

304
FIRST GRADE READING SUCCESS AND
HOME PREREADING EXPERIENCES

by

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Through the years an area of concern for educators has been children's success with reading. Reading specialists and teachers have realized for many years that the one most important part of a child's success with reading is the ability to bring the reader's experiences to the author's experiences. Much has been done in ascertaining that home pre-reading experiences are important factors in determining reading achievement in school. In the past few years, much has been done to inform parents of the importance of home pre-reading experiences, and in particular of reading aloud to children.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine if certain home pre-reading experiences are significantly different for children successful and unsuccessful at reading at the end of first grade, as revealed through a questionnaire study. Areas of pre-reading experience tapped by the study included: reading aloud; whether the child owned a library card, or had a magazine subscription; whether the child had been provided experiences through local trips and travel; how many newspaper and magazine subscriptions the parents had; and whether the child had experiences with music.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of home pre-reading experiences has been known by educators and stressed to parents for quite some time. The desire behind this study was to find out what specific home pre-reading experiences, if any, showed up as being significantly different for successful and unsuccessful readers at the end of first grade. The intent was to identify significant home pre-reading experiences as a service to parents and teachers. There are organizations that stress the importance of reading and home pre-reading experiences to parents and it is hoped that the results of this study could be beneficial in contributing to statements of the importance of home pre-reading experiences. The International Reading Association spends a great deal of time and money educating parents in the importance of home pre-reading experiences through pamphlets that they publish. These pamphlets offer suggestions to parents as to examples of the types of home pre-reading experiences their children need. Other organizations such as Reading is Fundamental and Right to Read support home pre-reading experiences through parent committees and providing books to children, with stress being placed to parents on reading aloud to their children. It is hoped that this study can provide statistical findings to support certain home pre-reading experiences that are different for successful and unsuccessful readers at the end of first grade, and that it could then be useful in contributing to what is being done in educating parents to the importance of home pre-reading experiences.

III. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited by the size of the population and the screening instrument used. The population was the first grade children in a small, rural, north-central Kansas school district and this may limit the applicability of the findings to other settings. The instrument was compiled by the investigator upon reviewing literature in the field and is limited by how good it is in obtaining information needed and how open it is to bias depending on how many responses are received and how honest the responses are. With these limitations in mind, it is hoped that the study can find some useful statistical data that can support home pre-reading experiences and success with reading at the end of first grade.

IV. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Successful. The term successful is defined as those children who at the end of first grade had completed the first grade reader and the skills necessary at a mastery level of achievement, so as to be ready for second grade reading. The children's teachers determined whether they had achieved this level and scores were attained from records kept by the teachers with permission from the children's parents.

Unsuccessful. Unsuccessful is defined as those children who at the end of first grade had not completed the first grade reader and the skills necessary at a mastery level of achievement, so as to be ready for second grade reading. This was determined from records kept by the children's teachers.

Home pre-reading experiences: Home pre-reading experiences are defined for the purpose of this study as those experiences children have at home before entering school that provide the child with the necessary information to make sense of the reading process. These experiences enable the child to relate his own experiences to those of the author in the stories and to have information about what reading is, when he/she actually begins to read.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section describes evidences of the effect of pre-reading experiences on reading achievement at the end of the first grade year.

Frank Smith, in his book, Understanding Reading, cites one way to summarize everything that a child needs to know to become a fluent reader: every child must learn to use nonvisual or "experience" information well when attending to print.¹ In other words, children must bring their own experiences to light when trying to understand what the author has written. The more experiences the child has, the more books he/she will be able to bring nonvisual meaning to.

John E. George conducted a study of Pre-School Reading Facilitating Experiences (PRFE's) of good and poor readers in grades four, five, and six. PRFE's were shown to have a positive correlation to superior reading achievement. The population used in this study was good and poor readers of a small semi-rural elementary school near Kansas City. The basis for labeling the children as good and poor was their rankings on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Form Q, Level I. At each grade level, fourth, fifth, and sixth, the eight students who ranked highest and the eight who ranked lowest on the CTBS were labeled "good" and "poor" readers. The "good readers" scored at grade level or above

¹Frank Smith, Understanding Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 179.

whereas the "poor readers" scored well below grade level. Parents of both groups completed the George Literacy Prediction Scale in a personal interview at the parents' homes. As was predicted, good readers realize more PRFE's than do poor readers during their pre-school years. Eight of the most frequently realized PRFE's for good readers in order from most to least important were: (1) parental desire for higher education for the child, (2) parental praise for writing, drawing, or reading, (3) parental feelings that the quality of kindergarten and first grade reading instruction is good, (4) working with pencil and paper at home, (5) talking with a parent about things seen and heard while shopping, going for a walk, or riding in a car, (6) parental willingness to answer questions, (7) being read to by parents from books and stories, and (8) parental teaching of unknown words.²

To discover certain social, emotional, physical, and environmental characteristics and experiences common to successful readers, Jerry G. Keshian did a study with 72 children who were found to be successful readers, after sampling procedures were used on 406 children. Testing for the emotional area was done by using two personality tests, the Aspects of Personality, and the California Test of Personality. Data on physical ability was attained from the Brace Motor Ability Test. Environmental and social information was collected from student questionnaires and case study interviews. Thirteen characteristics

²John E. George, "Correlates of Reading Deficiency: The Relationship of Pre-School Experiences to Reading Achievement," Kansas City, Missouri; Professor of Education, University of Missouri (ED 089 197), p. 45.

were listed as being those of successful readers, and the following conclusions were made by Keshian. Although the good readers were socially and emotionally well-adjusted, they didn't fall within any well defined personality pattern. Reading success appears to be the result of many factors. A whole range of characteristics and environmental factors appearing in combination enables a child to achieve reading success.³

Margarete Dix surveyed some parents from Neenah, Wisconsin, to try and find out if the reading habits of parents are related to the reading performance of their children. The subjects for this research were all the parents of children who had participated in STARR (Students are Reading Right) reading program. The instrument used for this was a questionnaire asking about parental reading habits and attitudes, general home environment, activities of the family, ranking of school subjects according to their importance, and values held by the parents. This instrument consisted of 36 questions and was sent to 213 parents, with the responses divided into groups, parents of "good" readers and parents of "poor" readers as was predetermined. The survey clearly showed that parents who themselves are good readers and present a good reading model are more likely to have children who are good readers. Children in a home reading atmosphere will read more. Parents of good readers are more aware of the importance of wide, varied experiences and tend to view

³Jerry G. Keshian, "The Characteristics and Experiences of Children Who Learn to Read Successfully," Elementary English (1963), pp. 615-16, 652.

reading in a broader sense and use it for enjoyment, fun, and entertainment. The number of magazines read was the same for both groups of parents, but the parents of the good readers tended to read more newspapers. Parents of the "poor" readers showed a greater return of the questionnaires, perhaps recognizing the need for improvement in their children's reading. These parents tend to see reading as a skills process and they themselves read more to gain information than for pleasure. Another difference noted was that parents of "poor" readers tend to use the library less themselves than the parents of "good" readers.⁴

The research discussed to this point seems to adequately support the importance of prereading experiences in the home as being very important. What some of the experiences are and how parents feel towards them are supported by the additional literature. Arnold L. and Wanda L. Willems point out that much evidence shows half of a child's intelligence to be developed by age four and approximately two-thirds by age six.⁵ Consequently, the experiences a child has before entering kindergarten determine at least half of his/her chances for success in school.

In the language development of children, vocal language (listening and speaking) precedes visual language (reading).

⁴Margarete Dix, "Are Reading Habits of Parents Related to Reading Performance of Their Children?" (ED 133 693), pp. 2-6.

⁵Arnold L. and Wanda L. Willems, "Please Read Me a Book," Language Arts, Vol. 52, No. 6 (September 1975), pp. 831-5.

Reading to the preschool child on a regular basis is the best way to enrich the environment by giving the child vicarious experiences and ensuring later success in learning to read. Research has shown that few children who were read to on a regular basis during their preschool years have difficulty in learning to read.⁶

That parents have a responsibility and valuable opportunity to want their own child's success in school is the basis for three things parents should be aware of and involved in, concludes Jane Iannelli. Parents should be aware of the importance of their being models for their child, both through the quality of language in the home and in reading books, allowing the children to observe much of this.⁷

Reading aloud to children as a means of introducing the child to print, introducing "book language," and offering the child more experiences seems to be a convincing enough argument for doing so. However, James E. Flood did a study on the relationship between parental style of reading to young children and the child's performance on selected pre-reading related tasks. The research was conducted by taping parental reading aloud sessions with the study group of thirty-six 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 year old children in the San Francisco Bay area. Fourteen separate components of the parent-child reading episode were selected for analysis and of these four

⁶Ibid., p. 831.

⁷Jane Iannelli, "An Ounce of Prevention," Reading Horizons, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Summer 1971), pp. 171-2.

correlated significantly with the pre-reading scores, and stepwise regression techniques revealed the importance of six components of the parent-child reading episode. These steps were used to suggest a cyclical model involving four steps to produce positive results. Children profit from preparation for reading. Providing the child with a purpose for the reading activity is the first step. The second is making children very much a part of the process; they need to talk about the story and relate it to their own experiences, and they need to be allowed to ask as well as answer questions about the book. The analysis of this study showed that adult-child verbal interaction can enhance the overall results of the reading session. The data also suggested that positive reinforcement from the parent is an effective component and makes up the third step. The final step is the evaluative questioning by parents. This step helps the child to clarify and learn to make conclusions and evaluations about the book read. For parent-child reading episodes to be successful the parent should hold the child in his/her lap and read the stories over and over, thus making the child's first experiences with books good.⁸

Many children miss out on the warmth and personal attention that can come with the introduction of books because they first experience them at school in large group situations, writes Joan Trezise. Parents often miss out on the experience of reading aloud

⁸James E. Flood, "Parental Styles in Reading Episodes with Young Children," The Reading Teacher (May 1977), pp. 864-67.

to their children because of lack of knowledge and/or lack of experience with children's books. Joan Trezise explained how parents in Lansing, Michigan were exposed to the process and much interest grew due to the workshop conducted.⁹ Arlene Wartenburg, a parent and a teacher, listed six steps for helping parents to gain knowledge on the importance of and how to establish a home reading environment. These steps were that parents should act as models, they should read to their children, they should provide a variety of reading materials, they should provide a variety of experiences, and they should suggest entertainment, as well as encourage pets and hobbies.¹⁰

Dorothy McDonald wrote an article supporting music as a part of reading readiness. Research indicating support of music as a part of reading readiness was discussed and it was suggested that the use of music be further explored. Areas of the curriculum where music seems most beneficial are: lengthening attention span, increasing children's willingness to listen, developing auditory discrimination skills, expanding oral skills, acquiring visual skills, and introducing children to writing as a form of communication.¹¹

I believe all of these ideas for research in the area of children's pre-reading experiences are summed up by Edmund Huey.

⁹Joan Trezise, "Parents Read Aloud to Children," Language Arts, Vol. 52, No. 6 (September 1975), pp. 881-88.

¹⁰Arlene Wartenburg, "A Parent-Teacher Speaks," The Reading Teacher, Vol. 23, No. 8 (May 1970), pp. 748-50.

¹¹Dorothy McDonald, "Music and Reading Readiness," Language Arts, Vol. 52, No. 6 (September 1975), pp. 872-3.

He wrote that although he couldn't define meaning, the meaning of a passage is not in the words alone, but largely in the reader. This meaning in the reader, or the child's experiences, is the basis for this research.¹² How many and particularly what pre-reading experiences, if any, will or can be associated with a successful reader at the end of first grade?

¹²Edmund Burke Huey, The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1977), pp. 160-65.

CHAPTER III

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter is devoted to the collection and analysis of the data. A description of the population and sample used as well as a description of the instrument are discussed. The results of the study, the significant results of the study, and tables giving these results conclude this chapter.

I. COLLECTION

Population. The population of this study was the sixty-five first grade children in a rural, north-central Kansas school district, which includes five small communities. This school system employs an "appropriate placement" condition such that children are placed or taught at their level of achievement in the subject area, and not held back or pushed ahead an entire grade level. This allows the child to proceed to the next grade level when competent in the majority of his/her schoolwork.

Children surveyed were the sixty-three first graders who were completing first grade for the first time. Those children were further screened so that those with uncorrected visual or auditory problems could be eliminated, but all showed satisfactory visual and auditory functioning. Sex differences in the children were also noted. There were thirty-five girls and twenty-eight boys among the sixty-three first graders surveyed.

The sample used for this study was comprised of a total of thirty-eight first graders, twenty-one girls and seventeen boys. Thirteen children, or 34 percent of the total sample, were unsuccessful readers. Twenty-five children or 66 percent of the total were successful readers. A successful reader was defined as a child who, at the end of first grade, had completed the first grade reader and had been credited by the teacher with mastery of the first grade skills. These data were attained from the children's reading records kept by their teachers. Children determined to be unsuccessful readers at the end of the first grade were children who had not completed the necessary work at an acceptable level of achievement, but who were not going to be retained in first grade.

Instrument. The screening instrument used in this study was a questionnaire compiled on the basis of the review of literature and research in the field. The forty questions were of four types: 1) those requiring a frequency response of every day, most days, once a week, less than once a week, and never; 2) those requiring responses as to whether certain experiences had occurred once, frequently, never, or don't recall; 3) questions asking the parents to respond with a numerical answer; and 4) questions requiring "yes," "no," or don't recall responses to many types of experiences that the parent and child might have had. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix A.

Many of the questions on the instrument were designed to follow up information discussed and suggested from findings of the review of literature in their field. A study by Jerry G. Keshian revealed many

characteristics and experiences of seventy-two fifth grade children who were successful readers. The article suggested that families who do things together might be forming a strong basis for reading success.¹³ This article provided support for those items of the questionnaire involving family activities; reading aloud, whether the child owned a library card, had a magazine subscription, owned books, and how many magazine and newspaper subscriptions the parents had (Items: 2,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,13,15,17,18,21,23,29,31,32,33,34, and 38 on the questionnaire).

An article by Jane Iannelli emphasized the responsibility and opportunity parents have in contributing to their child's success in school and examples of activities and experiences that parents should provide were given.¹⁴ Items on the questionnaire stemming from this study included those that dealt with reading books and nursery rhymes aloud to your child, providing vicarious experiences through local trips and travel, and providing writing tools and allowing the child the experience of writing (Items: 2,4,6,7,8,9,11, 27,28,30,31,36,37, and 39 of the questionnaire).

The items pertaining to music came from an article by Dorothy McDonald which gave much support to music in the pre-school in

¹³Jerry G. Keshian, "The Characteristics and Experiences of Children Who Learn to Read Successfully," Elementary English (1963), p. 616.

¹⁴Jane Iannelli, "An Ounce of Prevention," Reading Horizons Vol. 11, No. 4 (Summer 1971), pp. 171-2.

developing language and reading readiness skills¹⁵ (Items: 10,14, and 24 of the questionnaire).

Procedures. Permission to use the questionnaire, developed from a review of the literature, was granted by the University Rights of Human Subjects Committee, College of Education, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, after approval of the superintendent of the district was attained.

The following materials were then sent to sixty-five parents of first graders: a cover letter explaining the study and containing explicit information as to confidentiality and option not to participate, a release form from the district enabling access to the child's reading level as well as auditory and visual screening records, the questionnaire, and a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning the instrument. A second mailing of the same materials was done as a follow-up to parents who had not returned the questionnaire.

The questionnaires returned were assigned numbers to maintain confidentiality. The information needed from the children's records was then secured from the teachers. The instrument was coded to be key punched for SPSS computer processing. The items requiring responses from the first type of questions were coded with the following numbers: (1) never, (2) less than once a week, (3) once a week, (4) most days, and (5) every day. The questions from the instrument with the following responses were coded: (1) don't recall, (2) never,

¹⁵Dorothy McDonald, "Music and Reading Readiness," Language Arts, Vol. 52, No. 6 (September 1975), pp. 872-3.

(3) once, and (4) frequently. Items calling for a numerical answer were coded thus: (0) zero, (1) one or two, (2) three through nine, (3) ten through twenty, (4) twenty-one through fifty and (4) more than fifty. The last group of responses to questions were coded: (1) don't recall, (2) no, and (3) yes.

The chi square test was employed to show the significant differences between the groups. The chi square test demonstrates that the obtained frequencies of the responses differ from what would be expected if there were no real differences between, in this study, successful and unsuccessful readers, and that the difference is larger than we should be likely to get through sampling errors.

II. ANALYSIS

Results of the study. Tables I and II give the responses to the questionnaire in percentages for each item. Table I shows the responses, in percentages given by the parents of the 13 unsuccessful readers. Table II relays the responses, in percentages, of the parents of the successful readers.

These findings are the results of the data collected from the computer after the SPSS program was run. The chi square test of significance level is given for each question on Table III. The number of degrees of freedom affects the probability of chance occurrences and is related to the degree of significance. The .05 significance level is used by most researchers to indicate that there is indeed a difference between two groups. Essentially this means

TABLE I
Percentages of Questionnaire Responses by
Parents of Unsuccessful Readers (N=13)

Questions	(0)*	(1)*	(2)*	(3)*	(4)*	(5)*
1.		7.7	38.5	7.7	38.5	7.7
2.		0.0	15.4	30.8	46.2	7.7
3.		23.1	38.5	23.1	15.4	
4.		0.0	38.5	61.5	0.0	0.0
5.			46.2	46.2	7.7	
6.		0.0	7.7	15.4	76.9	
7.		7.7	7.7	23.1	61.5	
8.			7.7	30.8	61.5	
9.		0.0	15.4	53.8	30.8	
10.			53.8	30.8	15.4	
11.		15.4	23.1	38.5	23.1	
12.		15.4	15.4	30.8	38.5	
13.		5.3	30.8	38.5	15.4	
14.	23.1	23.1	7.7	30.8	7.7	7.7
15.			15.4	30.8	23.1	30.8
16.	7.7		53.8	38.5		
17.	23.1	69.2	7.7			
18.	38.5	23.1	30.8	7.7		
19.	69.2	30.8				
20.			15.4	84.6		
21.			23.1	76.9		
22.			23.1	76.9		
23.			53.8	46.2		
24.			30.8	69.2		
25.			30.8	69.2		
26.			30.8	69.2		
27.				100.0		
28.				100.0		
29.			69.2	30.8		
30.			15.4	84.6		
31.			100.0			
32.			69.2	30.8		
33.		5.3		84.6		
34.			46.2	53.8		
35.			61.5	38.5		
36.			7.7	92.3		
37.			15.4	84.6		
38.			7.7	92.3		
39.		7.9	53.8	23.1		
40.			30.8	69.2		

TABLE I (cont.)

*Responses - Questions 1-5: (1) never, (2) less than once a week,
(3) once a week, (4) most days,
(5) every day.

Questions 6-13: (1) don't recall, (2) never, (3) once,
(4) frequently.

Questions 14-19: (0) 0, (1) 1 or 2, (2) 3-9, (3) 10-20,
(4) 21-50, (5) 50 plus.

Questions 20-40: (1) don't recall, (2) no, (3) yes.

TABLE II
Percentages of Questionnaire Responses by
Parents of Successful Readers (N=25)

Questions	(0)*	(1)*	(2)*	(3)*	(4)*	(5)*
1.			12.0	32.0	48.0	8.0
2.		4.0	16.0	20.0	60.0	
3.			48.0	40.0	12.0	
4.		4.0	24.0	52.0	8.0	12.0
5.			28.0	48.0	24.0	
6.		4.0	12.0	12.0	72.0	
7.			8.0	16.0	76.0	
8.				16.0	84.0	
9.		4.0	16.0	56.0	24.0	
10.			16.0	36.0	48.0	
11.			8.0	48.0	44.0	
12.		4.0	4.0	16.0	76.0	
13.		4.0	16.0	8.0	72.0	
14.	4.0	12.0	4.0	60.0	16.0	4.0
15.				12.0	44.0	44.0
16.		32.0	48.0	20.0		
17.	4.0	64.0	32.0			
18.	8.0	24.0	60.0	8.0		
19.	20.0	76.0	4.0			
20.			8.0	92.0		
21.			48.0	52.0		
22.			12.0	88.0		
23.			16.0	84.0		
24.			12.0	88.0		
25.			32.0	68.0		
26.			8.0	92.0		
27.				100.0		
28.				100.0		
29.			8.0	92.0		
30.			4.0	96.0		
31.				100.0		
32.			76.0	24.0		
33.			12.0	88.0		
34.		4.0	16.0	80.0		
35.		8.0	16.0	76.0		
36.			4.0	96.0		
37.			48.0	52.0		
38.				100.0		
39.		4.0	68.0	28.0		
40.			4.0	96.0		

TABLE II (cont.)

- *Responses - Questions 1-5: (1) never, (2) less than once a week,
(3) once a week, (4) most days,
(5) every day.
- Questions 6-13: (1) don't recall, (2) never, (3) once,
(4) frequently.
- Questions 14-19: (0) 0, (1) 1 or 2, (2) 3-9, (3) 10-20,
(4) 21-50, (5) 50 plus
- Questions 20-40: (1) don't recall, (2) no, (3) yes.

that the odds are less than five out of one hundred that the results were due to chance. Although some researchers adopt a significance level of .01, this study adhered to the .05 convention. However, as can be noted in Table III, many of the questions were found to be significant to a greater degree than .05. The data revealed eight of the items on the questionnaire were significant to the .05 level.

Significant results. The instrument used in this study was comprised of 40 items, of which 20 per cent were found to be significant to at least the .05 level on the chi square test. The eight home pre-reading experiences found to be different for the successful and unsuccessful readers, in order from most to least significant, were these:

- (1) Children who had experienced a "collecting" project, such as rocks, insects, stamps, etc.
- (2) Children who had attended athletic competitions at the high school, college, or professional level.
- (3) Children who had their own magazine subscriptions.
- (4) Children who had experienced making a "book," such as an alphabet book, picture book, leaf book, etc.
- (5) Children who own their own library card.
- (6) Children who had visited with a senior citizen.
- (7) Children who had attended music concerts.
- (8) Children who had been to a fire station.

In taking a closer look at these eight home pre-reading experiences, the following specific statistical responses were found.

TABLE III
Chi Square (χ^2), Degrees of Freedom (d/f), and Significance Level

Question	(χ^2)	(d/f)	(Significance)
1.	7.08	4	.13
2.	3.16	4	.53
3.	6.73	3	.08
4.	3.88	4	.42
5.	2.06	2	.36
6.	.77	3	.86
7.	2.41	3	.49
8.	3.37	2	.19
9.	.68	3	.88
10*	6.77	2	.03
11.	6.51	3	.09
12.	5.60	3	.13
13.*	11.80	3	.01
14.	5.97	5	.30
15.	6.87	3	.08
16.	5.73	3	.13
17.	5.13	2	.08
18.	5.77	3	.12
19.*	9.03	2	.01
20.	.46	1	.48
21.	2.22	1	.14
22.	.79	1	.37
23.*	5.96	1	.01
24.	2.00	1	.16
25.	.01	1	.94
26.	3.33	1	.07
27.	-	-	-
28.	-	-	-
29.*	15.59	1	.00
30.	1.52	1	.22
31.	-	-	-
32.	.20	1	.65
33.	5.42	2	.07
34.	4.30	2	.12
35.*	8.56	2	.01
36.	.23	1	.63
37.*	3.91	1	.05
38.	1.96	1	.16
39.	3.31	2	.19
40.*	5.36	1	.02

*Those questions found to be significant to the .05 level of higher.

Of the 34 per cent unsuccessful readers, 69 per cent had never had a "collecting project," whereas only 8 per cent of the successful readers had never had this experience. On the other hand, 92 per cent of the successful readers as opposed to 31 per cent of the unsuccessful readers had experienced a collecting project. Thus 24 per cent of the total children had never had a "collecting project" and were unsuccessful readers, 5 per cent of the children surveyed had never had a "collecting project" and were successful readers. Of the total population used for this study, 11 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 61 per cent of the successful readers, had experienced a "collecting project" as part of their home pre-reading experiences.

The statistical findings for the home pre-reading experience of attending athletic competitions at the high school, college or professional level revealed that 16 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 14 per cent of the successful readers had never attended or didn't recall attending an athletic event. Of the unsuccessful readers only 18 per cent as compared to 52 per cent of the successful readers had attended an athletic event at least once. Looking further, 47 per cent of the successful readers as opposed to 5 per cent of the unsuccessful readers reported attending athletic competitions frequently.

The break down for children who had their own magazine subscriptions showed 24 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 13 per cent of the successful readers as having no magazine subscrip-

tions. However, 11 per cent of the unsuccessful readers as opposed to 50 per cent of the successful readers had one or two magazine subscriptions of their own, with 3 per cent of the group having three or more subscriptions.

In looking at the group of children as a whole, the data revealed 21 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 16 per cent of the successful readers had never or didn't recall the child as having experienced making a "book" such as an alphabet book, picture book, leaf book, etc. The unsuccessful readers showed 13 per cent and the successful readers 50 per cent having made a book as part of their home pre-reading experience.

Taking a closer observation at the number of children who owned their own library cards resulted in the following: 18 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 11 per cent of the successful readers did not own a library card; however, only 11 per cent of the unsuccessful readers as compared to 55 per cent of the successful readers did own a library card.

In noting children who had or had not visited with a senior citizen as part of their home pre-reading experience, the study revealed that, while 11 per cent of the unsuccessful readers had never visited a senior citizen, only 3 per cent of the successful readers had never experienced this, and 24 per cent of the unsuccessful readers in comparison with 63 per cent of the group had indeed visited with a senior citizen.

The findings disclosed the following about those children who had not attended a music concert: 18 per cent of the unsuccessful readers

and 11 per cent of the successful readers had never attended a music concert, 16 per cent of the unsuccessful readers had attended a concert at least once with more than half of this group responding to doing so only once. In contrast, 56 per cent of the successful readers responded as having attended a music concert with the largest number falling in the frequently category.

In looking at the data pertaining to the children who had and had not experienced going to a fire station, it was found that 5 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 32 per cent of the successful readers had not had the experience, compared with 29 per cent of the unsuccessful readers and 34 per cent of the successful readers who had been to a fire station.

In conclusion, eight of the forty pre-reading experiences showed significant differences in the number of experiences exhibited by the successful as opposed to the unsuccessful readers. Those experiences found to be significant were: (1) collecting projects, (2) attending athletic competitions, (3) having their own magazine subscriptions, (4) making "books," (5) owning a library card, (6) visiting a senior citizen, (7) attending music concerts, and (8) having been to a fire station.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This section is devoted to a discussion of observations made during the study and of conclusions drawn. The results of the study are reviewed, and comments are given regarding further research in this field.

I. DISCUSSION

In a study such as this the only way to reveal what home pre-reading experiences the children have had is through the parents. One difficulty with this procedure is that the parents may not wish to participate, which is their right, or they may feel in some way threatened by the questionnaire and choose not to participate, or perhaps they feel that their child is achieving well and find the survey to be bothersome or unnecessary. There was no way of determining the number of successful and non-successful readers not included in the study because, if the questionnaires weren't returned, neither were the permission slips to obtain the children's records.

Instrument. The instrument used in this study not only asked parents to recall experiences that they and their child had had together, but also asked them to recall several years past, as the children were now in first grade. This lapse in time may have resulted in inaccurate recall of experiences on the part of some parents.

Some of the findings may have been influenced by misinterpretation of the items, causing them not to function properly. Item (2), "How often do you read aloud to your child?" was perhaps not found to be significant because the parents are not reading aloud as often now that their child is in first grade as they may have prior to the child's entering school. Items beginning with "Have you and your child . . ." may have been misinterpreted if the parents knew that their child had had the experience with someone else. In particular item (37), "Have you and your child ever been to a Fire Station?" may have been inappropriately answered because many of the children in first grade had visited a fire station on a first grade field trip.

The significant results of this study, excluding perhaps the findings pertaining to the fire station, were very much in line with what might be expected. These results showed that children who were successful readers at the end of first grade had indeed had a wide variety of home pre-reading experiences. Finding that children who were successful readers had also attended music concerts was of particular interest due to the literature that was uncovered asserting the importance of music for reading readiness.

Population. The population used for this study was the first grade children from one school district. Because the district was small, the sample of children surveyed was small. Due to the small sample the life styles and parental attitudes may have been much the same, whereas, had the study included several districts and had a

larger sample, there might have been more "extreme" responses to the questionnaire items. The sample consisted of thirteen children who were unsuccessful readers and twenty-five children who were successful readers at the end of first grade. It would have been desirable to know how many successful and unsuccessful readers from the population were not included in the sample, due to parents choosing not to participate, but the parents who did not return the questionnaires also did not return the release forms for obtaining the children's records.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The study found eight home pre-reading experiences to be significantly different for successful and unsuccessful readers at the end of first grade. Due to the evidence that item (37) of the questionnaire may not have functioned properly, seven home pre-reading experiences are given as the statistically significant findings of this study. In order from most to least significant, the seven home pre-reading experiences found to be different for the successful and unsuccessful readers were:

- (1) Children who had experienced a collecting project, such as rocks, insects, stamps, etc.
- (2) Children who had attended athletic competitions at the high school, college, or professional level.
- (3) Children who had their own magazine subscriptions.

- (4) Children who had experienced making a "book," such as an alphabet book, picture book, leaf book, etc.
- (5) Children who own their own library card.
- (6) Children who had visited with a senior citizen.
- (7) Children who had attended music concerts.

These results could be used beneficially by educational reading organizations, teachers, and parents. The organizations such as the International Reading Association, Reading Is Fundamental, the Right To Read could use these findings as further support of their efforts to inform and stress the importance of home pre-reading experiences in determining children's success with reading. Teachers could make use of these findings as an additional screening device in determining children who are ready to read, and as information in guiding parents who want to know what they can do at home to help their child be successful with reading. Parents who are providing their children with home pre-reading experiences might find these results to be an incentive for keeping up the good work. Parents who may not be providing these home pre-reading experiences might begin to do so if they were to see significant results, such as these, indicating the importance of home pre-reading experiences.

Further study and research in this area of home pre-reading experiences might be more beneficial if alternatives to the self-report questionnaires, completed by the parents, could be found for obtaining the data about children's home pre-reading experiences. It would also be recommended that a larger population be employed,

including more than one school district, to insure a larger sample and more data. As a last suggestion for any further studies in this field, it would be useful as well as interesting to know how many successful and unsuccessful readers are not included in the sample.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How often does your child watch Sesame Street?
☐ Every day ☐ Most days ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐ Never.
2. How often do you read aloud to your child?
☐ Every day ☐ Most days ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐ Never.
3. How often does your child help you cook?
☐ Every day ☐ Most days ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐ Never.
4. How often do you play "finger" type nursery games or rhymes with your child?
☐ Every day ☐ Most days ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐ Never.
5. How often do you and your child play games together, such as cards, board games, or dominoes?
☐ Every day ☐ Most days ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐ Never.
6. Have you and your child ever been to a county or state fair?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
7. Have you and your child ever been out of the state?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
8. Have you and your child ever been to the zoo?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
9. Have you and your child ever attended a circus?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
10. Have you and your child ever attended a music concert?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
11. Have you and your child ever visited a museum?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
12. Have you and your child ever attended a play, high school, church, or professional?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.
13. Have you and your child ever attended any athletic competitions at the high school, college, or professional level?
☐ Once ☐ Frequently ☐ Never ☐ Don't recall.

14. How many records or tapes does your child own? NUMBER _____
15. How many books does your child own? NUMBER _____
16. How many games, commercial or home made, does your child own? NUMBER _____
17. How many newspapers do you subscribe to presently? NUMBER _____
18. How many magazines do you subscribe to presently? NUMBER _____
19. How many magazine subscriptions does your child have? NUMBER _____

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Don't Recall</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 20. Does your child have a pet? | () | () | () |
| 21. Have you and your child ever made play dough? | () | () | () |
| 22. Have you and your child ever been on a fishing trip? | () | () | () |
| 23. Does your child own a library card? | () | () | () |
| 24. Does your child own or have a record or tape player he/she can play by him/her self? | () | () | () |
| 25. Have you and your child ever been on a camping trip? | () | () | () |
| 26. Have you and your child ever made and/or played with puppets? | () | () | () |
| 27. Has your child accompanied you to the grocery store on a regular basis? | () | () | () |
| 28. Have you and your child ever been shopping in a shopping center or shopping mall? | () | () | () |
| 29. Have you and your child ever had a "collecting" project, such as rocks, insects, stamps, etc.? | () | () | () |
| 30. Has your child helped you write a letter, by telling you something to add, or by drawing a picture to send someone? | () | () | () |
| 31. Have you and your child ever been to a farm? | () | () | () |

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>36 Don't Recall</u>
32. Have you and your child ever flown on an airplane?	()	()	()
33. Have you and your child ever ridden in a boat?	()	()	()
34. Have you and your child ever been to a roller skating rink?	()	()	()
35. Have you and your child ever made a "book" together, such as an alphabet book, picture book, leaf book, etc.?	()	()	()
36. Have you and your child ever been to the Post Office?	()	()	()
37. Have you and your child ever been to a Fire Station?	()	()	()
38. Have you and your child ever attended a movie at a theater or drive in?	()	()	()
39. Have you and your child ever been to a Police Station?	()	()	()
40. Have you and your child ever visited with a senior citizen?	()	()	()

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTERS



Department of Curriculum
and Instruction

College of Education
Holton Hall
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
913-532-5550

May 9, 1979

Dear Parents:

I am studying early childhood experiences as part of my Master's Thesis. I am asking all parents of first grade children in U.S.D. #417 to help me by completing the enclosed questionnaire. The information I collect will be kept in complete confidence. The enclosed release form is necessary for me to secure your child's reading level and visual and hearing screening results, from his/her school records. My research is being conducted under the provisions of Kansas State University. Dr. Mary McDonnell Harris is supervising the study.

If you have any questions before participating, please feel free to call me at home at (316) 767-6773. After the survey is completed, if you would wish to see the results, please let me know.

I hope you will participate in this educational research. If you are willing to do so, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and sign the release form. Then place the information in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope. Your help will be very much appreciated. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Deanna L. Sterrett
Graduate Student, KSU
Teacher, 1st grade
Washington School
Council Grove, Kansas

Mary M McDonnell Harris

Dr. Mary McDonnell Harris
Department of Curriculum and
Instruction



**Department of Curriculum
and Instruction**

College of Education
Holton Hall
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
913-532-5550

June 25, 1979

Dear Parents:

I am again mailing questionnaires to parents of first grade children in U.S.D. #417. If you have misplaced yours, or gotten caught up with all the summer activities, I am asking that you will participate in this educational research. My research is being conducted under the provisions of Kansas State University. Dr. Mary McDonnell is supervising the study.

I am studying early childhood experiences as part of my Master's Thesis. The information I collect will be kept in complete confidence. The enclosed release form is necessary for me to secure your child's reading level and visual and hearing screening results from his/her school records.

If you have any questions before participating, feel free to call me at home at (316) 767-6773. After the survey is completed, if you would wish to see the results, please let me know.

I hope you will participate in this educational research. If you are willing to do so, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and sign the release form. Then place the information in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope. Your help will be very much appreciated. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Deanna L. Sterrett
Graduate Student, KSU
Teacher, 1st grade
Washington School
Council Grove, Kansas

Dr. Mary McDonnell Harris
Department of Curriculum and
Instruction

APPENDIX C
RELEASE FORM

May 9, 1979

I grant permission for Deanna L. Sterrett to obtain the reading level and visual and hearing screening results from my child's school records.

Name of child

Parent's signature Date

I understand that my child's name will not be used in any reports or publications growing out of this research and that I have the right to know the results of the study which pertain to my child.

I further understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study at any time.

APPENDIX D
PERMISSION FROM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Mary Harris

By Principal Investigator(s) Denna Sterrett

- ☒ This proposal has been approved.

Robert E. Scott
Adult and Occupational Education
College of Education
Horton Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

APPENDIX E
COMPUTER PRINT-OUT

Data Cards

01	441234433224425301033323333333232323323	1211
02	422223432243334211133323333333233332322	2111
03	4432344433444343221323332233233233333323	2111
04	243234444434445313333333333323333333333	2211
05	1411233322332130100332332233233212232222	1111
06	4431344433323022120332222333223333233323	1211
07	334234443333334211133333233323323333313	1121
08	3331243334344444111332232333233233333323	2211
09	2432344424344343110322333233333233132323	2111
10	2221244433111553011322233233233333232312	1111
11	442244343434444311033333333333233333323	3111
12	342244444344455422133333333333333333333	2211
13	343334432344343221333232333333333333333	2111
14	242224243421145313132323333333321333323	1111
15	4441334423344353101323333333333232232333	2111
16	4311243332433032100333233233333232233333	1211
17	4344444434444353121233333333333233333333	2111
18	2321243444144353221333323333233233233313	1211
19	4332344443443342120333323333323323323333	1111
20	5221224334342152121222322233333223232323	2211
21	4232244434344043120323323333333223132323	2111
22	4242240342443333120233333233233233233323	1211
23	2522334232322242100223322333223332333332	1211
24	3424344444444352111323333333333233332323	2111
25	2221324432324332121323333333333232333323	2111
26	5432324422332122100333233333233332333323	1111
27	443234243443214422132323333333233323323	2211
28	2422444442242032000333323333333232233322	1221
29	3322324442444242120333332333333233332333	2111
30	443344333324235412032333333333223332323	2111
31	502234443343435312233333333323333232323	2111
32	442130441331135322133333333333331333313	2211
33	4430244443444342221333332333333233333323	3111
34	442234443434434412132333233333233332323	2111
35	34343434444445322132333333333232333323	2211
36	344244242434435301133333333333233332323	2211
37	332244443323233223132333333333332232323	2211
38	4321234433443132101333323333333333333333	2211

Finish

FIRST GRADE READING SUCCESS AND
HOME PREREADING EXPERIENCES

by

DEANNA LYNN STERRETT

B.S., Kansas State University, 1976

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1980

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if certain home pre-reading experiences are significantly different for children successful and unsuccessful at reading at the end of first grade. Areas of prereading experience tapped by the study questionnaire included the parent's reading aloud, whether the child owned a library card or had a magazine subscription, whether the child had been provided travel and local trip experiences, how many magazines and newspapers were subscribed to by the parents, and whether the child had experiences with music.

Subjects for the study were twenty-one girls and seventeen boys who were completing first grade in a rural north-central Kansas school district. Data were collected from their parents by means of a mailed questionnaire. Children were classified as successful or unsuccessful first grade readers according to whether or not they had completed the first reader and were reading at the second grade level. Twenty-five of the subjects had successfully completed first grade reading, and thirteen had not. Chi square was used to analyze the data

The study showed that successful first grade readers had had a variety of prereading experiences in the home. Of the forty prereading experiences considered, seven were significantly associated with the successful readers: collecting projects, attending athletic competitions, having their own magazine subscriptions, making "books," owning a library card, visiting a senior citizen, and attending music concerts.