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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
PARENTAL GROUP TRAINING SESSIONS
ON EMERGENT LITERACY

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by

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of parental group training sessions on emergent literacy was evaluated. The study investigated if participation in a group training session would increase the number of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts parents use when reading to their children. Adult participants were videotaped reading a book to their children before and after participation in a group training session. The video tapings were analyzed to determine the number of print referencing prompts parent used during each joint book reading interaction. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used prior to participation in a group training session and the number of verbal print referencing prompts parent used following participation in a group training session. Clinical implications and avenues for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Emergent literacy is defined as “children’s earliest awareness of the function and form of literacy” (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, p. 173). In other words, emergent literacy refers to “children’s understanding about reading and writing before they actually acquire these skills” (Gleason, 2001, p. 494).

Emergent literacy involves several different behaviors. These behaviors range from conceptual knowledge about the functions of literacy to more precise specific skills related to print, language, and metalinguistic skills (Mason & Stewart, 1990). Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, and Colton (2001) explained that emergent literacy is made up of two components. These components include conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge. Conceptual knowledge refers to children’s knowledge of the functions of print and their perceptions of themselves as readers. Procedural knowledge refers to children’s knowledge about the mechanics of reading and writing (Senechal et al., 2001). Justice, Weber, Ezell, and Bakeman (2002) stated that emergent literacy skills fall into two domains-written language awareness and phonological awareness. Justice et al. (2002) explained that written language awareness refers to children’s implicit and explicit knowledge about print. The authors defined phonological awareness as children’s knowledge about the sounds of a language (Justice et al., 2002). Dickinson and McCabe (2001) argued that emergent literacy encompasses many

interrelated areas including oral language, phonological awareness, knowledge about print, understanding the relationship between sounds and letters, and knowledge about the uses of print.

Emergent literacy has become the focus of research conducted by many educators and early interventionists. In fact, in response to a Congressional Request, a National Reading Panel of leading reading-research scientists, educators, reading instructors, educational administrators, and parents was formed in 1997. The National Reading Panel was assembled with the purpose of evaluating the status of research-based knowledge concerning reading acquisition approaches. Recent reports published by the National Reading Panel (2000) indicated that while a great deal of knowledge has been gained regarding literacy, further studies are needed and many avenues for future research exist.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of parental group training sessions on emergent literacy. The study examined if participation in a group training session on the use and importance of print referencing prompts would increase the number of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts parents use when reading to their children.

Research Objectives

Research objectives for this study included the following research questions:

- (1) Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?;
- (2) Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?;
- (3) Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of questions parents ask about print when reading to their children?;
- (4) Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of comments about print parents make when reading to their children?;
- (5) Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of requests about print parents make when reading their children?;
- (6) What category of verbal print referencing prompts do the most parents employ when reading to their children?;
- (7) Does the educational level of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?;
- (8) Does the socioeconomic status of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?;

(9) Does the gender of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?;

(10) Does the age of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Importance of Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy is important because research has demonstrated that children's performances on tasks involving emergent literacy skills can serve as predictors of later reading ability (Bryant, Maclean, & Bradley, 1990; Hiebert, 1981; Stuart, 1995). Research has shown that various literacy skills including sensitivity to rhyme and alliteration, phonological recoding, and print awareness are necessary for children to acquire in order to become literate. Bryant et al. (1990) investigated the relationship between children's sensitivity to rhyme and alliteration and their success in reading. The results of the study indicated that children's scores in rhyme and alliteration tests given to them at 4 years predicted their reading and spelling levels at 6 years. The researchers concluded that "the connection between children's sensitivity to rhyme and alliteration is not a mere product of some broader linguistic ability" (Bryant et al., 1990, p. 249). Stuart (1995) conducted a study and found that children who learned to use phonological recoding processes showed greater reading gains. Stuart (1995) concluded that children who could not use phonological recoding processes were at risk for being unsuccessful readers. Hiebert (1981) found that acquisition of print awareness skills over the preschool period is necessary to develop the theoretical constructs of reading acquisition.

Significance of Early Literacy Experiences

Not only has research demonstrated the importance of emergent literacy skills, but studies have also shown the impact of children's early literacy experiences. Chaney (1994) discovered a significant relationship among three year old's family literacy experiences and their overall language development, performance on metalinguistic tasks, and knowledge of print. Chaney (1994) concluded the amount of family literacy involvement serves as a significant predictor of overall language development. Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, and Epstein (1994) found that children who were read to from an early age display more interest in reading books than children who were not. Ely (2001) discovered that children growing up in homes where literacy serves instrumental functions like reading bills and writing checks or grocery lists develop different notions about its worth than children growing up in homes where literacy is greatly valued and emphasized.

Effective Ways to Encourage Development of Emergent Literacy Skills

With the knowledge gained regarding the importance of emergent literacy skills and the impact of early literacy experiences, researchers began conducting studies to determine effective manners of encouraging development of emergent literacy skills (Catts & Kamhi, 1999; Commission on Reading, 1985; Ely, 2001). Research revealed that joint book reading is a beneficial approach to introducing

children to written language. In 1985, the Commission on Reading of the National Academy of Education described joint book reading as “the single most important activity for developing the knowledge required for eventual success in reading” (p. 23). Ely (2001) described shared book reading as an opportunity to gain knowledge about the conventions of print and an opportunity for extended talk. Catts and Kamhi (1999) suggested that joint book reading impacts children’s conceptual and reasoning skills and exposes children to specific components of print and book conventions. Catts and Kamhi (1999) stated that joint book reading “inevitably contributes to and facilitates the learning of letter names, shapes, and sounds” (p. 27).

Implementing a Print Focus

Studies regarding joint book reading raised questions concerning what strategies parent could use during joint book reading to encourage development of emergent literacy skills. Implementing a print focus during joint book reading is one strategy research has demonstrated that will encourage development of emergent literacy skills (Ezell & Justice, 2000; Justice & Ezell, 2000). Studies have shown positive effects when adults use verbal print referencing prompts (i.e. asking questions about print, making comments about print, making requests about print) and nonverbal print referencing prompts (i.e. pointing to print, tracking the print) to maintain a print focus during book reading activities. Ezell

and Justice (2000) determined that an increase in adult's use of print-referencing behaviors during book reading interactions increased verbal interactions with print by preschool children. Justice and Ezell (2000) investigated the efficacy of a home-based reading intervention program that instructed parents on the importance of use of print-referencing behaviors. The researchers demonstrated that parents who used print -referencing prompts during joint book reading interactions increased their children's early literacy skills in the areas of print and word awareness (Justice & Ezell, 2000). Justice and Ezell (2002) compared the impact of participation in book reading sessions with a print focus to participation in book reading sessions with a picture focus. The study determined that children who had participated in book reading sessions with a print focus scored higher in measures of print awareness ability than children who had participated in book reading sessions with a picture focus (Justice & Ezell, 2002).

Studies have also investigated the efficacy of different manners of increasing the print focus of adult-child shared book readings. Ezell and Justice (2000) determined that video observation can serve as an effective way of training adults to increase print focus during joint book reading interactions. The researchers found that adults who had viewed an instructional video on the use and importance of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts significantly increased use of print referencing prompts used during joint book reading interactions.

Parental Behaviors during Joint Book Reading Interactions

Studies have evaluated parental behaviors during joint book reading and have questioned whether or not parents use a print focus when reading to their children. Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, and Daley (1998) suggested that parents may not view joint book reading activities with their children as an instructional context. Van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton, and McGrath (1997) found that verbal references to print occur rarely during joint book reading interactions between parents and children. Ezell and Justice (2000) noted that adults rarely use verbal and nonverbal references to print while reading to their children. In fact, the researchers concluded that with the exception of tracking the print, adults use fewer than one print referencing behaviors per minute (Ezell & Justice, 2000). Ezell and Justice (2000) also noted that adult's nonverbal and verbal behaviors focus primarily on book illustrations than on references to print.

These findings generate questions regarding how educators and early interventionists can teach parents about the benefits of use of print referencing prompts during joint book reading activities. As discussed above, research has demonstrated the benefits of early literacy experiences that employ a print focus. Studies have shown that parents do not use these useful techniques when reading to their children at home. Yet, little research has been done to examine how parents can be educated about print referencing prompts. Ezell and Justice (2000)

demonstrated that video observation is an effective method to educate parents on the use of print referencing prompts. The effectiveness of other methods of instructing parents on the importance and use of print referencing prompts should be tested. Conducting a study that examines the effect of participation in parental group training sessions on parents' behaviors will provide valuable knowledge. This information will be helpful in designing intervention programs for at risk children using families as support systems. In addition, the information will be valuable for child development programs that employ parental training sessions as methods of intervention. Conducting a study on the effectiveness of training sessions that educate parents on how to help their children learn will empower interventionists and educators and will ultimately benefit children.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of parental group training sessions on emergent literacy. The study investigated whether participation in a group training session would increase the number of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children.

Subjects

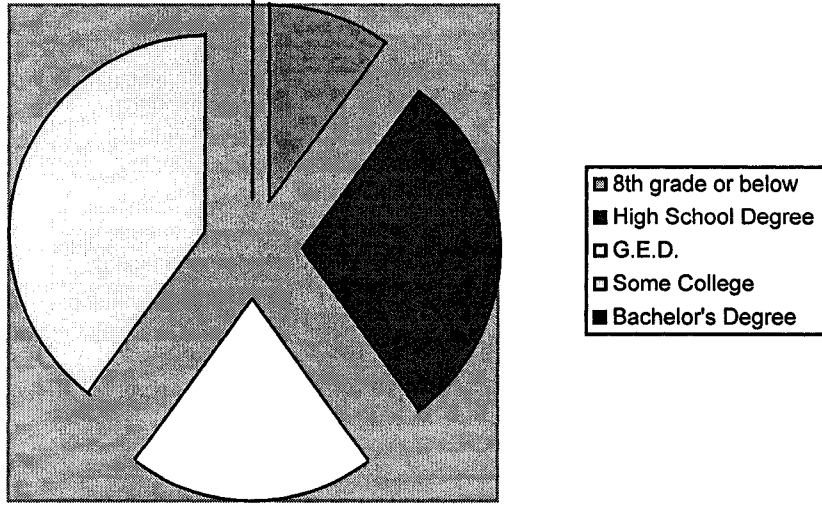
Adult Participants

Adult participants of this study included 10 parents of typically developing preschool children enrolled in a federally funded low income preschool program in a southern state. Adult participants consisted of nine females and one male. The age of adult participants ranged from 20 to 29 years of age with a mean age of 24.6 years.

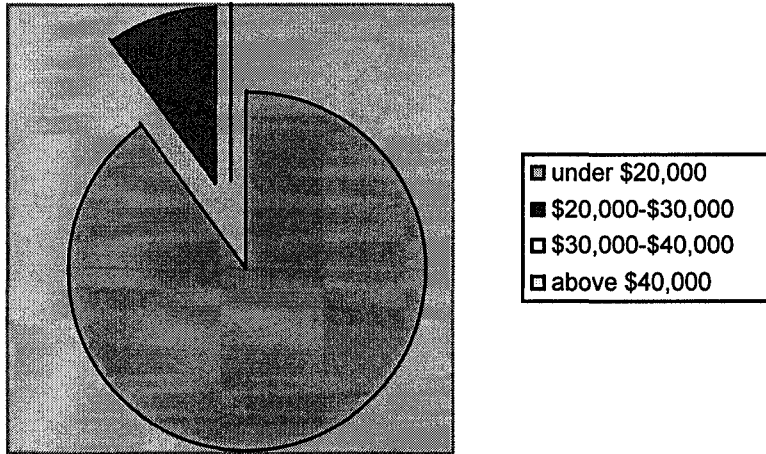
Information concerning the subject's education and socioeconomic status was taken from the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A) participants completed after signing the Consent Form (see Appendix B). With respect to the highest level of education participants reported achieving, 10% of adult participants indicated they had completed eighth grade, 30% of adult participants indicated they had received a high school degree, 20% of adult participants

reported receiving a GED, and 40% of adult participants reported attending some college. Figure 1 depicts the educational levels of adult participants.

FIGURE 1: EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS



With respect to the socioeconomic status of participants, 90% of adult participants reported their household annual income was \$20,000 or below while 10% of adult participants reported their household annual income was between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Figure 2 depicts the socioeconomic status of adult participants.

FIGURE 2: SOCIOECONOMIC LEVELS OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS

Child Participants

Ten typically developing children enrolled in the preschool program served as reading partners for their parents. Four of the child participants were male and six were female. The age of child participants ranged from 3 years to 4 years with a mean age of 3 years and 6 months.

Eligibility

All children who participated in this study had no known history of language, speech, or gross motor impairment and had no known history of speech-language intervention per parental report. All participants were native speakers of English. All participants passed their most recent developmental screening. Information regarding child participants' backgrounds was taken from the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A).

Recruitment

All subjects were recruited from the families of children enrolled in a federally funded low income preschool program. This study was approved by the program's policy council and each program's child development director. Each of the program's home-based educators received a letter describing this study, its purpose, and participant selection criteria and an enrollment form (see Appendix C and D). Home-based educators informed eligible families of the study when conducting home visits. All interested families completed the enrollment form (see Appendix D).

Incentives for Participation

Upon completion of the study, each adult participant received a copy of the children's book, "This is the Bear" (Hayes, 1986).

Materials

Materials included the children's book entitled "This is the Bear" (Hayes, 1986), videotaping equipment, audio-visual equipment including a videocassette recorder, screen, projector, and lap top computer, and an instructional videotape (Ezell & Justice, 1998). The instructional videotape, approximately 6 minutes in length, explained and demonstrated verbal and nonverbal print referencing behaviors. Verbal print referencing prompts included questions about print (i.e. "What is this letter?", "Where do I start reading?", and "What word rhymes with 'cat'?"), comments about print (i.e. "That is the letter 'k'", "Here is the word 'dog'", and "The letter 'k' makes the 'kuh' sound"), and requests about print (i.e. "Show me where the title of the book is," "Show me the letter 'c'", and "Show me the word 'dog'"). Nonverbal print referencing prompts discussed in the video (Ezell & Justice, 1998) included tracking the print and pointing to print.

General Procedures

This study occurred in three stages: pre-test, parental group training session, and post-test.

Pretest

Each adult participant was videotaped reading “This is Bear” (Hayes, 1986) to his or her child. The participants were instructed to read the book to their child like they do at home. The videotapes were analyzed to determine the number of print referencing prompts the adult participants used when reading to their child.

Parental Group Training Session

Adult participants attended a group training session regarding the use of print referencing behaviors during joint book reading interactions. The group training session lasted approximately 20 minutes and was conducted at a preschool facility. The parents received instruction regarding the importance of early literacy experiences and use of print referencing prompts. Adult participants viewed an instructional videotape (Ezell & Justice, 1998). In addition to the instructional video, visual aides containing written descriptions of print referencing behaviors were used and handouts containing written descriptions of print referencing behaviors were distributed to each adult participant.

Post-test

Adult participants read the “This is Bear” (Hayes 1986) to their child while being videotaped. The videotapes were analyzed to determine the number and type of print referencing prompts used during the joint book reading interaction.

Data Analysis

To determine if the parental group training session had a significant effect on participants' behavior, video tapings of each participant's joint book reading interaction before and after the parental group training session were analyzed. An Observation Guide (see Appendix E) was used for analysis. Prompts were coded as verbal and nonverbal. Verbal print referencing prompts included questions about print (i.e. "What is that letter?"), comments about print (i.e. "There is the word 'bear'"), and requests about print (i.e. "Show me where to start reading."). Nonverbal print referencing prompts included tracking the print while reading and pointing to print. Analysis consisted of determining the number of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts used. In addition, analysis of the verbal print referencing prompts was conducted. This consisted of determining the type (i.e. question, comment, request) and category of verbal print referencing prompts used. The categories of print referencing prompt used for analysis were taken from Justice et al. (2002) and included book reading concepts, word awareness,

alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and word reading.

To answer the first research question regarding if participation in a training session increased the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used, the t-test for related measures was used. To answer the second research question concerning if participation in a training session increased the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children, the t-test for repeated measures was conducted. The third, fourth, and fifth research questions regarding if participation in a group training session would increase the number of questions, comments, and requests about print were answered through use of the t-test for related measures. The sixth research question concerning the category of verbal print referencing prompts most parents employed when reading to their children was answered by calculating the number of parents who used each category of print referencing prompt at pre-test and post-test. The seventh research question was to determine if the educational level of the parent of the parent influenced the number of print referencing prompts the parents used. To answer this question, participants were sorted into groups according to the highest level of education they had indicated on their information sheet (i.e. 8th grade and below, GED, High School Degree, Some College). The average number of print referencing prompts was calculated for each group and a comparison was made. The eighth research question was "Does the

socioeconomic status of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?" To answer this question, participants were sorted into groups according to reported annual household incomes. The average number of print referencing prompts was calculated for each group and a comparison of the means was made. The ninth research question of if the gender of the child influenced the number of print referencing prompts parents used was answered by sorting the adult participants into groups according to their child's gender. The average number of print referencing prompts was calculated for each group. The means were compared. The tenth research question was to determine if the age of the child influenced the number of print referencing prompts the parent employed. This question was answered by grouping the participants by the age of their child (i.e. 3 years and 4 years), determining the average number of print referencing prompts used by each group, and comparing the means.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of each research question examined in this study are presented separately below. One tailed t-tests, with a significance level of .05, were justified because the Null and Research Hypotheses were all directional. They all predicted an increase or improvement in performance. Caution should be used however, since this is not as rigorous as requiring a two-tail .05 level of significance.

Research Question One: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?

Verbal print referencing prompts include questions about print, comments about print, and requests about print. Analysis of video tapings of adult participants reading to their children at pre-test revealed that one parent used a verbal print referencing prompt before participation in a group training session. The average number of verbal print referencing prompts used by adult participants prior to participation in a group training session was 0.1. Following participation in a group training session, six adult participants used a verbal print referencing prompt while engaged in a joint book reading activity. The average number of verbal print referencing prompts used after participation in a group

training session was 7.4. Table 1 depicts the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used before and after the parental group training session. Results from the t-test for repeated measures indicated that there was a significant increase in the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used after participation in a group training session for one-tailed tests ($t=2.34$, $df=9$, critical $t=1.833$, $p < 0.05$).

TABLE 1: VERBAL PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS USED AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of verbal prompts used at pre-test	Number of verbal prompts used at post-test
Adult Participant 1	0	2
Adult Participant 2	0	0
Adult Participant 3	0	26
Adult Participant 4	0	0
Adult Participant 5	0	8
Adult Participant 6	0	21
Adult Participant 7	0	1
Adult Participant 8	0	0
Adult Participant 9	1	16
Adult Participant 10	0	0

Research Question Two: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?

Nonverbal print referencing prompts include tracking the print and pointing to print. Analysis of data collected at pre-test revealed that four adult participants used one nonverbal print referencing prompt before participation in a group training session. The mean number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents used prior to participation in a group training session was 0.4. Following participation in a group training session all adult participants used at least one nonverbal print referencing prompt when reading to their children. The average number of nonverbal print referencing prompts at post-test was 1.3. Data collected on the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts used at pre-test and post-test is depicted in Table 2. The t-test for repeated measures was used to determine if a significant increase between the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents used at pre-test and post-test was present. Results indicated that there was not a significant increase ($t=1.76$, $df=9$, critical $t=1.833$, $p > 0.05$).

TABLE 2: NONVERBAL PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS USED AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of nonverbal prompts used at pre-test	Number of nonverbal prompts used at post-test
Adult Participant 1	0	2
Adult Participant 2	0	1
Adult Participant 3	1	1
Adult Participant 4	0	1
Adult Participant 5	1	2
Adult Participant 6	1	2
Adult Participant 7	0	1
Adult Participant 8	0	1
Adult Participant 9	1	1
Adult Participant 10	0	1

Research Question Three: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of questions parents ask about print when reading to their children?

Analysis of video tapings of parents reading to their children at pre-test and post-test indicated that no parent used the verbal print referencing prompt of asking a question about the print at pre-test. Thus, the average number of question about print at pre-test was zero. However, analysis of post-test data revealed that four adult participants asked questions about print after participation in a group training session. The average number of questions asked about print was 4.4. Table 3 depicts information regarding the number of questions about print parents asked at pre-test and post-test. Results of the t-test for repeated measures indicated that a significant increase existed between the number of questions adult participants asked about print at pre-test and post-test for one-tailed tests ($t=2.13$, $df=9$, critical $t=1.833$, $p<0.05$).

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT PRINT AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of questions used at pre-test	Number of questions used at post-test
Adult Participant 1	0	0
Adult Participant 2	0	0
Adult Participant 3	0	19
Adult Participant 4	0	0
Adult Participant 5	0	6
Adult Participant 6	0	10
Adult Participant 7	0	0
Adult Participant 8	0	0
Adult Participant 9	0	9
Adult Participant 10	0	0

Research Question Four: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of comments about print parents make when reading to their children?

Analysis at pre-test revealed that one adult participant used the print referencing prompt of making a comment about print while reading to their child. The average number of comments about print at pre-test was 0.10. Analysis of post-test data indicated that six adult participants used the print referencing prompt of making a comment about print while reading to their child. The average number of comments made about print at post-test was 2.1. Table 4 depicts the number of comments made about print before and after participation in a group training session on emergent literacy. Results of the t-test for repeated measures indicated that a significant increase was noted between the number of comments about print at pre-test and post-test for one-tailed tests ($t=2.63$, $df=9$, critical $t=1.833$, $p < 0.05$). Further analysis revealed that there was a significant increase in the number of comments about print made at pre-test and post-test for two-tailed tests ($t=2.63$, $df=9$, critical $t=2.262$, $p < 0.05$).

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF COMMENTS ABOUT PRINT MADE AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of comments used at pre-test	Number of comments used at post-test
Adult Participant 1	0	2
Adult Participant 2	0	0
Adult Participant 3	0	5
Adult Participant 4	0	0
Adult Participant 5	0	1
Adult Participant 6	0	6
Adult Participant 7	0	1
Adult Participant 8	0	0
Adult Participant 9	1	6
Adult Participant 10	0	0

Research Question Five: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of requests about print parents make when reading their children?

Data collected prior to participation in a group training session showed that none of the adult participants used the print referencing prompt of making a request about print while reading to their children. Thus, the average number of request used at pre-test was zero. Data collected after participation in a group training session showed that four adult participants used the print referencing prompt of making a request about print while reading to their children. The average number of requests about print at post-test was 0.9. Table 5 depicts the number of requests about print at pre-test and post-test. The t-test for repeated measures was used to determine if there was a significant increase in the number of requests about print at pre-test and post-test. Results indicated that there was not a significant increase between the number of requests made about print at pre-test and post-test for one-tailed tests ($t=1.78$, $df=9$, critical $t=1.833$, $p > 0.05$).

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF REQUESTS ABOUT PRINT AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of requests used at pre-test	Number of requests used at post-test
Adult Participant 1	0	0
Adult Participant 2	0	0
Adult Participant 3	0	2
Adult Participant 4	0	0
Adult Participant 5	0	1
Adult Participant 6	0	5
Adult Participant 7	0	0
Adult Participant 8	0	0
Adult Participant 9	0	1
Adult Participant 10	0	0

Research Question Six: What category of verbal print referencing prompts do the most parents employ when reading to their children?

To answer this research question, the total number of parents who used each category of verbal print referencing prompt at pre-test and post-test was calculated. The categories of verbal print referencing prompt used for analysis were taken from Justice et al. (2002) and included book reading concepts, word awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and word reading. Table 6 depicts the number of adult participants who used each category of verbal print referencing prompt at pre-test and post-test. Results indicated that at pre-test, one adult participant used a verbal print referencing prompt. The print referencing prompt used was in the category of word reading. However, at post-test, more parents used word awareness print referencing prompts than any other category. Of the print referencing prompts parents used at post-test, 39% were word awareness prompts, 25% were alphabet knowledge prompts, 23% were word reading prompts, 9% were book reading prompts, 4% were phonemic awareness prompts, and 0% were grapheme-phoneme correspondence prompts.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF PARENTS WHO USED EACH CATEGORY OF VERBAL PRINT REFERENCING PROMPT AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Number of parents who used this category of prompt at pre-test	Number of parents who used this category of prompt at post-test
• Book Reading Concepts	0	2
• Word Awareness	0	5
• Alphabet Knowledge	0	3
• Phonemic Awareness	0	1
• Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence	0	0
• Word Reading	1	3

Research Question Seven: Does the educational level of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

To answer this research question, data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. A comparison of the average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test and post-test for each educational level of the adult participants was performed. Table 7 depicts the average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test and post-test for each educational level. Results indicated that adult participants who reported eighth grade as their highest level of education used the highest average number of number of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test.

TABLE 7: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST FOR EACH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS

	Average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test	Average number of print referencing prompts used at post-test
8 th grade or below	2	17
G.E.D.	0	3
High School Degree	0.333	8.333
Some College	0.5	9.75

Research Question Eight: Does the socioeconomic status of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

Descriptive statistics were used to answer this research question. The average number of print referencing prompt used at pre-test and post-test was calculated for each socioeconomic status of adult participants. Table 8 depicts this data. Comparison of the average number of print referencing prompts revealed that participants who reported their household annual income as being between \$20,000 and \$30,000 used the highest average number of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test.

TABLE 8: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS USED AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST FOR EACH SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS

	Average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test	Average number of print referencing prompts used at post-test
\$20,000 or below	0.444	7.111
\$20,000-\$30,000	1	23

Research Question Nine: Does the gender of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

This research question was answered through the use of descriptive statistics. A comparison the average number of print referencing prompt parents of children who were male used at pre-test and post-test and the average number of print referencing prompt parent of female children used at pre-test and post-test was made. Table 9 depicts this information. Results indicated that parents of male children used a higher average of print referencing prompt when reading to their children at pre-test and post-test.

TABLE 9: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS USED BY PARENTS OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test	Average number of print referencing prompts used at post-test
Male	.75	10.75
Female	0.333	7.333

Research Question Ten: Does the age of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

Descriptive statistics were used to answer this research question. The average number of print referencing prompt parents of 3 year children used at pre-test and post-test was compared to the average number of print referencing prompt parents of 4 year old children used at pre-test and post-test. Table 10 depicts this information. Results indicated that parents of 4 year old children used a higher average of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test than did parents of 3 year old children.

TABLE 10: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PRINT REFERENCING PROMPTS USED BY PARENTS OF 3 YEAR OLD AND 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AT PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Average number of print referencing prompts used at pre-test	Average number of print referencing prompts used at post-test
3 years	0.2	3.4
4 years	0.80	14

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the efficacy of parental group training sessions on emergent literacy. The findings of this study demonstrated that parental group training sessions are an effective method of providing parents with instruction on emergent literacy. It can be concluded that participation in a group training session on emergent literacy will produce positive changes in parents' behaviors when engaged in a joint book reading activity.

This study is significant because it provides interventionists and educators with information regarding an effective way of teaching parents the importance of implementing a print focus when reading to their children. The findings serve as support for use of parental training sessions in child development programs and intervention programs for at risk children.

This study supports the findings of Ezell and Justice (2000). Ezell and Justice (2000) found that adults who had viewed an instructional video on the use and importance of verbal and nonverbal print referencing prompts significantly increased use of print referencing prompts used during joint book reading interactions. The findings of this study revealed that participation in a group parental training session that used Ezell and Justice's videotape as one method of providing instruction significantly increased the number of verbal print referencing prompts that parents employed when reading to their children.

This study also supports prior research regarding parental behaviors during joint book reading interactions (van Kleeck et al., 1997; Ezell & Justice, 2001). Van Kleeck et al. (1997) determined that verbal references to print occur rarely during joint book reading interactions between parents and children. Ezell and Justice (2000) noted that adults rarely use verbal and nonverbal references to print while reading to their children and that with the exception of tracking the print, adults use fewer than one print referencing behaviors per minute (Ezell & Justice, 2000). Analysis of the results of this study demonstrated similar findings. Analysis of video tapings of parents reading to their children prior to participation in a group training session revealed that only ten percent of study participants used a verbal print reference to print when engaged in a joint book reading interaction.

This research study consisted of ten research questions. Discussion of the results of each research question is presented individually.

Research Question One: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?

Analysis revealed a significant increase between the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used at pre-test and the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used at post-test. Thus, it can be concluded that

conducting a parental group training sessions is an effective way of instructing parents of the importance of use of verbal print referencing prompts. These findings support the use of parental group training sessions as a method of instructing parents about emergent literacy.

Analysis of the findings revealed a wide distribution of change in parental behavior. Several adult participants made great gains with respect to use of verbal print referencing prompts. At pre-test, only one participant used a verbal print referencing prompt. At post-test, sixty percent of the adult participants used this strategy when reading to their child. In fact, two adult participants used more than 20 print referencing prompts while one participant used 16 print referencing prompts. One adult participant went from using no print referencing prompts at pre-test to using five book reading concept prompts, four word awareness prompts, three phonemic awareness prompts, and fourteen word reading prompts.

It should be noted that data regarding the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used when reading to their children at pre-test and post-test was analyzed using a one-tailed test. Although use of the one-tailed test does not yield results as reliable as results analyzed with the two-tailed test, use of the one tailed test was warranted due to the fact that the direction of change in the participants' behavior was in the direction expected.

Research Question Two: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children?

Analysis of the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts parents employed before and after participation in a group training session yielded results that were suggestive and not quite significant for the sample size. This study examined the two nonverbal print referencing prompts discussed in the instructional videotape (Ezell & Justice, 1998). These included pointing to print and tracking print. Analysis of the data revealed that eight of the ten participants used more nonverbal print referencing prompts at post-test than pre-test. Seventy percent of participants used one of the two nonverbal prompts at post-test and thirty percent of participants used both nonverbal prompts. It is important to note that all participants used at least one of the two nonverbal print referencing prompts upon completion of the group training session. While the t-test for repeated measures did not indicate a significant increase in the number of nonverbal prompts parents used at pre-test and post-test, the fact that all participants used at least one of two nonverbal prompts indicates that participation in the training session did positively impact parental behavior. It is hypothesized that if a larger sample size were used, analysis of results would have indicated a significant increase in the number of nonverbal print referencing prompts used at pre-test and post-test. Future research in this area is recommended.

Research Question Three: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of questions parents ask about print when reading to their children?

Analysis of the data collected in this study revealed that a significant increase in the number of questions parents asked about print at pre-test and post-test. Thus, it can be concluded that participation in a group training session will increase the number of questions parents ask about print when reading to their children.

Forty percent of adult participants made great gains with respect to asking questions about print while reading to their children. Participants number three did not ask any questions about print at pre-test, yet asked nineteen questions about print at post-test. Subject six did not ask any questions about print at pre-test, but asked ten questions about print at post-test. Subject nine did not ask any questions about print at pre-test, yet asked nine questions about print at post-test. Subject five went from asking to questions at pre-test to asking six questions at post-test.

It should be noted that data regarding the number of questions about print observed at pre-test and post-test were analyzed using a one-tailed test. As previously described, use of a one-tailed test does not provide results as reliable as data analyzed using a two-tailed test. However, due to the fact that the direction

of change in participants' behavior was in the direction expected, use of the one-tailed test is appropriate.

Research Question Four: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of comments about print parents make when reading to their children?

Results of this study indicated that a significant increase between the number of comments parents made about print before participation in a group training session and the number of comments parent made about print after participation in a group training session was present. Thus, it can be concluded that participation in a group training session is an effective way of teaching parents of the importance of using the verbal print referencing prompt of making comments about print.

Analysis of the video tapings made at pre-test and post-test demonstrated that sixty percent of the participants made comments about print at post-test, while ten percent of the participant made a comment about print at pre-test. At post-test, three participants made at five or more comments about print. For example, participant six did not make any comments about the print at pre-test. However, at post-test participant six made six comments about print including "There is the word 'bear' again", "This word says 'ouch'", "This word is 'who'", "This word is 'would'", "Here is 'searched'", and "'bit' starts with 'b' and 'bump'".

starts with 'b'". These findings speak of the benefit of participation in a group training session on emergent literacy.

Research Question Five: Does participation in a parental group training session increase the number of requests about print parents make when reading their children?

Although an increase in the average number of request parents made about print observed at pre-test and post-test was noted, a significant increase did not exist. However, it is felt that the small number of participants may have contributed to the lack of significance. Therefore, it is recommended that future research address the question of if participation in group training session will increase the number of requests parents make about print.

It is important to note that while a significant increase in the number of requests about print at pre-test and post-test was not observed, forty percent of the adult participants increased the number of requests about print they used prior to completion of the group training session. It is also important to note that requests about print are only one type of verbal print referencing prompt. As discussed above, a significant increase in the number of verbal print referencing prompts parents used at pre-test and post-test was observed. Thus, although a significant increase in the number of requests about print was not observed, use of a parental training session as a way of educating parents is recommended.

Research Question Six: What category of verbal print referencing prompts do the most parents employ when reading to their children?

Findings of this study revealed that the category of verbal print referencing prompts the most parents employed while reading to their children was word reading at pre-test and word awareness at post-test. While the use of any category of verbal print referencing prompt is beneficial, determining which category parents use the most will supply interventionists with valuable information concerning the focus of future training sessions on emergent literacy. It should be noted that further investigation of this research question is warranted due to the small number of participants. The training sessions conducted for this study did not instruct adult participants of the different categories of print referencing prompts that can be used during joint book reading activities. Conducting a study where a researcher provides instruction to parents on the different categories of verbal print referencing prompts and the importance of their use and then determines which category of verbal print referencing prompt parents used the most would be an interesting topic for future research.

Research Question Seven: Does the educational level of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

One might assume that participants with the highest level of education would use the most number of print referencing prompts when reading to their

children. Surprisingly, results revealed that adult participants who reported eighth grade as their highest level of education used the highest average number of number of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test. This finding is significant because it indicates that participants in this study who had reported the lowest level of education were capable of understanding the importance of use of maintaining a print focus while reading to their children. This is promising for interventionists who hope to use parental training sessions as a method of providing instruction to parents with low levels of education. It is important to note that these findings serve only as a preliminary investigation of this research question due to the fact that there were ten study participants and only one of the ten participants indicated eighth grade as their highest level of education. In addition, the analysis of the data only involved use of descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics were not used in analysis. Thus, the findings of this study should be used with caution. It is recommended that future research address this question. Future research should include a larger sample size so that analysis of the data collected could include use of a test of correlation.

Research Question Eight: Does the socioeconomic status of the parent influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

Comparison of the average number of print referencing prompts revealed that participants who reported their annual household income as being between

\$20,000 and \$30,000 used the highest average number of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test. An annual household income of between \$20,000 and \$30,000 was the largest annual household income reported by participants of this study. This may indicate that socioeconomic status does influence the number of print referencing prompts parents employ when reading to their children. However, this conclusion needs to be supported with research that uses a test of correlation. It should be noted that of the ten study participants, nine reported an annual household income of \$20,000 or below and one reported an annual household income of between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Because of the limited range of reported socioeconomic status and low number of participants a test of correlation was not conducted. Descriptive statistics were the only form of statistical analysis used. Thus, the findings regarding this research question should be used with caution. Future research should address this research question and should include a larger number of participants with a wider range of reported socioeconomic status and use of a test of correlation.

Research Question Nine: Does the gender of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

The findings of this study indicated that parents of male children used a higher average of print referencing prompt when reading to their children at pre-test and post-test. This may indicate that the gender of the child does influence

the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs. However, these findings should be used with caution due to the small sample size of this study and the lack of use of a test of correlation. In addition, only descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Inferential statistics were not used as a method of analysis. A larger sample size would supply more information that could be analyzed using a test of correlation. Future studies should investigate this research question.

Research Question Ten: Does the age of the child influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs?

Results indicated that parents of 4 year old children used a higher average of print referencing prompts at pre-test and post-test than did parents of 3 year old children. These findings may demonstrate that the age of the child does influence the number of print referencing prompts the parent employs. However, these findings should be used with caution. Descriptive statistics were the only form of statistical analysis employed and a test of correlation was not conducted on the data collected in this study because of the small sample size. In order to answer this research question, a test of correlation is needed. Thus, future research is warranted.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is the small number of participants. Caution should be used when making conclusions based upon research of ten participants. The findings of this study would be greatly strengthened if the study had included a greater number of participants. In addition, data from other socioeconomic groups and use of participants of children with a wider age range would expand the findings and provide valuable information for educators and early interventionists.

Future Research

In addition to extending the findings of this study by conducting a similar study with a larger sample size, areas of future research include investigating the efficacy of other ways of teaching parents of the importance of implementing a print focus during joint book reading interactions. Studies could also examine the efficacy of providing instruction to parents on other ways of encouraging development of emergent literacy skills. Future studies could also include determining the effectiveness of parental group training session with participants from other socioeconomic levels. The data collected could be compared with these findings. A final avenue for future study is to conduct a similar study that determines the effectiveness of training sessions on emergent literacy for preschool teachers.

Implications

Many clinical implications can be drawn from this research study. As evidenced by the analysis of pre-test video tapings and prior research (van Kleeck et al., 1997; Ezell & Justice, 2001), parents do not typically use print referencing prompts when reading to their children. Thus, educators and early interventionists should take action to ensure parents and caregivers receive instruction regarding the importance of implementing a print focus during joint book reading interactions. Secondly, the findings of this study demonstrate that interventionists can bring about positive changes in parental behavior in a relatively short period of time. The training sessions conducted in conjunction with this study lasted for approximately twenty minutes. Although the training session was short in duration, the outcome of the training session was powerful and effective. Thus, this study should drive interventionists to utilize parental training sessions as a time efficient way of providing a valuable service to at-risk children. This study also identifies a different role that interventionists can assume in their plans of prevention. Rather than working only with at-risk children or other educators, this study demonstrates that working with parents is effective and beneficial. Conducting parental training sessions allows interventionists to serve as a consultant to families who greatly benefit from their service. Ultimately, the findings of this study should empower educators and

interventionists to incorporate parent training sessions in their current plans of intervention for at-risk children.

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APPENDIX A

University of Cincinnati
College of Allied Health Sciences
Communication Sciences and Disorders Department
Kellie C. Ellis, Principal Investigator
Phone: (606)574-0652

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

Your Age: _____ **Your Sex:** ___ female ___ male

Child's Name: _____ **Child's Age:** _____

Child's Sex: ___ female ___ male

1. Does your child have any developmental disability or special need?

___ Yes, my child has _____
 ___ No, my child does not have a developmental disability or special need.

2. Did your child pass the preschool's most recent developmental screening?

___ Yes, my child passed the preschool's most recent developmental screening.
 ___ No, my child did not pass the preschool's most recent developmental screening.

3. Has your child ever had speech/language therapy?

___ Yes, my child has received speech/language therapy.
 ___ No, my child has never received speech/language therapy.

4. What language do you speak at home?

___ English ___ Spanish ___ Other: _____

5. How far did you go in school?

___ 8th grade or below ___ High School Degree ___ G.E.D.
 ___ some college ___ College Degree ___ Other: _____

6. What is your annual household income?

___ \$20,000 and below ___ \$20,000-30,000
 ___ \$30,000-40,000 ___ \$40,000 and above

APPENDIX B

**University of Cincinnati
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Allied Health Sciences
Communication Sciences and Disorders Department
Kellie C. Ellis, Principal Investigator
Phone: (606)574-0652**

Title of Study: Effectiveness of Parental Group Training Sessions on Emergent Literacy

Before you agree to join this study, it is important that you read this paper and understand what the study is about. This paper explains why the study is being done, what will happen during the study, and how it can help you and your child. This paper also explains that you have the right to drop out of the study at any time. It is important to understand that I cannot guarantee what the results of the study will be.

Purpose

This study is being done to learn about how parents read to their children. The study will look at whether or not coming to a group workshop helps parents learn how to read to their children in ways that make it easier for children to learn.

You and your child will be one of approximately twenty parent-child pairs who are taking part in the study.

Duration

You will be expected to attend one group workshop that will last one hour. You will be one of approximately 20 adults who will be attending the workshop. You will also be videotaped reading to your child two times for approximately 10 minutes each.

The study will take you a total of approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes to complete.

Procedures

1. You will complete an information sheet about you and your child.
2. You will be videotaped reading a book to your child.
3. You will attend a group workshop where you will learn about ways to read to your child that will help your child learn. You will be one of approximately

20 adults who will be attending the group workshop. During the workshop, I will talk about what you can do when you read books to your child to help them learn. The group will also watch a videotape.

4. You will be videotaped reading the same book to your child.

Exclusion

You will **NOT** be able to join this study if:

- Your child has a language, speech, or gross motor impairment
- Your child has received speech/language therapy
- Your child did not pass Head Start's most recent developmental screening
- Your native language is not English
- Your child is younger than 3 years old
- Your child is older than 6 years old
- You are younger than 18 years old
- You are older than 35 years old

Risks/Discomforts

Being videotaped may be a potential discomfort to you. If you do not feel comfortable being videotaped during this study, you can tell me to stop videotaping and we can begin taping when you feel more comfortable or we can discontinue the videotaping altogether.

Benefits

By being a part of this study, you will find out about ways to read to your child in ways that will help them learn about language and encourage early reading. You may also help teachers, educators, and child development specialists better understand how to help parents teach their children.

Alternatives

There are no expected alternative procedures.

Confidentiality

The information about you and your child will remain confidential. The information I gain from the study may be published, but your name and your

child's name will not be mentioned. I will be the only person to watch the videotapes from this research study, unless you agree to let others watch the tapes for educational/presentational reasons. (See consent below) If you do not agree to let others watch the tapes, I will erase the videotapes after I analyze them.

Payments to Participants

You will receive one children's book for taking part in this study. You will be given the book after you have completed the second videotaping.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Deciding to join this study is your decision. You may refuse to join the study. You may drop out of the study at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits. I have the right to ask you to leave the study at any time.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study, you may call me at (606)574-0652, Joanne Prendeville at (513)558-8517, Carney Sotto at (513)558-8528, or Ernest Weiler at (513)558-8522. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Margaret Miller, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at (513)558-5784.

Legal Rights

Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the sponsor, the institution, or its agents from liability and negligence.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

Parent-Child Educators,

Hello! I am a second year speech-language pathology graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I am writing to inform you of a research study that I am conducting and to ask for your assistance in the study. Like you, I share a love for working with at-risk children and families. I am looking forward to beginning my career so that I can join with you to help educate and better the lives of others.

About the Study

The study is entitled “Effectiveness of Parental Group Training Sessions on Emergent Literacy.” The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of parental training sessions on emergent literacy. The study will examine if participating in a group training session on the use and importance of print referencing prompts will increase the number of print referencing prompts parents use when reading to their children. Study participants will consist of approximately 20 parents/caregivers and 20 typically developing children. The study will be conducted in three phases: pre-test (where I will videotape the parent participants reading to their child partner), a group training session (where I will teach parents how to use print referencing prompts when reading to their children), and post-test (where I will videotape the parent participants reading to their child partner).

Why you should help

As you are already aware, emergent literacy skills can serve as predictors of later reading ability. In addition, the amount of family literacy involvement serves as a significant predictor of overall language development. Research has shown that parents do not often employ print-referencing prompts and other important types of cues when they read to their children. This study is valuable because it will provide early interventionists and educators with information regarding effective ways we can educate parents on the importance of reading to their children. The knowledge gained from this study will be helpful in designing intervention programs for at-risk children using families as support systems. In addition, all study participants will receive a free children’s book upon completion of the study. This study can serve as an opportunity for your parents to learn valuable skills and be rewarded for their efforts.

How you can help

You can inform families who meet the selection criteria of the study and its importance. You will be given an enrollment form that contains the selection criteria for participation in the study. You can inform potential study participants

of the study when you making home visits. If a parent/caregiver is interested and meets the selection criteria, ask the family to complete an enrollment form. Finally, you can submit the enrollment form to me by placing the form in Tish Coldiron's mailbox.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me at (606)574-0652 or at coldirkm@email.uc.edu. I appreciate your willingness to help and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Kellie Coldiron Ellis

APPENDIX D
**Effectiveness of Parental Group Training Sessions on Emergent Literacy
Enrollment Form**



READING TO YOUR CHILD IS GREAT!!!

If you....

- Are between 18 and 35 years old
- Speak English at home
- Are interested in learning ways to help your child learn

If your child...

- Is between 3 and 6 years old
- Passed Head Start's most recent developmental screening
- Does not have a speech, language, or gross motor impairment
- Has never received speech/language therapy

THEN you can be a part of our research study!!! Please complete the information below. We will contact you with the information about the study. Thanks for your interest!

NAME: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

Participant Identification Number: _____

Observation Number: _____

Observation Guide

Instructions for Use: Under each category of print referencing prompt, record the number of prompts used.

Book Reading Concepts (i.e. "Show me where the title is," "Where should I start to read on this page?")	Word Awareness (i.e. "Point to the word _____," "Do these words look the same?")	Alphabet Knowledge (i.e. "That is a K," "What letter is this?")

APPENDIX E

Phonemic Awareness i.e. "What words rhyme on this page?")	Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence (i.e. "What sound does this letter make," "What sound does 'st' make?")	Word Reading (i.e. "Do you know what 'c-a-t' spells?")

Total Number of Prompts Used: _____