

**THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A STUDY OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOMEWORK AND KINDERGARTEN TEXAS  
PRIMARY READING INVENTORY SCORES**

A Dissertation

by

JILL MARIE DAVIS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2004

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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## ABSTRACT

The Impact of Parental Involvement: A Study of the Relationship Between Homework and Kindergarten Texas Primary Reading Inventory Scores. (May 2004)

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The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of School Home Links activity guide homework on kindergarten Texas Primary Reading Inventory scores.

Student Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) scores were obtained and analyzed for gains in score from the Middle of Year (MOY) and End of Year (EOY) administration. Parents were provided School Home Links Activity Guide Homework to use with their child on a weekly basis for twelve weeks. This group formed an experimental group. A control group did not receive SHL activity guide homework.

For the control and experimental group each student's letter/sound score was entered into SPSS for the MOY and EOY TPRI, and average gains were calculated. Groups of students were isolated and analyzed for gain based upon participation in a district reading program, and/or high or low parental involvement in SHL activity guide homework.

Research in the upper grades shows that homework completion and parent involvement positively affect student achievement. Students whose parents are involved

in their education reap many benefits. These benefits include higher academic achievement (Davies, 1991). Fuller & Olsen (1998), Davies (1991), and Epstein (1995) believe parent involvement is a stronger indicator of student achievement than socioeconomic status, parent education, ethnicity, or any other indicator. The research supports the use of homework for upper grades. The results of this study remain inconclusive for kindergarten age students.

This study shows that there is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control group kindergarten TPRI scores when homework is an independent variable.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the honor and glory of God, who guided my every action and led me to achieve. Without the ever-present whisper of His presence, I would have been unable to complete this project. He alone has provided family and friends to guide me through this process of academic discovery.

To my family and friends who supported me and led me in the right direction when I could not see the path, I am forever grateful. Your words of encouragement and faithful promise of hope remain with me always.

To my mother, the smartest person I know, your words of hope “wake up and assume it will be a wonderful day”, give me courage. To my husband, the ultimate Aggie, this work is yours and mine together, as parents of our wonderful children we know we make a difference together.

The inspiration for this work comes from my God-given children. To Kara Jean, Lauren Victoria, and Spencer Lynn: this “mommy’s book” is for you and your children. I will always strive to remain involved in your education, supporting you in all you dream to become in life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Unending thanks goes out to my committee chair, Dr. Lynn M. Burlbaw.

Without his comments, support, work, guidance, encouragement, knowledge, and presence, this dissertation would not have been such a wonderful learning journey. His expertise and value is gold to the field of education.

Thank you to my supportive, expert committee members. Dr. Clifford Whetten, his contributions to the field of parent involvement are an inspiration to all within our profession. Dr. Barbara Erwin provided the positive guidance and support of my efforts for the ‘little ones’ in public school. Dr. Robert Slater helped with insightful reflective guidance, for this I thank him.

I wish to acknowledge the support of all the kindergarten teachers who participated in this study. Their ability to adapt, make suggestions, follow directions, and remain supportive throughout this process is a credit to all kindergarten teachers in Klein ISD. I also thank the administrators at the campus and district level who graciously gave permission to conduct this study.

To all who listened to my ideas: the neighbors, store clerks, copy employees, educators, library workers, thank you for your assistance! It takes a village to complete a dissertation.

Thank you to parents everywhere who remain present in their children’s lives and support their education from birth through life’s end.

A final thank you to my husband, Pete, who provided technical support, hugs, an ear to listen, and three wonderful children.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Parents and children are a team that educators work with every day. The students who teachers have in their classrooms come into the school with at least 5 years of exposure to a very powerful teacher, their parents. Parents and teachers can and should work together to create the best environment for learning at home and at school.

Parent involvement in the schools is an issue under intense scrutiny and debate. What are the types of parent involvement, and what is the best involvement to promote student achievement? The many types of involvement range from serving on decision-making committees to writing checks for fundraising. Epstein (1983) focused much of her work on homework packets and home-school education. The Johns Hopkins University Center for Organization of Schools created a resource bank for parent involvement literature. Within the past decade Epstein (1995) and Davies (1991) published research on parent involvement practices.

Students whose parents are involved in their education reap many benefits. These benefits include higher academic achievement (Davies, 1991), a decrease in risk-taking behaviors, and fewer problems in school (Fuller & Olsen, 1998). Fuller & Olsen (1998), Davies (1991), and Epstein (1995) believe parent involvement is a stronger indicator of student achievement than socio-economic status, parent education, ethnicity, or any

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *American Educational Research Journal*.

other indicator. In short, parents make a difference.

Bauch (1994) provided a summary of several researchers' insights into parent involvement in the schools. His summary reported work by Gordon, Berger, Honig, and the System Development Council of California. Parents can be involved in many levels of the school hierarchy. Bauch concludes that Gordon, Berger, Honig and others name most of the same characteristics of parental involvement. Parents can be on councils, attend meetings, attend conferences, volunteer at school, and facilitate learning at home. The authors summarized by Bauch all had a component wherein the parent was a learning facilitator.

Epstein (1995) lists six categories for parent involvement. The six types of involvement include Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 1995). Learning at home involves homework assignments or interaction involving academics related to school (Epstein, 1995).

Learning does not take place in a vacuum. Learning is best achieved best in a caring, rich learning environment. This environment can occur at school or at home. When academic learning takes place at home children see it is possible in any situation. Simple activities such as reading to children, completing projects around the house, and doing problem-solving activities help children see that learning can happen anywhere (Berger, 1987). Learning at home does not have to be teacher directed activities.

Teachers and parents alike experience many barriers to becoming involved with their child's schoolwork. Barriers include, but are not limited to, parent education,

teacher experience, grade level of the child, teacher perception, and work and lifestyle of the parents. These barriers are reported in research by Epstein (1983), Becker (1982), and deCarvalho (2001). Teachers need guidelines for homework assignments and proof of their effectiveness.

In summary, Epstein (1983, 1995) and Becker (1982) make a case for assigning homework to upper elementary students. The benefits of higher academic achievement (Davies, 1991), a decrease in risk-taking behaviors, and fewer problems in school are seen in students whose parents are involved (Fuller & Olsen, 1998). Homework is a type of parent involvement (Epstein, 1983, Bauch, 1994).

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers assign homework in all grade levels. Epstein (1983), and Becker (1982) have established the positive academic impact of parent involvement in homework on upper elementary students. No research has addressed the effect of homework on Kindergarten students' achievement.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Several research questions were addressed in this study. Each question was designed to determine if parental completion of School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework had an effect on student Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) scores. Sub groups to analyze were based upon student placement in a district reading program due to qualifications set forth for the Middle of Year (MOY) administration of the TPRI. Sub groups were also created due to high or low parental completion of the

SHL activity guide homework. Data was collected to answer the following six research questions:

1. Do students whose parents were provided the School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) than students whose parents were not provided the SHL activity guide homework?
2. Do students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment and whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?
3. Do students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the TPRI and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program and whose parents were not

given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?

4. Do students whose parents participate in the SHL activity guide homework by completing more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?
5. Do students who participate in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment, and whose parents complete more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of SHL activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than those who participate in a district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?
6. Do students who do not participate in the district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the mid year TPRI test and whose parents complete more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who did not participate in the district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?

## DEFINITIONS

**Achievement:** An increase of one or more points in any category measured on the mid-year and summative TPRI.

**District Reading Intervention Program:** As part of the Texas Reading Initiative, the district identifies students at-risk of failing the state-mandated third grade reading test. Students are identified as part of this program by not passing the screening portion of the mid-year TPRI test. Students are given instruction by the classroom teacher during each school day for a period of time in small group format. Students receive instruction in literacy skills. All Kindergarten teachers in the district attended the Texas Reading Academy for four days of reading intervention training.

**Parent Involvement:** Any activity where a parent or adult caregiver participates in the child's education. For the purposes of this study, high parent involvement is defined as completing more than 2/3 of SHL activity guides sent home. For the purposes of this study, low involvement is defined as completing less than 1/3 of the SHL activity guides sent home.

**School Home Links Activity Guide (SHL):** A component of the Compact for Reading, these individual sheets consist of literacy and reading activities parents complete with their child. Developed by the US Department of education, the activities are meant to foster family involvement to improve reading skills. Each individual sheet is meant for one time use by parents and child (Russo, 2000)

**Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI):** A Texas criterion referenced reading achievement test. The test is individually administered twice a year in the Kindergarten

classrooms of the district studied. The test is a measure of reading achievement. The screening portion of this test was used for this study. It is a measure of student's knowledge of letter sounds (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

#### ASSUMPTIONS

For the purposes of this study, the researcher accepts the district decision to use the TPRI test as an accurate measure of student achievement. The researcher assumes the TPRI is a valid and reliable measure of student ability and that differences in mid-year and summative scores represent increased skill and proficiency in reading. The researcher accepts that not all parents will actually complete the SHL activity guide with their child before signing to verify completion of the work, therefore some SHL activity guide papers might be signed and returned without the activity fully completed.

#### OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

This research report is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is an introduction to the problem, it outlines why the topic is a problem. Chapter II provides a literature review related to the topic of parental involvement. Chapter III describes methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter IV gives results from the data collection. Chapter V is a discussion of results, a conclusion, and recommendations for further study. Included in the report are appendices with examples of all measures, data, and School Home Links Activity Guide homework.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Parents and children are a team that educators work with every day. The students teachers have in their classrooms come into the school with at least 5 years of exposure to a very powerful teacher, their parents. Parents and teachers can and should work together to create the best environment for learning at home and at school.

Parent involvement in the schools is an issue under intense scrutiny and debate. What are the types of parent involvement, and what is the best involvement in regards to student achievement? There are many levels of involvement ranging from serving on decision making committees to writing checks for fundraising. Epstein (1983) describes six types of involvement which will be investigated further in this paper: basic obligations of families, basic obligations of schools, involvement at school, involvement in learning activities at home, involvement in decision making at school, and collaboration with community. Epstein focused much of her work on homework packets and home-school education, including how parents can monitor and assist at home (Epstein, 1983). The Johns Hopkins University Center for Organization of Schools created a resource bank for parent involvement literature. A 1980 study was the first phase of a large study by the University (Becker, 1982). Within the past decade Epstein (1995), Davies (1991), and deCarvalho (2001) have published research on parent involvement practices.

This literature review will describe the benefits of parent involvement, the types of parent involvement, parental involvement in homework, and the use of homework

type activities with young children. There are many types of parent involvement in education (Epstein, 1983); this literature review will focus on parents' role as facilitators of learning in the home.

#### TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents can become involved in their child's education in many ways. There are many different opportunities in which parents can play a part in their child's schooling. This section will describe the types of parental involvement. Bauch (1994) provided a comprehensive summary of the levels of parental involvement. Parents can be involved in many levels of the school hierarchy. They can be on councils, attend meetings, attend conferences, and facilitate learning at home.

One example of a program that involves parents in their child's education is Head Start. The Head Start Program is a foremost proponent of the parent/child/school partnership. Head-Start is a program for identified at-risk children and their parents. Parents are actively involved in this program for children age three to six. Parents are required to further their own education, and are taught how to interact with their child's education process. The Head Start program supports the active involvement of parents in their child's education (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Parents become learn how to become involved in their child's education in many ways through this program.

Joyce Levy Epstein's (1983, 1988a, 1988b, 1995) work provided the literature and definitions most referenced in this paper. This review of literature will reference Epstein's model of parent involvement. Epstein has developed a 6-part model for parent involvement. Her work is the most cited in parent involvement literature. The six types

of involvement include Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 1995).

The most basic involvement of parents in their child's schooling is provision of basic needs. Parenting skills are a component of this level of involvement. Parents provide school supplies, supervision of activities, and home environments that are learner friendly. Schools can help in this area by providing parenting classes, home visits, or social services assistance (Epstein, 1995, Bauch, 1994).

The next type of involvement involves the school's ability to communicate, and the parent's ability to respond to that communication. The school and parents should establish a two way channel of communication about the child they share. A bond of ownership is formed between the parent and the school, and parents can become comfortable communicating with the school. When parents are comfortable with the school's expectations, they are willing to communicate with their child's teacher (Fuller & Olsen, 1998). Communication between school and home is the goal of parent involvement. Parents should be aware of their role in the communication partnership, communicating needs of their child in a clear manner (Epstein, 1995).

Parent volunteers are an example of the third type of parental involvement at school. Schools benefit from the extra helping hand with daily tasks, and parents benefit by learning new skills they can transfer to other workplaces. Parents in the volunteer role at school are a concrete example of ways parents can help with their child's schooling (Epstein, 1995).

Parents can also participate in committees, parent-teacher organizations, and other groups involved in decision making for the school. Parents feel a sense of ownership at school when they know they were involved in creating a policy, providing an activity for students, or changing a policy. They also develop knowledge of local and state laws that govern the education of their child (Epstein, 1995, Epstein, et al, 1997)).

Collaboration with community provides another type of involvement at school. Parents can organize business, community members, and resources in ways to benefit their child's school (Epstein, 1995, Epstein, et al, 1997)). "Parent and community members are important contributors to the education of children" (Parson, 1999, 33).

Learning at home, or parental involvement in homework, is another type of parental involvement Epstein (1995, 1989, 1988a, 1988b, 1983) mentions in her research. Bauch (1994) found that over 80% of parents say they monitor homework. Epstein (1995) reported higher levels of academic achievement for students whose parents participate in their homework. When learning occurs at home children see that learning is possible everywhere. Simple activities such as reading to children, projects around the house, and problem solving activities help children see that learning can occur anywhere (Berger, 1987). Learning at home does not have to be teacher directed activities. After a review of the benefits to all types of parental involvement, this paper will describe types of learning at home, outline the advantages and disadvantages of parental involvement in learning and homework, and discuss the role of homework in student achievement.

#### BENEFITS OF ANY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents and students benefit when there is a partnership between school and home. Parents become empowered with their own ability to guide their child's learning. Parents can become themselves life long learners and students show both emotional and academic benefits when their parents are involved with their learning at school and at home.

Students show a variety of social-emotional benefits when parents take an active role in their school career. The benefits to children with parents who are involved include higher self esteem and an increase in empathy towards others. It is in caring parent-child relations that children learn mutuality, empathy, trust, responsiveness to other people, and skills for pursuing prosocial living (Swick, 2001a, 2001b, 1997). Students who know their parents are active in their lives also exhibit fewer risk-taking behaviors (Fuller & Olsen, 1998).

Students whose parents are involved in their education reap many benefits. These include higher academic achievement and fewer problems in school (Fuller & Olsen, 1998). There is a belief that parent involvement is a stronger indicator in student achievement than socio economic status, parent education, ethnicity, or any other indicator (Fuller & Olsen, 1998, Davies, 1991). High school students name their parents being very influential in their academic lives (Carter, 2001). Academically, students have higher test scores, higher graduation rates, more homework completion rates, and fewer placements in special education programs when parents are involved (Fuller & Olsen, 1998). When parents are involved in their child's education, students' academic and social lives show the effects. In short, parents make a difference.

The importance of parent involvement is repeated in many school districts nationwide. It has been an issue for decades in this country, as well. A 1959 text by Osborne speaks of how parents identify with their children. Osborne (1959) expresses the mutual interest the schools and parents have in each child. This holds true four decades later as teachers struggle with the knowledge that parent involvement is critical to student success. Teachers want parents to be involved, parents want to be involved, and students want their parents and teachers to work together (Epstein, 1995).

Parents and students can both benefit academically when there is collaboration between home and school. One example includes a shared reading program in New Zealand. This program showed improvement in reading skills of children and parents. Parents had access to a lending library and activities to complete with their children related to the lending library. The parents were themselves new English readers and were taught how to interact and share reading with their children. With parents and children reading together for a few months, reading scores in both parents and students showed gains of 1-2 years. This program provides strong indications of the benefits of the parent/child academic partnership at home (Hornby, 2000).

Special Education policy mandates parental involvement in their child's education. Parents are required to attend meetings, sign Individual Education plans, and collaborate in learning. This vision of collaboration is seen as critical to a child's success in school (Hiatt-Michael, 2004). Parents get a better understanding of their child's abilities and how to work with their child when they are involved at the school. Schools

should communicate with all their parents, therefore increase every parent's involvement.

Another example of parental involvement that benefits parents is the establishment of a community learning center where parents learn alongside their students. Parents can participate in GED, English as a Second Language, or technology classes when schools are part of a larger community learning center environment. "The results of these programs are twofold: families improve their lives through increased education, and children's chances for success in school are improved" (Parson, 1999, 151). When parents are recognized as part of the larger family unit, the whole family experiences the benefits (Parson, 1999).

Parents and students benefit when there are opportunities for involvement in education. Parents can seek education for themselves and they can help their child's education. Parents involvement creates a feeling of caring and belonging towards the school, and their students become more aware of the importance of schooling (Hiatt-Michael, 2004).

#### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Epstein researched the effects of the learning at home type of parental involvement by creating two programs: Teachers Involve Parents and Students (TIPS) and Teachers Getting Involved with Families (TGIF). Both of these programs are a model for providing learning at home activities (Herrick & Epstein, 1991, Epstein, 1983). Parents can model learning behavior at home. Making lists, reading, measuring are all examples of learning in action within the home. Epstein's TIPS program has

shown how parents can help with homework and other at home activities (Fuller & Olsen, 1998, Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). This program helps parents with homework activities. Structured activities are provided to parents using this homework with their child. Training is given to parents participating in the TIPS program (Herrick & Epstein, 1991, Epstein, 1983, Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). Homework activities require students to share their knowledge at home, and increase parent knowledge of the child's schoolwork.

Students in high school name their parents as their key most influence in their academic life. Parents might not have knowledge of the skills the students are learning, but students see them as one of the best motivators to do well. A recent survey of high school students reported how students felt parental encouragement to complete homework was critical to attitudes about homework. Students in the study reported that a relationship between their parents, teachers, and themselves was important (Carter, 2001).

During conferences with parents and parent education nights teachers feel competent giving parents ideas as to how to work with children at home (Becker, 1981). Teachers cite reading at home as the single most important activity parents can do with their child. Most parents feel that if they are asked to help their child at home, they should help (Epstein, 1983). Parents who do not have flexible work schedules to participate in other areas of the school feel that working at home with their child constitutes involvement. Of the six types of involvement outlined by Epstein (1995),



helping with learning activities at home seems to be the most flexible way for parents to participate in learning.

#### CHALLENGES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Teachers know that as the child gets older, there is a decrease in parent involvement. Often it is the students who are doing poorly whose parents do not participate in any manner. These parents frequently withdraw because all the communication they have received has been negative. It is also more difficult for parents to help with more specialized curriculum as the students get older (Fuller & Olsen, 1998, Epstein, 1983).

Davies (1991) makes the point that most parents want to help their child in school. Parents feel that if teachers ask for help, they should help. Teachers on the other hand are unsure of how to create meaningful experiences at home (Davies, 1991, Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). Becker (1982) concluded teachers of early grades are more likely to send home activities for parents to do with their child. The activities helpful to younger students lend themselves more to short activities parents can do with their child.

Britt & Baker (1997) provided one of the few studies involving Kindergarten age students participating with their parents in a home learning activity. Parents were encouraged to visit school and take home books to read with their children. The lending library provided parents an opportunity to visit school more often than noted before instigating the library. The authors documented a feeling of positive attitudes toward the school from many parents that could be related to the existence of the lending library (Britt & Baker, 1997).

Time cost to teachers is another factor in the development of homework activities (Epstein, 1988b). Teachers are more likely to spend time developing in class learning than developing home learning. They feel more competent in developing lessons to be used in class, than coming up with ideas for activities at home (Becker, 1982). Teachers are more likely to send more homework home to students who are doing poorly, though (Epstein, 1988a). Teachers must develop meaningful work, while still respecting family time (Epstein, 1995, Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). The challenge of parent involvement through meaningful activities at home is ongoing.

The challenge arises when giving activities to different classes of parents. Topping (1986) stated that parents with less education and lower socio economic status (SES) interact differently than parents with higher education and income levels. Lower SES parents tend to be more directive and use less open ended language than parents with more education. This poses a challenge to teachers of low SES students, as they must develop homework directives with more detailed language for parents to use with their children. Parents may not understand how to elicit thinking from their child and may give directions to the child that do not foster independent learning or thought from the child. Teachers need help with homework design (Epstein & Voorhis, 2001).

Teachers with more experience may have taught the subject matter more and have more of an idea of how to explain the work to the parents. It is up to the teacher to learn how to design valid homework activities. These activities should be valid and match stated purposes. “Research is needed that examines whether the design and

content of homework match the teacher's stated purposes, and how different homework designs affect student achievement" (Epstein & Voorhis, 2001, 183).

Many studies (Becker, 1981) show how more experienced teachers used parent involvement techniques than teachers did with less experience. Perhaps teachers with more experience in the classroom have more time to develop meaningful activities to send home. Teachers also believe that they can provide ideas, but not influence the use of these ideas for parents (Becker, 1981).

Becker stressed the fact that opinions differ regarding the use of parents as learning partners. There are different opinions as to the effectiveness of teachers providing learning activities for the home. Despite the fact that teachers feel pressure to provide homework, teachers are not always convinced of the benefits of such work. The pressure to provide work contradicts some teachers' unwillingness to compete against parents already demanding time constraints within the family (Becker, 1981).

Some teachers and schools see completion of homework as part of the parents' responsibility with children's learning. A recent Detroit News article described how parents would be forced to accompany their child to Saturday detention if the child had not completed their homework. The parent would then be asked to help the child with the homework assignments during the detention period (deCarvalho, 2001).

deCarvalho's work contains an undercurrent of resentment toward the pressure of the schools' influence onto her time with her own son. She described how she was working on her own graduate school homework, and felt resentment to then work on her child's

complicated assignments (deCarvalho, 2001). When reading deCarvalho's text, the reader needs to understand the author's background and history.

Herrick and Epstein (1991) studied how Homework packets were used to help students. The Teachers Getting Involved with Families (TGIF) reading packets were used to study parent reaction to homework. The goal was to increase parent knowledge of the school's expectations and curriculum and to provide information as to how parents can help at home. The program was instigated in grades 1 and 2. Parents reported they wanted the packets sent home more often, they stated they had time to help with homework and wanted more information as to how to help. The work by Herrick and Epstein (1991) refutes deCarvalho's feelings of resentment. This could possibly be due to the age level of the students. Herrick and Epstein (1991) studied primary students in this study. Primary age students might not have as academically challenging homework assignments. Parents often feel that as a child gets older, they are less able to help with the academics of schoolwork (Balli, 1998, Corno, 1996, Fuller & Olsen, 1998, Epstein, 1983).

Teachers in the TGIF program felt that students were the keys in the program. The teachers felt the students needed incentives to bring the packets back to school. The teachers in the program felt the parents did not expect help from school, and it was the student's responsibility to tell their parents to help (Herrick & Epstein, 1991). Teachers who provide homework generally expect the homework to stand on its own merit and worth.

Parents in the TGIF program reported they spent more time on the packets if they worked full time. Parents of the more successful students in school completed more of the activities in the packets, also. There was decline in participation from the first to second grade. Regardless of work commitments, all the parents admitted they had time to spend with their child at home, and wanted more homework (Herrick & Epstein, 1991).

Epstein's TIPS program for middle school students involved parents working as volunteers in the schools. Parents help teachers develop either at home or at school art projects to use in the classroom. Parents are not working directly with their own children, but involved in the education of many children. Students involved in this program report higher gains in art awareness and social studies awareness (Epstein, 1989). TIPS can be extended into academic areas such as math and science.

Van Voorhis (2000) used TIPS homework in middle school science. This study created control and experimental groups related to TIPS homework activities. The students who were asked to involve their parents in TIPS science activities reported higher parental involvement, but did not obtain higher academic gains than their counterparts in the non-TIPS activity group. Parents were involved and active in their child's TIPS homework, but academic gains did not occur related to this homework (VanVoorhis, 2000).

Balli (1998) studied a TIPS math homework program in sixth grade. Using TIPS designed homework, students were asked to complete 20 activities with their parents. There was a 100% return rate in this study. Students reported that they worked with their

parents, and also believed they did better in school as a result of working on this homework with their parents (Balli, 1998).

#### DISADVANTAGES TO HOMEWORK

The disadvantages of homework are summarized by Conners (1992). She lists reasons that teachers should not give homework. These reasons for no homework include anxiety for students and parents, lack of meaningful activities, and wasted family time. In addition, homework is often not graded or reviewed by the teacher, is used as a punishment by the teacher, or is excessive (Conners, 1992)

For homework to be successful, these disadvantages need to be addressed (Conners, 1992). Other authors have researched the negative impact of homework assignments on today's students. deCarvalho (2001) is one author who supports many of the above-mentioned disadvantages for homework assignments. Yet, homework prevails in the schools of 2002. Kralovec & Buell (2000), Kralovec (2003), Alleman & Brophy (1991), and Cooper (1994) all reiterate the stress on homework within the past twenty years.

Homework has been thought to handicap poor students. The gap of resources available to higher SES students and the resources available to low SES students further widens the achievement gap between the two groups. Achievement scores are tied to the wealth of the community in which the school resides. Low SES students do not have access to books, computers, or libraries readily available to higher SES students (Kralovec & Buell, 2000).

Furthermore, parents' attitudes toward the school influence how a student perceives his or her out of school learning opportunities. If a parent does not see the value of education, they will not support it at home (Kralovec & Buell, 2000, Swick, 1988). Parents can motivate their children to do their homework. Their reinforcement and rewards can influence student completion of assignments. Parents who do not consider it important can lower homework motivation (Hong & Milgram, 2000, Swick, 1988).

Teachers and parents alike experience many barriers to becoming involved with their child's schoolwork. Some barriers include but are not limited to parent education, teacher experience, grade level of the child, teacher perception, work and lifestyle of the parents. These barriers are seen in research by Epstein (1983), Becker (1982), and deCarvalho (2001).

As students get older there is an emphasis on independent work, which contradicts the aspect of parent involvement at home. Elementary school tasks such as reading aloud, drilling math facts, or spelling practice lends itself to encouraging parents to help (Becker, 1982). Epstein found in a 1983 study that parents of children in grades 3 and 5 felt they did not have enough education to help their child. Yet, only 8% of these same parents reported that they never helped their child. Due to the fact that most parents report they help, it would be beneficial to the parents and child for teachers to send learning activities home (Epstein, 1983).

Parents felt that teachers need to send home more homework activities. They are willing to spend more time on activities if they are given instruction in how to do them.

Parents feel that teachers could be doing more to get them involved with schoolwork. Over 70% of parents responded that they never help at school, but are willing and able to help at home (Epstein, 1983). As stated earlier in this paper, teachers often do not feel comfortable with designing activities to send home.

Teachers believe that parent involvement is important, but have some preconceived ideas as to why parents are unwilling or unable to help. Many teachers believe that if parents are not active within the school building, they must not be active at home with their child (Epstein, 1983). Teachers sometimes use homework as punishment for misbehavior, or do not know how to assign proper homework (Corno, 1996). The misuse of homework is widespread. Epstein & Voorhis (2001) state the misuse of homework as punishment is not a valid purpose.

Ascher (1988) states that teachers often blame the parents for their child's low achievement. Teachers feel that low-income students with poor achievement are the result of parents who do not care about academics. Homework is the most common point of intersection between parents, students, and school (Hong & Milgram, 2000).

There are many misconceptions within the teaching profession regarding homework practices. Teachers feel that homework should be assigned to reinforce content taught in class. Teachers also feel students need to become structured at home, and homework assignments will accomplish this task. Another misconception regarding homework is that homework provides a positive link between home and school, when in fact; personal contact between home and school is more effective (Connors, 1992).



Teachers attribute low SES as an indicator of parents who will not participate, and this view hinders their attitude toward the parents. When in fact, parents of low-income students do want to help and schools must reach out to them (Ascher, 1988). Teachers are often the ones who do not send the work home because of the belief that the parents do not care.

Low-income parents or uneducated parents feel overwhelmed with some of the tasks asked by teachers. They may feel they are being asked too much of the school (Epstein, 1983). It is to the teachers' benefit to educate the parent as to how to help at home. Simple suggestions for parents to follow through at home can be given. Teachers can let the parent know that encouragement about homework is important.

Encouragement is a type of parent involvement and should not decrease with age of the student (deCarvalho, 2001). Parent's motivation toward homework can increase as student's motivation to complete their homework. This out of school activity can be influenced by how parents feel about academics (Hong & Milgram, 2000). Parents can make a difference. "Behaviors linked to student success include parents' positive reinforcement of children's academic efforts, supervision of homework, and reading, talking, and telling stories" (Davies, 1991, 379). Parental efficacy is related to student achievement, also. Parents who feel they matter at each stage of their child's schooling are more likely to provide help, be involved, and affect positive academic gains in student achievement (Swick, 1988).

As students get older and the academic work is more specialized, parents feel frustrated with helping with learning activities at home. Teachers need to realize that

some parents may not be able to help their child complete homework due to the educational level of the parents (Capper, 1993). Parents have academic barriers to helping at home. The very act of parents wrong questioning about homework can hold children back from success (Chandler, 1983). Parents may also not be aware of the surroundings their children work best in to complete their homework (Hong & Milgram, 2000).

Time barriers infringe upon successful homework completion and parent involvement in the learning activities. Parents have obligations that infringe upon the time spent doing homework. In addition, the teacher needs to respect family time. Parents often see homework as an intrusion into family time and work possibilities (Kralovec & Buell, 2000).

Kralovec & Buell (2000) make a case for the end of homework, primarily in the elementary grades. They cite the negative effects of homework on those who are not achieving in school and the cycle of negativism homework creates in the family environment. The reasons for homework often are to teach self-discipline, but if the parents are not structured, the child cannot learn the routine of homework. The work pressure of homework is seen as not beneficial to children as young as fourth grade (Kralovec & Buell, 2000, Cooper, et al, 1998). Fighting within the family over completion of assignments cannot foster good habits, and homework in itself creates bad habits of ignoring social activities that might foster self-esteem (Kralovec & Buell, 2000, Kralovec, 2003). Parents need help with ensuring a good balance of academic and social activities for their child.

Parents report other types of struggles with becoming involved in children's schoolwork. Besides not having a resource to call or consult, parents face economic and time constraints within the family structure. Parents may not be able to financially provide for homework assignment's requirements. If parents are worried about meeting everyday financial needs, homework assignments become irrelevant (Swick, 1984). Young children suffer when parents feel undervalued due to feelings of inadequacy of being able to provide for a family. Unemployment or underemployment by parents leaves parents at a psychological low point (Swick, 1984). Time constraints by all income levels are frequently cited as reasons for not completing homework and add to the level of frustration by parents (Kralovek & Buell, 2000).

#### SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HOMEWORK

One way to help parents is to create a visitor program. The school can hire a specialized person to visit with parents at home to help reach out to families. This person can be a liaison between the parent and teacher. They can answer questions about homework or schoolwork (Davies, 1991). Unfortunately, many school districts do not have the funds to hire such a person. Some schools have used Title 1 funds to hire parent involvement specialists, persons who can show parents about natural learning. Even a simple homework hotline can serve as a help to parents struggling with helping their child with homework (Ascher, 1988).

School Home Links, in association with the governments "Compact for Reading" provides structured reading activities for parents and students in grades kindergarten through third grade. The full Compact requires parents and schools to create a

partnership and work towards increased reading achievement for all children.

Kindergarten activities are designed for parents to read to and interact with their child to develop reading skills (Russo, 2000). These activities can be sent home as a part of a homework assignment. It is available from the United States Government, and online.

There are ways to help increase parent involvement in children's schooling.

Teachers need to overcome the barriers of perception, attitudes, and insecurity and create a successful parent involvement program for learning at home. So often the early grades create a routine of parent involvement and then this is not built upon in the later grades (Epstein, 1983). Teachers can and should use parent involvement practices to create more understanding of the school environment.

#### PURPOSE OF HOMEWORK

Homework is defined as any type of academic work assigned by a teacher to be completed at home. The assignments may be completed during a study hall period, or other class time (Conners, 1992, Cooper, 2001). There are many types of homework assigned by teachers. Conners (1992), and Lehr (2002) define four major categories of homework: practice, preparation, extension, and creative (sic). Alleman & Brophy (1991) list practice, preparation, extension, and creative as the four types of homework, also. The majority of middle school teachers reported they assigned only practice and preparation assignments (Conners, 1992).

Practice homework seems to be the type of homework studied in most of the research quoted previously in this paper. It is the type most described by students as dull and boring. Teachers can assign drill and practice worksheets, and easily assign grades

to this type of homework (Conners, 1992). Practice is the most common type of homework assigned by teachers (Cooper, 2001). Preparation homework is assigned before the class is to cover a topic (Conners, 1992, Cooper, 2001).

Within the four categories described by Conners (1992) and Alleman & Brophy (1991), there might be differing degrees of length, and assistance required. Cooper (2001) tells of the social aspect of homework, some assignments require outside help of a parent or other person, and some is meant to be done independently. Studies of homework show homework is most often given in Mathematics, and second often in English in the middle grades (Epstein, 1988b).

Homework use varies between grade levels, also. The use of homework by teachers in secondary and elementary was measured by Muhlenbruck, et al (2000). They found:

Elementary school teachers used homework more often to review material already covered in class and were more likely to discuss homework in class. Secondary school teachers were more likely to use homework to prepare students for work yet to come and to enrich classroom activities. (Muhlenbruck, et al, 2000, 314).

Epstein & Voorhis (2001) list many types of homework use, also. These include preparation, practice, personal development, and communication.

Homework use serves many purposes.

Teachers also most frequently cite homework as a method of communication with parents (Becker, 1981, deCarvalho, 2001). Lehr & Osborn (2002) list many reasons

for homework assignments. These reasons include communication, practice, reteaching, and preparation. Communication is one of the most important aspects of homework. It helps parents know what their child's strengths and weaknesses are academically (Lehr & Osborn, 2002, Berger, 1996, Berger, 1987, Epstein & Voorhis, 2001).

#### HISTORY OF HOMEWORK USE

The realization of the benefits of parent involvement in homework is new to the second half of the 1900's. The period in American from 1900-1950 saw bans on homework with the idea that it detracted from family life. The 1980's saw a resurgence of time-consuming homework and emphasis on parent involvement due to the research published relating student achievement to parent involvement. Parent accountability became important to schools in the 1990's; therefore homework as part of a set policy of parent involvement became widespread (deCarvalho, 2001).

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century homework was necessary to supplement the short lessons given during the day. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century homework was given for the more difficult subjects of Latin and Greek. Teachers' salaries and promotions were based upon student achievement; therefore teachers began to provide extra tutoring during the day or after school in the late 1800's. Homework was seen as necessary to strengthen the muscles of the mind, and a regular part of the school day into the early 1900's. Beginning in the early 1900's homework was seen as a distraction to the family morals and student extracurricular activities. Homework received renewed emphasis with the late 1960's advancement of competition against the Russians. The emphasis then waned until the 1983 Nation at Risk report (Conners, 1992, Cooper, 1994, Cooper, et al, 1998). Parents

called for increased academia and more homework followed. An increased shift in academic achievement has placed an increased value on homework in the past decade (Cooper, 1994, Kralovek, 2003, Cooper, 2001, Cooper, et al, 1998).

#### ADVANTAGES TO HOMEWORK

Students who regularly complete their homework show learning benefits within the classroom. Completion of home assignments and positive comments by teachers on assignments produce an increased in achievement three times as large as the family's socio economic status. Homework in this study was seen as being a greater influence on achievement than other factors (Maynes, 1987).

Maynes (1987) created a program for grades 1-6 entitled "We Care". This program used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) as a measure of achievement. Teachers gave suggestions to parents as to how to make Homework fun, interesting, and part of a student's leisure time. Parents who read the letters and used the suggestions had students with higher ITBS scores (Maynes, 1987).

Homework is more influential in raising student achievement when rates for completion and participation are high. Schools should and can communicate ways parents can help with homework (Connors, 1992). Homework is an area where parents can become involved in their child's education. Schools see the benefits of parent involvement in homework. Students whose parents used school provided homework helplines showed higher levels of homework completion (Bauch, 1989).

One example of how schools can help is evident in the TransParent School Model. The TransParent School Model (TSM) increased interactions between home and

school, increasing homework completion rates in a middle school setting. TSM included an electronic homework line recorded by teachers, and automated calling system to contact parents of students in the school (Bauch, 1989).

Students who do not complete their homework are more likely to drop out of school. Students and schools benefit with the positive outcomes related to parent involvement. Students achieve more, and schools experience fewer problems with those students who are achieving at higher levels.

The advantages to homework are numerous to those who are proponents of homework assignments. Conners (1992) described some of the advantages to homework completion. Homework helps students organize their time, allows teachers to make better use of class time, and teaches students to take charge of their own learning. Homework also provides a method of communication between home and school, satisfies parents need to see what their child is learning, and improves grades (Conners, 1992).

Previously in this paper many of the above reasons were given by other authors as benefits to homework assignments. Cooper (1994), Becker (1982), and Epstein (1983), all describe the benefits to parental involvement and list homework as a key component to communication between home and school. The organizing time component was argued by deCarvalho (2001) and Kralovek & Buell (2000). They both despaired over the lack of research to support homework teaching students how to organize their time, stating that parents were at a loss for time and had to be organized themselves to model it for their students. Clark (1993) studied homework parenting



behaviors, stating “the climate and conditions in the home can affect learning patterns” (Clark, 1993, 96). Yet, Anderson (1986) supports the issue of parental expectations of homework assignments; they had homework, and expect to see their children have homework. Parents want learning activities sent home (Goodall, 1985).

#### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK

Homework, defined as teacher assigned activities that students complete at home, has many purposes, designs, and outcomes. “For elementary-school students, most of these activities represent an effort to complete teacher assigned homework tasks” (Clark, 1993, 85). Parental involvement in reading takes many forms. Parents can model reading themselves, they can provide help at school with monitoring students reading, and they can work directly with students. Parents with training and/or guided activities for reading have been shown to foster a greater increase in student’s reading achievement than parents with no guidance (Anderson, 1986). It can be concluded that parents need guidance for literacy based homework in order to foster student achievement. Children become better readers when the literacy based activities are fun and meaningful (Douville, 2000).

Parents in a kindergarten program in Maryland reported that they wanted learning activities sent home. The teachers sent home activities that would foster communication between parent and child. There was a 90% participate rate in supervision of these activities sent home (Goodall, 1985). Increased involvement in student activities was seen in a 2000 study by Johnson, et al., as well. Parents were taught during a 9 week period how to increase learning at home. Elementary parents

increased reading to their children, and upper grade parents increased their homework monitoring of their children. The goal of this parent involvement program was to increase parent participation in learning activities at home (Johnson, et al, 2000). Younger children often elicit more help with their homework by the very nature of the activities. (Hoover-Dempsey, et al, 2001).

Academic benefits of homework seem to increase as grade level increases. The average student in high school who completes their homework outperforms those students who do not complete their homework. Students in lower grades do not show academic benefits of homework completion. Students in grades 2 and 4 time spent on homework was negatively correlated with class grades. Whereas students in grades 6-12 showed a positive relation with time spent on homework and class grades (Cooper, et al, 1998).

The varied purposes of homework at different grades levels provide some reasoning toward the varied achievement levels at each grade. “Research indicates that the correlation between time spent on homework and achievement is lower for students in elementary school than secondary school” (Muhlenbruck, et al, 2000, 296).

#### LITERACY IN KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten most often begins the formal schooling period in a child’s academic career. Currently in Texas, children are required to enter school if they are 6 years old before September 1 of the current school year. “Children who are five years of age on or before September 1 are not required to attend kindergarten. However, **on enrollment in kindergarten**, a child **shall** attend school. Compulsory school attendance begins at age

six” (bold in original text) (TEA, 2004). Texas adopts standards for reading instruction as per the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). These standards are required curriculum in all Texas Kindergarten classrooms.

Phonemic awareness activities are the basis for learning to read. Kindergarten TEKS state that students shall master letters and sounds in the alphabet. Bruneau, et al (1998) developed a phonemic awareness program in her kindergarten classroom which helps students grow in literacy awareness. Literacy in Kindergarten requires print rich activities, writing activities, and varied reading opportunities (Bruneau, et al, 1998). Many children begin Kindergarten having been read to regularly. “Their caretakers have pointed out environmental print in grocery stores, while traveling in cars, and in daily excursions” (Bruneau, et al, 1998, 70).

In *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (Bredekamp, 1987) encouraged educators to take a more active role in the education of young children. Christie, Enz, & Vukelich (1997) state the constructivist model of teaching reading included the recognition that literacy is embedded in context. DAP in today’s kindergarten incorporates opportunities for embedded literacy. Elizabeth Peabody, an early kindergarten pioneer, believed that language should be taught before reading skills. Emergent literacy theory can be traced to the maturation theories of the 1920’s. Emergent literacy theorists believed children needed to master a series of visual, auditory, and motor skills to master reading. Peabody’s interest in spreading the word about educational benefits for the kindergarten student helped to establish the idea of Froebel’s theory of building prior knowledge for learning (Allen, 1988). Children must

have strong exposure in pre-reading and literacy skills to become successful readers. Concrete literacy experiences have been present in kindergarten classrooms since the days of Elizabeth Peabody.

Barbara Foorman developed the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) to identify children who need extra help with literacy and learning to read. The ability to recognize certain sounds and letters she determined formed the basis for identification of at risk students needing extra help. “For a reading program to be effective, the teacher must devote some time each day to teaching individual children rather than the whole class” (Curtis, 1999, 137). TPRI helps identify those students needing extra help in the classroom.

#### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN KINDERGARTEN LITERACY ACQUISITION

Literacy begins early in a child’s life. Activities that foster this development should begin with the child’s first teacher, their parent. Parents, not schools, lay the foundation for children’s learning to read (Anderson, 1986). The foundation in literacy laid by parents is critical to student achievement. “Knowledge about letters and sounds, print and pictures, and words and sentences is a prerequisite for learning to read and write” (Bodrova & Paynter, 1999). This foundation begins early in a child’s life, and needs to be supported. Bodrova and Paynter (1999) stated that the early years are critical in literacy development. Early childhood educators need to be involved with parents as partners in a child’s learning. They should seek opportunities for children and parents to have educational fun together (Swick, 2001a).

Swick, et al (1997) began the “On Board Early” program based upon the premise that the early years are the best time to begin the family-school-community partnership. This program begins with a family centered approach to prepare for kindergarten transition. Home visits provide parents with activities that foster literacy skills. On Board Early is one program that indicates a parental involvement is a positive influence in children’s literacy development (Swick, et al, 1997). Parental involvement at school increased with this program. Academic benefits were not measured in this study.

Dawson & Schnulle (2003) recently completed a study on parental involvement in literacy skills. They attempted to increase parental involvement in literacy skills at the Kindergarten level. “Increasing parental involvement proved to be (sic) difficult because it included an outside factor, the parents themselves” (Dawson & Schnulle, 2003, 51). The results proved that parental involvement was difficult to obtain, and did not affect student’s achievement scores on literacy measurements (Dawson & Schnulle, 2003).

## SUMMARY

Parents and teachers have many opportunities to work together for the benefit of the student. When parents and teachers work together, students see the importance of education. Within Epstein’s framework of six types of involvement, the learning at home component seems to be one that is reasonable for most parents. Most parents can and do spend time with their child on learning activities at home.

It is up to teachers to create meaningful activities for parents to complete with their child at home. Using the knowledge that not all parents have enormous amounts of

time, and the education to understand the work sent home, teachers can call upon resources to send home for meaningful homework activities. Teachers can use parent nights to show parents activities to use at home. They can send home interactive homework, encourage reading at home, and also inform parents that encouragement is important, even if parents do not have the education to help.

Unfortunately when parents are only contacted when there is bad news, the parent does not want any type of contact with the school. Parents and teachers need to create a life long partnership up into the high school grades. Students and schools benefit when there is a partnership created for the education of a child. A positive method of partnership can be learning activities at home.

Teachers need to take advantage of this cost-less resource and invest some time into developing or seeking out meaningful activities to send home. Students who complete homework regularly are better students and more prepared for class. Parents who have a positive outlook on the school are more willing to help however they can.

In conclusion, the homework issue seems to be up for debate. Teachers feel they should send it home, parents feel they should do it. The issue of achievement related to homework completion is still under study. Even though students who complete homework are shown to be higher achieving students, whether this is an innate intelligence issue is under my question. Undoubtedly homework will be assigned, some students will do it, some will not. If the work were not sent home, would the students do better or worse in school?

The key might lie in research looking at how parents do the homework with their children. What language skills are parents using to help children with homework needs to be investigated. This might hold the key into the time issue that parents are reporting. Given the fact that parents of low achieving students report more time spent on homework, this might be due to the issue of how they are explaining the work. They might take several tries to explain work, whereas a more educated parent would know how to explain the work to the child. Parents want to help their children, and teachers should provide meaningful experiences for academic interaction.

There is no research in the area of parental involvement in kindergarten homework. Muhlenbruck, et al (2000) provide research indicating that homework completion is more influential to academic achievement as a student rises through the grade levels. Swick, et al (1997) give indications that the early years are instrumental in developing school-home partnerships. This study will address the competing nature of the research regarding parental involvement in young children's homework. Due to the lack of research in homework for kindergarten age students, further study is necessary.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study used a quasi-experimental pre/post test with treatment design. The design could be true experimental due to the non-randomization of subjects. Students were not randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. The school district registrar established class groups before the researcher began intervention procedures.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT**

##### **Demographics**

The district chosen for this study had over 34,597 students enrolled in the 2002-2003 school year. The district is a large urban/suburban school district in Southeast Texas. According to the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (2003), a Texas accountability ranking system, African American students account for approximately thirteen percent and Hispanic students number twenty two percent of the population in the district enrollment. Approximately fifty six percent of the students are white. The remainder of the student population consists of Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American students. The ethnicity of students enrolled in Kindergarten is comparable to the rest of the district.

During the 2002-2003 school year over 2,213 Kindergarten students were enrolled. The district's 20 Elementary schools implemented a full day program for all Kindergarten students in the 2002-2003 school year. All students in the study attended this Kindergarten full day program.



Permission was given by the district to gather data during the 2002-2003 school year. The researcher met with district officials to determine the benefits to the district that might result from this study. The district provided full support during the course of this study.

### Reading Achievement

The school district, in its commitment to ensure all students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade, begins monitoring student reading achievement in Kindergarten. The Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) is a criterion-referenced test to measure reading skills. TPRI has a screening and an inventory section. Those who do not meet the passing requirements for the screening section are then administered the inventory section. All students enrolled in the district's Kindergarten, first, and second grade classes are individually administered the screening, listening comprehension, and inventory sections of the TPRI by their classroom teacher.

The Kindergarten battery is used for all Kindergarten students enrolled in the district. The mid-year TPRI is given in December during the third six-week grading period. The summative TPRI is given at the end of April during the fifth six-week grading period. There is a period of approximately twelve weeks between the administration of the mid-year TPRI and the summative TPRI.

The district's reading intervention program is a district-wide program for at-risk students in Kindergarten to third grade. Students who do not pass the screening portion of the TPRI are assigned to this district-sponsored reading intervention program. These

students spend time in small groups with their classroom teacher. The student receives reading instruction based upon weaknesses identified using the TPRI.

For thirty minutes per day, five days a week, the classroom teacher works with TPRI identified at-risk students. These students are given activities designed to help accelerate reading achievement to grade level.

#### INSTRUMENTATION

For the purposes of this study, the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) was used as a pre- and post-test to assess student performance. The pre-test was the mid-year TPRI; the post-test was the summative TPRI. All students are given the screening portion of the TPRI. If students did not pass the screening portion of the TPRI, they were then given the inventory section. For the purposes of this study, only the TPRI test score from the letter/sound identification of the screening portion for the MOY and EOY was used for analysis.

The screening portion of the TPRI involves identification of letters and letter sounds. Students are asked to name upper and lower case letters, and then give the sound for the letter. A point was given for every correct letter name sounded. Students who identified four or more letter sounds in the mid-year assessment and eight or more letter sounds in the end of year assessment were not administered the inventory section of the test. It can be determined that all students were given the letter/sound portion of the screening section during the MOY and EOY TPRI administration.

Students who named fewer than four letter sounds and five or fewer blending onset-rimes & phonemes in the mid-year assessment are given the inventory section of

the test. Students who name fewer than eight letter sounds and fewer than six blending onset-rimes & phonemes at the end of year assessment are given the inventory section of the test. The inventory section has seven tasks designed to measure reading skills. Rhyming, blending word parts, blending phonemes, detecting initial sounds, and detecting final sounds are measured. Letter identification and letter to sound linking are also measured in the inventory section. All students were not administered the inventory section of the TPRI, therefore these scores were not used for analysis in this study.

#### TREATMENT

This study provided at home reading activities to all students involved in the treatment group. Changes in reading achievement were measured for all students. School Home Links activity guides provided activities that build reading skills. Parents were given activities to complete with their child. Activities sent home for this research pinpointed skills measured on the TPRI test. Activities such as rhyming, blending, concepts of print, and letter sounds were sent home (Appendix A).

#### PROCEDURE

Fourteen teachers at three different schools, chosen from those who volunteered to participate, were asked to use the SHL activity guide homework with their classrooms; these classrooms constituted the experimental group. Chosen from another set of volunteers, twenty additional teachers' classrooms at four different schools constituted the control group. The control group teachers did not use the SHL with their classrooms. All schools were part of the same school district. A contact teacher at each school was asked to distribute information to the other teachers.

The treatment group teachers received School Home Links materials (Appendix A). The teachers were asked to send two SHL activity guides home with students at the beginning of each week for twelve weeks. A letter explaining how to complete the SHL activity guides accompanied the first set sent home to parents (Appendix B). Teachers were given the option to send home additional homework as needed. Additional homework might include math activities, take home readers, science, or social studies activities. The researcher could not control additional homework that was sent home. One teacher in the experimental group did not consistently return SHL activity guide homework to the researcher and was eliminated from the study at the end of the study period. The researcher continued to send materials to this teacher, as all teachers had asked to be included in the study to maintain consistency within the grade level at that school.

The SHL activity guides were collected by the classroom teacher at the end of each week for twelve weeks. Activity guides, signed by parents and returned each week to the classroom teacher, were sent to the researcher weekly. Some teachers waited a few weeks before sending sets of completed homework to the researcher. The researcher provided teachers with pre-addressed envelopes to facilitate return of the activity guides. Teachers were asked to label their sets of homework, and to clearly write student names on homework without any identification. The researcher kept file folders for each week of homework; therefore it was easily seen if any teacher did not return a set of homework. Email contact was maintained during the course of the study with all

teachers. The researcher sent encouragement and thanks to each teacher as assignments were returned.

Each teacher administered the TPRI according to the testing calendar set by the district. All kindergarten students were given the TPRI test. After the summative TPRI administration, teachers in the 33 SHL and control classrooms were asked to send parental assent forms home for parent signature. A letter of explanation accompanied the consent form (Appendix C). The consent form had a Spanish translation copied on the reverse side.

Out of 600 consent forms sent to student homes, permission was granted for release of over 311 students' data. Teachers sent the signed consent forms to the researcher and some forms were mailed directly to the researcher from the parent. The researcher also had several phone calls from parents asking for further explanation of the study.

Only data of students whose parents gave assent for their child's scores to be released were used in this study. The teachers then provided a copy of the MOY and EOY TPRI Summary Sheets for each student with parental assent to the researcher.

Each summary sheet, parental consent, and completed homework was collated together for data analysis. There were some consent forms that could not be used. Factors for non-use included no clear name on the form, missing test data, duplicate forms, and one form signed for a student living in the same household but in a different grade level. All data was filed into file folders and maintained for reference.

The researcher used Microsoft Excel to tally student data. A spreadsheet was created to tally student data. Student numerical scores on the pre-test, MOY TPRI, the post-test, EOY TPRI, and participation/non-participation in district reading intervention program and SHL completion rates were then entered into SPSS for analysis.

#### METHOD OF ANALYSIS

A *t* test was done to determine if there was a difference between mid-year TPRI scores for the participatory and non-participatory groups. Each research question was answered using ANOVA and a determined statistical significance of .05. Data is reported in tables and paragraph form in Chapter IV.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

Data was entered into SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Packages for Social Science) for analysis. Each of the six research questions were answered using comparison of means and a t-test for analysis. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) between students' mean gain on the letter-sound correspondence portion of the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) were analyzed using the middle of the year (MOY) administration score and the end of year (EOY) administration score. A confidence level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance. No statistically significant difference was found for any of the comparisons between groups in the study.

Total participation in the study was 311. N for each sub-group is given in tables in this section. Research Question 5 did not yield sufficient N to analyze data collected. More than 311 consent forms were sent out, as described previously in the methodology section of this study. Due to the nature of informed consent procedures, the researcher did not have control over which participants gave consent. It can be assumed that each sub group for the entire study is a comparable representation of the nature of the entire population for the district. Table 1 gives a breakdown of N for each sub-group.

An initial analysis was done to determine if there was a statistical significance between the MOY scores for the experimental and control group. Total participation in the study was N=311, with the control group N=164 and the experimental group N=147. A t-test for equality of means resulted in a significance of .315, with equal variances

assumed. Based upon a significance factor of .05, it can be determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental MOY scores.

#### EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION IN SHL ON TPRI SCORE GAINS

Table 1  
Number of Students in Sub-Groups

	Experimental Group (received SHL)	Control Group (did not receive SHL)
Total students in each group	147	164
Students not assigned to district reading program	135	153
Students assigned to district reading program	12	11

Table 2  
Summary of Findings  
Questions 1-3

Research Question	N	SHL-N	Control-N	F	Significance
1	311	147	164	.005	.943
2	23	12	11	.029	.867
3	288	135	153	.128	.721



## RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Do students whose parents were provided the School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) than students whose parents were not provided the SHL activity guide homework?

This research question was to determine if SHL activity guide homework would have an impact on TPRI scores from the MOY to the EOY administration. A comparison group was chosen to factor out the impact of a regular educational setting's effect on TPRI scores. Table 1 gives a breakdown of N for each group. Table 2 gives a summary of findings.

Students whose parents were provided the School-Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework showed an increase of 1.81 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. Students whose parents were not provided SHL activity guide homework showed an increase of 1.79 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. A t-test for ANOVA showed a significance of .943 between the SHL and non-SLH group with  $F=.005$ . Based upon a .05 level of significance, this value is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be reported that there is no statistical difference between the control and experimental students' gains in score.

## RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Do students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment

and whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?

This question was formulated to rule out the impact of a district reading program. Students placed in the district sponsored reading program received special instruction that the regular education student did not receive. A comparison was made between this group of students (N=23) scores from the MOY to the EOY TPRI administration. Table 1 gives a breakdown of N for each group.

Students whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework and who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI MOY assessment showed an increase of 6.17 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. Students whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework and who participated in a district reading intervention program showed an increase of 6.00 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. A t-test for ANOVA showed a significance of .867 between the SHL and the non-SHL group with  $F=.029$ . Based upon a .05 significance level, this value is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental students' gains in score.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Do students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the TPRI and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program and whose parents were not

given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?

This question was formulated to compare the scores of students who only received regular education, and did not participate in the district reading intervention program. The majority of participants in this study fall into this category, with N=288. This question was used to rule out the impact of the district reading intervention program.

Students whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework and who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the TPRI showed an increase of 1.42 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. Students whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework and who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program showed an increase of 1.49 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. A t-test for ANOVA showed a significance of .721 between the SHL and non-SLH group with  $F=.128$ . Based upon a .05 level of significance, this value is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental students' gains in score.

## EFFECT OF RETURN RATE OF SHL ON TPRI SCORE GAINS

Table 3  
Number of Students in Homework Returned Categories

	Number of students	Returned 2/3 or more of homework	Returned Less than 1/3 of homework
All SHL students	147	106	14
Students not assigned to district reading program	135	99	12
Students assigned to district reading program	12	7	2

Table 4  
Summary of Findings  
Questions 4-6

Research Question	N	More than 2/3-N	Less than 1/3-N	F	Significance
4	147	106	14	1.364	.213
5	12	7	2	Insufficient N	
6	135	99	12	1.123	.353

## RESEARCH QUESTION 4

Do students whose parents participate in the SHL activity guide homework by completing more than 2/3 of the activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students whose parents complete less than 1/3 of SHL activity guide homework?

This question was formulated to determine if levels of completion made a difference in the gains from the MOY to EOY TPRI scores. Previously, questions 1-3

only looked at if the parent was provided the SHL activity guide homework, not how much was completed. Completion was determined by a parental signature on the SHL activity guide homework. As described in the methodology section of this study, papers were collated and counted after informed consent was obtained. N for each group is listed in Table 3. Table 4 gives a summary of findings.

Students whose parents participated in the SHL activity guide homework by completing more than 2/3 of the activities, 9 to 12 completed SHL activity guide assignments (high parent involvement), showed an increase of 1.60 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. Students whose parents participated in the SHL activity guide homework by completing less than 1/3 of the activities, 0 to 4 completed SHL activity guide assignments (low parent involvement), showed an increase of 2.57 mean points from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. A t-test for ANOVA showed a significance of .213 between the high parent involvement group and low parent involvement group with  $F=1.364$ . Based upon a .05 level of significance, this value is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be reported that there is no statistical difference between the high and low parental participation groups' gains in score.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION 5

Do students who participate in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment, and whose parents complete more than 2/3 of SHL activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than those who participate in a district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than 1/3 of SHL activity guide homework?

This question was formulated to determine if the level of completion of SHL activity guide homework, in addition to participation in a district reading intervention program impacted TPRI scores. Due to the limited group size of the participants in the district reading intervention program, it was impossible to determine any significance. A further breakdown to determine N for the high and low parent completion created an insignificant N for each group ( $N < 10$ ). Therefore, insufficient N was available to determine ANOVA.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION 6

Do students who do not participate in the district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the mid year TPRI test and whose parents complete more than 2/3 of SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who did not participate in the district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than 1/3 of SHL activity guide homework?

This question was formulated to determine if the combination of a regular educational program in addition to either high or low parental involvement impacted TPRI scores. High parental involvement consisted of determination of more than 2/3 SHL activity guide homework completed, and low parental involvement consisted of determination of less than 1/3 SHL activity guide homework completed. N for each group is listed in Table 3.

Students whose parents completed more than 2/3, 9 to 12 completed SHL activity guide assignments (high parent involvement), and who did not participate in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the MOY TPRI test showed a mean gain of 1.29 from the MOY to the EOY administration

of the TPRI. Students whose parents completed less than 1/3, 0 to 4 completed SHL activity guide assignments (low parent involvement), of SHL activity guide homework and who did not participate in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the MOY TPRI test showed a mean gain of 2.08 from the MOY to the EOY administration of the TPRI. A t-test for ANOVA showed a significance of .353 between the high and low parent involvement groups with  $F=1.123$ . Based upon a .05 level of significance, this value is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be determined that there is no statistical difference between the high and low parental participation groups' gains in score.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter V is divided into three parts. The first part is a summary of the research conducted. The next part consists of conclusions gathered from the study. Finally, recommendations for further research are made with reference to the limitations of this study, and questions that arose from this study.

#### **SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHOD**

This research investigated how parents could become an active participant in their child's reading education. There are many types of parental involvement in education. Epstein (1995) lists six categories for parent involvement. The focus of this research study was the category of learning at home. Learning at home involves homework assignments or interaction involving academics related to school (Epstein, 1995). This research focused on the effect of homework assignments on Kindergarten Texas Primary Reading Inventory scores. Research by Epstein (1983), Becker (1982), and deCarvalho (2001) support evidence that teachers need guidance in providing relevant homework activities, therefore for the purposes of this study, homework was provided to the experimental group.

Teachers assign homework in all grade levels. Epstein (1983) and Becker (1982) have established the positive academic impact of parent involvement in homework on upper elementary students. No research has addressed the effect of homework on Kindergarten students' achievement. This study addressed the use of homework in Kindergarten.



A large suburban school district was the location for this study. All twenty elementary schools were asked to volunteer for this study, with principals of seven schools giving permission for the researcher to approach teachers for volunteers to participate. A total of 33 teachers were involved. The researcher sent out over 700 informed consent requests for student data with a return rate of less than  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The final data set included 311 students.

Kindergarten parents were provided with structured activities to guide interaction with their kindergarten child at home. Teachers were asked to send home School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework each week for 12 weeks. Parents signed the homework each week and returned the homework to their teacher as verification that the activities had been completed with their child. Teachers were asked to send all SHL activity guide homework to the researcher for data analysis.

Teachers followed the district testing schedule for (Texas Primary Reading Inventory) TPRI administration. Every Kindergarten student was administered the TPRI in December (MOY) and again in May (EOY). Student TPRI summary sheets were sent to the researcher for each student involved in the study.

Parental assent forms were sent home after the administration of the EOY TPRI test. Even though all students enrolled in the selected experimental group received SHL activity guide homework, only the scores of students with parental assent were analyzed. Only scores of students with parental assent in the control group were analyzed. Over 700 parental assent forms were sent out. A total of 147 assent forms were returned by

parents of children in the experimental schools, and a total of 164 assent forms were returned by parents of children in the control group schools.

For the control and experimental group each student's letter/sound score was entered into SPSS for the MOY and EOY TPRI, and average gains were calculated. Groups of students were isolated and analyzed for gain based upon participation in a district reading program, and/or high or low parental involvement in SHL activity guide homework.

Students were placed into district reading program groups based upon not passing the screening portion of the MOY TPRI. These students received preferential time with the teacher for 30 minutes a day in a small group setting; therefore, their scores were isolated and analyzed for change/gain outside of the normal control and experimental large group.

Categories of high and low parent involvement were created, and analyzed for gain from the MOY and EOY TPRI administration. High parent involvement was classified as more than 2/3 of the SHL activity guide homework returned. Low parent involvement was classified as less than 1/3 of the SHL activity guide homework returned.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Several research questions were addressed in this study. Each question was designed to determine if parental completion of School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework had an effect on student Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) scores. Sub groups to analyze were based upon student placement in a district reading program due to

qualifications set forth for the Middle of Year (MOY) administration of the TPRI. Sub groups were also created due to high or low parental completion of the SHL activity guide homework. Data was collected to answer the following six research questions:

1. Do students whose parents were provided the School Home Links (SHL) activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) than students whose parents were not provided the SHL activity guide homework?
2. Do students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who participated in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment and whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?
3. Do students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the TPRI and whose parents were given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who were not enrolled in a district reading intervention program and whose parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the SHL activity guide homework?

4. Do students whose parents participate in the SHL activity guide homework by completing more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?
5. Do students who participate in a district reading intervention program as a result of not passing the screening portion of the TPRI mid-year assessment, and whose parents complete more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of SHL activities show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than those who participate in a district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?
6. Do students who do not participate in the district reading intervention program as a result of passing the screening portion of the mid year TPRI test and whose parents complete more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework show greater gains between the mid-year and summative TPRI than students who did not participate in the district reading intervention program and whose parents complete less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of SHL activity guide homework?

## CONCLUSIONS

There was not a statistically significant difference in the increase among any of the groups of students. Research question 5 could not be answered due to insufficient N, therefore is inconclusive in this study. This study was limited to Kindergarten age students.

Research in the upper grades show that homework completion and parent involvement positively affect student achievement. Students whose parents are involved in their education reap many benefits. These benefits include higher academic achievement (Davies, 1991). Fuller & Olsen (1998), Davies (1991), and Epstein (1995) believe parent involvement is a stronger indicator of student achievement than socio-economic status, parent education, ethnicity, or any other indicator. The research supports the use of homework for upper grades. The results of this study remain inconclusive for Kindergarten age students.

## LIMITATIONS

The researcher encountered several barriers within the course of this study. In order to conduct research in the district, the researcher was bound by constraints put forth by the district. There were also several unavoidable events that limited the size and scope of the study. The time frame, testing, district reading group participation, parent participation, and additional homework assignments were some limitations within this study.

The district selected had established TPRI testing as part of their reading assessment. The state of Texas requires districts to choose a research based testing as

part of their assessment program. The researcher was limited in the measurements provided by the TPRI. There might have been gains which resulted in student's being provided SHL activity guide homework that were not measured by the TPRI test. Some possible results could have been parent/child interaction, increased knowledge of student progress in school, participation in other school activities, or report card averages. The researcher did not have access to a measurement for this type of data. The TPRI test provided student knowledge of letter sounds.

In addition to measurement limitations, the homework factor itself was limited in its controllability by the researcher. It was impossible to control the additional homework sent home with either the experimental or control group. This study was limited in its control of outside factors such as parental tutoring, other types of homework used by the teacher, or if the homework was actually completed, or just signed. Some of the activities involved only verbal interaction, with no written verification other than a signature of completion, making it questionable if the parent truly interacted with the child. In contrast, some of the SHL activity guide homework returned to the researcher had additional comments and activities written on the papers, indicating additional work done by the parent with their child.

Verification of signatures was based upon an honesty factor. Some students SHL activity guide homework was completed with daycare workers, and some was completed with auxiliary teachers, such as during an ESL class (as verified by classroom teachers' notes on some returned homework). Care was taken when assessing data to use only data

that could be considered valid by cross verification of signatures. The researcher maintained controlled conditions wherever possible.

Group size was limited to the set of data with parental assent. A larger group size might have yielded statistically significant results for the research questions. A question also arises out of the procedure of informed consent. It is possible that parents who returned the consent forms were more likely to return signed homework, as well. A representative group might not be possible with the constraint of informed consent required in a valid research study. It can only be assumed that a cross section of the population was a representation of the true nature of the entire population given the opportunity to participate.

It can be determined that this study is a measurement of those who chose to participate by giving informed consent to the researcher. The results of this study can be used for further study. Questions that arose out of the administration of this study provide recommendations for further study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions for revision and a need for further study arose out of the administration of this study. Additional pre and post test measures, more controlled homework, or other homework could be provided, and a larger group size could provide additional data.

The TPRI is limited in its measure of student academic ability, as the screening portion only measures letters and sounds. It would be helpful to gather more thorough pre-test and post-test data for each group; therefore specific academic gains might be

measured. Use of report card data, parental questionnaires, or more extensive ability testing could be used.

Additional parent guidelines could be sent home with each homework assignment, and other assignments limited to control for time and management barriers faced by parents. Teachers would need to suspend additional homework assignments, or remain consistent with additional assignments, such as Math homework. This modification would result in assurance that the homework and not other factors influenced the testing results.

This study has shown that there is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control group TPRI scores when homework is an independent variable. Recommendations for further study have been given, and limitations to this study have been described.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**SCHOOL HOME LINKS ACTIVITY GUIDE**

## SCHOOL-HOME LINKS / BOOK LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Family, Your child is learning how to use pictures to guess what might happen in a story. Please read this page to your child.**

- Pick out a book and name the title and author.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Before you read a book today with your family, look at the cover and at the pictures. Write below what you think will happen in the story.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- After reading the story with your family, write below what really happened. Did you guess right?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/ Makes Predictions about Stories/ 1



# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning that words are read from left to right. Please read this page to your child.

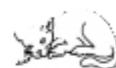
Circle the beginning of the word.

f o x



Circle the middle of the word.

c a t



Circle the ending of the word.

h a t



Circle the beginning of the word.

b o x



Circle the middle of the word.

c u p



Circle the ending of the word.

s i x



Circle the beginning of the word.

b e d



Circle the middle of the word.

j e t



Circle the ending of the word.

p i g



Circle the beginning of the word.

b u s



Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Begins to Track Print/7

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# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to notice each word in a sentence.

- Read each sentence below to your child.
- Have your child clap each time you read a word.
  1. The house is big.
  2. The mouse is small.
  3. I see a tall tree.
  4. I like to read.
  5. The box is red.
  6. I see a green ball.
- **More Fun:** Speak slowly to your child, pausing between each word. Show your child how to clap once for every word you say.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/ Knows Words Join Together to Make a Sentence/1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Family, Your child is learning where to begin reading on a page.**

- Read the title of the book sent home by your child's teacher or one that you already have at home.
- Look at the cover.
- Open the book to the first page.
- Point to where the text begins on the first page.
- Read the first page. Use your finger to point to each word as you read.
- Have your child point to where the text begins on the second page. Read the second page. Continue until you have read the whole story together.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Begins to Track Print/4







# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning that we read English from left to right and from top to bottom.

- Read the words in "Colors" (below) to your child.
- Put the eraser end of a pencil or your finger under each word as it is read.
- Have your child color each picture.

## Colors

A red apple	
An orange ball	
A yellow star	
Green grass	
Blue jeans	
Purple flowers	

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Begins to Track Print/3.

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning that English reads from left to right and top to bottom.

- Read the story "I Like to Play" (below) to your child.
- Put the eraser end of a pencil or your finger under each word as it is read.

## I Like to Play

I like to run.

I like to skip.

I like to hop.

I like to jump.

I like to play.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

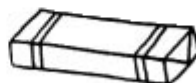
K/Begins to Track Print/2.

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to spell simple words.  
Please read this page to your child.

- Look at each picture and name the object.
- Use a pencil to circle four of the things you like best.
- Sound out each word for the four pictures.
- Write the letters that spell each word on the lines below the picture.



Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Uses Phonemic Awareness and Letter Knowledge to Spell/2

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to spell simple words.  
Please read this page to your child.

- Look at each picture and name the object.
- Sound out the word for each picture.
- Write the letters that spell each word on the lines under the picture (**bus, cat, mop, bat**).



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Uses Phonemic Awareness and Letter Knowledge to Spell/1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Family, Your child is learning to make a rhyme. Please read this page to your child.**

- Point to each word and say it out loud.
- Say a word that rhymes.
- Write the rhyming word on the line.
- Read the rhyming pair out loud.

1. rat \_\_\_\_\_

2. ball \_\_\_\_\_

3. fish \_\_\_\_\_

4. dog \_\_\_\_\_

5. cake \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/When Given a Word Can Produce Another Word That Rhymes with It/2



# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Family, Your child is learning to listen to the number of syllables in a word.**

- Get a spoon or pencil and give it to your child.
- Read each word to your child.
- As you read each word, ask your child to tap the table for each syllable in the word.

1. wagon (wag/on) (2 taps)

2. marigold (mar/i/gold) (3 taps)

3. butter (but/ter) (2 taps)

4. pickles (pick/les) (2 taps)

5. strawberry (straw/ber/ry) (3 taps)

6. chair (chair) (1 tap)

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/When Given Sound Segments Can Merge Them into a Meaningful Word/3.

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to notice the number of syllables in a word.

- Read each word.
- Have your child clap once for each syllable in the word.

1.	cat	(cat)	(1 clap)
2.	sing	(sing)	(1 clap)
3.	baby	(ba/by)	(2 claps)
4.	silly	(sil/ly)	(2 claps)
5.	puppy	(pup/py)	(2 claps)
6.	water	(wa/ter)	(2 claps)

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/When Given Sound Segments Can Merge Them into a Meaningful Word/2

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning the sound each letter makes in a word.

- Say each word to your child with a short pause between the letters (**b-o-x**).
- Have your child repeat the letter sounds back to you (**b-o-x**).
- Repeat each word with a shorter pause between the letters (**box**).
- Have your child say the word (**box**).

1. <b>b-o-x</b> <b>box</b>	4. <b>c-u-p</b> <b>cup</b>	7. <b>b-e-d</b> <b>bed</b>
2. <b>c-a-p</b> <b>cap</b>	5. <b>c-a-t</b> <b>cat</b>	8. <b>h-i-t</b> <b>hit</b>
3. <b>d-o-g</b> <b>dog</b>	6. <b>p-o-t</b> <b>pot</b>	9. <b>s-a-t</b> <b>sat</b>

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/When Given Sound Segments Can Merge Them into a Meaningful Word/1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to recognize words that rhyme. Please read this page to your child.

- Point to each word and read it.
- Put an X on each word that rhymes with **cat**.

1.	mat	car	jam
2.	tree	bat	sat
3.	red	cup	rat
4.	hat	fat	sun

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Within Sets of Words Can Identify Words Sharing the Same Sound / 1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to read some words without sounding them out.

- Read the story below to your child, pointing out the words as you read.
- Read the story again and when you come to an underlined word, ask your child to read the word to you.

## I Like My Cat

I like my cat. My cat is a good cat.

We like to play. Do you like cats?

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Recognizes Some Words by Sight/2

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to read some words quickly without sounding them out.

- Tell your child that some of the words below can not be sounded out (**is, are, the, my, you, I, of**). They need to be remembered.
- Read the words on each strip to your child.
- Ask your child to practice reading the words with you.

a	is	can	are
---	----	-----	-----

the	my	you	me
-----	----	-----	----

I	and	of	we
---	-----	----	----

- **More Fun:** Can you find any of the words above in a book you are reading with your family?

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Recognizes Some Words by Sight/1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning the sound that each letter makes.

- Read each line to your child (**A is for "apple"**).
- Have your child tell the letter for the sound he or she hears at the beginning of the word.

1. A is for "apple"

2. M is for "man"

3. R is for "rain"

4. B is for "blue"

5. P is for "puppy"

6. D is for "drum"

7. S is for "sock"

8. T is for "turtle"

9. I is for "ice cream"

10. L is for "lion"

11. G is for "girl"

12. N is for "nut"

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_









K/Learns One-to-One Letter/Sound Correspondences/6

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning that every word has an ending sound. Please read this page to your child.

- Name each picture. Listen for the last sound.
- Write the letter for the last sound you hear.

 g                      n	 g                      n
 g                      n	 g                      n
 g                      n	 g                      n
 g                      n	 g                      n

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/ Learns One-to-One Letter/Sound Correspondences/4

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# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to name letters by the sounds they make. Please read this page to your child.

- For each letter, say the sound that the letter makes.
- Name the letter that matches the sound.

1. /r/ as in rat

2. /u/ as in under

3. /i/ as in igloo

4. /p/ as in pet

5. /h/ as in hot

6. /y/ as in yes

7. /x/ as in x-ray

8. /m/ as in mom

- **More Fun:** Write your name. Say the names of the letters in your name.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Learns One-to-One Letter/Sound Correspondences/2

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to listen for each sound in a short word.

- Point to each word and say it slowly for your child.
- Ask your child to listen for all the sounds in the word.
- Repeat the word for your child.
- Ask your child to name the sounds.



d-i-g



r-u-g



c-a-t



n-e-t



p-i-g



b-o-x

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Understands That Words Consist of Sequences of Phonemes / 4

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Family, Your child is learning to put sounds together to read simple words. Please read this page to your child.**

- Look at each letter in the words below.
- Make all of the sounds of the letters in the word.
- Say the sounds again quickly.
- Say the word.

fun

can

dip

cat

ten

fox

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/ Understands That Words Consist of a Sequence of Phonemes/1

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to read uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet. Please read this page to your child.

- Read each letter.
- Draw a circle around each uppercase letter.

l h M c A E m F

l h A G b J f L

D K L B k G c j

- **More Fun:** Ask your family for a newspaper or a magazine. Find one sentence. Circle all the uppercase letters in that sentence.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Recognizes and Can Name All Uppercase and Lowercase Letters/15

# SCHOOL-HOME LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to recognize uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet. Please read this page to your child.

- Read each letter.
- Draw a circle around each lowercase letter.

M	c	R	V	F	O	P	m
A	m	X	D	g	L	H	I
T	E	W	I	J	B	S	z

- **More Fun:** Ask your family for a newspaper or a magazine. Find one sentence. Circle one lowercase letter in each word in that sentence.

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Recognizes and Can Name All Uppercase and Lowercase Letters/14

## SCHOOL-HOME LINKS / BOOK LINKS

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family, Your child is learning to listen to a story and answer questions. Please read this page to your child.

- Pick out a book and name the title and author.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Read the book with your family and answer the questions below. Ask for help if you need it.

Where does this story take place?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who is the main character in the story?

\_\_\_\_\_

How are you like, or different from, the main character?

Child's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's (Learning Partner's) signature \_\_\_\_\_

K/Correctly Answers Questions about Stories/2

**APPENDIX B**  
**PARENT LETTER**

## A Word to Families and Tutors About the Use of the School-Home Links Activities

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Research tells us that when a family works with their child on schoolwork and becomes involved in their child's learning, their child is more likely to succeed academically. Whether you are a family member or a learning partner/tutor, supporting your child in his or her schoolwork can make a real difference!

The School-Home Links activities provided to you for the next 12 weeks are keyed directly to reading activities that teachers typically do with children in school. These School-Home Links provide your family with an extra opportunity for learning at home.

The School-Home Links are intended to be family activities. Your child will need your support in completing these activities.

Remember that every child learns at his or her own speed, and most children learn within three-year developmental periods.

Some children acquire the skills of a developmental period early; others will take longer and may need to work harder. This means your child may find the School-Home Links very easy, or on grade, or difficult, depending upon your child's rate of growth. Wherever your child is, when you work with your child daily on the School-Home Links and similar reading activities, you can help your child grow steadily in reading and improve important skills.

Here are some tips for working on the School-Home Links activities:

Start each School-Home Links activity time by reading the gray, boxed note, starting "Dear Family." This note explains to parents the purpose of the specific School-Home Links activity, and the literacy skill it addresses.

Next, read the directions for the activity. If the directions are addressed to you, work with your child on the School-Home Links as suggested. If the directions are written to the student, read them out loud to your child, unless she/he can read them alone. Remember, the more a child practices reading, the better a reader he/she will become.

Finally, each School-Home Links activity ends with a space for your child to sign the page, showing he or she has worked on the activity. There is also a space for you to sign, showing that you have worked with your child on the activity. Please return the signed papers to your child's teacher.

Enjoy! The time you spend helping your child read and write is a gift for a lifetime! Literacy is the foundation for all other knowledge!

School-Home Links Reading Kit - February 1999  
[http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/kit\\_word.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/kit_word.html)



**APPENDIX C**  
**INFORMED ASSENT**

## Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a study that is being conducted by Jill Davis. Permission to conduct this study has been given by Dr. Julia Earl, Assistant Superintendent, Klein ISD. His letter stating this is attached. This study will investigate homework practices and their impact on student achievement. You and your child are one of approximately 200 families in Klein ISD who will be asked to participate.

The study will last the course of 12 weeks, and will NOT require you or your child to engage in any activity that is not part of the normal classroom requirements. This means that a participant will NOT be required/asked to do anything more than a non-participant. Your permission is required to release your child's Texas Primary Reading Inventory Scores to the researcher.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board- Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research related problems or questions regarding subjects rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at (979)845-1811.

Please read the following statements and then sign at the bottom.

- I understand there is no compensation for participating in this study.
- I understand that participation is voluntary.
- I understand I can withdraw at any time by informing Dr. Julia Earl or Ms. Jill Davis (281)320-2928.
- I understand that participation will NOT require me to perform any class activities not also required of non-participants.
- I understand that participation is confidential.
- I have read and understand the information contained in this consent form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to me and my child's participation in the study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form in English and in Spanish.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

This research is supervised by Dr. Lynn M. Burlbaw, Teaching, Learning, and Culture/College of Education, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, Phone (979)845-6195.

## VITA

JILL MARIE DAVIS  
18518 Branchdale Lane  
Spring, Texas 77379

### EDUCATION

- 2004 Ph.D., Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas  
Curriculum and Instruction
- 1992 M.Ed., Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas  
Curriculum and Instruction
- 1988 B.S., Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas  
Curriculum and Instruction

### PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

#### Texas:

Elementary Teacher	Kindergarten Endorsement
Principal	English as a Second Language
Instructional Leadership Development	Math
Professional Development Appraisal System	Speech Communications

### EXPERIENCE

- 1997- present: Kindergarten teacher, Klein ISD
- 1996-1997- pre-Kindergarten & ESL teacher (grades K-3), Spring ISD
- 1991-1996- pre-Kindergarten & ESL (grades K-5) teacher, Comal ISD
- 1990-1991- First grade teacher, Granbury ISD
- 1989-1990- Kindergarten & ESL (grades K-5) teacher, Klein ISD
- 1988-1989- Kindergarten teacher, Aldine ISD

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Campus Webmaster, English Language Arts Curriculum Alignment Committee, English Language Arts curriculum writer (Kindergarten), Campus Instructional Development Council, ESL book club sponsor, Campus Technology Mentor, District Technology Class teacher, Curriculum Alignment Campus trainer, Parent Advisory Board Member-Preschool

### PROFFESIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kappa Delta Pi  
Texas Computer Educators Association