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Parent and Teacher Perceptions About What Leads to Mastery in Reading at Classical Charter Schools in Texas

Brittany Kretz

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Brittany Kretz

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Parent and Teacher Perceptions About What Leads to Mastery in Reading at Classical Charter
Schools in Texas

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in
Teacher Leadership

David Kluth, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

Throughout the United States and in the State of Texas there are high percentages of students who are not reading at grade level. This study looked at the activities done at home by families of students who scored above grade level on the Third Grade Reading STAAR from classical charter schools. In this quantitative study, a survey was given to the parents of fourth-grade students and the teachers of elementary students. The families used in the study were from classical charter schools located in Texas. The literature review discusses the curriculum used in classical schools and how reading is taught. In addition to parents of fourth-grade students being surveyed elementary school teachers at three classical charter school in Texas were surveyed. The study was seeking to discover activities linked to high reading scores but also to find if teachers were aware of activities parents of struggling readers could do at home to improve reading skills. The study found that parents of students scoring above grade level were highly involved in reading with their children, speaking with them often, and modeling an enjoying for reading. Teachers reported support for doing many activities related to reading and talking with the child. The survey found a vast majority of teachers reporting sharing reading strategies with parents. Interestingly, an equally large percentage of parents reported that teachers had not shared reading strategies with them.

Keywords: reading strategies, reading struggles, parent-teacher communication, parents, teachers, communication, classical education, charter schools, phonics, orthography, classic texts

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The United States began as a nation of readers (Lockridge, 1974). New England cities boasted almost universal literacy among white males (Lockridge, 1974). The American Revolution was inspired by the words of writers and philosophers that the founding fathers and other Americans had studied (Lockridge, 1974). In recent years, the United States has slipped substantially in world literacy rankings. The most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores have ranked the United States as 24th in reading (PISA, 2015).

The State of Texas gives students a series of assessments to keep track of student progress throughout their schooling, called the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The STAAR summary report (2017) stated 28% of third grade students failed the STAAR reading examination (p. 1). Reading research shows a student unable to read by the end of third grade will continue to have reading difficulties (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Simmons, Coyne, Kwok, McDonagh, Harn, & Kame'enui, 2008; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007).

This decline in literacy in the United States has resulted in several government initiatives to address the issue (Ravitch, 2000). In some states, improving reading and other education goals has prompted some states to provide funding for alternative forms of education, including charter schools. Charter schools come in a wide variety as many different avenues are being tried to help students be prepared for life in an ever-changing world. This study focused on what classical charter schools are doing to address the literacy challenges being highlighted by recent tests such as the PISA scores. Classical character schools acknowledge the world is changing, but they would argue it has always been changing. People do not need an unknown set of skills to deal

with the future, and they need the knowledge of the past and the ability to seek truth (Moore, 2016).

Literacy initiatives involving parents have more impact than initiatives done exclusively at school (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). Higgins and Katsipataki (2015) conducted a meta-analysis using research about parent and school partnerships to improve students' learning. The researchers found there is a relationship between a parent's involvement with their child's learning process but not a strong consensus about the exact activities that are the most effective in improving reading scores (Higgins & Katsipataki, 2015). Swain, Welby, and Brooks (2009) found when schools reach out to parents, parents become more comfortable in the school environment and are more likely to feel confident enough to assist their struggling learner.

When parents of struggling learners were taught how to work with their children their reading scores improved (Press, 2008; Rose & Atkin, 2007; van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2011). Cultural differences may exist in how parents teach children at home and a family literacy program run by the school could assist parents from other cultures (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim 2010). Teachers may identify parents from minority groups as uncaring when really the families have different understandings of how and when to speak to teachers (Semington, 2008). The researchers found parents were able to mimic the school culture at home by imitating reading practices, but it is difficult for the school to incorporate all the different cultural backgrounds of the students (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010). According to Kesoglou (2016) parents of struggling readers reported not knowing how to help their children.

Reason for the Study

The last class I took before starting the dissertation phase was about education around the world. The class focused on countries such as Finland, Singapore, and China because those countries had high standardized test scores. The point of focusing on the countries with high test scores was to assist the United States in areas where American students were behind.

The class disturbed me because I was not aware of how many children in the United States could not read. The most shocking part of the class for me was the knowledge that the United States was ranked below many countries in reading (Stewart, 2012). Students that struggle in reading often also struggle in mathematics, science, and writing.

At the time I was taking the class, I was also teaching at a classical school. I was being educated by the school and educating myself on how to teach classically. While studying the high scoring countries and communicating with my peers in the class, I noticed that a lot of the suggestions for solving the problems the United States was facing were already being done by classical schools.

The class I had taken pointed out that the education level and income level of the parents had a huge impact on reading scores (Darling-Hammond, 2010). That was when I started thinking about what could be done to help students in that situation. It seemed to me if the parents did not know how to read and did not know what skills were important to pass on they needed someone to show them. That made me wonder, what types of things should a parent do at home to help their child read well? I had seen statistics about what might cause a child not to be able to read well, but I had not seen as many on what parents could do to overcome those struggles. I thought it might be helpful to look at what parents of strong readers do at home that could be shared with families of struggling readers.

Very early on in the dissertation process, I knew I wanted to study classical education in some way in my dissertation. Reading is crucial to the educational process. When I discovered the United States was struggling with reading problems in certain areas I wanted to know if classical education could help solve those problems.

When I was doing research on classical education, I found very little research had been done on classical education. There is an abundance of literature on the subject but not many research studies. I decided to look at the methods classical schools used and search for research on each method. For example, I searched for research on using phonics in early reading education because classical education uses phonics.

While I was doing my research, I came upon the 2009 PISA survey given by the OECD. The survey was given to parents of children that had taken the 2009 PISA reading test. The OECD used the survey results to examine what the parents of strong readers did at home along with their demographic information. Since this was similar to the information I was also seeking I decided to use the same survey with some modifications. The original survey was never given in the United States. The survey was given nine years ago and needed a few updates regarding technology use.

Problem Statement

Americans are not only concerned about how American students' reading test scores compare to other nations, but also the high cost of an illiterate person (Fiester, 2010). A person who struggles to read in school may drop out or have a lower paying job (Fiester, 2010; Hernandez, 2015). When a child cannot read well it leads to negative feelings towards school and higher dropout rates (Hernandez, 2015). The state average failure rate is 28% on the 2017 Third Grade Reading STAAR while the average failure rate from the classical schools being

studied is 12.5% (Texas Academic Performance Report, 2017, p. 1). Children who do not learn to read at grade level by the end of the third grade continue to have reading difficulties throughout their schooling and often have difficulties in all areas of their academic lives (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Simmons, et al., 2008; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007).

Nature of the Study

To find information that may assist struggling readers, a survey was given to the parents of fourth grade students and the elementary teachers at three classical charter schools in Texas. The survey for the parents was meant to discover if there are any correlations between the activities parents do at home with their children and a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Results of the teacher survey were examined to discover if the findings from the parent survey correlates with perceptions teachers have about home activities leading to strong reading skills. A quantitative approach would aid in identifying activities common among respondents. The parent and teacher surveys were implemented as the data collection instrument for this quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive, and explanatory research study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study was meant to discover if there were similarities between the activities done at home with students who receive the highest score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. It is hoped that the findings from this study could be valuable to share with parents of struggling readers to allow them to assist their struggling reader.

Two research questions were used to guide the research. The following two research questions were studied:

RQ1: What are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

Seven null hypotheses were developed to assess the correlations of at home activities on reading scores as measured by the questions on the parent and teacher survey. The following null hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to at home activities done with the students.

H₀₂ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to at home activities currently being done with fourth grade students.

H₀₃ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to parental opinions of reading.

H₀₄ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not

approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how much time parents spend reading for personal enjoyment.

H₀₅ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to speaking to teachers about reading concerns.

H₀₆ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how parents feel about their child's school.

H₀₇ No statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the current quantitative descriptive research were to examine (a) whether certain at home activities correlated to a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR, and (b) whether teacher perceptions of what leads to mastery of reading are similar to the perceptions of parents. This study may be useful in determining possible activities parents of struggling learners can implement at home. The study may also prove helpful to teachers by showing misconceptions teachers may have of parental involvement in supporting the reading skills of their children.

Purpose of the Study

The desired purpose of this study was to seek to discover if there are benefits to certain activities done at home with students at classical charter schools that scored mastery on the Third

Grade Reading STAAR. Teachers were also surveyed to discover if teacher perceptions matched up with the parent perceptions of what should be done at home. If the study can determine certain activities done at home do correlate with a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR these activities could be shared with parents of struggling readers. It may be beneficial for teachers to know if the teacher survey discovers teacher and parent perceptions differ. The parents and teachers studied are all from three classical charter schools in Texas.

Theoretical Base

There have been limited studies on classical education (Splittgerber, 2010). There is a lack of literature on the possible benefits of classical education. Splittgerber (2010) found students at private classical Lutheran schools scored higher than non-classical Lutheran schools on standardized tests. Splittgerber (2010) focused on the test scores in many areas around the United States and was trying to prove classical education resulted in a better education.

Nebrig (2008) found teacher and parent perceptions differed in many areas. Nebrig (2008) found parents prioritized different strategies for improving literacy. Nebrig (2008) did not have the parent surveys separated by literacy skill level. There was no way to determine if parents of students with stronger literacy skills had similar perceptions to teachers. There is also a lack of literature on the thoughts and opinions of parents and teachers at classical charter schools.

The survey used for this research was created from a survey published by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009. OECD (2009) gave the survey to parents of 15-year-old students who had participated in the 2008 Reading PISA. The countries receiving the survey were Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Korea, New Zealand, Portugal, Croatia, Hong Kong-China, Lithuania, Macao-China, Panama, and Qatar.

These studies lack information about the role of technology in literacy development. Technology plays a much bigger role in the lives of students in 2018 than it did in 2009. The PISA survey was not given to parents of students in the United States, and it may be beneficial to discover if cultural differences affect the survey outcomes.

Operational Definitions

Approaches. A student scoring approaches on the Third Grade Reading STAAR means they are likely to be successful in fourth grade but may need targeted academic intervention (TEA, 2017).

Classical education. An education style used for over 2,500 years. Modeled after the education used in ancient Greece and Rome and perfected during the Middle Ages. Classical education teaches the ancient languages of Latin and Greek and uses classic texts to teach virtue (Moore, 2016).

Classics. Moore (2008) describes classics as, “the best that has been thought and said and done and discovered” (p. 237).

Does Not Meet. A student scoring Does Not Meet on the Third Grade Reading STAAR means they are unlikely to be successful in fourth grade without significant intervention (TEA, 2017).

Mastery. A student scoring mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR is expected to have success in the fourth grade with minimal to no academic intervention (TEA, 2017).

Meets. A student scoring meets on the Third Grade Reading STAAR has a high chance of success in fourth grade but may need minimal academic intervention (TEA, 2017).

Morphology. The study of how words change, especially concerning their ending (Gwynne, 2014).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Issues the PISA examination and conducts research based on the results. Their mission is to positively impact the well-being of people all over the world (OECD, 2018).

Orthography. Orthography is the study of the sounds letters make together through patterns (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008).

PISA. Programme for International Student Assessment. The examinations are given every three years to 15-year-old students. The examinations cover reading, science, and mathematics along with problem solving and financial literacy (OECD, 2018).

Phonics. Memorizing the sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet (Willingham, 2016).

Phonology. Phonology is the study of the sounds the letters of the alphabet make (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008)

Quadrivium. The liberal arts of astronomy, music, arithmetic, and geometry (Joseph, 2002).

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Reading and mathematics in grades three–eight, writing at grades four and seven, science at grades five and eight, social studies at grade eight. End-of-course (EOC) assessments are used for English I, English II, Algebra I, biology and U.S history (TEA, 2018).

Trivium. The liberal arts of logic, grammar, and rhetoric (Joseph, 2002).

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study the researcher assumes the following:

1. It was assumed participating teachers have some background knowledge of the activities done in the home that could correlate with strong reading skills.

2. It was assumed participating teachers would be honest in reporting their perceptions of activities done in the home that could correlate with strong reading skills.
3. It was assumed participating parents would be honest in reporting the activities done in their home.

Limitations

The researcher recognizes there are certain limitations inherent in conducting this research study.

The limitations are as follows:

1. There may have been a response bias, as participants chose to participate or not.
2. There may have been a response bias, as participants might have been anxious about disclosing information about their home life.
3. There may have been a response bias, as participants may felt they had failed or were not doing what they should to help their student (potential guilt).

Delimitations

The study was delimited by the following boundaries:

1. The study was delimited to classical charter schools.
2. It was further delimited to classical charter schools in Texas.
3. It was further delimited to parents of fourth grade students (and elementary school teachers) at the classical charter schools in Texas.

Significance of the Study

Current literature exists addressing activities done at home leading to higher literacy rates (OECD, 2009) and literature on teacher and parent perception differences (Nebrig, 2008).

However, this research was not conducted in a classical setting. There is a need for this research for a variety of reasons. The focus of this study researched more about classical education and

the perceptions about literacy held by parents and teachers. Findings from this research contributed to the relatively small amount of research currently existing on classical education. The study added to the current body of knowledge about how to help struggling readers. The study results may add resources for parents and teachers to assist students not reading at grade level.

Chapter 1 Summary

Having grade level reading skills is crucial for student success at all grade levels but falling to read at grade level by third grade can lead to great difficulties continuing throughout schooling. Research shows families have a great impact on student reading level at all ages. There is also research showing parents want to be able to assist their children, but they may not know how (Kesoglou, 2016; Miller, 2009). Examining the at home activities of students who received the highest score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR may lead to information that can be shared with parents of struggling readers. There is also research showing parents and teachers often have different perceptions on what will aid children in learning (Nebrig, 2008). Teachers may not be aware of the parent's lack of information on how to aid their child.

The three schools that were surveyed for this research were classical schools. The literature review will outline the ways classical schools teach reading. The purpose behind this is to show the special teaching methods used for reading at classical schools and the possible impact on reading scores on the Third Grade Reading STAAR.

The research was conducted with parents and teachers at classical charter schools, but the emphasis is on activities performed at home that may have impact on reading skills and the perceptions of teachers regarding activities done at home. The research described in the literature

review will go into further detail on the type of education given at a classical school, parental impact on the literacy level of their children, and teacher perceptions on best practices at home. The information presented in the literature review examines the research on educating parents on the best practices to bring up their child's reading skills.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

Aside from the benefits of excelling in school and on standardized tests, the ability to read well allows students to experience worlds and ideas that may have a profound impact on their lives. This research focused on how parents and the home environment impact literacy. The research took place in classical charter schools in Texas. Classical schools run their literacy programs in significantly different ways than many public schools. This literature review will describe the methods used in classical schools. Being able to read is one of the most important skills a child can have. Some parents take a strong position as a literacy teacher alongside their children's school teachers; others are unsure of how they can help their children master reading.

The purpose of this research was to discover what parents of master readers do to assist their children in gaining literacy skills, and data was collected from classical charter schools in Texas. Classical schools teach literacy through many subject areas and use classic texts rich in a broad vocabulary. The study of grammar teaches students proper syntax and morphology. Grammar can aid in understanding sentences and individual words (Gwynne, 2013; Willingham, 2017). Orthography is the study of the sounds used in the English language and the symbols associated with those sounds (Baker, Torgesen, & Wagner, 1992; Galletly & Knight, 2013). Students also memorize spelling rules through the study of orthography. The classical schools that are part of this research are supported by an initiative encouraging the teaching of Greek and Latin roots in third through fifth grade with full Latin classes starting in the sixth grade. Greek and Latin roots help students with morphology and vocabulary acquisition by providing them with the meaning of word parts (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton 2011; Robinson, 2015; Simmons 2002).

The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) measures student achievement in reading (TEA, 2011). The STAAR exams cover many different subjects (reading, mathematics, social studies, and science) at different grade levels. The STAAR examinations are a requirement for all publicly funded schools. The STAAR examination was started in 2011 (TEA, 2011). In grades three through eight, students take a STAAR reading assessment, and at the high school level tests for English I, English II, and English III are issued. Students in the third grade take only two tests, the Reading STAAR and the Mathematics STAAR. Third grade is the first year the STAAR reading test is given (STAAR summary report, 2017).

There has been little improvement in STAAR reading scores, which correlates with achieving state mandates (Weiss & Lanthrop, 2014). According to the Nation's Report Card, Texas's fourth grade reading scores were labeled as significantly lower than national public averages in 2015 (NCES, 2015). Texas has scored below the national public average since 2009 (NCES, 2015). As a result, some parents are sending their children to alternative schools. One option for alternative schools in Texas is classical charter schools. The classical schools' alternative approach to literacy development uses a systematic classical model focusing on phonics, classic literature, and memorizing Greek and Latin roots may be one of the reasons parents choose classical schooling.

The STAAR summary report (2017) stated 28% of third grade students failed the STAAR reading examination (p. 1). This failure rating is higher than the previous year when 26% of third grade students failed the reading examination (STAAR summary report, 2016). In 2017, 28% of third graders in Texas failed the reading STAAR and implications must be reviewed (STAAR summary report, 2017). According to the STAAR Summary Report (2017),

102,725 students are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade. In the state of Texas, retention is required if students fail the fifth grade reading STAAR.

Hernandez (2015) used research from a longitudinal study tracking 3,975 students born between 1979 and 1989. According to Hernandez (2011) researchers have discovered students who fail to master reading by third grade fall behind in successive grades and have higher dropout rates. The STAAR examinations do not begin until third grade. Waiting until third grade to discover if a child has a reading struggle may cause a student to fall significantly behind in school (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007).

The researcher examined current research on methods used by classical schools along with research about the impact of family influence on literacy. Two significant sections are in the literature review. The first section covers the research about the literacy methods used by classical schools. The second section discusses research on how parenting practices affect literacy rates. The second section is divided further into two more sections: the first is effective parenting practices and the second is family literacy training. The literacy practices of classical schools are examined, in the first section. This research goes over several parent studies to discover what research shows to be the most effective ways to teach literacy at home, in the second section.

Conceptual Framework

The research centered on the curriculum at classical charter schools in Texas. The purpose of these classical schools is to bring students up to pursue knowledge and virtue. These classical charter schools work with an initiative associated with a college in Michigan. The initiative believes education in the United States has lost its substance, aim, and rigor since the

progressive movement. During the progressive movement, politicians thought most students were not heading to higher education, but directly into the workforce (Ravitch, 2000; Veith & Kern, 2016). The initiative wishes to bring back the education methods used by early Americans. During the early years of the United States and during the times of the American Revolution, being “classically trained” meant being taught to read Greek and Latin (Cothran, 2007). Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Adams and other founding fathers were students of these “classical schools” (Cothran, 2007; Simmons, 2002).

What are classical teaching methods? Teaching methods known as the “trivium” teach students grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The trivium has been used since Ancient Greece. According to Bauer (2016), the grammar stage is essentially the building blocks of education. At this stage, students absorb information through memorization and repetition. The logic stage involves understanding the information learned during the grammar stage. After knowledge is acquired and understood, students move into the rhetoric stage. At the rhetoric stage what is learned is expressed or applied (Veith & Kern, 2016). Cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham (2016) believed a person needs background knowledge (grammar stage) to read. He stated a student would not understand information as well if they have not memorized it first. In Thorton's (2013) article titled “An Education Classic” from the New American, he explains how the media is constantly criticizing the current education system, contrasting that of early American education which was quite successful. Thorton (2013) wrote logic not only aids in understanding, but it helps prevent being “misled by fallacious arguments” (2013, p. 36). The trivium discusses how a student should learn and work with knowledge but not what they should learn. Classical Education relies on a liberal arts education to give students the knowledge they need to live a well-rounded life (Thorton, 2013).

In the three classical schools studied for this research, all students receive an education from the same curriculum. There are few electives in the fine arts and languages. The students receive a liberal arts education. Mastery of all subjects allows students to be able to speak a common language because of their shared background knowledge. The term *liberal arts* comes from the Latin “*artes liberales*” which meant all that a Roman citizen needed to know (Wintrol, 2014).

In classical education, students study history, reading, writing, orthography, science, and mathematics. Howe (2011) wrote about how colonial Americans felt about education, “The purpose of college was not to train students for a vocation... but to improve their minds with a liberal education” (2011, p. 32). This education was labeled “liberal because it was intended to be liberating and hence suitable for a free person” (Howe, 2011, p. 32). Classical schools do not believe all literature is created equal. Moore (2013) suggests books should get children to be interested in the world around them and allow them to ponder life. Classical literature has been time tested to be excellent educational material (Bauer, 2016; Moore, 2013; Veith & Kern, 2016).

When a student reads a book classified as classic literature, they become culturally literate, build vocabulary, and form their moral imagination (Guroian, 1998; Hirsch, 1997; Willingham, 2016, 2017). When students read classics from the past, they become part of the “Great Conversation” (Bauer, 2016). Willingham (2016) made the argument to learn to read you must read. Authors reference other authors and expect their readers to know the information they have left out (Willingham, 2016). Cultural literacy is using information learned from history and the literature of one's culture to understand new material (Hirsch, 1997). When a student reads, it exposes them to vocabulary they would perhaps not frequently hear in their day to day life.

When reading classics, the exposure to a broader vocabulary is more significant because of the use of uncommon language. Building a moral imagination is a natural result of reading: students can imagine life situations and have empathy towards others, even if they have not experienced those events themselves (Guroian, 1998). Classics, such as Aesop's Fables, also serve as a warning of what not to do.

If students are going to read the classics, which contain challenging vocabulary, they are going to need to know how to read and to read well. Classical schools believe for students to be able to read and spell well, they need to know phonetics. The study of phonetics involves memorizing the sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet. Cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham (2016) wrote a child must know the sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet to read well. Classical schools do not use whole-word or sight-word teaching methods. Whole word reading came from the idea that adults do not sound out every word but eventually memorize certain words. In whole-language methods, students learn to memorize words from the beginning. Veith and Kern pointed out, "Since the whole language method-with its notorious 'creative spelling'-was adopted in elementary schools across the country, reading ability has plummeted" (2016, p. 7). When students learn to spell phonetically, they also learn word meanings and roots. The meaning of many English words can be traced back to Latin.

Classical education believes in teaching the ancient languages of Greek and Latin. Learning Latin helps a student have a deeper understanding of western culture. Latin teaches a better understanding of the English language and an easier time learning new languages (Lowe, 2017; Simmons, 2002). Americans used to value Latin and Greek culture (Simmons, 2012). According to Simmons (2012) Americans viewed Latin and Greek culture as an essential inspiration for how Americans should act. Ancient Greek and Latin texts were used to teach

virtues and vice (Howe, 2011). Americans learned about Greek and Latin culture by reading about it in Latin and Greek. An educated person was expected to be able to read and write in Latin (Howe, 2011).

Learning Latin is not easy. Howe writes, “Besides the effort of mastering the rigorous logic and grammar required to conjugate Latin verbs and decline nouns was itself regarded as a tool to teach young people self-discipline” (2011, p. 32). This hard work will not only result in a more disciplined pupil but also a more equipped pupil. In the English language, 50% of all words come from Latin roots, and the number jumps to 90% of all multisyllabic words. The romantic languages, Italian, Spanish, and French, stem from Roman influence and have 80% of all words coming from Latin roots (Robinson, 2015). If a student has a mastery of the language of Latin, they will be able to learn other languages with ease. Most school curriculums have removed Latin, but it used to be a requirement for all scholars.

Review of Literature and Methodological Literature

The review of literature includes research about teaching methods used by classical schools in the instruction of reading. Research on how to build a strong reader is included as well. Along with research on how parents can assist in a child’s reading abilities and how schools can help build up a parent in that role.

History of classical education. Miller's (2015) article from the National Review gives a history of the modern classical education movement. Miller (2015) discusses Dan Scoggin, Douglas Wilson, Susan Bauer, Tracey Lee Simmons, and Andrew Kern and Perrin. Dan Scoggin co-founded the Great Heart's Academies. Douglas Wilson founded Logos Schools. Susan Bauer has inspired many homeschool parents to switch to the classical model. Tracey Lee Simmon is a champion of bringing Latin back in the classroom through his book *Climbing Parnassus*. Andrew

Kern and Perrin have written books about classical education. According to Miller (2015), the classical education movement began in Idaho after Douglas Wilson, who had read Dorothy Sayers (2010) essay (originally a speech given in 1947) "The Lost Tools of Learning," wanted a different type of education for his daughter. After talking with others, Wilson started a school with 12 students and had an enrollment of 120 students the following year (Miller, 2015). The school used classical teaching styles with a liberal arts curriculum (Miller, 2015). The school also focused on creating educated citizens that understand truth, justice, and beauty. The school received attention because of the excellent students they were producing (Miller, 2015). Others began to start classical schools using a similar curriculum (Miller, 2015).

In Ravitch's (2000) book *Left Back; A Century of Failed School Reforms*, she describes liberal arts education as,

“The systematic study of language and literature, science and mathematics, history, the arts, and foreign languages; these studies, commonly described today as a ‘liberal education,’ convey important knowledge and skills, cultivate aesthetic imagination, and teach students to think critically and reflectively about the world in which they live.”
(p.15).

Ravitch (2000) explained a liberal arts education when she described the battles that took place in education during the late 19th century; one debate centered on whether or not students bound to work in factories needed a liberal arts education. School reformers thought it was unnecessary for schools to teach as though their students were college bound when so few of them would attend college. Over the last century, Ravitch (2000) explained, vocational training replaced the liberal arts.

According to Veith and Kern (2015), Romans gave their slaves vocational training, while free citizens were educated in a way that would “enlarge the mind and cultivate the soul” (p. 11). According to Wintrol (2014), the term liberal arts is derived from the Latin "artes liberales" and referred to the type of education needed to be a free contributing member of society. The quadrivium and trivium, which describes which subjects a school should teach, were developed during the middle ages (Veith & Kern, 2015). The Renaissance period brought ancient Roman and Latin texts to secular education (Veith & Kern, 2015). Wintrol (2014) gave an example of the benefits of a classical education by telling the story of Cicero and his ability to use his liberal arts education to find comfort after the death of his daughter. Good schooling not only prepares students for college and career but life (Veith and Kern, 2015; Wintrol, 2014).

Bram’s (2015) article in *Funk and Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia, A History of Education in the United States*, described classical education as an education seeking to give children the knowledge discovered by previous civilizations and to give students the ability to educate themselves. Bram (2015) described how educated colonial Americans could read Greek and Latin. The quadrivium and trivium have been used with great success for centuries (Bram, 2015; Joseph, 2002; Moore 2016). Classical education prepares the mind of children for anything life could bring to them (Moore, 2016; Wintrol, 2014).

Splittergerber (2010) had observed the popularity of classical schools in the Lutheran community and wanted to know if there was a difference between classical Lutheran schools and non-classical Lutheran schools. Splittergerber (2010) set out to find if classical Lutheran schools outperformed non-classical Lutheran schools. The researcher observed many schools were switching to the classic model, but there was little research to say if the classical style of education brought about better results. Using Lutheran schools, both classical and non-classical,

from around the United States, he compared standardized state test scores. Splittgerber (2010) compared test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics. Splittgerber (2010) discovered classical Lutheran schools outperformed non-classical Lutheran schools in the older grades. The classical schools had an increase in achievement while the non-classical schools had a decline.

Barzun (1991) stated in American culture the most important thing a child can learn is how to read, as he said: “All the other intellectual powers depend upon it” (p. 21). Barzun (1991) believed the literacy rates started to drop in the United States when public schools switched from teaching a phonetic and orthography-based curriculum to the whole-word method. Flesch (1985) in his book, *Why Johnny Can't Read; And What You Can Do About It*, went so far as to say teachers using the whole language method were not teaching reading. According to Flesch (1985), Dehaene (2009), and Willingham (2015) a student must be taught how to decode the written English language by learning the sounds associated with the letters.

Methods used by classical schools to teach reading.

The research was done in a classical school. The researcher thought it was important for people looking at the research to understand what type of reading education the families taking the survey would have had. The teachers that participated in the survey would have believed these to be an important part of a reader's education.

Orthography. According to Willingham (2015), there are three essential things needed for a person to be a reader: knowledge of the sounds letters make, knowledge of the topic, and the motivation to read. While it may seem most reading takes place silently, Willingham says, “Print is mostly code for sound” (2015, p. 7). Readers need to know the sounds the letters are supposed to make to understand what the word is. Children need to be able to first, identify a letter, and after they have learned this, second, they will then need to know the sounds the letter

makes (Willingham, 2015). Willingham (2015) says children need to learn how different combinations of letters can make different sounds. Visually learning the image associated with learning the letters is an easy task according to Willingham. He points out while there are 26 letters in the alphabet (52 symbols), there are as many as 44 sounds in the English language. It may seem daunting to memorize the different rules for the letter combinations and those tricky words do not seem to follow the rules. Willingham (2015) commented on how several words do not follow traditional pronunciation rules, but they are so commonly used they are easy to memorize. Not only do children need to know the sound of the words, but they also need to learn how to identify when one word stops and another word begins. Children need to learn to recognize how different syllables can be part of the same word (Willingham, 2015). The sounds, symbols, and rules associated with spelling are all part of the study of orthography.

De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, and Verhoeven (2009) performed research using four groups. The groups were composed from 93 kindergartners, 47 boys and 46 girls. One group was used as a control, the second used a systematic phonics system, and the third used non-systematic phonics program (de Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009). A fourth group was another class of systematic phonics systems but the teacher did not perform her duties therefore the data was thrown out (de Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009). Participants in the study were given four different tests before and after the study. The tests measured productive letter-sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, reading ability, and spelling ability (de Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009). De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, and Verhoeven (2009) discovered using a systematic phonics program was more beneficial than a non-systematic phonics program. In their experiment, students who learned a systematic phonics system spelled better than students in the control group. De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman,

and Verhoeven (2009) discovered teaching students phonics in stages is better than randomly teaching letter sounds and combinations. The researchers also found children taught with systematic phonics and a non-systematic phonics system outperformed the control group with no phonics training (de Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009)

Simmons, Coyne, Kwok, McDonagh, Harn, and Kame'enui (2008) conducted a longitudinal study evaluating students from kindergarten through third grade. Simmons et al. (2008) used Juel's (1988) study focusing on phonemic awareness and phonological recording to give kindergarteners a strong foundation in reading to create a seminal descriptive study of their own. Simmons et al. (2008) used 41 kindergarteners from seven elementary schools from the Pacific Northwest for their longitudinal study. The kindergartners were chosen out of 464 students for the study because they were performing below the 30th percentile in letter-naming fluency and phonemic awareness. The study focused on an intervention to teach the struggling students phonemic awareness and phonological recording. After conducting the intervention with the kindergartners were below the 30th percentile through their third grade year, the students measured in the 46th and 63rd percentiles on PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency) and NWF (Nonsense Word Fluency) measures and 69th and 57th percentiles on norm-referenced Word Attack and Word identification measures (Simmons et al., 2008, p. 169). The data collected supported the idea that intervention focused on phonemic awareness and phonological recording can assist students in overcoming reading difficulties (Simmons et al., 2008).

Allington (2012) wrote in his book, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, about how research strongly supports knowing the sounds associated with the letters (phonics) is an essential skill for young children who are learning to read in the early grades. The researcher also wrote the best way to get students to read better is to have them read. Allington (2012) believed

silent reading in class is not a productive use of time. The researcher found having students read aloud round-robin style is also ineffective and teaches students to read with awkward pauses, similar to those occurring when a teacher corrects them. According to Allington (2012), students need to be able to read a text with 98–100% accuracy to feel successful. Therefore, students need access to literature they can read with 98–100% accuracy.

Latin. Latin is currently having a resurgence of popularity in the United States, not only in schools but with the students themselves (Grafton, 2015). According to Simmons (2002), it is incredibly misleading for Latin to have the title: *Dead Language*. It is misleading because 60% of the English language derives from Latin while 90% of all multisyllabic words use Latin roots (Rasinski, Padka, & Newton, 2017; Robinson, 2015). Rasinski, Padka, Newton, and Newton (2011) explain this is why knowing Greek and Latin roots improves a student's vocabulary. Learning the definition of one Latin root can give a student the ability to unlock the meaning of many words depending on the root (Rasinski, Padka, Newton, & Newton, 2011). Having an extensive vocabulary is an integral part of reading at the mastery level. Understanding Latin opens up the student to understanding and using a much more extensive vocabulary.

According to McLaughlin (2012), understanding vocabulary is a crucial part of reading comprehension. When students read a variety of texts, they are exposed to a variety of vocabulary words. This exposure will aid them when they come in contact with those words in the future. McLaughlin (2012) noted it is beneficial to students to create an environment that makes learning the meaning of words exciting. The instruction of vocabulary, according to McLaughlin, should involve defining the word and being able to use it in context. It is important to provide multiple opportunities to use the words. McLaughlin (2012) reports teachers should be

teaching word building strategies using root words and affixes. Students should also have exposure to a variety of different texts in different subject areas (McLaughlin, 2012).

According to Rasinski, Padka, and Newton (2017), reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge have a strong connection. Rasinski, Padka, and Newton (2017) found when students learn Greek and Latin roots, they could make connections and apply previous knowledge to unknown words. All age groups have been shown to benefit from Greek and Latin roots (Rasinski, Padka, & Newton, 2017).

According to Rasinski, Padka, Newton, and Newton (2011) teaching Latin and Greek is more efficient than teaching single vocabulary words. Understanding what words mean is essential to reading. A child that has an extensive vocabulary can better understand what they read. A significant amount of English words come from Latin and Greek (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton, 2011). The researchers point out many academic words especially come from Greek and Latin and most of the multisyllabic words do. Knowledge of Latin may improve a student's ability to recognize and understand unknown words (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton, 2011). The researchers believe Greek and Latin roots could aid elementary students in reading comprehension. If readers know what the words mean they will be able to understand what they are reading (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton, 2011).

Classic texts. Moore (2013) argues the reason many students find modern schools boring is they lack good literature. Caros (2014) and Moore (2013) have concerns about the use of information texts. According to Moore (2013), in modern public schools, students read disconnected little snippets of writing for different purposes. He argues they lack the continued and engaging aspect of longer chapter books. Moore (2013) points out children like to “be lost” in imagination. If children are naturally drawn to the world of pretend, then it makes sense to

expose them to *Robin Hood*, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Treasure Island*, and so on. (Moore, 2013). Children enjoy literature, and they must be exposed to great literature by their teachers (Moore, 2013).

Dodington (2012) suggests what is missing from American education is the study of self. The Greeks and the Romans were interested in finding the good life (Dodington, 2012). According to Dodington (2012), Greeks and Romans made decisions based on their life goals. Dodington believed students can understand what the Greeks and Romans were doing and will apply similar understanding to their own lives. Studying classic texts could help modern students to be more successful challenging them to think of their desire to have a good life. Dodington (2012) expressed when students learn Latin, they feel they can also accomplish other difficult academic tasks.

According to Howe (2011), Americans used to value Latin and Greek culture as significant inspiration for how an American should act. Americans learned about virtue and vices through ancient texts and utilized ancient methods in their schools (Howe, 2011). Early Americans would have received a liberal arts education. A liberal arts education was believed to be vital for free citizens. Howe says this also allowed everyone to have the same basis of knowledge. Latin may have gone out of popularity, but it still has merit (Howe, 2011).

According to Bauer (2016), the best way to improve your mind is to read. Mortimer Adler and Doren (1972) talked about how there is a *Great Conversation* that has been happening since the beginning of writing. When we read books from the past Bauer (2016) and Adler and Doren (1972) believed we become a part of that Great Conversation. Bauer (2016) made sure to address the fact when a person can read, it does not mean they will understand everything they read. Bauer (2016) compares reading to exercising: the mind has to work to build up to higher

levels just as the body does in physical exercise. Classical education emphasizes becoming a well-trained reader especially by reading the classics (Bauer, 2016).

Coupland (2013) defended the use of classical texts in his article from the National Review titled “It takes a pirate to raise a child.” In this article, which was initially a lecture, he explains how a book like *Treasure Island* or *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, along with many others, give children an example of what moral, and in the case of Long John Silver what immoral, behavior looks like. Books may compare characters in their writing to characters in another book. When a character is called a Pollyanna, a person may not understand the reference if they have never read *Pollyanna*. They would, therefore, miss the meaning of the sentence or have to look it up.

According to Rasinski (2012), Willingham (2016), and Allington (2012), wide reading is an activity that increases a student's fluency. Rasinski (2012) attributes this to the process of reading a new text and discussing it, followed by reading something else and discussing it. Deep reading is when the passage is read several times (Rasinski, 2012). Deep reading allows a student to become more familiar with the text and words each time they read. According to Rasinski (2012), it can be detrimental when the focus is on speed during deep reading instead of reading comprehension. Prosody, patterns of stress and intonation in a language, can also be practiced through reading deep and wide (Rasinski, 2012). A way to read deep in class is by having students perform; they can perform poetry or parts of a story. According to Willingham (2016), a teacher can provide an example of prosody during read-aloud times.

Hirsch (1988) wrote literacy is more than just a skill to be learned. Hirsch claimed literacy gives people the ability to communicate with each other, but to understand what is read, a person needs to have cultural literacy. The author used the term “cultural literacy” as the name

for the background knowledge a person must have to understand what they read. Cultural literacy involves knowing idioms and phrases, poems, songs, and references to classic texts. Hirsch (1988) stated being able to read consists of a lot more than decoding what is on a page. And further that the reason schools were not addressing cultural literacy was it was being taken for granted. For a while, everyone had a similar background knowledge, and it was not clear background knowledge was vital until it became evident students lacked a shared background knowledge. Students need to be taught a body of shared knowledge and have exposure to classic literature to understand what is referenced during advanced reading (Hirsch, 1988).

Simmons (2002) describes classical education using Matthew Arnold's words "the best that has been thought or said" (p. 29). Exposing students to classical texts exposes them to the shared human condition and allows them to see the answers are out there to some of life's most challenging problems (Simmons, 2002). When students read classics, they are also taught lessons from the past and learn to value those lessons. Simmons (2002) uses the Greek word *paideia* (παιδεία) to examine the Greek idea behind their education. While *paideia* is usually defined simply as "education," Simmons (2002) found the word "enculturation" was more accurate. *Paideia* was meant to educate students in a way allowing them to be citizens that appreciated the good and the beautiful (Simmons, 2002). Reading classic texts exposes students to the good and the beautiful.

Adler and Doren (1972) described reading as being like a catcher in baseball, one is not passive when reading. Real learning takes place when someone understands something they did not understand before; when a person reads, they should go from "understanding less to understanding" (Adler & Doren, 1972. p. 8). A student needs to be able to learn something, "by research, by investigation, or by reflection" (Adler & Doren, 1972. p. 12). For a person to read

something well, a person must be able to understand and think about what they have read (Adler & Doren, 1972; Willingham, 2016).

Grammar. Purvis (2012) and Wordsworth (2006) argue grammar is crucial to success in life. Students need to be corrected when they use grammar poorly or else they will make blunders that may cost them a job or career advancement (Purvis, 2012). Poor grammar is strongly associated with illiteracy and general intelligence, and yet many schools are putting off grammar instruction as a minor priority. According to Purvis (2012) children are not being corrected in school when they incorrectly use grammar. When they are not corrected, they think they are doing well and continue in ignorance. Students need to know what is allowed in writing and what to expect when reading. Wordsworth (2006) argues students need to understand proper grammar to recognize the improper use of the English language. Slang is used at inappropriate times and Wordsworth (2006) believed students need to be taught when slang is appropriate to use in writing and speech.

Gwynne (2014) states grammar is essential to a child's education, even if modern education has reduced its importance. Gwynne (2014) says, "Truth is not decided by a majority vote, not even by unanimous vote, not even by the majority or unanimous vote of experts" (p. 8). She wrote this before discussing how modern educators have belittled the position of grammar in education. Gwynne (2014) breaks grammar in two parts: syntax and morphology. Gwynne (2014) describes morphology as how words change, especially concerning their ending. Syntax is how words are used together to make meaning, usually in the form of a sentence (Gwynne, 2014). Understanding both morphology and syntax can aid reading.

Safford (2016) set out to research how teachers in England felt about a national mandate to teach spelling, punctuation, and grammar along with the standardized test that accompanied

the mandate. The study interviewed 16 teachers, collected data from an online teacher survey ($n = 170$), teacher lesson plans were examined, and paper questionnaires were given to 27 teaching assistants (Stafford, 2016). The researcher found teachers were surprised by how much the students enjoyed studying grammar. Safford (2016) explained students were found to enjoy grammar because it was similar to math because there is an absolutely correct answer, unlike the subjective nature of many things in an English class. Teachers also found learning grammar boosted the student's confidence in writing and reading (Safford, 2016).

Wolter and Dilworth (2008) set up their research to discover how multilinguistic interventions would improve reading and spelling for students struggling with literacy in elementary school. Wolter and Dilworth (2008) did a study to discover the value of morphology. Phonology is the study of the sounds the letters of the alphabet make. Orthography is the study of the sounds letters make together through patterns. Wolter and Dilworth (2008) describe morphology as the study of adding prefix and suffix to change the meaning of words. Twenty second graders were used in the study. The students were recommended by teachers as having low spelling and reading abilities (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008). The students attended a literacy summer camp for nine consecutive weekdays, for 90 minutes a day. They split students into groups of five. Two groups studied phonology and orthography while the other two groups studied phonology, orthography, and morphology. Wolter and Dilworth (2008) believed knowledge of phonics, orthography, and morphology could help struggling readers. The study found that students in the morphology group significantly improved their reading comprehension. The ability to read sight words increased significantly in both groups (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008).

Stark (2011) experimented to discover how knowledge of morphology (syntax, suffixes, phonology, and spelling) affects reading comprehension. Using random assignment Stark (2011) split 46 sixth graders into two groups. The first group studied suffix and syntax and the second group studied phonology and spelling. Morphological understanding becomes more necessary as students get older (Stark, 2011). Stark (2011) and Willingham (2017) agree phonological knowledge alone will not aid in comprehension. Learning affixes and suffixes can change the meaning of a word and become a different part of speech is vital in aiding in the understanding of what is read (Stark, 2011). Students need to know when a word shares a common morpheme, the words are related; this can help students discover the meaning of unknown words (Stark, 2011). Syntactical knowledge allows a student to know how changing the suffix can make it a different part of speech. Knowledge of morphology leads to better vocabulary acquisition (Stark, 2011). There is a strong correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension (Stark, 2011). So much so that vocabulary is a predictor of reading comprehension by fourth grade (Stark, 2011).

Why third grade matters. According to Hernandez (2011), children who have not mastered reading by third grade are four times more likely to drop-out of school. Third grade is the year where students shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Interventions for struggling readers after third grade are far less effective than in the early elementary years (Hernandez, 2011).

According to Fiester (2010), there are millions of students that make it to fourth grade without being able to read fluently. Low achievement in reading by the end of third grade has long-term consequences according to Fiester (2010). Fiester (2010) writes the first teacher of

literacy for a child should be their primary caregiver and there is not a good substitute. The researcher notes parents should read and talk with their children.

Intervention programs need to be started as early as possible according to Ziolkowka (2007). Students that experienced problems with reading in kindergarten and first grade remained poor readers as fourth graders (Ziolkowka, 2007). Schools that remediate as early as possible in elementary school have a chance of eliminating reading difficulties later on (Ziolkowka, 2007). Not addressing the deficiency may cause the gap to increase. This is especially a problem if reading issues are not identified until third grade when many of the state's reading assessments begin.

King (2015) comments on how almost every student should be able to learn to read by the time they finished first grade. King (2015) wrote about how No Child Left Behind, and the high stakes testing have marked literacy as being an essential skill for success in school. Not being able to read at grade level makes it more likely a student will be retained or be labeled as needing special education. King (2015) studied the methods teachers use to teach reading. The keys to having a successful reading program were teachers using a phonics program in kindergarten through third grade, reading comprehension strategies were employed starting in third grade, and continuing to teach vocabulary words (King, 2015).

Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, and Fletcher (1996) found a significant number (74%) of students labeled with reading disabilities in the third grade still had reading disabilities in the ninth grade. Torgesen (2004) said, "Children who are poor readers at the end of first grade almost never acquire average-level reading skills by the end of elementary school" (p. 1). Torgesen (n.d.) in an article titled Preventing Early Reading Failure, wrote it is challenging for a student struggling with reading in the first three years of schooling to ever acquire average, grade

level reading skills. Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne (2010) said, “Students who are not reading at grade level by third grade begin having difficulty comprehending the written material that is a central part of the educational process in the grade that follows” (p. 1).

Improving literacy. Miller (2009), also known as the *book whisperer*, is a reading teacher who attempts to teach struggling readers to become master readers. To become a master reader, Miller (2009) wrote, you must behave like a master reader. Master readers generally steal any minute they can find to read and carry books around with them everywhere they go. A proficient reader is friends with other readers either in person or part of an online community (Miller, 2009). Being friends with other readers allows a person to receive book recommendations (Miller, 2009). There are many choices when it comes to reading, and an inexperienced reader can feel overwhelmed (Miller, 2009). A person needs to be taught how to find books at the library, and they need to feel comfortable at the library and bookstores.

Willingham (2016) suggests the best way to get better at reading is to be well read. It is not always easy to get a struggling reader to want to read. Willingham (2016) suggests having a weekly reading time where everyone sits in the same room and reads together. Along with sitting together reading different books, listening to audio books as a family allows for everyone to have a shared reading experience (Willingham, 2016). Willingham makes an interesting proposition, after watching television for 30 minutes, turning the volume down and only using subtitles.

Allington (2011) is the author of *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*. Allington is passionate about assisting struggling readers and attempts to help educators search through the numerous research studies done on struggling readers. Allington (2011) found the amount of time a student reads per day has a significant impact on their vocabulary. Allington (2011) discovered high achieving readers read about three times as much as lower achieving classmates.

Miller and Kelley (2014) wrote, “Children who read the most will always outperform children who do not read much” (p. xix). Willingham (2015) encourages parents to get their children to read. Allington (2011), Miller and Kelley (2014), Willingham (2015) all agree for a child to get better at reading they need to read as much as possible.

Parent influence. According to Williams (2012), Parents who see themselves as their child’s primary literacy teacher before going to school have higher literacy rates. Williams (2012) was inspired to research after she had asked 176 fifth and sixth graders, “Who reads with you?” She found of those who had an adult read with them not one qualified for special reading services. She became interested in finding out how to motivate parents to read with their children. Williams said, “It is then, less about the children's abilities and more about the guidance they received” (pg. 6).

She interviewed 12 parents of first graders. Four of the families had a high performing reader, four had a medium range performer in reading, and four were receiving remediation services for reading. She used two male and two female students in every group. Interviews were conducted with the families. All families were from the same school. The researcher was unaware of the reading level of the student during the interview process. Williams' (2012) research focused on finding out what parents did before their child entered 1st grade. While this research is vital for parents of preschool or younger children it is not as helpful to parents who have older children struggling with reading. Williams (2012) found, when parents are involved in teaching their child to read or read with their children, their children have significant gains in reading. Parents of the children with the highest literacy rates encourage a love for reading (Williams, 2012).

Nebrig (2008) surveyed parents and teachers of pre-school and kindergarten age children in a southeastern state. Of the 524 surveys sent out to the parents 259 surveys were returned, only 193 surveys were able to be used based on criteria of parents needing to be identified as low-income. Two hundred forty-eight surveys were sent to kindergarten teachers with 210 usable for the research. Descriptive statistics were applied to the perceptions of teachers and parents pertaining to at home activities that impacted literacy.

The results of the survey showed parents and teachers had statistically significant different views on what was important in increasing literacy skills (Nebrig, 2008). Nebrig (2008) stated parents prioritized skills like knowing the alphabet (77.7%) and being able to write their name before entering kindergarten (86%) higher than teachers prioritized knowing the alphabet (61%) and being about to write their name (74%). Nebrig (2008) found 63% of teachers suggested parents play games, sing songs 42%, and 83% believing parents should ask questions about the story when reading, encourage the child to talk about the book while reading, and show the child the proper way to read a book.

Nebrig's research discovered parents ascribe more importance to activities occurring naturally versus structured ones. Teachers also prefer activities that occur naturally (Nebrig, 2008). Teachers wanted to encourage parents to sing songs and read versus spending more time learning the alphabet and writing letters. Nebrig (2008) found parents (67%) put a higher priority on education television than teachers (30%). The study was conducted in 2008, the survey did ask about electronic toys such as toys made by LeapFrog. Eighty-one percent of parents believed that using electronic devices would assist their child in learning to read as opposed to 40% of teachers.

A school with successful communication between parents and teachers has more learning opportunities. The research shows that parent and teacher communications struggle and that often the leadership in the school does not know how to improve the communication (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). According to Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, and Selcuk (2016), teachers do not always know how to communicate with parents. If the school leadership also struggles with communication teachers may have difficulty improving their communication (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). When parents and teachers work together they can evaluate problems and work towards solutions together. Communication barriers can be on the parent or school side. Schools may not have a good a communication system in place, lack alternative strategies, or have knowledge deficiencies (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). Parent communication issues may involve schedule, family status, or negative experiences with schools (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). The research was collected from over 500 teacher questionnaires. Teachers with less teaching experience have more communication problems (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, and Selcuk (2016) suggested communication with parents in as many formats as possible such as face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls, handouts, and so on.

Thompson, Mazer, and Flood Grady, (2015) surveyed 1,349 parents from the Midwest. Thompson, Mazer, and Flood Grady (2015) found parents preferred email communication for everyday simple messages but face-to-face communication was better if there was a chance information could be misconstrued. The research did not ask about teacher preferences.

Symeou, Roussounidou, and Michaelides (2012) researched the impact of training teachers to communicate with parents. Symeou, Roussounidou, and Michaelides (2012) found teachers had very little training in their original teacher programs about communicating with

parents. The trainings in the study taught teachers about different cultures and communicating with parents in different ways based on the family dynamics. Many of the teachers in the training had used the same communication methods to contact all their families and did not take into consideration family backgrounds (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). The trainings helped teachers feel more confident in their interactions with parents because they had been given knowledge on how to put parents at ease (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012).

Researchers Aram and Besser-Biron (2017) wanted to understand how parents supported reading and writing skills. The researchers were especially interested in what they call precocious readers which they defined as a child that was able to learn to read before entering formal education (Aram and Besser-Biron, 2017). The research examined the reading abilities of preschool and school-age children with a focus on the precocious readers. Sixty participants from Hebrew-speaking homes were split into three groups. The first group was made up of the parents of 20 precocious readers, 12 boys and eight girls. The second group consisted of parents of children reading at the same level, 12 boys and eight girls. The third group was also made up of 20 parents of children reading at the same level. Aram and Besser-Biron (2017) had the parents complete three tasks with their children. They had to complete a birthday invitation, add texts to a picture book, and spell 12 words. Aram and Besser-Biron (2017) found parents that gave age appropriate assistance in figuring out what letters were needed to form words, without simply giving their child the letters, had children with higher reading skills. Parents of precocious readers referred to orthography rules more often than parents with children in the other groups.

Evans, Shaw, and Bell (2000) conducted a study involving 72 children and their parents in kindergarten, first, and second grade. The research involved interviewing parents on the phone, interviewing the children, and observing parents reading to their children in their home.

Parents who reported listening to their children read had children that scored significantly higher than other students on reading achievement tests (Evans, Shaw, & Bell 2000). Evans, Shaw, and Bell (2000) reported that reading to children in kindergarten increased vocabulary while talking about the alphabet and phonetics was more highly correlated with reading skills. Evans, Shaw, and Bell (2000) found that reading alone did not improve reading skills outside of an increased vocabulary. The researchers found knowing the sounds letters make played a bigger role in literacy scores than vocabulary knowledge did (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000). Evans, Shaw, and Bell (2000) wrote, “letter sound knowledge, letter name knowledge, and phonological awareness are closely and reciprocally related in young children, with higher levels of each leading to higher levels of the other” (p. 72).

Senechal and LaFevre (2002) conducted a five-year longitudinal study to assess the impact of two types of parent involvement in literacy skills, formal and informal. Parents and children were recruited from Ottawa in Ontario Canada. The study involved children of the ages four and five that attended the same kindergarten classroom and a separate group of first graders. The study started with 110 kindergartners and 66 were still being followed by third grade with 45 of the original 58 first graders being followed until third grade (Senechal & LaFevre, 2002). Informal interactions involved simply reading to children and possibly discussing storylines. Formal interactions involved discussing letter names or sounds (Senechal & LaFevre, 2002). Parents were given an extensive questionnaire which included a list of authors and pseudo authors for parents to identify which authors were real. Senechal and LaFevre were testing the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficients. The children were given a test involving art from popular children’s literature. Senechal and LaFevre (2002) believed that the parental knowledge of authors and the child’s knowledge of books associated with art would correlate to higher

reading scores with the children. Senechal and LaFevre (2002) found there was a positive correlation between a child's recognition of art from popular children's literature and higher reading scores along with the parents' ability to recognize children's literature authors. The researchers did discover students with higher reading skills in early grades continued to grow more than their peers, but the results were not conclusive on exactly what parents need to do in regard to teaching orthography at home (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011) studies from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), examination results showed parental involvement significantly impacts scores on the PISA exam; especially when parents read to children. When parents have conversations with their children and ask them about their day students have higher scores (OECD, 2011). The OECD (2011) found having dinner around the table together was also connected to higher scores.

Kesoglou (2016) set out to see parent perspectives about what was needed to assist their child in literacy at home in a qualitative exploratory case study. The study focused on 40 parents of children ages birth through five in a preschool in East Tampa, Florida (Kesoglou, 2016). The majority of the data was collected through a 31question multiple choice survey. Additional information was collected from 10 parents that agreed to a face-to-face interview (Kesoglou, 2016). This research found parents did seem to know how to make their children better readers (Kesoglou, 2016). Kesoglou (2016) identified parents knew it was essential to read to their children. Parents were not as clear on what to do if their children were struggling (Kesoglou, 2016).

According to a meta-analysis conducted by Mol, Bus, Jong, and Smeets (2008) book reading promotes vocabulary. An extensive literature search was done across many different

research platforms and included research conducted from 1988 to 2007 (Mol, Bus, Jong, & Smeets, 2008). Books have a broader exposure to vocabulary than everyday conversation (Mol, Bus, Jong, & Smeets, 2008). Asking younger children questions about what they were reading aided in understanding, but it was not as effective with older children (Mol, Bus, Jong, & Smeets, 2008). Mol, Bus, Jong, and Smeets (2008) suggested training for parents in how to ask questions while reading because it did not seem to come naturally to parents.

Semingson (2008) interviewed 14 parents of children in grades one, two, or three participating in a reading group for struggling learners. The children were from an elementary school in Texas. Semingson (2008) interviewed the parent on three separate occasions, in their homes or at their work, to discover what the parent viewed as their role in the literacy process. Semingson (2008) conducted Naturalistic Inquiry, which is why she chose to conduct the surveys in the family home. The first survey was 45 minutes long followed by two 30-minute interviews. Semingson (2008) found parents from different cultural backgrounds were viewed as uncaring when they may have a different way of interacting with teacher figures. She found parents of struggling readers sometimes felt at odds with the school and may be reluctant to seek help because of fear of backlash against their child (Semingson, 2008).

Programs to assist parents. If parents struggle with reading, they may feel uncomfortable reading to their children. Children of parents who struggle with reading often also struggle. According to Rose and Atkin (2007), this can result in a cycle of poverty. Developing literacy skills had been shown to help break the cycle of poverty (Rose & Atkin, 2007). Many countries are adopting adult literacy programs (Rose & Atkin, 2007). Nordic countries have adult and family learning as part of their cultures. They have not added new programs because the

Nordic countries already have high literacy rates. Rose and Atkins (2007) found parents were interested in learning opportunities that would help them assist their children.

Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim (2010) examined research on family literacy and family participation in literacy education. The Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim, (2010) found that while parents are the most influential part of a child's literacy development, other significant people can play a role. According to Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim (2010), shared book readings assist with the development of vocabulary and syntax. Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim (2010) found that cultures have unique ways of teaching literacy and while a family can imitate school methods at home it is difficult for the school to imitate the student's home culture. In the research analysis fathers reported feeling uncomfortable at the programs because they felt the programs were geared towards women (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim 2010).

Parents of struggling readers can be made to feel as if they are to blame for their child's literacy problems. Rocha-Schmid (2010) makes the argument it is better to avoid framing the student's reading struggles as a deficit. Semingson (2008) found parents from minorities and recent immigrants often had cultural misunderstandings. The school's teachers and administrators might not know the best way to communicate well with these families. The families could appear to be uncaring when in actuality the families are at a disadvantage because their culture is different than the school's (Semingson, 2008). Schools should consider this when working with parents of struggling readers.

Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) set out to find out the benefits of family literacy using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) used interviews to discover how parents felt about family literacy programs. The researchers found interviews at the

end of a program to be notorious for getting positive feedback and therefore less reliable. They were also unable to interview parents that had dropped out before the end of the program. Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) discovered a significant component of a successful literacy program is the program's ability to get parents involved in the school's culture. Along with the school's culture, parents that were trained in the school's educational practices and emotional support skills had more of an opportunity to assist their struggling reader (Swain, Brooks, & Bosley, 2014).

According to McElvany and van Steensel (2009) and Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014), family literacy initiatives can do more to aid in literacy issues than schools can alone. McElvany and van Steensel (2009) compared two different family literacy program approaches. They used meta-analysis to look at the data collected from two different literacy programs. One program was done in the Netherlands and the other in Berlin. The two programs were conducted in entirely different ways. The McElvany and van Steensel (2009) discovered not all family literacy programs have success. One of the programs required a serious time commitment for parents in the form of several classes weekly (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). This program required many teachers and government workers to run, but they were unable to find any gains from the children whose parents had been a part of the program (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). Contrast that with a program that sent materials to the parents with instructions. This program was much more straightforward and did have positive results from the children of the families involved (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). Parents must have buy-in, and they have to be willing to participate in the program (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009).

Teaching children to read is a complex and sometimes mysterious process. Not of the current research on how to teach reading is in agreement, but there is a strong consensus that a

child needs to be able to learn to read in the early elementary grades or they will continue to struggle with reading (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007). Parental background and family interactions play one of the biggest roles in a child's reading ability (Miller, 2009; Nebrig, 2008; OECD, 2011; Semingson, 2008; Williams, 2012; Willingham, 2015). When parents learn how to help their child, reading scores improve (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010; McElvany & van Steensel, 2009; Rose & Atkin, 2007; Swain, Brooks, & Bosley, 2014).

Review of Methodological Issues

In Ravitch's book *Left Back*, she discusses the difficulty of doing a study on the teaching of phonics versus whole language. When observing teachers who were teaching at a school that was advocating for either phonics or whole language, it was difficult to find a teacher genuinely doing only one of the methods. Many older teachers that had previously used phonics to teach children to read would still secretly get out their phonics cards when no one was looking. It is challenging to do education research because of the numerous variables involved in every different education classroom. Even though there are a variety of variables that could impact the outcomes of education experiments there are experimental practices that can safeguard against the skewed results based on a single teacher, school, or area.

Classical teaching methods. There are not many dissertations or experiments done on the merits of classical education. Splittgerber (2010) wanted to know if Lutheran schools switching to classical education were making the right decision. Splittgerber (2010) only used private Lutheran schools in his study. That was a good choice for his study because he wanted to know if classical education was better at Lutheran schools. Splittgerber (2010) compared non-classical Lutheran schools to classical Lutheran schools using a quasi-experimental design. The

classical Lutheran schools were all part of the same consortium and used the same curriculum. Splittgerber (2010) used demographic information to find non-classical Lutheran schools to match with the demographics of the classical Lutheran schools. Splittgerber (2010) used standardized test scores as the dependent variable. Splittgerber's (2010) used the question, "How does the standardized test scores of Lutheran classical schools compare to Lutheran schools not using the classical education model?" (p. 27). Using standardized tests was a good choice because it would provide a standard way to measure the test scores that would be similar even across states.

Orthography. Stark (2011) used a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental nonequivalent group research design to discover if suffix and syntax or phonology and spelling groups would result in higher post-test scores. The participants in the study were all from the same school (Stark, 2011). This was a convenience sample, and the sixth grade was chosen because they were already studying morphology (Stark, 2011). The students were assigned randomly into two groups (Stark, 2011). A series of morphology posttests were given to both groups (Stark, 2011). Having the experiment take place in more schools would make the results more reliable. Having a third group that used mixed instruction could provide information on the value of teaching both items.

Wolter and Dilworth (2008) studied 20 students that had been referred by their teachers for spelling and reading deficiencies. The children were split into five groups randomly (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008). The groups were given one of two types of intervention. One intervention focused on phonological and orthographic awareness. The focus of the second intervention was on phonological, orthographic, and morphological awareness (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008). Having both groups studying the phonology and orthography would make it easier to see the effects of

the morphology. The groups all had different instructors. The leaders of the groups included the two researchers and three college students. Some groups could have better results because they had a better teacher.

Dixon and Marchman (2007) studied 37 boys and 37 girls that represented the United States average demographics and included children from seven different states. All students involved had English as a first language (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). The data for the experiment was collected by parents, and the researchers analyzed the collected data (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). The parent or caregiver read their child a list of words and noted which words their child knew (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). The parents were given a list of 37 phrases one set had correct grammatical structure, and the other did not (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). The parents were to choose which phrase their child would probably use (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). The research was attempting to find a relationship between how many words a child knows and their use of correct grammar (Dixon & Marchman, 2007). Using someone other than a parent could result in more accurate reporting, but children typically talk less to someone they do not know, and it would be hard to discover the typical grammatical structure the child uses.

Programs to assist parents. McElvany and van Steensel (2009) compared two different family literacy program approaches. They used meta-analysis to look at the data collected from two different literacy programs (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). One program was done in the Netherlands and the other in Berlin (McElvany & van Steensel, 2009). The two programs were conducted in entirely different ways. The program from the Netherlands was not successful in raising the literacy scores, but it would be hard to say why because the Berlin program was not similar. There were almost no similarities in how the programs were run making it difficult to discover why one program was successful and the other was not. In 2011, McElvany, van

Steensel, Kurvers, and Herppich conducted another review of family literacy programs, but this time they did a meta-analysis of many literacy programs. Using ERIC databases and PsycINFO they searched for peer-reviewed articles, programs that measured the effect of a literacy program, had elementary or younger participants, involved a control group, provided effect sizes, and the total sample size was at least 10 (van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2011).

Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) set out to find the benefits of family literacy using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) used interviews to discover how parents felt about family literacy programs. Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) wrote that interviews at the end of a program are notorious for getting positive feedback. They were also unable to interview parents that had dropped out before the end of the program (Swain, Brooks, & Bosley, 2014). Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) wanted to know how best to run a family literacy program because they felt that the key to breaking the cycle of poverty is strong literacy skills. Swain, Brooks, and Bosley (2014) felt it was important to interview parents and see how they felt about the program to reach the parents in future family literacy programs.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Skills needed for reading. Wolter and Dilworth (2013) claim the knowledge of phonics, orthography, and morphology aid in a student's ability to spell and read. Readers can identify unknown words when they know the sounds the letters make. Morphology enables a person to figure out an unknown word based on its word parts (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008). Orthography helps a student with spelling rules, which can help a person figure out a word using phonograms or silent letters (Wolter & Dilworth, 2008). Rasinsk, Padak, and Newton (2017) support the idea morphology aids in reading comprehension by exposing them to roots used in many words.

Mol, Bus, and Jong (2008) found reading exposes students to a broader range of vocabulary words than everyday conversation. Different genres of books have words that may seldom come up in a dialogue with parents, teachers, or peers. Reading requires the reader to have background knowledge to understand the text and Willingham (2015) says the best way to get background knowledge is to read a wide variety of books. Caros (2014) wrote reading requires the reader to have background knowledge to understand the text. McLaughlin (2012) found understanding the vocabulary in a text was one of the critical parts of reading comprehension.

Miller (2009) believed the best way to become a better reader was to imitate the actions of master readers. Miller (2009) described master readers as people who read any chance they have, communicated with other readers, and felt comfortable in the library or bookstore. Imitating character and strategies of great people is a classic way to get better at something. Athletes mimic the actions of other great athletes in their sport. If struggling readers adopt the practices of master readers, they will discover how great reading can be (Miller, 2009). A person does not naturally know how to use a library, how to find a good book, or how enjoyable reading is until someone shows them (Miller, 2009).

Allington (2011) described how the amount of time a student reads per day has a significant impact on their vocabulary. Hearing a word in isolation makes it difficult to figure out what the word means, aside from morphology skills (Allington, 2011). When a child reads the unknown word in a context of the rest of the writing, it becomes easier to use their previous knowledge to guess at the word's meaning (Allington, 2011).

OECD (2011) found parents who read to their children performed higher on the PISA and there was also a correlation between parents who spent more time speaking to their children and

an increased vocabulary. Understanding the words in a sentence is key to understanding the sentence. Hearing and reading words helps to understand the meaning of a word. A parent who is well-read and has an extensive vocabulary is going to expose their children to more words, in conversation as well as reading books (OECD, 2011).

Willingham (2015) expressed the best way to improve reading skills is by reading. Willingham (2015) acknowledged it is not easy getting a child who does not enjoy reading to read as much as they need to. Willingham (2015) suggested having family reading times and using subtitles with the volume turned down on the television. The more a person reads, the more exposure they have to new vocabulary words, and they also build their background knowledge (Willingham, 2015). Background knowledge and an extensive vocabulary allow a person to read higher level books with understanding (Caros, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; Willingham, 2015).

Allington (2011), Willingham (2015), and Miller (2009) agree to get better at reading a person must read. The more a person reads, the better they will become at reading. Children need to see how enjoyable reading can be by being exposed to beautiful books. Miller (2009) commented on how important it is for the family to create a culture of reading. The culture in the United States does not always value reading, and the parents need to show they value reading.

In Adler and Doren's (1972) classic book *How to Read a Book*, the authors describe reading as being like a catcher in baseball. Reading is not a passive activity, and it requires the reader to actively attempt to understand and make connections with their previous knowledge (Adler & Doren, 1972; Willingham, 2015). A student needs to be taught how to be an active participant in the reading process.

According to Ravitch (2000), the teaching of literacy changed in the United States with the introduction of the whole-language method. Moore (2013) and Barzun (1991) agree sheer

boredom caused by “look and say” books played a big part in the loss of interest in reading. Dehaene (2009) refers to whole-language methods as an artificial form of reading.

McElvany and van Steensel (2009) discovered family literacy programs are more likely to improve a child’s literacy skills than programs run by the school. Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim (2010) found parents are the most influential person in a child’s literacy development, but other significant individuals can play a part as well. Shared book readings can assist in developing vocabulary and syntax (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim 2010).

Background knowledge. The study of history and science are strongly emphasized in classical education. These are part of the liberal arts. While at first it may seem as if these subjects do not have much to do with literacy, Barzun (1991), Caros (2014), Hirsch (1989), Moore (2013), and Willingham (2015, 2017), would disagree. The subjects of history and science help to build up students’ background knowledge. Willingham (2017) wrote while a person who can sound out the words they are reading are literate, the inability to understand what they are reading makes them only functionally literate. Willingham (2017) claims many readers have a factual knowledge deficit keeping them from understanding what they are reading. Caros (2014) noted a person must understand 90% of the words in a passage to be able to apply that knowledge to the unknown 10%. Reading comprehension skills cannot make up for lack of background knowledge. A student that reads fluently may seem as if they can read but if they do not have the background knowledge to understand what they read they are not actually reading (Caros, 2014). Caros wrote, “The reality is good readers are effective decoders, they are fluent, and they have a broad vocabulary and background knowledge” (2014, p. 3).

In an article from the New York Times, Willingham (2017) claims along with a broad vocabulary a reader must also have a large bank of factual knowledge. A poor reader with

background knowledge on a topic may be three times as likely to answer questions correctly from reading a passage as a strong reader without background knowledge (Willingham, 2017). Willingham also noted 11th grade students that scored high on a general knowledge examination also scored high on reading in one experiment.

Hirsch (1988) wrote literacy is more than just a skill that can be learned. Hirsch (1988) claims literacy gives people the ability to communicate with each other but to understand what is read a person needs to have cultural literacy. Hirsch (1988) used the term *cultural literacy* as the name for the background knowledge a person must have to understand what they read. Cultural literacy involves knowing idioms and phrases, poems, songs, and references to classic texts. Hirsch (1988) stated being able to read involves a lot more than what is on a page. Hirsch (1988) believed the reason cultural literacy was not being addressed in school was it was taken for granted. Everyone had a similar background knowledge, and it was not clear background knowledge was vital until it was clear students lacked a shared background knowledge (Hirsch, 1988). Students need to be taught a body of shared knowledge and have exposure to classic literature to understand what is being referenced during reading.

Reading in the early grades. King (2015) wanted to discover what teachers perceived as the best literacy practices in a kindergarten through third grade setting. King used three high-achieving elementary schools in the same county. She used open-ended interview questions with qualitative research design. According to King (2015), a student should be able to read by the time they finished first grade, and if they cannot, it makes it difficult to catch up by the time standardized testing starts in third grade. King (2015) found teachers believed specific vocabulary instruction aided in reading comprehension. If second and third grade teachers have a curriculum that assumes a child can read at the expected level than it would be difficult for a

student to pick up the skills they missed on their own. Those students need to master the skills they were unable to master as a first grader before they can read at grade level.

Ziolkowka (2007) found students who were poor readers in kindergarten remained poor readers in the fourth grade. According to Ziolkowka (2007), the earlier the remediation takes place, the better for the student. Allington (2012), Ziolkowka (2007), Hernandez (2011), and King (2015) discuss the importance of catching reading problems early and reading deficiencies usually remain unless they are addressed.

Hernandez (2011) found students who failed to read at grade level by third grade had higher dropout rates than students reading at grade level. Similarly to Ziolkowka (2007) and King (2015), Hernandez (2011) found it was hard for students that could not read well by third grade to catch up to their peers. The skills used for third grade reading are different than the previous grade. In the early elementary grades, students are learning mostly decoding skills, but in third grade students must begin to understand what they read. They cannot be focusing on decoding skills. If students have not mastered decoding skills, they will still be trying to decode rather than understand.

Fiester (2010) explained many students make it to the fourth grade without being able to read fluently. Fiester (2010) also claims a child's first teacher of literacy should be their primary caregiver. Many studies have shown the home environment plays a crucial role in a child's literacy development. Therefore, many countries and school districts have implemented family literacy programs (McElvany, van Steensel, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2011)

For a child to read well, he or she needs to be taught how to become a skilled reader (Miller, 2009). A child can be taught to love reading by the example of a parent, guardian, teacher, or friend, but the most critical relationship is the parent (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich,

& Kim, 2010; Miller, 2009; McElvany, van Steensel, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2011; Willingham, 2015,). Families need to create a culture of reading allowing a child to explore and fall in love with books (Miller, 2009; Willingham, 2015).

Critique of Previous Research

Willingham (2015), Miller (2009), and Allington (2011, 2012) all stress the importance of reading to improve reading skills. Reading as much as possible is emphasized in these texts. Specific amounts of time are not given, aside from Miller (2009) mentioning master readers often read three times as much as their lower-performing counterparts. For a parent who has a struggling reader, it may be helpful to know the specific amount of time a master reader spends reading and use the information to compare to their own child's reading time.

Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, and Kim (2010), Mol, Bus, and Jong (2008), Fiester (2010), and Willingham (2015) describe the benefits of shared reading between parents and their children. Their research does not tell a parent of struggling readers how parents of master readers do their shared reading time. Do parents of master readers read with their children every night or once a week? Do the parents read in the presence of their children? It may be helpful to parents of struggling readers to have more specific information on how much time parents of master readers read with their children on a daily or weekly basis.

Willingham (2015) and Hirsch (1987) wrote about the importance of background knowledge when reading. OECD (2011) found it was not only shared book reading that helped students with vocabulary and background knowledge but also the conversations parents had with their children. Parents of struggling readers may want to know what kind of conversations parents of master readers have with their children. Parents may also be interested to know in what ways parents of master readers help their children gain a good base of background

knowledge. There is a difference between knowing a child should have background knowledge and knowing how to give a child background knowledge.

Bauer (2016), Moore (2013), and Miller (2009) discuss the importance of choosing the right books when getting children interested in reading. Parents of struggling readers may not know how to find the right books. Parents of master readers have methods for choosing the books their children read until the children begin to choose for themselves. Miller (2009) explains how it is important to expose students to exciting books, but a parent of a struggling reader may need more information about how to find books that will hook their child.

The literature review has examined many different aspects of teaching a child to read. In some of the areas there is consensus on what aids in reading development while others have more unique ideas. Most of the studies examined here used struggling readers to conduct their research and it may be possible to glean more information by studying students at many different literacy levels to further understand how parental activities impact literacy skills. Instead of focusing on what students from low achieving families do not have, this study will look at what families of high performing students do to support reading mastery.

RQ1: What are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students that received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

Chapter 2 Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the literacy strategies used by classical schools and examine parent roles in the literacy process. The reading strategies used by classical institutions are time-tested and are also supported by current research in literacy. The research shows literacy skills are essential for the success of a student in school. The research also revealed if a student struggles with reading they are likely to continue to struggle without intervention. The research also revealed the importance of the role of the parent in a child's literacy development. Parents play a significant role in the child's literacy habits and feelings about reading. Research on how to cultivate master readers discusses the importance of time spent reading. The best way to get better at reading is to read more. Parents may need more specific details about how to assist their children. To a family that rarely reads, reading once a month for an hour may seem like a lot, whereas, a family of master readers may read an hour every day. Current suggestions may not be specific enough for parents to know what their goals should be. Parents of struggling readers may need strategies from parents of master readers about how to support their child better.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction to Chapter 3

Classical schools employ teaching methods that have been used for centuries around the world. Current research supports the success of the teaching methods used by classical schools in many ways. De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, and Verhoeven (2009) and Willingham (2015) have discussed the importance of phonics in the reading process. McLaughlin (2012), Rasinski, Padka, and Newton (2017), and Robinson (2015) have shown knowing Latin roots opens a reader up to a more extensive vocabulary and the ability to break down unknown words to find their meaning. The reading of classical texts improves a child's vocabulary, gives the reader background knowledge that may be used in other works of literature, and may expose them to a love of reading (Adler & Doren, 1972; Bauer, 2016; Moore, 2013). Gwynne (2014) wrote about how the study of grammar assists in a reader's understanding of morphology and syntax, which allows a child to recognize familiar words and find meaning in the arrangement of a sentence.

The classical schools in Texas have higher reading scores than other schools in their area, but there are still students who do not pass the Third Grade Reading State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (Texas Academic Performance Report, 2017). The reading level of a child by the end of third grade can have a lasting impact on their reading skills as they progress through school (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Simmons et al., 2008; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007). Classical schools are teaching all the students with a similar curriculum, but there are still students unable to read at grade level. Instead of looking at the commonalities in the failing students, this study focuses on the population of students achieving the highest score of mastery.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the shared home activity characteristics of students who achieve a score of Mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Current reading research does not agree on what activities at home contribute to success in reading. This study attempted to discover to what extent, if any, certain activities done at home impact the skills of students receiving a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR.

The information learned from this study could help parents and schools assist struggling readers. If there are several similarities among families of readers achieving mastery on the STAAR exam than those similarities can be shared with the parents of struggling readers. Williams (2012) found parents who showed they valued and found reading enjoyable had more success at getting their children to read than parents who believed reading to be a task needed to be done but did not find it enjoyable. Kesoglou (2016) noted most parents want their children to read well, and many know they should read to their children, but parents had a harder time understanding how to assist struggling readers.

In addition to surveying parents on how they assist their children in reading, teachers were also surveyed. The survey was intended to find out if teachers suggest to parents the strategies parents of successful readers use. It was hoped the data collected would shed light on what strategies teachers share with parents of struggling readers. The survey given to the teachers was very similar to the survey provided to parents, but the wording was modified to address teachers.

It is essential to assist children with learning difficulties as soon as possible. Parents and teachers want to help struggling readers, but they may not know what to do to help. If the survey

can narrow what parents of successful readers do, it is possible information can be beneficial to parents of struggling readers.

Research Questions

The state of Texas average failure rate is 28% on the Third Grade Reading STAAR while the average failure rate on the Third Grade Reading STAAR from the classical schools involved in this study is 12.5% (Texas Academic Performance Report, 2017). Those numbers represent actual children who do not have some of the necessary skills needed to be successful in schools. Instead of focusing on what students from low achieving families do not have, this study looked at how families of high performing students support their students in becoming strong readers.

RQ1: What are the specific activities and the amount of time spent on activities common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

The answers to these questions could assist in raising the reading level of students if parents of struggling learners implemented suggested strategies.

Hypothesis

Seven null hypotheses were developed to assess the correlations of at home activities on reading scores as measured by the questions on the parent and teacher survey. The following null hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not

approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities done with the students.

H₀₂ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities currently being done with fourth grade students.

H₀₃ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to parental opinions of reading.

H₀₄ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how much time parents spend reading for personal enjoyment.

H₀₅ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to speaking to teachers about reading concerns.

H₀₆ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how parents feel about their child's school.

H₀₇ No statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers and compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students.

Research Design

The researcher sought to examine the causality of master readers by examining activities done in the home. To achieve the purpose of this study a quantitative approach was selected. A quantitative approach aids in identifying activities common among respondents. This quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive, and explanatory research study employed a survey as the data collection instrument. The survey used a combination of several types of responses, specifically, a Likert rating scale, frequency scale, demographics questions, and a place for respondents to select their child's score on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The study employed cross-sectional survey methods to collect self-reported data at a specific point in time. A cross-sectional study was used because the research is looking at a specific population and occurred only once and all the participants were sent the same survey questions in the same time frame. Four classical charter schools were originally part of the study; however, when the research was conducted, only two classical schools participated in both surveys and one participated in only the teacher survey. The parents were given their surveys in the first half of October. The teachers were given their surveys in the second half of October.

The data was used to examine if a relationship existed between the dependent variable (parents' or teachers' perceptions) and the selected independent variables (survey questions). When the surveys were completed and the data collected, the data was analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) software. The independent-samples *t* test were used to compare frequency ratings on the parent and teacher surveys, in addition to comparing frequency ratings between those of parents with students scoring mastery and those who did not.

The researcher could have used interviews to discover information about what families do at home. Interviews would have allowed for the researcher to ask more specific questions. This may have made people less likely to want to participate in the research. Teachers have heavy workloads and may not have had the time for interviews. Parents may also have been busy and less likely to volunteer to participate than with a survey. The interviews could have less participants and potentially limit the amount of data collected.

Having parents or master readers keep journals for two weeks about the activities they do with their children could have provided richer details. This method could potentially have made it difficult to find participants because the amount of time needed. The journals could provide details about what parents do with their children that has not been previously thought to have an impact on reading. A potential problem with this method could be parents leaving out information because they do not think it is important for the study. This method would potentially have fewer participants and limit the data.

A survey may allow the researcher to examine possible correlations with specific activities and reading skills. It could give the researcher the ability to narrow down the potentially infinite variables impacting a child's reading skills. Surveys may reach more participants because it is not as much of a commitment. Another benefit of a survey could be reaching families unable to come in for interviews because of schedule conflicts. One of the schools has a high population of Spanish speaking families since the researcher does not speak Spanish this method would be difficult. The survey had a Spanish translation for each question.

An electronic survey through Qualtrics was sent to the parents of fourth-grade students. Permission to conduct the surveys was granted by the superintendent and the headmasters of the schools. The link to the survey was also an informed consent letter. When a participant clicked

the link to take the survey they were giving their consent. No identifiable information about the participant was collected. The survey asked parents questions about what activities their child participated in that may be related to their reading level. A similar survey was given to teachers. The questions were modified to ask what a teacher would recommend to parents as opposed to the parent survey asking what had been done for their child. The results of the parent survey were examined to find correlations between readers achieving a score of mastery on the STAAR exam. The survey listed activities done at home and asked parents how often those activities were done with their child. In addition to examining the parent survey for possible links between parent actions and reading success, parent answers were compared to the teachers' perceptions of what actions at home lead to a strong reader.

Many of the options on the survey were activities suggested by research from the literature review. The questions on the survey asking about how often parents read for their own enjoyment could support Miller (2009) and Willingham's (2012) discoveries that strong readers usually come from families promoting a culture of reading. Willingham (2016) said the best way to get better at reading is to read as much as possible. There were questions on the survey to discover how often parents read to their children.

Research Population and Sampling Method

Two target population groups were studied. The first group was the parents of fourth-grade students at three classical charter school campuses in Texas. The survey was sent out to parents at all three campuses but only two campuses had parent participation. The second group was the elementary school teachers from the same three classical charter school campuses.

The researcher sent the survey to the parents of fourth-grade students. The parents of fourth-grade students were selected because they are the youngest grade that has already taken

the Reading STAAR examination. Research shows the earlier reading difficulties are detected the more likely the problem(s) can be addressed (Miller, 2009, Torgeson, 2004, Ziolkowka, 2007). The average class size is 22, with three classes of fourth grade at two schools and two larger classes at the third. There was a potential of 200 families to take the survey. The three schools have different demographics based on their location, but the aggregate population is 52% White, 27% Hispanic, 6% African American, and 14% other (The Texas Tribune, 2017). The three schools had an average failure rate of 21% on the 2017 Third Grade Reading STAAR. This population was chosen to discover if any patterns or correlations exist between students scoring mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR and certain activities done at home. A fourth classical school was desired, but the headmaster declined the survey because she was worried it would make parents believe they needed to focus more on the STAAR examinations.

All elementary teachers at the three classical charter schools in Texas were also surveyed. The breakdown of the aggregate demographics for the teachers is 89% White, 4% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 3% Asian (The Texas Tribune, 2017). The average level of education for teachers is as follows: 75% have bachelor's degrees, 20% have master's degrees, and 3.8% have doctorate degrees. The teachers have an average of three years of teaching experience (The Texas Tribune, 2017). The teachers' survey was similar to questions on the parent survey but geared towards educators rather than parents. The survey was desired to provide data about the differences between parent and teacher perceptions.

A teacher survey was sent to the teachers of elementary students. This population was chosen because they teach reading to their students on a daily basis. There is an average of 18 elementary teachers at each of the three schools being surveyed. The potential number of elementary teachers that could have been surveyed was 72.

The superintendent and headmasters permitted the researcher to solicit participants through the school email system. Three separate emails were sent to the teachers and the parents. The first email was sent a month ahead of time explaining the purpose and potential benefits of the survey (see Appendices E and G). The second email was sent the week before the survey was distributed reminding potential participants about the survey (see Appendices F and H). The third email contained the consent form and a link to the survey (see Appendices C and D). The first and second emails contained information about how long the survey would be available along with the specific dates it was open.

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study was modified from a survey given by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009 (see Appendices A and B). The OECD allows modification of their research if the researcher gives credit to the OECD (Terms and Conditions, 2017). The 2009 OECD survey was conducted in 14 countries that had taken the PISA Reading Assessment (OECD, 2012). The countries were Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Korea, New Zealand, Portugal, Croatia, Hong Kong-China, Lithuania, Macao-China, Panama, and Qatar. The survey was not administered in The United States. The OECD survey and parent responses were connected to the performance of their children on the PISA examination. The PISA reading examination is given to 15-year-olds. The OECD was seeking to discover if parent involvement affected their child's learning efforts (OECD, 2012). The survey found information such as families that ate together had a higher score on the reading exam.

The PISA survey included questions about what parents did before their child went to kindergarten. Some of the information may have been forgotten or misremembered by parents because of the large time gap between when their child entered kindergarten and the time the

survey took place when their child was 15. Asking some of the same questions of parents with students in fourth grade may surface more accurate answers. Also, since the OECD surveyed parents from a variety of countries, other than the United States, there may be some insights that surface from asking some of the same questions of American parents (see Appendix A). Survey questions directed to teachers were modified to explore what teachers believe are activities linked to reading skills that should be done at home (see Appendix B). The researcher was then be able to compare parent perceptions about teaching reading to teacher perceptions. The original OECD survey was given in 2009 during a time when technology did not play as big a role in children's lives. The survey for this research was modified to explore a possible relationship between technology use and reading skills.

Many of the questions on the survey had scaled responses (Likert and frequency scales). The frequency scale was used to discover how often parents and their child participated in certain activities. The options on the frequency scale questions were *never or rarely, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, and daily or almost daily*. The Likert scale was used to discover parent perception about reading using a 4-point scale *strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree*. The option of neutral was not used in order to elicit an actual opinion. Parents and teachers were able to choose how often a certain activity was done (parents) or how often it should be done (teachers). There was a place on the survey for parents to mark the score their child received on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The options for the score were: *mastery, meets, approaching, and not approaching, unknown, or did not take the Third Grade Reading STAAR*. Another section asked parents if their children have access to specific items (such as books or e-readers) and the teacher version asked if students should have access to those same items.

The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment at Penn State (2006) developed a guide for creating surveys and suggested questions should be written at an eighth grade reading level and avoid using words having more than seven letters. To encourage participants to finish the survey, the survey questions were limited to those most likely to be relevant to the current research. In addition to making the questions in the survey easy to understand, jargon or acronyms parents may not have understood were avoided.

Data Collection

The survey was created and conducted online through the program Qualtrics. Two different forms of the surveys were created, the survey for the parents and the survey for the teachers (see Appendices A and B). The format of the survey mimicked the original format of the survey used in 2009 by OECD. The OECD approves further research with their survey as long as they are given credit for the original research (Terms and Conditions, 2017). The modification of the original survey involved removing some demographic questions and adding questions about what was currently being done with the fourth grade child. The survey had two versions of the survey, English and Spanish. The original survey asked questions mainly about what parents did before the child entered kindergarten. The OECD survey was given to parents of 15-year-olds who had taken the 2009 Reading PISA.

Qualtrics was used, and the survey link was emailed to parents through the schools' email system. The superintendent and headmasters gave permission to conduct the surveys online using the school email system. The informed consent information was sent along with a link stating participation in the survey was giving consent (see Appendix C). Qualtrics was set to anonymous and did not save data on participants.

The survey developed for this research was modeled after a survey sent out to parents following the 2009 PISA Reading Assessment. The PISA survey was used because it asked questions such as how often did the parent read to the child before they entered first grade? The survey used a frequency scale to answer: *never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or daily*. As stated earlier, the 2009 PISA survey was given to the parents of 15-year-olds and mainly asked about activities done before entering kindergarten. The survey developed for this research also had questions about how often certain activities are done with their current fourth graders. The parents were asked how they felt about books and reading. The teacher survey was modified more than the parent survey from the original OECD survey. The questions had to be reformatted to ask what a teacher would suggest rather than what a parent has done. The survey was piloted with individuals outside of the survey population to see if anything needed to be modified. The survey was not modified.

To encourage as much participation as possible two emails were sent out before the link to the survey was provided. The emails briefly explained the purpose of the survey and why the target population was selected. The first email stated the date the survey was going to be sent (see Appendices E and G). The second email reminded participants of the survey (see Appendices F and H). The third email had a brief description of the survey, a note of gratitude for participating, and click to consent form (see Appendices C and D).

After the surveys were completed, the response rates were calculated. Data analysis was done through SPSS to see any patterns created in the data. Data analysis also made it easier to detect errors in the data collection process. Frequency distribution showed the responses to each category. Percent distribution was used to indicate the percentage of surveyors selecting each response. ANOVA tests were used to assist in data collected because it could explore if the

survey answers of parents with students that scored Mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR and participated in certain activities are significantly different than the surveys of the students who did not pass the exam. Finding the p -values assisted in determining if the results were accurate and identify statistical significance.

The questions using the frequency scale were used to calculate the mean, median, and mode. Knowing the mean, median, and mode of the responses from parents of students scoring mastery on the Third grade Reading STAAR could identify trends. The data showed what types of activities were done more often by families of master readers.

Operationalization of Variables

The study examined the scores students received on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The dependent variables were the perceptions of parents and teachers taking the survey. The questions on the survey were the independent variables. When looking at the parent data only the score their child received on the Third Grade Reading STAAR was the dependent variable: the options are *not approaching*, *approaching*, *meets*, or *mastery*. The survey was meant to discover if certain at-home activities are linked to the scores received on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The teacher survey sought to discover if teachers have different perceptions about effective at home activities than parents.

Data Analysis Procedures

A survey was used to attempt to answer the research questions. The responses from the survey were analyzed and examined to discover if the information collected can assist teachers and parents of struggling readers. The surveys for parents were looking for common at home practices impacting student literacy and the teacher survey was examining perspectives of the teachers in regard to family activities that may impact student literacy.

RQ1: What are the specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities common among families of students receiving a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

The parent survey assisted in answering RQ1 by asking parents about certain activities. The survey sought to find trends or correlations between activities done by families with a student receiving a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Parents took the survey and selected if their child received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Even if the child did not pass the examination the data from the survey was still collected. The researcher looked at the scores of all students regardless of the scores, to avoid falsely correlating an activity with high reading scores. If activities are done by families with students scoring mastery and students failing to read at grade level it may mean that activity has little impact on reading skills. Many of the questions on the survey were inspired by research mentioned in the literature review. Using SPSS, the P-values and ANOVA tests were done to search for statistical significances. The results of the survey were analyzed and compared to the results from previous research.

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

By asking the teachers similar questions to the parents, it was possible to see where parents and teachers have different knowledge or perceptions on what will make a child a strong reader. It may be possible teachers assume parents have knowledge they may not possess. The information could encourage teachers to share their knowledge with parents. There may be activities correlated with higher reading scores teachers were unaware of or would not have

suggested. The results of the teacher survey and the parent survey may give teachers information to share with parents of struggling readers.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

Before the surveys were sent out to the parents and teachers, the surveys were piloted. There were no changes made to the surveys. Teachers may have answered the way they felt they ought to do versus what they actually did. A high response rate was anticipated. The goal of the survey response was 50%. The actual participation rate was 18% for parents and 54% for teachers.

Plans were created if a school had a low number of surveys completed. One of the questions on the surveys asked which school the student attends. The school with the lowest number of responses was isolated and examined for possible reasons. Paper surveys could have been given to the school or computers set up in the school to allow parents to take the survey on site. The researcher decided not to take these routes even with lower numbers from the third school because of the proximity of Thanksgiving and fall break. In the case of a low response rate from the teachers, the researcher could have spoken to the staff during a meeting at the location to discuss the purpose of the research with the teachers and to provide them with paper copies to be filled out in the meeting. This was not necessary since the teacher response rate was over 50%.

There may have been some parents of fourth graders without an easy way to access the survey because of a lack of access to the needed technology. It was surmised the age group of those being surveyed allowed for most parents and teachers to have access to the proper technology. One of the schools had a significant number of students speaking Spanish at home, and the survey had a Spanish version.

Internal and External Validity

The research design was asking parents to answer questions about what types of activities they did in their home or are currently doing in their home possibly having an impact on their child's reading skills. The data was used to make correlations between students achieving a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR examination and activities they did at home. To reduce the number of variables affecting how well a child can read, all parents surveyed came from the same type of classical charter school. The students are all exposed to the same reading curriculum which was explained in part of the literature review.

The research population came from three classical charter schools in Texas. All three schools are operated by the same company and receive training through the same initiative. The schools were all located in different demographic areas to reduce the variable effect of environment. Each school has an average of 56 students at the fourth-grade level. The teacher survey was offered to all elementary school teachers. There were 72 teachers altogether.

The survey used was modified from a survey used by the OECD in 2009 after the PISA reading examination was given. The format of the survey was the same as the original OECD survey. A majority of the questions were from the original OECD survey. The major modifications were repeating the questions that asked about activities done with the child before first grade to ask what activities were still being done with the child. The original survey was only given to parent. In the research discussed here a modified survey was also given to teachers to ask what they would suggest to parents.

Expected Findings

The research was expected to reveal correlations between activities done at home and high reading scores on the Third Grade Reading STAAR of students at three classical charter

schools in Texas. The teacher survey was expected to find out if teachers recommend the same activities the parents chose as activities they participated in with their children. The researcher predicted parents selecting daily or once or twice a week on many of the activities on the survey would have children with higher reading scores. The researcher also anticipated teachers and parents would have differences in what they perceive as aiding in reading skills. Teachers may perceive parents have information or knowledge they do not possess.

Ethical Issues

The researcher was a teacher at a classical school and had a professional relationship with teachers at the institutions being researched. To reduce the chance of bias the researcher did not discuss any of the research with participants before the survey was given out. While the schools and district were supportive of the research, the outcome did not affect the school or the district outside of the benefits of knowledge. The researcher did not receive any financial incentives for conducting the research. No identifiable information from the surveys was stored. The Qualtrics program did not collect identifiable information because the survey was set to anonymous. Therefore the researcher does not know how specific participants answered questions.

The research was done honestly and in an unbiased way to gather information beneficial to students and their families. The findings from the survey attempted to discover what parents did at home possibly linked to their child's reading scores. The survey was not meant to discover the quality of education the schools have. The survey was about activities done in the home and not the activities done at school. The research is being conducted by the researcher's own design.

Neither the school nor the company managing the school has asked for the research to be done. The research was meant to discover a way to help parents of struggling readers by finding out what is done by parents of master readers. The teacher survey was not designed to make the

teachers look good or attract people to the school. It is made merely to discover what teachers are suggesting to parents and what they perceive as being helpful to struggling learners.

No informed consent documents were collected having identifiable information on them. The informed consent information was included in the emails sent to the families and teachers before taking the survey (see appendices C and D). The statement, “Click the button below to consent to take this survey” was located at the bottom of the consent message sent in the third email. If they click the link to take the survey they gave their consent.

The surveys were anonymous. There were no questions on the survey allowing the participants to be identified. There was a question about ethnicity but there are high enough numbers of each ethnicity option it was not be an identifiable question. The number of participants in the survey aided in making participants unidentifiable. There was no place on the survey to place identifiable information. The survey did not ask for names or addresses. There was a question on the survey about how a child scored on the STAAR examination. It did not ask his or her exact score, but whether the score was under the category of mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching. This question was essential in identifying whether certain activities correlate to a score of mastery in reading on the STAAR examination. This did not mean only parents of students scoring mastery on the STAAR were surveyed. If families of poor readers consistently participate in the same activities as master readers the activity may have little connection with reading level. The scores on the STAAR examination are not unique enough for the information to be identifiable. The survey was set to anonymous through Qualtrics, and it did not collect identifiable information.

The research was approved through the IRB process through Concordia University–Portland. Along with getting approval from IRB the headmasters from each participating site

gave their consent. Before approaching the headmasters permission was received from the superintendent and the head of research from the company that runs the charter schools.

Chapter 3 Summary

Low reading scores are troubling. It is more disturbing to think the numbers or percentages represent actual children who are going to school without the tools needed to read at grade level. The survey conducted with parents and teachers may provide insight assisting students struggling with reading and their parents. The survey results may give teachers more concrete ideas to suggest to parents of struggling readers. Using parents of fourth grade students allowed data to be collected since this is the first year students take a reading STAAR examination. The teacher survey was given to all elementary teachers because reading is taught at all grade levels in elementary school. The use of an electronic questionnaire may have assisted in getting more responses from participants because it is more convenient than other methods. The results from the parent and teacher survey may give parents and teachers new methods to assist in reducing the number of students failing to read at grade level.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 4 and the analysis process is to determine if there is a relationship between the activities parents do at home and the child's reading level reported on a state standardized test. In addition to this data, teacher perceptions of what parents should do at home were compared to what the parents surveyed reported. Earlier in Chapter 1, a problem was reported of a failure rate of 28% on the third grade reading STAAR for the state of Texas. Failure to read at grade level leads to falling behind in all subjects with great difficulty in catching up (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007).

Quantitative data from a survey was collected to address the research question. This chapter contains a description of the data collected by the surveys. The survey questions were meant to address the two research questions and seven null hypotheses. This chapter evaluates the results and provide a summary. The chapter reports the findings from quantitative questions of parents ($n = 36$) of fourth grade students and elementary school teachers ($n = 43$) at classical charter schools in Texas. The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Chapter 2 discussed current reading research along with a look at how classical teaching methods instruct students in learning. Chapter 3 reviewed how the current study was developed and for what purpose. The current study had the following research questions:

RQ1: What are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

Hypotheses. In the current study, the following hypotheses were tested.

H₀₁ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities done with the students.

H₀₂ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities currently being done with fourth grade students.

H₀₃ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to parental opinions of reading.

H₀₄ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how much time parents spend reading for personal enjoyment.

H₀₅ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not

approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to speaking to teachers about reading concerns.

H₀₆ No statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how parents feel about their child's school.

H₀₇ No statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students.

The testing of the hypothesis was done with the program SPSS using the survey data collected from parents of fourth grade students and elementary school teachers from classical charter schools in Texas. The statistical tests determined whether statistically significant differences exist between the answers of parents who chose mastery as their child's STAAR score about activities done at home. Additionally, tests were done to determine statistically significant differences between the answers of the parents and the teachers. Testing the hypothesis may determine if specific activities are more commonly done by students who received the highest score on the Third Grade Reading STAAR.

Survey data from parents of fourth grade students and elementary school teachers from classical charter schools in Texas was collected. The parents selected what their child scored on the Third Grade Reading STAAR as part of the survey. The Third Grade Reading STAAR is the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, and it determines the reading level of third grade students. This test was used because most of the students would have taken it and the parents would be more likely to know how their child scored on the STAAR than most other benchmark tests.

The analysis used Pearson correlations to determine statistical significance. In addition, ANOVA tests were run on the activities having a statistical significance in the Pearson correlation tests. When comparing the data from parents and teachers *t* tests were used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the opinions of teachers about what activities should be done at home, the frequency they should be done, and the answers from parents about the frequency of activities they have done.

The results of the survey identified the activities done at home with parents of fourth grade students and their reading level reported by the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Additionally, the perceptions of elementary school teachers were collected in regard to what activities should be done at home with children.

Description of the Sample

Demographics of participants. Only two out of the four schools desired for this research participated in the parent survey. One of the schools did not want to pressure parents about STAAR scores, and the other had no parental response to the emails about the survey. The demographics mentioned in the design portion of the research described the demographics for all four schools. The demographics for the two schools with parent responses are 62% White, 12% Asian, 12% Hispanic, 6.5% Black, and 7.8% other. The demographics of the participants were 72% white ($n = 26$), 19% Asian ($n = 7$), and 5% other ($n = 2$). The parents reported STAAR scores in the survey. The breakdown of the STAAR scores was not approaching ($n = 1$), approaching ($n = 2$), meets ($n = 14$), mastering ($n = 10$), did not take STAAR ($n = 2$), and unsure ($n = 6$).

The teacher survey did not ask about race. The survey did ask about what level of education the teachers had. The majority of teachers had a bachelor's degree with 80% selecting

that response ($n = 32$). A master's degree is held by 17.5% ($n = 7$) and 2.5% have a doctoral degree ($n = 1$).

Piloting the survey. Before the survey was sent out it went through several iterations. There were two surveys one for parents and one for teachers. The parent survey was sent to a couple of parents who would not be part of the pool to be surveyed. The purpose of piloting the parent survey was make sure the questions made sense or if any of the questions made them uncomfortable. No changes were made to the parent survey after the piloting. A similar process was used for the teacher survey. Since the teacher survey was only for elementary teachers, the survey was sent to a pool of available middle school teachers. The purpose was the same as for the parent survey, to make sure all questions were easy to understand, and the surveyors felt comfortable. The process also helped in discovering the approximate amount of time the survey would take to complete.

Data collection process

In preparation for the survey, the headmasters needed to be contacted to ask for their consent. The schools are run by a larger company and they needed to be contacted first. The director of research for the company running the classical charter schools stated the headmasters would have to give their approval for the survey and the superintendent of the schools would need to give his approval. The director of research required a concise description of the research to be presented to the president of the company. After approval was given by the company, a description of the study and the purpose of the survey was sent to the superintendent first to receive his approval. After the superintendent had given approval emails were sent to the headmasters several months in advance of the survey explaining the purpose of the survey and

the timelines. Three of the headmasters agreed to participate in the survey. The fourth headmaster had some questions about the research.

When it came closer to the time of the actual survey emails were sent out again reminding the headmasters of the survey and checking up on the fourth headmaster. The fourth headmaster did not respond for many weeks. At this time the fourth headmaster stated she had decided her school would not be participating in the survey. She was afraid the survey would give parents the perception they should be doing more at home to prepare their child for the STAAR examinations. The headmaster said she would still give her teachers the teacher survey, but none of the teachers surveyed selected that campus as their school. It is assumed that the survey was not given to the teachers.

It was decided the best way for the surveys to be sent out was through the schools directly rather than having the researcher send the surveys to the parents and teachers. The researcher sent a schedule to the headmasters and told them the dates to send out information. Emails were sent out about the surveys along with the actual survey with the click to consent form. The first set of emails was sent to the teachers because the teacher survey was open first. The headmasters sent out an email created to explain the purpose of the survey two weeks before the teacher survey opened (see Appendix G). The second email was sent by the headmasters one week before the teacher survey opened to remind the teachers the survey was coming (see Appendix H). The third email was sent on the day the survey started. The email had a click to consent form with the link to the survey at the bottom (see Appendix C). The consent form explained the survey had minimal risk and the surveyor could discontinue the survey at any time. When the surveyor clicked on the survey link it signified consent. The survey was open for two

weeks. Teachers from three schools participated in the survey. A total of 43 teachers took the survey.

While the teacher survey was being conducted parents were being alerted about the survey created for parents of fourth grade students. On the same day the survey for the teachers started, the parents received an email explaining a survey was coming and what the purpose of the survey would be (see Appendix E). The following week a second email was sent to parents reminding them a survey was coming and when it would start (see Appendix F). The parents received a click to consent email explaining the nature of the survey and what could be expected on the survey (see Appendix D). The survey was open for two weeks. Thirty-six parents participated in the survey.

While the survey was open, the researcher could see what schools had taken the survey and how many surveys had been completed by each school. The researcher noticed one of the schools had not had any surveys filled out by the parents. The researcher emailed the headmaster and requested he send out a reminder email, which he did. After the survey was closed, the school still had no surveys completed by the parents.

The researchers contacted the headmasters and thanked them for their participation. One of the schools had participation from all of their elementary school teachers. The results of the survey were shared with the headmasters after the conclusion of the research.

Summary of Results

Data analysis. A survey created by modifying a 2009 survey used by PISA was given to parents of fourth grade students at three classical schools in Texas and elementary school teachers at three classical school in Texas. Parents at only two of the schools completed the survey. The quantitative data analysis compared the State of Texas Assessments of Academic

Readiness (STAAR) results of the surveys reporting a score of not approaching, approaching, meets, and mastery ($n = 27$). The survey asked about activities that could be done with a child. Parents selected the frequency they participated in activities when their child was in first grade and the activities currently done with their fourth-grade child. The surveys that reported not taking the STAAR or being unsure of the STAAR score were excluded from the analysis ($n = 8$). The purpose of the research was to determine if there were activities done at home that were more likely to be correlated with a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR.

The parents reported their child's Third Grade Reading STAAR scores on the survey which provided the reading level for the study. The Third Grade Reading STAAR was used because it is the first STAAR reading test students take in the state of Texas. In the following years, the scores were compared to previous grades in order to establish an individual student's growth. The survey results provided the parent's reported activities and teacher perceptions about activities done at home. Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and t tests were performed on the data.

The survey questions that were used for the statistical analysis on the parent survey were questions one, two, five, seven, and twelve (see Appendix A). Questions one, two, five, and seven had sub questions. When the questions are written they are listed as question 1-b if it is from question one which states: When your child was in first grade, how often did you or someone else in your home undertake the following? The second option for question one is tell stories. Therefore 1-b represents the question, when your child was in first grade, how often did you or someone else in your home undertake telling stories? Questions one, two, and seven had frequency scales for the answer options. The options were never or rarely, once or twice a

month, once or twice a week, and daily or almost daily. Questions 5 and 12 were yes or no responses.

The researcher examined how the data was connected to each of the hypotheses and the research questions. The first six null hypothesis related to the RQ1 and the seventh null hypothesis is connected with RQ2. The research questions mention families of students that scored mastery while the hypotheses state that there was no statistical significance between the answers of parents selected not approaching, approaching, meets, or mastery on the STAAR. In order to answer both the research question and the hypotheses separate tests needed to be run. Statistical tests were run using all of the STAAR scores to answer the hypotheses one through six. Tests using only the answers of meets and masters were run to answer the RQ1. To answer RQ2, only the surveys of those reporting mastery were used. For the seventh hypothesis all of the parent survey data was used.

The summary of the RQ1 will discuss the research question and the hypotheses that are associated with it. Each hypothesis was reported along with the statistical data that is associated with it. The RQ2 was discussed separately along with the seventh hypothesis supporting it.

Summary of Research Question 1. The RQ1 stated: what are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR? The six null hypotheses were developed to assess the correlations of at home activities on reading scores as measured by the questions on the parent survey.

The null hypotheses associated with research question 1. The null hypothesis H_{01} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade

Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities done with the students. There were three sections on the survey containing questions about activities done at home with families. When a Pearson Correlation was done with these sections of the survey, there were no activities that had a p value of less than .05. The findings were therefore not statistically significant.

The null hypothesis H_{02} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities currently being done with fourth grade students. After performing a Pearson Correlation and an ANOVA analysis, there were no activities that were statistically significant. A statistically significant p value would have been $<.05$. No conclusion can be drawn without statistically significant data.

The null hypothesis H_{03} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to parental opinions of reading. A statistically significant p value would have been $<.05$. After performing a Pearson Correlation and an ANOVA analysis, there were no activities that were statistically significant. No conclusion can be drawn without statistically significant data.

The null hypothesis H_{04} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how much time parents spend reading for personal enjoyment. After performing a Pearson Correlation and an ANOVA analysis, there were no activities that were statistically significant. A statistically significant p value would have been $<.05$. No conclusion can be drawn without statistically significant data. When the parents answered survey questions about their enjoyment of reading, 30% ($n = 3$) of

parents, reporting a score of mastery, stated they read more than 10 hours a week, 40% ($n = 4$) 6-10 hours a week, 20% ($n = 2$) 1-5 hours a week, and 10% ($n = 1$) less than one hour a week.

The null hypothesis H_{05} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to speaking to teachers about reading concerns. After performing a Pearson Correlation and an ANOVA analysis, there were no activities that were statistically significant. A statistically significant p value would have been $<.05$. No conclusion can be drawn without statistically significant data.

The null hypothesis H_{06} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how parents feel about their child's school. After performing a Pearson Correlation and an ANOVA analysis, there were no activities that were statistically significant. A statistically significant p value would have been $<.05$. No conclusion can be drawn without statistically significant data.

Masters data for research question 1. The RQ1 asked about specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. When comparing the activities reported by the families of students that scored mastery with the other STAAR scores there is no statistical difference. However, the research question simply asks what activities are common among families of students that scored mastery and the amount of time spent on those activities. Of the parents surveyed, only one parent reported their child had failed the Third Grade Reading STAAR. All groups reported participating in the activities on the survey frequently. Since the

research questions specially mentions students scoring mastery the following paragraphs are the percentages of just the findings from parents of students that scored mastery.

The first question on the survey asked parents about activities done with their child before entering first grade. There were very few of the activities on the survey not done by parents regardless of the score received on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Only one out of 36 reported never playing word games, and one out of 36 reported never reading aloud signs or labels. Two out of 36 reported never using educational apps.

Ten parents that responded to the survey selected mastery as their child's Third Grade Reading STAAR score. Nine out of ten parents with students scoring mastery reported reading every day or almost every day. Of the parents with students scoring mastery, 9/10 selected telling stories at least once a week, 5/10 reported daily or almost daily storytelling and 4/10 once or twice a week. There were 8/10 parents with students scoring mastery who reported singing songs at least once a week, 2/10 reported singing songs daily and 6/10 selected once or twice a week. Of the parents, with students scoring mastery, 100% reported talking about things they had done at least once a week, with 4/10 once or twice a week and 6/10 daily or almost daily. Parents with students scoring mastery reported 9/10 talking about books they had read at least once a week. Seven out of ten parents reported playing word games at least once a week, 2/10 reported daily or almost daily and 5/10 once or twice a week. Having students writing letters or words once a week was reported by 100% ($n = 10$) of the parents of students that scored mastery, 7/10 daily or almost daily and 3/10 once or twice a week. Eight out of ten parents of students scoring master reported reading sings or labels at least once a week, 7/10 reported daily or almost daily and 1/10 reported once or twice a week. Educational apps and educational television were not reported as being used as often as other activities.

The second question mimicked the first question but asked what families were currently doing with their fourth grader. Some of the activities were removed for age appropriateness. Reading books together remained a favorite activity with students scoring mastery with 7/10 reading daily together. Nine out of 10 parents told stories at least once a week, 5/10 daily or almost daily and 4/10 once or twice a week. Of the parents reporting a score of mastery 8/10 selected talking about things they have done on a daily or almost daily basis, 2/10 reported once or twice a week. Playing words games at least once a week was reported by 9/10 of the mastery parents.

The seventh question on the survey asked parents about activities they currently do with their child. Nine out of ten parents of students with a score of mastery on the 3rd Grade Reading STAAR reported discussing books, films, or television at least once a week. Nine out of ten parents also reported participating in discussions about how their child was doing in school at least once a week. Eating at the table together every day or almost every day was reported by 7/10 of the parents with 3/10 eating together at least once a week. Similarly, 7/10 selected they just talking every day or almost every day and 3/10 at least once a week. Library or bookstore visits were reported to occur at least once a month by 9/10 parents. The parents reported 100% ($n = 10$) talking about what a child is reading on his/her own at least once a week. Helping daily with homework was reported by 7/10 parents and at least once a week by 2/10 parents). The parents surveyed were highly involved in their child's academic interests in the first grade which was similar to the answers about activities done with fourth graders.

Summary of Research Question 2. The second research question stated: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers? One null hypothesis was developed to

assess differences between perceptions of the impact of home activities on reading scores. The data was collected from a survey completed by parents and teachers.

The null hypothesis associated with research question 2. The null hypothesis H_{07} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students. After performing a Pearson Correlation and t tests, there were several questions where the perceptions of teacher and parents were statistically significant (see Table 1).

Table 1

The Average Means of Parents and Teachers

Question #	Activity	<i>P Mean</i>	<i>T Mean</i>
1A	Read books	3.86	3.98
1B	Tell stories	3.49	3.92
1C	Sing songs	3.4	3.55
1D	Talk about things you have done	3.77	3.88
1E	Talk about things you have read	3.26	3.88
1F	Play word games	2.63	3.25
1G	Write letters or words	3.57	3.83
1H	Read aloud signs or labels	3.37	3.88
1I	Use education apps	2.34	2.52
1J	Watch education television shows	2.86	2.77
7A	Discuss political or social issues	2.63	2.65
7B	Discuss books, films, or television programs	3.09	2.23
7C	Discuss how well your child is doing in school	3.66	3.63
7D	Eat dinner with you child around a table	3.86	3.98
7E	Spend time just talking with your child	3.86	4
7F	Go to a bookstore or library with your child	2.17	2.38
7G	Talk with your child about what he/she is reading on his/her own	3.57	3.49
7H	Help you child with his/her homework	3.69	3.8

The difference in answers to Question 1-b between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .000$). It asked how often parents told stories to their child in first grade on the parent survey and how often do teachers recommend parents tell stories. Sixty percent of parents reported telling stories daily or almost daily while 92% of teachers suggested telling stories daily or almost daily. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should tell stories was statistically significant with a score of $t(64) = -3.752, p = .000$. In Figure 1, one means rarely or never, two is once or twice a month, three is once or twice a week, and four is daily or almost daily.

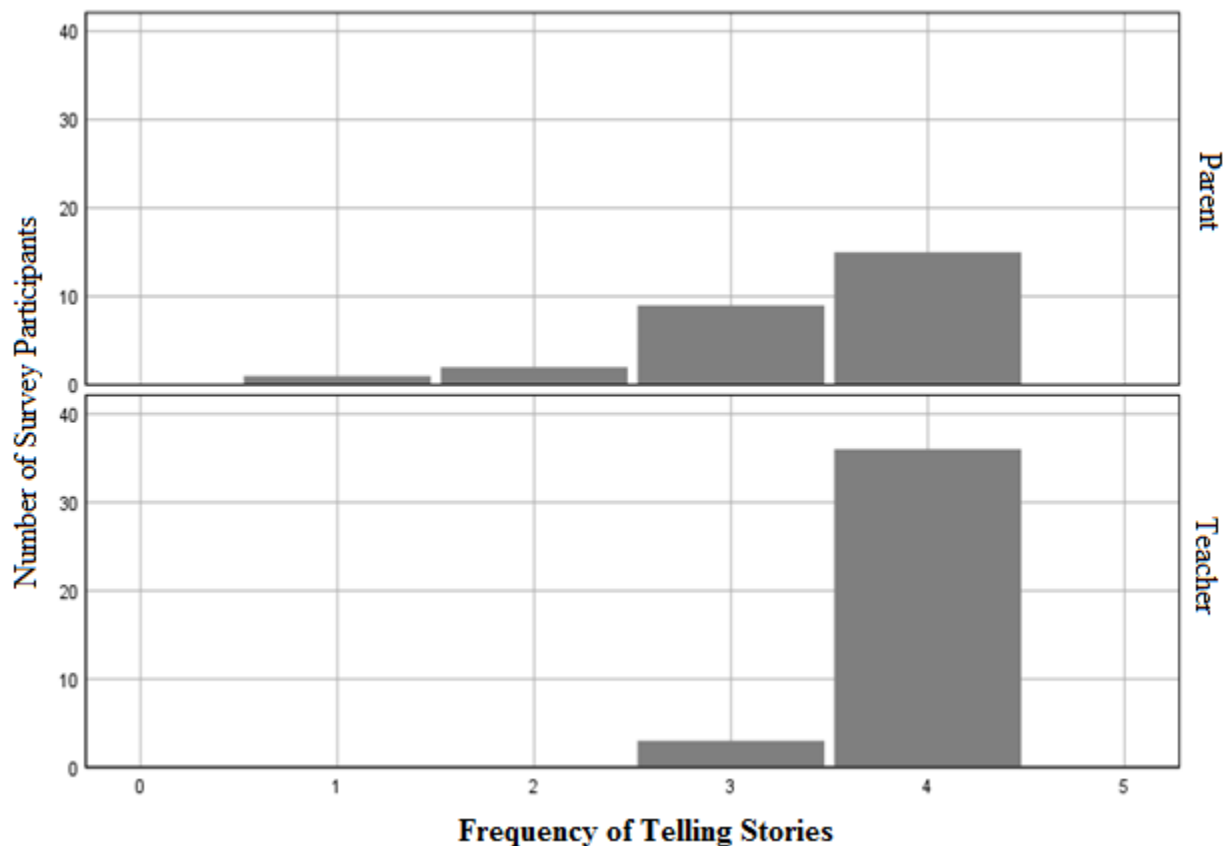


Figure 1. How often parents tell their children stories.

The difference in answers to Question 1-e between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .000$). It asked how often parents talked about what they had read with

their child in first grade on the parent survey and how often do teachers recommend parents talk about what they have read. Thirty Seven percent of parents reported talking about things they had read daily or almost daily and 89% of teachers recommend that activity daily or almost daily. To confirm statistical significance a *t* test was performed. The *t* test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should talk about books they have read was statistically significant with a score of $t(65) = -6.337, p = .000$. In Figure 2, one means rarely or never, two is once or twice a month, three is once or twice a week, and four is daily or almost daily.

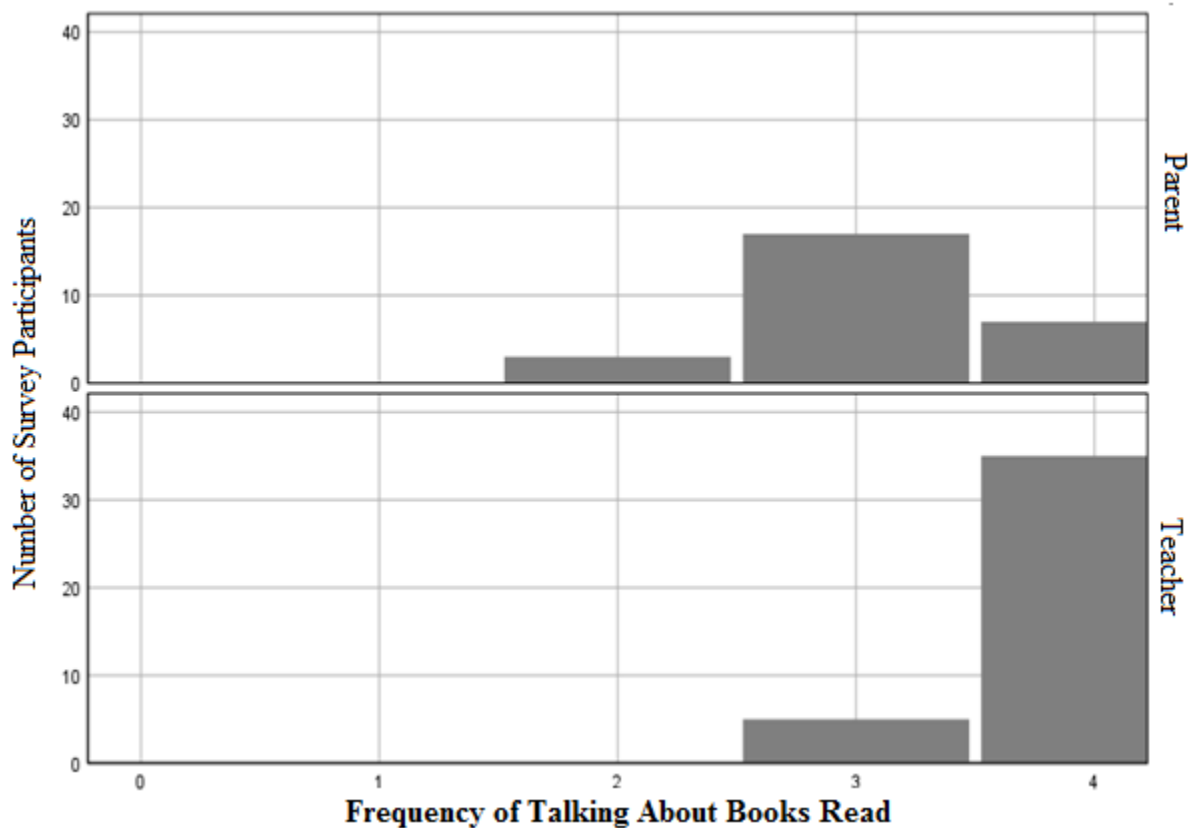


Figure 2. How often parents talk to their child about books they have read.

The difference in answers to Question 1-f between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .006$). It asked how often parents played word game with their child in first grade on the parent survey and how often do teachers recommend parents play word games. Fourteen percent of parents said they played word games daily. Thirty-eight percent of teachers

recommended playing word games daily or almost daily. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should play word games was statistically significant with a score of $t(65) = -2.863, p = .006$. In Figure 3, one means rarely or never, two is once or twice a month, three is once or twice a week, and four is daily or almost daily.

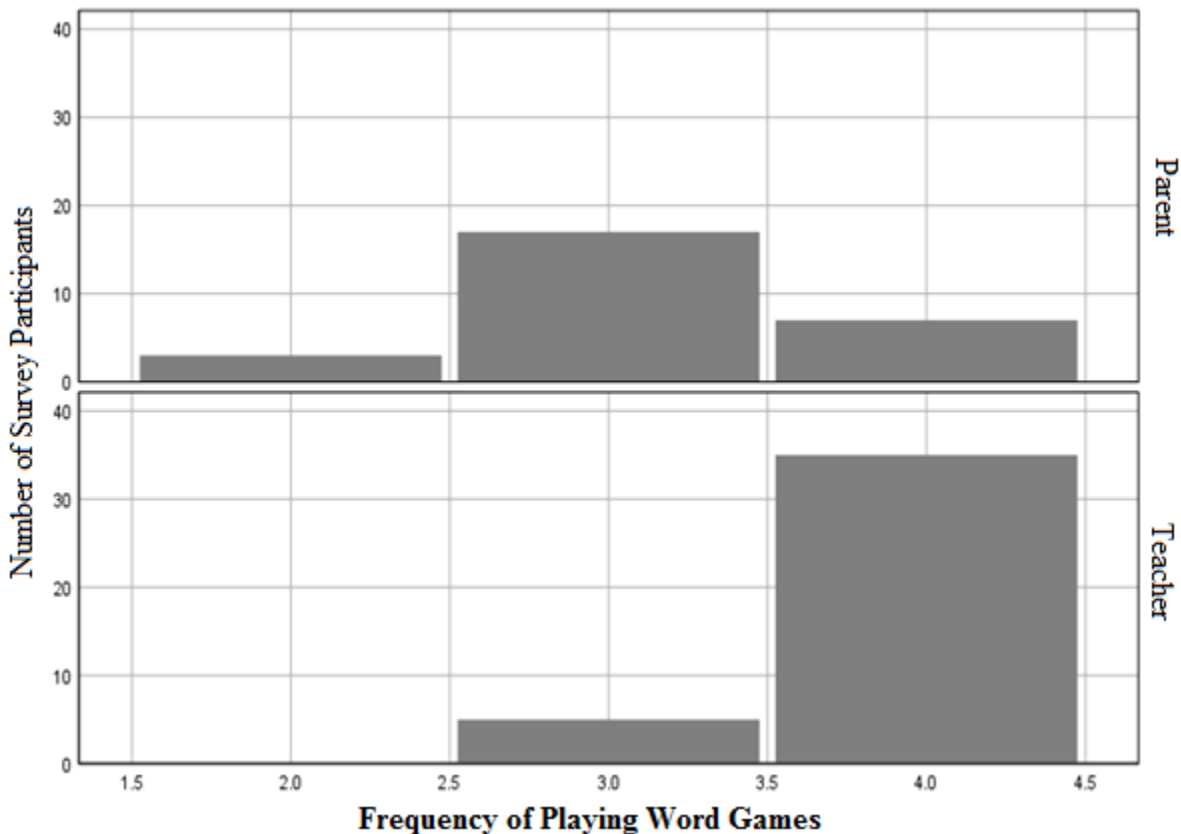


Figure 3. How often parents play word games.

The difference in answers to Question 1-h between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .003$). It asked how often parents read aloud signs or labels to their child in the first grade on the parent survey and how often do teachers recommend parents read signs or labels to their children. Sixty percent of parents said they read labels or signs aloud daily or almost daily and 88% of teachers recommended doing that task daily or almost daily. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher

responses to how often one should read signs and labels was statistically significant with a score of $t(65) = -3.034, p = .003$. In Figure 4, one means rarely or never, two is once or twice a month, three is once or twice a week, and four is daily or almost daily.

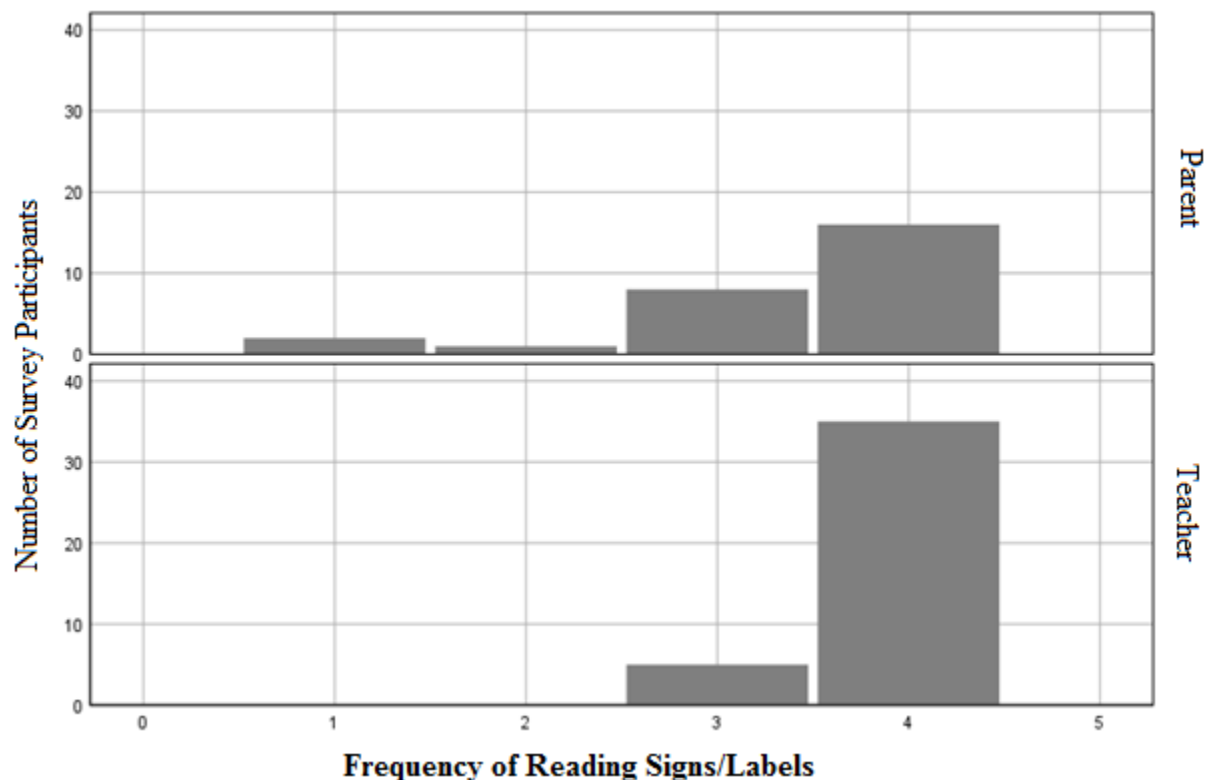


Figure 4. How often parents read signs/labels.

The difference in answers to Question 5-b between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .05$). This question was asking if the child had magazines or journal subscriptions on the parent survey and if teachers recommended a magazine or journal subscription. Fifty-four percent of parents reported yes to having a subscription to a journal or magazine and 73% of teacher recommend it. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to asking if students should have a

magazine or journal subscription was statistically significant with a score of $+ (65) = -2.055, p = .044$. In Figure 5, one means yes and two means no.

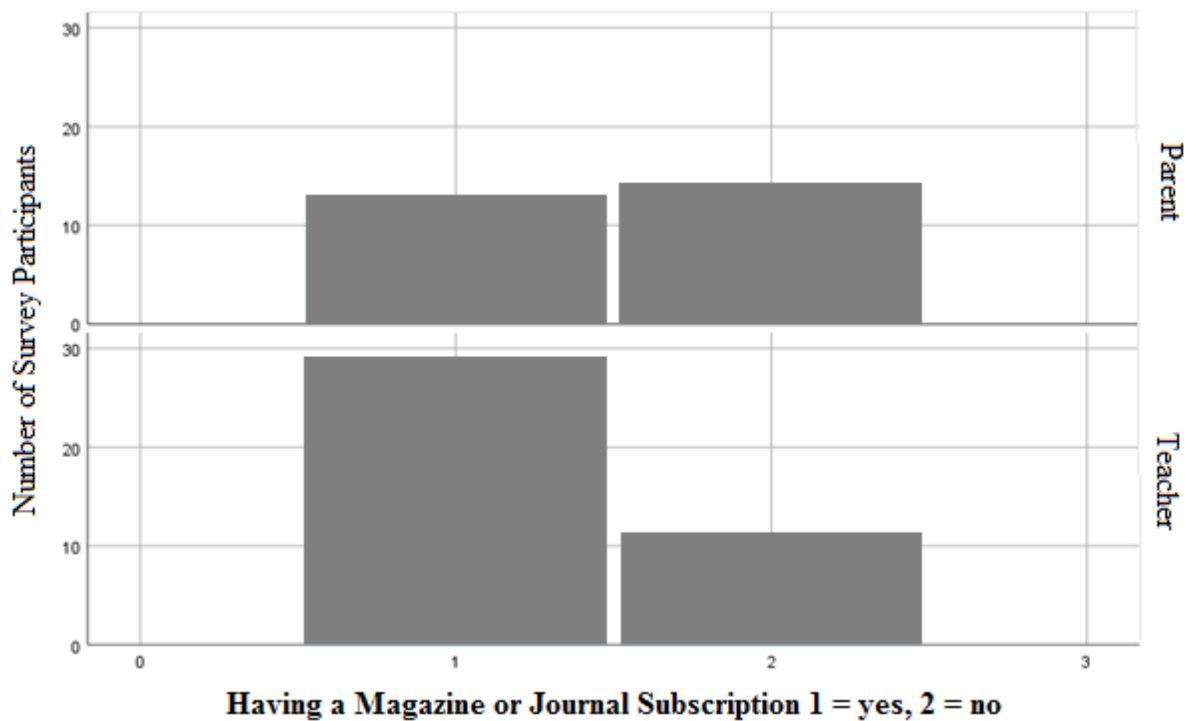


Figure 5. Students having a magazine or journal subscription.

The difference in answers to Question 5-d between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .000$). The question asked parents if they had an internet connection and asked teachers if a child needs an internet connection at home. Eighty-nine percent of parents answered yes to having an internet connection and only 65% of teachers recommended an internet connection. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should talk about books they have read was not statistically significant.

The difference in answers to Question 5-e between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .05$). This question asked parents if their child had access to an e-reader or tablet and asked teachers if a child should have access to an e-reader or tablet. Sixty-three percent of parents answered yes to having an e-reader or tablet and only 38% of teacher recommended a tablet or e-reader. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses about having an e-reader or tablet at home was statistically significant with a score of $t(65) = -2.082, p = .041$. In Figure 6, one means yes and two means no.

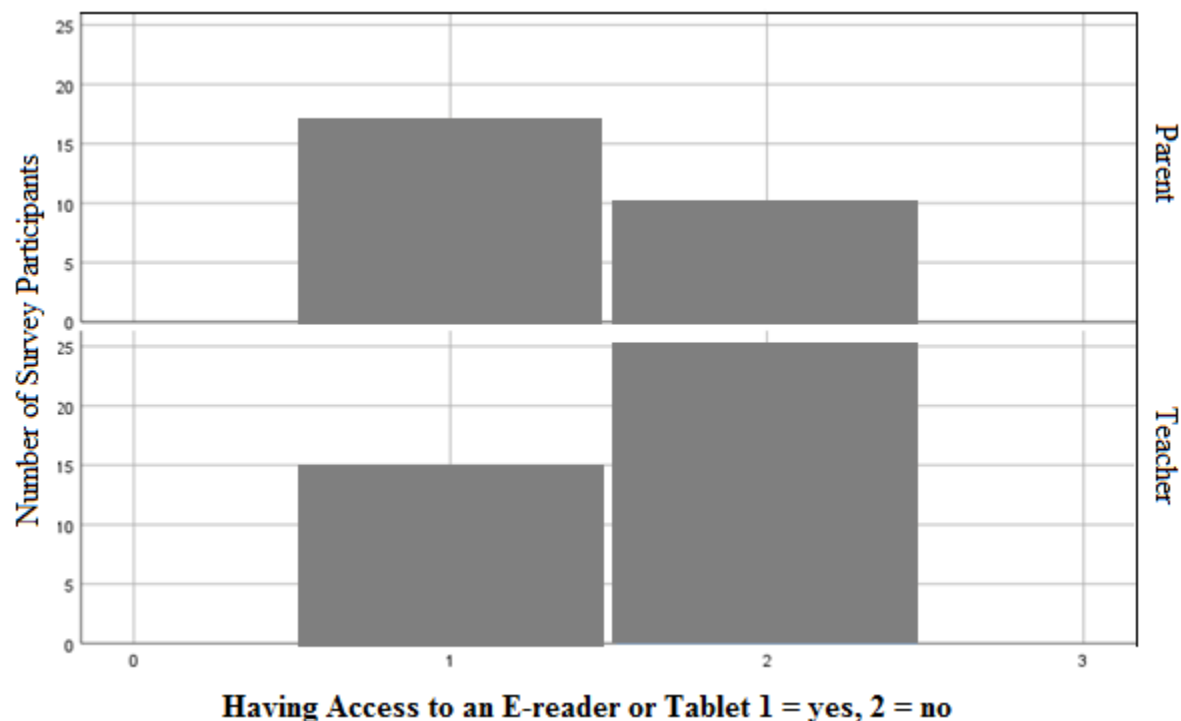


Figure 6. Students having an e-reader or tablet.

The difference in answers to Question 1-b between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .004$). This question asked how often do you or someone else in your home spends time just talking with your child on the parent survey. Eighty-six percent of parents reported just talking to your child daily or almost daily. One hundred percent of teachers

recommended just talking to your child daily or almost daily. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should someone just talk with the child was statistically significant with a score of $+ (65) = -2.970$, $p = .004$. In Figure 7, one means rarely or never, two is once or twice a month, 3 is once or twice a week, and 4 is daily or almost daily.

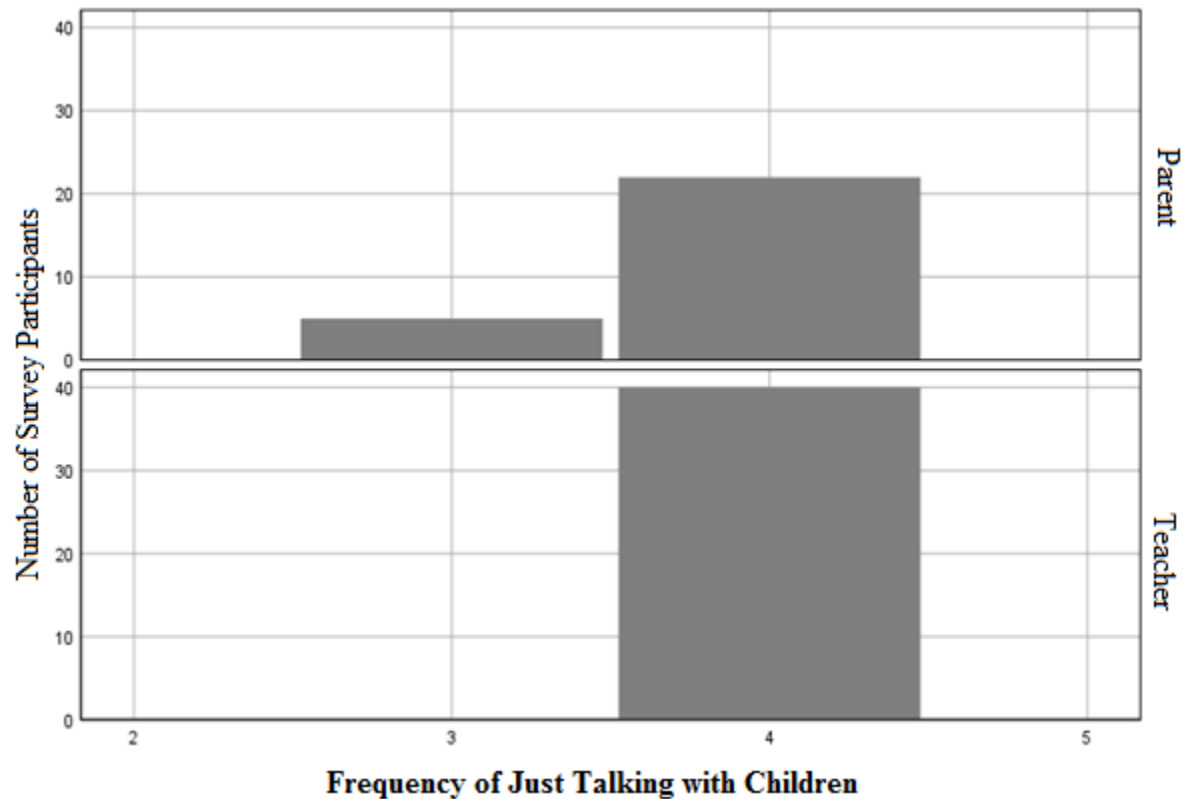


Figure 7. Time spent just talking with fourth grade student.

The difference in answers to Question 7 between parents and teachers had a statistically significant response ($p = .05$). This question asked about how often you or someone else in your home goes to a bookstore or library with the child and the teacher surveys asked how often teachers suggested parents take a child to the library or bookstore. Three percent of parents reported going to the library daily or almost daily, 23% reported once or twice a week, and 63% reported going once or twice a month. Five percent of teachers recommended going to the library or bookstore daily or almost daily, 28% recommended once or twice a week, and 68%

recommended going once or twice a month. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The t test comparing parent and teacher responses to how often one should take their child to the library was not statistically significant.

Question 12 had a statistically significant response ($p = .000$). Questions 12 asked parents if any of your child's teachers shared strategies for you try at home to increase their reading skills and it asked teachers if he or she shared strategies for parents to try at home to increase a student's reading skills. Eighty-three percent of parents said no that teachers had not shared strategies and 85% of teachers said yes, they had shared strategies with parents. There is sufficient evidence to reject the seventh null hypothesis stating no statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students. To confirm statistical significance a t test was performed. The results of the t test from the responses of the parents and teachers about sharing literacy strategies was statistically significant with a score of $+(65) = 6.502$, $p = .000$. In Figure 8, one means yes and two means no.

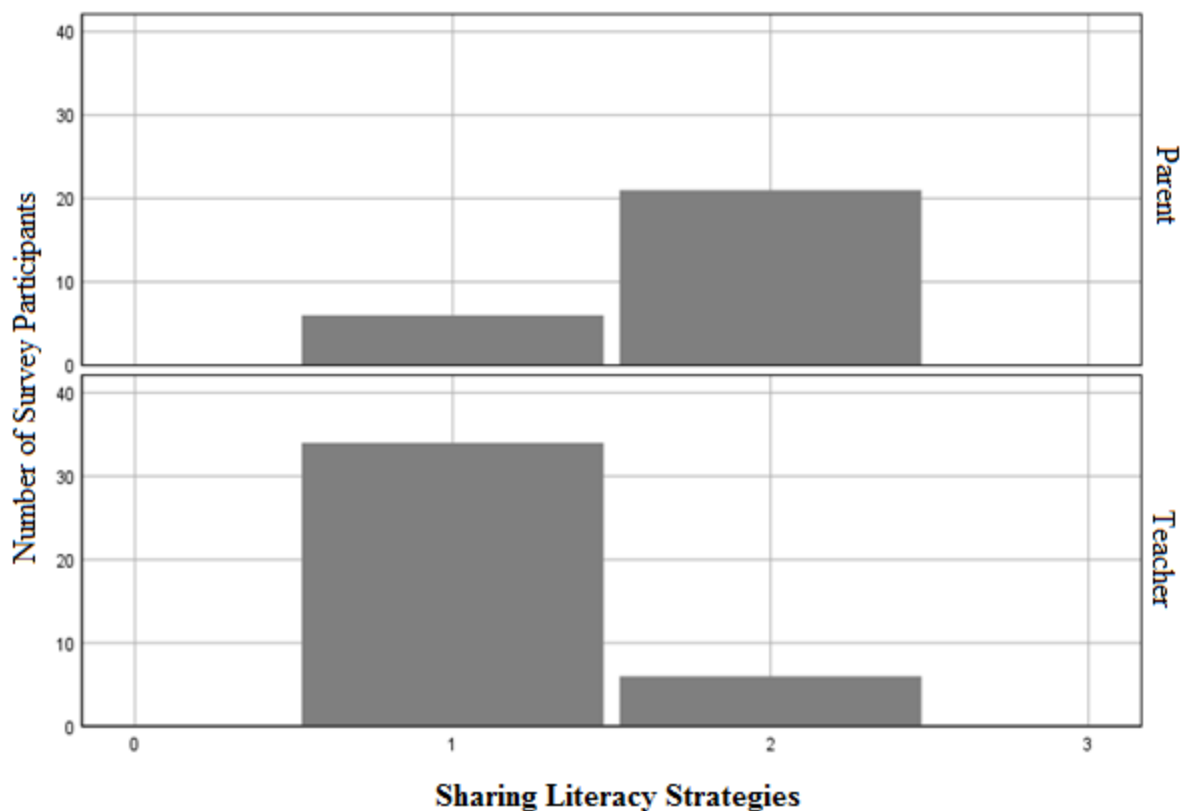


Figure 8. Teachers sharing literacy strategies with parents.

Based on the results of the statistical tests the null hypothesis H_{07} stating no statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth-grade students can be rejected. There was a statistical significance on questions one, five, seven, and 12 after a Pearson correlation test was done. In many cases the teacher recommended doing activities more often than parents reported participating in them.

Detailed Analysis

The data was interpreted based on the research questions. The research questions were:

RQ1: What are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among families of students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

The results of the study indicated that there was not a clear difference in what parents of students that achieved a score of mastery on the reading STAAR did at home with students compared to the answers of the parents reporting other scores. The parents who took part in the survey were very active with their child before entering first grade and currently as parents of fourth grade students. The activities listed in the survey were all activities recommended by other reading research that had been done in the past as used by the 2009 PISA Reading survey. All of the parents used these activities at home to different degrees, but their children had different scores on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The vast majority of parents who took the survey were parents of children who had passed the Third Grade Reading STAAR ($n = 26$).

The one parent reporting a score of not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR reported a personal love for reading involving over 10 hours a week of reading for personal enjoyment. Miller (2009) wrote that a parent enjoyment of reading will often result in the enjoyment of reading for the child. There were no questions on the survey asking why the child did not pass the exam or if the parent knew why the child struggled with reading. The answers of this parent seem to show a significant involvement with their child and an attempt to instill a love of reading.

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{01} . The first null hypothesis stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored master, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the home activities done with

students. There were no activities that were common among high achieving readers that were not also common among the lower STAAR scores.

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{02} . H_{02} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to the at home activities currently being done with fourth grade students. This part of the survey had two sections of questions about activities currently being done with the fourth grade students. The first section mimicked the questions asked about activities done prior to entering first grade and the second section asked about more age-appropriate questions. The parent with the student scoring not approaching was just as active with their child in these areas as the parents of children with passing scores.

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{03} . It stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to parental opinions of reading. The parents that took the survey reported high opinions of personal reading with the majority finding personal reading to be beneficial ($n = 33$).

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{04} . It stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how much time parents spend reading for personal enjoyment. The parent responses did not show a correlation between personal time spent reading

and STAAR scores. The parent that selected not approaching as their child's STAAR score reported spending ten plus hours a week on personal reading.

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{05} . It stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to speaking to teachers about reading concerns. Few of the parents surveyed reported speaking to the teacher about concerns ($n = 2$). One of the parents had a child scoring approaching, and the other scored meets.

No conclusion could be drawn without statistically significant data on the null hypothesis H_{06} . It stated no statistically significant difference is present in the responses of the families of fourth grade students who scored mastery, meets, approaching, or not approaching on the Third Grade Reading STAAR in regard to how parents feel about their child's school. All of the parents agreed with the positive statements about the school their child attended. Most selected strongly agreeing with statements about the school with the group of parents of children scoring approaching selecting agreeing with most statements. The parents of students scoring approaching did answer more critically about the schools providing regular and useful information on their child's progress.

The null hypothesis H_{07} stated no statistically significant difference is present in the perceptions of the elementary school teachers compared to the parents of the fourth grade students. Teachers reported that less time should be spent on telling stories, talking to their child about what they have read, and playing word games than parents reported participating in those activities. Teachers placed a high importance on having access to magazine or journal subscriptions while parents placed a higher importance on having an internet connection and an e-

tablet or reader. Teachers recommended going to the library or a bookstore more frequently than parents reported doing those activities. The most significant difference in parent and teacher responses was on question 12 which asked parents if their teacher had ever shared reading strategies with them and the teacher survey asked if the teacher had ever shared reading strategies with the parents. The teacher survey reported 85% ($n = 34$) of teachers saying “yes” to the question about sharing reading strategies and 85% ($n = 29$) of parents reporting “no” to the question asking if teachers had shared reading strategies with them.

Comparison to Original PISA Survey

The results from the original PISA survey showed that parents who read with their child in the first year of primary school had significantly higher scores on the 2009 Reading PISA (OECD, 2011). The results from the survey at the classical school had all parents reporting reading books often with their child before entering first grade. Few parents of students that scored poorly on the STAAR took the survey. If there was a larger sample of families with lower scores on the STAAR it would have been easier to see if the data would have matched up with original PISA results. The OECD also found that strong family involvement results in higher PISA test scores. The survey data from the classical school was collected from highly involved families that had student scoring in all possible ranges on the STAAR test. The survey given to the classical school parents did not ask if the child had special needs or disabilities that could affect test scores.

The OECD found that parents who reported reading to their child daily or almost daily in the early years of their child’s life had children that performed markedly better than parents who selected never or once or twice a month (OECD, 2011). The data collected from the classical school had 90% ($n = 9$) of parents who selected their child scored mastery marking they read

daily or almost daily to their child before entering first grade. The one survey response that selected not approaching (failing) on the Third Grade Reading STAAR marked they read to their child once or twice a month.

Activities that involved talking with or reading to the child had more of a statistical significance in the original PISA survey over activities such as playing word games or with alphabet toys (OECD, 2011). Twenty percent ($n = 2$) of the classical school parents with a student that scored mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR selected they play word games daily, 60% ($n = 6$) reported talking with the child daily, and 50% ($n = 5$) selected telling stories daily. Seventy percent ($n = 7$) of parents of a child with a score of mastery reported practicing writing words and letters daily or almost daily before entering first grade.

The OECD (2011) claimed that parents who read to their child at an early age helped their child develop a greater enjoyment of reading. It was unclear how they came to this conclusion since the survey was given to parents and not to the students. It is possible that the PISA exam had survey questions for students. The survey data collected from the classical school did not involve asking students questions. Therefore, no data was collected about student opinions about reading. Miller (2009) and Willingham (2018) both discuss reading to children at a young age to create a home climate that enjoys reading. The OECD survey found students with parents that read at home for enjoyment had higher reading scores.

The PISA survey found communication to be a key to high reading scores (OECD, 2011). In the OECD article titled, What Can Parents do to Help Their Children Succeed in School? Pisa in Focus, the OECD suggested having dinner together as it is a natural place for conversations to occur (OECD, 2011). In the survey with the classical school 70% ($n = 7$) of the parents reporting mastery selected eating a meal together at a table daily or almost daily and 30% ($n = 3$) selecting

once or twice a week. The PISA survey found that simply talking with a 15-year-old was more beneficial than taking them to the library or bookstore (OECD, 2011). The classical school survey had parents reporting high participation in talking with their children and taking children to the library and bookstores. The time between visits to the library varied. The PISA survey found parents that discussed political and social events had 15-year-olds with higher test scores (OECD, 2011). The classical school survey was given to parents of fourth graders had 60% ($n = 6$) of parents that reported discussing politics once or twice a week, 20% ($n = 2$) once or twice a month, and 20% ($n = 2$) reported hardly or never.

PISA found a possible correlation between higher reading enjoyment and parents asking about what the child was reading (OECD, 2012). The classical survey found 40% ($n = 4$) of the parents of students with a score of mastery selected talking daily or almost daily about what their student was reading and 60% ($n = 6$) selected once or twice a week. The PISA survey found that parents who reported enjoying reading and having reading as a hobby had children with significantly higher test scores (OECD, 2012). All of the parents reported spending some time reading for pleasure. Interestingly, the parent that reported their child as failing the Third Grade Reading STAAR reflected they read more than ten hours a week.

Chapter 4 Summary

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative research was to discover if there were any connections to the activities done at home with children and their reading levels. The study involved two surveys given to two different populations. The first population was parents of fourth grade students at two classical charter schools in Texas. The second population was teachers of elementary students at three classical charter schools in Texas. The surveys used for the study were based on a survey used by OECD in 2009 after a PISA reading examination was

given. The survey asked questions about the frequency different activities were done at varying ages to parents and asked teachers how often they suggested those activities be done. The survey also asked parents about personal opinions of reading and time spent reading leisurely. The results of the survey were examined with numerical summaries. Pearson Correlation tests were run with all activities on the parent survey. ANOVA tests were performed on statistically significant activities. Pearson Correlation tests were also run with the parent and teacher data from the surveys. A one-tailed t test was conducted to compare the results of the parent and teacher data further. The responses from the survey and the statistical tests were done to test the two research questions and the seven null hypotheses. The results of the survey showed that talking with children about books read may have an impact on reading level. The survey also revealed that teachers and parents may have different perceptions on what activities, and the frequency they are employed, should be done at home.

Chapter 4 discussed the data collection and data analysis process used for this study. The researcher did not find many conclusions that could be made about the first research question. The researcher concluded from the analysis that parent and teacher perceptions are varied when it comes to the activities and their frequency that can aid in reading skills. Chapter 5 will provide a look at how the research relates to previous research along with a summary of findings for the study and implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This study looked at the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding home activities that lead to strong reading skills. This chapter is divided into eight parts: introduction, summary of results, discussion of results, discussion of results in relation to the literature, limitations, implications of the results for practice, recommendations for further study, and conclusion. This investigation was supported by the desire of the researcher to find reading strategies to recommend to parents of struggling readers.

Many studies discussed the difficulty of students being able to catch up on reading skills after the third grade (Allington, 2012; Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2011; King, 2015; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Other studies discussed how parent involvement can increase a child's reading skills (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; OECD, 2011; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Williams, 2012). The researcher wanted to discover if there were certain amounts of time that activities needed to be performed. Knowing what activities can have an impact on reading skills and how often those activities should be done might assist parents of struggling readers. This information could also be helpful to teachers who are not sure what to recommend to parents of struggling readers.

The researcher also wanted to know if teachers were aware of the activities parents participated in at home that had an impact on reading skills. The first research question that guided the study was:

RQ1: What are specific activities and the amount of time spent on those activities that are common among students who received a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR?

The first research question was created to discover what activities were done at home with students that scored above grade level on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. The hypothesis that went along with RQ1 was meant to look at activities done at home and the time spent on the activities in correlation to their STAAR scores. The STAAR scores were analyzed to see if there was a correlation between certain activities and STAAR scores. The results of the test showed no statistical significance. The second research question that guided the study was:

RQ2: What strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers?

The second research question had one null hypothesis associated with it. The researcher wanted to know if teachers recommended the same activities and frequencies as parents of high achieving readers. The survey results reported many questions having statistically different responses between parents and teachers.

A survey was utilized to answer the research questions. The survey was based on a PISA survey given in 2009 after the PISA reading examination (OECD, 2011). The survey was an online survey operated through Qualtrics. The survey was completed by parents of fourth grade students at two classical charter schools in Texas and elementary school teachers at three classical charter schools in Texas. The results of the study showed there was no statistical difference in the activities done in first grade or currently done at home with fourth grade students scoring not approaching, approaching, meets, or masters on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. When comparing the parent and teacher surveys, several survey responses showed a statistical significance.

Summary of the Results

A survey given to parents was utilized to discover at home activities done with fourth grade students currently and when in first grade. The survey asked parents to report the child's score on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. A second survey was given to elementary teachers with similar questions. The purpose of giving the teachers a survey with similar questions to the parents was to discover if teacher recommendations would match up with the activities done by parents of students that scored mastery.

The study was intended to discover if there were any at home activities that were correlated with a score of mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. If there were activities done at home that were linked to high reading scores, those activities could be shared with teachers and parents of struggling readers. Third grade is the first year that students are given a state standardized reading test in Texas. Research shows that it is difficult for a reader to catch up if they struggle with reading in the third grade (Allington, 2012; Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2011; King, 2015; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010).

Pearson Correlation tests were performed using the surveys of parents that provided an answer of not approaching, approaching, meets, or mastery to the question what score did your child receive on the Third Grade Reading STAAR? The scores were the independent variable with the activities being the dependent variables. In addition to information about activities done at home, the survey collected information about education level, ethnicity, and opinions on the schools. When asked about parent education level, 3% had had a high school diploma, 11% had

some college, 3% had an associate degree, 54% had a bachelor's degree, and 29% had a master's degree. Seventy-four percent of the parent respondents were white, 20% Asian, and 6% other.

A second facet of the study was to discover if teachers were aware of what parents of students scoring mastery did at home. If teachers are not aware of what types of activities to suggest they were less likely to help struggling readers. Teachers were given a survey similar to the parents asking how often they recommended certain activities be done. The researcher compared the results of the teacher survey to the parent survey.

Summary of Analysis. Pearson Correlations were run using all of the STAAR scores of not approaching, approaching, meets, and masters to the activities mentioned in questions one, two, and seven of the parent surveys. Additionally, Pearson Correlations were run on only the scores of Meet and Mastery. The Pearson analysis of all scores on the Third Grade Reading STAAR showed no statistical significance. The Pearson Correlation test between meets and masters had a statistical significance on questions 7-d eating meals with family (p value = 0.028). One hundred percent of families that reported meets as a STAAR score selected eating together daily or almost daily. Seventy percent of parents reporting a score of mastery selected eating together daily or almost daily.

When analyzing the data of the parents and the teachers, Pearson Correlations were done along with t tests. There was a statistically significant difference when comparing all the parent answers to all the teacher answers in questions 1-b, 1-e, 1-f, 1-h, 5-b, 5-d, 5-e, 7-e, 7-f, and 12. The null hypothesis stating there would be no statistically significant difference between parents and teachers was rejected.

Question 1-b asked how often parents told stories to their child in first grade (p value = .000). The teachers reported a mean of 3.92 with a standard deviation of 0.27. The parents

reported a mean of 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.73. A mean of three equates to once or twice a week and four daily or almost daily.

Question 1-e asked how frequently parents talked with their children about books they had read when their child was in first grade (p value = .000). The teachers reported a mean of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.33. The parents reported a mean of 3.26 with a standard deviation of 0.65. A mean of three equates to once or twice a week and four to daily or almost daily.

Question 1-f asked how often parents played word games in first grade (p value = .006). The teachers reported a mean of 3.25 with a standard deviation of 0.70. The parents reported a mean of 2.63 with a standard deviation of 0.9. A mean of two equates to once or twice a month, three to once or twice a week, and four to daily or almost daily.

Question 1-h asked how often parents read signs or labels aloud (p value = .003). The teachers reported a mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.33. The parents reported a mean of 3.37 with a standard deviation of 0.93. A mean of three equates to once or twice a week and four to daily or almost daily.

Question 5-b was a yes or no question asking if a child had a magazine or journal subscription for the parent survey and if teachers recommended a magazine or journal subscription (p value = <.05). The teachers reported a mean of 1.27 with a standard deviation of 0.45. The parents reported a mean of 1.46 with a standard deviation of 0.50. One equates to yes and two to no.

Question 5-d asked about a child needing an internet connection (p value = .000). The teachers reported a mean of 1.35 with a standard deviation of 0.48. The parents reported a mean of 1.11 with a standard deviation of 0.32. One equates to yes and two to no.

Question 5-e asked yes or no question about access to an e-reader or tablet (p value = .05). The teachers reported a mean of 1.63 with a standard deviation of 0.48. The parents reported a mean of 1.37 with a standard deviation of 0.48. One equates to yes and two to no.

Question 7-e was about how often someone in the house spent time just talking to the child (p value = .004). The teachers reported a mean of four with a standard deviation of zero. The parents reported a mean of 3.86 with a standard deviation of 0.35. A mean of three equates to once or twice a week and four to daily or almost daily.

Question 7-f asked how often someone in the house should take the child to the library or bookstore (p value = .000). The teachers reported a mean of 2.38 with a standard deviation of 0.58. The parents reported a mean of 2.17 with a standard deviation of 0.65. A mean of two equates to once or twice a month and three to once or twice a week.

Question 12 asked parents a yes or no question about whether any of their teachers had shared reading strategies with them 83% of parents said no. The teachers were asked a yes or no question asking if they share reading strategies with their parents 85% said yes (p value = .000).

Discussion of the Results

Based on the results of the survey, the parents that volunteered to take the survey were involved in their child's education. The parents reported doing many of the activities suggested by the reading research. Even with the involvement rate of the parents, there was still one parent that reported a failure score on the Third Grade Reading STAAR and two that reported a score of approaching. There was nothing statistically significant between the STAAR scores and the activities done by parents at home.

The parent and teacher surveys showed a statistically significant difference in perceptions on many questions. The question that had the most notable difference was question 12. The

majority of parents reported that their child's teacher had not shared reading strategies. While a majority of teachers said, they had shared reading strategies with the parents of their students. The teachers suggested more time be spent on activities than the parents reported on most of the activities. Parents valued having an internet connection and an e-reader or tablet more than the teachers.

The schools used for the research were classical charter schools. They are schools of choice. A parent that chooses a charter school may be more interested or concerned with their child's education. That may be why the parents that participated in the survey reported being active in educational activities with their child at home.

The teachers reported that almost all of the activities on the survey should be done and frequently. It may be that when the teachers saw the activity on the survey they thought it could be helpful for building reading skills. That does not mean the teacher had or would have recommended that activity. The activities on the survey involved words, reading, and talking with children and they were all activities mentioned in reading research.

Not all of the schools ended up participating in the research. One of the schools that chose not to participate was afraid parents would think they should do more STAAR preparation at home. This school did not ask many questions about the research or they would have discovered that would be an unlikely outcome of the survey. Parents may have felt compelled to try new activities at home with their child, but there was only one question about STAAR on the survey.

The other school had teacher participation but had no parent participation. Teachers at this school have explained how difficult it is to get parents involved. The demographics of the school are high poverty and there is also a language barrier in some cases since there is a high

population of English as Second Language learners. The emails that were sent out to parents at this school was not translated into Spanish. The survey was translated into Spanish, but if they could not read the email they would not know that.

Discussion of Results in Relation to Literature Review

The survey used in the current study was modified from a survey used in 2009 by PISA (OECD, 2011). The purpose of the survey was to determine what families do at home that might have an impact on their reading skills. Allington (2012), Miller (2009), and Willingham (2016) discussed the importance of having students read often and reading to them. The parents and teachers showed through their survey responses that reading should be a daily or an almost daily activity. Rasinski, Padak, Newton, and Newton (2011) reported the importance of having an extensive vocabulary which may be obtained through reading and talking with adults. The survey results reported that parents of students with a score of mastery participated in reading, talking, play word games, discussing television and books, and frequently eating together.

Fiester (2010) wrote about how parents and primary caregivers are a child's first teacher, and they should read and talk to their children. Both parents and teacher survey responses showed support for reading to children and talking with them. Miller (2009) wrote that master readers often develop the habit of reading from a parent that enjoys reading. Miller also discussed a need for children to feel comfortable in a bookstore or the library. Ninety percent ($n = 9$) of parents reporting children that scored mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR agreed with the statement reading is one of my favorite hobbies and 100% ($n = 10$) agreed they enjoyed going to the library or bookstore. Williams (2012) found that parent involvement in teaching their children to read or reading with their children had significant gains and encouraged a love for reading.

Hernandez (2011) and Ziolkowka (2007) discussed the importance of reading interventions before third grade. The parents of the fourth grade students had reported not receiving advice from teachers during this critical period. The teachers selected activities on the survey that are supported by the reading research. Teachers believed they were sharing these strategies, but the surveyed parents reported not receiving strategies from teachers.

The PISA survey discovered reading to children significantly impacted reading scores (OECD, 2011). The OECD found talking with children, asking about their day, and eating dinner around the table together was connected to high reading scores. The mean score of parents reporting mastery was 3.8 for reading to children. The mean score of parents reporting mastery for talking with their children was 3.7. A mean score of three represents once or twice a week and four represents daily or almost daily. One hundred percent of parents reporting their child scored meets (grade level) on the Third Grade Reading STAAR said they eat around a table daily or almost daily. Seventy percent of parents reporting their child scored mastery on the Third Grade Reading STAAR said they eat around a table daily or almost daily.

Kesoglou (2016) found the parents in his study knew it was important to read to children. Parents were not as confident in what to do if their children were struggling with reading. The majority of the parents involved in this study read to their child daily or almost daily when their child was in the first grade. Only 9% ($n = 3$) of parents in the current study reported contacting their teachers about reading strategies.

Nebrig (2008) found parents and teachers had significantly different ideas about what was important for literacy. This study showed that parents and teachers had statistically different answers to how often activities that may influence literacy should be done. Nebrig (2008) also

found teachers and parents disagreed about education television, but the current study had parents and teachers agreeing to limit education television.

Semingson (2008) found parents reluctant to talk to teachers about reading struggles for fear of backlash against their student. The parents from this study reported not contacting teachers but for other reasons. The parents in this study were given the choices of: I did not want to bother the teacher, I have never thought about it, the teacher did not seem knowledgeable, I have thought about asking the teacher but have not had time to ask, other, or I answered yes to asking the teacher about literacy. In this study, 44% ($n = 15$) of parents said they had never thought about asking the teacher, 41% ($n = 14$) selected other, and 9% ($n = 3$) said they had thought about it but forgot to ask.

Rose and Atkins (2007) found that parents were interested in learning about opportunities that would assist their children. This may mean that parents would appreciate more communication about how to improve literacy. The present study reported parent not receiving literacy strategies from teachers. When parents help their child reading scores improve (Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2015; King, 2015; Torgesen, 2004; Ziolkowka, 2007).

PISA Results Comparison.

The PISA survey found that most parents did not enjoy reading as a hobby but having parents that enjoyed reading had a significant impact on reading skills (OECD, 2011). The OECD (2011) suggested parents read in front of their children even if they did not enjoy it. They suggested this because having a reading parent had such an impact on the perceptions of the child about reading (OECD, 2011). Of the classical school parents that selected mastery 30% ($n = 3$) reported reading ten hours or more a week, 40% ($n = 4$) six to 10 hours, 20% two to five

hours, and 10% ($n = 1$) reading one hour a week. The OECD gave the survey and the PISA examination. The OECD had access to all the PISA test data. They were able to use more specific data to determine how parental interactions could affect certain reading skills. On the survey used in the classical school research only the actual test label of mastery, meets, approaching, and not approaching were collected. It may have been more informational to have collected the numerical score given to the students on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. Having numerical scores may have made it possible to find trends.

The PISA survey collected the parents' opinions about the school their child attended. The researcher decided to leave those questions on the survey. After the survey was given, the questions about how parents felt about the school did not give much valuable information about how parents impact reading skills. It may have been best to eliminate those questions. It would have been better to ask parents about their knowledge or classical reading education. That would have added to the research on classical education that is seriously lacking. The teacher survey could have been similarly modified. The teacher survey could have been changed to ask which classical methods they believed were attributed to better reading skills.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. The study only included elementary school teachers at three classical charter schools in Texas. Teachers from different backgrounds may have had different opinions about what types of activities were helpful for struggling readers.

If there were more schools in more area it may have been possible to have more diversified data. The schools that had parent participation were high income areas. The schools have higher than average STAAR scores. It may have been informative to have parents from a variety of incomes and STAAR scores.

The parents participating in the survey were from two classical charter schools in Texas. Parents with children attending public schools, private schools, or different charter schools may have had different activities they participated in. Having a more diverse pool of parents may have helped to see if the data had any statistical significance.

Originally four schools were expected to participate. Three of the schools' teachers participated, but only two schools had parent participation. The demographics of the school that did not participate and the school with no parent participation were significantly different from the schools that did participate. The two schools that participated had similar demographics. The two schools that did not submit survey data were from areas with a more diverse population. Having a more diverse population take the survey would potentially have more interesting findings.

The time of the year the survey was conducted in was a couple weeks before Thanksgiving Break. The researcher decided that people would be less likely to complete the survey during the busy holiday season. That made it to where the researcher decided not to pursue other means to attempt to get survey results from the third school. If the researcher had been able to get some parents from the third school to take the survey that would have contributed to the data. The third school had significantly lower STAAR scores. Having more parents of students that failed the STAAR would have assisted in finding if certain activities were statistically significant.

The survey was open two weeks for the parents and two weeks for the teachers. Both parents and teachers received email notices about the survey two weeks before the survey. An additional email was sent out one week prior to the survey. A final survey was sent at the start of the survey with a click to consent form.

The school that had zero parent participation has a high population of Spanish speaking students. The survey was written in Spanish in addition to English. The emails, however, were not written in Spanish and did not mention the survey having a Spanish version. It was not until after the emails had been sent and the survey started that it was realized the emails should have had a Spanish translation.

The emails were sent from the researchers to the headmasters. The headmasters distributed the emails to the parents and teachers. The researcher did not have access to the parents or teacher emails at two of the three schools. This made it where the researcher could not contact the parents in order to try to get a higher participation. The emails were sent to 264 parents of fourth grade students. Thirty-six of those parents completed the survey, or approximately 13% of the parent survey population. If the researcher had access to the emails, it is possible that reminder emails could have been sent and a rate of participation achieved.

The teacher survey was sent to all the elementary teachers at the three schools. Seventy-two teachers received emails about the project with 43 taking the survey. Approximately 60% of the teachers completed the survey. The results of the survey were limited to the population that completed the survey.

The survey was conducted online, and the surveyor's information was kept anonymous. If the survey had been done on paper with students bringing in the completed survey, there might have been more parent results. Additionally, an award for bringing back a survey may have yielded more parent participation. The survey results seemed to indicate the population completing the survey were more involved and reported higher scores on the STAAR. Perhaps wording in the emails explaining the survey accidentally dissuaded parents of struggling readers.

The teacher survey may have had more participation if they had understood more about the project. One school had 100% of its teachers complete the survey. Their headmaster had requested they do the survey and he is well respected. If the leadership at the other schools had expressed support for the survey that may have resulted in higher participation.

The survey was given to parents and teachers from classical charter schools. This may have led them to give different responses than other teachers or parents in the area would have given. The income level at the two schools with parent participation is significantly higher than average incomes. The teachers chosen to work at the classical schools have a shared similar background and belief system.

The survey for the teachers had eight questions. The survey had a combination of frequency scales, yes or no, and Likert scale multiple choice response options. There were no fill in the blank questions or the ability to explain an answer. The parent survey had 15 questions but was similar to the format of the teacher survey. Parents may have felt compelled to answer the questions with what they thought they should have done rather than what they actually did.

It may have been more revealing to ask teachers to list what they would suggest to parents of struggling readers with no multiple choice. That would have made the results more accurate because they would only list what they believed were good for literacy. The way the survey was laid out all the activities could have a positive impact on literacy skills. The teacher may have ranked an activity as necessary on the survey that he or she would not have thought of on his or her own. RQ2 asked: what strategies can teachers identify from what parents of high achieving readers do at home in order to make recommendations to the parents of struggling readers? This question may have been answered better if teachers had to supply the activities they recommend without a list.

The study used survey questions from a previously conducted study. Some of the questions may not have been as suited for the current study as the original study. This could have had an impact on the effectiveness of the current study.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The purpose of this study was to explore what types of activities done at home might be linked to higher reading scores. Additionally, the study explored the perception of teachers regarding what they believed were important at home activities. The survey used to collect data from parents had questions about activities done at home using frequency scales. The survey also asked how parents felt about personal reading using Likert scales.

The survey given to the teachers looked similar to the parent survey, but it asked teachers to select how often that activity should be done. Rose and Atkins (2002) reported that parents are open to suggestions from teachers. Teachers should be prepared and willing to share what at home activities may help improve literacy. Equipping teachers with easy to share information on activities parents can do with their children at home may help assist parents.

Implications for teaching practices. The perceptions of the teachers surveyed as to what at home activities should be done to improve literacy matches up with current reading research. The teachers surveyed seemed to know what to suggest. Teachers reported 85% ($n = 34$) shared reading strategies with their families, but 83% ($n = 29$) of parents reported that they had not received literacy strategies from teachers. The survey asked if they had ever received strategies. The parents had a fourth grade child, they would have had the opportunity for five teachers to share strategies with them. Perhaps teachers were not sharing strategies, or the teachers are sharing strategies and the parents are not perceiving it.

The survey asked parents to report their child's Third Grade Reading STAAR scores as a way to measure their reading ability. The survey results showed no statistical significance in the activities done at home and the child's STAAR score. The parents taking the survey identified participating in all the activities on the survey with different frequencies. In several cases, the teachers suggested doing an activity more frequently than parents with children scoring mastery reported doing those activities. It could be overwhelming to a parent to be told they must carry out all the activities listed in the survey daily or almost daily. The teachers may want to adjust their recommendations based on what families with high achieving readers are averaging.

In the literature review, many sources said you should read to your child, sing songs, and play word games (Miller, 2009; Willingham, 2012). They rarely gave frequencies of how often these activities should be carried out. That may be because their research was inconclusive in that same way as the current study. However, it could be helpful for teachers to give ranges such as sing to your child once a week to several times a week.

The parents reported a majority 91% ($n = 33$) not asking the teacher for advice on how to improve literacy. This may have been in part because a majority of the parents surveyed had children reading at grade level. This information may mean that teachers need to take the initiative to contact parents with literacy strategies rather than wait for parents to contact them.

Implications for educational practices. The results of this survey could inform administrators, policymakers, and college educators about the miscommunication between parents and teachers. When teachers are preparing to enter the classroom, particular emphasis may need to be made on the importance of parent communication. Symeou, Roussounidou, and Michaelides (2012) found that educating teachers about how to communicate with parents encourages teachers and makes them more comfortable with parent communication.

Schools may want to have specialized training on how to properly communicate with parents. When parents feel connected and well informed the students have more success (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zinciril, & Selcuk, 2016). Parents want to be informed and can implement practices at home if they are instructed on what to do (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010; Rose and Atkins, 2007).

Communication problems between schools and teachers are common (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). Teachers have the responsibility of sharing information with the parents of their students. If a teacher is not equipped with the communication skills to create relationships with parents they may be less successful (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). Colleges and schools should prioritize educating teachers in parent communication skills.

Implications for education theories. There was a concern for students that were not able to read at grade level by fourth grade. The study was designed to identify activities that parents did at home that were linked to high reading scores. The researcher hoped the information could be shared with parents of struggling readers. The participants in the study were parents of students that passed the Fourth Grade Reading STAAR with the exception of one survey. The data was not conclusive as to which activities were correlated with high reading scores.

The research study was conducted in schools utilizing a curriculum built on classical education. Classical education focuses on learning principles dating back to Ancient Greece. The basic building blocks for reading and language arts in a classical school include learning Greek and Latin roots at the grammar school level, orthography, grammar, and the reading of classic texts.

Instruction in classical schools connect these basic learning principles with current research in effective teaching strategies, such as Willingham (2016) suggested students need background knowledge about classic texts to understand what authors are referencing. Greek and Latin roots help students with morphology and vocabulary acquisition by providing them with the meaning of word parts (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton 2011; Robinson, 2015; Simmons 2002). Wolter and Dilworth (2008) believed knowledge of phonics, orthography, and morphology could help struggling readers.

The researcher surveyed parents and teachers of children at classical schools. The parents were surveyed to better understand what they do at home that may also impact their child's reading scores. In addition, the researcher examined instructors who teach in classical schools to discover what they recommended parents do at home to build strong readers.

The current study's results showed a need for better parent-teacher communication. Eighty-three percent of parents reported never having teachers share literacy strategies with them, while 85% of teachers reported sharing strategies. Either teachers believe they are doing something they are not, or parents are not perceiving the strategies when presented. If teachers know what strategies parents should be doing at home to increase literacy skills but lack the ability to communicate them to parents, there may be an opportunity lost.

The parents that participated in the current study seemed knowledgeable about what they should be doing at home to help their child become strong readers. Parents that do not know what they should do at home need the advice of the knowledgeable teachers to be able to help their child at home. Teachers need to know how to share information with the parent of struggling readers. Teachers already play an essential role in improving a child's reading skills but teaming up with parents could lead to even more gains.

Educating parents on possible literacy strategies they could perform at home may have a positive impact on a student's literacy skills. Teachers need to be educated about effective literacy strategies. Teachers need to be trained in communicating with parents to be able to share those strategies effectively.

Recommendations for Further Research

Parents are frequently their child's most important teacher. If parents are unaware of what is helpful to do at home, they may be missing an opportunity. The current research only had one survey filled out by a parent of a child not meeting state standards in reading. A study that collected more data from families with struggling learners might reveal more. Additionally, the schools surveyed attracted a particular type of family. The schools used were classical charter schools that required parents to buy uniforms, transport students without a bus system, and pack a lunch every day since there is no lunch program. A study that surveys parents from a variety of schools might find different insight about activities done by families of struggling readers. Teacher perceptions may be different when comparing public school teachers, private school teachers, and charter school teachers.

The survey listed activities that reading research suggests doing with children to improve reading skills. It may be revealing to add activities not known to be related to reading to see parent and teacher responses. It could be that teachers ranked everything as necessary when they saw all the activities could help with reading skills. If other activities were introduced, teachers and parents would have to think about each item more carefully.

There is very little research about classical education or why parents choose classical education. It may be that the type of parents that would choose a classical education have

different priorities or interactions with their children than parents of other schools. This may have made their survey responses different than parents at other schools.

The original PISA survey was not given to teachers. The survey was not designed to discover the differences between parent and teacher perceptions. A new survey that is geared towards parent and teacher perceptions may be more informative. Since the original survey did not ask questions of teachers it was not set up to find out what teachers recommended to families. The survey was full of potentially helpful activities but that may not have been the best way to discover what teachers knew about helpful activities.

A study that uses qualitative and quantitative questions could allow parents and teachers to explain more about what they do or recommend. Parents may be able to describe their daily activities in a journal or interview. It may be more revealing to interview teachers and simply ask them to detail what they do to help families of struggling readers. This may be revealing about parent-teacher relationships and communication. This may also be more informative when trying to find out what teachers know about reading research and the best strategies to use at home. A qualitative study with interviews could find more specific information about what parents do at home with their children that may result in higher reading scores.

Many of the survey questions asked, how often do you or someone else in your home participate in the following activities with the child? No questions asked about who performed the activities with the child. There could be other family members helping with the education process, and that could be insightful. It may also have been the case that the parent filling out the survey did not foster a love of reading, but another member of the household does.

Symeou, Roussounidou, and Michaelides (2012) found that if teachers are trained in communication, they feel more comfortable with parent interactions. The current study found

that parents and teachers may have miscommunication when it comes to sharing literacy strategies. It would be interesting to see if parents and teachers would have more similar perceptions in a school where teachers had been trained in communication.

Conducting similar research with more teachers at different schools would give great insight. Similarly, having families of fourth graders from many schools at different reading levels would lead to more accurate research. Adding interviews and open-ended qualitative questions could bring more specific information about how parents conduct activities and parent-teacher perception differences.

Conclusion

A child's ability to read shapes his or her school life and what he or she may choose to pursue after school. Teachers spend countless hours during a child's schooling teaching children to read at different stages. While the teacher's role is important parents also play a crucial part in teaching their children to be strong readers. Parents can increase a child's vocabulary through conversations and reading. Parents also establish a culture of reading based on their personal feelings about reading (Miller, 2009; Willingham, 2012).

This study looked at the activities parents participated in with their children and the perceptions of teachers about those activities. Teachers and parents from classical charter schools in Texas completed the survey. The survey was conducted online via a link sent through email to parents of fourth grade students and elementary teachers. The parent survey was different from the teacher survey to collect more information about the fourth grade home. Each population had two weeks to complete the survey. Two reminder emails were sent before the survey began and one reminder a few days before the survey closed. Forty-three teachers participated and 36 parents in the survey.

The study had two research questions and seven null hypotheses. The first research question focused on parents and the activities done at home. Six null hypotheses went along with the first research question. The second research question centered on teacher knowledge of activities that lead to mastery in reading. The second research questions had one null hypothesis.

There was no statistical significance in the activities done at home and the child's reading score as measured by their Third Grade Reading STAAR scores. The parents surveyed reported being involved in their child's education at home. Additionally, the parents surveyed were interested in personal reading.

The teacher survey when compared to the parent survey had many statistically significant differences. Eighty-three percent of parents reported no to the question asking if their child's teacher had ever shared reading strategies with them. Interestingly, 85% of teachers answered yes to the question asking them if they shared literacy strategies with parents. In many cases, teachers suggested more time should be spent on activities linked to reading than parents reported participating in those activities.

This survey looked at the at home activities done with children at a classical charter schools in Texas. Much of the previous reading research focused on children with reading deficits. By studying what families of high achieving students do at home with their families, strategies could be discovered. The results of this survey showed a possible communication gap between parents and teachers. Improved communication could result in the sharing of effective strategies from the teacher to the parent.

The research from the literature review constantly referred to the importance of a child being able to read at grade level by the third grade (Allington, 2012; Fiester, 2010; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Hernandez, 2011; King, 2015; Lesnick,

Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Parent-teacher communication about literacy strategies needs to begin in kindergarten and continue throughout elementary school. Teachers may need to be trained on how to communicate with parents for their interactions to be more effective. Previous research discussed issues in parent-teacher communication (Nebrig, 2008; Ozmen, Akuzum, Zincirli, & Selcuk, 2016; Semingson, 2008). If this is a common issue schools need to spend more time focusing on building relationships with families through communication. Parents want to help their child to be successful and are open to suggestions of what they can do at home (Rose & Atkins, 2007).

Parents and teachers have a strong desire for children to build strong literacy skills. Having parents and teachers work together would yield better results. Improved teacher communication with parents may be essential to helping struggling learners catch up.

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Appendix A: Parent Survey Questions

1. When your child was in first grade, how often did you or someone else in your home undertake the following;

- (a) Read books,
- (b) Tell stories
- (c) Sing songs
- (d) Talk about things you have done
- (e) Talk about what you have read
- (f) Play word games
- (g) Write letters or words
- (h) Read aloud signs or labels
- (i) Use educational apps
- (j) Watch educational television shows together?

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

2. How often do you or someone else in the home undertake the following activities currently with your fourth grader;

- (a) Read books
- (b) Tell stories
- (c) Talk about things you have done
- (d) Talk about what you have read
- (e) Play word games

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

3. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements about reading?

The options are; strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

- (a) Reading is one of my favorite hobbies.
- (b) I feel happy if I receive a book as a present.
- (c) For me, reading is a waste of time.
- (d) I enjoy going to a bookstore or library.

4. When you are at home, how much time do you spend reading for your own enjoyment (e.g., magazines, comics, novels, fiction, non-fiction)?

- (a) More than 10 hours a week.
- (b) 6–10 hours a week.
- (c) 1–5 hours a week.
- (d) Less than one hour a week.

5. Are the following available to your child in your home, yes or no?

Books of his/her own.

- (a) A subscription to a journal or magazine.
- (b) Daily newspaper.
- (c) Internet connection.
- (d) E reader or tablet.

6. How often do you or someone else in your home do the following things with your child?

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

- (a) Discuss political or social issues.
 - (b) Discuss books, films, or television programs.
 - (c) Discuss how well your child is doing at school.
 - (d) Eat dinner with your child around a table.
 - (e) Spend time just talking to your child.
 - (f) Go to a bookstore or library with your child.
 - (g) Talk with your child about what he/she is reading on his/her own.
 - (h) Help your child with his/her homework.
7. How many children are there in your household? Options are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 more.
8. Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity..
- (a) White
 - (b) Hispanic or Latino
 - (c) Black or African American
 - (d) Native American or American Indian
 - (e) Asian or Pacific Islander
 - (f) Other
9. What score did your child receive on the 3rd Grade Reading STAAR?
- (a) Not approaching
 - (b) Approaching
 - (c) Meets
 - (d) Mastering
 - (e) Unsure
 - (f) My child did not take the 3rd Grade Reading STAAR.

10. Which campus does your child attend? The options are; *****, *****, *****, or *****.

11. Have any of your child's teachers shared strategies for you try at home to increase their reading skills? The options are; yes or no.

12. If you answered no to the previous question, please select your reason.

- (a) I did not want to bother the teacher.
- (b) I have never thought about it.
- (c) The teacher did not seem knowledgeable.
- (d) I have thought about asking but have not had time to ask.
- (e) Other.

13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The options are; strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

- (a) Most of my child's school teachers seem competent and dedicated.
- (b) Standards of achievement are high in my child's school.
- (c) I am happy with the content taught and the instructional methods used in my child's school.
- (d) I am satisfied with the disciplinary atmosphere in my child's school.
- (e) My child's progress is carefully monitored by the school.
- (f) My child's school does a good job of educating students.
- (g) My child's school provides regular and useful information on my child's progress.

Appendix B: Teacher Survey Questions

1. How often do you believe first graders should participate in the following activities with their parents/guardians?

- (a) Read books,
- (b) Tell stories
- (c) Sing songs
- (d) Talk about things you have done
- (e) Talk about what you have read
- (f) Play word games
- (g) Write letters or words
- (h) Read aloud signs or labels
- (i) Use educational apps
- (j) Watch educational television shows together

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

2. How often do you believe fourth graders should participate in the following activities with their parents/guardians?

- (a) Read books
- (b) Tell stories
- (c) Talk about things you have done
- (d) Talk about what you have read
- (e) Play word games

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

3. Should the following be made available to a child in the home?

- (a) Books of his/her own.
- (b) A subscription to a journal or magazine.
- (c) Daily newspaper.
- (d) Internet connection.
- (e) E reader or tablet.

4. How often should the following events take place at home between parent/guardian and child?

The answer options are hardly ever or never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, or every day or almost every day.

- (a) Discuss political or social issues.
- (b) Discuss books, films, or television programs.
- (c) Discuss how well child is doing at school.
- (d) Eat dinner with child around a table.
- (e) Spend time just talking to child.
- (f) Go to a bookstore or library with child.
- (g) Talk about what he/she is reading on his/her own.
- (h) Help child with his/her homework.

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The options are; strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

- (a) Most of the teachers at our school seem competent and dedicated.

- (b) Standards of achievement are high in the school I teach at.
- (c) I am happy with the content taught and the instructional methods used in the school I teach at.
- (d) I am satisfied with the disciplinary atmosphere in the school I teach at.
- (e) The students' progress is carefully monitored by the school I teach at.
- (f) The school I teach at does a good job of educating students.
- (g) The school I teach at provides regular and useful information to parents about their child's progress.

6. Do you share reading strategies with parents of struggling readers? The options are yes or no.

Appendix C: Survey Consent Form

CONSENT FOR ANONYMOUS SURVEY (click consent)

The purpose of this study is to examine perceived relationships between activities done in the home and reading scores. We expect approximately 40 volunteers. No one was paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on October 14, 2018 and end enrollment on October 27, 2018. To be in the study, you complete this online survey. This will ask you questions about your opinions and personal experiences about activities parents do at home that contribute to reading skills. The survey also contains questions about your opinions of the school you are working at. The survey is based on a similar survey given to parents of fourth grade students at your school. Completing the survey should take less than 20 minutes of your time. The online survey is anonymous. We will not ask you any personal identifying information and we will have no record of who completes this survey.

There are no risks to participating in this study other than the everyday risk of your being on your computer as you take this survey. The benefit is your answers will help us understand the relationship between activities done at home and the perceived relationships to reading skills. You could benefit by reflecting on your own beliefs about what leads to strong reading skills.

All data is collected anonymously. If you were to write something that made it to where we predict that someone could possibly deduce your identity, we would not include this information in any publication or report. And data you provide would be held privately. All data will be destroyed three years after the study ends.

You can stop answering the questions in this online survey if you want to stop.

Please print a copy of this for your records. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Brittany Kretz at xxxxx@xxx.edu. If you want to talk with a participant

advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email xxxxx@xxx.edu or call xxx-xxx-xxxx).

Click the button below to consent to take this survey.

Appendix D: Survey Consent Form

CONSENT FOR ANONYMOUS SURVEY (click consent)

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between activities done in the home and reading scores on the Third Grade Reading STAAR. We expect approximately 150 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on October 1, 2018 and end enrollment on October 13, 2018. To be in the study, you complete this online survey.

This will ask you questions about activities done with your child. Completing the survey should take less than 20 minutes of your time. The online survey is anonymous. We will not ask you any personal identifying information and we will have no record of who completes this survey.

There are no risks to participating in this study other than the everyday risk of your being on your computer as you take this survey. The benefit is your answers will help us understand the relationship between activities done at home and reading skills. You could benefit by reflecting on your engagement with your child.

All data is collected anonymously. If you were to write something that made it to where we predict that someone could possibly deduce your identity, we would not include this information in any publication or report. And data you provide would be held privately. All data will be destroyed three years after the study ends.

You can stop answering the questions in this online survey if you want to stop.

Please print a copy of this for your records. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Brittany Kretz at xxxxxx@xxx.edu. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email xxxxxx@xxx.edu or call xxx-xxx-xxxx).

Click the button below to consent to take this survey.

Appendix E: Parent Email 1

Attention Parents of fourth-grade students!

We are seeking your participation in a short online survey about activities done in the home with your fourth-grade student.

We are seeking correlations between activities done in the home and reading skills.

The survey results may be helpful to parents and teachers of struggling readers.

You may benefit from the survey by thinking on how your time is spent with your child.

The survey will take place Monday, October 1st – Saturday, October 12th.

Appendix F: Parent Email 2

Reminder, survey for the parents of fourth-grade students.

We are seeking your participation in a short online survey about activities done in the home with your fourth-grade student.

We are seeking correlations between activities done in the home and reading skills.

The survey results may be helpful to parents and teachers of struggling readers.

You may benefit from the survey by thinking on how your time is spent with your child.

The survey will take place starting next week,

Monday, October 1st – Saturday, October 12th.

Appendix G: Teacher Email 1

Attention elementary school teachers!

We are seeking your participation in a short online survey about activities done in the home that may impact reading skills.

We are seeking teacher opinions about what activities, done at home, may impact reading skills.

The survey results may be helpful to parents and teachers of struggling readers.

You may benefit from the survey by thinking about strategies for struggling readers.

The survey will take place starting

Sunday, October 11th – Saturday, October 26th.

Appendix H: Teacher Email 2

Reminder, survey for elementary school teachers.

We are seeking your participation in a short online survey about activities done in the home that may impact reading skills.

We are seeking teacher opinions about what activities, done at home, may impact reading skills.

The survey results may be helpful to parents and teachers of struggling readers.

You may benefit from the survey by thinking about strategies for struggling readers.

The survey will take place starting next week,

Sunday, October 11th – Saturday, October 26th.

Appendix I: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy.

This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.



Digital Signature

Brittany Kretz

Name (Typed)

12/11/19

Date