instructors by having computers in front of them and being able to be hands-on with the lesson was really helpful to be able to understand the instructors. The researcher did not anticipate students being present for the class but told parents that students would be allowed to attend with them. Several students attended with their parent, and the students offered technical support if the parent was having a difficult time following each instructor move. The students were able to keep up with the information being given to the parents and help the parent keep up with what was being said. Some parents may not have extensive computer skills and knowing that

someone will be in the class to help them if they experience difficulty may help improve parental attendance at future workshops.

RQ3 finding 2. The quality of the time parents engaged with their child around the use of reading apps improved for the participants after the workshop. One parent explained that she would place her child in front of the computer and help her get on the websites for school and then give her 30 minutes to work. This parent said the computer was like a baby sitter before the workshop. In the words of Participant 5, she states in Table 4.4, “She did what she wanted on the site without us sitting next to her for her to be able to explain, ‘Hey mom, look what I am doing.’ It makes me proud. It was something I should have already been doing.” This participant is a great example of how the quality of time a parent was spending with their child using the reading apps improved. If the quality of time spent at home on the subject of reading is more enjoyable using the reading apps for both the parent and the child, parental and student engagement will increase.

Participant raw data. Findings that can be summarized by the use of key words or a general theme have been condensed into Table 4.4 Researcher’s Summary of General Findings for RQ1. Not every question in the study generated outstanding findings. However, some questions that the participant’s answered gave great insight into the dynamic of parental engagement that is documented in greater detail and the statements the participants made are included in the tables to come. For findings that would be helpful for the reader to explore in greater depth, the data was summarized and included in a table immediately following the text or at the end of the document in the Appendix. The first table is a summary table of general findings for questions that map or relate to RQ1.

Table 4.4

RQ1 Researcher's Summary of General Findings

Question	Researcher's Summary
<p>Pre-Intervention Survey Q3 Circle items that follow that are used at your home: Desk top computer, laptop computer, tablet or smart phone.</p>	<p>Items used at the home of the participant. The use of the desktop was the most frequent device participants used to access the Internet, and they also used a variety of other common devices like the laptop, tablet, and smartphone.</p>
<p>Post-Intervention Survey Q12 I learned that there are free reading apps that I can use with my child at home to help my child keep from forgetting what they have learned in reading in school this year. Yes or No</p>	<p>Participants learned that there are free reading apps to use with their child at home to prevent forgetting what they have learned in reading in school. All of the participants responded yes to learning that there are free reading apps.</p>
<p>Post-Intervention Survey Q15 What part of the instruction on how to use the computer at home to help in reading was the most helpful?</p>	<p>The hands-on instruction occurred in the computer laboratory where the participant was able to see what the teacher was doing on the screen in front of the class and then do the same thing on the computer screen directly in front of them. The hands-on experience was the common positive theme in the responses from the parents.</p>
<p>Post-Intervention Survey Q17 How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?</p>	<p>All of the participants have been engaged with helping their children read at home. Even the student who had a tutor in reading over the summer was still getting help in spite of the family taking trips out of town for summer vacation. All of the families in the study had a high level of engagement with reading either one-on-one with their child, or the child was getting one-on-one reading help from a tutor. Researcher noticed a high level of support for reading at home with a high priority set by the participants to set aside time to work on reading with their child.</p>
<p>Parent Interview Q1 What resources do you draw upon to help your child with reading?</p>	<p>Parental comments helped the researcher see that there were a variety of tools being used at home by participants to help their children with reading and the most common response of the kind of resource being used at home was books. The computer was not the first choice or the most common tool as reported by the participants. One participant hired a tutor to help her child with reading over the summer.</p>

Question	Researcher's Summary
Parent Interview Survey Q15 How were the reading apps that were shared during the workshop helpful or not helpful?	In one month after the workshop, which was held at the very end of the school year before summer break, four of the eight participants had not used them at all or much when the follow up face-to-face interview with the participants was held. For the participant who did use the websites, they shared the websites were fun and helpful. Educational Galaxy was the most popular with participants who used the websites. The children reported to their parents that they liked being able to read and get a reward like seeing a rocket launch. Some of the websites helped the children feel like what they were doing was a game and changed the dynamic of homework in reading with their parents to something that was more enjoyable for both of them.
Parent Interview Q2 What kinds of things do you say at home about school?	Participants made positive comments on a regular basis at home regarding the importance of school and learning.
Parent Interview Q9 If you could ask the teacher to go over an item again, what area would you like to see again from the workshop?	Tell the participants who are helping their children learn to read about the websites because participants do not know about these and it could help a lot more people.

Parent Interview Q5: From your perspective as a parent, what is your role in supporting your child learning to read?

Table 4.5 presents the responses regarding the parental perspective on their role at home. Participant 2 described how she set up a system using the time her child spends reading to reward her child with electronic time. Thirty minutes of reading time would be used as a credit for the child to then get thirty minutes of electronic or computer time. Also, in this same question in Table 4.5, Participant 7 describes her philosophy as a parent in teaching her child to read at home and assumes the responsibility to teach reading at home five days a week, usually four hours a day. One of the primary tools that she uses to teach reading is “Hooked on Phonics” and uses the technique of teaching the child how to break down words by the way they sound in

syllables as her primary strategy. This participant, unlike the other participants, saw teaching her child to read as her responsibility and named the tools that she uses at home to do so. This participant worked closely with the teacher to get assignments one week ahead that would be covered at school, and she then taught the assignments that were coming at home. The participant was doing the primary teaching for this student in a way that none of the other participants in the study were doing.

Table 4.5

RQ1 Parent Interview Q5 Parental Perspective on Their Role at Home

Participant	From your perspective as a parent, what is your role in supporting your child learning to read?
Participant 1	Pass
Participant 2	I help them get resources that they need. I read with them. We read every night. And right now they are reading to get electronic time. Thirty minutes of reading to be able to use the computer or iPad. They use the computer way too much.
Participant 3	Basic skills
Participant 4	Pass.
Participant 5	Pass.
Participant 6	We help her with homework and spend time reading with her at night.
Participant 7	I feel like I need to teach her how to read because I believe strongly in phonics. I believe that unless you know phonics you can't read fluently any book that you pick up. If you are learning to read only using the sight method and only a tiny bit of phonics, you are always going to have trouble reading. You can't just look up a word in the dictionary and see the phonetic reading of it to be able to pronounce it or even know how to look it up. If you just hear a word, you are not able to spell it based on how it sounds. The school touches on phonics a little bit, but not enough to be able to read fluently. I believe my role is teaching her so that anything she gets at school is just gravy. Hooked on Phonics is one of my main resources.
Participant 8	We help with homework and reading at night.
Conclusion	Participants have a wide variety of ways they approach helping their child at home with school work, from taking on the task of actually teaching the child to read to being a less active participant and supporting the work the student is doing in school by reading with the child at home.

Parent Interview Q8: What has helped you the most from participating in the computer class offered by the teacher?

Table 4.6 refers to Parent Interview Q8, one of the comments given by Participant 2 is a significant remark regarding the rapid pace of technology change. Participant 2, a grandparent, like half of the other participants in the study, shares in her remark that there were not even

electric typewriters when she was in school. She further notes how much times have changed and describes the learning curve now for her to go on the computer to access information and try to keep up with what is going on in school with her grandchild. This participant feels like she has overcome being intimidated by the new technology since the workshop and states about the computer that, "I am not afraid to open up and start with it." With half of the study participants being grandparents, the benefit of helping a person who was afraid to get on the computer begin to use it to help with reading homework, is a significant step in the learning that was accomplished through the workshop. Participant 1 notes that she did not know there were websites that were available to her at home that she could use with her child to help with reading. Passing this critical information along to the participants was information well received by the participants and points to the success of the intervention.

Table 4.6

RQ1 Parent Interview Q8: Most Helpful Learning From Workshop

Participant	What has helped you the most from participating in the computer class offered by the teacher?
Participant 1	Because we know the websites are available. We did not know they were there. So that will be better to help us if we need help. If you don't know it's there you don't know to use it.
Participant 2	I think just the part of how to get on the computer. How to get on the computer and move around it. I did not come along when computers were in. Electric typewriters had not even come along at that time. But now that we have been through your class and learned how to get where we need to on the computer, I am a little more at ease. I am not scared to open up and start with it.
Participant 3	Being able to use the apps that was on the website that you guys gave us and knowing about them.
Participant 4	Pass.
Participant 5	Pass.
Participant 6	Pass.
Participant 7	Pass.
Participant 8	It has helped me in the way of knowing there are more websites that we do now than just a couple. My son enjoys them.
Conclusion	The participants stated it was very helpful to know about the website that can be used at home. For parents and grandparents not familiar with how to use the computer, the workshop helped them get started using the technology that their children are using in school which is a great benefit.

Parent Interview Q13: What part of the workshop offered has had the biggest influence on your decision to try to become more engaged or not?

Table 4.7 refers to Parent Interview Q13, parental engagement is at the heart of the question. Several responses to this question give greater insight into how parental engagement may have improved. Giving participants the websites that they can use at home to help their child with reading was an important piece of information. Teaching about that resource helped some participants feel more connected to the teacher and the learning process, and more engaged

in the student's learning. Participant 2 replied, "I was happy Mrs. Lemons helped connect the teacher to the participants." Participant 5 shared that she grasped a concept the teachers explained about how important it is to help keep their children reading at grade level. If they get behind it is very hard for them to catch up. Participant 5 said,

I think it was the education part from you and the teachers of the children and what they have to learn. The basics from our state are what is important. If they don't learn it from first to second, then they are going to be behind. By third, they are going to be so far behind, they won't even make it. So, yeah, that scares me into wanting to help more.

Her response shows that she wants to be even more engaged to keep her child from falling behind in reading.

Table 4.7

RQ1 Parent Interview Q13 Biggest Influence on Becoming More Engaged

Participant	What part of the workshop has had the biggest influence on your decision to try to become more engaged or not?
Participant 1	Because I know the resources are available. That is what has made me more engaged. It makes me want to help them more knowing that is there.
Participant 2	I was happy Mrs. Lemons helped connect the teacher to the parents.
Participant 3	I don't see how I can be more engaged.
Participant 4	It goes back to how important reading is with younger kids to get that passion in them for reading because it carries with them when they are older. That was one big influence. And then showing her the websites at home that has helped her with her excitement in wanting to learn to read to continue.
Participant 5	I think it was the education part from you and the teachers of the children and what they have to learn. The basics from our state. If they don't learn it from first to second, then they are going to be behind. By third, they are going to be so far behind, they won't even make it. So, yeah. That scares me into wanting to help more.
Participant 6	Just being at the workshop itself and getting the information. I wanted to be engaged to be at the workshop, so I am looking for the child's best interest.
Participant 7	Pass.
Participant 8	The more we help, the better our children do.
Conclusion	It was helpful to learn about the web-based resources available through the workshop, and it was also seen as a benefit to improving communication between the participants and the teachers through the workshop itself. The instructors gave clear remarks to the participants on how important it is for students to be at grade level with reading and stay at grade level, because trying to catch up if a student falls behind is very difficult.

Parent Interview Q16: What were the specific things you have found to be the most useful since you have had the chance to practice using the reading apps at home?

Table 4.8 Parent Interview Q16, addresses the specific things the participant found to be the most helpful after having a chance to practice with the reading apps at home. Participant 1 said, "Directions on how to use the websites offered by the teachers at the workshop. If the

workshop had not been offered, we would not have known about the websites and we would not have known how to use them.” Her reply addresses the main point the teachers were trying to communicate during the workshop that these websites are available for use at home to help your child with their reading at school. Participant 5 stated that the workshop has helped her make better use of the time she spends with her daughter on reading. Using the computer apps has improved the amount of attention the mother gives to the daughter while she is doing reading.

Participant 5 said:

Just making time, find the time and making time to sit beside her to watch her and let her show us what she is learning and what she is doing. Most of the time we would put her on the website and that was her 30 minute time and she did what she wanted on the site without us sitting next to her for her to be able to explain, “Hey mom look what I am doing.” It makes me proud. It was something I should have already been doing.

One more participant had a very specific tool that she shared she had been using all summer. Participant 6 described the handout given to each of the participants with the ten websites in the workshop to be extremely useful as she tried to apply what she had learned at home. Participant 6 shared,

The most specific thing I found, the paper you gave us with the websites. They have been like my little Bible. I made copies of it and gave to the girls so if they wanted to run papers off for her to practice, or they wanted her to go on the websites with her to see that she is reading right or doing words right, they could encourage her on the math part, the numbers, or whatever she is doing. Everybody has a paper to go by, including “student” name.

Table 4.8

RQ1 Parent Interview Q16 Most Helpful Practices of Apps at Home

Participant	What were the specific things you have found to be the most useful since you have had the chance to practice using the reading apps at home?
Participant 1	Directions on how to use the websites offered by the teachers at the workshop. If the workshop had not been offered, we would not have known about the websites and we would not have known how to use them.
Participant 2	I passed the information along to a tutor to help me.
Participant 3	Pass.
Participant 4	My grandson stays with me until his mom gets off work. He likes to get on the computer, and he asks me to get on it. Not every day, but he must really like it for him to ask. He is not a school person. There are these little rocket things that he gets to shoot if he gets a question right. If he doesn't get it right, he has to go back and answer it again.
Participant 5	Just making time, find the time and making time to sit beside her to watch her and let her show us what she is learning and what she is doing. Most of the time we would put her on the website and that was her 30 minute time and she did what she wanted on the site without us sitting next to her for her to be able to explain, "Hey mom look what I am doing." It makes me proud. It was something I should have already been doing.
Participant 6	The most specific thing I found, the paper you gave us with the websites. They have been like my little Bible. I made copies of it and gave to the girls so if they wanted to run papers off for her to practice, or they wanted her to go on the websites with her to see that she is reading right or doing words right, they could encourage her on the math part, the numbers, or whatever she is doing. Everybody has a paper to go by, including "student name."
Participant 7	The websites, the reading ones that have the sound that reads back has helped her a lot. Thanks.
Participant 8	They are easy to access. Fun. Helpful. Enjoyable. My son enjoys them.
Conclusion	The participants reported that the directions on how to use the websites were very useful. The websites were easy to access and fun for their child to use which made encouraging their child to do reading activities an easier task. The use of the reading apps at home gave the participant and the child something to do together at home focused on improving reading.

Summary of findings. Post-Intervention Q15: What part of the instruction on how to use the computer at home to help in reading was the most helpful?

Participant 1 shared a statement that seemed to be a common theme with the other participants as well when she said, “Being at the workshop and being able to watch what was up on the computer screen, watching that was the best.” The participants expressed enjoyment in having the opportunity to come to the school and have a hands-on class explaining to them in person what they could do at home to help their child with reading. Favorable remarks were given for the opportunity to follow along on a computer in front of them as the teacher worked on a screen at the front of the class where they could see how to go from one website to the next. The time the participants spend regularly working with their child on reading at home varied from 30 minutes a day, a couple of times a week, to four hours a day. All of them did show a strong commitment to reading with their child at home, and already had established reading at home with their child as a high priority before the workshop. Participants shared that the use of the reading apps had improved the quality of time they were spending with their child on reading. One mother shared that she and her husband now would take the time to sit at the computer with their daughter to watch her interact with the reading apps and keep up with what she was doing. Before the workshop, the student had been using the reading app at home, but the time was not attended by the participant. The mother would be in the room doing something like cooking supper, while the child had her 30 minutes of time on the computer. It was not a time that the participant and the child were interacting together about reading prior to the workshop. So for that family, the workshop gave them a direct benefit of improving the quality of time spent together on reading. Several participants reported that the children found the reading apps to be fun. The “fun factor” was a common theme that the participants described as

a bonus for using the reading apps. The use of the reading apps did draw the attention of the students which made it easier for the participants when they wanted to work with their child.

Table 4.9

RQ3 Post-Intervention Q15 Most Helpful Element and Post-Intervention Q17 Quality and Quantity of Time by Parents

Participant	Post-Intervention Q15: What part of the instruction on how to use the computer at home to help in reading was the most helpful?	Post-Intervention Q17: How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?
Participant 1	Being at the workshop and being able to watch what was up on the computer screen, watching that was the best.	Three days a week, 30 minutes per day.
Participant 2	Hands on experience!	My kids love electronics. Getting them to play was not a problem.
Participant 3	Access through school to get to websites we need and which ones are good for practice sheets and games.	Two or three times a week.
Participant 4	The understanding of reading.	We try to spend 30 minutes a night to read. Sometimes we read in the car. Since we travel a lot as well, we spend time reading signs etc. in the car.
Participant 5	The part of letting us parents know that there are websites that we can go on with our kids and it is actually helping them do better on their reading and math.	I spend at least 4 hours per day working with her on reading. We also work on phonics, grammar and spelling, and writing.
Participant 6	I have been using the computer and reading apps for two years on a limited basis.	Pass.
Participant 7	Letting us know about the websites.	We haven't done anything yet. We plan to work on it. This was a very good thing for you to do! Thanks for noticing the need and choosing this to help children.
Participant 8	No answer.	
Conclusion	Q15 Teaching the participants that there are apps they can use at home was an element of the instruction well received by participants. Q16 The quantity of time varied from 30 minutes a day, a couple of days a week, to intensive teaching at home up to four hours a day. The quality of time also varied greatly from hands-on teaching of reading by the participant to watching the child and interacting with them as they used the reading apps on the computer at home.	

Post-Intervention Q17: How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?

Post-Intervention Survey Q17: All of the participants were engaged in helping their children with reading at home. All of the families represented in the study had a high level of engagement with reading either one-on-one with their child, or the child was getting one-on-one reading help from a tutor. The researcher noticed a high level of support for reading at home with a high priority by participants to set aside time to work on reading with their child.

Parent Interview Q11: What part of the workshop helped you the most to feel like you can be more involved with your child's learning?

Participant 1 gave a detailed reply,

I think there was a website that showed exactly what they teach. I can't remember what they were called. If they are going over it that week, I can go back and look at it on the website. Then I can go see what they are doing. I am hands-on. I can help more if I can see it. The reading passages, I think they were called learning targets.

This answer showed her enthusiasm in having a new tool to be able to keep up at home with what her child was being taught in school and that helped her feel more connected. In addition, Participant 2 shared that,

I did not know I should play any other part other than making sure homework is done and AR [Accelerated Reading] are done and of course having them at school. The workshop helped me see there is more I can do at home.

The insight from Participant 2 is an important finding for this study. This participant shared that she did not know there was anything else she should be doing except for helping with homework the teacher sent home and getting her child to school. The workshop was a place

where the participant learned of new opportunities of how she could be engaged with her child in reading. It also provided her the opportunity to keep up with her child's level in reading. Her comment reveals her desire to know how to help her child as much as possible at home, and she was grateful for the information that showed her even more than she knew before the workshop.

Table 4.10

RQ3 Parent Interview Q11 Most Helpful Tool Learned in Workshop

Participant	What part of the workshop helped you the most to feel like you can be more involved with your child’s learning?
Participant 1	I think there was a website that showed exactly what they teach. I can’t remember what they were called. If they are going over it that week, I can go back and look at it on the website. Then I can go see what they are doing. I am hands on. I can help more if I can see it. The reading passages, I think they were called learning targets.
Participant 2	I did not know I should play any other part other than making sure homework is done and AR [Accelerated Reading] is done and of course having them at school. The workshop helped me see there is more I can do at home.
Participant 3	It just showed how important reading was and that at first grade they have a big jump to make in reading. So it is important to help show us at all ages but especially at first grade to help them in reading with their confidence and make them feel like they are successful.
Participant 4	The welcome feeling. The feeling you get from the teachers here. The principal. Anybody who works here. Even down to the janitor of the school. Everyone is helpful when you come in. They ask, “May I help you?” The teachers are available after class. They are open for suggestions. They give you suggestions on what to do to help the child learn more.
Participant 5	I don’t know how I could be more involved.
Participant 6	The part about being involved, don’t let it end in coming to school and then not have anything to do with the school. Keep up with what they do. Like when you read a sentence, ask the child what does it mean to you? You want the kid to feel confident and feel good. Make it fun. A whole lot of time if I read with mine, if they don’t feel good about reading, we will stop and pick it up another time. Sometimes we do have to wait to another day.
Participant 7	Watching the teachers go through step by step on the website themselves in the computer room.
Participant 8	I can do these apps with him and keep track of his progress.
Conclusion	Watching the teachers go through step by step on the websites themselves in the computer room helped participants feel more confident they could do the same work at home. They also felt more connected to the teacher because of the way the teacher extended the learning opportunity to the participant.

Parent Interview Q19: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants were given the opportunity to contribute something that they thought would be useful for the researcher to know or understand at the interview conclusion. Participants did have helpful insights that are shared in Table 4.11. Participant 2 was open in her reply when she said:

What Mrs. Lemons has done is remarkable. However, I was disappointed that nothing of the such has ever been said before now. The teachers we have had in the past have never said anything other than what level they are on and how they are doing other than do the homework. No one ever said the parents were needed or could help. Thanks! Good luck!

One participant in her one comment gives the researcher a greater window of understanding of how other participants may feel let down. Parents had not been instructed in how to keep track of their child in reading even if they had been invited to do so on their own. The disappointment is understandable coming from a parent who is getting this information that she finds very helpful at the very end of her child's first grade of school. Whatever the efforts may have been prior to the intervention, this parent's comments reveal she was not invited to participate, nor informed about how she could best participate, until the very end of the school year through the workshop. The expression communicated during the research was "this is great information, why have I not gotten this before now?" This important finding was shared with the new school principal as the next school year unfolded and school improvement plans were made for the 2016-2017 school year. This finding may have an impact on how the new principal provided future opportunities to parents as well as what to offer during the events where parents were invited to the school. Participant 1 shared that the kind of information shared in the

workshop should be offered to all the elementary grades, starting with kindergarten. She placed such a high value on the information she learned during the workshop, she wanted the same information to be made available to the whole school for parents who wanted to find ways to be more engaged to help their child with reading at home. The workshop was aimed primarily at first grade with the intention of equipping parents at an early grade to help them be more engaged, which in the long run would improve their child's learning. However Participant 1 said,

I think it should be offered school-wide, not just to first graders. I think it should be offered from K to fifth grade. There are a lot of parents that want to know what is going on and want to help. They are not aware of these resources.

An important finding summarized in Table 4.11 from Participant 2 is that parents do want to know what they can do to help their child with reading at home, and many do not know about the websites as resources they could use to supplement reading instruction at home.

Table 4.11

RQ3 Parent Interview Q19 Additional Comments by the Parents

Participant	Is there anything else you would like to add?
Participant 1	I think it should be offered school wide, not just to first graders. I think it should be offered from K to fifth grade. There are a lot of parents that want to know what is going on and want to help. They are not aware of these resources.
Participant 2	What Mrs. Lemons has done is remarkable. However, I was disappointed that nothing of the such has ever been said before now. The teachers we have had in the past have never said anything other than what level they are on and how they are doing other than do the homework. No one ever said the parents were needed or could help. Thanks! Good luck!
Participant 3	I think the workshop was wonderful.
Participant 4	Nothing else.
Participant 5	Not unless there is anything you could put together to do for the upper grades to help with parents being involved in reading.
Participant 6	Thank you. Thank you for helping me be able to help her.
Participant 7	I think you did a great job. Very informative.
Participant 8	No, just that you did a great job.
Conclusion	Remarks from all the parents were positive that the workshop was well done. Building a bridge between parents and teachers to improve communication was a positive outcome from the intervention. Parent comments highlight that parents wanted and needed to support the reading work at home and being given specific tools to practice with at home such as the apps, was well received by all parents.

Summary Table 4.12 gives broader meaning to the answers participants gave to the survey questions that can be grouped together based on a common theme. The hands-on work that the participants were able to do at the workshop was appreciated and the most useful part of the event. One take-home item was prepared for the participants by the instructors with the top 10 websites listed. The participants were able to take the sheet home with them and not have to hurry or scramble to make notes while the instructor was presenting the information. Those two items were repeated by several participants as the two most useful parts of the workshop.

Table 4.12

RQ3 Researcher's Summary with Table References

Question	Researcher's Summary	Table
Post-Intervention Q15 What part of the instruction on how to use the computer at home to help in reading was the most helpful?	Teaching the participants about apps that they can use at home was an element of the instruction that was well received by the participants.	4.9
Post-Intervention Q17 How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?	The quantity of time varied daily. The quality of time also varied greatly from hands-on teaching of reading by the participant to watching the child and interacting with them as they used the reading apps. Some parents spent time with their child reading by sitting with them at the computer and commenting on the items on the screen as the apps moved from one level to the next.	4.9
Parent Interview Q4 Why do you put in extra time to help your child with reading homework?	The general understanding communicated by the participants was that reading is essential for students to be successful in school.	4.22
Parent Interview Q6 Have there been benefits from the instruction offered in how to use the computer resources online at home that you could share?	The use of computer technology to help teach reading at home has helped some participants because students enjoy using the computer. The apps have some fun benefits when they reach a certain level of accomplishment in their activity. The fun factor was mentioned by several participants as a benefit that helped them engage with their child more on reading at home using the computer apps.	4.23

Question	Summary	Table
Parent Interview Q10 Was there anything you learned in the workshop that made you feel more confident that you can be more connected to the school, the teacher and what your child is learning?	Several participants noted that the workshop helped them see new resources available to them through the use of apps. But they also mentioned that the teachers came across as approachable and available to help parents as well as students if they had more questions about what they learned at the workshop.	4.24
Parent Interview Q12 What are the barriers you face that get in the way of you being more engaged with your child's work at school?	All of the participants had a strong interest in being engaged with their child's work at home. Time was named to be a limiting factor for participants that may have more than one child at home.	4.25
Parent Interview Q14 How did the workshop impact your confidence in being able to help your child with their work at home?	The workshop did help several participants feel more confident that they were able to access and use the reading apps with their child at home than before the workshop. Confidence improved on the part of the participants.	4.26
Parent Interview Q19 Is there anything else you would like to add?	Remarks were positive that the workshop was well done, from all the participants. Building a bridge between the participants and the teachers. Seek to improve communication. The participants learned from the teachers that their help was wanted and needed to support the reading work at home and then appreciated being given specific tools in how they could practice that work at home.	4.11

Summary of the Findings

The findings appear to reflect an eagerness on the part of the participants to be highly engaged with their child at home in the subject of reading using reading apps. Four parents and four grandparents participated out of the 46 potential parents that were invited to participate. Out of those who did participate in the workshop, the researcher did observe a great desire to be highly engaged with their child at home through reading and improved communication with the

teachers. The instructors and the principal gave counsel to the researcher ahead of the study that it was very difficult to get parents to come to an event after school. The school is in an area of rural poverty and is about a 20-minute drive from the closest small town. The lack of parental participation in after-school activities of any kind may have more to do with the parents working more than one job, or the lack of transportation to the school during the event, rather than seeing their absence from the after-school events as a sign that the parent is not engaged or does not want to be highly engaged. All of the participants in the study seemed to benefit from the conversations and lessons during the workshop, and were eager to learn. The workshop stimulated enough parental engagement that future workshops could be even more successful as will be described in the next chapter. It was remarkable for participants to want to do something at home with their child regarding school work, only days away from the end of the school year. Parents, students, and teachers sometimes tend to get burned out by the end of the school year and may not be looking for an opportunity to do anything related to school over the summer. Participants were hungry for the information that was being shared with them on how to use the reading apps, and more can be done with helping all parents know about the apps at future workshops in coming school years. At the end of the study, a spirit of humble gratitude was expressed by all of the participants to the researcher for thinking of them and for looking for a way to try to help them. There is room for growth in the coming school year to look for ways to apply these findings to improve parental engagement. Those suggestions will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter V: Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

A case study was conducted in a rural high poverty school using a pre and post-intervention survey and participant interviews. The focus of the study was an intervention offering a workshop for parents to show them how to use reading apps online at home to help their child with reading. Parental engagement was the main factor being examined to see if the use of the intervention would make them feel more engaged. The researcher has chosen to use the word “parents” to also represent guardians or grandparents who may be helping their child at home with reading. Practical recommendations that can be widely used in schools by principals, superintendents, teachers, and also by future researchers are shared next.

A small number of parents and grandparents (four of each) participated in a workshop as part of a case study at an elementary school in late May of 2016. The setting was a rural Title I school in the Piedmont of North Carolina. In the school year of the study, 62 % of the students were on free or reduced price lunch. The study began one week before the end of the school year with the hope that parents would want to continue the work over summer break that teachers had been doing with their children in reading during the school year. The researcher studied three research questions

RQ1. To what extent will parental engagement in the reading process improve when parents receive training on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online?

RQ2. To what extent does communication improve between parents and teachers when parents receive training in how to use email?

RQ3. What are the most important factors influencing parental change in engagement?

Findings and Recommendations for Practitioners

RQ1. To what extent will parental engagement in the reading process improve when parents receive training on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online?

RQ1 finding 1. The participants reported that taking the workshop on how to access the “top ten reading tools” for parents online was helpful, showing a hunger for the information as the instructors taught the workshop. During the class the parents asked questions and interacted with the instructors, the school principal, the researcher, and the other parents with an eager spirit. Note that the timing of the workshop fell at the very end of the school year. For parents/grandparents to show such a strong interest in learning about reading demonstrates that for these participants, it was a prime opportunity to help them learn how to with their child in reading over the summer.

RQ1 recommendation 1. Principals should consider offering a workshop for parents just before summer break in the school year to help improve parental engagement around the subject of reading at home using engaging online reading apps.

It is difficult to get parents to attend an event after school, even if the event is free, pertains to their child’s learning, and includes a free meal. The reason only eight parents out of 46 chose to participate is not clear. However, working with the community surrounding the school, the researcher did note that several parents who were invited to the study could not attend either on that particular day, or at that particular time. The study was a one-time offering for this research project.

RQ1 finding 2. Some parents requested that a workshop similar to the one for this study be taught at the school for parents in the other elementary grades. Participant 1 who is the parent of a first grade child and teaches fifth grade states in Table 4.11:

I think it should be offered school wide, not just to first graders. I think it should be offered from K to fifth grade. There are a lot of parents that want to know what is going on and want to help. They are not aware of these resources.

The insight given from this parent is particularly important for future workshops because she is speaking not only as a parent but also as a current fifth grade teacher.

RQ1 recommendation 2. Schools should consider offering a similar workshop to parents in each elementary grade, using a computer laboratory so parents can have the hands-on experience while learning from instructors. Offering the same workshop on different days and at different times may help accommodate the schedules of families that work long hours; rotating shifts; or have other family responsibilities such as caring for siblings, other dependents in the household, or children that participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities. Also plan to video record the workshop and make that video available to parents online who may not be able to attend the workshop in person.

RQ1 finding 3. Hospitality is a key to successfully engaging parents in the workshop. If the principal and the teachers communicate both verbally and non-verbally that they want regular communication with parents, they set the tone for parents feeling wanted and welcome. The principal and teachers at this school did the foundational work of making parents feel wanted and welcome at the school for the workshop. However, with great hospitality provided, and a warm welcome extended, an extremely low number of parents participated. Before the teachers made additional phone calls, only four parents had indicated that they planned to attend the workshop. The two teachers who taught the workshop had been making regular contacts with parents through the school year to keep them informed of student progress. Through communication between the teacher and the parents over the course of the school year, a relationship was formed

between the parents and the teachers. Because the teacher had established a positive relationship and communication path with each parent through the school year, parents responded more favorably to an invitation to participate in the workshop when it was extended to them by the teacher, than by the flyer that was sent home in the child's backpack, or through other electronic media communications that the principal had published to help publicize the coming event. Two parts of that process were crucial; offering hospitality to make the parents feel welcome in the school building, and using personal relationships with parents as a bridge of communication to help spread the word of important events at the school.

RQ1 recommendation 3. Principals and school superintendents should consider the importance of leading in hospitality. Make hospitality a priority as teachers communicate with parents, and the school principal corresponds with parents through weekly communication using telephone calls, social media, and other electronic avenues. To encourage a higher rate of parental participation, consider making phone calls to specific parents to invite them to events a part of the plan.

RQ1 finding 4. All of the participants that used the reading apps, even after having only one month to practice with them, enjoyed using the apps, and noted to the researcher that the use of the apps made the reading homework more fun. Participant 8 made this remark, "These programs are a lot of fun." Participant 5 made a similar remark, "It has made my child excited about learning because she loves using the computer and learning about technology." For parents who participated, to enjoy using a tool that will help their child be more engaged with reading, revealed that the workshop did improve parental engagement. All of the participants said that using the reading apps was helpful to their child. Because the use of reading apps at home was enjoyable, parental engagement was impacted in a positive way. Parents reported that

using the reading apps with their child was enjoyable and improved the quality of time they were spending with their child.

RQ1 recommendation 4. Principals should incorporate a training time for parents using reading apps into the school improvement plan. Principals should schedule workshops for parents as far ahead as possible on the school calendar so the date can be communicated to parents a number of times. With the positive feedback from parents that using the reading apps with their child was enjoyable, the principal may encourage the use of this tool at home with the hope that because the work is fun, parents will spend more time highly engaged with their child using the reading apps, and eventually hope to see that impact improvement in student reading achievement.

RQ2. To what extent does communication improve between parents and teachers when parents receive training in how to use email?

RQ2 finding 1. There was a new confidence present on the part of participants to be able to more easily communicate with teachers than before the workshop. All of the participants in the study had established email accounts when the workshop was conducted in the spring of 2016. However, only five out of the eight parents said before the workshop that they would be likely to email the teacher if they had a question. After the workshop, the attitudes of the parents shifted for them to be more inclined to use email than before the workshop as was revealed in the face-to-face interviews. Participants did not try to email any questions to the teachers over the summer break. Just because parents have an email address that they can put on a contact form at the beginning of the school year does not mean the parent is going to use email regularly for communication with the child's teacher. If the school communicates regularly through email and the parent does not check their email often, the intended communication is dropped. The

instructors explained during the workshop that it was much easier for them to reply to an email question because during the majority of the day, the teacher is involved in instructional time with students, and are not readily available to speak with parents over the phone. The instructors communicated clearly that they want to protect the instructional time when they are in front of the class teaching, and that they check their email often and could send the parent a reply during a short break. Participants in the workshop seemed to receive that information from the instructors as a helpful tip that they will try to put into practice in the coming school year. Several parents mentioned that they had never thought about how much easier it would be to get a question answered from the teacher by using email rather than a phone call. On the use of email, the findings include that parents already knew how to use email and basic training on how to use email was not needed. The focus regarding email then shifted to the usefulness of email in communicating with the teachers during the school day rather than trying to teach the parents how to use email. The instructors of the workshop were able to make that adjustment of their focus during the workshop presentation to the parents.

RQ2 recommendation 1. Communicate any message you are trying to get across to parents through all the means available including email, social media, school websites, and school phone calling systems. Principals should encourage parents to use email as a means of communicating with the teacher during the school day rather than trying to reach the teacher by phone.

RQ2 finding 2. Parental engagement seemed to improve for the participants of the workshop just by being present and participating in the event. Participants asked questions and the instructors gave answers to help parents stay on track with what the instructors were presenting. Participants made it a point to come to the researcher at the end of the workshop to

thank her for offering the class for parents. The same comment came through in the face-to-face interviews with parents regarding their gratitude for having the opportunity to learn. With half of the participants in this study being grandparents, it is possible that a grandparent could be the person attending the workshop and may need some basic instruction in computer skills to help them get started using email. All of the grandparents at the workshop for the study did know how to use email, but if the workshop is offered to a larger number of participants, instructors should not assume that all present could use email, know what email is, or how it is used. For grandparents who have never used a computer and now may be the primary caregivers for grandchildren, wanting to help their grandchild do the best they can in school may motivate grandparents to become computer literate.

RQ2 recommendation 2. Provide a workshop for parents/grandparents to teach them about resources they can use on the Internet at home like reading apps and include the best ways to communicate with teachers during the school day. Workshop instructors should be prepared to help parents/grandparents set up email accounts and give basic instruction on how to use email.

RQ2 finding 3. The use of the handout during the workshop was reported by the participants to be extremely useful.

RQ2 recommendation 3. Principals should consider the benefit of a handout that has the websites typed out ahead of time, so that during the instructional time, parents can be more focused on how to do what the instructors are showing them.

RQ2 finding 4. In a follow-up conversation, the two instructors shared that several parents had asked when they were going to offer another workshop like they offered in the spring

for parents. Parent demand for another workshop points to the success of the workshop offered to help them feel more engaged.

RQ2 recommendation 4. Offer workshops for parents to help them assist their children with school-work over the summer, and offer similar workshops for parents during the school year.

RQ3. What are the most important factors influencing parental change in engagement?

RQ3 finding 1. Parents participated clearly communicated that tracking along with the instructors by having computers in front of them and being able to be hands-on with the lesson was really helpful to be able to understand the instructors. The researcher did not anticipate students being present for the class but told parents that students would be allowed to attend with them. Several students attended with their parent, and the students offered technical support if the parent was having a difficult time following each instructor move. The students were able to keep up with the information being given to the parents and help the parent keep up with what was being said. Some parents may not have extensive computer skills and knowing that someone will be in the class to help them if they experience difficulty may help improve parental attendance at future workshops.

RQ3 recommendation 1. Offer a workshop for parents in the computer laboratory with the instructors giving the parents a lesson on a large screen in front of the class while parents follow along on computers. Also invite volunteers or students to be ready and willing to help prompt parents if they need help as the teacher gives instructions on how to move from website to website (Kupzyk, 2012; Warren, 2009; Houg, 2012).

RQ3 finding 2. The quality of the time parents engaged with their child around the use of reading apps improved for the participants after the workshop. One parent explained that she

would place her child in front of the computer and help her get on the websites for school and then give her 30 minutes to work. This parent said the computer was like a baby sitter before the workshop. In the words of Participant 5, she states in Table 4.5, “She did what she wanted on the site without us sitting next to her for her to be able to explain, ‘Hey mom, look what I am doing.’ It makes me proud. It was something I should have already been doing.” This participant is a great example of how the quality of time a parent was spending with their child using the reading apps improved. If the quality of time spent at home on the subject of reading is more enjoyable using the reading apps for both the parent and the child, parental and student engagement will increase.

RQ3 recommendation 2. Early in the school year, offer a similar workshop for parents and explain to parents that students and parents have reported using the reading apps together at home made reading time more fun for both of them. Principals and teachers should encourage parents to focus on the quality of time they are spending with their child reading at home rather than the quantity of time to improve parental engagement.

Recommendations for Academics

This study examined parental engagement through the use of a parent workshop. To take the current study to the next level, it would be helpful to see if significant improvement could be seen in academic achievement in reading for the students whose parents participated in the workshop.

Pre and post-intervention questions were used in the current study to increase internal validity. By asking the same question on different instruments, or similar questions in the interview, the researcher was able to triangulate answers that converged on the same theme, even if the question was asked at a different time (Merriam, 2009). The use of similar questions

through a variety of instruments is recommended in future research. Using a variety of means to ask the same questions can strengthen the internal validity of the instruments being used to gain new understandings. In the current study, parents did give similar answers to similar questions demonstrating that the parents did have an understanding of what was being asked of them.

More work could be done in future research by studying the specific content that would be useful in a workshop held early in the school year compared to the content that would be helpful to parents in a workshop held right before summer break. The academic needs may be different for the beginning of the school year than at the end of the school year.

The length of the study could be longer in future research. The current intervention was a one-night workshop for parents of primarily first grade students. The face-to-face follow up questions were placed one month following the intervention, after a letter went home to the parents asking them to complete a post-intervention survey. In a future study, it would be ideal if parents had the opportunity to practice what they learned during a full school year and then give the researcher feedback on what was the most useful information they were able to use at home through the school year.

Teachers who provided the instruction as well as the principal and one parent, all suggested that the timing of the workshop would have been better in the fall at the beginning of the school year, rather than at the end. Future researchers could look for the best content to include in workshops offered to parents at the beginning of the school year and how that content would differ if the workshop was also offered at the end of the school year. Future researchers could also look for the best timing of the year to offer workshops to parents. Right after reading test scores were made available to parents may be a window of opportunity to reach more parents who are thinking about their child's reading success or failure.

The teachers in the current study explained during the workshop that the “summer slide” could cause a student to slip backwards as much as four months of reading progress over the summer break. A future study could track the reading levels of the students at the beginning of the summer and again at the beginning of the new school year to see if the use of reading apps as an engagement strategy impacted reading gain or loss over the summer break.

Limitations of the Study

By using a case study methodology, the findings are particular to one group of parents. The researcher is not able to generalize the findings to the larger population of first grade parents around the nation. A qualitative case study was selected to reveal, in depth, perceptions and feelings about parental engagement. The words that the parents used to describe their perceptions would have been lost if the researcher had only used scaled items. The input that participants shared will help shape future parent workshops. An additional limitation is that this study offered only one workshop at the very end of the school year, and earlier or more frequent workshops, or workshops at different grades might have produced different results.

The setting of the study also involves dynamics that are unique to rural poverty that might not be the same in an urban setting.

Summary

The importance of reading as a life skill and as a skill to help a student be successful in academic achievement underscores the importance for school principals and teachers to place an emphasis on looking for ways to help parents and students be as successful as possible, starting early as the student enters the public school system. Providing a reading strategies workshop for parents is an intervention that participants reported enabled them to feel more engaged. School principals and teachers are encouraged to take the lead in making this kind of resource available

to parents. Parents may not understand how important it is for them to be engaged with their child's school work in reading at an early age. If a parent does have a good understanding and strong desire to be an engaged parent, that parent still may not have the financial resources that would help them provide the tools at home to help their child with school work. More work is needed to address solutions to the "digital divide" for those parents who want to be able to use the internet to help their children at home. In some rural communities near the school where the study was conducted, there is no reliable home internet service available.

One more parent reached and engaged early in a child's education may mean the difference in whether or not that child will graduate from high school. This study demonstrated that a relatively simple intervention can provide the skills and engagement needed by parents. Because the stakes are so high regarding student success, doing a simple intervention like the workshop in the study to help parents become more engaged is well worth the time. In the end, the child learning to read and stay on track in school will help them graduate and be prepared to launch into a successful career. Parents can make the difference (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Hemphil & Tivan, 2008). The end goal of parental engagement early in a student's career is greater student academic success and achievement.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for Levels 1 and 2 Research with Humans

Researcher, Evelyn Lemons

Dear Parent,

You are invited to participate in a study on Parental Engagement by attending a workshop on the use of reading apps and email. I hope to learn whether or not your participation in the workshop on using reading apps and basic skills on how to use email will improve your engagement with your child's reading at home and your connection to the school. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the researcher was looking for a school to participate that was a rural community with a need for improvement in reading scores. This project is to fulfill degree requirements in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Bethel University St. Paul Minnesota. The researcher is funding the project. If you decide to participate, I will invite you to attend one 1 1/2 hour workshop at the school, take two short written surveys that will take about 10 minutes to complete. One survey will be given before the workshop and one survey will be sent to you in the mail, one month after the workshop in a self-addressed stamped envelope. To finish the study, you will be asked to participate in a personal interview that will take about 30 minutes which will be audio recorded. There will only be one workshop, held late in the afternoon at the school computer laboratory. Refreshments will be provided the night of the workshop. Your total time that is being asked for you to participate is two hours and a half or less. Then you will be contacted by the researcher by phone to set up a personal interview, also to be conducted here at the school, which should take no more than 30 minutes. The personal interview will be recorded, each participant will be assigned a number, you will be given a number, and the researcher will not use your name in any published documents. The recordings will be kept, with other surveys in a safe location, locked. All information will be kept confidential and any personal information you give will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research project, no more than one year after the dissertation is published. All that is being asked of you is your donation of time and filling out surveys, participating in one workshop, and answering personal interview questions on the workshop. The researcher does not anticipate that you are being put at any risk to participate. The project will run in May of 2016 or as soon as approved. Two weeks after the workshop at the school, the follow up written survey will come in the mail to be returned to the researcher and then the researcher will set up a time to meet you at the school for a 30 minute personal interview about how the workshop may or may not have helped you. The benefit you can reasonably expect is to learn something at the workshop taught by the two first grade teachers that you will be able to use at home with your child using the reading apps or email over the summer. As an incentive to complete the whole study, the researcher is offering you one free book, first grade reading level, to be handed to you after the personal interview is completed as a sign of gratitude for your time. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Participant numbers will be assigned rather than using real names of any parent participating. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented. An audio tape will be made of the personal interview to help the researcher be able to go back and type out the exact answers

that each parent gives to the questions. After hard copies of the interviews have been typed and participant numbers assigned, the cassette recordings will be destroyed within one year of the date the dissertation is published. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with “Name of School” in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel’s Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants’ rights or wish to report a research related injury, please call Evelyn Lemons at “Phone number”, Dr. Michael Lindstrom at “Phone number.”

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature Date

Signature of Investigator Evelyn Lemons

Appendix B

Pre-Intervention Parent Survey

Parent Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Parent Address: _____

Email address: _____ Student Name: _____

Given by: Evelyn Lemons, Doctoral Student, Bethel University St. Paul, Minnesota.

Please circle your answers below.

1. I feel well prepared to help my child with his/her reading at home. Yes or No
2. I have Internet access in my home. Yes or No
3. Circle items that follow that are used at your home:

Desk top computer, laptop computer, tablet or smart phone.

Please circle your response below:

4. My child is: male or female
5. My child is on free or reduced price lunch. Yes or No
6. I am: male or female
7. I am the parent, or I am the guardian.
8. I would call my child's teacher if my child is having a hard time with reading. Yes or No
9. I would be likely to email my child's teacher. Yes or No
10. I use email regularly as a means of routine communication. Yes or No
11. Taking a workshop on how to use specific apps for helping my child with reading at home would help me. Yes or No
12. I want to understand more clearly about what the teacher would like for me to be doing with my child at home to help them with their reading. Yes or No
13. What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent/guardian in your child's school work?

Appendix C

Post-Intervention Parent Survey

Parent Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Parent/Guardian Address: _____

Email address: _____ Student Name: _____

Given by: Evelyn Lemons, Doctoral Student, Bethel University St. Paul, Minnesota.

Please circle your answers below.

1. I feel well prepared to help my child with his/her reading at home. Yes or No
2. I have Internet access in my home. Yes or No
3. Circle items that follow that are used at your home:

Desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet or smart phone.

Please circle your response below:

4. My child is: male or female
5. I am: male or female.
6. I am the parent, or I am the guardian
7. I would call my child's teacher if my child is having a hard time with reading. Yes or No
8. I would be likely to email my child's teacher about a question regarding homework assignments. Yes or No
9. I use email regularly as a means of routine communication. Yes or No
10. Taking a workshop on how to use specific apps to help my child at home has helped me feel more engaged with my child's reading. Yes or No
11. I understand more clearly about what the teacher would like for me to be doing with my child at home to help them with reading. Yes or No
12. I learned that there are free reading apps that I can use with my child at home to help my child keep from forgetting what they have learned in reading in school this year. Yes or No

13. How did the workshop on the top ten reading apps for you to use with your child at home help you feel more connected to your child's reading at home and the teachers?
14. What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent in your child's school work?
15. What part of the instruction on how to use the computer at home to help in reading was the most helpful?
16. What was the most important factor that may have changed how you feel about how you are engaged with your child in their work at home in reading?
17. How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?

Appendix D

Questions used in personal interview with parents:

1. What resources do you draw upon to help your child with their reading?
2. What kinds of things do you say at home about school?
3. What would be some examples of ways you help your child succeed in school?
4. Why do you put in extra time to help your child with reading homework?
5. From your perspective as a parent, what is your role in supporting your child learning to read?
6. Have there been benefits from the instruction offered in how to use the computer resources online at home that you could share?
7. In what way has communication improved between you and the teacher since the workshop?
8. What has helped you the most from participating in the computer class offered by the teacher?
9. If you could ask the teacher to go over an item again, what area would you like to see again from the workshop?
10. Was there anything you learned in the workshop that made you feel more confident that you can be more connected to the school, the teacher and what your child is learning?
11. What part of the workshop helped you the most to feel like you can be more involved with your child's learning?
12. What are barriers you face that get in the way of you being more engaged with your child's work at school?
13. What part of the workshop has had the biggest influence on your decision to try to become more engaged or not?
14. How did the workshop impact your confidence in being able to help your child with their work at home?
15. How were the reading apps that were shared during the workshop helpful or not helpful?
16. What were the specific things you have found to be the most useful since you have had the chance to practice using the reading apps at home?
17. How much time did you spend with your child using the reading apps since the workshop each week?

18. If we wanted to offer a similar workshop to like this to parents again, is there anything you could share that could make our next workshop even better?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E

Elementary School Letterhead

May 5, 2016

Dear Lyons Elementary School parents and family members,

I am excited to invite you to a workshop offered for all the parents of our current first grade students at “Name of School”. Mrs. Evelyn Lemons, who just completed her principal internship work here at our school during the spring, is a student at Bethel University completing doctoral work in Educational Leadership. Mrs. Lemons is preparing to do a project in our school for the parents of our first grade students as part of her dissertation research.

You are invited to come to a workshop taught by our two first grade teachers, “Teacher Name, Teacher Name”, that will last about 1.5 hours on Tuesday, May 31st at 4:30pm. The workshop will be held in our school computer lab next to the library. The topic of the workshop is how to use reading apps at home to help your child with reading over the summer. Parents will also learn some basic computer skills regarding email applications. Refreshments will be served. If you are willing to attend the workshop and participate in the study, you will receive a free book at the end of the study from Mrs. Lemons.

Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to come to this very important training. We have established this workshop to give you the tools to help your child learn to read. You have been chosen to participate in the workshop because you are a parent of a first grade student in our school. This is a one-time workshop and the only training that will be offered to parents before the end of the school year.

Please feel free to contact either of the teachers or me to let us know of your desire to participate in the workshop that evening. We look forward to a great turn out to represent our school well. Come and learn, and enjoy a workshop that is built for you as a parent.

Sincerely,

“Signature of Principal”

“Name of Principal”

Principal
Lyons Elementary School

Appendix F

10 Websites used with parents for the workshop.

The document that follows was used May 31, 2016 in the actual workshop with parents.

Document was written by the two first grade teachers who taught the workshop for the dissertation project with parents.

10 Summer Reading Websites:

- www.spellingcity.com

This website is free. You will have to register with your parent information. Sign in and you will be able to input spelling words for your child to play games.

- <http://www.educationgalaxy.com>

This website is free through “Lyons Elementary School.” IF it expires you can go online and sign up for \$5.99 per month if you choose. You will have to register and sign in. Your child is able to do reading and math while playing games.

- www.readworks.org

This website is free. You will have to register with your parent information. Sign in and you will be able to print leveled passages with questions for your child.

- www.easycbm.com

This website is free. You will have to register with your parent information. Sign in and you will be able to assign your child reading and math assignments. The website will grade each assignment.

- www.scholastic.com

This website is free. You will have to register with your parent information. You can go under the parent tab for reading information. You can go under the kids tab for the family playground games. You can also buy books for your child.

- www.getepic.com

This website is free for 30 days and then it is \$4.99 per month. You will have to register with your parent information. Sign in and there are leveled books that your child can read or the site will read it aloud to your child.

- www.abcya.com

This website is free. You can access it through “Lyons Elementary” sымbaloo. You do not have to register for it. It has spelling practice, games, sight word games, stories, grammar, etc.

- www.starfall.com

This website is free. You can access it through “Name of School” sымbaloo. You do not have to register for it. It has learning to read, phonics, games, songs, etc.

- www.IXL.com

This website has a free trial. If you purchase it is \$9.95 a month. You do have to register with parent information. Sign in and you will be able to access all the standards for first grade and other grade levels.

- www.education.com

This website is free. You do have to register with parent information. Sign in and you will be able to do online games, rhyming words, sight words, phonics, reading, quizzes, worksheets, etc.

*If you would like to know more information about any of the above websites please feel free to contact us at:

Teacher One email shared here: _____

Teacher Two email shared here: _____

Researcher email shared here: _____

Appendix G

Tables have been placed in the Appendix for the benefit of the reader to have the ability to look at the responses participants gave in more depth if there is an interest to do so. The tables that are included in the body of the dissertation have a direct connection to the paragraphs around the tables. The tables that follow in the Appendix are what the researcher used for general findings and items along the same theme have been grouped together in the findings in the body of the dissertation.

Table 4.13

RQ1 Post-Intervention Survey Q17 Quantity and Quality of Time Using Apps

Participant	How much time and what was the quality of time you committed as a parent to help your child on the reading applications?
Participant 1	Three days a week and 30 minutes each session.
Participant 2	My kids love electronics, so getting “student name” to play was not a problem.
Participant 3	Two or three times a week.
Participant 4	One hour two or three times a week.
Participant 5	We try to spend 30 minutes a night to read. Sometimes we read in the car. Since we travel a lot as well, we spend time reading signs etc. in the car.
Participant 6	We do 30 minutes a day. My son is very intelligent. He knows all sight words even 5 th grade words. He did every grade of sight words in kindergarten. I’m so proud of him.
Participant 7	We spend at least 4 hours a day working with her on reading. We also work on phonics, grammar and spelling and writing.
Participant 8	We haven’t done anything yet. Sadly we have been gone out of town. We plan to work on it and I will pass the information along to the summer tutor. This was a very good thing for you to do! Thanks for noticing the need and choosing to help children. Sincerely, “Parent signature.”
Conclusion	All of the parents have been engaged with helping their children with reading at home. Even the student who had a tutor in reading over the summer was still getting help in addition to the family taking trips out of town for summer vacation. All of the families represented in the study had a high level of engagement with reading either one-on-one with their child, or the child was getting one-on-one help with reading from a tutor. Researcher noticed a high level of support for reading at home with a high priority set by the parents to set aside time to work on reading with their child.

Table 4.14

RQ1 Pre-Intervention Survey Q13

Participant	What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent/guardian in your child’s school work?
Participant 1	To make sure I am doing all I can to make them be the best they can be.
Participant 2	I am actively involved in my kid’s school work. I always check homework and help when needed. If I do not understand something I will call/email the teacher. In my opinion being active is knowing what is going on with my child while at school.
Participant 3	Give ‘student name’ a better education and a chance of a good future with the knowledge base to further her education easily.
Participant 4	“I would like for my child to have the best education possible. I would also like to be in his surrounding and settings of his education.”
Participant 5	“An engaged parent is one who knows what is going on with their child or children academically. They are involved, on top of things and helps with homework. They have open communication with their child’s teacher and school.”
Participant 6	Pass.
Participant 7	“I talk to [student’s name] teacher regularly in person. She shows or tells me about specific areas that ‘student’ needs to work on. ‘Student’s name’ health challenges prevent her from being 100 percent engaged at school. Teaching her and helping her learn at home is the best way to give her an equal chance to keep up, and hopefully one day, excel. I have a multitude of resources available to me, both from school and from the Internet.”
Participant 8	Pass.
Conclusion	Parents have a strong working definition of what it means to be an engaged parent and articulated in their own words what that meant to them.

Table 4.15

Parent Interview Q1 Resources at home and Q2 Kinds of Things Parents Say at Home about School

Participant	Q1: What resources do you draw upon to help your child with their reading?	Q2: What kinds of things do you say at home about school?
Participant 1	Books are always available. We read together every night.	I try to be positive.
Participant 2	The websites	How important it is.
Participant 3	The computer, the iPad, and even the phone. She loves videos.	It is important to pay attention.
Participant 4	Books, games, the websites.	We try to say positive things at home about school and that at school you are there to learn so you can be successful.
Participant 5	Books. We have a lot of them in our home.	We try to read in front of our kids to show them that reading is important. We try to incorporate reading while we are driving and we incorporate reading into our lives every day.
Participant 6	Private tutoring	We are constantly talking about school. We are not pushing, but we are talking about things you learn, and different ways you learn. She is using videos to learn how to do things around the house like how to make cookies or how to cook this or that. It is amazing.
Participant 7	The websites and books and take my child to the library. We read the books that the teacher sends home that are on her level.	We try to stay positive. We have already talked about her new principal that is coming.
Participant 8	Books and Hooked on Phonics. We were using the same books they used in school but we finished those up.	School is great! It helps you learn and your mind grows. It gives you an education to where you can have any job you want when you grow up. School is fun and eventful.

Conclusion

Q1 Parents used a variety of resources at home with books being the most common resource available to all the parents.

Q2 Some parents used the reading apps and the computer as a resource, and one parent employed the services of a tutor to help her son with reading over the summer. Parents made positive comments on a regular basis at home regarding the importance of school and learning.

Table 4.16

RQ1 Post-Intervention Q13: and Post-Intervention Q14

Participant	Q13: How did the workshop on the top ten reading apps for you to use with your child at home help you feel more connected to your child's reading at home and the teachers?	Q14: What does it mean to you to be engaged as a parent in your child's school work?
Participant 2	She has seen the websites before when we got on there. It is familiar to her. I think it has helped a lot.	It matters to me a whole lot because it keeps you up to date on how they are doing and what they are doing. You stay informed by your teacher and it will help your child be the best they can be.
Participant 4	Knowing the right place to go on the Internet helps a lot.	I want to know everything that's going on good or bad so I can help fix anything that's wrong or improve.
Participant 5	Helpful. Teachers have never told parents how to help, just referred to a tutor.	It feels good. A part of me feels angry and sad that children can't get what they need at school. We send them there to learn and teach them other family life skills at home.
Participant 7	Getepic.com seemed more helpful.	Blessed and hopefully very helpful in her future.
Participant 8	It helps me to be part of his education.	It gets me involved in what is going on in school.
Conclusion	Q13, parents were highly engaged with the process of receiving training on reading apps and reflecting on how that process has been helpful. This particular question is at the heart of the whole study. All of the answers were positive in some way reflecting on how the workshop helped the parent feel more engaged. Researcher's Summary for	Q14: Parents expressed a strong interest in keeping up with what their child is doing academically. Parents want to hear from the teacher about what is going on with their child good or bad.

Table 4.17

RQ1 Parent Interview Q9 What Area Would Parent Like to See Again

Participant	If you could ask the teacher to go over an item again, what area would you like to see again from the workshop?
Participant 1	Go into more detail on the websites. Maybe take a couple to go in more depth and how to print some at home. I have used them to print some reading passages at home with questions and answers.
Participant 2	Telling and educating all parents because they don't know.
Participant 3	I am not sure.
Participant 4	I can't think of anything.
Participant 5	I don't think there is anything. The information I have gotten has been good. I don't feel like I need anything further at this point.
Participant 6	None.
Participant 7	Wow. I haven't thought of that. We go so much information that day, and with the notes I made, I felt like it was pretty well covered.
Participant 8	Programs to help comprehension. It felt complete.
Conclusion	Tell the parents who are helping their children learn to read about the websites because parents do not know about these and it could help a lot more people.

Table 4.18

RQ1 Parent Interview Q15:

Participant	How were the reading apps that were shared during the workshop helpful or not helpful?
Participant 1	We haven't used them yet, but the ones that have the reading passages on them that I have looked at are helpful because you can print them. They can see them and they can do it on paper. I like the part on the websites of being able to go to the leveled reading. I can use it with both of my kids because I have a first grader and a fourth grader.
Participant 2	Unexpected influences held us back.
Participant 3	Pass. I have not used them yet.
Participant 4	The Educational Galaxy and the AR are really helpful. The students that are confident get to move to the computer to education Galaxy. My grandson showed me how to use Education Galaxy. That part of the workshop was the most helpful. He liked the rockets.
Participant 5	We only used a couple of them. Like I said earlier, it has helped boost her confidence. Reading is essential in everyday life.
Participant 6	"Student name" gets on there and she can read site words. She can pick those out in a heartbeat, which she had trouble with when school first started. Site words are not her favorite. It was not interesting. It was like mumbo stuff to her. But on the computer it gives her a little different edge. It is more like she is in charge of controlling her buttons. She is more engaged with it on the computer than on paper.
Participant 7	They were all very helpful. She really likes the ones that read to her and has the sound. I guess it depends on the child. They are all fine to me.
Participant 8	They help because it's like games but they learn.
Conclusion	In one month after the workshop which was held at the very end of the school year before summer break, four of the eight parents had not used them at all or much when the follow up face-to-face interview with the parents was done. For the half of the participants that did use the websites, these participants shared that the websites were fun, and helpful. Educational Galaxy was the name of the website that was the most popular with participants who used the websites.

Table 4.19

RQ1 Parent Interview Q17 Time Spent Weekly Using Apps

Participant	How much time did you spend using the reading apps since the workshop each week?
Participant 1	Right now none because of the busy summer and vacation time, but we plan on doing that before school to get them ready and to know what to expect.
Participant 2	Several hours per week.
Participant 3	I have not used the apps yet.
Participant 4	Three hours a week.
Participant 5	30 minutes of reading a day, which includes reading books on the way home. Using the apps, 30 to 45 minutes for the whole week.
Participant 6	Three or four nights a week. Thirty minutes to earn some time to go swim in the pool. We say, "Let's read a story, then we will get in the pool."
Participant 7	Three days a week, 30 minutes or less.
Participant 8	I try four and a half hours a week.
Conclusion	Parents are still engaged with their child doing reading over the summer about 30 minutes a session two or three times a week.

Table 4.20

RQ1 Parent Interview Q18 Suggestions to Make Next Workshop Better

Participant	Parent Interview Q18: If we wanted to offer a similar workshop like this to parents again, is there anything you could share that could make our next workshop even better?
Participant 1	I would want to make sure parents could ask questions at the end like you did at the first workshop and then listen for what they are asking for at the end of the workshop.
Participant 2	I can't think of anything.
Participant 3	No. I liked the handout with the websites that we could use. It went great.
Participant 4	A follow up class. A follow up workshop. I would be thrilled to come and be involved in it to be able to learn for myself to be able to help her. I found the first one to be most informative.
Participant 5	No. I think you did a great job. Put the knowledge out there. Have the papers with the names of the websites on hand. I think that is great.
Participant 6	Not really. I enjoyed it.
Participant 7	Pass.
Participant 8	Pass.
Conclusion	One observation given by a parent is that a follow up class or follow up workshop would be helpful. This class was a starting place with some parents using technology. For some parents was their first time understanding that they are invited to learn and use technology at home to help their child with reading. To give the parents a better chance to succeed in the computer applications, one parent suggested that the school offer a follow up workshop along the same line of application as the first class.

Table 4.21

RQ2 Parent Interview Q7

Participant	In what way has communication improved between you and the teacher since the workshop?
Participant 1	It will help when school starts back. They have told us that email works better than phone calls.
Participant 2	It has not.
Participant 3	School has been out since then, so there is really no teacher to communicate with. I am sure it will help me in the new school year. I am sure that what I learned in the workshop will be helpful in communicating with the new teacher.
Participant 4	I already had a great way of communication with the teacher.
Participant 5	I already had a great communication path with the teacher before the workshop.
Participant 6	It was the end of the school year. Her teacher and I always stayed in contact with each other, so I haven't had the chance to do that again until school starts back. It is usually no problem to communicate with a teacher, like with email, and they will respond right back.
Participant 7	We seem to be on the same page now and I feel comfortable talking to his teacher.
Participant 8	Pass.
Conclusion	With the workshop timing falling right at the end of the school year, parents did not try to email the teachers before the end of the school year. There was a positive tone in the pathway of communication that new confidence was present to be able to more easily communicate with teachers than before the workshop.

Table 4.22

RQ3 Parent Interview Q4 Why Parents Put in Extra Time Helping with Reading at Home

Participant	Why do you put in extra time to help your child with reading homework?
Participant 1	Because reading is the most important. If they can't read, it is going to be hard for them to do anything else.
Participant 2	Have education outside of school time.
Participant 3	I want her to succeed. I want her to be able to read fluently and be able to understand what she is reading so she can succeed in life. You can't do anything if you can't read.
Participant 4	Any type of reinforcement will help him. Make sure he feels good about himself. Reading is not his thing. Math is.
Participant 5	Because reading is essential in life. You have to be able to read to drive, to work, to make it.
Participant 6	Because I want to help him succeed in school. You can learn a lot from reading.
Participant 7	This gives her a baseline. She has to have this at an early age or she is not going to make it in the older grades.
Participant 8	Just to better her as a student.
Conclusion	Reading is essential for students to be successful in school was a general understanding communicated by the parents.

Table 4.23

RQ3 Parent Interview Q6 Benefits from Using Computer Resources at Home

Participant	Have there been benefits from the instruction offered in how to use the computer resources online at home that you could share?
Participant 1	I haven't really used them. I have set up two or three accounts. It has been a busy summer and vacation time. Sometime in the next two weeks we will be using them before school starts back. We have church camp next week. I plan to let them use the websites.
Participant 2	I shared the information with a tutor.
Participant 3	I hate to say this, but we don't really use those kind of things because they get a lot of that at school. We will probably use them later on in the summer, but I want to make sure she is reading fluently first. We have been concentrating on the hooked on phonics and the reading.
Participant 4	With Spell City, he is not good in spelling. It is a program that helps them learn. It is a computer game.
Participant 5	It has made my child excited about learning because she loves using the computer and learning about technology.
Participant 6	Wow. This child is seven. She lives in the country. She is not exposed to a lot of outside things. She can go on the computer, cut it on and go to the websites. She picks different games to play. She picks sites with words or math, whatever she is interested in that day. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop. My eyes were opened to so many different sites. And I made little notes as you were going along, what I could look for in each site, and which was better for one or the other, and which site was free. It didn't cost a thing to get right there and for her to get the information. Learn how to work the computer as well as doing math problems. Yeah, I really did get a great deal of information that day.
Participant 7	Yes. The websites that she was already familiar with helped me and her.
Participant 8	These programs are a lot of fun. Yes. I have told my sister-in-law about it for her girl because she wanted to know what I was doing with my son that makes him be reading at a higher level than he is in.
Conclusion	The use of computer technology to help teach reading at home has helped some parents because the students enjoy using the computer and the apps have some fun benefits when they reach a certain level of accomplishment in their activity. The fun factor was mentioned by several parents as a benefit that helped them engage with their child more on reading at home using the computer apps.

Table 4.24

RQ3 Parent Interview Q10 Influences to Help Parents Feel More Connected

Participant	Was there anything you learned in the workshop that made you feel more confident that you can be more connected to the school, the teacher and what your child is learning?
Participant 1	Yes. I know there are resources available and I know the teacher is available.
Participant 2	Educating me.
Participant 3	I feel like I was already pretty connected.
Participant 4	Keep in touch with the teacher and the progress the child is making. Be more connected to the school and stay involved in that child's life and make sure they are on task. If they are having a problem with something, hopefully that teacher will call you to let you know if they are having a problem in a certain area. The workshop helped me feel more connected.
Participant 5	Well connected to the school would be using the websites from the school site that they use every day and are familiar with in the classroom. That's about it.
Participant 6	Just as I said, I feel like the teacher and I can talk at any time. I feel like that even more now. They showed us several things during the class, and it was several teachers there, not just one. I felt like all of them wanted to see us succeed.
Participant 7	The websites were already familiar to the child and most parents didn't know about the websites and that this was something that we could do at home. So that helps a lot.
Participant 8	Yes. The websites we were shown is what our kids do in class and now I know exactly what he is doing.
Conclusion	Several parents noted that the workshop helped them see new resources available to them through the use of the apps, but also that the teachers came across in the way they communicated to the parents to let the parents understand better that the teachers are approachable and available to help not only the student, but the parent if they had more questions about what they had learned at the workshop.

Table 4.25

RQ3 Parent Interview Q12 Barriers for Greater Parental Engagement

Participant	What are the barriers you face that get in the way of you being more engaged with your child's work at school?
Participant 1	Time. We have three small children.
Participant 2	I don't think there is anything.
Participant 3	My children listen to someone else better than myself.
Participant 4	There is so much going on now with testing. I think that is a big barrier.
Participant 5	If I were on a daytime schedule, I could be at home more at night when she is doing the work on the computer.
Participant 6	None.
Participant 7	Work schedule sometimes but I always try to help.
Participant 8	Pass.
Conclusion	All of the parents had a strong interest in being engaged with their child's work at home. Time was one factor named to be a limiting factor for parents they may have more than one child at home.

Table 4.26

RQ3 Parent Interview Q14 Workshop Improved Parental Confidence in Working with Child at Home

Participant	How did the workshop impact your confidence in being able to help your child with their work at home?
Participant 1	I can explain things better to them. It is hard to explain things if you don't understand them.
Participant 2	The knowledge that I can.
Participant 3	Pass.
Participant 4	When my little ones had homework, I had them bring it to the kitchen table while I cooked supper, so I could answer questions and also look over their work. Sometimes they needed my help and sometimes they did not. I kept up with the teacher.
Participant 5	It just reinforced some of the technology that can be used that I had forgotten about. It refreshed my memory that I could use it at home. My child loves ABC workshop and Education Galaxy. She would get a creature then move up to the next level. She gets excited about that.
Participant 6	My confidence. Just the fact that you showed me it can be done. That it is easier to get on the computer and go places than I originally thought it would be. That is a big deal. That was a big barrier for me.
Participant 7	Just having the information of the websites
Participant 8	It was easy for us to access and do together.
Conclusion	The workshop did help several parents feel more confident that they were able to access and use the reading apps with their child at home than before the workshop. Confidence improved on the part of the parents.