The Effects of Providing Literacy Materials on the Home Literacy Environment

By

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Abstract

The amount of instructional time teachers have with students is very limited. Many students and families do not engage in literacy activities outside of the classroom environment. The purpose of this case study was to analyze how providing literacy materials affected the home environment. Baseline data were collected from families and students to identify typical after school activities the students engage in. Mixed methods were used throughout the study to collect data. The qualitative data used in this study included observations, communication logs, and student journal logs. The results indicate that providing specific ideas and materials does have a positive impact on a majority of home literacy environments.

Keywords: home literacy environment, motivation, home-school relationships, literacy engagement
The Effects of Providing Literacy Materials on the Home Literacy Environment

This is my fourth year teaching and each of these four years have been spent in fourth grade. Every year, it is of high priority for me to build a strong relationship with both my students and their families in order to foster a powerful home to school connection. My time with my students is very limited at school and I know in order for students to make sufficient growth in their literacy skills they need to continue to apply and practice these skills in their home environment. However, I have noticed parents may struggle with what activities to do in order to support them in this learning. This research has assisted me in building these relationships.

Previous research has shown that a predictor of student achievement in literacy is connected to a student’s home literacy environment. This home literacy environment is defined as the interactions students have with their parents regarding literacy topics and the availability of literacy materials within their own homes (Zwass, 2018). Having a better understanding of students’ home literacy experiences helps educators to plan appropriate supports for students. Learning about the child’s home environment also allows for teachers to better develop a relationship with their students and learn about their interests. The knowledge of their home environment can be incorporated into the classroom to help actively engage all learners.

An explanation for why there may be differences in students’ literacy levels could be a result of the presence (or lack) of literacy related activities taking place in the home environment (Kirby & Hogan, 2008). It is important for me to understand the home literacy environments of my students in order to better meet their reading needs in my classroom. Students who lack literacy related activities may need more opportunities to read to build their background knowledge, vocabulary work, and additional reteaching opportunities with overall comprehension skills of new content. Having the knowledge of specific students who lack a
strong home literacy environment will allow me to pull these students prior to reading a book and provide them with additional information to support their comprehension. It will also inform me which students may need additional support during small group time to support their reading needs. The purpose of this action research study is to analyze the effects of providing literacy materials on the home literacy environment, and use the data to inform my teaching practices and support student learning so all needs will be met. The data will allow me to take a closer look at my students’ literacy development beyond the classroom, as well as within. Ultimately, it is the hope that this home school connection will increase the chances for students to become more successful literacy learners.

**Literature Review**

Research has shown the important role that the home literacy environment plays in a child’s literacy education and success. This is important as it shows that language and literacy are typically first encountered in the home setting (Wigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). Throughout this review I explore how the literacy environment plays a critical role, as well as take a closer look at interrelated factors such as building a home school connection, literacy materials, and student motivation. All of these areas account for, and help shape, what the child’s home literacy experience is like.

**Home Literacy Environment**

A child’s home literacy environment is composed of their experiences, attitude, and materials utilized within literacy activities inside the home (Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005). Several studies have shown the significance role the home literacy environment plays in a child’s literacy success in school. This research proves that children that are in homes that
encourage literacy activities have higher phonemic awareness and decoding skills, higher reading achievement, and advanced oral language development (Padak & Rasinski, 2007).

The home literacy environment is “complex and multifaceted” (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan studied many different components of the home literacy environment. One component represented a limiting environment. This area focused on the idea that a parents’ ability to provide literacy opportunities for their child is ultimately determined by the resources they have available to them (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). This includes, but is not limited to the families social class, level of education the parents have obtained, as well as their attitudes towards education and literacy. Another component studied was a literacy interface which focuses on the activities in which parents engage in that expose their children to literacy activities both directly or indirectly. One of the more commonly studied areas is shared reading, engaging reading with one another. Lastly, home literacy environment was looked at overall which accounted for all the different components as being interrelated. This shows how crucial it is as educators that we help provide families with materials, resources, and ideas to actively and directly engage in literacy activities with their children to help foster this growth.

**Building Home-School Relationships**

Parents and teachers alike want to come together for the purpose of better understanding, supporting, and to celebrate the overall development of literacy in students’ lives (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006). Building a strong home school connection has such positive outcomes on the growth of the child involved (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006). Simply instructing parents to “read to your child” or “encourage your child to read at home” may be a start, but it is not nearly enough (Padak & Rasinski, 2007). Parents may need specific suggestions and guidelines
about what to do. Providing these guidelines could encourage more parents to be involved, as well as help them to feel more confident and supported in what they are doing with their child. “When parents feel supported by the staff at their children’s schools, they are willing to work with the schools in a joint effort to educate their children” (Taylor & Pearson, 2004).

Building a strong home-school relationship isn’t always easy and takes time. However, there are many things we can do as educators to help foster these relationships. When providing parents with activities to engage in with their children we should keep it simple, help them see their options, and provide them with materials (Padak & Rasinski, 2007). Keeping it simple and providing them with materials ensures that all families can participate no matter their social class or level of education. Helping parents to see their options in different ways they can engage in literacy activities with their child can open up new opportunities. For example, parents should understand that even though their child can read independently, they can still be read aloud to.

**Literacy Materials**

One of the biggest challenges or concerns there is when it comes to the home literacy environment is “all children do not have the same access to books in their homes” (Taylor & Pearson, 2004). Higher income families and families with higher education levels tend to purchase more books than those of lower income families and families with lower education (Taylor & Pearson, 2004). Unfortunately, due to the cost of books increasing from infancy to early adolescence, this number only becomes greater as the child gets older. As we know, the ability to have a rich home literacy environment is greatly impacted by the inability to gain access to literacy materials. Therefore, it is crucial all families have access to appropriate materials in order to engage in literacy activities. These materials may come from a variety of sources such as the families’ own materials, the school, or even the community library.
**Motivation and Home Literacy Development**

Motivation can be defined as the want to engage in a specific activity and the willingness to persevere through an activity regardless of its level of difficulty (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013). Motivation plays an important role in the development of students academically within all subject areas. The more a student is motivated to perform a certain task, the more beneficial it is likely to become. When people think of motivation they often think about self-interest. However, another large component that plays into one’s motivation is whether or not the activity is applicable in future context. Malloy et al. (2013) found:

> If students feel that reading is interesting because they enjoy being absorbed or informed by text, or think that becoming a good reader will help them in their future careers, they will more likely engage and persist in the reading task presented. Students who are interested in reading for these intrinsic, or personal reasons will likely be more open to instruction and development. (p. 280)

Research has shown the more engaged and motivated readers are more likely to attain higher levels of achievement in reading, will perform better on standardized reading assessments, and receive higher grades than their less enthusiastic counterparts (Applegate & Applegate, 2010).

Motivation begins to develop very early in infants' lives (Begus & Southgate, 2018). As many of us know infants and toddlers naturally share their interests in certain objects, songs, and facial expressions. They show this by how they react. This same idea can be applied when noticing the child’s interest in literacy based activities such as shared reading. A parent’s beliefs about their child’s interest can greatly influence the child’s home literacy environment (Sackes, Isitan, Avci, & Justice, 2016). Parents tend to provide their children with learning opportunities that include activities or objects in which they show interest. If a parent believes their child is
interested in literacy like activities, they are then more likely to provide these types of activities for them. Parents' thoughts on their child’s literacy motivation would promote their literacy development as they would increase the amount of exposure to literacy activities within the home (Sackes, Isitan, Avcı, & Justice, 2016). In addition to observing children’s interests, parents also observe their child’s ability to be cognitively active and their ability to demonstrate effort towards certain tasks. If they believe their child will do these things during literacy based activities, they will be more likely to provide them the opportunity to do so. Therefore, what parents believe about their child’s competence could influence the type of literacy experiences they provide their children (Sackes, Isitan, Avcı, & Justice, 2016).

Much like motivation is important in the home literacy environment, it is equally crucial in the classroom setting. According to the study done by Turner and Paris there are six important components to fostering motivation. Teachers who foster motivation in literacy classrooms: provide authentic choices and purposes for literacy, allow students to modify tasks so the difficulty and interest levels are challenging, show students how they can control their learning, encourage collaboration, emphasize strategies and metacognition for constructing meaning, and use the consequences of tasks to build responsibility, ownership, and self-regulation (Turner & Paris, 1995). The first component, choice, is something that can be easily provided to students, simply by offering them a variety of books to read with a wide range of topics to meet students’ interests. Choice can be a very powerful motivator. When students have the opportunity to pick texts and tasks they are interested in, they put forth more effort in learning and understanding the material. The second area of importance is creating a challenge. If students are given a task that is too easy, they quickly become bored. However, if they are given a task that is too difficult, they soon become frustrated and give up. It is important to find a balance between the two, one
that will challenge students and allow them to use a variety of strategies to work through the
difficulty. The students that were most motivated were the ones that were engaging in
moderately difficult tasks that led them to new understandings and learning. When the control is
shared between the teacher and students, students interpret this as an opportunity to learn and
improve. Students in shared-control classrooms have a higher interest in their schoolwork and
felt they were more successful compared to classrooms where teachers were in control.
Collaboration is another significant component when trying to motivate students and can be
motivating in several different ways. One way in which a student's curiosity can be sparked is by
utilizing peer comments and ideas. Another way is by having students observe their classmates’
progress as this will increase their own personal confidence in being successful. Another way to
foster motivation in the classroom environment is through constructing meaning. This promotes
motivation as it allows students to make sense of what they are learning and the strategies they
are using. Lastly, teachers use the consequences of tasks to build responsibility, ownership, and
self-reflection. Open and closed tasks have different consequences. Closed tasks often have one
right answer, so students are focused on if they answered correctly or how high of a percentage
they received. In contrast, open tasks rarely have one correct answer. Therefore, this allows
students to shift their focus on if they used good strategies, achieved their purpose, and if they
put forth their best effort. They can base their self-assessments on their overall efforts,
enjoyment, and the meaningfulness of the task. In doing so, these consequences of open tasks
usually result in positive feelings about the students’ responsibility and achievement.
Incorporating these six different strategies into the classroom environment can have huge effects
on students' motivation, which in return will benefit their academic performance and success.
Motivation begins to develop very early in an infants’ life, but continues to develop and change throughout childhood, early adolescence, and even adulthood (Begus & Southgate, 2018). However, in each stage of life, it is important to understand the many different variables that play into one’s motivation. Variables such as “ability levels, interests, and learning backgrounds of students” will continue to change and develop throughout the different experiences they encounter (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013). One must take into consideration all different areas to incorporate engaging, meaningful activities and instruction, both at home and in the classroom.

There are many different components that make up the home literacy environment including a home school connection, access to literacy materials, and student motivation. The home literacy environment is where students are exposed to their first literacy experiences and motivation, or lack of, begins to develop towards literacy based activities. The environment to which each student is exposed to will play a significant role in their current and future literacy development.

**Methods**

The purpose of this study was for me to get a better understanding of the types of activity my students engaged in outside of the classroom environment in order to build a better home-school connection. It also provided me with information to direct my instruction in order to better meet the diverse vocabulary and comprehension needs of my students. Lastly, my hope was to potentially increase my students’ motivation to read both in the classroom and out.

In this study I analyze how providing literacy materials affect the engagement of literacy in the home environment.

**Research Context**
This study took place over a period of 5 weeks in a public elementary school in a rural community in a Midwestern state. There are 726 students in attendance from preschool through fifth grade. A majority of students who attend this school are white, with 91% of students identified as Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, 4% identified with two or more races, and less than 1% identified as American Indian or Asian. 30% of students also receive free or reduced lunch.

Our school recently adopted a new reading program that intertwined different components of literacy such as reading mini lessons, interactive read alouds, phonics and word study, and guided reading. Each student, no matter the grade level, has the same activities throughout the day, just varying on the times of day they have each subject. All students receive core math, reading, writing, science, and social studies instruction from their classroom teacher. Each classroom also has an independent reading time built into their schedule. Students typically follow a three day rotation for specials including art, media, and physical education. However, due to COVID, this rotation is now a six week rotation this year. All students also receive music twice a week.

I began my study with 17 participants, but due to a variety of factors, I was only able to complete the full data collection with 9 students. One participant asked to no longer participate during week three of the study. The other 7 participants did not return a sufficient amount of their student journal logs, making it difficult for me to do a complete analysis of how this study affected their home literacy environment. Therefore, the findings of this study are based on the data collected from 9 students.

Data Collection

Data were collected by a variety of sources for each participant. To begin, each student was sent home a permission and consent letter. These forms allowed parents to give the
opportunity for me to include their child and their child’s work in my research study. In addition to these letters, I also sent all families the family survey through google forms (Appendix A). This survey helped me to guide my research and what materials I planned to share with my families in order to enhance their home literacy environment.

Once I began my study I provided each of the students with a student journal log sheet, one for each week (Appendix B). This sheet was sent home for students to record their daily after school activities. Through this documentation I was able to better understand each of the students’ home environment and the types of activities they engaged in after school and on the weekends, whether they are literacy based or not. In addition, I also recorded an observational note sheet (Appendix C). This allowed me to record any observations I made, as well as the interpretations of those observations.

Lastly, I used a communication log (Appendix D). This helped me record communication between myself and families. Throughout my research study, I reached out to families once a week. I kept a record of what I communicated as well as any responses I received back from families. This communication informed them of the various literacy materials and ideas coming home with their child. These ideas were organized onto a choice board (Appendix E). I created a choice board with activities from a variety of literacy areas in which families could participate. Along with the choice board, I sent any needed materials home in what I called “Literacy Activity Bags.” Each week there was a new choice board with new activities and a new weekly challenge.

**Data Analysis**

Starting with the family survey I analyzed parent answers to find patterns on the frequency and types of literacy activities that the families were currently engaged in. I also
collected input of the types of materials families had access to within their homes. The analysis of these answers guided my weekly communication with families as well as what literacy materials I prepared and sent home with students.

I also analyzed students’ initial activity logs and compared them to their logs in the following weeks during my research study. This gave me an opportunity to see how providing literacy materials and ideas to their families affected their after school and weekend activities.

**Choice Boards**

The literacy materials and activities were all organized through a choice board. On this choice board I provided two ideas in each of the four different categories: reading comprehension, reading, writing, and speaking/listening. I chose these four categories to encourage students and families to engage in all areas of literacy. Based on the family survey and students’ baseline journal log, if they participated in literacy outside of the home it was typically independent reading. Each week students were given a new choice board with new activities, but still within these four main categories. To begin my first week I chose reading comprehension activities that my class as a whole needed more practice on as seen from benchmark assessments. These comprehension skills included comparing and contrasting, as well as inferencing. I also picked reading, writing, and speaking/listening activities that I thought would be fun for families to participate in together. The first week’s activities also related around Valentine’s Day in hopes to make them more appealing. On each week’s choice board I also included a “weekly challenge.” For the weekly challenge I picked an activity from a different category each time in order to encourage students to at least complete one activity and if they did so, each week they would be engaging in a different area of literacy. As I collected more data from students’ journal logs as well as observational notes such as conversations, I was able to use this information to
continue picking activities to include on the choice boards. I would then try to incorporate the same format of a game, but with a new literacy skill.

**Procedures**

After the first baseline week of collecting the data mentioned, I began providing families with literacy materials and ideas (Appendix E). All families received weekly communication with literacy ideas and activities to engage in, as well as any materials needed to complete them. I recorded this communication I sent to families as well as any responses I received (Appendix D). During this time, I asked students to continue to log their weekly after school activities for the next four weeks of the study. I also recorded any observational notes or comments given by students when they arose throughout my research (Appendix C). Throughout my action research I used both my observational data and student journal logs to help pick what to include in the next week’s literacy activity bags. The last week of the study families were again given a family survey. This survey was very similar to the pre-survey given, with a few changes (Appendix F).

**Findings**

For this research project, I was interested in looking more closely at my students’ home literacy environments. I wanted to better understand the types of activities they engaged in outside of the classroom environment in order to help build a better home-school connection, as well as potentially increase my students’ motivation to read both in the classroom and out.

After providing families with literacy materials and analyzing the data, I found two larger groups of students; one group who had an unclear effect and one group of students who were clearly affected. I also found it interesting to note the information shared specifically from the parents’ and guardians’ perspectives.

**Effect Unclear Group**
Out of the nine students who participated in my research study, two appeared to be unaffected by the literacy materials provided for them. The baseline data collected at the beginning was very consistent all throughout their participation in the study, as well as the final week of data collection.

**Literacy Engagement Within the Classroom**

The unaffected students have many similarities when looking at their literacy behaviors within the classroom. For example, during past guided reading groups or whole-group reading lessons they appeared to be less motivated or engaged in the content and discussion. Each of them would prefer to read independently. However, they both entered 4th grade reading above grade level expectations on school-wide benchmark assessments.

**Literacy Engagement Outside the Classroom**

Much like their literacy engagement within the classroom, student A and student B have similarities outside the classroom as well. According to each of their baseline student journal logs they spend a majority of their after school activity time engaging in activities on digital platforms, such as watching television, youtube, and playing video games (Figure 1). Throughout the study, when literacy materials were provided for them to participate in at home, their journal log remained the same throughout the duration of the study (Figure 2). It was interesting to observe that they even recorded playing video games with one another a handful of times on their weekly journal log.
**Figure 1**

*Effect Unclear Student A Baseline Activity Log: 01/25/21*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother</td>
<td>● Ark Yu-Gi-Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother</td>
<td>● Pokemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Fortnite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Mac n cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>● Played video games with Jack*</td>
<td>● Roblox Yeet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Dominos pizza..yum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Watch Netflix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played video games with Jack*</td>
<td>● Smash Bros Ultimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● McDonalds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>● Watched YouTube</td>
<td>● Mac n cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>● Played video games</td>
<td>● Ping pong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate lunch</td>
<td>● Corn dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>● Played video games</td>
<td>● Ping Pong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Mac n cheese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2

Effect Unclear Student A Activity Log: 03/01/21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my Jack*</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Mac n cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● I was home alone</td>
<td>● Dad and brother at scouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>● Played video games with Jack*</td>
<td>● Minecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Me vs my brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Prank wars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>● Played video games with Jack*</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Mac n cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played video games</td>
<td>● YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>● Played video games with Jack*</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Corn Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played on tablet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother, Jack, and Jim</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Ate dinner</td>
<td>● Corn Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>● Went skiing all day</td>
<td>● With family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>● Played video games with my brother, Tom*, and Sue*</td>
<td>● Roblox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Watched tablet</td>
<td>● YouTube/Netflix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student A and Student B’s baselines and additional activity logs included no literacy based activities. However, they did include a large amount of digital platform use. Student A engaged in these activities mostly with their brother, as well as with Student B.

Affected Group

The other seven students who participated in the research study showed positive effects as a result of providing home literacy materials. Within this group of students, there were two
ways students were affected. One way was simply an increase in the amount of literacy activities the student participated in at home. The other way students were affected was the types of literacy activities they engaged in.

**Literacy Engagement Within the Classroom**

Out of the seven students who were affected, two are reading above grade level according to their latest benchmark assessment. The other five students are currently reading at a fourth grade level. However, all students, except for one, are motivated and are actively engaged in our classroom discussions during both whole group and small group reading lessons. As noted in my observational notes, these students kept their attention on the speaker, were willing to share their thoughts and ideas, and engaged in conversation with their peers. The one student, student C, who does not participate as often as the others, was affected differently.

**Literacy Engagement Outside the Classroom**

Student C had increased the amount of literacy engagement with his home environment. According to their baseline data, they engaged in no literacy activities, and much like the unaffected student group, spent much of their time watching television, youtube, and playing video games (Figure 3). However, according to their journal log, they incorporated more literacy activities into their after school activities when materials were provided for them, as seen by the highlighted activities, though they did still continue to engage in a lot of electronic activities (Figure 4). When home literacy materials were being sent home, their log shows that they did engage with two of the activities on two separate days and that they played with their sister.
Figure 3

Affected Student C Baseline Activity Log: 01/25/21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>● Played Roblox</td>
<td>● Played Roblox with my sister for 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Watched TV for 30 minutes</td>
<td>● Watched TV by myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>● Cleaned under my bed</td>
<td>● Cleaned for 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Watched YouTube</td>
<td>● Watched YouTube for 3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>● Watched TV</td>
<td>● By myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>● Watched YouTube</td>
<td>● Watched Youtube with my sister for 1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played Roblox</td>
<td>● Played Roblox alone for 4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>● Watched TV with dad</td>
<td>● Did chores alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Did chores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>● Played Roblox</td>
<td>● Did it alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>● Watched a movie</td>
<td>● Watched Monster House with mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played Roblox</td>
<td>● Played Roblox for 2 hours with a friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student C’s baseline journal log reflected no engagement with literacy based activities. However, in their following journal logs I saw an increase in the number of activities involving literacy. It was interesting to note that each of the literacy activities were completed with their sibling, even though other activities were completed with their mom or dad.

The other five students were also affected, but in a different way. These students already participated in literacy activities according to their baseline journal log collected. However, these activities were limited to independent reading (Figure 5). As a result of provided activity bags, students shifted their engagement of literacy into a variety of different areas such as comprehension, fluency, reading with others, listening to reading, writing, and speaking and listening activities, as seen by the highlighted activities (Figure 6).
**Figure 5**

*Affected Student D Baseline Activity Log: 01/25/21*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>● Played outside</td>
<td>● Took garbages to the end of the driveway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Did dishes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● I read for 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>● Played football on ipad for 30 minutes</td>
<td>● I won the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played catch with dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● I read for 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>● Played with Football cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Read for 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Played football catch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>● Antler walk</td>
<td>● Dad found 2 antler sheds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● I read 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>● Antler walk</td>
<td>● Mom’s birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Football catch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Football</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>● Played ipad for 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Read 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Practiced spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Watched tv for 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>● Played outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● 4-H record book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Pro-bowl celebration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 6**

Affected Student D Activity Log: 03/01/21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>● Took dog for walk&lt;br&gt;● Choice board&lt;br&gt;● Practiced spelling&lt;br&gt;● iPad for 30 minutes</td>
<td>● Reader’s theater and Taboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>● YMCA to play football&lt;br&gt;● Practiced spelling&lt;br&gt;● Played Legos&lt;br&gt;● Choice board</td>
<td>● Read 30 minutes under blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>● Choice board&lt;br&gt;● Watched a movie&lt;br&gt;● Played rubber bands</td>
<td>● Fact and opinion spoon game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>● Choice board&lt;br&gt;● Played magnets&lt;br&gt;● Played baseball catch</td>
<td>● Roll a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>● Played baseball catch&lt;br&gt;● Went for a walk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>● Choice board&lt;br&gt;● Played outside</td>
<td>● Read 30 minutes under blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>● Rode in car to Florida&lt;br&gt;● Played iPad for 30 minutes&lt;br&gt;● Played license plate game</td>
<td>● Stopped to go swimming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in student D’s baseline data, their after school activities included some literacy based activities, however, they were limited to reading independently or practicing spelling. In their following journal logs, the amount of literacy based activities not only increased, but the types of activities varied greatly. Throughout the study, student D engaged in an activity from each of the four categories at least once. These activities were completed with either one or both of their parents, as well as occasionally with their sister.
Family Perspectives

As a baseline to my data collection, I gathered feedback about the home literacy environment from the guardian’s perspective through both a pre and post survey. Throughout the study I also kept a communication log of any comments made between myself and the participating families. During the middle of my study, I had parent-teacher conferences in which parents made comments about the many different ways their child was affected by the literacy materials being sent home weekly. These comments as seen below, were all made from families of students who were affected by the literacy materials provided.

- “I’m excited about these activity bags and so is Kamden*. He’s enjoying doing activities together.”
- “We are really enjoying the choice boards and the different types of activities.”
- “It’s nice coming from you because she doesn’t always want to do things when I ask. She’s more excited to do them being that you provided them.”

After the final week of my study, I sent a post-study survey. It was interesting to note that when asked “Did the activity bags affect your child’s after school activities?” their responses were the same as what I had observed on the logs. Seven out of the nine parents selected “yes.”
Some comments given of how they were affected stated, “There were more literacy options for my child to do at home,” and “He wanted to do more activities like those, so he would do them and then come up with his own.” I asked guardians if they would like to continue receiving literacy (or math) activities to do at home. Eight out of the nine families stated that they would.

**Figure 8**

*Family Post-Study Survey Results*

Would you be interested in continuing to receive literacy (or math) activities to do at home?

9 responses

- **Yes**: 88.9%
- **No**: 11.1%
Discussion

As seen from my findings, providing literacy materials may not have an affect on the amount of literacy in the home environment. However, for those that it does affect, it does so in a variety of ways.

One area of interest I found is the role of activities on digital platforms within the home environment. Of the three students who noted engaging in many hours of electronics, i.e. watching television, youtube, and playing video games, their home literacy environment appeared to be the least affected compared to their peers who did not engage in or had limited engagement with these types of activities.

From my experience as a teacher, I quickly learned the importance of incorporating students' interests into all content areas I teach as one way to help make the task more engaging. This same concept was found in many studies like those mentioned previously by Turner and Paris and Applegate and Applegate. Throughout my action research I used observational data and student journal logs to help pick what to include in the next week’s literacy activity bags. If I noted a “popular” activity, I would try to use the same format or game, but incorporate a new skill. This built on students’ interests and motivated them to continue to engage in these activities at home. When I would go over the new week’s activity bags it was fun to hear them share, “I loved this game,” or “I want to do that one again, those are my favorite!” Two of the most popular activities were reader’s theater and “spoons” game. The reader’s theater readings were short, humorous poems about animals. The spoons game was built around the traditional card game where players work to find four of a kind and then quickly take a spoon before there are no spoons left. However, in this literacy version, students worked to collect four cards that matched
relating to the skill the game was focusing on. For example, when practicing main idea and
details, students need to find one main idea and the three related details before grabbing a spoon.

When planning for and implementing my action research, I had imagined students
engaging in these activities with their parents. However, as I analyzed their weekly journal logs I
quickly noticed that some students completed the activities with their sibling. Having siblings is
one thing that may change the dynamic of how families engage with one another. As seen in my
study, they may be the only ones who participate in the activities with the student, or they may
join along with their parents.

During my action research many students appeared to be motivated to complete the
activities that were provided to them. Students may have had varying motives to do so. One
reason appeared to be in order to become a better student and life long learner. Another motive
appeared to be simply the notion to please me and receive the gratification that I was proud of
them for working hard on their learning outside of the classroom environment. Lastly, another
motivation for students might be simply the novelty of having something new and different to do
at home.

It is often easy for educators to inform families that their child needs additional support
with literacy, however through this action research, I’ve learned this isn’t enough. Families may
not have the knowledge or resources to fulfill this request, even if they are willing to do so. I was
able to see how providing a few simple options, along with the materials, increased the amount
of literacy families engaged in, either with siblings or parents. The simple suggestions and
directions I believe made parents more confident and comfortable in supporting their child with
these activities.
The results of my action research study provides reassurance that building home-school connections, and working together with families to motivate and help their child succeed is important. Educators know the more a student practices a skill the better they will become. Engaging in literacy activities in the home environment is additional time for them to practice and reinforce these skills, therefore, allowing them to become a stronger literate student.

**Limitations**

As with any research, my study has limitations. Since this study focuses on the home literacy environment, much of the data collected is recorded at home, away from my supervision. There is a possibility that families may record false or inaccurate information on the activity log. In addition, when collecting my baseline data, I did so for only one week. This may not have been a typical week that the child experiences, therefore, my interpretation of how providing literacy materials affected them may have been inaccurate.

**Implications**

This study showed that providing specific materials for families to engage in affects students. This will encourage other educators to incorporate school to home literacy activities into their regular practice. I believe that this study has benefitted my students and families in many ways by building a stronger home to school relationship, providing parents with specific literacy activities to engage their child in, and appearing to motivate students to engage in more literacy outside of the classroom environment. I will continue to provide activity bags for them to engage in at home and will incorporate activity bags into my future classrooms. The relationships that are forged have a lasting impact on students’ literacy motivation and achievement. All families, no matter their social class, home language, or education will have the
ability to engage in academic activities with their child. As an effect, the more engagement the child has with these skills the more successful they will be academically.
References


Begus, K., & Southgate, V. (2018). Curious learners: How infants' motivation to learn shapes and is shaped by infants' interactions with the social world. In P. A. Ganea & M. M. Saylor (Eds.), *Active learning from infancy to childhood: Social motivation, cognition, and linguistic mechanisms* (pp. 13-37). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International.


Roberts, J., Jurgens, J., & Burchinal, M. (April 2005). The role of home literacy practices in


Appendix A

Family Pre-Study Survey

Dear Families,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to answer these questions! If there is any question you prefer not to answer, please feel free to skip it.

Use the following rating scale to answer the following questions:

1. Never
2. Once a month
3. Once a week
4. Several times a week
5. Once a day

I read with my child at home.

1  2  3  4  5

I (parent/guardian) read by myself at home.

1  2  3  4  5

As a family, we visit a public library.

1  2  3  4  5

My child enjoys reading at home.

1  2  3  4  5

My child observes me writing at home.

1  2  3  4  5

My child brings books home from school.

1  2  3  4  5

My child writes freely at home.

1  2  3  4  5

For the last six questions, please provide as much detail as possible. Thank you!
Appendix A (continued)

Family Pre-Survey

Please describe items that your child has access to at home that enable him/her to engage in activities related to reading, writing, listening, and viewing.

Please describe a typical reading experience for your child at home.

What kinds of television shows or movies do you watch with your child at home?

What are some topics of frequent conversation in your home?

How does your child spend time outside of school? (extracurricular activities, hobbies, etc.)

How many adults and children live in your home?
Appendix B

Student Journal Log of Home Activities

Name: __________________
Week of: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Observational Notes

Participant: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Communication Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
## Appendix E

### Choice Board

**February Choice Board**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Comprehension</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Speaking/Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compare and Contrast Activity</strong></td>
<td>Read Aloud (Pick a book to read aloud with an adult).</td>
<td>Make a valentine for somebody you know. Write about what they mean to you.</td>
<td>Share a story about your day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inferencing Activity</strong></td>
<td>Build a fort. Read in it!</td>
<td>Valentine’s Boggle</td>
<td>Play a board game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Weekly challenge: Pick a chapter book. Begin reading it with a member of your family (or your whole family). You may take turns who reads or just one person may do the reading. Try to read TWO-THREE chapters a week.***

***Most materials needed for the above activities are in the “home literacy baggie.” If you are in need of additional materials, PLEASE let me know.***
Appendix F

Family Post-Survey

Dear Families,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to answer these questions! If there is any question you prefer not to answer, please feel free to skip it.

For these questions, reflect only on the last month (during your participation in the research project).

Use the following rating scale to answer the following questions:

1. Less
2. Same
3. More

I read with my child at home.

1 2 3

I (parent/guardian) read by myself at home.

1 2 3

My child enjoys reading at home.

1 2 3

My child observes me writing at home.

1 2 3

My child brings books home from school.

1 2 3

My child writes at home.

1 2 3

The overall amount of literacy activities my child engaged in was:

1 2 3

Did the “activity bags” affect your child’s after school activities?

1 2 3
Appendix F (continued)

Family Post-Survey

If yes, please explain. If no, explain why.

Would you be interested in continuing to receive literacy (or math) activities to do at home?

- Yes
- No
- Just literacy activities
- Just math activities

Additional comments about your or your child’s participation experience can be shared here.

Thank you!