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Early Literacy Strategies for Families and Educators

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Early Literacy Strategies for Families and Educators

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DEDICATION

To my family: Thank you for being so supportive and always finding ways to lift me up.

To my students: Watching your joy for learning inspires me to be my best and keep learning to
always improve for you.

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Abstract

This paper collected and examined research suggesting differing strategies for literacy learning. The research studies examined used qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods of data collection. The scope of research included three themes of study: home and family literacy learning strategies, school literacy teaching strategies and strategies for differentiation. Commonalities suggested from the studies included positive reading interactions from families and educator use of research-based literacy strategies. As well as differentiation through scaffolding to meet individual needs, the research suggested positive family joint reading and positive family engagement around literacy improve child literacy outcomes. Studies also suggest research-based literacy strategies directly lead to improved outcomes in the classroom. The differentiated study research suggested evidence-based interventions should be inclusive and best used as part of direct instruction. The three themes work together to create a non-comprehensive catalog of strategies to be used by families and educators. Parent-educator partnership is vital as the research presents data indicating key successful literacy learning is a combination of positive parental interactions around reading and intentional research-based literacy education at school.

Keywords: differentiation, direct instruction, evidence-based interventions, inclusion, literacy learning strategies, positive family engagement, parent-teacher partnership, scaffolding

Early Literacy Strategies for Families and Educators

Chapter One: Introduction

Think back to when you were in elementary school, picture being in the classroom during independent reading time. All you can hear in the quiet room is the rustling of pages and clock hands ticking. You look around the room and see your peers confidently reading chapter books, you look down at your favorite picture book and start counting down the seconds until time is up. How do you think this child feels? Feelings of inadequacy and shame often lead to children hiding their learning struggles. Learning to read is not intuitive and all children learn in different ways and at different times. Having positive interactions around literacy is vital to literacy learning.

“Two-thirds of America’s fourth and eighth graders are not proficient in reading” (Cassidy, 2024, p. 2). Not understanding how to read at early levels leads to inequities in learning such as delayed comprehension skills and therefore challenges learning in other subjects. Reading is more important than just for independent reading time, learning how to read is essential because it is part of how humans communicate with each other. Learning how to read is challenging and can take many approaches. If educators and families collaborate towards student learning, all children can show literacy growth.

Importance of the Topic

Successful early literacy strategies are important for educators and families working together to teach young children early literacy skills. “Reading is one of the most valuable skills developed during childhood but is also one of the most cognitively challenging proficiencies to acquire” (Kern, 2008, para. 2). Having successful strategies is vital to teaching all children how to read. Not all children can learn in the same way so finding differentiated strategies is

important to making sure each child learns to read. “Learning to read is a key objective of early education and difficulties in learning to read can have serious adverse consequences” (Hume et. al., 2015, para. 2). Learning to read is a key life skill and is needed for communication, continuous learning and for life advancement. Not learning to read can create lifelong challenges which include lack of social skills, inability for further learning as well as lack of job opportunities later in life.

Sometimes families are uneducated about what teaching reading can look like and why it is important. Family propensity to learn how to read can also play a role in how they help or disengage from children learning to read. “Reading skills are heritable, but they are also shaped by the student’s environment. [...] Students need explicit and systematic reading instruction and a learning environment that ensures they reach their maximum potential, no matter their genetic predisposition” (Estrera, 2023, para. 4). While family traits are one factor of learning and can influence the beginning of a child’s learning, they are not the only factors playing into student learning. While classroom literacy strategies are often focused on the time spent in the classroom and are not abundantly shared with families, the following research looks at both modalities and finds ways for collaboration.

Scope of Research

This research investigated qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method studies and examined different strategies for both families and educators to implement in order to improve literacy outcomes in children. The research was collected from educational databases and examined peer-reviewed and current studies. The literature examined, conducted studies involving three themes: family literacy learning, educational literacy strategies for school use and differentiated literacy strategies for specific student needs. The first theme presented

evidence of literacy growth through positive parental literacy modeling and parental joint-reading. This theme shows the value of repeated positive literacy engagement modeled by families as a precursor to later literacy growth. The second theme involves a broader selection of strategies, and each study presents an additional strategy. In this theme the strategies examined in the studies are all researched-based and include targeted literacy benefits for student learners. The third theme involves studies about differentiated learning strategies. These studies explored evidence-based interventions, the benefits of differentiated direct instruction and the continuation of building positive literacy practices. The studies involved mainly targeted early childhood through elementary learners, however the scope broadened to show additional learning benefited by a single study about expanding past elementary into secondary education in connection to family involvement. The research was primarily focused on literacy instruction for native English speakers but did include perspectives from studies focused on English as a second language learners (ELL). After research was concluded, there were areas not expanded on. Additional research should be conducted on specific research-based literacy strategies and differentiated literacy strategies. The look conducted into school-based strategies for these two themes were designed to be limited in scope and should be treated as non-comprehensive. Additionally, more research should be conducted on the partnership between parents and educators and the indications of that partnership on literacy outcomes.

Research Question

In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, what strategies can be used to strengthen early literacy in learners both at home and school? This research aims to collect and compare different strategies for educational and home use to teach children to read and the importance of home-school collaborations. This research kept the focus of Concordia St. Paul's

Differentiated Instruction Program's Essential Question "in light of what is known about differentiated instruction, how shall professional educators effectively teach every student?" front and center by collecting evidence of differentiated learning strategies and at home learning strategies for the purpose of finding useful connections and collaborative efforts to meet the needs of each beginning reader.

Definition of Terms

Early Readers are young children learning beginning reading concepts (such as phonemic awareness, phonetic awareness and print awareness) until they are fluent.

Differentiated Instruction is a mindset for educators to create learning opportunities for students in ways to meet each student's learning need.

Joint Book-Reading is a style of reading together with children. Joint book-reading includes taking turns reading, reading to others aloud and engaging with the story together.

Literacy is all the skills of reading and writing and communication.

Multi-Modal learning contains multiple sensory inputs during learning.

Summary

Literacy is a complex but vital skill children need to learn. Educators and families are compelled to partner together to provide a well-rounded literacy educational experience. The research below identified many strategies families and educators found to be effective in implementing literacy education at home and at school. After analysis the research led to strategies found to be beneficial to implementation in both home and school settings. The strategies included positive parental modeling and implementation at home, educator implementation of research-based strategies as well as differentiated literacy strategies based on

student needs. This paper will aim to decipher different strategies leading to positive literacy growth for both parental and educator implementation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Every child must master literacy. Literacy is comprised of many skills and therefore finding specific strategies to benefit every student becomes a monumental task. Families and educators should work together to find strategies to meet the literacy needs of the students. Parental strategies start much earlier than educator strategies as parents and families are the child's first teachers (Vygotsky et al., 1978). This is important as educators and families work together to help each child. The educator should rely on family input and support parental figures and the students. The research analyzed in this paper focused on three areas. The first theme of the research was what strategies families could use to help students gain growth in all aspects of literacy. The second theme asks the question -what strategies could educators use to lead to positive literacy learning and growth? The third theme the research showed was strategies for learners who have differentiated needs. The three themes present strategies when used in tandem can benefit early literacy learners.

The first theme involved studies from Barton-Husley et al. (2020), Chang et al. (2019), Curry et al. (2018), Sulaiman et al. (2022) and Silinskas et al. (2020). Each of these studies researched a different aspect of parental involvement with literacy learning. These studies all supported positive parent-child literacy strategies including joint-book reading and positive parental modeling.

The second theme for educators in the classroom teaching literacy included studies from Ankrum et al. (2014), Lipsky et al. (2015), Omega et al. (2019), Shimek (2023), and Zaman et al. (2019). These studies are not exhaustive and only target strategies additional to strategies prevalent in educational curricula. The range of topics covered includes play-based learning,

multi-modal read alouds, vocabulary strategies, verbal scaffolding and the use of research-based strategies. These studies are broad and only conduct a superficial look into this topic.

Third theme included studies from Akamoglu et al. (2019), Malouf et al. (2014), Smith (2022), Stuart et al. (2018), and Zagona et al. (2020). These studies all explored differentiated strategies to help learners with differing levels of disabilities and learning needs. The strategies identified were all specific to different learning needs but could be helpful to differentiate for other learners. The studies included evidence-based intervention, inclusion in general education classrooms, positive one-on-one instructions and tie-ins for parent education towards modeling and communication strategies.

Family Strategies

Positive parental involvement with literacy education is beneficial to all young readers. The qualitative research study done by Sulaiman et al., titled *Pupils' and Parents' Perspectives Towards Using Smartphones Strategies to Improve Reading Skills* (2022), showed the benefit for parental involvement in literacy after early childhood. This study targeted children aged 10-12 and looked at the benefits of smartphones on reading skills. This study was completed in Malaysia and not all families were fluent in English, so interpreting services were used to complete questionnaires. The literacy engagement was done in English as the students were English Learners. In this study researchers gathered information through interviews, observations, and open-ended responses. The researchers organized a workshop where participants first learned about the technology they would use. Then, the researchers conducted frequent check-ins to determine the perceptions of parents regarding how smartphones impacted literacy. Included in this study were 79 people, children aged 10-12 and their parents aged 25-55.

The study found “the parents’ role is important in actively engaging with their children's reading process” (Sulaiman et al., 2022)

The strategy highlighted by Sulaiman et al. (2022) throughout provides evidence of positive parent engagement with literacy materials produced a result of 52% grouping who thought the activities and strategies increased student interest in reading activities along with 32% who saw a slight improvement in student interest in reading. At the end of the study, 43 student participants said they liked reading. The results of this study showed the importance of importance of engagement of families in literacy. This is an important strategy, as it boosts the enjoyment of reading, which can strengthen the chance of literacy skill mastery. Positive engagement in literacy at home can be modeled in many ways including reading for fun, interacting with literacy materials, looking forward towards time with literature and positive encouragement towards children reading. While this study focused on intermediate-aged students this strategy can also be used for beginning readers. Staying positive in interactions with beginning readers is essential to producing readers who are positive.

Shared reading time between children and families is important for literacy acquisition skills, beginning at a young age. This can also be true for parents of kids with a disability. In the study *Maternal Input and Child Language Comprehension During Book Reading in Children with Down Syndrome* by Barton-Hulsey et al. (2020) discuss the benefits of language and literacy skills gained by shared book reading for children with Down Syndrome (DS) as compared to typically developing children (TD). Literacy needs to have multiple pathways to be accessed and one direct link to later reading is development of language skills. In this study children aged 22-63 months (approximately 2 years to 5 and a half years) were grouped by chronological age and were compared to peers of the same chronological age. This study

included children with DS and TD. The mothers included in this study were also around similar educational levels which has been known to “influence the amount of linguistic input provided to young children” (Barton-Hulsey et al., 2020, p. 1479). The procedure of the study was a quantitative study done in short 1- 2 hour visit at the participants' homes. Each dyad was observed participating in a reading activity. The interactions were recorded in 7–10-minute intervals and based on a set of predetermined books with affects and manipulatives included. The data collected was assessed based on the Mullen Scales of Early Learning and is “a standard assessment for children ages birth to 68 months” (Barton-Hulsey et al., 2020, p. 1479). This assessment investigates receptive and expressive language, visual reception, and fine motor skills. The coding for this study was analyzed by looking at a combination of maternal codes and child codes.

The results of the analysis conducted by Barton-Husley et al. (2020) showed a slight negative correlation between maternal input and receptive language growth for children with DS. Also noted, for mothers of children with DS, the amount of input was substantially higher than their typically learning counterparts. The study also finds “for children with TD having lower receptive language may result in the need for more direct input in the form of labels and points to maintain engagement with a book, whereas children with higher receptive language skills may need less of this type of input” (Barton-Hulsey et al., 2020, p. 1484). Having families verbally label images and point to the story helps children with DS build language and story tracking skills. When thinking about differentiating the needs of children with DS and TD children both should be receiving tailored reading time with parental figures and each family should be adjusting their verbal and visual input based on their child’s receptivity and comprehension

needs. The strategies directly looked at during this study were parental involvement and direct reading to children.

The third study also had connections to maternal interaction with children and reading to children, specifically joint book reading. *A Longitudinal Study of Maternal Interaction Strategies During Joint Book-Reading in Taiwan* by Chang et al., (2019) highlighted joint book reading, while a “highly ritualized form of parent-child interaction that involves complicated language exchange between parents and their children” (p. 401) is also scaffolding strategies for literacy and social skills. “Joint book-reading experiences are linked to children’s language and literacy proficiencies as well as to their later academic achievement” (Chang et al., 2019, p. 402). This mixed-methods study tracked the change in maternal interaction strategies across time and how they affected literacy skills in children at the starting age 14 months until the age of 3. This study asked three questions “(1) What interaction strategies do Taiwanese mothers use during joint book-reading when their children who are 14, 26, and 36 months old? (2) Does mothers’ use of interaction strategies change across time? (3) How are the interaction strategies used by Taiwanese mothers related to the concurrent and subsequent language and early literacy abilities of their children?” (Chang et al, 2019, p. 405). The participants involved are forty-two pairs of mothers and their children, 22 boys and 20 girls. All children were the first born in their families to limit additional factors and the mean age of the mothers and fathers was 34.4 years old. The procedure of the study was a combination of questionnaire and data focused observations. 3 home visits were the primary study model and took place at 14 months, 26 months and 36 months. While researchers were at the homes each mother was asked to read 2 books and play with a set of toys together, with their child. Mothers were required to fill out a questionnaire regarding joint-book reading practices at home and demographic information. Standardized

language measurements were administered to the children on the 3rd visit at 36 months of age. Each visit was video recorded and coded by mother-child interactions, the data analyzed to conclude a significant correlation between maternal talk and child comprehension and language growth. The results of this study indicate how parent voiced interactions during joint-book reading can lead to language growth and gained reading comprehension skills. The studies by Chang et al. and Barton-Hulsey et al. indicate parental involvement in reading to children directly impacts fluency in all literacy skills.

The fourth study reviewed, *Connecting Schools and Families: Understanding the Influence of Home Literacy Practices* conducted by Curry et al. (2018) also dove into home literacy practices. The research was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods and followed 3 mother-child pairs. The requirements for participation in the study included socio-economic indicators below the national poverty line and the child qualifying for the school-free lunch program. The qualitative data was collected through interviews with the mothers and used to gather background information about current family literacy practices. The quantitative data was gathered by having the families record shared reading sessions for eight weeks. Each pair was also given 5 picture books deemed appropriate literacy levels for each child to use, families could choose what materials they used including electronic books, books from home collections or the provided picture books. The results of the data collected showed a few strategies for each of the 3 families used. “Through an analysis of the codes that were utilized, several themes emerged. Sophisticated reading behaviors (e.g. labeling, schema activation, questioning) were apparent in the shared reading interactions between parent and child. Adult modeling, correcting/repeating, questioning, elaboration, encouragement and praise were just a few of the interactions evident in the shared reading events. Most valuable, however,

was an examination of the cases as a whole and listening to the exchanges of the children and their mothers” (Curry et al., 2016, p.73). The strategies present from the findings also showed that while the mothers modeled literacy strategies intuitively, they did not formally include synthesizing or inferencing. Curry et al. states “perhaps even most importantly, the mothers modeled positive attitudes about reading in general by reading with their children for enjoyment and not solely skill acquisition” (Curry et al., 2016, p.74). Curry et al. concluded the study with connections from findings geared towards classroom applications and concluded available literacy practices at home vary greatly between cultures and a positive home-school literacy environment can contribute to positive outcomes in literacy learning.

The fifth study reviewed topics of home literacy learning in *Home Literacy Activities and Children’s Reading Skills, Independent Reading, and Interest in Literacy Activities from Kindergarten to Grade 2*, Silinskas et al. (2020). This study used qualitative data of which reviewed a previous longitudinal study started by Sénéchal et al. (2002). The original research collected qualitative, longitudinal data studying the literacy strategy called the Home Literacy Model. Sénéchal et al. (2002) collected data about literacy growth based on parent involvement in kindergarten through second grades, then how it connected again when the students reached ninth grade. The reviewed study collected information from approximately 2000 children Kindergarten through ninth grade. One third of the collection sampled was culturally homogenous chosen from four Finnish municipalities. The critical background knowledge and other information from gathered studies including information about the Home Literacy Model which comprises two pieces; informal literacy such as environmental print and adults reading to children as well as print focused activities such as teaching children letter sounds and print meaning related activities. Silinskas et al. stated “although the Home Literacy Model postulates

that parental literacy activities at home enhance children's literacy outcomes, other evidence has shown that children's own reading as well as children's interest in literacy activities predict their literacy outcomes" (Silinskas et al., 2020, para. 3).

The implications indicated children's independent reading is positively correlated with improving reading skills. A contradictory finding in this study is of the focus on how children's interest in reading does not always predict positive skills outcomes; the studies referenced have mixed results suggesting emergent learning and early interest in reading might not have a strong predictor but there are some instances where it has been proven. The data shows more positive connections have been made at later grades such as first and second grade where positive engagement in literacy might have a higher predictive value in skill outcomes. The second part of the research reviewed the longitudinal studies throughout the years and to see if parent involvement improved outcomes. Parents who listened to their child read and continued to do so throughout first and second grades saw more growth in reading skills than parents who did not or reduced frequency throughout the year. The limitations of this study came from limited data of single item assessments and how the data was self-reported from the mothers, which indicated bias from the mothers in the answers without additional opportunities for cross-checks or reflection. The quantitative data collected over time drew a few conclusions, "literacy activities at home prior to school positively predicted the frequency with which Finnish children read independently at the end of Grade 1" (Silinskas et al., 2020, para. 45), "The frequency with which children read independently at the end of Grades 1 and 2 was positively correlated with children's literacy skills at all time points" (Silinskas et al., 2020, para. 46) and "Across time points, children indicated that they were interested in letters and reading activities, with 74% of them choosing one of the two smiling faces" (Silinskas et al., 2020, para. 47). Therefore, the

strategies for literacy learning at home are beneficial providing positive literacy environment and continue to engage in the literacy materials with children.

The collection of studies above shows evidence to support the continuation of positive environments around literacy, reading and support of learning in the home environment from infancy through a child's academic career. Additionally, children's literacy learning was supported by the data above and suggested another strategy: direct modeling of literacy behaviors such as reading to children and speaking, promote positive independent joy in reading.

School Based Strategies

In addition to positive literacy learning environments at home, school-based strategies are important to learning literacy. Most families leave direct instruction of literacy strategies to schools. Ankrum et al. (2014), Lipsky et al. (2015), Omega et al. (2019), Shimek (2023), and Zaman et al. (2019) all conducted studies with different strategies to boost literacy in the classroom.

Omega et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative research study about how play-based learning is important in the literacy teaching and learning process. This study was conducted in an early childhood setting in the Philippines and investigated "what perceptions of early childhood educators in regard to the use of play as a medium of delivering instruction to advance literacy?" and "what kinds of play do teachers think are suited to advancing literacy?" (Omega et al. 2019, p.478). The participants of the study were experienced teachers who had taught for 7-18 years and had taught in nursery or kindergarten settings during the time of the interviews. The data was collected in interviews of which took 40-60 minutes, and the interview notes were analyzed by emerging themes. The key theme was the different kinds of play the teachers noted as valuable to early literacy learning. Three types of play were identified from the themes of the

interviews which included active play, exploratory/manipulative or constructive play, and Music and dramatic play. These differing types of play all offer different ways for educators to introduce literacy skills such as the development of early phonics during musical songs and exploratory play with clay which strengthens fine motor skills in which later helped with initial writing skills of holding a pencil. Play has many benefits as a strategy targeted towards literacy learning.

Shimek (2023) also suggested multi-modal read-aloud benefits in literacy learning. The case study conducted by Shimek observed one classroom through mixed method of both qualitative observations of teaching practices and quantitative coding during read aloud. This study was done only in one specific classroom as the teacher of the room has background and is known for multi-modal learning through non-fiction texts. The modes of learning found in multi-modal learning were mainly done by the teacher but were used to draw attention to the text in differing ways such as pointing to pictures, turning her body to the student speaking and using eye-contact. The findings of the study support interactive read-alouds, modeling non-fiction text and encouraging children to act out what they see and hear from the shared literacy times. This study is very limited but gives insight into introducing multi-modal learning as a strategy for literacy learning.

While Shimek observed the occurrence of multi-modal benefits during read-alouds Lipsky et al. (2015) compared the instructional strategies of vocabulary introduction during read-alouds for differing socio-economic preschools. There were 52 preschool teacher participants from both Head Start and private preschools. The socio-economic status of the children at each location was collected and compared higher socio-economic status preschool programs to lower socio-economic status preschool programs. All participating preschools had at least one student

per classroom who was a dual-language learner. The procedures of this study were focused on reading and transcription. The preschool teachers included in the study were asked to read the same book, *Edward and the Emu* by Sheena Knowles, as they would during a typical reading time. The teachers were recorded reading the book to the children by the research team. The teachers were asked to read the suggested book as it was intentionally engaging and also had complex vocabulary which provided opportunities for educators to demonstrate vocabulary strategies. *Edward and the Emu* is a book included in the text Talk program by Beck and McKeown from 2001.

The measures of the study by Lipsky et al. included having the transcripts of the videos coded and analyzed by teacher vocabulary instruction practices, 12 separate strategies were identified: defines word, acts out meaning of word, gives synonym, points to a picture of word, uses recasts, asks student to define word, connects word to its use in the books, connects word to personal experience, connects word to illustration, discusses spoken form of word, discusses written form of word or shows written form of word, asks students to say word aloud (Lipsky et al., 2015, p. 963). These 12 strategies are a combination of definition strategies, contextualization strategies and orthographic/phonological strategies. The coded transcripts were used to divide the words taught into three categories: frequent, high utility and low utility (Lipsky et al., 2015, p. 963). The three categories were used to identify frequency of a word and the usefulness of the word for the participating children's daily vocabulary.

The results of the study found in participating Head Start preschool programs the result of using vocabulary teaching strategies varied from 0-60 incidents per story. Most of the strategies used by Head Start preschool teachers were definition strategies at (M= 9.00) with both contextualization strategies at (M=1.96) and orthographic/phonological strategies at (M=0.74),

M as the mean number of strategies used by those included teachers. Private school teachers did not include as many vocabulary strategies during their reading with definition strategies at ($M=2.79$) and used less contextualization strategies at ($M=0.45$) and even less orthographic/phonological strategies at ($M=0.14$). 12 of the 29 private school teachers did not use any vocabulary strategies (Lipsky et al, 2015, p. 965). This data indicated, private school preschool teachers do not place as much value on implementing vocabulary strategies and place more emphasis on book exposure and enjoyment while the Head Start program teachers placed a higher value on including vocabulary strategies with read-alouds. The strategies used by both participating groups suggest exposure to reading and introductory vocabulary strategies can lead to later literacy learning.

The use of vocabulary strategies is also an example of a literacy scaffold used by preschool teachers. Ankrum et al. (2014) conducted a study exploring a single teacher's use of verbal scaffolding during differentiated reading instruction in a kindergarten classroom. The study collected multiple sources of data using qualitative and quantitative methods and included a two-stage process of reviewing data transcribed of small group lessons and teacher interviews. The data was collected during 3 weeks of literacy instruction spread out throughout the school year (i.e. 1 week in the fall, 1 in the winter and 1 in the spring). Video recording was used to collect the data of the small group lessons and coded by identifying the materials used, how each lesson varied and the use of scaffolding. The teacher the study followed taught at a school of approximately 650 students, kindergarten through sixth grade, with 23 students in the kindergarten classroom, 11 boys and 12 girls. This school was at the edge of a large urban area. The teacher had a teaching certificate in Elementary Education and was a certified reading specialist. The verbal scaffolding used included invitations to participate, verification of answers

given by students, direct explanations, and opportunities to co-participate (Ankrum et al., 2014, p. 44). By using these strategies during small groups this teacher successfully furthered each student in her classroom's reading to either at or above the kindergarten benchmark. The indication of successful verbal scaffolding during small group reading lessons showed the use of intentional, thoughtful scaffolding strategies and how students advanced in their literacy learning.

Scaffolding strategies are important to help all students learn literacy skills but should be used with specific scientific researched-based strategies for literacy learning. Zaman et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study with elementary English teachers from Pakistan. Of the target population of 72 public primary school teachers of 14 schools, 10 third grade teachers were purposely chosen to participate in three days of consecutive observations of reading instruction. The goal of the observation was to identify specified scientific research-based 'teaching reading strategies' including phonemic awareness instruction, word pronunciation, fluency instruction and reading comprehension (Zaman et al. 2019, p. 34). The data collected for all 10 teachers was collected over fifteen days, 60 minutes each, and all educators were notified before observed.

The results of the research concluded how nearly all of the educators used text comprehension strategies such as definition practice. This reinforced the use of vocabulary strategies studied by Lipsky et al., (2015) and suggested vocabulary instruction could grow to be more beneficial as children continue to learn and grow. Zaman et al. also posed the question of the need for continuous teaching phonemic awareness. "It seems that early grade teachers are deficit in skills and knowledge about research-based teaching reading strategies because 9 out of 30 times the early grade English language teachers follow the related standard practices but 21 times out of 30 (69%) they do not apply the given research-based teaching reading strategies for

developing phonemic awareness” (Zaman et al., 2019, p. 38). Phonemic awareness should be held to a higher value as it bridged the gap between reading, fluency and comprehension (Zaman et al., 2019, p. 38). Strategies for phonemic awareness should be research based and tied to engaging and scaffolded activities based on student need.

School-based literacy strategies which are research based, multimodal and engaging help students learn literacy skills. Specific skills such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and more should be considered under a research-based model. Additionally scaffolding should be to target specific student needs. While much of a child’s literacy learning happens at school, play should also be incorporated to help students develop a love for literacy and learning (Omaga et al., 2019, p. 477).

Differentiated Strategies

Educators and families use many strategies to help children learn literacy skills, some children require differentiated strategies to help them learn and increase literacy outcomes. In the research below Akamoglu et al. (2019), Malouf et al. (2014), Smith (2022), Stuart et al. (2018), and Zagona et al. (2020), all provide data supporting strategies to help differentiated needs of children.

The study conducted by Smith (2022) studied evidence-based intervention to promote reading proficiency. “Educators can implement strategic literacy interventions within early learning classroom to aide with the bridging of educational gaps” (Smith, 2022, p. 59). This study was a quantitative study in which Tier-1, Tier-2 interventions are centered upon small, guided reading group lessons and Tier-3 strategies were implemented as individual learning plans and on-to-one teacher support for reading interventions. The tiers were decided by the needs of each group of learners. Tier- 1 interventions were implemented whole class as shared

reading lessons, Tier-2 interventions were implemented as small group learning and Tier- 3 were individually implemented interventions. The interventions were data tracked by monitoring student progress in vocabulary, hearing and recording sounds in words and text levels read after instruction. The implementation of a tier strategy system increased student progress at a rate of 100% where all students increased by a minimum of one reading level (Smith, 2022). This study was conducted over a 5-week tracking period and included a group of 23 students all from the same classroom. Smith was also the classroom teacher of the study which implies an inherent bias. An additional teacher observation given during the conclusion of the study connects to the parent strategies above, “findings show that students were most engaged in their reading when they were offered consistent positive reinforcement and were given a clear and directed goal to work towards” (Smith, 2022, p. 58).

In addition to tier-based interventions as differentiated reading strategies Zagona et al. (2020) suggested "the importance of an inclusive education as essential for ensuring access and progress in the general education curriculum" (Zagona et al., 2022, p. 35). The research supports students with complex support needs having access to general education classroom learning as beneficial to their literacy learning needs. This study was a qualitative study done by explanatory sequential design used to investigate the research three questions “(a) What is the extent of the participation in academic (literacy) and non-academic activities of students with [complex support needs] in inclusive general education classrooms? (b) What strategies (observed and self-reported) do educators implement in general education classrooms to support students with [complex support needs]? And (c) How do the educators describe learning about the strategies they use to support students with [complex support needs] who are included in their classrooms?” (Zagona et al., 2022, p. 35). This study was implemented in two elementary

schools in the south-western United States. All the students included in the study were participating from their own neighborhood school and students from kindergarten to fifth grade participated. There were 840 students in one school and 600 in the other. There was no initial professional development done for the teachers before conducting the study, and the classrooms included in the study had at least one student who had complex support needs.

The data collected was done through observations in inclusive and general education classrooms. There were two parts to the observations: one-part whole class and the other focusing specifically on the student with complex support needs. The data was analyzed through coding of the written, audio and video files. The data concluded, students with complex support needs participated in activities linked with grade level curriculum addressing literacy skills. By being included in grade level academics students showed progress in literacy even if they needed complex support. “There is a need for future research to focus on instructional strategies that are effective in supporting the progress of students with complex support needs” (Zagona et al, 2022, p. 43).

Malouf et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study about the effects of helping early literacy with practice strategies for reading fluency for children with severe reading impairments using the HELPS program. The HELPS program implements 8 common components of effective reading including model reading, error-correction, goal setting, performance feedback, systematic praise, verbal cues for fluency, verbal cues for comprehension and repetition of reading ability appropriate text out loud to adults three times (Malouf et al, 2014, p. 271). This study included two adolescent aged children both 12 years old, one boy and one girl. The girl had notable difficulties reading and the boy was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol syndrome and Tourette’s Disorder. The students attended a summer academic clinic for 20 hours a week, for

four weeks, from 8am to 12pm daily and were provided two snacks during their morning sessions. While reading was the primary concern noted this time was split into one session of reading, one session of math, one session of writing and one session of social skills each morning. Studied were the words per minute reading rates tested and the HELPS data. Progress monitoring data was collected every week to support finds.

The overall data was inconclusive about the continuing benefit of the HELPS model as the data collected from the two participants wasn't consistently compared to the correct grade level reading goals. While both participants showed growth in their progress monitoring, future research needs to be completed to verify the direct interventions of the HELPS model as a benefit to literacy growth. However, direct intervention of HELPS uses strategies of positive feedback and direct assistance, also supported by additional research above.

The fourth study provided qualitative data which indicated direct assistance, and support should be used to support learners with dyslexia. Stuart et al. (2018) identified inclusive classroom strategies to help positively influence academic achievement of dyslexic learners. The study conducted was an individual program where the student participated in one-one sessions for 45 minutes twice a week. The length of the study nor the specific number value of its population is specified. During this time, students would miss other academic instruction, and this does not indicate an overall inclusive practice. A downfall of the study Stuart et al. (2018) identified was how additional context clues of the inclusive practices were not noted. This study was conducted in New Zealand with English speaking students.

One of the main strategies highlighted by the study results were "building positive self-esteem and developing support systems" (Stuart et al., 2018, p. 102). The other strategy highlighted by the observations done was how teachers should present information to students

with dyslexia in multiple ways to keep learning engaging and appropriate for them. These two strategies connect to positive interactions around literacy and repetitious practices through multi-modal learning.

The fifth study highlighted how the research connects to the strategies above of direct reading to children. The study titled *Parent-Implemented Communication Strategies During Storybook Reading* by Akamoglu (2019) focused on “reading techniques and evidence based naturalistic communication teaching strategies (i.e. modeling, hand-model and time delay) while reading books with their children with DD” (Akamoglu, 2019, p. 300). This quantitative study focused on three research questions “Is there a relation between training and coaching parents to use shared storybook reading techniques and increases in parent’s fidelity of technique use?”, “Is there a functional relation between training and coaching parents to use specific PiCS strategies (modeling, mand-model, time delay) during shared storybook reading and the parent’s rate and fidelity (quality) of strategy use?”, “Is there a functional relation between the parent’s use of PiCS strategies (modeling, mand-model, time delay) and increases in the child’s communication behaviors during shared storybook reading?” (Akamoglu et al., 2019). The participants of the study were children ages from 3- 5years old with diagnosed developmental delay or qualifying individual education plans. The family home language was primarily English, and two families were chosen to participate in the study. The sessions lasted for 10 –12 weeks and families were compensated for their time with a payment of \$200. The study was conducted in phases (baseline, training, post-training and coaching) and occurred at a local community facility.

Akamoglu et al. (2019) used the *Read Together, Talk Together* book set created by Pearson Early Learning in 2006 for the study participants. The initial training covered baseline instructions such as “read the book as you typically would” (Akamoglu et al. 2019, p. 305) and

then coaching further taught book reading techniques, modeling, mand-model and time-delay. The study then watched for the frequency of each strategy during reading sessions. The data was collected and coded into fidelity groupings to see how frequently each strategy was used. The evidence presented by Akamoglu et al. (2019) supported teaching parents' strategies to help them teach their children communication strategies through literacy which therefore strengthens literacy learning. Parental education about literacy and how to teach literacy to young children should be accessible to all families.

Differentiated literacy strategies are used to help students with individual needs continue to learn and be supported in their learning by literacy instruction. Differentiated literacy strategies should be implemented based on tiered intervention needs and scaffolded to benefit student learning. All interventions should be evidence-based and by default should be focusing on inclusive practices such as staying in general education classroom settings. Differentiated strategies should model positive literacy engagement and should be applicable for some parental crossover.

Review of problem

In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, what strategies can be used to strengthen early literacy in learners both at home and school? The research above highlighted how three themes of strategies could be implemented in both home and school settings for literacy learning. The first theme collected evidence of home learning strategies such as positive parental engagement with literacy materials and joint reading to children. The second theme had a wider scope of evidence diving into school-based strategies. These strategies all had common references to the importance of research based-methods and included strategies such as play based learning, multi-modal read-alouds, specific vocabulary use and the use of scaffolding for

literacy small groups. The third theme focused on strategies used for differentiated needs. The differentiated strategies used evidence-based interventions and promoted inclusion in elementary classrooms. All three themes considered the differing needs of literacy learners and suggested differentiated strategies based on purpose and student needs.

Review of Importance of Topic

Positive research-based literacy strategies are necessary for families and educators working together to help children learn literacy skills. Learning literacy skills does not come naturally to children therefore the families and educators in their lives need to use positive interactions and research-based strategies to boost literacy learning. Differentiated strategies are vital to helping all children learn to read. “Reading is a developmental process[...] and knowledge occurs at different times for children depending heavily on their access to early school and their experience with books at home” (Acosta-Tella, 2019, p. 88). As such educators and families must work together to promote positive literacy in children’s life and set children up for a life of literacy learning and success. In working together families and educators should be using research-based literacy strategies and modeling positive literacy engagement.

Summary of Findings

In the research by Barton-Husley et al. (2020), Chang et al. (2019), Curry et al. (2018), Sulaiman et al. (2022) and Silinskas et al. (2020) each study researched a different aspect of parental involvement with literacy learning. These studies all targeted single child-parent interactions and primarily focused on early literacy introductions and joint-book reading to children. Sulaiman et al. (2020) investigated the connections of positive literacy engagement through technology. These studies all supported positive parent-child literacy strategies.

Akamoglu et al. (2019) presented evidence how families could be taught positive literacy interaction strategies to help benefit children with differing learning needs.

In the research studies conducted by Ankrum et al. (2014), Lipsky et al. (2015), Omega et al. (2019), Shimek (2023), and Zaman et al. (2019) different strategies for the classroom were identified. Each study highlighted research on specific strategies to help different aspects and modes of literacy learning. While each study supported evidence for the need for varied research-based methods of literacy instruction, themes of play based language introduction, multi-modal learning, direct instruction, and scaffolding emerged. Zaman et al. valued the role educators provide as reflective facilitators for effective strategies for literacy learning (2019, p. 29). Each of these studies recorded student growth data or educator reflective feedback data to support the strategies researched.

The studies by Akamoglu et al. (2019), Malouf et al. (2014), Smith (2022), Stuart et al. (2018), and Zagona et al. (2020) presented strategies targeted towards the differentiated literacy needs of children. The authors had common themes of differentiated strategies with the goal of inclusive literacy education. Overall, the research connected to positive modeling, direct instruction and evidence-based interventions all echoed the general education and home-based strategies above.

Conclusion

The above research presented strategies for literacy learning in three themes: home-based learning, educator taught literacy instruction and differentiated strategies for diverse learning needs. The themes worked together to present a whole child picture of literacy learning where-as a child does not learn literacy from any one strategy but from a combination of positively modeled, research-based, differentiated strategies from both at home and at school in

partnership. The following chapter will present insights gained from the above research and discuss how the insights can be applied to literacy learning and how educators and families can work together to implement the insights.

Chapter Three: Discussion, Application and Future Studies

In the following chapter, insights gained from the above research on strategies for literacy instruction and engagement are discussed. The research analyzed suggested positive family engagement, research-based strategies and inclusive differentiated strategies work together to provide instruction for literacy education. This chapter will discuss how the above strategies should be used in conjunction to help provide a well-rounded literacy education. Future studies about strategies for literacy learning and collaboration between families and educators will be suggested as well.

The Insights Gained from the Research

Throughout the research analyzed above, there were common concepts echoed in the strategies presented in all three themes. The commonalities echoed throughout the research included positive parental interactions through literacy engagement, evidence-based research and inclusive practices for literacy education. The first insight gained from the research above was the need for positive parental engagement. Having positive parent engagement in literacy can help initiate literacy learning, encourage further learning and enforce positive literacy habits. Having families model positive literacy engagement sets students up for successful habits and deepens family-child relationships. Continuous positive modeling can be supported by direct instruction for families but should always connect back to building a love and enjoyment of literacy first.

The second insight is an interconnected thought; strategies for literacy learning should be interwoven and evidence based. The educator and school-based strategies presented in the research above were all useful tools working together to create a menu of possible research-based strategies. The main insight gained from the above school-based strategies research is how

evidence-based strategies should be used implemented together to build a well-rounded literacy education. Of all the school-based strategies presented in the research, no single strategy was implemented independently. All authors mentioned other strategies and referenced research built outward to connect additional studies and further connect strategies. The intentionality of continuous research to always improve implies evidence-based learning should continue to be updated and educators should be learners too and implement new learning into daily practice.

The last insight inferred from the research highlights how every child will have individual needs during their literacy instruction therefore, educators and families need to meet those individual needs through differentiated strategies. This indicates educators need to intentionally plan literacy instruction and implement scaffolded strategies to meet students' needs. By differentiating learning through either scaffolded or tiered instruction educators can help students learn literacy in an inclusive setting. A goal for educators should always be to keep students with differing learning styles in the general education classroom setting as much as possible. Using differentiated learning strategies best meets the individual needs of literacy learners.

The insights gained from the research above suggest positive engagement and literacy modeling initiate and maintain the literacy learning process at home and at school. The literacy learning process is then supported by evidence-based strategies including inclusive differentiated options. The insights suggest strategies should be evolving to meet the needs of students and families.

Application of Research

The application of implementing positive family-child positive literacy engagement from young childhood through the literacy learning process indications growth in literacy skills can

look varied based on family need. Positive family engagement furthers growth in positive enjoyment and continued engagement in literacy from literacy learning children. To apply this, families can start joint-reading with children, modeling positive literacy engagement from early childhood. This can be continued through school-aged years and through adolescence.

When implementing school-based strategies educators should consistently be working to update their repertoire of strategies and include research based multimodal literacy strategies in their educational practices. This means educators need to become the students and continue to learn and always improve their best practice. Educators can also work to implement additional differentiated strategies in their implementation of literacy strategies. Differentiated strategies will not work for each student and will need to be tailored to best fit the needs of the students by scaffolding and using tiered systems based on data and continuous adaptation.

In addition to educators implementing research-based literacy strategies and intentional positive family-child literacy modeling and interactions educators and families should work together to communicate about successful strategies at school and at home. By communicating and working together families and educators promote a positive literacy learning environment and provides continuity for strategies to be used by educators and positively modeled by families at home. By creating a continuity of communication families and educators become a team to provide feedback and adjust strategies together, therefore creating the best possible literacy learning environment for each child.

Future Studies

Literacy is a complex subject with many components all need to be taught and therefore many possible strategies could be suggested to study in the future. One possible future study should focus on how multiple learning strategies could be woven together to build an

encompassing literacy instruction. The possible study should include multiple perspectives from various educators who choose strategies to meet the needs of their students, how they make those choices and how effective the use of multiple strategies could be towards literacy learning.

Another future study should also follow and identify successful parent-educator partnerships and what communication styles, and frequency helps support literacy learning in children. In the hope of seeking meaningful and effective suggestions for partnership, family-educator pairs should be followed through the course of a school year. By following partnerships for an extended time, data can be kept about student growth, family feedback and educator input about how the partnership impacts literacy growth for the child. This may set up a blueprint for future options for building family-educator partnerships.

An additional future study should teach families differentiated learning strategies for inclusive learners and follow the benefits of literacy learning passed to children in a longitudinal study. The benefits of following a longitudinal study of parental education would show insight into the implications of early literacy head starts and continuous family support. During this study family socio-economic status and access to parental education should be measured and included in the data along with suggestions on how best to reach all families. This study is important because many parental figures would benefit from direct instruction of strategies to try with their children at home.

These future studies would provide additional insight into literature education and provide new researched based strategies for educators and families to implement. Future studies about literacy strategies, families-educator partnerships and family education will benefit student literacy learning. As student literacy learning is so complex these additional studies are needed to continue to improve implementation of literacy education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review examined strategies for literacy learning for both home-based and school-based applications. The research interpreted studies with findings of positive literacy modeling and interactions at home, research-based strategies implemented by educators and differentiated strategies for literacy learning should all be used to teach literacy. Three themes were revealed by the research: strategies for literacy learning for families at home, strategies for educators at school and differentiated strategies for educators and families. These themes all work together to provide a non-comprehensive index of possible strategies for literacy learning. The research was incomplete as indicated by the insights gained about the need for research-based strategies for literacy learning, further research will always be needed to keep strategies relevant. Educators and families need to work together to model positive literacy interactions and keep students motivated.

When thinking about all the factors and feelings children have when learning how to read, families and educators need to prioritize positive literacy environments and strong strategies for differentiation, so students become confident learners. By providing positive modeling of joint-reading and positive literacy behaviors at home children become confident in their own abilities. Research-based literacy strategies are vital to meet the learning needs of students to support the complex ways children learn to read. By utilizing multi-modal, differentiated learning strategies students are supported in their own learning journey and are provided with the opportunity to make data driven growth in literacy.

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Appendix

Article Tracking Matrix

	Articles	Method	Strategies for Home	Strategies for School	Strategies for Differentiated Instruction
1	Akamoglu et al. (2019)	Quantitative			X
2	Ankrum et al. (2014)	Mixed-Methods		X	
3	Barton-Hulsey et al. (2020)	Quantitative	X		
4	Chang et al. (2019)	Mixed-Methods	X		
5	Curry et al. (2018)	Mixed-Methods	X		
6	Lipsky et al. (2015)	Quantitative		X	
7	Malouf et al. (2014)	Quantitative			X
8	Omaga et al. (2019)	Qualitative		X	
9	Shimek (2023)	Mixed-Method		X	
10	Sulaiman et al. (2022)	Mixed-Methods	X		
11	Silinskas et al. (2020)	Mixed-Methods	X		
12	Stuart et al. (2018)	Quantitative			X
13	Smith (2022)	Quantitative			X
14	Zagona et al. (2021)	Qualitative			X
15	Zaman et al. (2019)	Quantitative		X	