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A STUDY EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
SELECTED HOME EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS AND
THEIR FUNCTIONING IN LANGUAGE ARTS AT SCHOOL

by

MAUREEN THERESE SCHILLER

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

A Study Exploring the Relationships Between

Selected Home Experiences of Students and

Their Functioning In Language Arts at School

By

Maureen Therese Schiller

In addition to a literature study, this thesis

explores the relationships between selected home

experiences of Grade four students ($\underline{N}$ = 173), the

interactions between their parents and their teachers

as reported by parents on a questionnaire, and student

functioning levels in Language Arts at school, as

perceived by classroom teachers. Ten Grade four

classrooms in Southwestern Ontario were examined.

Parents of the students were asked to complete a

questionnaire regarding selected reading, writing, and

speaking experiences that occur at home and they were

questioned on their interaction with their child's

teacher and school. Classroom teachers were asked to

group their students into one of five groupings (high

above average, above average, average, below average,

or low below average), according to the level they

perceived the students to be functioning at in the

Language Arts component of their classroom. Teachers

were also asked to classify students according to one

of Good and Power's (1976) student types (successful,

social, dependent, alienated, or phantom).

The purpose of the investigation was to use the questionnaire as an exploratory tool in order to examine differences between above and below average students' home experiences according to parents' responses to selected items. Student type, gender, and location of school (used as an indicator of a working or middle class population) were used in attempt to seek further relationships with home experiences on the questionnaire.

For this investigation, 81% of the parents contacted completed and returned their questionnaire. Overall, parents of the above average students returned more of the questionnaires than did parents of the below average students. Large differences did not occur with how the parents of the various functioning groups of students responded on the questionnaire.

A correlation was revealed indicating that parents of above average students reported more writing experiences occurring in their homes compared to that which was reported from the parents of below average students' homes. Additionally, eleven individual items on the questionnaire also revealed correlations between the items, which were concerned with functional, pleasurable, and what appeared to be self-initiated reading and writing activities in the home, and student

functioning group.

Parents of female students reported more of the writing activities than did parents of male students, and parents from the inner city (working class) schools reported less of the speaking activities, and less parent/teacher interaction than did parents from the suburban (middle class) schools. Overall in the working class schools, parents of below average students reported more parent/teacher interaction than the parents of above average students in Language Arts. Percentage frequencies revealed that the majority of successful and social typed student functioned at average, or above average levels, while the majority of alienated and phantom typed students functioned at average, and below average levels according to teacher perceptions.

The investigation suggests that more qualitative data are needed in order to access the interactive quality of the experiences on the questionnaire. Combined with the literature study in this thesis, an argument is presented for a developmental model of learning to read and write, and making parents aware of this model in order to get at the roots of literacy.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to making the learning of reading and writing easier and more meaningful to learners in order that they sooner move on to the more important uses of these skills. (This is not to imply that the functions of, and learning of language are to be separated. In fact, within this paper, the opposite is argued.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The issues in focus concern the home reading,
writing, and speaking experiences of Grade four
children and their parents' interactions with teachers.
It has long been assumed that the nature of these
experiences and interactions are related to how
children function in Language Arts at school. The
questions this thesis addresses are in what ways does
this occur and how significant are they in terms of
school performance.

This first chapter describes the underlying
theoretical premises that the present research is
grounded upon and serves as a rationale for the study.

Background for the Study: Emergent Literacy

Historically, formal education has been almost the
exclusive domain of teachers. The division between
home and school was a very clear one, and school was
often seen as a means of compensating for what was
lacking in the home (Edwards & Redfern, 1988). It was,
and probably is still, believed by most people, that
the teaching of reading and writing was, or is, best
left to professionals trained in handling such complex
endeavours.

Recent research, however, has shown that the home
plays a vitally important role in educating the child

1

(Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Tizard & Hughes, 1984;
Wells, 1986). These studies show the home as the place
where the roots of literacy are cultivated. Literacy
(defined broadly as the ability to read and write at
some level) is now largely viewed by the leaders in the
field as a socialization process rather than the sole
function of a particular program at an educational
institution (Laing, 1990; personal communication).
Yetta Goodman (1987) argues that literacy is a cultural
phenomenon, developing as society has a need for it.
She states that children in a literate society grow up
with literacy as an integral part of their personal,
familial, and social histories. The concept of
emergent literacy is based on the idea that parents are
the first and most important determinants of their
children's literacy. As a result of studies in
emergent literacy, Sulzby and Teale (1987) state that
we are now seeing reading in toddlers' explorations
with picture books and seeing writing in their
scribbles.

Much emergent literacy theory relies on the
research which shows a relationship between children
who were read to, and exposed to literature, early in
life, and later educational achievement (Durkin, 1966;
Clay, 1967; Clark, 1976). An early study by Durkin
(1966) showed that children who learned to read before

entering first grade had all been read to from an early
age by siblings, parents, or other caring adults.
Neither race, ethnicity, socio-economic level, nor IQ
distinguished between readers and nonreaders; the
differences lay in access to print, being read to,
valuing education, and early writing. Durkin called
these early readers "paper and pencil kids" (p. 137)
who liked to make marks on paper.

Morrow (1989) claims that the notion that such
young children learn to read naturally is a misleading
one. She agrees that these early readers do not
experience formal reading instruction such as that
provided by schools, but they usually have supportive
parents and an environment rich with the materials of
literacy. Specifically, Morrow (1983) argues that
early readers tend to come from homes where parents
read to them, help them read and write, and where the
parents often read themselves. She claims that these
parents read a wide variety of materials, including
novels, magazines, newspapers and work related
information. They keep reading materials in all rooms
of their homes, especially in the children's rooms.
They often take their children to libraries and book
stores (Durkin, 1966; Morrow, 1983; Taylor, 1983;
Teale, 1982). Their homes hold an abundance of books
and writing materials for themselves and for their

children. They generally value reading as an important activity, associate books with pleasure, and encourage and reward activities related to literacy. Morrow (1989) further explains that these activities are often functional and related to real life situations, such as cooperative preparation of shopping lists by parents and children, reading and following recipes, and leaving personal notes as a form of communication (p. 123).

Holdaway (1979) summarizes the major characteristics of literacy oriented pre-schoolers as they enter school primed to become rapid literacy learners. The characteristics are listed in Appendix A. Holdaway believes that "children with a background of book experience since infancy develop a complex range of attitudes, concepts, and skills predisposing them to literacy" (p. 49). Further, he maintains that these children are likely to continue into literacy on entering school with a minimum of discontinuity. Holdaway describes the concept of 'literacy set' in such children. He states that they are all set up for reading and writing, in the sense that "all their faculties have been trained to work in appropriate and harmonious ways whenever they are in contact with books or stories" (p. 49).

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that

many educators now acknowledge the role that the home
plays in the literacy development of children. Because
we now know more about early literacy, we know more
about how children learn and this knowledge has
profound implications for classroom teaching practices.
As a result, the focus for many teachers has changed
from one in which direct teaching of language arts
strategies is predominant, to one in which assisting
children in furthering their own literacy strategies is
emphasized. These changes in schools are characterized
as what is popularly known as the whole language
approach.

Laing (1990) states that whole language is "a body
of beliefs about learning and language that coalesced
during the 1980s to become a major influence on the
school curriculum and teaching practice throughout the
English-speaking world". Briefly, whole language is
also a "top-down" approach toward reading and writing.
What is meant by this is that, first, comes an exposure
to literature, that is, to stories, books, poetry and
so on and second, through this exposure comes
understanding, meaning, and ultimately pleasure to be
derived from the written material. In turn, such
concepts as paragraph, sentence, word, letter, and
sound, follow. A "bottom-up", or "skills approach"
toward reading and writing by and large reverses this

order of progression in teaching literacy skills. The latter, of course, has been the traditional approach used in schools towards the teaching of reading and writing. Whole language, in short, advocates that "book experience should precede word experience in bringing a child to print" (Martin & Brogan, 1972).

In a much larger sense, whole language is viewed in light of what Rich (1985) describes as the beginning of a paradigm shift in the thinking of teachers. The shift is in contrast to the practice of offering the same instruction to all children in a given grade at the same time and in the same order (Sulzby & Teale, 1987). However, Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) stress that whole language is first and foremost not practice, but a set of beliefs, a perspective on language and learning. At the root of the shift is the observation that, the world over, babies acquire a language through actually using it, not through practising its separate parts.

Developmental Learning and Whole Language

A whole language philosophy is built on a developmental approach towards learning. Holdaway (1979) advances the developmental model of learning based on the concept of looking at the initial language learning of children as the basic model for literacy learning. He believes that the efficiency with which

spoken language is learned is beyond question.
Further, he suggests that there is more to learning how
to talk than merely having been 'wired' neurologically
in a certain way. In order for children to learn to
talk, Holdaway believes certain conditions must exist
to permit that learning to occur. Cambourne (1984),
along with Holdaway, believes these same conditions
that are present for learning oral language, can be
applied in the classroom when teaching reading and
writing. Cambourne (1984) simplifies these conditions
to seven and they may be summarized as:

1. **Immersion** - From the moment they are born,
meaningful language washes over and surrounds
children. They are immersed in a "language
flood" and, for most of their waking time,
proficient users of the language-culture
that they have been born into literally
bathe them in the sounds, meanings, cadences and
rhythms of the language that they have to learn.

2. **Demonstration** - Children, in the process of
learning to talk, receive thousands and thousands
of demonstrations (models or examples) of the
spoken form of the language being used in
functional and meaningful ways.

3. **Expectation** - Unless the infant is severely
damaged, all parents expect their children to

learn to talk, and their children do. However, if
we project the expectation that learning to
read, write, and spell is difficult, complex, and
beyond children, then many of them will respond
accordingly.

4. **Responsibility** - When learning to talk,
children are left to take responsibility for what
they learn about their language. Children master
different grammatical structures at different
ages and they seem to know instinctively which
set of conventions to adopt at any given time.
What is important is that children arrive at the
same state of "know-how" at about 5.5 to 6.5 years
of age. Children may arrive at the same
destination by different routes.

5. **Approximation** - Young language learners are not
expected to display full-blown adult competence
from the beginning. Parents actually reward
children not just for being right, but also for
being close to being right. How many children
would want to go on with the task of learning to
talk if they were continually corrected or scolded
for making errors? Yet, with the written mode of
language children are often expected to display
adult competence from the beginning.

6. **Employment** - Plenty of opportunity to use the
medium is provided when learning to talk. We
do not restrict our children to two 20 minute
periods per week to employ the conventions of
spoken language, and prevent them from
practising them at other times.

7. **Feedback** - The adults and older siblings as
well who teach young children give them feedback
of a very special kind. The feedback is
supportive, perhaps rephrased correctly, and the
message is: "Yes, your attempt is good".
They know that the baby talk will persist for
weeks until the child decides to change. No
exasperated pressure of the kind: "Look, I've
modelled the auxiliary a dozen times now- when
will you get it right?" is ever given.
Unfortunately, the feedback we give children in
school, with respect to the written form of the
language, is not quite the same (pp. 5 - 9).

Each of these conditions for learning to talk has
implications for the classroom when teaching what is
referred to as a reading and writing process by whole
language advocates (Butler & Turbill, 1984; Graves,
1983; Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Along with these
changes in the classroom comes the acknowledgement of

the role of the home in the literacy development of
children.

Whole language programs in schools try to narrow
the gap between home and school learning. Wells (1986)
points out that the strategies children have developed
for actively making sense of their experience before
entering school have served them well and that it is
the role of the school to extend and develop these
skills, not suppress them by the imposition of routine
learning tasks for which they can see neither a purpose
nor a connection with what they already know and can do
(p. 68).

Whole language, Heald-Taylor (1989) concludes, is
the summation of research concerning developmental
learning, oral language, reading, writing, and
evaluation when it is applied to classroom practice.
Her book The Administrator's Guide to Whole Language
(1989), contains an excellent summary of the research
that has laid the foundation for the whole language
approach.

Parental Collaboration

Rich (1985) states that a whole language
perspective implies a restructuring of traditional
schools and an opening of the curriculum, with parent
education as a part of the total package. Fields
(1988) points out that when parents understand how

written language development can be similar to that of
oral language, they are more willing to accept whole
language instruction, and more importantly, they are
able to see the role that they play in their child's
literacy development. From this understanding, it
becomes clear that parental support and collaboration
with teachers is an essential ingredient in the
effective development of literacy learning.

Heath's research (1983) demonstrates the fallacy
of parents turning their child's education entirely
over to the school, believing in the school's singular
ability to make a difference. Her ethnographic research
of three different communities living in close
proximity, in the southern United States, revealed that
children from one of the communities whose parents took
great care in preparing them for school entry, did not
turn out to be high achievers in school. The reason
for this, Heath observed, was that the parents'
preparation did not extend itself to include genuine,
purposeful life situations for literacy activities in
the home, and furthermore, these parents ceased their
educational interaction with their children once their
children entered school. Heath (1983) believes parents
need to build on the orchestrated preparation they give
their preschoolers in order to reinforce or extend the
school's academic activities and to bring these back

into the home (p. 348).

Tizard & Hughes (1984) and Wells (1986) demonstrate how teachers can learn from observing children at home. These researchers, along with Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983) show the richness, depth and variety of experiences that characterize children's homes. The realization that the home (not the school) may be the primary influence on children's literacy development in the long run, is beginning to come to the forefront (Laing, 1990, personal communication).

As a result of the research pertaining to emergent literacy and developmental learning, educators and administrators of whole language have suggested ways for parents to contribute actively to their child's literacy development at home. Some of these suggestions are listed in Appendix B.

Purpose of the Study

The question which naturally arises is which of these suggested home experiences appear to be important, in terms of a relationship with student functioning level in school. It is an attempt to answer this question that gave rise to this study.

To investigate the problem, parents of Grade four students were asked by means of a questionnaire about experiences they may or may not have provided for their children. Specifically asked about were selected

activities that are suggested for parents to do involving reading, writing, and speaking at home, and about parent/teacher interactions. Classroom teachers were asked to classify students as performing at an above average (high or low), an average, or a below average (high or low) level. In addition students were identified by their teachers as being one of five personality types (successful, social, dependent, alienated, or phantom) as described by Good and Power (1976); student's school location was used as an indicator of social class; and student gender was noted.

The purpose of the research was to use the questionnaire as an exploratory tool by analyzing responses given in order to determine if parents of above average students would answer differently from the parents of below average students. The research question was to see if home experiences and parent/teacher interactions correlate with student functioning in Language Arts. Student type, social class, and gender were explored for further relationships with home experiences.

The study was one not directly of emergent literacy, but one of literacy development and maintenance embedded in the "soil" of the literate environment of the homes of Grade four students.

As whole language is finding its way into school systems, misconceptions and confusions abound surrounding its philosophy and teaching practices (Newman & Church, 1990). Research that addresses specific areas of whole language is in demand by researchers, theorists, educators, and parents alike. The role of the home and parent education certainly qualifies as constituting a vital part of the 'whole language' whole.

Findings from this study may have implications for learning to read and write; and for the priority that is given to information shared with parents. Findings, it is hoped, will shed light on additional questions to be asked, and further areas to be investigated.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The topic of this thesis is one that is not new to research. As already indicated, much research has been carried out in the area of emergent literacy. In addition, much has been written in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand regarding the whole language approach and communication with parents. Also, much has been written about the relationship between home and school in Japan (Simmons, 1987; Elkind, 1988; Fallows, 1990).

Less research, however, has been done on what occurs in the home after children begin to attend school. Of these studies, most have been carried out in Great Britain, but recently, some qualitative studies have been undertaken in the United States. Findings from these investigations will be reviewed as they pertain to the issue being raised and in so far as they influence the design of the present research.

Parental Practices and Student Functioning in School

Edwards and Redfern (1988) believe that in North America and in Europe, much of the literature and most of the studies done relating to parental involvement and children's achievement in school stem from the Plowden Report (1967) undertaken in Britain. This

15

report, entitled <u>Children and their Primary Schools</u>, was one of the first major undertakings to give official recognition to the potential role which parents could play in their children's schooling.

Researchers for the Plowden Report carried out a National survey by interview, questioning the mothers of 3,000 British children about their attitudes concerning school. At the same time that the interviews were held, information was collected from the 173 head teachers who were involved in the study. Information was collected on the nature and function of the schools, and their relationships with parents. Class teachers added information about the children in the sample. The attainment levels of the children were assessed by reading comprehension tests, and a picture intelligence test. For comparison of the attainment of children within schools, pupils were arranged in rank order by teachers.

The main purpose of the survey carried out for Plowden was to attempt to relate what could be learned about home and school in relation to the attainment of children. One category of questions concerned parental attitudes towards school. Among other things looked at were the initiatives shown by parents in visiting the school, in talking to heads and class teachers, and in asking for work for children to do at home. Parents

were asked about the time they spent with children in the evening and whether they helped children with school work. There was an assessment of the literacy of the home as judged by what parents and children read, whether they belonged to a library, and the number of books in the home.

A positive relationship between children's home backgrounds and their success in school was established and according to Hewison (1982), schools could no longer ignore the fact that the views and behaviour of parents had a definite influence on the educational achievement of their children. The response to the finding in this report was to advocate the increased involvement of parents in education, as a means of raising the school performances of children (Hewison, 1982:156).

The Bullock Report (1975), entitled A Language for Life, was another massive study undertaken in Britain concerning the teaching of reading and other language skills in school. This report urged parents to "bathe their children in language", and it made one vitally important point:

> It has been said that the best way to prepare
> the very young child for reading is to hold him
> on your lap and read aloud stories he likes,
> over and over again. The printed page, the

physical comfort and security, the

reassuring voice, the fascination of the story:

all these combine in the child's mind to

identify books as something which hold great

pleasure (p. 97).

Both the Plowden and Bullock Reports discussed

co-operation between parents and teachers and made

constructive suggestions as to how this could be

improved. Concerning these reports, Hewison states

that what matters most is "whether there is genuine

mutual respect, whether parents understand what the

schools are doing for their children and teachers

realize how dependent they are on parents" (Hewison &

Tizard, 1980, p. 214).

Another major undertaking in Britain entitled the

Bristol Language Study included an investigation of

children's home background and school performance. In

presenting his findings and discussion from this 15

year longitudinal study of children's language

development (n = 32), Wells (1986), found that the rank

ordering of children (according to relative

achievement) did not change significantly between

school entry at age five, and the last assessment at

age ten. Wells noted that any given child in the study

was likely to retain his/her standing in the rank order

(as determined by tests and teachers' assessments) between school entry at age five and re-evaluation at age ten. Children who started out 'ahead' were very likely to stay ahead, and children who started out 'behind' were likely to stay behind.

Wells found that the single most important factor in accounting for the differences between children in their school achievement was how much they understood about literacy on entry into school (p. 165). This knowledge of literacy was measured by comparing frequency scores of children in three given activities-looking at picture books, listening to a story, and drawing and colouring. Other contributory factors, Wells found, were the amount of help that parents gave with school work and the model they provided of the value of literacy in their own lives by the frequency with which they themselves engaged in reading and writing.

The Bristol Language Study clearly demonstrated that it was growing up in a literate family environment, in which reading and writing were naturally occurring, daily activities, that gave children a particular advantage when they started their formal education. Of all the activities that were characteristic of such homes, it was the sharing of stories that Wells found to be most important (p. 194).

Wells maintains that while there are ways in which parents can and do help children to construct the foundations of literacy in the years before school, once children start going to school, supporting the continuing development of literacy should become a collaborative enterprise, in which the assistance of parents is positively encouraged.

In 1982 Hewison undertook the Dagenham Project, named after the area where the project was undertaken on the eastern outskirts of London, England. Its purpose was to look at the connection between social background and early school performance, specifically factors influencing early reading success within a group of working class six to seven year old children. The work on the project fell into three stages. In each stage information was collected on children's reading ability (using standardized tests), and on home backgrounds (using parent interviews). The interviews were set up with the aim of building up a picture of detailed variations in the homes of the children.

Of all the factors examined in the study, the one which appeared to be most strongly and independently linked to reading performance was whether or not the mother reported she regularly heard the child read. All other things being equal, children who regularly read to their parents at home were considerably better

readers than those who did not (Hewison, 1982, p. 158).

Because the Dagenham study was a survey based on interview evidence, and the fact that perhaps, only good readers were willing to read aloud at home, Hewison decided to take the argument a stage further. This led to the Haringey Reading Project (Hewison, Schofield & Tizard; 1982) conducted between 1976 and 1979.

Haringey, another London borough, was where the experiment was conducted. All middle infants (age five), top infants (age six), and first and second year juniors (ages seven and eight) were included in the sample taken from six schools. All parents of the students were asked to hear their children read regularly, monitor what they did, and then look at the reading performance of their children. Parents were given advice on good coaching tips to use when helping their children. For this experiment, all children taking part in the parental involvement scheme were paired with children from six other schools not taking part in the parental involvement scheme.

Reading progress was compared in the summers of 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979 of all students involved. By this means, a 'grid' of reading standards was constructed, enabling comparisons to be made between parent involvement and control groups of children, at a

number of different reading stages. The questions asked of the schools with the parental involvement were: do the children read better; do they read worse; or does it make any difference? The study found that in the great majority of cases, children helped by their parents with reading were put at a reading advantage, not a disadvantage, as had sometimes been claimed (Hewison, 1982, p. 162).

Taylor (1983) carried out a study in the United States in attempt to develop systematic ways to look at reading and writing as activities that affect family life and are affected by family life. Her three year study looked at six, white middle-class families who, at the time of the study, had to have had a child who was considered by his/her parents to be successfully learning to read and write and was either finishing Kindergarten or entering Grade One. Based on her study, Taylor concluded that "children from literate environments have an enormous advantage in learning to read and write" (p. 87).

All of the children in her study grew up in a literate environment at home, and consequently, she maintains, they made the transition to school with few problems. Taylor claims that a skills approach to literacy in school "runs counter to the natural development of reading and writing as complex cultural

activities" (p. 90). She claims that schools cannot
effectively teach children to read and write using a
skills approach if those children have never
experienced, or had little experience of, reading and
writing as complex cultural activities. Taylor states
that children remember something that has personal and
important meaning to what they are doing. The teaching
of reading and writing in schools is taken out of
personal context for children who have no experience
with these activities, and the school experience with
these subjects then becomes unrelated to their everyday
lives. Taylor believes that the school cannot take the
place of the learning opportunities provided by a
literate family.

In summary, Taylor maintains that traditional
literary styles and values are transmitted through
generations of the family indirectly from parent to
child. The child's exposure to print in the home,
either by being read to or by seeing parents read and
write, directly influences the child's ability to see
functions of language as meaningful experiences and
thereby prepares and influences the child in
experimenting and learning to read and write both at
home and at school. A child's preparedness for
learning to read and write in school, Taylor concludes,
depends upon his or her exposure to written language in

the family. The failure or difficulty in learning to read or write in school is not necessarily the fault of the school, but, more likely, rests with the inability of the family to provide the child with a literate environment.

Heath (1983) carried out an ethnographic study in the United States investigating three different communities which, as a whole, had different success experiences within school. Success in school was defined in terms of successful completion of primary school, completion of elementary school, post secondary education, and employment.

Heath found that children from two of the communities had no experience in seeing their parents read or write extended pieces of prose at home. These children in the long run were not successful in school and did not benefit from its experience. The third community, the one whose children did succeed in school, on the other hand, revealed evidence of a different kind with regard to parental behaviour concerning reading, writing, and speaking at home.

Heath found that these parents linked items in the home setting to items in the school setting. Perhaps most importantly, reports Heath, those parents "expect events of the moment to bear on the outcome of future events. They assume that what happens at school and at

home are linked, and they make possible a variety of
activities, resources, and authorities to support these
links" (p. 350). Further, Heath states that:

> A family outing to an air show may be primarily for
> entertainment, but the next science project at
> school may well incorporate an extended prose
> account of the air show, photographs from the air
> show, and a detailing of the features of a
> particular airplane on display there. When
> children do not initiate these links, parents
> suggest them, and when too many weeks go by
> without direct and extended talk of what is going
> on at school, parents begin looking for ways to
> build anew some connections (p. 350).

Most children from these families succeed in school
reports Heath. All are not top scholars, she states,
but most go through the school system without
questioning its usefulness and its critical role in
their future. Discontinuities between out-of-school
activities and in-school lessons occur for individuals,
but not for the group as a whole, claims Heath.

In Australia, Dwyer (1989) distributed to between
40,000 and 50,000 parents and teachers, a survey which
examined major concerns about primary schooling. What
dominated everything else in this survey was a
fundamental interest in the teaching of reading.

Parents wanted to know how children actually learned to read, how these skills were taught at school, and what they could do to help their children become better readers. Based on his findings, Dwyer argues that reading is only one aspect of language and that of course it is very closely related to talking, listening, and writing. He maintains that a child's ability to read depends to a very large extent on the quality of language experiences he or she enjoys at home. A home rich in language, where people love words and stories, where tales are told and books are read, where parents model interesting speech and are seen to be readers and writers, and where children are automatically expected to be the same, such a home prepares the child to move naturally and inevitably into reading (Dwyer, 1989:21-22).

In Japan, so pronounced is the relationship between a mother's involvement in her children's school work at home and her children's achievement in school, that it has received considerable publicity in North America.

> No one doubts that behind every high scoring
> Japanese student - and they are among the highest
> scoring in the world - there stands a mother,
> supportive, aggressive, and completely involved
> in her child's education.... She helps every day

with homework, hires tutors and works part-time to

pay for "juku" [study classes]. Sometimes she

enrolls in "mother's class" so she can help with

the drills at home. So accepted is this role that

it has spawned its own label, "Kyoiku Mama"

[Education Mother] (Simmons, 1987, p. 56).

Elkind (1988) writes that the success of Japanese

education is in large part, due to the efforts and

self-sacrifice of Japanese 'Education Mothers'. He

says Japanese children are able to tolerate the stress

and pressure of the educational system because their

mothers are always there for support and encouragement

(p. 58).

With regard to specific kinds of parental

involvement in school work at home, Dye (1989) reports

that there is a general trend in the research which

suggests that cognitive development in children is

improved by parents taking time to talk with their

children. Hewison (1982) also reported that "parent's

willingness to chat with their children" was identified

in the Dagenham Project as significant information in

examining parental attitudes towards education. The

research of Becker and Epstein (1982) also identified

"learning through discussion" as an important activity

that involved parents in children's learning activities

at home. Family exchanges about daily school

activities and homework assignments were seen as valuable.

Parent/Teacher/School Interaction

VanDevender (1988) states that how successful a child is in school depends to a large extent on the child's parents. The research findings of Bennett (1986) indicate that an extra boost from parents helps children learn more effectively. Bennett found a strong correlation between parental involvement in the school and student achievement. Dye (1989) claims through her research that when children have a quality school program and supportive and involved parents, they attain better academic and social skills. Children see parental involvement in school as a sign that their parents value education.

From New Zealand, Cutting (1989) maintains that parents should know what the school's reading and writing program is; what methods and materials are used, and just how their children will learn to read. In this sense, Cutting believes that parents should know their role in helping children learn to read and write. As Dwyer's survey results show (1989), most parents want to help their children with reading and writing, however, Cutting maintains, most do not know what to do. Cutting says that schools can easily do something about this, by showing parents specific ways

to help their children learn to read and write.

One Board of Education in Ontario has a Teacher's Handbook entitled Communicating with Parents and Students (1984). The handbook urges parental involvement and states that one of the most effective ways teachers can communicate a child's progress to parents is to involve them in the learning situation on a regular basis. In this way, the parents become aware of teaching methods, expectations and learning growth of their children, and they become actively involved as well. This document encourages informal communication between school and home through:

- telephone conversations,

- letters, memos, regular newsletters,

- home visits,

- school displays and demonstrations, and

- classroom visits (open door policy).

Formal communication is encouraged through parent/teacher interviews and report cards.

Another Board of Education in Ontario (Peel, 1983), through its support document for Language Arts from kindergarten to Grade three, and Grade four to six, encourages parent workshops to be put on either by individual teachers, or by the school administration. This document suggests the workshops be given singly, or as an on-going series.

A review of the literature related to parental
practices at home has revealed dozens of items as
suggestions for parents, in order to encourage literacy
development in the home. As already indicated, a
summary of these items is found in Appendix B.

Personality, Gender, and Socioeconomic Differences

Wells (1986) suggests that little is known in
detail about the contribution of personality
differences in children and of differences in learning
styles, but he maintains that these differences are
probably quite important (pp. 129-130). Children
differ with respect to such traits as perseverance (to
endure a task), and risk-taking (in attempting tasks),
and these factors do influence the amounts of helpful
feedback that these children get from other speakers.
Children also differ in such traits as sociability,
curiosity, argumentativeness, and so on. Wells
believes all of these variables affect the ways in
which other people interact with them. He found that
in this respect, one of the more important differences
between children is in the amount they converse with an
adult while engaged in shared activities, such as
helping with the housework, cooking, playing together,
watching television, looking at books, and so on. In
such contexts, adults not only provide evidence of
language in use, but they also tend to 'scaffold' the

activity to make it easy for the child to play his or her role within it (p. 130).

Good and Power (1976) believe that the assumption that certain key teacher behaviours have generally favourable effects upon all students in all situations is erroneous (p. 45). These researchers believe that in general teacher behaviours are not equally received by all students because research has shown that teaching behaviour does not have the same salubrious effects upon all students. Good and Power believe further that if successful intervention in the educative process is to occur, then educators need to develop conceptual and research strategies which match the complexity of the classroom setting and its inhabitants.

For these reasons, they discuss the personality types of five kinds of students found in most classrooms. Briefly, these are: successful students who are task oriented and academically successful; social students, who are more person than task oriented; dependent students, who look to the teacher for support and encouragement and often ask for additional directions and help; alienated students who seem to be reluctant learners and potential school dropouts; and phantom students who seem to fade into the background because they are rarely noticed or heard

from by the teacher. A further description of these five types is found in Appendix C. Much of Good and Power's research has gone into designing successful classroom environments for these types of students.

In the Bristol Study Wells found no differences in achievement levels due to the sex of the child. He reports that there were no measures on which girls as a group were consistently ahead of boys, or vice versa. Wells notes that this finding is consistent with the results of other recent studies. However, it is in marked contrast to the picture that emerged from earlier work, in which girls were found to develop more rapidly on a number of linguistic dimensions (Cherry and Lewis, 1973).

Brophy and Good (1990) state that among individual variables used to describe particular students or even entire school populations, the most important may be socioeconomic status and social class. Hess (1970), however, stresses that the major difference between disadvantaged (generally referred to as people at the lower end of socioeconomic status) and advantaged (generally referred to as people at the higher end of socioeconomic status) parents, is that the former lack the knowledge that would enable them to obtain things they want. Therefore, it is relevant knowledge and experience, not financial resources, that determine the

quality of the "cognitive environment" that a home

provides (Hess, 1970). This is to say that children's

cognitive development depends more on the modelling and

intellectual stimulation they get from their parents

than on the mere presence of material possessions.

Parents who provide a rich cognitive environment

interact with their children often, frequently at

length, and in ways likely to stimulate thinking

(Brophy, 1977; Hess, 1970). These parents label

objects and events, explain causal relationships,

discuss future activities in advance, and accompany

discipline with instructions containing information as

well as demands (Brophy and Good, 1990). These parents

also answer children's questions, encourage their

exploratory efforts, and generally provide them with a

rich context of meaning within which to understand and

assimilate new experiences. Furthermore, these parents

model intellectual activity and verbal communication in

everyday activities such as, reading newspapers and

books for both information and pleasure; watching

educational as well as entertaining television

programs, and discussing their content; conversing

about daily events at mealtimes; participating in

social and political organizations; and visiting zoos,

museums, and other educational settings (Brophy and

Good, 1990).

Summary and Research Prediction

In short, studies done in the past have consisted of actual home observations, and interviews (sometimes using questionnaires) as methods of collecting data on families. Data collection in schools consisted of interviewing teachers, teacher assessments, use of standardized tests, etc. Some studies included actual experimental situations where specific kinds of intervention occured, and other studies consisted of interpretations from findings of others' research.

The present investigation was conducted by compiling lists of suggestions that are available for parents through various school boards, and pamphlets. Items from these lists were asssembled on a questionnaire that was distributed to parents in order to see if, and how often selected experiences occurred. The purpose was to answer the question: Is there a difference between high achievers' and low achievers' experiences with the items on the questionnaire according to how their parents respond?

On the basis that students exposed to frequent literate home experiences would make the transition from home to school learning with greater ease, it was predicted that students whose homes provided more experiences concerning reading, writing, speaking, and school interaction would be higher achieving students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to carry out the investigation component
of this thesis, and as all research methodologies
mandate by nature, a number of decisions were made.
Some were of a theoretical nature, others practical or
logistical. The purpose of this chapter is to describe
the decisions taken and the rationalizations behind
them, as well as to outline the procedures used in
carrying out the study. These include information
pertaining to questionnaire construction, student
assessment and types, subject and school selection, and
data collection.

Questionnaire Construction

Cattell (1973) reminds the researcher that the
questionnaire instrument is put into perspective by
recognizing that it provides Q-data only, and that this
represents only one leg of the tripod. Q-data are
questionnaire (hence Q) responses which the individual
him/herself observes and describes. Other methods of
data measurement are L-data, in which an observer
assesses the individual's behavioural traits from
looking (hence L) at what the subject does in his/her
everyday life; and T-data, in which an observer
measures the subject's behaviour in a standard,

contrived laboratory or test (hence T) situation.

Other questionnaire limitations are that they may produce low response rates; their reliability and validity are limited; sometimes written questions are dealt with on a shallow basis; some respondents have negative attitudes towards them; they are impersonal; they cannot sample people who do not read English; and the researcher cannot be sure of who actually completed the form (Anderson & Berdie, 1974). Finally, questionnaire results involve the problem of respondents giving what they think are socially desirable responses.

Despite all of the above, one of the basic uses of questionnaires according to Anderson and Berdie (1974) is to point out trends for future study. These researchers state that "although questionnaires are not ideal for research concerned with minute discrimination, they do allow the investigator to ask general questions which suggest areas of interest for more intensive study" (p. 20).

With the above in mind, the instrument selected to explore the literate environment of homes was a questionnaire. Among the advantages of a questionnaire for this particular piece of research were that it was possible to question a larger sample of people, as opposed to using interviews; questionnaires were

relatively easy for respondents to complete; and items
within the questionnaire were posed in the same manner
for each respondent, therefore reducing the possibility
of bias.

Oppenheim (1966) notes:

A questionnaire is not just a list of questions or a
form to be filled out. It is essentially a
scientific instrument for measurement and for
collection of particular kinds of data.
Like all such instruments, it has to be specially
designed according to particular specifications and
with specific aims in mind, and the data it yields
are subject to error (pp. 2 - 3).

Thus, the questionnaire used was designed to obtain
parents' responses to suggested activities for them to
do at home, and to items that appear in the literature
concerning parental collaboration at home. The purpose
of it was to compare given responses to the items.
Would the parents of above average students respond
differently from the parents of below average students?

All items on the questionnaire were selected from
the literature dealing with parental involvement with
children at home, and from the studies to do with
parent/teacher/school interaction. The questionnaire
(see Appendix D) contained 83 items of inquiry. These
were presented in an organized manner.

1) A 16 item yes/no introductory part to the
   questionnaire asked more or less general questions
   concerning reading and writing, and served to ease
   the respondent into the more in depth items of
   inquiry;

2) A five-point Likert scale ranging from Never to
   Very Often (Scale A = 33 items) asked about
   experiences not necessarily occuring on a daily
   basis; and

3) A five-point Likert scale ranging from Once a Month
   or Less to Every Day (Scale B = 34 items) asked
   about experiences that may occur on a daily basis.

   All 67 scaled items on the questionnaire can be
viewed in light of five categorical areas dealing with:
reading (23 items), writing (12 items), speaking (16
items), parent/teacher interaction (5 items), and other
items, not necessarily falling under one specific
grouping (11 items). A reliability test was conducted
on the questionnaire categories through the SPSS
computer program. The following standardized item
alpha levels were recorded for each category: .85
(reading), .77 (writing), .80 (speaking), .71
(parent/teacher interaction), and .42 (other).

   Appendix E details the items in these categories.
The categories allow for measurement of the items under
inquiry and allow composite scores to be tabulated.

The maximum scores in each category are as follows:
Reading (115 points), writing (60 points), speaking (80
points), parent/teacher interaction (25 points) and
other (55 points). Scaled items appeared on the actual
questionnaire in a more or less random fashion.

Additional information asked on the questionnaire
concerned:

1. The gender of the person completing the form.

2. Did the family of the Grade four child have other
   siblings?

3. Employment, and/or stay-at-home status of parents.

4. Space was left for comments in two areas-
   those concerning any item on the questionnaire,
   and; those concerning any additional information
   regarding reading, writing, and speaking at home.

The questionnaire did have a foreword attached to it
and this can be seen in Appendix F. Parents were
instructed to have the parent with the most involvement
with the child complete the questionnaire, but that it
was acceptable to have both parents complete it.
Parents were told that for the items on the
questionnaire, an I(you) actually meant either parent.
For example, for the item "I read to my child", the "I"
actually referred to either parent.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a group of
adult teachers (n = 25), and with selected parents

(n = 5) who were acquaintances of the researcher. The
teachers were told of the use of the questionnaire in
advance, and the parents were only given the foreword
that was to be used for the actual study. The purpose
of the pre-test was to determine questionnaire
readability, time of completion, and to ascertain
possible problems that might arise. Responses given
were not tabulated, they were only taken into
consideration by the researcher for the design of the
instrument. Respondents were asked for written and
verbal comments. The average time for completing the
questionnaire was thirteen minutes. Based on the
responses from the pre-test, appropriate changes were
made.

Student Assessment and Types

Several choices of assessment are available in
order to measure children's functioning level in
Language Arts at school. For this study, teacher
perceptions of students was used. This choice was made
as it is the belief of whole language advocates (Butler
& Turbill, 1984; Goodman, 1986; Heald-Taylor, 1989)
that teachers continually evaluate their students'
progress in order to plan further relevant classroom
activities. This evaluation takes place while
listening to and watching the children as they go about
their daily activities. Goodman (1986) refers to this

evaluation process as "kid watching" (p. 41 - 42).
The research of Pearson and Dunning (1985) and Teale,
Hiebert, and Chittenden (1987) suggests that observing
students while they are engaged in reading or writing
provides a reliable source of valid information about
students' growth in language. Brophy and Good (1990)
state that teachers form impressions (usually
accurate), of their students' academic abilities very
quickly, even if they do not have access to home
background information and cumulative record files.
Teachers do this by using cues such as general signs of
alertness and comprehension, quality of questions and
comments, and performance of academic tasks (p. 587).

For the investigation, teachers were asked to
complete the data on student functioning levels in mid-
November. This actually followed them having completed
student report cards for official school purposes.
Five choices were given to the teachers as to student
functioning levels in the Language Arts component of
their classroom. These levels were-

1. High above average

2. Above average

3. Average

4. Below average

5. Low below average

Teachers were asked to make their choice of student

grouping based on their perceptions of student
performance in Language Arts in class. Teachers were
asked to take the perspective from viewing students
over their teaching careers.

In order to ascertain the status of the teachers
participating in the study, each was requested to
disclose their gender, the number of years of teaching
experience, and the number of years experience in
teaching Grade four. The answers to these enquiries
revealed five male teachers, and five female teachers
with an average of 21.7 years of teaching experience;
the range being from 3 to 29 years, with a standard
deviation of 4.5 years. The average number of years
teaching Grade four was significantly lower, being five
years, with a range from 1 to 19 years, and a standard
deviation of 2.2 years.

In attempt to address the complexity of student
differences in the present study and by carrying the
findings of Good and Power (1976) further, it is safe
to believe that just as students do not equally receive
all teacher practices, likewise, all children will not
receive, and respond to all parental practices equally.
For example, a practice such as a parent reading to a
child may prove to be successful in one household, and
not in another. The purpose of using the student types
was to see if certain home experiences would correlate

with student type.

Teachers were therefore asked to classify their students into one of Good and Power's (1976) five student "types". These were discussed in chapter two, and again may be viewed in Appendix C. Teachers were asked to read the descriptions and to make only one choice as to which type they would classify each of their students.

Subjects

Grade four students and their parents were chosen to work with as subjects because this grade marks the end of the primary years. By Grade four, literacy skills should be developed to a degree that one can investigate the "soil" of the literate environment of the home. Children in Grade four are also young enough that their earlier years are still in the memories of their parents. This recall information was necessary for parents when responding to the questionnaire. Children in Grade four are on average, nine years old.

One school board in Southwestern Ontario was approached for permission to carry cut the study in the Spring of 1990 and permission was received to conduct the research in the Fall of that year. Ten schools were used for the investigation. One Grade four classroom was used from each school. In c⸱⸱⸱er to maintain anonymity for those involved, the name of the

school board, schools, teachers, and students remains
confidential. At no time did the researcher have
access to parent or student names. All information
dealing with subjects was dealt with on a coded basis.

School Selection and Social Class

The ten schools were selected in order to obtain a
cross-section of socioeconomic respondents within the
population group. Five schools were located in the
inner-city area and five schools were located in
suburban areas. Schools in these locations were
selected with the intention of using location as an
indicator of social class status. Information from
principals, teachers and a knowledge of the
neighborhoods that the schools were located in,
confirmed the distinction of designating inner city
schools as a working class population, and the suburban
schools as a middle class population.

As the investigation did not address the special
consideration of English As A Second Language (E.S.L.)
students, schools with high numbers of E.S.L. students
were excluded from the selection of schools used.

Collection of Data

Principals were approached personally by the
researcher and were given details of the study in
writing. Appendix G contains the letter that was
presented to school principals. Teachers were also

approached personally by the researcher. Appendix H is a copy of the letter and the instructions that were presented to classroom teachers. Permission was obtained by all principals and teachers to proceed with the data collection.

The researcher personally visited all ten classrooms one week prior to the questionnaire being sent home. The purpose of this visit was to have the researcher introduce herself to the students and to have students take letters of intent home to their parents. The researcher actually read this letter with the students and had them fold it, seal it with a sticker, and write a message on the cover to the person who would be receiving it in their home. At this time students were given an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. A rapport was sought with students with the intention of increasing the likelihood of letters and questionnaires actually reaching the parents, and in order to promote dialogue concerning the questionnaire.

This letter of intent (Appendix I) was to serve as notification to parents that a questionnaire would be sent home to them in one week's time. The purpose of this letter was to try to obtain a high return rate from parents, by giving them advance notice of the study, and their requested involvement in it.

One week later, classroom teachers sent
questionnaires home with students. Instructions were
to have them ask their parents to complete the
questionnaires that evening, if at all possible, and to
send them back to school the following morning. It was
made clear, however, that parents had a full school-
week to complete and return them.

In the meantime, teachers were asked to complete
the information on students. Specific instructions to
teachers are contained within the letter to the
teachers (Appendix H). Three pieces of information
were requested from teachers regarding each of their
students. These were: student group (high above
average, above average, average, below average, and low
below average); student type (successful, social
dependent, alienated, and phantom); and student gender.
Student information was written on a tabulation sheet
that was provided for the teachers. This form can be
seen in Appendix J. Information was given on all
students, regardless of parent participation in the
questionnaire making it possible to collect data on
students whose parents did not return the
questionnaire. On the tabulation sheets, students were
given a code number and they were referred to by this
number in all information provided to the researcher.

Parents were given a blank envelope with

questionnaires in order that they be sent back to the school, via their child. Parents were requested to seal the envelopes. Upon return of the questionnaires to school, it was necessary for classroom teachers to write appropriate code numbers on the envelopes. This number was to match the appropriate information on the tabulation sheet. At the end of the test period, the researcher went to all schools to collect returned questionnaires, and completed tabulation sheets. All students were presented with book marks for their rendered delivery services.

Data from questionnaires and tabulation sheets were transferred onto computer scan sheets for ease of tabulation. The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer program was used to analyze results.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

The total number of questionnaires from parents
and corresponding teacher information on student-
subjects used in the statistical analyses was 173.
Table 1 shows this sample broken down according to
student functioning group (high above average, above
average, average, below average, and low below
average), as assessed by classroom teachers, student
type (successful, social, dependent, alienated, and
phantom), as assessed by classroom teachers, student
social class (working and middle), as determined by
school location, and student gender (male and female).
A further breakdown of the population used in the study
is found in appendices K, L, M, and N where separate
profiles are shown for: the five student functioning
groups (K); the five student types (L); both social
classes (M); and for both genders (N).

A chi square test was computed to ascertain any
significant relationships between the introductory item
yes/no responses from the parents of the students in
the various functioning groups. Correlation
coefficients were computed between student functioning
group and home experiences, and between student type
and home experiences. In addition, a multiple

Table 1

Sample Population used in the Statistical Analyses.

	n	
Student Functioning Group		
High above average	37	(21%)
Above average	31	(18%)
Average	66	(38%)
Below average	30	(18%)
Low below average	9	(5%)
Student Type		
Successful	89	(51%)
Social	29	(17%)
Dependent	26	(15%)
Alienated	10	(6%)
Phantom	19	(11%)
Social class		
Working	65	(38%)
Middle	108	(62%)
Gender		
Male	82	(47%)
Female	91	(53%)

N = 173

regression procedure was computed to investigate the degree to which these home experiences predict student functioning group. To further examine the five student functioning groups, analyses of variance (ANOVA's) were carried out to investigate the relationships between student sex and home experiences and social class and home experiences. The results of the above statistical tests, along with return rates, an analysis of comments from respondents, and overall questionnaire response percentages are reported in this chapter.

Comparison of Yes/No Responses According to Student Functioning Group

A cross-tabular chi square test was computed on the 16 yes/no items in order to compare parent responses for the various functioning groups of students. For this test, the five functioning groups were collapsed into three groups (above average, average, and below average) in order to ensure sufficient responses in each of the cross-tabular cells. Of the 16 items, 4 revealed significance in the actual distribution of responses in comparison to the expected distribution of responses. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 2. The Chi square statistic (Pearson) is reported for the 4 items at a .01 or .05 significance level.

Table 2

Yes/No Frequency Response According to Student
Functioning Group.

	Above Average (n = 68)	Average (n = 66)	Below Average (n =39)
Item #1.			
yes	56	53	23
no	12	13	16
Item #3.			
yes	22	19	1
no	46	47	38
Item #4.			
yes	50	47	19
no	17	19	20
Item #11.			
yes	45	29	22
no	22	35	17

Item #1.   My child could recognize his/her name in writing before kindergarten.
Minimum expected frequency- 9.24
$\chi^2(2) = 8.44$ $p < .01$

Item #3.   My child could read children's books before going to kindergarten.
Minimum expected frequency- 9.57
$\chi^2(2) = 13.14$ $p < .01$

Item #4.   My child could write his/her name before starting kindergarten.
Minimum expected frequency- 12.69
$\chi^2(2) = 8.23$ $p < .01$

Item #11.   I subscribe to one or more magazines.
Minimum expected frequency- 16.97
$\chi^2(2) = 6.35$ $p < .05$

Correlational Analyses

The questionnaire had the 67 scaled items of selected home experiences divided into five categories: reading, writing, speaking, parent/teacher interaction, and other (items not necessarily belonging to the above categories). Correlation coefficients were computed for the following sets of variables: the five questionnaire categories and the five student functioning groups [the same test was repeated separately for each social class (working and middle)]; the five questionnaire categories and the five student types; individual questionnaire items and the five student functioning groups; individual questionnaire items and the five student types.

Questionnaire Categories and Student Functioning Group and Student Type

Pearson coefficients between the five student functioning groups and the five questionnaire categories revealed only one significant relationship that was between student grouping and the writing category ($r = .27$, $p < .05$, two-tailed test). This revealed for example, that students whose parents reported less writing activity were in the below average functioning groups.

When social class (working and middle) was

considered separately, a significant coefficient was revealed between the parent/teacher interaction category and student functioning group ($r = -.31$, $p <$ .05) in the working class. This finding indicates that in the working class schools only, students whose parents reported more interaction with the teacher were in the below average functioning groups, whereas, students whose parents reported less interaction with the teacher were in the above average functioning groups.

In order to compute correlation coefficients for the five questionnaire categories and the five student types, the student types were placed on a continuum from one to five: 1 - successful, 2 - social, 3 - dependent, 4 - alienated, and 5- phantom. No significant coefficients were revealed between the student types and the questionnaire categories.

Individual Items and Student Functioning Group and Type

Correlational analyses between the 67 individual items on the questionnaire and the five student functioning groups revealed 11 significant coefficients (see Table 3). Three significant coefficients were revealed between student type and student functioning group (see Table 4). Item 19, "I get frustrated when I help my child with school work" indicated that parents of alienated and phantom students reported experiencing

Table 3

Pearson Coefficients for Questionnaire Items Correlated with Student Functioning Group.

Scale A items

3.   .15*   I speak to my child in another language besides English.

4.   .16*   My child talks to me about school projects he/she is working on.

7.   .31**   Paper, pens, pencils, markers, etc. are easy to find at our house.

8.   .31**   My child likes to do school work at home involving reading or writing.

15.   .22*   My child keeps a diary or journal at home.

19.   -.32**   I get frustrated when I help my child with school work.

24.   .28**   My child reads books that are not required for school.

31.   .15*   My child writes at home for purposes besides school work.

Scale B items

16.   .17*   I use a computer at home.

20.   .22**   My child reads at night before going to sleep.

24.   .19*   My child reads books for pleasure.

---

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4

Pearson Coefficients for Questionnaire Items Correlated
with Student Type.

Scale A items

\# 8.   .21**   My child likes to do school work at home
                involving reading or writing.

\# 19   -.26*   I get frustrated when I help my child
                with school work.

Scale B items

\# 20.   .21*   My child reads at night before going to
                sleep.

---

* p < .05

** p < .01

more frustration when helping their child with school
work at home.

Multiple Regression

A stepwise multiple regression test was computed
to investigate which of the five questionnaire
categories (entered in the equation were reading,
writing, speaking, parent/teacher interaction, and
other) would best predict: (a) student functioning
group, and (b) student type. Similar results were
obtained for both regression equations.

Writing and parent/teacher interaction were found
to be significant predictors of student grouping.
Writing ($R = .16$, $p <.05$) was entered on Step 1, and
parent/teacher interaction ($R = .24$, $p < .01$) was
entered on Step 2.

Similarly, writing and parent/teacher interaction
were also significant predictors of student type.
Writing ($R = .15$, $p < .05$) was entered on Step 1, and
parent/teacher interaction ($R = .22$ $p < .01$) was
entered on Step 2.

Analyses of Variance: Student Gender

Analyses of variance were computed for Sex (male,
female) x Student Group (high above average, above
average, average, below average, and low below average)
for each of the questionnaire categories (reading,
writing, speaking, parent/teacher interaction, and

other). Only one significant main effect was found.
There was a significant main effect for sex in the
writing category, (F (1, 163) = 4.03, p < .05). This
finding reveals that parents of females reported more
occurrences of the writing activities (M = 35.26) than
did the parents of male students (M = 32.45). Means
and standard deviations are reported in Table 5.

Student Social Class

Two-way ANOVA's were also computed for Social
Class (working, middle) x Student Grouping (high above
average, above average, average, below average, and low
below average) for the questionnaire categories
(reading, writing, speaking, parent/teacher interaction
and other). A significant main effect for social class
was found in the speaking category, [F (1, 163) =
5.03, p < .05], indicating that respondents from the
middle class reported more occurrences of the items in
the speaking category (M = 61.09) than respondents from
the working class (M = 57.80).

A significant main effect was also revealed for
social class in the parent/teacher interaction
category, [F (1, 163) = 6.92, p < .01], indicating that
more parents and teachers interact within the middle
class (M = 15.81) than in the working class
(M = 14.31). The means and standard deviations are
reported in Table 6.

Table 5

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations* for Questionnaire
Categories According to Gender and Student Functioning
Group.

Student Functioning Group	Question- naire Category	Male		Female	
High above average	Reading	80.75	(12.11)	77.43	(12.56)
	Writing	35.81	(6.63)	35.95	(6.28)
	Speaking	62.81	(9.47)	58.71	(9.96)
	Parent/Teacher	15.44	(4.15)	14.24	(4.70)
	Other	37.75	(4.88)	35.05	(3.85)
Above average	Reading	81.00	(12.95)	73.95	(15.88)
	Writing	34.92	(8.34)	33.37	(6.85)
	Speaking	63.33	(8.21)	56.68	(8.49)
	Parent/Teacher	14.83	(2.69)	14.63	(4.03)
	Other	37.83	(4.55)	34.58	(5.17)
Average	Reading	71.72	(13.02)	78.33	(15.96)
	Writing	31.31	(5.12)	35.60	(5.88)
	Speaking	60.55	(9.09)	59.63	(10.96)
	Parent/Teacher	14.81	(4.25)	16.00	(3.40)
	Other	35.08	(4.81)	36.13	(5.73)
Below average	Reading	70.77	(13.61)	72.53	(18.04)
	Writing	30.69	(4.85)	33.29	(6.05)
	Speaking	59.69	(11.54)	57.70	(11.79)
	Parent/Teacher	17.00	(3.76)	14.41	(4.23)
	Other	36.54	(4.52)	34.88	(5.44)
Low below average	Reading	78.00	(10.17)	83.50	(6.35)
	Writing	34.20	(4.15)	34.00	(2.00)
	Speaking	62.20	(2.86)	60.75	(4.19)
	Parent/Teacher	19.60	(2.61)	14.50	(.58)
	Other	38.00	(3.08)	35.50	(1.73)

*Standard deviations are reported in brackets.

Table 6

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations* for Questionnaire
Categories According to Class and Student Functioning
Group.

Student Functioning Group	Question-naire Category	Class			
		Working		Middle	
High above average	Reading	76.20	(12.45)	80.68	(12.08)
	Writing	35.53	(6.46)	36.14	(6.41)
	Speaking	55.67	(11.18)	63.77	(7.39)
	Parent/Teacher	12.87	(4.94)	16.05	(3.66)
	Other	33.60	(4.05)	38.00	(3.89)
Above average	Reading	74.71	(17.69)	77.25	(14.50)
	Writing	32.28	(9.55)	34.46	(6.78)
	Speaking	54.43	(11.21)	60.67	(7.81)
	Parent/Teacher	12.28	(3.64)	15.42	(3.23)
	Other	32.14	(6.59)	36.92	(4.18)
Average	Reading	73.35	(17.42)	75.62	(12.77)
	Writing	34.04	(5.67)	32.75	(5.99)
	Speaking	60.65	(11.78)	59.80	(8.72)
	Parent/Teacher	14.96	(4.00)	15.60	(3.87)
	Other	35.96	(5.87)	35.30	(4.84)
Below average	Reading	65.85	(17.80)	76.29	(13.35)
	Writing	31.00	(6.59)	33.06	(4.79)
	Speaking	55.54	(12.82)	60.88	(10.22)
	Parent/Teacher	14.46	(3.82)	16.35	(4.36)
	Other	35.77	(4.24)	35.47	(5.71)
Low below average	Reading	84.25	(11.44)	77.40	(5.13)
	Writing	35.50	(3.78)	33.00	(2.45)
	Speaking	60.50	(1.29)	62.40	(4.39)
	Parent/Teacher	18.50	(4.12)	16.40	(2.51)
	Other	36.75	(2.87)	37.00	(3.00)

*Standard deviations are noted in brackets.

Return Rates

Of the 246 questionnaires sent out, 199 of them were returned. Due to "English as a Second Language" home situations ($n = 8$), and the improper coding of questionnaires not allowing them to be matched to teacher information ($n = 18$), 26 questionnaires were eliminated from the investigation. The total number of questionnaires used in the statistical analysis therefore was 173. These figures equate to a 81% return rate received on the questionnaire. The five working class schools averaged a return rate of 73% while the five middle class schools averaged a return rate of 84%.

Table 7 illustrates the frequencies and percentages of questionnaire return rates according to social class, student group, type, and sex. Overall, this table shows that as student functioning group decreased from high above average to low below average, questionnaire return rates also decreased from 88% down to 53%. The largest discrepancy of return rates was from the 44% return rate from working class parents of low below average grouped students, compared to a 96% return rate from middle class parents of above average grouped students.

In general, returns from parents according to student type also indicated a drop in return rates from parents of successful types (86% return rate) to a

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages for Return Rates on the
Questionnaire.

	Working class		Middle class		Total	
	*Out	*In	Out	In	Out	In
High above average	16	15 (94%)	26	22 (85%)	42	37 (88%)
Above average	13	7 (54%)	25	24 (96%)	38	31 (82%)
Average	32	26 (81%)	51	40 (78%)	83	66 (80%)
Below average	22	13 (59%)	18	17 (94%)	40	30 (75%)
Low below average	9	4 (44%)	8	5 (63%)	17	9 (53%)
Successful	34	27 (79%)	70	62 (89%)	104	89 (86%)
Social	21	15 (71%)	17	14 (82%)	38	29 (76%)
Dependent	21	15 (71%)	15	11 (73%)	36	26 (72%)
Alienated	6	2 (33%)	11	8 (73%)	17	10 (59%)
Phantom	10	6 (60%)	15	13 (87%)	25	19 (76%)
Male	48	26 (54%)	68	56 (82%)	116	82 (71%)
Female	44	39 (89%)	60	52 (87%)	104	91 (88%)

*Out refers to the number of questionnaires that were
sent to the homes of students.
*In refers to the number of questionnaires that were
returned to school.
Note: The 26 cancelled questionnaires are not included
in these figures.

return rate of 59% from parents of alienated types;
however, returns were 76% from parents of phantom typed
students. The largest discrepancy in return rates was
from working class parents of alienated typed students
(33% returns) compared to an 89% return rate from
middle class parents of phantom typed students, and
successful typed students (89%).

Overall, female students returned 88% of their
parents' questionnaires, while males returned 71% of
their parents' questionnaires. In terms of gender
distinction, the largest discrepancy rate in returns
was between a 54% return rate from working class males,
and an 82% return rate from middle class males.

Comment Analysis and Overall Response Frequencies

Table 8 contains a comment analysis from comments
appearing on the questionnaires. Thirty percent of
respondents volunteered additional information. The
parents from both social classes commented almost
equally, and the majority of comments came from parents
of average-rated students. Appendix O contains sample
comments from the six categorical areas of comments
made.

Appendix P is the actual questionnaire reduced in
size with response percentages for items appearing on
it. If the percentages do not equate to a total of
100% it is because of missing data on that item.

Table 8

Comment Analysis from Questionnaire Respondents.

Number of questionnaires containing comments = 55

Comments from working class population = 30 (54.5%)

Comments from middle class population = 25 (45.5%)

- 21 came from parents of average students

- 15 came from parents of above and high above average

    students   (13 from high above, and 2 from above

    average)

- 11 came from parents of below and low below average

    students (9 from below, and 2 from low below average)

- 8 came from questionnaires that could not be matched

    to teacher information.

Comments were Categorized into Six Categories:

1. Added notes to reading = 14 (25.5%)

2. Expressing a problem or concern with child and

    explaining a lack of time to spend with

    child = 10 (18.5%)

3. Requests for more homework = 9 (16%)

4. Concern for teaching of reading, writing, spelling

    (whole language) = 7 (13%)

5. Qualitative notes in general = 7 (13%)

6. Small added comments of no particular area = 8 (14%)

Overall, by observing the last two/three columns of response choices, response percentages to items on the questionnaire reveal high frequencies for most items.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

The general purpose of this thesis was to explore the relationship between selected home experiences of students and their functioning in Language Arts in school. As indicated in Chapter One, this research was conducted on the theoretical premises concerning emergent literacy development in the home, developmental learning, whole language, and the impact of parental involvement at home on the development of children's literacy growth. The relationship between home experiences of students and their functioning in school was examined through a literature search of past studies and through a search of existing practices concerning advice given to parents. This exploration was delineated in Chapter Two.

The specific purpose of the investigation was to explore the relationship between selected home experiences of Grade four students and their functioning in Language Arts in school by use of a questionnaire that was designed and used as a tool in attempting to investigate this relationship. The questions this thesis addressed were: In what ways do specific home experiences relate to children's functioning in school? and, how significant are

selected experiences in terms of school functioning? Student types, gender and class were also considered in relation to the home experiences that these distinctions presented. Parents were asked whether certain events and experiences occurred in their homes. Additionally, the questionnaire was used to see if parents of above average functioning students would answer differently from parents of below average functioning students.

The research prediction was that differences would exist, and further, that students from homes who had more reading, writing, speaking and parent/teacher interaction experiences, would be higher achieving students. This prediction was made on the basis of the author's reading of the research literature and on the assumption that students exposed to more literate experiences in the home, would make the transition from home to school learning with greater ease, thereby increasing their functioning level in Language Arts in the classroom. This research looked to establishing a relationship between selected home experiences and student performance in school at a Grade four level.

As the questionnaire in the study was used as an exploratory tool, areas for further research will be noted throughout the discussion in this chapter. Respondents' written comments which are not edited by

the author are used in order to illustrate given points. The investigation's findings are discussed first in terms of the relationships found between the home experiences and student functioning in Language Arts in school, and second, in terms of findings related to student types, gender, and class. Lastly, the overall implications of the study will be explored.

Relationships Found in the Investigation:

Within the limits of the investigation undertaken, a strong case was not established for correlating home experiences with student functioning level in Grade four. Overall, parents of the different (high above average, above average, average, be`ow average, and low below average) functioning groups of children did not answer in significantly different ways to the items on the questionnaire. The questionnaire design incorporated all items into five categories (reading, writing, speaking, parent/teacher interaction, and other). The only category that overall showed a significant difference with regard to how the parents of the different groups answered was the writing category. A weak correlation showed that as home writing activities increased, so did student performance in Language Arts. A multiple regression procedure also confirmed the writing category as a predictor of student functioning level within this

investigation.

Writing

Although the relationship was weak (r = .27), the fact that only home writing activities revealed a relationship to the level of student functioning is important for several reasons. The items in the writing category as previously quoted were:

- My child writes stories or poems at home for fun.

- Paper, pens, pencils, markers, etc. are easy to find at our house.

- We write notes to each other at our house, these go on such places as the fridge door, or on the kitchen table, etc.

- My child keeps a diary or journal at home.

- At home, my child writes letters to friends or relatives.

- I write out shopping lists with my child.

- At home, I see writing that my child does at school.

- My child writes at home for purposes besides school work.

- I write at home for various purposes.

- I use a computer at home.

- My child uses a word processor for writing.

- My child uses a typewriter for writing.

The first reason this finding is important is that the items in the writing category are functional and

clearly related to real life situations. They are consistent with the kind of literate environment that Morrow (1989) described. She found that such homes were rich with the materials of literacy, and literacy activities were often functional and related to real life situations.

Secondly, active involvement seemed to be a key factor in the correlation between certain home experiences and student functioning level. In support of this claim of 'active involvement', Graves (1978) states that in addition to contributing to intelligence, writing develops initiative. He claims that:

> In reading, everything is provided; the print waits on the page for the learner's action. In writing, the learner must supply everything: the right relationship between sounds and letters, the order of the letters and their form on the page, the topic of the writing, information, questions, answers, order (p. 7).

Durrell (1978), a pioneer in the reading field, believed that writing was active; it involved the child; and doing was important. He believed that teachers made learning too passive. In an interview with Graves (1978), Durrell stated that: "We have known for years the child's first urge is to write and not

read and we haven't taken advantage of this fact. We
have underestimated the power of the output languages
like speaking and writing" (p. 8).

It was intriguing that most comments volunteered
on the questionnaire concerned reading, and yet writing
was the category that best predicted student
functioning group. This leads to a third reason why
the finding in regard to writing may be important.
This is the possibility that the writing items did not
beg socially desirable answers as the reading items may
have done. Traditionally, more emphasis has been, and
probably still is, placed on reading than on writing
both in the schools and in the minds of the public.

In a larger sense, to demonstrate this point,
Graves (1978) in a Report for the Ford Foundation
entitled Balancing the Basics: Let Them Write, stated
that a greater premium has been placed on students'
ability to read than on their ability to write in
school. He maintained in 1978 that reading dominated
elementary education in the United States, and that
"our anxiety about reading is a national neurosis" (p.
11). This statement was backed up by a review of
public educational investment at all levels in the
United States which showed that for every dollar spent
on teaching writing, a hundred or more were spent on
teaching reading. "Of exemplary programs in language

chosen for recognition by the U.S. Office of Education in 1976, forty-six were in reading, only seven included any writing objectives at all, and only one was designed for the specific development of writing abilities" (Graves, 1978, p. 12). Graves' report gives many further examples of, and reasons for the ways in which writing suffers in schools in contrast to reading.

In 1991 however, the unbalanced priority assigned to reading at the expense of writing seems to be diminishing. For example, we now have entire text books for teachers devoted to writing, such as Classroom strategies that work: An elementary teacher's guide to process writing by Nathan, Temple, Juntenen, Temple (1989); The art of teaching writing by Calkins (1986); Writing: Teachers and children at work by Graves (1983); Active voice by Moffett (1984); etc. As Graves pointed out, books such as these, dealing exclusively with writing, simply did not exist fifteen years ago.

Within the classroom, change with regard to improving the status of writing is evidenced in some Language Arts programs. For example, an emphasis is placed on invented spelling (especially in the formative years of reading and writing), and on what is referred to as the writing process. Writing

conferences, workshops, young a thor's programs, book publishing, and similar activities, all make up part of more balanced Language Arts programs in schools. Emphasis is beginning to be placed on learning to write through authentic writing experiences, such as journal keeping, story writing from draft-writing through to publishing, letter writing for real purposes, science charting, writing out mathematical problems, and so on. These forms of writing are gradually taking the place of writing being taught through filling in blanks, circling correct answers, responding on tests with one sentence answers, diagramming sentences and other questionable procedures used in the name of writing instruction in the classroom. Many models of writing are being presented to students and most significantly, a developmental model of learning to write is beginning to take effect in some classrooms. In these classes, for example, it is believed that spelling is acquired through usage and practice of language, as children become involved more and more with actual writing. This is contrasted to children learning to spell singularly, through word lists given during a spelling period.

Within the investigation, several comments from questionnaire respondents reflected concern with regard to spelling. For example, one mother of an average

rated child commented:

"The only thing I find wrong with the school system

is they don't stress enough spelling. My child is

almost ten years old and she can't spell at all."

Interestingly enough, this child was typed as being

successful by her te.._.ner so it is not certain that

this characterisation was accurate, in whole or in

part. What comes to mind here is a comparison with the

conditions that are present when children learn to

speak. Cambourne (1984) reminded us of the positive

feedback that is given to children when they learn to

speak, as wa.; indicated in Chapter One. He maintained

that no exasperated pressure of the kind: "Look, I've

modelled the auxiliary a dozen times now- when will you

get it right?" is ever given. He made us confront the

fact that, unfortunately, the feedback we give children

in school with respect to the written form of the

language is not quite the same as that we give to

children when learning to speak at home.

For all of the above reasons, the fact that the

investigation undertaken pointed in the direction of a

relationship between home writing experiences and

student functioning group is significant not least

because the obvious factor, that is reading

experiences, did not reveal such a relationship. What

is also interesting is the fact that, while reading

activities and experiences may occur frequently, such
may not be the case for writing, but, when writing is
in fact given a place, reading does and indeed must
occur.

Graves (1978) further believes that writing
contributes to reading because writing is the making of
reading. When a child writes, he/she has to know the
sound-symbol relations inherent in reading. Auditory,
visual and kinaesthetic systems are all at work when a
child writes, and all of these combined contribute in
turn to the skill of reading. His report, <u>Balancing
the Basics</u>, argues for promoting writing more
vigorously. The findings of this investigation tend to
support Graves' case for balancing the basics of
reading and writing, because writing, and not reading,
was the only correlate with student functioning group.
Granted, more factors must be taken into consideration,
as shall be discussed below.

Graves maintains that when writing is neglected,
reading suffers as a result. He further believes that
the neglect of a child's expression in writing can
limit the understanding that a child can gain from
reading. Carol Chomsky (1973), argued that children
should write first, and through that experience, learn
to read. As a researcher, her studies involved
allowing children to begin reading through the use of

invented spelling. She believes that "writing more than any other subject, can be the means to personal breakthrough in learning" (in Graves, 1978, p. 7). Appendix Q provides an example of a real life situation wherein it is demonstrated how a writing experience became a breakthrough in a student's learning.

Durkin's (1966) research tends to support Graves' plea for balancing the basics, in that her study of early readers indicated that more than half of them developed an interest in print prior to, or simultaneously with, an interest in learning to read. In fact, for some early readers, Durkin maintained that the ability to read seemed almost like a by-product of an ability to print and spell. For t'·se "pencil and paper kids," she says the learning sequence moved from (a) scribbling and drawing, to (b) copying objects and letters of the alphabet, to (c) questions about spelling, to (d) ability to read (p. 137).

To illustrate the point of what appears to be, perhaps a "paper and pencil kid" from the investigation undertaken is one comment from a questionnaire respondent of a high above average rated student:

Started at library at or· year old. Started
ᵤedtime reading at one and still read every
night for half an hour at bedtime. Have read her
Jane Eyre, Gone With the Wind, Wheathering Heights,

Little Women series, Little House on the Prairie
series, Anne of Green Gables series, as examples.
She also read two to three library books on her
own a week. She also has entered contests for
stories for the newspaper. Was one of eight
students picked in the school last year for
Young-Author's Award.

Tucked in to the many reading experiences of this
child, are significant writing experiences. The
comment is suggestive of a highly literate child who
has been perhaps what Taylor (1983) might say,
"inducted, rather than instructed" (p.94) into literacy
at home. To this Vygotsky (1978) might add "with
'natural' methods of teaching reading and writing
involving appropriate operations on the child's
environment" (p. 118). Holdaway (1979) wrote:

>   the most important discovery that we made was that
>   the much lauded bed-time story situation is only
>   half the picture; practice of reading-like and
>   writing-like behaviour completes the picture. A
>   noteworthy feature of this behaviour is that it
>   arises naturally without direction by parents-
>   and perhaps that is one reason why its
>   significance has been overlooked (p. 61).

The notion of children themselves taking the initiative
with literacy activities is an important one that Clark

(1976) and Durkin (1966) noted. The present
investigation also hinted toward this finding as shall
be seen.

Individual Correlates

Individual questionnaire items correlating with
student functioning in Language Arts at school hint
that in the homes of above average students, enjoyable,
active, and voluntary involvement with reading and
writing activities exist. In these homes, provision of
materials and equipment seem to be available and
activities with books seem to occur frequently.

The correlational analysis with the individual
questionnaire items (as opposed to the correlational
analysis using the questionnaire categories) revealed
11 items that weakly correlated with student
functioning group. These items are noteworthy, and
reveal a number of interesting ways that suggest how
home experiences might be related to student
functioning level, for example:

- I speak to my child in another language besides
  English.
- My child talks to me about school projects he/she is
  working on.
- I use a computer at home.
- Paper, pens, markers, etc. are easy to find at our
  house.

- My child keeps a diary or journal at home.

- My child writes at home for purposes besides school work.

- My child likes to do school work at home involving reading or writing.

- My child reads books for pleasure.

- My child reads at night before going to sleep.

- My child reads books that are not required for school.

- I get frustrated when I help my child with school work. (The correlation indicated that parents of students in the above average functioning groups did not experience frustration when helping their child with school work.)

Each of these identified significant items are interesting in some way and all reveal something of what a literate home environment entails. For example, if a computer is available in the home and a parent works on it, the child from that home has the opportunity to see writing put to use, outside of school.

Several of the eleven items correlating with student functioning level in Language Arts are associated with what seems to be an attitude toward, and an enjoyment of reading and writing. The experiences occur outside of school activity, and

perhaps, at the initiative of the child. For example, "My child keeps a diary or journal at home"; "My child reads books that are not required for school"; "My child writes at home for purposes besides school work"; "My child reads at night before going to sleep"; "My child likes to do school work at home"; and "My child reads for pleasure".

Parent/Teacher Interaction

Overall in this investigation, more parent/teacher interaction (as defined by the items in this category) did not indicate higher student functioning. Overall, the multiple regression procedure indicated this category as a significant predictor of student functioning group. Within the working class population (further discussion is found on page 88), more parent teacher interaction indicated that student functioning level was below average.

Clark (1976) noted within her study of fluent readers in Scotland that the parents of early readers did not visit their child's school except upon invitation. She stated:

> It should not be taken to mean that these parents were not vitally interested in their children's progress nor even that they would not have welcomed more contact with and information from the school. They were, however, almost

embarrassed by their children's success and did
not wish to appear to be asking for exceptional
treatment (p. 67).

Recent research (Chapey, Trimarco, Crisci, and
Capobianco; 1988) examining school-parent partnerships
From paper to reality (p. 37), supports the
investigation's finding concerning parent/teacher
interaction. These researchers investigated the
involvement of parents of gifted children and found
that contrary to the expended role assigned to parents
in the literature, parents of these high functioning
children were not very involved in school activities.

The findings in this study also reflect a
controversy in the literature regarding the role of
parent involvement in the school. Further research in
this area could have implications for the amount of
energy expanded by schools in attempting to involve
parents in programs. This may be especially true in
cases where both parents work outside of the home with
their time at a premium, as respondents indicated on
the questionnaire. The important distinction may be in
the amount of interest and involvement in literate
activities shown to children by their parents in the
home, rather than in actual activities in the school.

Overall Home Experiences and Functioning in Language
Arts

The investigation undertaken suggests that only
asking parents to disclose information concerning the
'quantity' (ie. how often do the following experiences
occur?) of reading, writing, speaking, and
parent/teacher interaction, is not sufficient.
Clearly, more needs to be known regarding the quality
of the experiences taking place. However, certain
comments from respondents seemed to amplify some of the
items on the questionnaire. For example, a mother of a
child who was rated as a high above average student
commented:

> As an only child my son has always been spoken to
> in a very adult manner. He has always questioned
> the definitions of words he sees, or we use in
> conversation, and as a result has quite an extensive
> vocabulary for a nine year old.

More information such as this is needed to ascertain
the quality of the experiences on the questionnaire.
Another mother of a child who was also rated as
functioning at a high above average level commented:

> Being that one spouse works 12 hour shifts, dinner
> times are decreased, but when we are together,
> dinner time is when we discuss topics such as
> school. Our child does not have a reading lamp

beside their bed but reads every night before
retiring. As a parent I would like to read more for
enjoyment at home but find that time is invaluable
with trying to manage a home and also working full
time...

It is clear why an abundance of ethnographic,
qualitative, and longitudinal research exists
concerning reading, writing, and speaking at home. To
this end, research involving interviews with parents,
and children, and visits to homes would prove helpful.
These kinds of investigations would, and do, serve to
provide information regarding the quality, and the kind
of interaction that occurs around given experiences.
This study suggests that amplifying factors surrounding
literate experiences are important and without them,
vital information may be lacking.

As Teale (1982) points out in making a case for
how children learn to read and write "naturally",
'interactive literacy' events are essential. It is
what surrounds the reading, writing, or speaking per se
that makes literacy "take" in the child (p. 559)
because above all, we need to keep in mind that
literacy is a social process (p. 563). Teale first
argues that in examining an event in which the
participants are a parent and a child, the child must
be an actual participant in the activity, experiencing

the motives, goals, and conditions associated with the
activity as they relate to the reading or writing which
is going on if the literacy experiences are to have a
positive effect. The point made is that the child
should not simply be a passive responder to a literate
experience, but rather, that the key to the
developmental process is the child's interaction with
the experience.

Teale suggests a second critical feature in
examining an experience or an event where the
participants are a parent and a child, and that is the
'speech' which surrounds the experience. 'Scaffolding',
described as a process whereby adults structure a given
experience for children in order to increase their
cognitive structures; and more specifically what Cazden
(1979) refers to as a special kind of scaffolding that
"self-destructs, gradually as the need lessens, and is
then replaced by a new structure for a more elaborate
construction" (p.11) is needed for the literacy event
to "take" in the child. The important feature here in
a child's literate experience is that as the child
becomes more capable of carrying out a task for him or
herself, the adult gradually "raises the ante" and
removes certain scaffolding. As a result, the child
assumes more responsibility for completing the task
(Teale, 1982, p. 562). For natural developmental

literacy learning to occur, it is important to realize that this scaffolding and interaction should occur at a time dictated by the child, and the time of advancement within a given experience may vary for each child. It is for this reason that education in the formative years of children is beginning to shift away from offering the same instruction to all children at the same time. Because of discrepancies in children's points of departure in learning, individual personalities enter into the learning process.

As an example to illustrate this point, one mother of an average rated (dependent typed) child in the questionnaire commented: "My son loves to be read to, but hates to read to himself." It is important that this mother is aware of the situation so that she can continue to read to her son, until he is ready to take this task over himself. The knowledgeable parent and teacher who intimately knows the child recognizes when the time is right to "raise the ante", as Teale refers to it. The questionnaire did not address the interactive 'social' aspect of the experiences that reportedly took place in respondents' homes. However, student types were taken into consideration, and will be a topic for later discussion.

The investigations' finding in not establishing a stronger case for the relationship between home

experiences (especially between the reading, writing, and speaking categories) and school functioning using the questionnaire may be due to three possibilities, in addition to the study limitations itself. First, it may be too late in a child's life to establish such a relationship. The possibility that a strong emphasis on literacy in earlier years is sufficient to set a child on his/her own way so that perhaps by Grade four the literate environment of the home is no longer influential and any improvement in it would have little or no effect deserves consideration.

In order to address this possibility, the analysis within the yes/no introductory section to the questionnaire used did indicate three significant associations or relationships concerning emergent literacy events that took place in homes before children entered formal schooling at a kindergarten level. The items,

- My child could recognize his/her name in writing before kindergarten (82% of parents of above average students reported yes, where 60% of parents of below average students reported yes);

- My child could read children's books before going to kindergarten (32% of parents of above average students reported yes, where 2% of parents of below average parents reported yes); and

- My child could write his/her name before starting

   kindergarten (73% of parents of above average

   students reported yes, where 49% of parents of

   below average students reported yes);

did reveal that parents from the different functioning

groups did answer differently from each other, and the

difference is especially noticeable when looking at the

above average and below average category of responses.

This finding suggests something about the literate

environment of the students' homes prior to school

entrance. The limitations of a questionnaire did not

allow the researcher to probe further into exactly what

was at work in the above and below average student's

homes; however, the following comments from

respondents, and a review of the emergent literacy

literature in this area would suggest that the homes of

the above average students within these associations

would be distinguished by a greater amount of literate

activity such as that described in Chapter One of this

thesis.

   My child was reading and understanding newspapers

   by Grade two and we found it necessary to hide

   newspapers from her because she wasn't able to

   handle the type of information she was taking

   in...

This comment was written by a mother of a student who

was rated as functioning at a high above average level
in Language Arts from her teacher. Another comment
from a mother of a high above average rated student
wrote:

> She was reading fluently before kindergarten so
> she was read to from about 0 to 4 years old.
> After that she has read to herself...

This kind of self reporting must, of course, be treated
with discretion in this investigation. It may be
argued that the noted differences in the three emergent
literacy yes/no items were not made entirely visible in
the comparison of responses between parents of the
various functioning groups within the scaled items on
the questionnaire.

Secondly, and conversely, Grade four may be too
early to establish a relationship between students'
home activities and language functioning at school.
Bissex's (1980) research pointed to the possibility of
children not using their capacities fully in school;
therefore the impact of a richly literate home
environment would not emerge until later in life. The
possibility here is also that a child's literacy skills
at a Grade four level are not sufficiently internally
assimilated in terms of 'putting it all together' for
school performance in Grade four.

A third possibility for not establishing a

stronger relationship with selected home experiences and school functioning level is that the experiences may be too embedded in family life to be separated out in order to establish such a relationship. "Literacy may be so deeply rooted that it is simply too complex to attribute its outcome to a specific list of activities added to a family agenda" cautions Taylor (1983). Within the context of the family, she maintains "that the transmission of literary styles and values is a diffuse experience, often occurring at the margins of awareness" (p. 20). Heath (1983) also states that the deep and wide-reaching complexities of language uses, time, and space are far more resistant to change than are single factor activities traditionally associated with preparation for school. The amount of parent-child interaction time, the habit of reading bedtime stories, and early promotion of increased talk between parents and children, depend on several things for their establishment. These may include such things as: how they fit into a network of other cultural patterns, problem-solving techniques, role relations and shared functions across sex and age, as well as favourite ways of interacting with others and spending one's leisure times (Heath, 1983, p. 367).

Study Limitations

Limitations of the questionnaire itself and the research design must also be acknowledged. There is the possibility that classroom teachers may have over or under estimated pupil abilities in the student assessments. In further research, perhaps the additional use of a standardized test would reveal an alternative assessment of a child's functioning level.

It must be acknowledged that for the correlational analyses undertaken, student functioning groups were unbalanced in regard to size as can be seen in Table 1. Here it is evident that the low below average group consisted of a sample of only nine; however, the below average group consisted of a population of 30. The high above average functioning group had a sample of 37, and the above average functioning group had a sample of 31. In order to increase the population of the low below average group, it would be necessary to draw from a much larger sample of students in order to locate these students, and the responses from their parents. As shall be noted in subsequent discussion, in terms of overall student functioning groups, the lowest return rates on the questionnaire were from the low below average group.

Future research could target the high above average and low below average functioning students,

possibly eliminating the middle range students. The
questionnaire itself could become more focused with
fewer items, for example, eliminating entire categories
such as the other and parent/teacher interaction
categories. Home interviews accompanying the
questionnaire would add the additional qualitative
aspect to the home experiences. Additional variables
to consider in relationship to home experiences such as
I.Q. levels; performance on a standardized reading and
writing tests; or even student interest shown to
literature could also prove helpful in strengthening
the relationship this thesis addresses.

Student Differences: Type

Noticeably different to the other correlations
noted in this study with regard to student type was the
item "I get frustrated when I help my child with school
work". This finding suggests that parents of alienated
and phantom students experience more frustration than
the parents of successful and social students when
helping their child with school work .

Student's different personality types seemed to be
evident from comments made from respondents, such as:

Trying to explain things to her at home is
sometimes very frustrating- she's very stubborn and
sets her mind to one way only. Can you please give
me tips on how to handle this situation without

loosing patience with her? (Child was typed as

successful, and functioned at an average level);

and,

My daughter is very hard to talk to, and does not

open up easily. We do not have a very good

relationship, though I wish we did. (Child was

typed as social, and functioned at an average

level);

and,

Our son does not like any aspect of school. It's

hard to make him go. (Child was typed as phantom,

and functioned at a below average level);

and finally,

The child must be willing to participate! (Child

was typed as phantom, and functioned at a below

average level).

These comments illustrate the fact that some parents do

experience frustration when working with their children

and that not all home experiences have the same

positive outcome with children, at least in part

because of personality differences. The first comment

suggests that some of these parents desperately seek

solutions to dealing with their children.

Appendix L provides a profile of the various

student types found in this investigation. Among other

data, it shows that the majority of successful (99%)

and social (80%) typed students function at average, or above average levels, and likewise (with the exceptions of one alienated, and three phantom typed students functioning at above average levels), the majority of alienated (90%) and phantom (89%) students function at average, or below average levels. Further analyses and research in this area may shed valuable insight. What may be important here is the kind of remedial work that may be done with below, and low below average students in school.

Often this remedial work is of a very specific kind, dealing with specific skills concerning letter, sound (phonetic), and spelling types of drills. What may be important is that if we know for example, that some students experiencing difficulties in reading and writing are typed as dependent, alienated, and phantom, than the possibility exists that their reading and writing problems may be due to other kinds of problems, unrelated to reading and writing techniques. Clark's research (1976) was based on the fact that certain skill factors are found to be associated with lack of progress in reading and writing, however, she stresses that this finding does not entitle one to assume that those lacking skills are the cause of the failure in reading and writing. Clark argues that some factors, even if causally related to lack of progress, may be so

only within certain approaches to learning to read (p. ix). What may be important is that as educators, we may be robbing students of valuable 'book experience' that probably should, according to Martin and Brogan (1972), precede word experience in bringing a child to print. Wells (1986) argues that "means must be found to ensure that all children's first experiences of reading and writing are purposeful and enjoyable" (p. 162).

More research into the definitions, implications, and reasons for the various types could reveal useful information for teachers, and parents involved with students, especially when there seems to be a problem that interferes with student progress in reading and writing, and development in general. The student types may be useful in helping to identify problems that teachers and parents, may or may not be aware of, such as social immaturity, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. These are situations that may affect communication between children and adults, and may affect both home experiences and school functioning. In conclusion to the findings regarding student types, it may be said that often upon problem identification, proper consultation and support can lead to appropriate solutions that address real problems thereby minimizing the amount of harm done to what should be joyous

literacy encounters in school.

Gender Differences

With regard to the gender differences found within this investigation, only one main effect was found through the analysis of variance. It was revealed that parents of females in the study reported higher ratings in the writing category than the parents of male students. This finding is not that significantly different from the findings of Wells (1986) who did not find any area where gender differentiated between ratings on any given tested situation within the Bristol Language Study. This is a possible area for further research, and the possibility exists that on the questionnaire, the items in the writing category did not tap into other areas of writing that perhaps males could have scored higher on.

Class Differences

Within the investigation, two main effects were found in the analyses of variance with regard to social class (working and middle). Parents from the middle class population reported more occurrences on the items in the speaking and in the parent/teacher interaction categories. It is interesting that when social classes were investigated individually in the correlational analysis, a significant correlation between parent/teacher interaction and student functioning

group within the working class population was reported.
This finding is evident in Table 6. Clearly within the
working class as parent/teacher interaction increased,
student functioning level decreased, suggesting that
parents interacted more with the school as problems
arose, perhaps at the request of the school. The items
in the parent/teacher interaction category again were:

- When they take place, I attend parent/teacher
  interviews.
- I talk to my child's teacher on the telephone, or
  write notes to him/her.
- I attend special events at my child's school, such as
  open houses, concerts, plays, book fairs, sporting
  events, etc.
- Not including parent/teacher nights, I visit my
  child's teacher at school.
- I am involved in school activities with my child's
  class.

The correlation in the working class schools revealing
that students whose parents reported more involvement
with the teacher fell into the below average
functioning groups was not found within the middle
class population, and overall, the middle class
population reported more parent/teacher interaction.
This finding suggests that within the middle class
schools, parent/teacher interaction may not involve as

many 'problem' encounters as it seems to in the working class schools.

It is interesting to note that overall, within this investigation which was conducted in Canada, and within a heavily industrialized urban centre in southwestern Ontario, more pronounced class differences were not found. It may be argued that class differences are not as great in the given area, as they are in Great Britain, for example, or in a larger metropolitan area such as Detroit, Michigan. However, the finding in this study regarding class differences is not radically different from Wells (1986) who reported no significant class differences in the Bristol Study. Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) also found that class differences did not exist for children identified as early readers. Finding little, or no class differences, suggests, as Hess (1970) claims, that perhaps it is relevant knowledge and experience, not financial resources, that determine the quality of the "cognitive environment" that a home provides.

In this investigation, the possibility exists that perhaps more class differences would have been found if class distinction had been determined by obtaining more rigid, hard data such as, family income, and parental educational levels. It may also be argued that in the area used for the study, extreme class differences do

not exist.

Overall Study Implications: Return Rates

It appears from this investigation that when parents are confronted with a well presented opportunity to express themselves, or to make a possible contribution to their child's development of reading and writing, they will take advantage of the opportunity. With an overall return rate of 81% on the questionnaire, it seems safe to say that most of the parents who participated in this study care about how their children function in school.

The combination of a school board supportive to the research undertaken, and classroom teachers who may have already established a good rapport with parents, may also have contributed to the high return rates on the questionnaire. The parents' return rates may also suggest that education is an area where many people (especially parents of school children) hold opinions and wish to express them. This point was illustrated by one mother commenting by writing one and a half pages on how she thought reading should be taught in school. What appeared to be sincere comments from 30% of the respondents on the questionnaire and even a positive phone call to the researcher from a parent, seemed to confirm Dwyer's (1989) Australian survey results that parents do have a fundamental interest in

the teaching of reading, and how their children function in this area.

Overall, if return rates are to be viewed as an indicator of an interest in reading and writing, it appears from Table 7 that the parents of the high above average rated students were interested in the greatest amount because they had the largest return rate of 88% on the questionnaire compared to a 53% rate of return from the parents of the low below average rated students. In short, in this investigation, as student functioning level decreased, so did questionnaire response rate. As Dye (1986) claims, it appears that when children have supportive and involved parents, they attain better academic skills. The point here, is that children may perceive parental 'interest' (not necessarily parent/teacher involvement) in school as a sign that their parents value education. In the case of the questionnaire in this investigation, children were fully versed and aware of its value and purpose.

The largest discrepancy of return rates revealed on Table 7 was within the responses from the working class parents of low below average grouped students who averaged a 44% return rate (the only lower return rate was a 33% return rate from working class parents of alienated typed students) compared to a 96% return rate from the middle class parents of above average grouped

students. This comparison suggests that, perhaps, the middle class parents of above average students have a greater enthusiasm for reading and writing than their low below average working class counterparts in this study, and that, for what ever the reasons may be, this showed through in their children's functioning level in Language Arts at school. The large discrepancy in return rates (44% return rate from working class parents of low below average grouped students compared to the 96% return rate from middle class parents of above average grouped students), however, did not manifest itself in other areas of the questionnaire responses.

Overall Questionnaire Response

The parent with the most involvement with the Grade four child was asked to complete the questionnaire. It is noted in Appendix P (in the last page of the questionnaire) that 76% of females reported completing the questionnaire, while 12% of males reported this, and 12% of both genders reported completing the questionnaire together. Sixty-six per cent of females indicated that they work full-time outside of the home, and 79% of males reported working outside of the home. Of the working mothers, 42% work full-time, and 24% work part-time outside of the home. Of the mothers, 27% reported working full-time in the

home taking care of family needs, and 2% of the fathers reported this work. These findings relate to the study of exploring the relationship between selected home experiences of students and their functioning in Language Arts at school because they affect home experiences in general. Specifically, they affect the amount of time parents spend with their children. For example, one mother wrote on the questionnaire:

> I feel I have less time to work/play with the
> child than I would prefer. The demands on my time
> from work have increased of recent. At other
> times I have been able to be more attentive...

A running theme throughout comments from questionnaire respondents was a lack of time to spend with children.

The findings in this investigation regarding a lack of parental time to spend with children (perhaps, because both spouses work), suggest an area for further study. This notion could possibly be looked at in contrast to the literature reporting from Japan (Elkind, 1988; Simmons, 1987) concerning the reported relationship between Japanese "education mothers" with their children, and student performance in school. In Japan, much of a student's success in school is attributed to the amount of time that mothers devote to their children.

Another important implication for the finding

regarding a lack of time to spend with children at home may be directed toward the kind of day care and early educational programs that are set up for children. Morrow (1989) devotes attention to the area of designing the early learning environment to promote literacy development in the classroom (pp. 121 - 134).

Overall responses on the questionnaire items, as shown in Appendix P reveal high occurrences for the items in general. For example, 89% of parents report that they read at least once or twice a week to their child before their child entered school; 63% of parents reported that their child reads out loud to them at least once or twice a week; 79% of parents reported that their child reads books for pleasure at least once or twice a week; 91% of parents report that their child has one or more shelves of books at home; 63% of parents report helping their child study for tests quite or very often. Overall, the possibility of parents responding with what they feel are socially desirable answers is a real one. This consideration is interesting and may suggest an acknowledgement to what parents believe they should be doing at home with their children.

As a comparison of response rates from parents on the questionnaire did not outstandingly correlate with student functioning group, high response rates may also

be interpreted as parents wanting to help their children, but as Dwyer (1989) revealed, most do not know how, when it comes to reading and writing. The interest parents took in general to respond to the questionnaire may suggest that they are eager to contribute to their children's growth in school, and perhaps they are uncertain as to how to go about contributing to it. One respondent commented:

> I found this questionnaire very helpful. Being a working Mom I sometimes neglect the important things like reading to my children. I wish that homework would have been sent home before grade 4...

Also suggestive through the many requests for more homework on respondents' comments is that parents may solely rely on the school to educate their child.

Many parents believe that the teaching of reading and writing is best left to the school, in the hands of the experts. To this comes the realization that most parents are not aware of the role that they could play in developing their child's literacy growth. Durkin (1966) noted that the parents of early readers showed less tendency to believe that reading should only be taught by a trained person. More important, her data indicated that it is the presence of parents who spend time with their children; who read to them; who answer

their questions and their requests for help; and who
demonstrate in their own lives that reading is a rich
source of relaxation, information, and contentment (p.
136) that foster early literacy in their children. One
comment from a parent of a high above average rated,
successful typed student in the investigation seemed to
confirm Durkin's data:

> I read to, and taught my child to read at the age
>
> of 18 months old- three letter words. At 3, was
>
> fluent newspaper reader. My child discusses all his
>
> interests whether it is school or anything in
>
> general with me. He is aware of the world around
>
> him through our discussions...

Again, it must be acknowledged that more is not known
concerning this situation.

James (1990) reports that the changes in primary
education are based on research which is not available
to parents unless they subscribe to professional
journals. Most parents, he states, know more about
medicine than they do about current teaching practices.
Confusion with regard to current educational practice
was evident in comments received from parents. For
example, one mother wrote:

> We think whole word is what is stunting our
>
> child's reading and spelling. We feel he would
>
> (and we would) enjoy it more if phonics was

brought back.

another mother commented:

> ...They do not use enough phonetics at school.
> For that reason, many do not learn to read. For
> that reason I did not want my kids to learn ABC
> songs before they knew how to read...

and,

> Do not agree with not teaching phonics, as it
> seems the children find it much harder to
> pronounce words at first glance. (Can't sound
> out.).

These comments reveal a lack of understanding and knowledge regarding the nature of language and literacy learning and consequently, of a whole language approach as well. As noted in Chapter One, the article by Newman and Church (1990) serves to clarify myths that people hold regarding whole language.

James (1990) also states that since the mid 1970's, education has undergone a quiet revolution, and nowhere more than in the primary grades. The Nelson Language Arts Newsletter (1989) maintains that communication between teachers and parents has always been an important factor in the success of any program. At no time is this more crucial than during the implementation of a new program, particularly when it involves a change as far reaching as the shift we are

making from a skills model of reading to a wholistic model of language arts instruction. Fields' (1988) point in the first chapter of this thesis is well taken. She believes that when parents understand how written language development can be similar to that of oral language, they are more willing to accept whole language instruction, and more importantly, they are able to see the role that they can play in their child's literacy development.

Conclusions

In exploring the relationship between selected home experience and student functioning level in Language Arts in school, it has been made evident through this investigation that qualitative research in the form of interviews and observation is needed in order to further assess the quality of experiences taking place in homes. Evaluating the effectiveness of suggested activities for parents through the single use of a questionnaire is limited. Respondents' qualitative comments shed information that seemed to be more useful, and simply asking parents to respond to a task concerning reading and writing and their child seemed to add to the exploration regarding home experiences and student functioning level.

Coupled with the study limitations, insight from this investigation, however, does point towards home

environments that house functional forms of literate activities (especially those involving writing), as being associated with student functioning level in Language Arts in school. In such homes, pleasure in literate activities seems to be instilled, resulting in children wanting to spend their time reading and writing.

If information could be effectively related to parents concerning current research on how children learn oral language, and how these conditions can be applied in the home to promote natural literacy growth ['natural' in the sense that the learning occurs without 'formal' literacy training (Teale, 1982)], perhaps children could reap the rewards by making the transition from home to school learning with greater ease.

The investigation undertaken in this study (along with the introduction and literature review in this thesis), provide a basis for believing that a longitudinal experimental and qualitative research design with a parent involved group (beginning when children are young), and a group with no parent involvement, could prove to be of value in attempting to further the research in establishing a relationship between home experiences and students' successful encounters with literacy in school.

Findings from this thesis also suggest supporting Graves in his plea for balancing the basics of reading and writing, and findings support schools in strengthening writing across the curriculum. Perhaps also suggestive from this investigation is that parents should be told to provide writing opportunities for their children to do at home as readily as they are told that they should read to their children. This study also points to more research needed in the area of writing as our society advances further into an age of literacy where reading and writing are seen as basics for human dignity. As Holdaway (1974) claims, as teachers, we cannot afford to tolerate the failure of reading and writing, and we must do all in order to avoid it. We, as professionals in education, probably need to share our current knowledge with parents in order to get at the roots of literacy.

In terms of making specific suggestions to parents as to how they can best assist in their child's literacy development, perhaps it can be said that as in whole language, the most important aspect is not in practice, but rather in belief and attitude toward how children learn in their formative years. As in everything, the more knowledge and resources that one has available, the more one is able to pick and choose what is appropriate in a given situation. It may be

said that providing lists of suggestions for parents at
home constitutes a valuable contribution toward
equipping them with tools for providing a natural
literate environment in their home and it is for the
parent to decide for themselves what is appropriate,
given their life circumstances and the needs and
requests of their child.

Because of its functional and everyday uses,
parents seem to intuitively know what to do in terms of
facilitating oral language with their children. In
making the transition into an increasingly literate
society, it may be said that the goal in regard to
reading and writing is to have parents facilitate these
literate activities in their homes as seemingly easy as
it appears to happen with oral language. For this to
happen, however, current research supports applying the
conditions that apply to learning to speak, both in the
primary classroom and in the home, in order for
children to more effectively learn to read and write.
Perhaps at this time, children will be socialized into
reading and writing, just as they are in speaking.

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APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTICS OF LITERACY ORIENTED PRESCHOOLERS

According to Holdaway (1979: pp. 49 - 50) the characteristics of literacy oriented pre-schoolers are:

- They have developed high expectations of print, knowing that books bring them special pleasures which they can obtain in no other way.

- They have built a set of oral models for the language of books and practised these models to the point where they have become almost as natural and familiar as the forms of conversation: they have developed native language control of the fundamental forms of written dialect.

- They are familiar with written symbols as signs which are different in their interpretation from normal visual experience, and have become interested in them to the point of experimenting in writing with them.

- They have begun to understand the complex conventions of direction and position in print, knowing for instance, that the message unfolds from the print itself, and from top to bottom of the page.

- They have learned to listen for long periods to continuous language of story-length related in terms of plot, sequence, or central ideas.

- They are able to attend to language without reference to the immediate situation around them, and respond to it in complex ways by creating images from their past experiences- they have learned to operate

120

vicariously. This has opened a new dimension of
fantasy and imagination, allowing them to create
images of things never experienced or entities which
do not exist in the real world. By these means they
are able to escape from the bonds of the present into
the past and the future (p. 49).

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- Establish a routine of reading to your child every
  day. This is one of the best ways of developing
  lifelong positive attitudes to reading and an
  understanding of print and books.
- Praise every effort in reading, especially if
  confidence is low. Do not compare a child's
  performance with that of relatives or friends.
- Be seen as a reader yourself.
- Take the family to the library. Help in selecting
  books but resist the temptation to impose your own
  choices. Let your child get a library card.
- Give books as presents and show your child how to
  care for them.
- Buy your child a bed-lamp and encourage the routine
  of reading in bed before lights-out.
- Encourage your child to make good use of the school
  library. Ask: "What have you borrowed this week?
  Would you like to read some of it to me?"
- Talk about a story before reading begins. Discuss
  the cover, the illustrations, the relevance of the
  story to the child's own experiences. In other
  words, generate both interest and language about
  the topic.
- Do not nag a child about reading, nor worry if the
  reading is not word-perfect or equal to that of some
  other child. Rather, pursue this basic question: "Is

my child finding interesting reading material, and
are conditions at home favourable to reading?"

- A family reading hour can be appropriate.
- Make opportunities when your child can read and
  write messages, eg. notes on the refrigerator, notes
  in the lunch boxes, notes on pillows, diaries,
  writing letters and thank-you notes to friends and/or
  relatives, encouraging pen-pals, etc.
- Work in the kitchen, read and talk about recipes
  together; make up books together.
- Play board games as a family, reading directions
  and following rules of the game.
- Encourage singing, and read words to songs.
- Gear your home to reading and writing- take a look at
  your home, is it geared to reading- or TV viewing?
  How is the lounge arranged? Are there bookshelves?
  Are writing implements easily accessible?
- Make books and other reading materials readily
  available in your home; in fact, try to have good and
  fun reading material in every room of the house:
  magazines, picture books, how-to-books, some comics,
  and the occasional well-worded poster that invites
  reading.
- An open dictionary, flat and open on a shelf or
  cabinet invites easy reference.
- Encourage the 'look-it up' attitude, starting with a

dictionary and adding reference books as you can afford them (an atlas, bird books, histories, a children's dictionary, etc.).

- Do not pressure your child to read.

- Get your child a subscription to a child's magazine.

- Join a book club (Binkley, 1988; Chapple, 1989; Cutting, 1985; Goller, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Fannan, 1985; Heald-Taylor, 1989; Impressions on whole language, 1983; Laing, 1984; Peel Board of Education, 1983; Scholastic-Tab, 1988; Waterloo County Board of Education, 1984; Windsor Board of Education, 1988; Windsor Roman Catholic Board of Education, 1989).

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTION OF FIVE STUDENT TYPES

1. SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS: These are task oriented and they are academically successful. They participate in lessons, turn in assignments on time (almost always complete and correct), and they create few if any discipline problems. Teachers are likely to direct difficult questions to them, because they get most of them right. Successful students like school and tend to be liked by both teachers and peers.

2. SOCIAL STUDENTS: These are more person than task oriented. They may be able to achieve but value socializing with friends more than working on assignments. Teachers tend to call on them fairly often, both to keep them involved in lessons and because they are able to answer easy questions. Social students tend to have many friends and be popular in the peer group but are usually not well liked by teachers (because their frequent socializing creates management problems).

3. DEPENDENT STUDENTS: These look to the teacher for support and encouragement and often ask for additional directions and help. They are frequent hand raisers. In secondary schools, most dependent students achieve at a low level. Teachers generally express concern about their academic progress and do what they can to assist them. Peers often reject them because they tend to be socially immature.

127

4. ALIENATED STUDENTS: These are reluctant learners and potential dropouts. In the extreme, they reject the school and everything that it stands for. This rejection may take one of two forms: open hostility or withdrawal into cynicism and passivity. Hostile alienated students create serious disruptions through aggression and defiance, whereas passive alienated students withdraw to the fringes of the classroom and may be ignored by teachers and most peers. Teacher attitudes toward alienated students typically range between indifference and rejection.

5. PHANTOM STUDENTS: These seem to fade into the background because they are rarely noticed or heard from. They tend to be average in everything but involvement in public settings. Some are shy or nervous, and others are quiet, independent workers of average ability. They work steadily on assignments but are rarely involved actively in group activities because they never volunteer and are rarely involved in managerial interchanges because they never create disruption. Typically, neither teachers nor peers know these students very well.

- Good & Power (1976).

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

.

HOME EXPERIENCES AND PARENT/TEACHER INTERACTION QUESTIONNAIRE.

Keep in mind that a parent may write on behalf of both parents,
and that an I (you) refers to either parent.

The following questionnaire applies to you and your child in Grade 4,
during the school year.

Please answer all questions with the response that best describes your situation. Space is provided at
the end of the questionnaire for comments if you wish to make them.

Please answer yes or no:

1. My child could recognize his/her name in writing before kindergarten.   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. My child knew the alphabet before going to kindergarten.   Yes ☐   No ☐

3. My child could read children's books before going to school.   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. My child could write his/her name before starting kindergarten.   Yes ☐   No ☐

5. I am familiar with my child's school books.   Yes ☐   No ☐

6. Because of my interaction with my child's teacher, I feel
   I know the approach she/he uses when teaching reading and writing.   Yes ☐   No ☐

7. Our household receives a daily newspaper.   Yes ☐   No ☐

8. My child has one or more shelves of books at home.   Yes ☐   No ☐

9. I like to see my child bring school work home to work on.   Yes ☐   No ☐

10. My child has a bed-side lamp for reading.   Yes ☐   No ☐

11. I subscribe to one or more magazines.   Yes ☐   No ☐

12. I belong to a book club.   Yes ☐   No ☐

13. My child belongs to a children's book club.   Yes ☐   No ☐

14. My child has a subscription to a children's magazines.   Yes ☐   No ☐

15. My child has a lights out, bed time curfew.   Yes ☐   No ☐

16. I remember being read to as a child.   Yes ☐   No ☐

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Quite often (4)	Very often (5)
1. When they take place, I attend parent/teacher interviews.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My child writes stories or poems at home for fun.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I speak to my child in another language besides English.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My child talks to me about school projects he/she is working on.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I talk to my child about books he/she has read.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I talk to my child's teacher on the telephone, or write notes to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Paper, pens, pencils, markers, etc. are easy to find at our house.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My child likes to do school work at home involving reading or writing.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I help my child study for school tests.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I help my child work on school projects.	1	2	3	4	5
11. On gift-giving occasions, I give my child books as gifts.	1	2	3	4	5
12. People such as friends or relatives bring my child books to read.	1	2	3	4	5
13. We write notes to each other at our house, these go on such places as the fridge door, or on the kitchen table, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I attend special events at my child's school, such as open houses, concerts, plays, book fairs, sporting events, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My child keeps a diary or journal at home.	1	2	3	4	5
16. At home, my child writes letters to friends or relatives.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My child has a daily routine at home that includes school work.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My child likes it when I help him/her with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I get frustrated when I help my child with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Not including parent/teacher nights, I visit my child's teacher at school.	1	2	3	4	5

131

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Quite often (4)	Very often (5)
22. My child and I visit places such as a zoo, a museum, an art gallery, a provincial or national park, etc. 1	2	3	4	5
23. My child plays board games at home such as Monopoly, Sorry, etc. 1	2	3	4	5
24. My child plays word games at home such as Scrabble, Boggle, crossword puzzles, etc. 1	2	3	4	5
25. My child reads books that are not required for school. 1	2	3	4	5
26. I bake or cook with my child. 1	2	3	4	5
27. I build, or put things together with my child that require instructions. .1	2	3	4	5
28. I write out shopping lists with my child. 1	2	3	4	5
29. My child sees me reading books, newspapers, or magazines at home. 1	2	3	4	5
30. I am involved in school activities with my child's class. .1	2	3	4	5
31. At home, I see writing that my child does at school. 1	2	3	4	5
32. My child writes at home for purposes besides school work. .1	2	3	4	5
33. Together, my child and I look things up in books in order to find information. 1	2	3	4	5
34. I enjoy reading. 1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE WITH NEXT PAGE

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE	Once a month or less (1)	Once every two weeks (2)	Once or twice a week (3)	Every other day (4)	Every day (5)
1. Before my child entered school, I read to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When my child was in Kindergarten and Grade 1, I read to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When my child was in Grade 2, I read to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When my child was in Grade 3, I read to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This year i read to my child.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My child reads out loud to me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. In past years, my child read out loud to me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Meal time is an occasion for our family to sit down and talk to each other.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My child reads the cereal box at home, or other such items.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My child talks to me about school work.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I help my child with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I encourage my child to do school work at home.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My child talks to me about school in general.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When my child comes home from school, we talk about what happened that day.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I write at home for various purposes.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I use a computer at home.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I read books at home.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I read newspapers or magazines at home.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I talk to my child about things going on in the world.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My child reads at night before going to sleep.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My child reads the comic or sport section of the newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My child reads magazines.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My child reads comic books.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My child reads books for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My child and I sit down and watch TV together.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My child and I talk about things we see on TV.	1	2	3	4	5
27. My child watches television..	1	2	3	4	5
28. My child uses a local library.	1	2	3	4	5
29. My child works on a hobby at home.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Someone else besides us as parents, and the school staff helps my child with school work.	1	2	3	4	5

Who?   Sibling ☐   Other Relative ☐   Neighbor ☐   Tutor ☐

Other ☐   Specify if you wish. _____

133

Answer if your child has access to a computer or typewriter (outside of school)

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE ──────────────────▶	Once a month or less (1)	Once every two weeks (2)	Once or twice a week (3)	Every other day (4)	Every day (5)
31. My child plays computer games. 1	2	3	4	5
32. My child plays video games. 1	2	3	4	5
33. My child uses a word processor for writing. 1	2	3	4	5
34. My child uses a typewriter for writing. 1	2	3	4	5

If only one person filled this questionnaire out, please indicate your gender. Female ☐ Male ☐

Are there any other children in your family? Yes ☐ No ☐

If there are other children, how many, and what are their ages? _____

Does the female head of the home: (check any appropriate response)

☐ Work full-time outside of the home.

☐ Work part-time outside of the home.

☐ Work full-time in the home taking care of family needs.

☐ Have a full or part-time business conducted from the home.

Does the male head of the home: (check any appropriate response)

☐ Work full-time outside of the home.

☐ Work part-time outside of the home.

☐ Work full-time in the home taking care of family needs.

☐ Have a full or part-time business conducted from the home.

Is there anything you would like to add concerning any item on this questionnaire?

Is there anything you would like to add concerning reading, writing, or speaking with your grade 4 child at home?

Thank-you for your time.

134

CATEGORY BREAKDOWN OF SCALED ITEMS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

READING- 23 items

- On gift-giving occasions, I give my child books as gifts.

- People such as friends or relatives bring my child books to read.

- My child plays board games at home such as Monopoly, Sorry, etc.

- My child plays word games at home such as Scrabble, Boggle, crossword puzzles, etc.

- My child reads books that are not required for school.

- My child sees me reading books, newspapers or magazines at home.

- I enjoy reading.

- Before my child entered school, I read to him/her.

- When my child was in Kindergarten and Grade 1, I read to him/her.

- When my child was in Grade 2, I read to him/her.

- When my child was in Grade 3, I read to him/her.

- This year, I read to my child.

- My child reads out loud to me.

- In past years, my child read out loud to me.

- My child reads the cereal box at home, or other such items.

- I read books at home.

- I read newspapers or magazines at home.

- My child reads at night before going to sleep.
- My child reads the comic or sport section of the newspaper.
- My child reads magazines.
- My child reads comic books.
- My child reads books for pleasure.
- My child uses a local library.

WRITING- 12 items

- My child writes stories or poems at home for fun.
- Paper, pens, pencils, markers, etc. are easy to find at our house.
- We write notes to each other at our house, these go on such places as the fridge door, or on the kitchen table, etc.
- My child keeps a diary or journal at home.
- At home, my child writes letters to friends or relatives.
- I write out shopping lists with my child.
- At home, I see writing that my child does at school.
- My child writes at home for purposes besides school work.
- I write at home for various purposes.
- I use a computer at home.
- My child uses a word processor for writing.
- My child uses a typewriter for writing.

SPEAKING- 16 items

- I speak to my child in another language besides English.

- My child talks to me about school projects he/she is working on.

- I talk to my child about books he/she has read.

- I help my child study for school tests.

- I help my child work on school projects.

- My child and I visit places such as a zoo, a museum, an art gallery, a provincial or national park, etc.

- I bake or cook with my child.

- I build, or put things together with my child that require instructions.

- Together, my child and I look things up in books in order to find information.

- Meal time is an occasion for our family to sit down and talk to each other.

- My child talks to me about school work.

- I help my child with school work.

- My child talks to me about school in general.

- When my child comes home from school, we talk about what happened that day.

- I talk to my child about things going on in the world.

- My child and I talk about things we see on TV.

PARENT/TEACHER INTERACTION- 5 items

- When they take place, I attend parent/teacher interviews.

- I talk to my child's teacher on the telephone, or write notes to him/her.

- I attend special events at my child's school, such as open houses, concerts, plays, book fairs, sporting events, etc.

- Not including parent/teacher nights, I visit my child's teacher at school.

- I am involved in school activities with my child's class.

OTHER-(For items not necessarily suited to one specific area)- 11 items

- My child likes to do school work at home involving reading or writing.

- My child has a daily routine at home that includes school work.

- My child likes it when I help him/her with school work.

- I get frustrated when I help my child with school work.

- I encourage my child to do school work at home.

- My child and I sit down and watch TV together.

- My child watches television.

- My child works on a hobby at home.

- Someone else besides us as parents, and the school staff helps my child with school work.
- My child plays computer games.
- My child plays video games.

APPENDIX F

FOREWORD TO QUESTIONNAIRE

November 19, 1990

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian (s)

Here is the questionnaire that I have informed you about.

Again, I know there are many things that parents do, and many things that parents do not do. With no judgement attached to your response, I simply want to know what these things are.

I cannot stress enough that there are no correct answers for any of the experiences.

The questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential.

It will take approximately 15 minutes to fill out.

I shall give you (via your child) a summary of these findings in return for your participation.

REGARDING THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE KEEP IN MIND-

1. I suggest that the parent with the most involvement with the child fill the questionnaire out. However, either parent may fill it out, or you may decide to do it together. Either way, when an experience is asked about such as- I read to my child- the I actually means, **either parent.**

2. I ask that you return the questionnaire as soon as you can, tomorrow morning if possible. Friday, Nov. 23 will be the last day of collection.
   Please return the questionnaire back through your child in the envelope provided. Please seal it upon return.

3. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire, do not hesitate to call me at one of the phone numbers below.

Thank-you for your time.

APPENDIX G

LETTER SENT TO PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS

October 1, 1990

Dear School Principal,

In collaboration with the Research Review Committee of your Board of Education, the Superintendent of Special Education and Special Services has granted me permission to approach you regarding the participation of your school, and specifically your Grade 4 classroom in the carrying out of my Master of Education thesis work.

I am conducting a study investigating the relationship between selected home experiences and student performance in Language Arts. Enclosed is a copy of my proposal to the Research Review Committee.

It is my intention to ask the parents of ten Grade 4 classrooms within your school system to fill out a questionnaire for me. This would occur, upon your written permission in mid-November, 1990. Specifically my request is that I may have a total of 7 minutes Grade 4 class-time on Nov. 12 or Nov. 13. In addition, I will be asking your Grade 4 teacher for no more than one hour's extra class-time work.

Please read the enclosed letter and instructions that I would give to your Grade 4 teacher. This letter outlines in detail specific dates and times, and the tasks that are involved in the study. Also included for you is the letter that I would send home to parents, and the questionnaire that I would be asking them to fill out.

To avoid duplication, all of the information in the letter for your teacher is for your knowledge as well.

I hope that you consider the study worth the time that it would require of your teacher and students. In return, I would of course be giving you a summary of my findings. Thank-you very much.

Sincerely,

144

APPENDIX H

LETTER AND INSTRUCTIONS SENT TO CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Dear Classroom Teacher,

Your principal has granted me permission to approach you with my research request. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Windsor and am conducting a study investigating the relationship between selected home experiences and student performance in the classroom.

To do this, I will be asking parents to fill out a questionnaire (enclosed for your information) and I will be asking you to perform specific duties. Nine other Grade 4 classrooms from your board will also be participating in the study. I will be needing approximately 7 minutes of your class time. Specifically, the tasks required for the study are the following:

Mon. Nov. 12, 1990- or Tues. Nov. 13	I will come in to your class at a time to be determined by you for approximately 7 minutes. I will introduce myself and my purpose to your students and I will give them letters to take home to their parents. This letter is also enclosed for your information.
Mon. Nov, 19, 1990-	I would like you to distribute questionnaires to students to bring home to their parents. Please ask students to ask parents to fill them out if possible that evening, and for students to return them the following morning.
Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri. Nov. 20 - 23 1990	These are the days set aside for students to return their parent's questionnaires. When students return them, in sealed envelopes I would like you to write the proper student identification number on them.
Fri. Nov. 23, 1990-	I shall come to school to pick up all returned questionnaires.
Jan. 1991-	Return briefly to class to give thank-you letters to students, and to send summary of research findings and thank-you letters home to parents.

In addition to the above, it will be necessary for you to carry out certain tasks for me. This work should not take you long to complete. The following outlines what this work is, and what your instructions are:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER-

1. Please see the **Tabulation Sheet** provided for you. I would like you to fill this out. Begin by filling out the information on yourself, and than write in your students names. After this, circle one appropriate letter or number in each category for each student.

2. Based on your perception, taken from viewing students over your teaching career, decide which **group** you would classify each of your students to be in, in the Language Arts component of your class. You have 5 choices:

   I and II - **aa** - This is for your **above average** students. If it is a **high**, above average student, circle the 1st a; if it is a **low**, above average student, circle the 2nd a.

   III - **a** -   This is for your average students.

   IV and V - **ba** - This is for your **below average** students. If it is a **high**, below below average student, circle the b; if it is a **low** below average student, circle the a.

3. **For student type:** please read the enclosed briefing on Student Types. From your observations in class, I would like you to classify what type each of your students are. Though some students may fit into more than one category, I ask that you choose only **one** category that best depicts that student according to your perception.
   Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your choice.

4. Circle the appropriate letter to identify the student's sex.

5. When you return the completed tabulation sheet to me, please cut off the portion indicating student's name, and the name of your school. This will guarantee anonymity of all.

6. It is very important that upon return of the
    questionnaires from students, you write down the
    appropriate code # for each student on the cover of
    the envelope.

        My research will attempt to see what might be the
relationship of different home experiences to the
perceived school functioning of types of students.
Gender will also be used to understand the patterns
that might be found.
        It is important that you realize that parents will
not be informed at this time of just what relationships
will be explored in order that their responses not be
unduly influenced. The students themselves need only
be aware that their parents are being asked to
participate in a study as stated in the letter to the
parents. It is important at this time not to say much
more to the parents.
        Parents are being asked to fill out a
questionnaire so that I will know what home experiences
are taking place among Grade 4 students. This
information alone may be valuable to teachers. Should
parents or students have any questions for you as to
the nature of the study, please refer them to me. Be
sure to read the letter I am sending to the parents.
        The possible relationships between selected home
experiences and perceived performance of students will
be reported in my research findings. I shall give you
a summary of these findings, and as well my completed
thesis will be available for your reading through the
Board office.
        In my thesis I shall not mention the name of The
Windsor Board of Education nor the names of the
schools, principals, or teachers involved. I will not
have access to parent or student names, thus
guaranteeing the anonymity of all concerned.
        I thank you very much in advance, and please do
not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or
concerns.
        I look forward to our working together on this
study, and I anticipate valuable information for
parents and teachers as a result of our efforts.

                    Sincerely,

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF INTENT SENT TO PARENTS

November 12, 1990

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian(s),

Your Board of Education has given me permission to approach you about filling out a questionnaire. I am conducting a study out of the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. My intention is to survey parents from a number of Grade 4 classrooms within the school system. It is for this reason that I send this letter home to you through your child in Grade 4.

Among other things, my study will have to do with different kinds of home experiences of Grade 4 students. **I know there are many things that parents do at home, and that there are many things that parents do not do. As a researcher, I want to know what these things are.** To get at this information, it made sense to me to simply ask parents about selected experiences. These will have to do with things going on at home concerning reading, writing, talking, and parent/teacher communication.

There will be no "right" answers to what I will be asking, my purpose will be to survey what kinds of things are happening outside of the classroom and see how these might relate to perceptions of school functioning. All information will be dealt with on a group basis with complete anonymity to me. The information I receive may be useful to both teachers and parents
in developing a better understanding of the wide range and different experiences students have.

Therefore, with the above information in mind, I am inviting you to participate in my study by filling out a questionnaire that
will be sent home to you next Monday, November 19, 1990. <u>Your return of the completed questionnaire after you receive it will constitute your consent to participation in the study.</u>

Please be aware of the information on the next page:

- The questionnaire will take approximately **15 minutes** of your time to complete.

- **I suggest that the parent with the most involvement with the child fill the questionnaire out.** Either parent, however will be able to fill it out, or you may decide to do it together.
  Either way, one parent may respond on the other's behalf.

- **Nothing on the questionnaire will identify you or your child, as no names will be asked.**

- Questionnaires will be confidential and I will ask you to return them sealed, through your child in a blank envelope that will be provided for you. Your child's teacher and school will not see your questionnaire.

- I realize that you may have many things to do, however, I will ask that you try to return them as quickly as possible.
  Friday, November 23rd, will be the final day of collection.

- In my research, the name of the school board will not be mentioned, nor the names of the participating schools, or teachers. At no time shall I have access to student or parent names.

- My study in its entirety will be available for your reading at the school board office in the Spring of 1991.

In conclusion, I thank-you very much for your time and do anticipate that our efforts will be of great value for all concerned. Should you have any questions do not hesitate to call me at a phone number below.

Sincerely,

Maureen Schiller

969-0520 (University of Windsor, Faculty of Education)

APPENDIX J

TABULATION SHEET FOR STUDENT-SUBJECT DATA

TABULATION SHEET

School: _____   School
                       Code: ___   Teacher gender: male   female
                                    Number of years taught: _____
                                    Number of years teaching Grade 4: ____
                                    (including this year)

Student Names	Code #	Teacher Perceptions Circle one letter or number in each category:			Parent Questionnaire
		Group	Type	Sex	Response
	-01	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-02	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-03	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-04	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-05	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-05	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-06	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-07	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-07	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-08	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-09	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-10	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-11	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-12	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-13	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-14	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n
	-15	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	n f	y n
	-16	aa a ba	1 2 3 4 5	m f	y n

APPENDIX K

STUDENT FUNCTIONING GROUP PROFILE

	*H.A.A. $n = 37$	A.A. $n = 31$	A. $n = 6$	B.A. $n = 30$	L.B.A $n = 9$
	%	%	%	%	%
Male $n = 82$	16 (43%)	12 (39%)	36 (55%)	13 (43%)	5 (55%)
Female $n = 91$	21 (57%)	19 (61%)	30 (45%)	17 (57%)	4 (45%)
Working $n = 65$	15 (41%)	7 (23%)	26 (39%)	13 (43%)	4 (44%)
Middle $n = 108$	22 (59%)	24 (77%)	40 (61%)	17 (57%)	5 (56%)
Success. ** $n = 89$	34 (92%)	25 (81%)	29 (44%)	1 (3%)	
Social $n = 29$		6 (19%)	17 (26%)	5 (17%)	1 (11%)
Depend. $n = 26$			11 (17%)	1 (37%)	4 (44%)
Alien. $n = 10$	1 (3%)		3 (4%)	4 (13%)	2 (22%)
Phant. $n = 19$	2 (5%)		6 (9%)	9 (30%)	2 (22%)

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* H.A.A.  (High above average)
  A.A.    (Above average)
  A.      (Average)
  B.A.    (Below average)
  L.B.A.  (Low below average)

**Success.   (Successful)
  Depend.    (Dependent)
  Alien.     (Alienated)
  Phant.     (Phantom)
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APPENDIX L

STUDENT TYPE PROFILE

	*Success. n = 89 %	Social n = 29 %	Dep. n = 26 %	Alien. n = 10 %	Phant. n = 19 %
Male					
n = 82	38 (43%)	16 (55%)	13 (50%)	6 (60%)	9 (47%)
Female					
n = 91	51 (57%)	13 (45%)	13 (50%)	4 (40%)	10 (53%)
Working					
n = 65	27 (30%)	15 (52%)	15 (58%)	2 (20%)	6 (32%)
Middle					
n = 108	62 (70%)	14 (48%)	11 (42%)	8 (80%)	13 (68%)
H.A.A. **					
n = 37	34 (38%)			1 (10%)	2 (11%)
A.A.					
n = 31	25 (28%)	6 (21%)			
A.					
n = 66	29 (33%)	17 (59%)	11 (42%)	3 (30%)	6 (31%)
B.A.					
n = 30	1 (1%)	5 (17%)	11 (42%)	4 (40%)	9 (47%)
L.B.A.					
n = 9		1 (13%)	4 (16%)	2 (20%)	2 (11%)

* Success.   (Successful)
  Dep.   (Dependent)
  Alien.   (Alienated)
  Phant.   (Phantom)

**H.A.A.   (High above average)
  A.A.   (Above average)
  A.   (Average)
  B.A.   (Below average)
  L.B.A.   (Low below average)

157

APPENDIX M

STUDENT SOCIAL CLASS PROFILE

	Working class		Middle class	
	n 65	% of working class	n 108	% of middle class
Student Functioning Group				
High above average	15	(23%)	22	(20%)
Above average	7	(11%)	24	(22%)
Average	26	(40%)	40	(37%)
Below average	13	(20%)	17	(16%)
Low below average	4	(6%)	5	(5%)

Student Type				
Successful	27	(41.5%)	62	(57%)
Social	15	(23%)	14	(13%)
Dependent	15	(23%)	11	(10%)
Alienated	2	(3%)	8	(7%)
Phantom	6	(9%)	13	(12%)

159

APPENDIX N

STUDENT GENDER PROFILE

	Male		Female	
	n	% of	n	% of
	82	males	91	females
Student Functioning Group				
High above average	16	(19%)	21	(23%)
Above average	12	(15%)	19	(21%)
Average	36	(44%)	30	(33%)
Below average	13	(16%)	17	(19%)
Low below average	5	(6%)	4	(4%)
Student Type				
Successful	38	(46%)	51	(56%)
Social	16	(19.5%)	13	(14%)
Dependent	13	(16.5%)	13	(14%)
Alienated	6	(7%)	4	(5%)
Phantom	9	(11%)	10	(11%)

APPENDIX O

SAMPLE COMMENTS TAKEN FROM QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

1. Added Notes to Reading:*

   My child was reading and understanding newspapers
   by grade 2 and we found it necessary to hide
   newspapers from her because she wasn't able to
   handle the type of information she was taking in
   (including symptoms of anxiety).

   - From a parent of a high, above average student.

   Started at library at 1 year old. Started bedtime
   reading at 1 and still read every night for .5 hour
   at bedtime. Have read her Jane Eyre, Gone With the
   Wind, Wethering Heights, Little Women Series, Little
   House of the Prairie Series, Anne of Green Gable
   series, as examples. She also read 2 to 3 library
   books on her own a week. She also has entered
   contests for stories for the newspaper. Was 1 of 8
   students picked in the school last year for young-
   author's award.

   - From a parent of a high, above average student.

2. Expressing a problem, or concern for Child and
   Expressing a Lack of Time to Spend with Child.
   I would spend more time reading to my child if I had
   the time, but I am a single parent working full-
   time. We don't get home evenings after day care

   _____

   * In this thesis respondents' comments are not edited.

163

until 6:35 p.m. He does read books at day care
after school. My son is attention deficit
disordered (hyperactive) and is <u>not</u> on medication,
so his reading and writing skills are not that good,
but he doesn't let that stop him from writing. He
has a good imagination.

- Taken from a parent of a low, below average
student.

> Having four children it is very difficult to find
> the time to sit with each child every day. By the
> time dinner is over, there is only about 2.5 hours
> before the younger ones go to bed.
> - From a parent of a low, below average student.

3. <u>Requests for More Homework</u>:
I'd like to see more reading assignments and a
little more writing assignment given to be done at
home. My child especially enjoys word-find
puzzles.

- From a parent of a high, above average student.
Not enough reading books are sent home, actually
once a month is when she brings a book home to read,
please send more.

- From a parent of an average student.

4. <u>Concern for Teaching of Reading, Writing, Spelling,
(Whole Language)</u>:
The only thing I find wrong with the school system

164

is they don't stress enough spelling. My child is
almost 10 and she can't spell at all.

- From a parent of an average student.

We think whole word is what is stunting our
child's reading and spelling. We feel he would
(and we would) enjoy it more if phonics was brought
back.

- From a parent of an average student.

5. Qualitative Notes in General:

She plays with friends very often- games are
usually school related, and an enormous amount of
communication occurs at these times.

- From a parent of a high, above average student.

We actively participate in all our children's
activities to maintain and promote a happy, calm,
interesting lifestyle.

- From a parent of a high, above average student

6. Small Added Comments cf , Particular Area:

Spend as much time as possible with your children,
you have them, take care of them! Could I get the
overall results?

- From a parent of an average student.

APPENDIX P

OVERALL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE FREQUENCIES

HOME EXPERIENCES AND PARENT/TEACHER INTERACTION QUESTIONNAIRE.

Keep in mind that a parent may write on behalf of both parents,
and that an I (you) refers to either parent.

The following questionnaire applies to you and your child in Grade 4,
during the school year.

Please answer all questions with the response that best describes your situation. Space is provided at
the end of the questionnaire fc comments if you wish to make them.

Please answer yes or no:

                                                                  %   %

1. My child could recognize his/her name in writing before kindergarten. Yes 76 No 24

2. My child knew the alphabet before going to kindergarten. Yes 81 No 18

3. My child could read children's books before going to school. Yes 24 No 76

4. My child could write his/her name before starting kindergarten. Yes 67 No 32

5. I am familiar with my child's school books. Yes 82 No 16

6. Because of my interaction with my child's teacher, I feel
I know the approach she/he uses when teaching reading and writing. Yes 43 No 53

7. Our household receives a daily newspaper. Yes 77 No 23

8. My child has one or more shelves of books at home. Yes 91 No 9

9. I like to see my child bring school work home to work on. Yes 91 No 6

10. My child has a bed-side lamp for reading. Yes 57 No 43

11. I subscribe to one or more magazines. Yes 56 No 43

12. I belong to a book club. Yes 19 No 79

13. My child belongs to a children's book club. Yes 24 No 76

14. My child has a subscription to a children's magazines. Yes 32 Nc 68

15. My child has a lights out, bed time curfew. Yes 79 No 19

16. I remember being read to as a child. Yes 49 No 50

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite often	Very often
	%	%	%	%	%
1. When they take place, I attend parent/teacher interviews.	3	2	18.5	21	54
2. My child writes stories or poems at home for fun.	7.5	17	35	18	22.5
3. I speak to my child in another language besides English.	63	10	6	5	15
4. My child talks to me about school projects he/she is working on.	1	2	12	23	60
5. I talk to my child about books he/she has read.	2	9	32	33	22
6. I talk to my child's teacher on the telephone, or write notes to him/her.	22.5	29	32	10	3.5
7. Paper, pens, pencils, markers, etc. are easy to find at our house.			3.5	14.5	80
8. My child likes to do school work at home involving reading or writing.	4	7.5	24	25	38
9. I help my child study for school tests.	3.5	9	21	25	38
10. I help my child work on school projects.	4	6	18.5	27	42
11. On gift-giving occasions, I give my child books as gifts.	2	14	37	24	21
12. People such as friends or relatives bring my child books to read.	10	18.5	40.5	16	14
13. We write notes to each other at our house, these go on such places as the fridge door, or on the kitchen table, etc.	9	12	35	25	18
14. I attend special events at my child's school, such as open houses, concerts, plays, book fairs, sporting events, etc.	1	6	17	25	49
15. My child keeps a diary or journal at home.	42	20	14	7.5	13
16. At home, my child writes letters to friends or relatives.	18	25	31	14.5	10
17. My child has a daily routine at home that includes school work.	6	9	25	29	29
18. My child likes it when I help him/her with school work.	1	2	17	29.5	49
19. I get frustrated when I help my child with school work.	22.5	31	35	2	6
20. Not including parent/teacher nights, I visit my child's teacher at school.	33	27	28	5	5

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE ────────────	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite often	Very often
	%	%	%	%	%
21. My child and I visit places such as a zoo, a museum, an art gallery, a provincial or national park, etc.	3	13	40	25	19
22. My child plays board games at home such as Monopoly, Sorry, etc.	3	10	43	28	16
23. My child plays word games at home such as Scrabble, Boggle, crossword puzzles, etc.	6	21	39	20	14
24. My child reads books that are not required for school.	4	6	27	28	36
25. I bake or cook with my child.	5	18.5	44	17	16
26. I build, or put things together with my child that require instructions.	4	16	43	25	10
27. I write out shopping lists with my child.	34	32	22.5	6	5
28. My child sees me reading books, newspapers, or magazines at home.	1	2	9	25	62
29. I am involved in school activities with my child's class.	27	29.5	25	8	9
30. At home, I see writing that my child does at school.	3	11	28	56	
31. My child writes at home for purposes besides school work.	3.5	6	28	29	33.5
32. Together, my child and I look things up in books in order to find information.	3	10	32	33	21
33. I enjoy reading.	1	1	12	28	60

PLEASE CONTINUE WITH NEXT PAGE

169

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE	Once a month or less	Once every two weeks	Once or twice a week	Every other day	Every day
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Before my child entered school, I read to him/her.	6	5	28	20	41
2. When my child was in Kindergarten and Grade 1, I read to him/her.	5	6	32	24	33
3. When my child was in Grade 2, I read to him.	8	14.5	36	21	20
4. When my child was in Grade 3, I read to him/her.	16	24	32	12	14.5
5. This year I read to my child.	41	20	21	6	12
6. My child reads out loud to me.	18	17	27	19	17
7. In past years, my child read out loud to me.	13	8	35	23	19
8. Meal time is an occasion for our family to sit down and talk to each other.	6	4	12	11	65
9. My child reads the cereal box at home, or other such items.	6	3	23	21	45
10. My child talks to me about school work.	2	2	9	17	69
11. I help my child with school work.	5	8	24	24	38
12. I encourage my child to do school work at home.	3	2	15	18	61.5
13. My child talks to me about school in general.	1	3	8	16	72
14. When my child comes home from school, we talk about what happened that day.	2	2	9	17	70
15. I write at home for various purposes.	15.5	8	23	21	32
16. I use a computer at home.	73	23	7	3	8
17. I read books at home.	18	8	18.5	13	42
18. I read newspapers or magazines at home.	6	2	6	10	76
19. I talk to my child about things going on in the world.	9	9	27	20	33.5
20. My child reads at night before going to sleep.	16	8	26	21	29
21. My child reads the comic or sport section of the newspaper.	25	12	31	10	20
22. My child reads magazines.	34	24	22.5	10	9
23. My child reads comic books.	44.5	18.5	22	7.5	6
24. My child reads books for pleasure.	12	9	25	27	27
25. My child and I sit down and watch TV together.	3	3	19	19	56
26. My child and I talk about things we see on TV.	5	5	21	27	41
27. My child watches television.	2	1	2	12	83
28. My child uses a local library.	49	25	17	3	6
29. My child works on a hobby at home.	34	21	18.5	10	14
30. Someone else besides us as parents, and the school staff helps my child with school work.	68	7.5	12	5	5

Who? Sibling ☐   Other Relative ☐   Neighbor ☐   Tutor ☐

Other ☐   Specify if you wish. _____

Answer if your child has access to a computer or typewriter (outside of school)

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE ─────────────	Once a month or less	Once every two weeks	Once or twice a week	Every other day	Every day
	%	%	%	%	%
31. My child plays computer games.	57	6	24	3.5	9
32. My child plays video games.	33.5	8	25	17	16
33. My child uses a word processor for writing.	90	3	3.5	1	3
34. My child uses a typewriter for writing.	89	6	3.5	1	1

If only one person filled this questionnaire out, please indicate your gender. Female ☐ Male ☐
                                                                                    76%   12%   21% Both

Are there any other children in your family?   Yes 87% No 12%

If there are other children, how many, and what are their ages?   12% only child; 31% eldest child;
31% 2nd child; 17% 3rd child; 6% other.

Does the female head of the home: (check any appropriate response)

42%. . .Work full-time outside of the home.

24%. . .Work part-time outside of the home.

27%. . .Work full-time in the home taking care of family needs.

4%. . .Have a full or part-time business conducted from the home.

Does the male head of the home: (check any appropriate response)

79%. .Work full-time outside of the home.

1%. .Work part-time outside of the home.

2%. .Work full-time in the home taking care of family needs.

2%. .Have a full or part-time business conducted from the home.

Is there anything you would like to add concerning any item on this questionnaire?

30% of respondents gave written comments.

Is there anything you would like to add concerning reading, writing, or speaking with your grade 4 child at home?

Thank-you for your time.

A WRITING EXPERIENCE AS A BREAKTHROUGH IN LEARNING

Marcia, an eighth-grade student, has written a composition about handguns, a subject of her own choosing. She first became interested in the problems raised by handguns when a shooting occurred in the family of a friend. She knew the family, had seen the gun on an earlier occasion, had felt the shock of the incident, and had experienced with neighbours the emotions that surfaced in its aftermath.

To begin writing her composition, Marcia listed key words and details surrounding the incident: the expressions on the faces of her friends, the statements of neighbours, the appearance of the gun itself. As she set down these impressions she recalled details that otherwise would have escaped her. The process of writing heightened a remembered experience. It developed a way of seeing.

Later, Marcia found further material to add to her initial draft. She gathered general information on handguns, their use in robberies, their suitability for protection or for sport. She reviewed data on accidental shootings. Taking all this information, she analyzed and synthesized it through the process of writing.

In successive drafts, Marcia shaped her material into a structure that gave more meaning to the details. A sense of order and rightness came from the new

arrangement. Through organization, the mass of data was simplified. This simplicity, in turn, made it possible for Marcia to stand back from her material to see new details and meanings, such as the evident concern of the police, the effect of the shooting on the family, and her own feelings.

What Marcia would have expressed orally at the time of the shooting was different from what she later developed on the page. Reflection and discovery through several drafts led to depths of perception not possible to reach through immediate conversation. Marcia now can say with authority why she has always opposed the sale of handguns. Through the successful analysis and synthesis of fact and feeling she has strengthened her cognitive abilities.*

* Graves (1978, pp. 6 - 7).

VITA AUCTORIS

Maureen Schiller was born on November 23, 1957 in Windsor, Ontario where she completed her Grade XIII at F. J. Brennan High School. In 1980 she completed her Honours Bachelor of Science degree in Recreology from the University of Ottawa. In 1985 she completed her Bachelor of Education from the University of Windsor. She has taught in an 'Alternative Classroom' for students experiencing difficulties with reading and writing, as well as taught English and French as a second language, Junior/Kindergarten, and has worked with Home Instruction programs.

Maureen has two children (soon to be three), and will receive her Master of Education degree in the spring of 1991 from the University of Windsor.